2017 - 2019 Strategic Plan

BLANDFORD | nature center

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Blandford Nature Center (BNC) engaged Inclusive Performance Strategies (IPS) to conduct a strategic planning process to design a three-year Strategic Plan (January 2017 to December 2019). As the organization is uniquely positioned to provide natural spaces within the city limits in our diverse community, Blandford knew it was critical that both the process and final product of the Strategic Plan continue to support their commitment to inclusion.

The strategic planning process was designed to obtain as much feedback as feasible from Blandford's stakeholders. In addition to engaging BNC **staff, board, clients,** and **volunteers,** IPS engaged **nonprofit partners, funders,** and **community members** in an initial data gathering phase. Information from all stakeholders was used to shape BNC's strengths, values, and opportunities for growth.

IPS utilized the strategy pyramid of David La Piana (*The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid Response World)* to provide structure to the roles of staff and board during the planning process. The Board focused on high-level *organizational* strategy, designing the Goals and Focus Areas. The staff focused on the *programmatic* and *operational* strategy sections, designing the Key Performance Indicators and Action Steps. All groups worked to refine BNC's new Mission, Vision, and Values.

A high-level timeline highlighting key activities for the planning process is given below.

Organizational
Determine mission, vision, trends, competitoors, partners, and market position

Programmatic
Decide on approaches and offer programs and activities to acheive specific outcomes related to the target audiences

Operational
Administer and oversee systems, policies, and personnel in areas such as finance, human resources, communications, and IT

SPRING 2016	SUMMER 2016	FALL 2016	WINTER 2016 - EARLY 2017
Define the Landscape: focus groups, document audit, survey	Define Big Questions & Blue Ocean; Revise Vision/Mission/Values	Define Goals, Key Performance Indicators, & Action Steps	Review, Launch & Implementation of Strategic Plan

Inclusive Performance Strategies utilized the following phases of work to co-create the Strategic Plan with Blandford Nature Center:

PHASE 1: DEFINE THE LANDSCAPE —COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DATA ANALYSIS

Blandford agreed that the strategic planning process presented an opportunity to engage stakeholders at all levels of community, and that doing so was critical to the future success of their mission. To that end, Inclusive Performance Strategies engaged **community partners, Blandford volunteers, and the broader community.** All data and key findings from this period of work were presented to the Board and Staff in a **Data Summary** document. IPS completed the following engagement activities during this phase:

- Conducted **five focus groups:** two with clients and volunteers at Blandford Nature Center, one in English at Baxter Community Center, one in Spanish at the Grandville Avenue of the Arts, and one with community partners and funders. The purpose of the focus groups was to understand community perception and gain input about strengths, opportunities, and challenges that BNC should consider in their strategic planning.
- Launched a community-wide **survey** that resulted in responses from 706 people; visitors, members, donors, volunteers, and community members.
- Conducted a **document audit** and **data analysis** of Blandford policies, procedures, reports, and communications. This provided the basis for understanding current state to design the Key Performance Indicators and guide strategic discussions.
- Conducted **two focus groups** with Blandford staff members and utilized notes from key interviews conducted with Blandford board members during our previous board development engagement.

PHASES 2 & 3: DEFINING BLANDFORD'S BIG QUESTIONS & BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY

IPS conducted "Visioning" work sessions with the Board of Directors and staff, respectively. Participants completed several exercises to shape the vision of Blandford Nature Center for the future. The data summary was presented during these sessions to inform the formation of **Big Questions,** which enhance Blandford's ability to continue serving community effectively. Participants also worked through the information to illuminate Blandford's "Blue Ocean Characteristics": attributes that give Blandford a unique position in the community.

PHASE 4: REFINING BLANDFORD'S MISSION, VISION & VALUES

While not every strategic planning process will result in changing an organization's mission, it is always advisable to review the mission to ensure it is still relevant given the desired future state of the organization. After an initial review of Blandford's mission, staff and board agreed that a revised mission and vision were needed. They also agreed that defining organizational values would help ensure that, in their respective roles, staff, board members, and volunteers consistently demonstrate behaviors essential to the success of Blandford's mission. During the visioning sessions, the groups made significant process on refining the organization's mission, vision, and values. A subcommittee of staff and board members made final decisions on these items in a session facilitated by IPS.

PHASE 5: DRAFTING THE PLAN

The staff and the board each participated in half-day planning retreats. The first portion of each session was spent refining the revised mission, vision, and values of Blandford. The next portion of the sessions focused on developing the goals and focus areas (board session) or key performance indicators and action steps (staff session) of each of the Strategic Plan domains, which are explained further in the section *Structure of the Plan*.

Both staff and board members were given the opportunity to provide additional feedback through online tools after each of the sessions mentioned above. This accommodated for different thinking styles and allowed stakeholders to comment on the work of their counterparts (either board or staff groups).

PHASE 6: REVIEWING & LAUNCHING THE PLAN

To gather final input, IPS reviewed the final draft of the Strategic Plan with the executive director, board, and staff respectively. The last session brought the board and staff together. IPS presented the final Strategic Plan and gave recommendations about how to launch and implement the plan.

BLANDFORD'S BIG QUESTIONS

During the data review sessions, stakeholders were given an overview of Blandford's current state and community perceptions across each organizational domain. As the information was presented, participants were asked to write down defining questions that would need to be addressed for Blandford to successfully move forward. The first question was addressed during strategic planning, though further reflection on Blandford's target population will be helpful. The other questions will be critical to reflect on as the Strategic Plan is implemented and each year's action steps are drafted.

1. What is our **mission** and who is our target population?
2. How do we maximize our **capacity** to meet our mission and support new & innovative ideas?
3. How do we increase **awareness** of Blandford and our connections to community?
4. How do we ensure we are **accessible**, especially to culturally diverse groups?
5. How does Blandford encourage sustainable **partnerships** with organizations that align with our mission?
6. What are our goals for good **stewardship**, and how do we meet them?

Blue Ocean Strategy, a concept originally developed by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, is what can differentiate Blandford Nature Center from other area service providers. This does not mean outperforming competitors; rather, it means creating a new marketspace or "Blue Ocean," where competition is irrelevant. There is potential for Blandford to move beyond the "Red Ocean" of competing for members, funding, and community awareness by capitalizing on the aspects that make Blandford unique.

IPS requested staff, volunteers, nonprofit partners, and community members to provide their perspectives on what gives Blandford a Blue Ocean edge. Listed below depicts key characteristics of Blandford that the community feels are unique and needed.

Cost-Efficient	Intentional Relationships	Innovation	Safe Space for Community	Quality Staff
• Low-cost admission • Accessbile for students	• Partnerships • Strong staff/volunteer relationship	• Educational programming • Unique property	• Only nature center in Grand Rapids	• Responsive • Welcoming • Mission-Driven • Knowledgeable

MISSION

• To engage and empower our community through enriching experiences in nature.

VISION

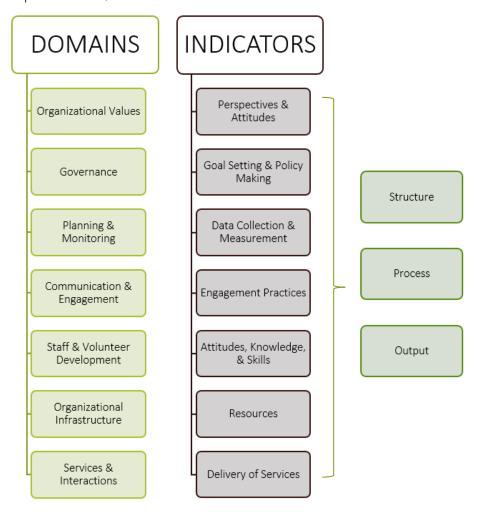• A thriving, diverse community that supports a healthy, natural world.

VALUES

• **Inclusion**: Intentionally welcoming and embracing everyone.
• **Stewardship**: Responsibly using and caring for all our resources.
• **Integrity**: Demonstrating honesty, authenticity, and transparency within our organization and community.
• **Experiential**: Providing direct opportunities to enjoy, explore, and learn in nature.
• **Partnership**: Connecting and collaborating to effectively serve our community.
• **Innovation**: Using creativity and curiosity to continuously improve.

The Strategic Plan aligns with seven **Domains** agreed upon by Blandford Nature Center in advance: **Organizational Values, Governance, Planning & Monitoring, Communications & Engagement, Staff & Volunteer Development, Organizational Infrastructure,** and **Services & Interactions.** These domains provide structure to the plan and ensure a comprehensive approach to Blandford's development. Each domain has the following components:

- A **Strategic Goal** that has been customized for BNC and reflects the purpose of the domain;
- **Focus Areas** that have been prioritized by the organization in support of the strategic goal;
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** that demonstrate the measurable desired performance within the focus areas;
- and quarterly **Action Steps** to accomplish each KPI.

DOMAINS	INDICATORS	
Organizational Values	Perspectives & Attitudes	Structure
Governance	Goal Setting & Policy Making	
Planning & Monitoring	Data Collection & Measurement	
Communication & Engagement	Engagement Practices	Process
Staff & Volunteer Development	Attitudes, Knowledge, & Skills	
Organizational Infrastructure	Resources	Output
Services & Interactions	Delivery of Services	

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategic Plan domain charts provide a clear road map with the first year of action steps. As BNC implements the plan and transitions into the second year, the following tips are helpful to remember:

- Action steps have only been developed for Year 1 and part of Year 2 because the plan is structured for flexibility. There is a suggested timeline, however, staff and board may find that some work will happen at a different pace. Whether this is faster or slower than what is laid out, this is fine! While it is important to remain accountable to accomplishing the performance indicators, the time within three years may vary depending on circumstance.
- Every KPI within the plan has been assigned to BNC staff leadership to oversee implementation; these assignments have been labeled within each domain chart per the designated role: President/CEO (**CEO**), Director of Development (**DD**), Director of Operations (**DO**), Director of Programs & Services (**DPS**). As indicated within the Strategic Plan, an initial first step will be to determine appropriate staff or teams of staff to help facilitate the actions steps.
- When planning future action steps, be timely yet realistic. As the organization tries to improve at a strategic level, each stakeholder also has regular daily responsibilities. Acknowledging this, it may take a whole quarter to accomplish something that seems relatively quick.
- We suggest referencing the Tamarack Institute's Community Engagement Chart (see Appendix A) throughout implementation. Sometimes, it may be appropriate to simply inform community. Other times, it may be appropriate to engage or even empower community in Blandford's work. Decide this before beginning, and build in time to engage community when appropriate.
- While progress should be tracked throughout the year, be sure to take time in the last quarter to evaluate the work that was done and consider how the organization will build on that work in the following year.
- Each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is coded as either Structural (**S**), Process (**P**), or Output (**O**). Some KPIs may take all three years of the plan. Others may be accomplished more quickly. If an indicator is accomplished, consider building on it by writing a new KPI. Blandford's 3.1 KPI, *"S 3.1: Useful metrics for planning and evaluation have been identified,"* is used below as an example.
  - o **Transitioning from Structure to Process:** Blandford has successfully identified useful metrics. Now, Blandford should design and implement the *processes* used to measure those metrics.
  - o **Transitioning from Process to Output:** Measurement is successfully taking place. Several output indicators may be appropriate. Consider analyzing initial data and setting targets for specific metrics. Consider setting output performance indicators for measurement and evaluation itself.
    - ▪ *It is important to remember at the output stage that performance management is most useful for learning. Blandford hasn't "failed" if what is being measured shows the metric is not being met. It is an opportunity to understand current state, discuss the "why," and decide what improvements can be made, which may include changing the metric and strategy.*
  - o **Output:** Once output KPIs have been achieved, Blandford can consider evaluating for outcomes and impact. This answers the "So What?" question. Can the organization articulate what has happened because of the outputs, as opposed to what it wanted to happen? If the organization wants to expand the work or to shift directions, new structure and process indicators may be useful.

ACQUISITION OF THE HIGHLANDS GOLF CLUB PROPERTY

In January 2017, Blandford Nature Center acquired the property of the Highlands Golf Club, located adjacent to BNC. At the time of this Strategic Plan's implementation, BNC was in process of finalizing the acquisition in partnership with the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, and obtaining funding from The Conservation Fund to secure a mortgage on the property. The project to fully acquire the property is divided into two primary phases. The goals of Phase 1 are to secure the property, raise funds to pay back the loan to secure the property, conduct preliminary stewardship work, and to facilitate a community visioning process to determine the property's future potential. Phase 2's goal will be to raise funds necessary to implement the vision as determined in Phase 1. BNC staff indicated that the Land Conservancy would continue to be a primary partner throughout this phase.

There is a strong indication that acquisition of the Highland property has the potential to support Blandford's strategic growth as it implements the plan through 2019 and beyond. It is imperative that the board and staff be mindful of the impact the property will have on the organization and strategic direction. Most importantly, **BNC stakeholders must continue to view the new property through the lens of how it supports and enhances their organizational mission and vision**. Additionally, Board members and staff should continue to evaluate what key action steps regarding the property are needed to propel the Strategic Plan moving forward. **Though this acquisition will impact every facet of the organization, the organization cannot yet quantify what that impact will be. As such, Key Performance Indicator 3.4 in the Planning & Monitoring domain is in place to ensure the organization establishes the appropriate structure to assess such impact.**

COMMUNITY ADVISORY FEEDBACK

To help ensure Blandford Nature Center is best positioned for success as it launches its Strategic Plan, IPS facilitated a final plan review with a smaller group of community stakeholders. Participants in this review process participated in a focus group and/or survey during the data gathering phase of strategic planning and indicated their interest to participate during review. Participants provided feedback either in person or via written response. Participants were asked to review BNC's revised mission and vision, newly created values, and "Big Questions" and Blue Ocean attributes. Participants were also requested to reflect upon each domain and its objective as it pertains to BNC's capacity to engage and interact with the community (fully compiled feedback responses from participants are included in Appendix A).

Overall, participants approved of the mission, vision, and values. In addition to being clear and comprehensible, participants noted it felt "welcoming" and "could see how important community was to Blandford." Participants were particularly encouraged to see that the organization identified Inclusion as an organizational value; diversity and inclusion were oft-cited as personal values important to participants and noted it is important to see organizations do the same.

Community members were also encouraged by and supported the strategic direction of the organization. They emphasized the imperative of increasing community awareness of BNC moving forward through various platforms (specifically, collaborating with neighborhood or community-based organizations, schools in urban areas, and on social media). Additionally, participants noted the necessity of seeing themselves and their families reflected in Blandford. They emphasized the need for concentrated communication about the organization's efforts to increase accessibility, consistent reporting on the impact of the

organization (especially as it pertains to community involvement and volunteer opportunities), and intentional partnerships with community-based organizations serving target populations.

KEY ENABLERS

Key enablers are factors that can influence an organization's capacity to successfully implement its Strategic Plan and meet its goals. During their strategy session, IPS asked staff to reflect on which key enablers will be important to ensure the plan's success. BNC should continue to consider these key enablers as it moves forward through the next three years. Themes from feedback are recorded below, using staff's words when possible.

- **Accessibility:** Must actively build awareness of Blandford in the community and consistently engaging the community to learn how they "own" Blandford.
- **Adaptability:** Must be willing to change to meet evolving needs.
- **Capacity:** Expansion in multiple ways is needed to meet the vision.
- **Clarity:** Must ensure every team member understands the value of the vision and their role in achieving Blandford's goals.
- **Cohesion:** Must understand how this work is either building off or pivoting from Blandford's past strategic plan. Additionally, must ensure staff, board, and community feels the plan is worthy, feasible, and has understandable goals and timelines.
- **Inclusion:** Must engage diverse communities and ensure that different viewpoints are encouraged and appreciated.
- **Innovation:** Must think and move towards the future with shared goals and clear action.
- **Roadmap:** Must work use the Strategic Plan as a "guiding light" that helps the organization avoid mission creep.
- **Stewardship:** Must continue to be assertive about restoring the natural world and educating the community to become stewards.
- **Transparency:** Must work together openly and honestly.
- **Trust:** Must be more board and staff interaction that builds cohesion between the two groups about what BNC stands for and where it is going.

1	ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

Strategic Goal

Our mission, vision, and values are demonstrated in the way we behave as individuals and as an organization.

Focus Areas
- Mission, Vision, and Core Values
- Vital Behaviors
- Demonstrating Organizational Culture

	Key Performance Indicators	2017 Action Steps			
		QTR 1 (JAN - MAR)	QTR 2 (APR - JUN)	QTR 3 (JUL - SEP)	QTR 4 (OCT - DEC)
S	**1.1**: The mission and vision of Blandford is clear and accessible to all staff, board, volunteers, and visitors.	• Evaluate signage, promo materials, internal/external documents, etc., including the updated mission, vision, and values • Revamp internal and external communications to embed mission/vision/values • Review onboarding procedures/training for staff/volunteers • Ensure the onboarding process includes explicit training on mission and vision		• Create a rollout plan and necessary budget to revamp internal/external communications	
S	**1.2:** Staff, board, and volunteers understand the vital behaviors that connect their roles to the organization's values. **(DO)**	• Identify vital behaviors • Ensure hiring/onboard process for orientations (board, staff, vols.) places vital behaviors, mission/ vision/ values in forefront for all organizational divisions • 100% of board & staff sign off on mission, vision, & values	• Create informal process for staff to receive frequent feedback about living out organizational values • Revise staff job performance matrix to reflect vital behaviors	• Create an internal structure/program to recognize how staff, board, and volunteers demonstrate one or more of BNC values	• Ensure performance reviews utilize job performance matrix that reflects Vital Behaviors

2018 Action Steps
- Give out "recognition awards" in Qtr. 1

2	GOVERNANCE			

Strategic Goal

Our oversight is effective, inclusive, and supports Blandford's organizational performance and sustainability.

Focus Areas
- Board & Committee Recruitment
- Board Utilization
- Board Engagement with Organization
- Board Training
- Policy Review

Key Performance Indicators		2017 Action Steps			
		QTR 1 (JAN - MAR)	QTR 2 (APR - JUN)	QTR 3 (JUL - SEP)	QTR 4 (OCT - DEC)
P	**2.1**: Board members actively diversify their personal and professional networks to aid in recruitment. **(CEO)**	• Define target diverse community groups BNC should engage • Board & Staff help identify diverse community opportunities for board members to participate in	• Staff to report at meetings, send emails, etc. • Board members attend identified opportunities; staff accompany when appropriate	• Informal reports at meetings; board invites people from new networks to Back to Nature tours; Include feedback in President's report • Develop Likert-scale survey for quarterly board reporting on diversified networks	
O	**2.2**: Use of the Board Recruitment Plan results in adding new and diverse board members. **(CEO)**	• Identify potential organizations that can help identify board prospects from target communities • Create process/list to track potential candidates; potential board members sought/placed on committees		• Potential board members are nominated	• New board members confirmed by vote of board
O	**2.3**: 75% of Board members have received their Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Results. **(CEO)**	• New board members are invited to participate in the IDI	• Board members receive IDI debrief/results	• Design accountability & support structure of IDI individual Development Plans (IDPs)	• Evaluate use of IDPs, decide on goals for 2018
S	**2.4**: The board has identified where their talents & interests intersect with organizational opportunities, & needed board training is implemented. **(CEO)**	• Survey board members to identify passions and interests	• Create board 'talent map'; match to organizational needs • Identify needed board training	• Design/coordinate training as needed • Board to begin participating in identified areas	
S	**2.5**: The board is structured to regularly review, revise, and enhance/create needed policy. **(CEO)**	• Develop full list of policies for review • Develop review calendar	• Board/committees review policies and present changes/new policies to board for adoption		

Notes:
- The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a statistically valid and globally utilized tool to measure individual and organizational intercultural competence. More information on how the IDI was utilized in the 2015 Board Assessment can be found in Appendix B.

3	PLANNING & MONITORING

Strategic Goal
We use data to support the planning, inclusive growth, and measurement of our organizational performance.

Focus Areas
- Data Collection & Analysis
- Stakeholder & Data-informed Planning
- Ongoing Evaluation & Improvement

Key Performance Indicators		2017 Action Steps			
		QTR 1 (JAN - MAR)	QTR 2 (APR - JUN)	QTR 3 (JUL - SEP)	QTR 4 (OCT - DEC)
S	**3.1**: Useful metrics for planning and evaluation have been identified. **(CEO)**	• Identify metrics that are useful for all program areas, including income growth, demographics, # of visitors/participants, etc., as well as opportunities for meaningful utilization of data			
P	**3.2:** There are processes for regularly collecting, storing, and analyzing data. **(CEO)**			• Build the processes/tools needed to collect and utilize data/feedback related to metrics	
S	**3.3:** There are regular opportunities for community to provide feedback about their experience with Blandford. **(DPS)**			• Build the feedback structures, processes, and tools needed to collect and utilize data/feedback related to metrics	
S	**3.4:** There is an established process to assess acquisitions that will impact the organizational domains of the strategic plan. **(CEO)**	• Develop a process to assess how acquisitions impact the current staffing needs, resources, infrastructure, and capacity to meet organizational goals			

Notes:
- See Appendix A for a suggested approach to community engagement ("Increased Levels of Engagement," Tamarack Institute).

4 — COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

Strategic Goal
We promote greater awareness and use of Blandford for our diverse community (race, age, socioeconomic, ability, gender, etc.).

Focus Areas
- Brand Identity & Marketing
- Inclusive Community Engagement
- Partnership
- Internal Communications

Key Performance Indicators		2017 Action Steps			
		QTR 1 (JAN - MAR)	QTR 2 (APR - JUN)	QTR 3 (JUL - SEP)	QTR 4 (OCT - DEC)
S	**4.1**: There is a structure in place for staff to regularly communicate and enhance effective interactions. **(CEO)**	• Create and implement a "pod" (team) structure for staff • Continue all staff meetings that focus on "big picture," strategic plan progress, board report, etc.	• Continue implementation of pods	• Evaluate pod reporting process and participant placement within pods	• Conduct an all-staff survey to determine effectiveness of pod structure
P	**4.2:** The marketing and communication plan effectively promotes updated materials to target communities. **(DPS)**	• Review plan to ensure target communities/tactics are identified	• Ensure dedicated staff time to implement the plan • Develop schedule of media releases & promotions • Materials are updated		• Create target figures for number of releases, increase in public events attended, increase in followers, etc.
P	**4.3:** The Board attends events with diverse audiences to promote Blandford at least once a quarter. **(CEO)**	• Expand the current elevator-pitch orientation to include inclusion language • Research community events with diverse audiences and solicit staff feedback to encourage Board members' attendance		• Develop reporting process for board members to share their activities/feedback	
S	**4.4:** There is a community engagement plan that promotes regular outreach to all diverse communities. **(DPS)**	• Identify target groups to engage • Identify individual/organizational partners to collaborate in plan development	• Define goals, objectives, and desired outputs • Develop general community engagement plan and target group-specific plans	• Implement community engagement plan	• Evaluate impact of community engagement plan on target groups
S	**4.5:** Partners are equipped to accurately promote Blandford. **(DPS)**	• Develop 'kits' to share with partners: fundraising, marketing, education, community, etc.	• Distribute "kits" to partners accordingly		
		• Invite partner organizations to Back to Nature Tours; follow up with each attendee after tour			

See following page for 2018 Action Steps and Notes

2018 Action Steps
4.1: Determine pod focus areas for 2018   **4.2:** Evaluate outputs and adjust as necessary   **4.4**: Evaluate outputs and impact of plan on target groups and adjust as necessary
Notes
"Communication & Engagement" focuses on equipping board members to adequately promote BNC as they engage in the community. These actions steps in this domain are closely aligned with the KPIs and Action Steps in the "Governance" domain, however, the Governance domain focuses on the overall capacity of the board as the governing body of the organization.   - See Strategic Plan Data Summary in Appendix B for community focus group data on the value proposition of engaging with the community.

5	STAFF & VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Goal

Our staff and volunteers are stewards of our resources and deliver inclusive, high-quality experiences to all visitors.

Focus Areas

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Training (professional development, mentors, sustainability, orientation, cultural competence)
- Succession planning

	Key Performance Indicators	2017 Action Steps			
		QTR 1 (JAN - MAR)	QTR 2 (APR - JUN)	QTR 3 (JUL - SEP)	QTR 4 (OCT - DEC)
S	**5:1:** All staff and volunteer positions have defined core competencies, and all staff document processes, contacts, etc. that are vital to their jobs. **(DO)**	• Develop an organizational core competency chart that reflects all needed • Develop core competencies for each position, create process for documenting needed information, and how those core competencies are integrated			
P	**5.2:** There are staff and volunteer recruitment strategies to ensure diverse candidate pools and inclusive vetting processes. **(DPS)**	• Develop posting and hiring process intentionally – various posting platforms, outlets, using community partners, etc. • When a vacancy comes available, plan is implemented appropriately			
S	**5.3:** All staff have access to individual professional development plans (PDPs). **(DO)**	• Develop individual PDPs within budget constraints • Staff begin to implement PDPs			• During performance reviews, inventory staff on professional development (PD) needs & opportunities for next year
S	**5.4:** There are regular opportunities for staff to develop professionally (based upon PDPs) and for volunteers to develop their skills. **(DO)**	• Inventory staff on PD needs/opportunities	• Quarterly PD opportunities are identified/promoted		
S	**5.5:** Succession plans are in place for key staff and volunteer leadership positions. **(CEO)**	• Define key leadership positions • Create a template for staff document position roles & responsibilities	• Assess current staff and identify potential candidates for development • All staff complete the roles & responsibilities	• Create development plans for candidates	
S	**5.6:** There is a mechanism in place to measure employee satisfaction as it pertains to retention. **(CEO)**	• Create an employee satisfaction survey to collect staff perspective			• Conduct employee satisfaction survey • HR Committee and President/CEO review survey results and identify trends and/or factors that contribute to retention

6	ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Strategic Goal
We have the resources needed to expand and sustain operations and for new services.

Focus Areas
- Fund Development
- Land Management (preservation, expansion)
- Facilities & Equipment (accessibility, maintenance, expansion, vehicles)
- Human Resources (staff, volunteers)
- Agricultural Production

Key Performance Indicators	2017 Action Steps			
	QTR 1 (JAN - MAR)	QTR 2 (APR - JUN)	QTR 3 (JUL - SEP)	QTR 4 (OCT - DEC)
O — 6.1: The Fund Development Plan results in obtaining the resources needed to sustain the organization. (DD)	• **Annual Fund Plan**: Invite people to Back to Nature tours, prepare for benefit breakfast, launch Sponsorship, Jeans & Jewels, & 5k subcommittees • **Campaign**: Continue fundraising, promotion of legacy society, prepare for grand opening	• **Annual Fund Plan**: Benefit Breakfast, Longest Day 5K, spring appeal, Back to Nature tours • **Campaign**: Grand Opening of new visitor center, continue fundraising	• **Annual Fund Plan**: Jeans & Jewels, Back to Nature tours • **Campaign**: Continue fundraising	• **Annual Fund Plan**: Holiday appeal, grant reports, development of next year's plan • **Campaign**: Close out campaign, final reports/updates to donors (may carry into next year)
P — 6.2: Facilities and equipment are regularly assessed for accessibility improvements and maintenance needs. (DO)	• Facilities Committee is formed (comprised of interested board & staff)	• Facilities Committee assess facilities for future improvements & maintenance needs & reports on quarterly basis	• Facilities Committee proposes improvements/budget to President/CEO to include in budget	
S — 6.3: All facilities have defined objectives for use. (DO)	• Staff defines priorities & objectives for all facility use	• Begin to utilize facilities per priorities & objectives		• Evaluate facility use & determine priorities & objectives for 2018
S — 6.4: There is a Land Stewardship Plan that supports a balance between services and preservation for new and existing land. (DO)	• Hire Land Manager and bring up to speed • Land Manager & Program Director create solution for balance between services & preservation	• Bring solution to Board for approval	• Propose changes to Plan to President/CEO • Propose budget to President/CEO	
		• Plan/implement land management activities per Land Stewardship Plan		

The Organizational Infrastructure Domain Chart continues on the following page.

6 — ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE (continued)

Strategic Goal
We have the resources needed to expand and sustain operations and for new services.

Focus Areas
- Fund Development
- Land Management (preservation, expansion)
- Facilities & Equipment (accessibility, maintenance, expansion, vehicles)
- Human Resources (staff, volunteers)
- Agricultural Production

S	**6.5:** Specific needs for current & additional staff are identified, with budget projections. **(DO)**	• HR Committee is launched	• HR Committee revamps performance review process and creates position salary ranges	• Project staffing needs for next year/propose budget to President/CEO	• HR Committee provides guidance on hiring, performance review processes • Approve staffing plan for next year, begin hiring process if applicable
P	**6.6:** Volunteers can easily sign up for useful work that fits their skills and interests. **(DPS)**	• Evaluate current recruitment & placement procedures	• Improve/enhance recruitment and placement process to meet the needs of a diverse constituency		
S	**6.7:** The farm plan is revised to balance agricultural use, program use, and land stewardship. **(DPS)**	• Land Manager collaborates with Farm Manager to identify agricultural, programmatic, & preservation priorities • Revise current farm plan based on balanced priorities	• Find farm plan compatibility with land stewardship plan	• Implement newly revised farm plan	• Evaluate farm plan & adjust as necessary

Notes:
- See KPI 3.4 in the Planning & Monitoring domain regarding action steps pertaining to land acquisition.
- The components of the various plans mentioned above should inform the KPIs and Actions for 2018 & 2019.
- The Finance and Fund Development Committees should regularly review strategic plan action steps as they convene; the Finance Committee should also incorporate strategic action plan steps needing resources into the overall budget.

7	SERVICES & INTERACTIONS

Strategic Goal
We provide inclusive, relevant, and accessible services for all ages.

Focus Areas
- Defining Target Population "Balance"
- Inclusive Program Development (on and off-site)
- Strategic Collaboration

Key Performance Indicators		2017 Action Steps			
		QTR 1 (JAN - MAR)	QTR 2 (APR - JUN)	QTR 3 (JUL - SEP)	QTR 4 (OCT - DEC)
S	**7.1**: Board and staff agree about how much to invest in Youth vs. Adults vs. Whole Families. **(DPS)**	• Develop a process for board and staff to identify target audience (Marketing Committee may play a role)	• Agree on how to prioritize customers	• Develop general resource allocation guide to match investment priorities	
S	**7.2:** A service expansion plan with budget projections is developed. **(DPS)**	• Utilize community feedback to determine what programs and services to keep, eliminate, or expand (including new programming) • Seek community partners that can be leveraged for programmatic growth/expansion		• Develop service plan geared towards primary/secondary customers, including staff plan/budget	
S	**7.3:** There are shared success measures with current partners and opportunities for new partners have been identified. **(DPS)**	• Define difference between partners and joint programming • Identify current and potential partnerships	• Meet with current and potential partners to discuss what we can do together • Define what success looks like for each partnership		• Continue to seek out new partnerships that support Blandford's organizational capacity to meet goals

Notes:
- See Strategic Plan Data Summary in Appendix B for client, volunteer, and community input on desired services.

BNC 2017 – 2019 Strategic Plan
Appendix A

Community Advisory Feedback on Strategic Plan

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES: *If staff were to live out Blandford's values when interacting with you, what would that look like?*

- If you represent something, you should use all the professionalism in your body, no matter how much money they may have or what they could contribute. People should feel like they want to come back. Word of mouth can either make and break you.
- If someone was taking me on a tour, and I heard someone say "I can't wait for these kids to get of here!" I'm not going to come back. Those kids should feel like it was the best day ever, and to go home and be excited to tell their parents, etc.
- I hope they would understand the magnitude of what it means for those kids (or people) to be there: caring, patience, understanding, and being professional.
- In the little things they do, they are walking the walk. I went to one of their events and they had plastic water bottles, which seemed against the environmental stewardship. Their staff didn't really seem to stand out, so to make sure that their staff stand out so that people know who they can ask. Make sure people know who to approach.
- I agree: when you go there you don't know who is working there.
- Very welcoming; reaching out into the community to embrace other races and socioeconomic levels not normally found in the "environmental movement."
- Openness to new ideas
- Doing what they already do – mucking around in the mud with my son looking at bugs at summer camp, taking classes of kids through the forest in the fall on field trips, and offering my GVSU students opportunities to practice working to protect the natural world in an urban setting.

GOVERNANCE: *What community events or groups would you like to see Blandford's board members at?*

- Anything with the Cesar Chavez Group: Hispanic Chamber, HCWM, LINC, Baxter, organizations that are doing something in the community
- Churches in different areas
- Be innovative: think outside of the box—partner with ArtPrize
- I'd hope they would have a relationship with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
- Work with the tribal communities
- They should have seats on the board reserved for people in the community (they may not have deep pockets but they have deep roots)
- Community garden activities, hunting/fishing events, Izzak Walton league meetings, concerts with environmental leanings, Audubon meetings, School events like CA Frost Nature nights.

Community Advisory Feedback on Strategic Plan

PLANNING & MONITORING: *What information should Blandford share with the community about its progress?*

- I like the updates on vandalism: speaking out about their needs, making the community aware of what is happening
- How many visitors per year? How many total volunteer hours, new volunteers?
- New partnerships
- Making sure they post on social media
- Year-end reports: how much they have made/raised
- Big changes that they have made to show the community how they helped it grow
- Maple Syrup: sapping conditions, how much, what it's like.
- The number of outreach programs, partnership connections.
- Share some exciting, new data regarding health benefits from being outside in nature, then share all the different ways BNC is providing the opportunities…. more than just walks in nature.
- Capture younger people as well with exciting opportunities geared towards them.
- I'd like to know more than fundraising numbers – if you're going to give data that's numbers, tell me how many school children came out, and how many hours volunteers spent pulling invasive species, and how many pounds of food they grew at the farm, and tell me what the critical ecological issues are that you are trying to manage this year. I think this is the sort of data that brings the work to life – and that helps frame the next set of questions about where Blandford is headed.

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT: *What do you think it is important for an organization to do when engaging community?*

- Bi-lingual programming, materials, etc.
- Do they have areas that handicapped people can access? Are they communicating that?
- Being intentional in communicating about how they are increasing accessibility
- The maintenance of their trails—the rainy season is bad. Making volunteer in maintenance accessible.
- Thinking of the different ways that partnerships can be leveraged, i.e. when you get out to schools, are they recruiting for student volunteers?
- Thoughtfully design/create events where people from different cultures and political views will mix and get to know each other.
- Try to provide something for everyone without compromising the integrity of the land/living things.

Community Advisory Feedback on Strategic Plan

STAFF & VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT: *What would you want staff to learn about to serve you better?*

- Diversity in their volunteer groups is important so that people can see
- Hispanic and African American culture.
- Once you know who to talk to, people are very welcoming and knowledgeable. Getting them in front of people more so they can share their passion and knowledge.
- About the organization itself: I want to be able to ask someone and them to get me an answer instead of just "I'll email you." Have a FAQ book for staff and volunteers.
- It really depends on the area of the staff and volunteers, they should be knowledgeable about their area.
- It's important to know about the cultures of populations they are seeking to connect with, for instance with the Native American community (or other groups). "I'd like to see them working with and learning about local tribes."
- Making sure the people they are inviting in to lead the learning are an appropriate fit; sure they are using that as an opportunity to build relationships as well
- How to communicate effectively with different groups and populations
- Awesome training
- Let me know the great impact I could make; what would it accomplish?
- The Blandford Staff is exceptional. I can't think of anything new that they need to work on learning – and I just asked my nine-year-old son and he agrees. What we want is for them to be as well supported as possible to do their work, with the time and resources for training and professional development that they identify is important. Frankly, the Blandford staff could lead the nation in delivering these sorts of programs… maybe they already do!

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE: *What would motivate you (or people you know) to volunteer?*

- If I get to learn basic skills and knowledge with a volunteer opportunity
- Should be a good source for invasive species (plant, insect, animal)
- I'm a people person. If I was going to volunteer, as long they had people, I'd be happy. I want to
- Time can make it hard.
- Make it easy to sign up. I shouldn't have to sign 10 documents to volunteer.
- Teach me: don't just expect me to know or require me to know something. Show me want you want me to learn.

Community Advisory Feedback on Strategic Plan

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE (cont'd): *What would motivate you (or people you know) to volunteer?*

- Offer different levels of volunteerism for different skill sets
- Going online and being able to call someone to explain what the different opportunities
- Making it easily accessible: background checks and forms make me not want to volunteer, but if you engage with me and walk me through it then I will
- Diversity in volunteer options and commitment should continue. That's important and would make it easier.
- "…the request to participate in this strategic planning exercise was the first time that I was asked to do something for Blandford that fits into my skill set – not pulling invasives or leading activities, which I can manage, but the thinking through things that fits with my professional life."
- The other thing that would motivate me to volunteer would be if it was something meaningful that I could do with my child. I know we would look forward to doing things there together, and can imagine that we would enjoy working together on something.

SERVICES & INTERACTIONS: *What types of organizations) do you think would be good partners for Blandford to consider?*

- I'd like them to see them develop their partnerships regarding wildlife.
- Baxter Community Center, Hispanic Center, or other neighborhood organizations
- Kent County Animal Shelter (Blandford would see dogs and cats as an invasive species); using that as a potential mutual opportunity to raise awareness and to teach people
- State of MI, Kent County, or Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Departments (Doing events in city parks "Blandford Nature Day")
- Tribal groups: how people use the resources, the culture, working with them as a teaching experience
- Community gardens
- Inner-city schools
- I think it depends a lot on what you are trying to accomplish through these partnerships – and that isn't entirely clear to me. If you want to get more people out for the first time, that's one thing (Meijer Gardens? Kroc Center?) but if you want to work to support long term relationships with the folks who already come out occasionally that's something else entirely. And what if what is needed is support in program development, or in research? I think a clear sense of the purpose of partnerships is important.

Reflections on the IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) Spectrum

Submitted by **Community Animator** *on January 26, 2015 - 1:51pm*

Community Animator's Note: This blog post was written by Max Hardy for Tamarack **www.maxhardy.com.au**

I remember well how thrilled I was to come across a thoughtful framework for community engagement, the **IAP2 Spectrum**, in the late 1990s. Developed by some highly skilled and generous practitioners in North America, it has since become the most recognizable brand and image related to the field of community engagement. The IAP2 Spectrum has become synonymous with the association itself and is now proudly referred to policy statements and guidelines for hundreds of organisations, especially in Australia and New Zealand. Sadly the **IAP2 Core Values** have not had similar attention or profile, but that is a blog for another time.

During my time with Twyfords we probably explained the IAP2 Spectrum (and ran exercises drawing upon it) to thousands of students, practitioners, elected representatives, and professionals in a multitude of sectors. Unfortunately, it has in many instances been misused, abused or at least misunderstood. Even where it is understood and applied, it has not always been helpful or offered the intended clarity. So, here, I want to talk about what the Spectrum is about, what it is meant to do, how it has been misinterpreted, and also what I consider to be some limitations of the framework (I need to stress that I am not pretending to offer the definitive view of these matters; our application and understanding of the Spectrum continues to evolve).

What is it?

It is a framework that explains the different levels of engagement at which organisations can engage their stakeholders/communities. The further to the right on the Spectrum, the greater the influence the community has to influence decision-making. At each level a different promise to the community applies – a promise that decision-makers can be held accountable to. Each level requires a different type of interaction.

- The Inform level simply provides information throughout a process about work being undertaken by an internal or expert team leading up to a decision being made. The promise is simply about keeping people informed – some would say it is about helping people to understand. No input or feedback is sought from the community of interest.

- The Consult level is about putting forward options or a proposal for which feedback is sought. The promise is to listen to the community of interest's feedback, to carefully consider, then make decisions and finally explain how this feedback has been taken into account.

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- The <u>Involve</u> level invites input and ideas from the community to help develop options/potential solutions. The community participates earlier in the process than for the consult level. The community is part of developing solutions, not merely commenting about plans or solutions being proposed by an organisation. Ultimately the organisation will still make decisions, but they promise that the decisions will be informed by ideas and input.

- The <u>Collaborate</u> level is a significant jump. It's about partnering and sharing power – to *the maximum extent possible* (a phrase that has been used, confused and misused). It takes more time and effort. A range of stakeholders/community members work together with the sponsoring organisation to define the scope of the decision to be made, to develop options, to assess those options against agreed criteria in an attempt to arrive at consensus. Although more time consuming and expensive it is the shortest route to an implementable solution for highly complex/controversial decisions.

- The <u>Empower</u> level is essentially delegated decision-making. It is where an organisation promises to do whatever the 'community of interest' decides.

What I like about the Spectrum

Although drawing upon much earlier work of Sherry Arnstein (**Arnstein's Ladder**) it is the most helpful framework around – still – for showing that engagement can happen at different levels, requiring different types of interaction. The 'Promise to the Public' layer is quite simply written and helps everyone to check with decision-makers and project leaders whether this is the promise they are really making, when throwing around words such as consult, involve, collaborate and empower. The descriptions of the levels help to make more visible the kind of process that is being pursued and promised.

I also like the layout. It is not meant to be a hierarchy, it is a continuum, and this is presented quite helpfully. The layout and neatness of it has helped it to become the major reference point for a decade.

Some common misunderstandings of the Spectrum

1. <u>You start at the left and go right.</u> Some have misunderstood the framework completely, thinking that you start off Informing, then you Consult, then you Involve etc. It's a framework and a not a process guide.
2. <u>At the Inform level a decision has already been made</u> (like the DAD approach; Decide Announce and Defend). It may seem like a subtle difference but this is not the case. At the Inform level the public is kept informed about progress being made by an internal working group, until a decision is made. No input or feedback is sough – people are just progressively informed about what is going on.
3. <u>Once a level is selected that is what you have to do throughout</u>. This is not necessarily the case. IAP2 does not actually stipulate this, but those trained in the IAP2 Certificate are told that it is very important to work out the highest level on the Spectrum you will go for any given process. All the levels to the left of that level also apply.
4. <u>The further to the right on the Spectrum the better it is</u>. This was never the intention and it is why the Spectrum runs left to right – so that it does not appear to be a hierarchy like Arnstein's Ladder. IAP2 has attempted to convey through the training, that it depends. It is about finding the most appropriate level. Trying to <u>Collaborate</u> on something fairly straightforward, where there is little passion or complexity, would be a waste of time. Doing a simple <u>Consult</u> level process for something highly complex will probably result in having to start all over again, after having done some damage.
5. <u>It is up to the organisation to decide what level, and be clear about it, then everything should run smoothly</u>. In my experience this is nonsense. The level often needs to be negotiated, and communities have shown that they can challenge the level of engagement, especially when particular stakeholder groups have been overlooked in the process.

Some things I have learned from practice

Along with a number of other practitioners, I have found that the Spectrum is a much more flexible framework perhaps than it was first envisaged. For any given process it is common to move to a different level of on the Spectrum on a number of occasions. For instance, if a <u>Consult</u> level process is not going well (ie, a community group is very unhappy with the options being presented, and instead want to be involved in developing options, it is possible that the process will need to go as high as <u>Collaborate </u>for a time until trust is rebuilt. If sufficient trust is built an organisation may be finally told to just get on with it, and move as far back as <u>Inform</u>. Yes – it does happen!

Flexibility also applies to working with different groups at different levels at the same time. Collaborating with more than 15 people is very challenging. Generally when working at Collaborate there will be other groups and individuals with whom an organisation will need to actively be informing, consulting and involving. Keeper the broader community engaged is critical. Developing trust between the broader community and those who are at the table collaborating is a real challenge, but one that must be attended to.

Another learning, and this emerged from a great sessions facilitated by **Professor Bojinka Bishop** in Salt Lake City back in 2002 (I think), is that <u>Collaborate</u> is often a stronger level of engagement than <u>Empower</u>. The reason for this is that at Collaborate, the sponsoring organisation(s) are there working through an issue, or decision, or plan, with a diverse range of stakeholders. They are all in it together, whereas as Empower, the organisation(s) delegate decisions to external stakeholders. Often this means that less complex issues are delegated, and that the organisation becomes more removed from the process. Paradoxically, collaboration can be more empowering than the empower level because of the investment in building longer term working relationships and the level of importance given to the process. There have been exception to this – but that is a blog for another time.

Some limitations of the IAP2 Spectrum

Again, these are my personal views, but they are based on plenty of experience. I believe we expect way too much of the Spectrum if we believe it will safeguard an engagement process, and provide clarity for all. It is useful – but on its own not sufficient.

There are some limitations to its usefulness (as with any framework) and assumptions made that may not be helpful. Here are some:

- The IAP2 Spectrum is written as if there is only one sponsoring organisation involved. Even if you look at the Collaborate level it is assumed that collaboration will influence the decision to the maximum extent possible. If multiple organisations co-sponsor the process than collaboration is not an option – it is fundamental. Without thorough collaboration a decision will not be made, and partnering will break down.
- Secondly, the IAP2 Spectrum is written in a way (and this is perpetuated by the Certificate Training) that the organisation can do its own research and risk analysis and determine, by itself, the most appropriate level on the Spectrum. In my experience, this is often negotiated, and the community wants to be part of that conversation – especially for projects that are controversial and complex.
- Thirdly, the Spectrum assumes that the organisation is the entity initiating the process. This is not always the case – engagement can be initiated by the community, or a particular community group, and the Spectrum, and supporting information, does not really make provision for this.
- Lastly, it assumes that the process is essentially about influencing a decision. Once a decision is made, then what? In my experience, the process itself is incredibly important as to what happens after decisions or plans have been determined. If ongoing relationships are important to implementation then that needs to be considered in determining the level of the Spectrum. Anything less than Involve is unlikely to help build the system's capacity to make those decisions sustainable.

In conclusion

Well there it is. Turned out to be much longer than I thought. If you got to the end, well done. So what are your thoughts, experiences, and observations? Oh, and if ever you say to me that your organisation uses the IAP2 Spectrum as its policy framework or methodology, chances are I will ask you to consider the above. For me, clearly, the IAP2 Spectrum in a policy or strategy document will not necessarily give me confidence that it is being used well or consistently. But it can useful, and those who generated it have given us something useful.

Max

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BNC 2017 – 2019 Strategic Plan
Appendix B

Appendix B of Blandford Nature Center's 2017 – 2019 is composed of two primary reports: The Strategic Plan Data Summary, which was completed by IPS in Fall 2016, and the 2015 BNC Board Assessment. Both documents were formally presented to the organization at the time of their respective completion. As such, IPS has provided electronic versions of each report for all BNC staff and board members to reference as tools throughout the implementation of the Strategic Plan.