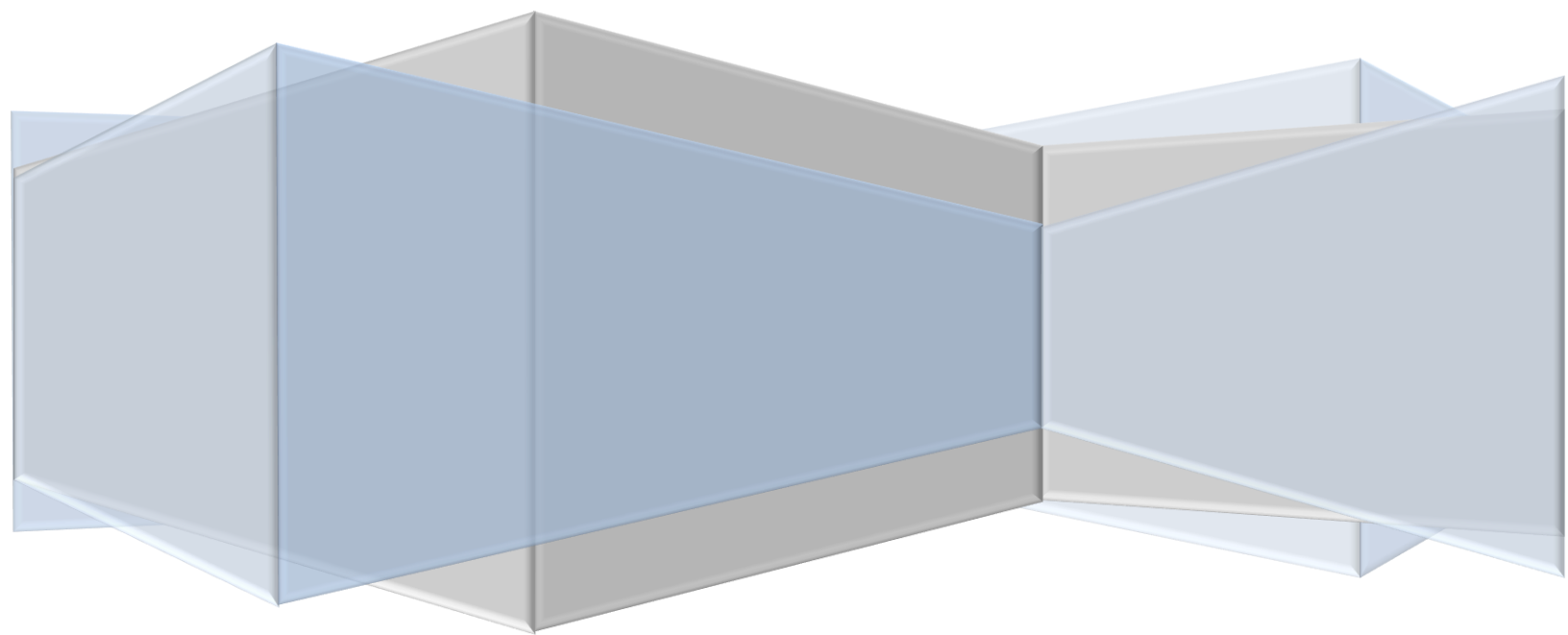


Nonprofit Strategic Technology Planning Guide

A step-by-step guide to help nonprofit
organizations get more from their technology



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Welcome!

If you are reading this guide, you are about to embark on a process that will help your organization harness the potential of technology to deliver your mission and best serve your community. Proactively planning for technology is about more than replacing old computers (although that might be part of your plan!). This process will help your organization fundamentally shift the way you approach technology investments toward greater mission achievement and community impact. It will identify opportunities for technology to help you control costs, reduce risk, raise funds, and empower staff.

Strategic technology planning – much like any strategic planning process – is a comprehensive look at the current state and the desired future state for your organization. If you just need some new computers, this may not be the right process. But if you are ready to treat technology as a mission-critical investment that can accelerate your organization's impact, you are in the right place! Your nonprofit has much to gain from appropriately integrating technology into your operations, communications, fundraising, and service delivery. This guide offers step-by-step support to help you lead your organization through technology planning, resulting in a roadmap to smart technology use.

An Overview of Nonprofits and Technology

Let's be honest: You are likely not choosing to go through a strategic technology planning process at your organization just because "it's the right thing to do." Chances are, if you are reading this guide and considering technology planning, you are in a serious stare-down with some substantial challenges that are making your current use (or misuse) of technology impossible to ignore. Whatever your motivation, going through this process will be well worth your time! Technology planning can help your organization mitigate a range of challenges and reap greater rewards from its technology use and investments.

Challenges Facing Nonprofits

As you well know, nonprofit organizations face a lot of the same challenges that many businesses face. Add in reliance on outside funding and your mandate to deliver on your mission, and you and your nonprofit peers have some unique challenges to navigate.

- **Funding Challenges** – These are a constant in the nonprofit sector, but have been particularly noteworthy the last few years given the economic downturn and Federal and State deficits. You constantly scan for new and diverse sources of funding – ranging from grants and donations to contracts and earned revenue – to ensure you can continue operations and deliver your mission.
- **Increased Demand for Services** – When times are tough, your organization probably faces increased demand for services because more people are out of work and/or in need of some type of assistance, or because government programs get cut, leaving a gap in services that nonprofit organizations often step up to fill.
- **Escalating expectations for accountability** – Nonprofits today face increased pressure from the community, donors, government, and funders to demonstrate accountability and transparency for how they steward funds and create measurable impact. You are being asked to be more transparent in how funds are used, and to accurately measure and report on key data about the impact of your programs and services.

Overview & Introduction to Technology Planning

- **Rising Competition** – As dollars become scarce, being able to differentiate and prove your unique value-add is critical to your organization’s ability to survey and thrive. You need to be able to attract clients and supporters to continue to be viable.

Given the sampling of key challenges above, you can see how technology can play an important part of your organization’s success strategy.

How Technology Can Help

Technology can help your organization better achieve its mission by enabling you to:

- Improve engagement with donors and raise more funds
- Streamline operations and processes and boost productivity
- Expand your reach and serve more people
- Better manage and use mission-critical data to drive decisions and programming
- Strengthen internal and external communications
- Improve the quality and impact of your services

Still, many nonprofits, perhaps including yours, struggle to use technology effectively. For many, it is seen as more of a hindrance than a help. That is not to say that there aren’t nonprofits using technology effectively – there are! But many organizations struggle to keep up with the exponential pace of technology change, and are not able to capitalize on its potential. Even those organizations that *are* able to keep IT humming along are often so focused on it as a basic operational or infrastructure tool that opportunities for technology to truly drive value and work in service to mission are missed. Strategic technology planning can help change that.

If you are like other nonprofits, you face technology challenges such as:

- Old and outdated hardware and software; often a mix of different makes, models and versions
- Lack of funding, particularly for large capital expenditures like new equipment
- No or too few IT staff to support your organization’s needs
- Lack of IT expertise, policies and processes
- Resistance from leadership or board to funding IT, which is perceived as an “operations” or “overhead” cost versus an investment in programs and services
- Lack of confidence in leading or managing the IT function or IT staff, leading to over-reliance on outside vendors, volunteers, or a sole IT staff person
- Lack of awareness around the Total Cost of Ownership and Total Value of Ownership of technology, which leads to under-budgeting or over-running budgets

Sound familiar? Read on.

Introduction to the Strategic Technology Planning Process

Why a Technology Plan?

With all of the technology needs and challenges of nonprofits, you may be asking yourself, “Can we afford to spend the time to do this?” The reality is that – without a plan – you are likely to end up with piecemeal or temporary solutions, or worse – the wrong solutions. This will end up costing you more time and money in the long run. Through simple yet thoughtful planning, your organization can position itself to focus precious funds to the areas of greatest risk, need or potential for impact.

Strategic technology planning will help your organization:

- Identify and prioritize the technology investments that will directly support the organization’s mission, goals and business requirements
- Gain a better understanding of the ongoing costs to manage and maintain technology, including replacement and upgrade costs, and to budget for the Total Cost of Ownership
- Have a clearer understanding of the expected outcomes of technology investments and therefore better justify your spending and communicate its impact
- Write more informed grant requests for technology
- Weave technology into regular strategic or annual planning cycles, including budgeting

What is involved?

Technology planning includes a comprehensive review of an organization’s underlying mission, key goals, and current opportunities and challenges, much like strategic planning. Together with a technology planning team, you will review your organization’s programs and business requirements to explore and understand how technology can help you deliver on your mission. Technology planning should include a thorough assessment of the organization’s current technology state, including an inventory of hardware and software assets, as well as the collection of stakeholder perceptions on how technology is or is not working well. You will create a plan for the integration and maintenance of technology going forward, which will include technology projects you will undertake in the plan.

The technology planning process itself is just as important (if not more so!) as the actual plan that results from it, so plan to focus on the discussion and the process as much as the actual writing of a technology plan. You will learn a lot about your organization in this process, not just about technology use.

Like all major strategic planning efforts, organizational development and change management issues will surface during technology planning, and they should be addressed early and often to ensure that staff and stakeholders are ready to embrace the change that will result from this process. Change is hard, and – for many – technology change is particularly threatening or scary. Whether it’s because people feel their job will be made obsolete by technology, or because they are simply comfortable with the current way of doing things, communicating and managing change will be critical to the success of the technology planning process.

Overview & Introduction to Technology Planning

As you go through this process, you will create two key deliverables:

- A **technology strategy**, which articulates, from a business perspective, why your organization needs technology and what it hopes to accomplish with it. It is the process of determining how your organization can best use technology to further its mission and support its goals. If done properly, your technology strategy can remain constant for several years, while your technology plan – the actual projects and steps you will take on in the near-term – will evolve.
- A **technology plan**, which spells out the specific tactics and activities you will implement to make the technology strategy a reality. Creating the technology plan involves assessing existing resources, defining needs, and exploring potential technology solutions.
 - The plan is completed *after the strategy* and gives a high-level view into the prioritized technology projects. It presents a detailed budget including direct and indirect costs.
 - It incorporates results and recommendations from a technology assessment, which inventories and reviews the organization’s existing technology assets and approach.
 - It becomes your organization’s roadmap for implementing your technology projects.

Templates are available in the beginning of the Appendix to help you create both deliverables above.

Who does the work?

Strategic technology planning is a significant undertaking, but nonprofit organizations *can* complete this process on their own. To be successful, a technology planning process needs a designated champion or Chief “Keep-Things-Moving” Officer. This champion does not need to be technical and may not be the IT staff person at the organization (if you have one), but he or she *will* be passionate about the importance of technology to the organization. The champion need not be a senior leader or the Executive Director, but should plan to involve senior leaders in the process. The champion will need to become familiar enough with this guide and the process that he or she can serve as a facilitator of the process, and – at times – act as a project manager to help the organization complete its technology plan... Are you still reading? If so, guess what?

You are quite likely the technology planning champion at your organization! The rest of this guide is written especially for you. You don’t have to do the entire plan yourself (in fact, that’s discouraged), but you do need to gather your team and steward the plan to completion. You can and should delegate tasks to your technology team members along the way, but – at the end of the day – you will be in charge of making sure it all gets done. No wonder you’re called a champion.

A note on getting outside help: Many organizations recruit consulting assistance to lead strategic planning efforts. Outside consulting can be very valuable to help with technology planning as well. If possible, seek help from an experienced strategic technology consultant to guide your organization through this process. That consultant should not just be a tech guru, but also a business and process expert who can learn the operations of your organization and help you architect *solutions*. He or she should be equal parts facilitator, management consultant, trusted guide, and technology expert. His role is not to write the plan, but to help you discover the best options and write your own plan.

The Strategic Technology Planning Guide

Now that you have some high-level background on this process and your likely role as the technology planning champion, it's time to dive into the detail about technology planning. This guide will walk you through the process every step of the way. If you are working with a third-party consultant who is facilitating this process for you (see sidebar), make sure you are clear on respective roles *before* you begin. He or she is there to facilitate the process and help your organization understand its options, *not* to write the plan for you, push a certain product or solution, sell his or her services, or start implementing new tech solutions right out of the gate. Be clear on this up front and everyone will get more long-term value out of this process. If you want help defining the roles and responsibilities when using a third-party consultant, check out the *Sample Memorandum of Understanding* in the Appendix of this guide.

How to Use This Guide

There is one section of this playbook for each of the five phases of the planning process shown in the image below, and detailed information for each step within the five phases. For each step, you'll find:

- ▶ **Who's Involved:** The parties that should participate in this step or meeting.
- ▶ **Rationale & Description:** Why this step is important and what it entails.
- ▶ **Outcome & Deliverables:** What you should achieve or accomplish as a result of this step, and what deliverables must be collected or produced before the *next* step.
- ▶ **Tools to Help with This Step:** A list of the tools, templates or worksheets in the Appendix of this guide that you can use to help you complete this step.
- ▶ **Key Messages to Discuss:** For each step or meeting, we provide key messages that you can discuss with your technology planning team.
- ▶ **Homework:** Homework that you or someone on the tech team must do to complete the deliverables before the next meeting, or to otherwise keep the tech planning process on track.
- ▶ **Resources to learn more:** Wherever possible, this guide includes resources you can turn to for additional guidance or learning on each phase or step of the tech planning process.

The Phases of Strategic Technology Planning:



Each of these phases is described in further detail on the following pages.

Phase 1: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Phase 1: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Step 1.1: Leadership meeting – Get buy-in & build the team

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Technology planning champion (that’s you!)
- ▶ Organizational Leads: Executive Director (CEO) and another senior leader (Board Member, Chief Operating Officer, Development Director, Chief Financial Officer, and/or IT Director)
- ▶ Facilitator/consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

This meeting may feel like a formality, but it is of the utmost importance to make sure you (as the tech planning champion at your organization) have the explicit support and buy-in of your organization’s leadership. Your Executive Director and board of directors must be willing to support the process, to allocate some of your time and that of others to participate in planning, and to help budget for and/or secure funding to implement technology projects once the planning process is complete.

During this meeting, help your leadership understand the importance of technology planning, what outcomes can be expected, and the time commitment involved. Review the process using the *What to Expect: Process Overview & Checklist* (see Appendix) to help them understand what needs to be done over the next few months if you move forward.

In addition, emphasize the importance of a team approach and talk with leadership about who can and should be on the technology planning team, and how you’ll invite and recruit them to participate.

Tip! If you are working with an outside consultant to help you with this process, he or she may help you deliver the key messages in this meeting. Sometimes, it is helpful to have the expertise and credibility of an “outsider” to get the attention of senior leadership.

Outcome & Deliverables:

- ▶ Get explicit approval of the organization’s leadership, which determines if tech planning is a ‘Go’ or ‘No-Go’
- ▶ Determine who you will recruit for your tech planning team and how you will recruit them
- ▶ Set a date for first meeting of the tech planning team

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Leadership Meeting Agenda & Testimonials
- ▶ What to Expect: Process Overview & Checklist
- ▶ Tech Strategy and Tech Planning templates
- ▶ Questions to Ask Before Tech Planning
- ▶ Guide to Building a Tech Planning Team
- ▶ Resources to Help You Get Started

Phase 1: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Key Messages to Discuss:

Using the *Leadership Meeting Agenda & Testimonials* document (see Appendix), discuss the following key messages with your leadership. Review the handout, *Questions to Ask Before Tech Planning* (Appendix), together during the meeting. It touches on many of the key readiness factors for an organization considering technology planning, and may reveal some key factors that will influence whether now is a good time to pursue the technology planning process.

On the tech planning process and getting organizational buy-in:

- ▶ This process is about looking at the organization's mission, key goals and main programs to find strategic opportunities for technology to support them.
- ▶ If the organization chooses to work with a consultant to help facilitate and complete this process, note that your organization will still need to do a lot of heavy lifting.
- ▶ Leadership and board buy-in is critical to successful technology planning.
- ▶ It may take between 3-4 months total to complete this process. It could move faster or slower depending on how much time and energy the organization can commit and other factors.
- ▶ This process will result in a technology plan which will include projects that need funding. Leadership should discuss this with the board to ensure they are willing to help budget for technology and at least partially fund (or seek funding for) the technology projects identified.
- ▶ Review and discuss the handout, *Questions to Ask Before Tech Planning*, if you haven't already.
- ▶ Review the handout, *What to Expect: Process Overview & Checklist* so all are clear on the process and what will be involved.

If there is general agreement on the topics above, no "show-stopper" issues come up on the *Questions to Ask Before Tech Planning* document, and leadership is willing to make the commitment to move forward, now is the time to start planning for your team, which you will need to form before the next meeting. Use the handout, *Guide to Building a Tech Planning Team*, to highlight the importance of a team approach to planning and to help you think through appropriate members for your team.

On building your team:

- ▶ This process must be a team approach. It will be more successful if leadership stays involved throughout. It is not appropriate to delegate strategic planning to any one person in the organization, including the IT person.
- ▶ It is important to have a team with deep understanding of the organization (e.g. elders), organizational power (e.g. leadership), technical thought leaders (e.g. the IT go-to person), and other stakeholders that interact with the organization's technology on a regular basis and that will therefore be impacted by any changes (e.g. front-end tech users like the database administrator, case workers or field staff, etc).
- ▶ The team will be critical to completing the tech planning process over the next few months.
- ▶ It's not feasible to have every stakeholder on the team because it would be too big to be productive, but you should get a cross-section that is representative of key programs and services. (See the *Guide to Building a Tech Planning Team* worksheet in the Appendix for more advice).
- ▶ For those who *cannot* be on the team due to team size or other limitations, plan to get their input in Phase 2 (Reflect on the Organization) and find ways to keep them updated during the tech planning process.

Phase 1: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

- ▶ The tech planning team will not necessarily be tasked with implementing the IT projects, so people on the team need not be technical as a prerequisite. Implementation will be accomplished through a combination of internal IT staff and outside vendors or consultants.
- ▶ The tech team's role is to create a vision for how technology can serve the mission, explore the current situation at the organization, and research and evaluate potential solutions.

Homework:

- The Executive Director should update the board on tech planning and get their buy-in
- If you haven't already, review this entire guide and the technology strategy and plan templates to get familiar with this process
- Review some of the articles on the *Resources to Help You Get Started* handout to get more background on what this process is about and why you are doing it
- Review the *Guide to Building a Tech Planning Team* and determine who to invite to the tech planning team
- Recruit your technology planning team
- Schedule the first tech planning team meeting
- Send *What to Expect: Process Overview & Checklist* and *Resources to Help You Get Started* handouts to your tech planning team; ask them to review them in advance of your first meeting

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ See the *Resources to Help You Get Started* handout in the Appendix

Step 1.2: Tech Team Kick-off Meeting

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

This meeting will be an opportunity for your newly recruited tech planning team to review the planning process and time commitment, clarify roles and responsibilities, ask questions, and set a recurring meeting schedule for future meetings. It is also an important opportunity to agree to some group guidelines that will help your team work together effectively to complete the tech planning process.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Team has established clear roles & responsibilities; understands what's expected of them
- ▶ A shared set of group guidelines exists, which can be referenced at future meetings if needed (it may just come in handy!)
- ▶ A schedule of recurring meetings is set for the rest of the process

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Meeting Tracker Template (for you to use at every meeting to keep track of notes and actions, and easily share with others)
- ▶ What to Expect: Process Overview & Checklist (send in advance)
- ▶ Resources to Help You Get Started (send in advance)

Phase 1: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Tip! Ask your leadership to talk with each tech team member before this meeting (or empower you to) about the time commitment and their role in tech planning. You want to make sure folks are ready and able to adjust competing priorities as needed to make time for planning. It may not be appropriate for you as a colleague or peer to ask people to re-prioritize their work, so get support from your Executive Director so it's been clearly communicated before you arrive at this meeting.

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Review much of same content from the initial leadership meeting to ensure the entire planning team understands the value of, process for, and time involved in tech planning.
- ▶ Discuss the importance of a team approach. Have each participant discuss what perspective she brings to the team (ex: represent a particular department/program, IT expertise, client-knowledge, organizational history, etc.). Even if you all know each other, this icebreaker will help get everyone thinking about what they can contribute to this important planning effort.
- ▶ Work with the group to formulate some group guidelines that the whole team can use to help keep the process on track and ensure meetings are productive. You can use the suggestions in the sidebar as examples, but the team should brainstorm its own guidelines to ensure they fit with the culture of your organization. You may already have similar guidelines that you use at other organization meetings, so feel free to borrow and adapt. This may seem “fluffy” right now, but the guidelines will likely come in very handy down the road when you are deep into the weeds of the process and folks are struggling to make decisions and maintain momentum.
- ▶ Discuss your role as the champion, project manager, and key point of contact for tech planning (unless you are designating this role to someone else). You will schedule meetings and share materials, help keep the process on track, and ensure action items get completed. Make sure the team knows this does not mean you will do all the work or write the plan by yourself.
- ▶ Discuss *their* roles. Do you want to adopt consistent roles at each meeting, or rotate and share roles? Helpful roles may include timekeeper, scribe, and facilitator. As the champion, you may play some of these roles, but sharing some of this responsibility with the team will make it easier for you to run smooth meetings, or for meetings to happen when you are out.
- ▶ Develop a plan with your team to update and inform the rest of the staff about tech planning (assuming there is some staff not in the room). You might review the process at an upcoming staff meeting, for example. Because of the change technology planning can yield within your organization, it's best to ensure staff is clear on the process and why you are pursuing it – it will help you establish a foundation for change management going forward. It will also be important to let other staff know they will have

Suggested Group Guidelines

- *Avoid jargon*
- *Be open to new ideas*
- *Attend every meeting*
- *Be present*
- *Keep our mission at the forefront*
- *Avoid “shiny-object syndrome”*
- *Watch out for “analysis paralysis” between various IT solutions*
- *Assign a scribe for every meeting*
- *Keep notes in a location accessible to all team members*
- *Stay on task*
- *Be accountable for your action items*

Phase 1: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

opportunities to give input into the technology plan.

- ▶ Set a recurring meeting time to help ensure continued momentum. Meeting for about 2 hours every two weeks should be sufficient, but you can adjust as needed to suit the organization and the extent of your technology needs.

Homework:

- Add recurring meeting times to calendars
- Update the rest of the staff on the process of strategic tech planning at a staff meeting
- Create a shared place (ideally electronic) to store all tech planning files. It should be accessible to all staff so folks can seek out information along the way if interested.

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ *Your Tech Team*, by Marc Osten:
www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/archives/page9840.cfm
- ▶ *Preparing Your Staff Members for a Technology Change*, by Dahna Goldstein:
www.nten.org/blog/2008/08/20/preparing-your-staff-members-for-a-technology-change

Phase 2: Reflect on the Organization and Assess Current IT State

Phase 2: Reflect on the Organization and Assess Current IT State

Step 2.1: Team Meeting – Get grounded in mission, goals, opportunities and challenges

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

Before getting bogged down in the specifics of technology, it is important for your organization to get grounded in its mission, key goals for the next two to three years, and current opportunities and challenges (not specific to technology). If you dive right into the technology discussion, it will often turn into a complaint-session focused on the various technology tools that are *not* working effectively, and will be driven by limitations instead of inspired by what's *possible*. Rather than a discussion focused on identifying and fixing existing problems, start the team with a discussion of the organization's mission, goals, opportunities and challenges. This will help elevate *later* technology discussions so they focus on how technology can add strategic value to the organization, not just on fixing what is in place now.

Encourage discussion and try to get input from all team members, not just those that are more comfortable talking big-picture.

Refer to the [IT Stages of Growth Model](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stages_of_growth_model) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stages_of_growth_model) in this meeting if helpful (only *after* you've discussed mission, goals, opportunities and challenges, however). You can use this model to start a discussion about where your organization is on the model *now*, and where you would like to be in the future. The model is not meant to be prescriptive or exact, but it can help you understand the gap between your organization's current technology state and where you would like to be; that's a good motivator to have in mind during planning.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Drafted copy of mission, goals, opportunities and challenges, which will later go into your Technology Strategy

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ *Mission, Goals, Opportunities and Challenges* worksheet (send in advance)
- ▶ *IT Stages of Growth Model* article (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stages_of_growth_model)
- ▶ Technology Strategy Template

Tip! Have each team member spend 5-10 minutes (either before arriving or in the first part of this meeting) jotting down his or her thoughts on the *Mission, Goals, Opportunities and Challenges* worksheet. This individual reflection time is valuable – it will help you avoid “group-think” during the meeting, will lead to richer discussion, and will help ensure you hear from different perspectives within the organization, not just those who are typically involved with strategy discussions.

Phase 2: Reflect on the Organization and Assess Current IT State

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Ask each team member to look at the *Mission, Goals, Opportunities and Challenges* worksheet and write down their take on the organization's mission and key goals over the next two to three years (if they didn't already do this before the meeting). They should think about goals in the broad, organizational sense (the kind of goals often included in your annual plan or strategic plan, if you have one); it's not yet time to be focused on technology-specific goals.
- ▶ Each team member can also use the worksheet to capture their thoughts on opportunities and challenges facing the organization. Mission and goals are usually internal to the organization, whereas opportunities and challenges are often influenced by external factors affecting the organization and its work. Encourage people to think about these things even if it is not normally part of their work – there are no wrong answers and getting everyone focused this way will help them bring their best thinking to the technology planning process.
- ▶ Once everyone has jotted down their thoughts on the worksheet, discuss them as a group and try to capture the most important and common themes. Your goal is to get to a shared sense of the organization's mission, goals, opportunities and challenges to include in your final *Technology Strategy*, so use this meeting to hear different viewpoints and hone in on a set of shared responses. This will be easiest for mission (which most team members probably have a common and shared understanding of), but may start to vary more when it comes to the opportunities and challenges facing the organization. Where there are differing views, facilitate discussion until there is mutual agreement on the mission, goals, opportunities, and challenges.
- ▶ If there are key perspectives (client, board, volunteer) that are *not* present on your tech planning team, but are critical to your organization, you may want to talk those stakeholders about the opportunities and challenges facing your organization before finalizing.
- ▶ Once it seems a shared version of mission, goals, opportunities and challenges is well underway (you'll want to draft this into your *Technology Strategy template* before the next meeting), review the *IT Stages of Growth Model*. Talk through the model and the stages at a high-level.
- ▶ Ask your team to finish reading the *IT Stages of Growth Model* (as homework, not at the meeting) and determine where they think your organization is on the model today, and where they would like the organization to be in the future. Have each team member do this individually so they can compare ideas at the next meeting. Also ask them to consider what your organization might need to do to move from its current stage to its desired stage on the model.
- ▶ Lastly, reflect on your own organization's technology philosophy. A technology philosophy statement can be a great touchstone to help guide your technology decisions in the future and as a reminder of your ideal state and attitude when it comes to using technology to serve mission. If time allows, brainstorm ideas for your tech philosophy. Your homework will be to draft the technology philosophy in the *Technology Strategy template*.

Tip! To help the team think about the technology philosophy (or “vision”), ask yourselves the following questions: “If money and training were not obstacles, what would technology use look like at our organization? How would staff use it? How would it help us serve our mission and our community?”

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Homework:

- Talk to other key stakeholders (if needed) about opportunities and challenges before finalizing your mission, goals, opportunities and challenges in the Technology Strategy template
- Read the *IT Stages of Growth Model* (see link below) and determine where you think your organization fits on the model, and where you'd like to be
- Draft your technology philosophy in the *Technology Strategy template*

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ *Forget the Tech, Let's Talk Mission*, by Steve Heye and John Merritt:
www.nten.org/blog/2010/05/27/forget-tech-lets-talk-mission
- ▶ *IT Stages of Growth Model* article: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stages_of_growth_model

Step 2.2: Meeting – Identify Key Business Requirements

Rationale & Description:

Now that your tech team is grounded in your mission, goals, opportunities and challenges, it's time to take a closer look at your organization's key "business requirements." Business requirements are the elements or functions that must be present in order for your organization to achieve its mission and goals, deliver its programs and services, and run its operations (examples include: data reports, ticket sales, regulatory compliance, financial management, and more). Often, the requirements and key organizational processes are places where technology is already playing a role or where it *could* play an important role for the organization. In this meeting, your goal will be to identify all of the business requirements and processes supporting the organization's mission, and to understand how technology is already being used (if at all) to support those requirements.

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Technology Strategy document with draft business requirements added

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Technology Strategy template

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Start by defining what is meant by "Business Requirements" with the tech planning team – *the functions or elements that must be present in order for the organization to meet its mission, achieve its goals, and run its operations, programs and services.* In other words, *the functions required in order for the business to operate.*
 - Examples: Reporting to funders, billing insurance companies, managing finances, accepting donations, selling tickets, serving meals, complying with regulations, etc.

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- ▶ The goal of this meeting is to brainstorm and identify all of the business requirements for the organization. Assign a note-taker to capture all ideas from the brainstorm, as they will need to be drafted into your *Technology Strategy* document.

Tip! It can be helpful to think through each of your organization's departments, programs and services, and then think of the business requirements related to each (some may cut across programs and services, but this will help organize your thinking).

- ▶ Discuss how technology is already being used to support each business requirement (ex: *we have a donor database to track our donations received*), as well as opportunities to introduce new or improved technology solutions to make meeting that requirement even more effective (ex: *ability to accept credit card donations on our web site*).
- ▶ While not every business requirement can or needs to be supported by technology, there are likely places where technology *could* improve your organization's capacity to deliver on a requirement. This is still not the time to think through technology projects in detail, rather to brainstorm at a conceptual level how IT could better support certain business requirements.

Homework:

- Use the notes from the meeting to draft the Business Requirements section of the *Technology Strategy* document

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No additional resources for this section

Step 2.3a: Meeting – Kick-off Stakeholder Input & Analysis

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

Up until this point, much of the input into the *Technology Strategy* and *Technology Plan* has been from the tech team itself, which – while chosen to represent the organization's stakeholders – is not the same as getting input from each key stakeholder group. Gathering input from these key stakeholders and analyzing their needs is a critical part of a comprehensive strategic technology planning process. Since tech planning will result in technology change, the stakeholders who will be affected by that change should have a voice. This will not only shape what technology projects are taken on, but – just as importantly – will raise stakeholder awareness that changes are coming (which will help you when it's time to get everyone to switch to a new database, content management system, etc.). The more stakeholders know about the process and the changes that may result, the more likely they are to be supportive of (or at least prepared for) those changes when it comes time for project implementation. Gathering stakeholder input is a key to the tech planning team's success for a number of reasons.

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In this meeting, work with your team to identify your key stakeholder groups, such as: staff, clients, donors, board members, volunteers or others. Then you will need to determine which groups should have input into the plan, and how you will collect their input through activities such as surveys, calls, meetings, and/or focus groups. Once you have the stakeholder input, your team should review and analyze it, looking for trends and themes that suggest certain technology needs or opportunities in the organization. You will discuss the results as a team at the next meeting.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ List of the key stakeholder groups for the organization
- ▶ Plan to collect input from the key stakeholder groups, as appropriate
- ▶ Initial analysis of potential technology needs or opportunities from the perspective of stakeholder groups

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Sample Stakeholder Perceptions Surveys

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Tech planning will likely result in substantial change for the organization, so it should be an inclusive process that takes into account the needs of various staff, programs, departments, or other stakeholders like clients or donors. More involvement and input early on in the process will yield a more comprehensive plan and better engagement later.
- ▶ Stakeholders are individuals or groups who can affect or be affected by the actions of the organization – e.g. finance, HR, marketing, clients, volunteers, donors, board members, etc.
- ▶ Brainstorm the list of key stakeholders for the organization. For each stakeholder group, discuss:
 - What are their information needs (i.e. what data or reports do they need access to) and what data management systems are in place to support their needs?
 - What resources do they need access to, and what tools do they use or *could* they use in interacting with the organization?
 - Are there opportunities to use technology differently with this stakeholder group?
 - How is the organization reaching out to these stakeholders and tracking its interaction with them? Are those tracking systems connected or totally separate?
- ▶ Discuss how you will collect input *directly* from your stakeholders before the next meeting:
 - You *must* collect input from each and every staff member. It is suggested to use a survey or some other intentional method of collecting staff feedback to ensure that each staff member feels they have had an opportunity to share their input into planning, even if they don't *think* they want to provide input.
 - Determine which other stakeholder groups you will want to provide further input. This could include key board members, key volunteers (if very involved in the work of the organization), and possibly some donors or clients.
 - Review the ways in which you can get stakeholder input (paper surveys, online surveys, 1:1 interviews/calls, focus groups etc.)
 - Review the *Sample Stakeholder Perceptions Surveys* for sample questions you can use with various stakeholders. Add to or customize the questions to ensure you will get input on the issues in which you are most interested.

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- You may also want to gather forms or reports that particular stakeholders produce or use on a regular basis, as well as information on processes they carry out on a regular basis (ex: medical or insurance billing, membership renewal, new client intake, etc.). These will help you understand what data various stakeholders or departments are collecting and reporting on, and where there may be opportunities to better manage data collection and reporting.
 - Examples: Client intake forms, monthly reporting templates, membership/donation forms, funder reports, board reports

Homework:

- Gather input from each identified stakeholder or stakeholder group
- Review the results for trends that may need to be addressed in your tech plan
- Prepare an aggregated stakeholder perceptions report for the next meeting that includes common technology needs, process or information bottlenecks, opportunities, etc.

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ *Strategic Technology Planning for Nonprofits Part 2*, by Liteskip Consulting Group:
www.liteskip.com/http://www.liteskip.com/strategic-technology-planning-for-non-profit-part-2

Step 2.3b: Meeting – Discuss Results of Stakeholder Analysis & Gather Potential Projects

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

This meeting is a “forcing function” to ensure that stakeholder input has been collected and stakeholder analysis is completed. The main goal is to discuss the themes and trends you and your team have seen emerge through stakeholder input and analysis, and to ensure those are documented as possible projects to address in the technology plan. It is possible that stakeholder input will simply validate all of the previously identified technology challenges and opportunities you and the tech team have discussed, but you may discover some surprises or new information worth addressing in your plan.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Understanding of the trends identified through stakeholder analysis
- ▶ Draft list of potential technology projects to include in the technology plan

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ None – just bring the results of your stakeholder surveys and analysis with you to the meeting

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Discuss if there were any surprises, new challenges or new opportunities identified through the stakeholder input. Were there trends or themes that emerged? Bottlenecks or broken processes identified? If so, make sure they are documented for possible inclusion in the technology plan.
- ▶ In addition to stakeholder analysis, look back at all of your team’s discussions of opportunities and challenges facing the organization, and at your business requirements to determine the full list of

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potential ways technology can be incorporated to support your mission. You will be pulling all this information together to create a wish list of potential projects to include in your technology plan. Don't worry about narrowing this list for now; that will come later.

- ▶ As a final piece of analysis, discuss nonprofits with similar missions or other local nonprofits. Are they doing something with technology that would be interesting and relevant to consider at your organization? If so, add it to the potential project list!

Homework:

- Complete your list of potential technology projects, grouping similar projects together and removing duplicates (don't prioritize or pull projects off the list yet – that's coming next!)

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No additional resources for this step

Step 2.4: Assess current technology (site assessment)

Who is Involved?

- ▶ In-house IT staff (if none, work with CFO or whoever manages assets at the organization)
- ▶ It is recommended to work with an outside IT consultant on this step to get an independent 3rd party assessment of your existing use of technology

Rationale & Description:

You have worked with your tech team to reflect on the organization's current state, including: Defining key business requirements and how technology is being used to support them, analyzing the needs of various stakeholders, and more. To add to this, it is important to conduct a site assessment of the current technology at your organization. This may include an inventory of current technology assets (computers, printers, servers, internet connections, etc.) as well as an assessment of current IT policies or practices (back up, appropriate use policies, remote access, security, etc.). This site assessment need not involve the whole tech team; it can be primarily driven by your technology staff person (if one exists). If you don't have an IT staff person, whoever manages your assets and purchases is probably best positioned to help with this assessment (ex: CFO, COO, or Office Manager). In either case, it is strongly advised to pair your point person with a third-party technology consultant for this part of the process; the outside consultant may be more experienced in conducting such assessments or "IT audits," and can help you get "fresh eyes" on your existing technology infrastructure and processes.

This site assessment should result in high level overview the organization's technology infrastructure and will include recommended steps to make it more stable and secure. Many of the recommendations may become projects in your Technology Plan.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Technology site assessment with recommendations for infrastructure improvements

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Ask your outside/IT consultant for tools to help you with this step (if not using an outside consultant to help conduct the site assessment, refer to the resources below)

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Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ No key messages; this is a straightforward site assessment not a facilitated meeting.

Homework:

- Review the site assessment once it is completed by your IT staff or consultant; ask questions
- Incorporate recommendations onto your running project list for later prioritization

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ *Assess Your Tech: Why Nonprofits Need Technology Assessments*, by Chris Peters (includes templates and online resources to help you inventory and assess your IT on your own):
www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page12082.cfm
- ▶ *Stable & Secure Benchmarks for Nonprofit Technology*, by NPower:
<http://www.npowerpa.org/services/ss-12-benchmarks>

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Step 3.1: Meeting – Develop your Technology Strategy

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

This meeting will be to review all the work that has been done thus far on the organization's *Technology Strategy*, and to help the tech team to pull it together. It will be a working meeting during which the organization continues writing the *Technology Strategy*.

Much of the information that feeds into the *Technology Strategy* has already been discussed during "Phase 2: Reflect on the Organization" and may already be drafted into your *Technology Strategy template* (namely: the mission, goals, technology philosophy and business requirements). At this meeting, discuss questions or concerns from the team about the strategy, and start working on the final version of the *Technology Strategy* document. This document connects your mission, goals and business requirements with the technology choices you will make and include as projects in your *Technology Plan*. It identifies what areas of the organization and/or which stakeholders are in need of new technology tools and solutions, and outlines those opportunities *at a high level*. The specific technology projects will be prioritized and included in the next document, the *Technology Plan*.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Draft of the Technology Strategy

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Tech Strategy Template (already begun)
- ▶ Notes from meetings during "Reflect on the Organization" phase, including stakeholder analysis

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Review the different outputs of the strategic technology planning process and discuss the difference between them so the team is clear on what documents they will create:
 - The *Technology Strategy* (what you will be working on in this meeting) articulates, from a business perspective, why the organization needs technology and what it hopes to accomplish with it. It is "the process of determining how an organization can best use technology to further its mission." It will state the organization's mission, goals, and business requirements, and start to articulate opportunities for technology to support the organization in achieving these.
 - The *Technology Plan* (which you will work on in a future meeting) spells out the specific projects, tactics and activities to make the *Technology Strategy* a reality. The technology plan will draw from the site assessment as well, and will present potential technology solutions in priority order. It may include up-front, capital projects, as well as projects to sustain IT use. It will include a 3-year budget to implement selected projects.

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- ▶ Open the draft *Technology Strategy* document you've begun, and start talking through it and adding to it as a group. If you have a projector in the room, it is helpful to project the document so the whole team can refer to it as it is being drafted and fleshed out in the meeting.
- ▶ Remember, this is not the meeting to get into the details of any solution, but to make sure the organization has clearly captured what "makes it tick" as a business and where there are opportunities for technology to help support those core goals and requirements at a strategic level. The technology opportunities identified in the strategy can be discussed in more detail in the Prioritization meeting and the Technology Plan meetings.

Homework for the Nonprofit:

- Finish writing the Technology Strategy incorporating feedback from this meeting

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No additional resources for this step

Step 3.2: Meeting – Prioritize Potential Technology Projects

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

By this step, you have not only done a lot of reflecting on your organization's current state, challenges, opportunities, and stakeholders, but you have also written your *Technology Strategy*, articulating opportunities where technology can help you deliver on mission and achieve goals. Soon, you will be ready to include the specific projects, tactics, and activities you will adopt to make the Technology Strategy a reality. Before that, it is important to have a sense of the relative priority of such projects.

As a nonprofit, you will inevitably have to make hard choices about which projects you can take on and which will have to be tabled until additional resources (money, time, expertise) can be secured. You will also need to stage or sequence projects in a way that allows projects to build on one another if needed, or to account for limited bandwidth to take on several large technology projects simultaneously.

For all of these reasons, this meeting will be devoted to reviewing all of the inputs and potential projects and helping your tech team prioritize them in terms of need, potential impact, cost, timing, tech expertise needed, and more. Potential tech projects have emerged from the following sources at this point: Stakeholder analysis, Site Assessment, and the Technology Strategy document. You need to determine which you can do and when.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Prioritized list of projects

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Project Prioritization Framework

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Key Messages to Discuss at this Meeting:

- ▶ Discuss with your team the importance of project prioritization: It will help ensure you get good return on your technology investments and that you won't be overwhelmed by taking on too many projects at once. It is likely also necessary to account for limited funds available and the need to sequence certain technology projects and/or tackle them in phases.
- ▶ Share the *Project Prioritization Framework* with your team and talk through the different criteria that you will use to prioritize the list of potential technology projects.
- ▶ First, ask a few questions to help begin your prioritization:
 - Are there any potential single points of failure within the organization's current IT that need to be addressed immediately to mitigate risk? Examples include: A server that's about to die, a client database that lives on a single laptop that is not backed up, an expensive copier lease that is running the organization dry of key funds, etc. These risks were likely detailed out as recommended fixes in your Technology Site Assessment and must be prioritized in your Technology Plan. If you identify any potential single points of failure that are putting the entire tech planning effort at risk, give them top priority.
 - Are there any other infrastructure needs that need to be shored up first before other new projects can be taken on? For example, if all computers are seven years old and need to be replaced, that will be a high priority project to tackle *first* so the basic infrastructure is in place on which to build the rest of your projects. Another example would be a networking project that's critical to getting the organization's network working so subsequent technology projects can leverage that network.
 - Are there any projects that have dependencies on other projects? For example, you want to build a form to register clients on your web site, but first need to set up the database on the backend that will "accept" the entries from your site. Or, you want to install a new donor database, but first must upgrade your hardware to meet the minimum system requirements to run it. If there are projects like these that have inter-dependencies and require particular sequencing, make a note of them. You may also need to make a note of projects that you cannot begin without receiving an infusion of significant outside funds/grants.
 - Are there any projects that – if you don't start right away – will cause a "staff mutiny" because your staff is so fed up and disgruntled? If so, worth considering slotting into an early tech planning spot to reduce frustration and churn!
 - Are there any easy and/or immediate projects that would be quick to implement, cheap, and would yield immediate benefit to the organization? These "low-hanging fruit" projects are easy to pick off and start enjoying the benefits right away. If there are any projects like this, it can be wise to prioritize a couple of them to tackle early so you can demonstrate the benefits of technology planning to key stakeholders early in the process.
 - Are there any projects that will lead to such immediate, positive outcomes for your programs or your clients (or that otherwise have such a clear and fast return on investment) that they should be moved to the top of the list?
- ▶ With these questions out of the way, use the *Project Prioritization Framework* to prioritize the remaining projects on the following criteria:
 - Implementation Complexity: degree of complexity to implement the project, degree of specialized IT skills or consulting required, costs and time to implement the project, etc.

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- Potential benefits or return on investment to the organization: Program impact of the project, dollars saved or earned through project, increase in services offered or clients served, ability to pursue new strategic opportunity, etc.
- ▶ Proceed using the *Project Prioritization Framework* to prioritize your list of projects. You may not be able to complete this by the end of the meeting, given that – for some projects – there may be unknowns in terms of cost or timing. If you can estimate or address those unknowns in the meeting (especially if you have an IT consultant in the room), great. If not, divvy up homework amongst the team to do further research. Balance your research effort here – you want to prioritize projects based on reasonably accurate time and cost estimates, but it need not be exact – just enough to enable you to make a fairly informed decision about priority. As with all technology projects, there may be adjustments made once further research has been done and you have a greater understanding as to the complexity or cost to complete a project.
- ▶ Take the projects as laid out in the *Project Prioritization Framework* and determine if they should be addressed in Year 1, Year 2, or Year 3 of the technology implementation plan based on their relative priority, dependencies, and other time and cost estimates. Again, this does not have to be perfect, but will help your organization get the big pieces in order in terms of how and when to tackle the technology projects at your organization.

Homework:

- Additional research on costs/time to complete certain projects (as needed)
- Finish prioritizing projects in the framework (if didn't complete during meeting)
- Organize projects into Years 1, 2 and 3 of your plan

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No additional resources for this step

Step 3.3: Develop your Technology Plan, Part 1 – Capital Projects

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

In this meeting, you will start to write the technology plan, focusing first on all of the capital projects you identified as priorities in the previous meeting. Capital projects are the large, one-time investments you will make to implement new or improved technology tools or solutions. With your tech team, document the capital technology projects you'll tackle, using the priority order established in the last meeting to map out when the major technology initiatives will occur over the next three years.

The project listing in the Tech Plan should not be fully-detailed project plans, which should instead be included as appendices to the Tech Plan. Rather, the Tech Plan should provide a high-level overview of the capital projects with rough time and cost estimates, in priority order. (Note that the site assessment usually will outline the project costs and some detailed plans for the first couple of major capital projects, so you should be able to reference that document to add detail to the plans outlined here).

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Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Draft technology plan with capital projects listed

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Technology Plan template
- ▶ Refer to prioritized list of projects from last meeting and the Site Assessment for some detail

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ It will be easy to try to address all of the action plan and implementation detail when drafting your capital projects into your technology plan, so help your team focus on capturing the projects, their relative priority, and the high-level time and cost estimates. More detail can be researched outside of the meeting and added to a more detailed action plan in the appendix of your technology plan. For now, you are just trying to get the overall plan together.
- ▶ Make sure you include all the key capital projects necessary for your organization to strategically use technology in support of mission and goals, NOT just those for which you think you can get funding. The plan should be comprehensive, even if you are not certain at this phase how you will fund its implementation. You may be able to use the plan to help you fundraise or submit grants for technology support.

Homework:

- Finish the Capital Projects portion of the Tech Plan (if not completed during the meeting)

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No additional resources for this step

Step 3.4: Develop your Technology Plan, Part 2 – Sustainability or operating projects

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

This is a continuation of the last meeting to keep drafting your Technology Plan, this time focusing on what are known as ‘IT sustainability’ or ongoing operating projects needed to maintain technology use at the organization. This section of the plan will address how your organization intends to *care for* its technology systems through their lifecycle – from installation, to operation, to maintenance, to proper disposal and replacement. It should include a plan for preventative maintenance so you can maximize the useful life of your technology investments, and a realistic plan for replacement once machines reach the end of their expected life. Technology is NOT a one-time investment, and this is your chance to consider how your organization manages and budgets for technology to ensure you can keep it up over the years. While you may only take on the big, capital technology projects every few years, these are the “regular hygiene” projects that need to happen on a consistent and ongoing basis – and budgeted for annually – to keep technology humming along at your organization.

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Discuss “hidden” costs of technology during this meeting, such as replacement fund costs, consumables (ink, paper, etc), and recycling. You should also discuss staff costs (staff time) so you can see where you may be spending time and dollars to maintain technology even if you aren’t paying for a consultant or outside IT support. Organizations are often surprised by the hidden or indirect costs they incur to support technology, so it’s important to track “in house” hours regularly spent in this part of the plan.

By defining the sustainability and operating projects, including tasks or time your staff is already spending regularly or *should* be spending regularly to make technology work for your organization, you will be able to create a more accurate and realistic budget for technology in the next step of the process.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Draft technology plan with operating/sustainability projects

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Technology Plan template
- ▶ Refer to prioritized list of projects from last meeting and Site Assessment for some detail

Key Messages to Discuss at this Meeting:

- ▶ Start by referring to the Site Assessment document you completed; it probably already includes some sustainability or operating projects to include in this part of the plan.
- ▶ As a team, review current IT support costs, service contracts, or staff time spent on technology-related initiatives to expose the ongoing operating projects and needs of the organization. Does a photocopier maintenance company come out once a month to do preventative maintenance on your copier? Include that. Does your IT staff person back up the server daily and drive the tapes off site once a week? Then that is another sustainability “project” to note here. Do you have to pay for quarterly updates to your web site? Make a note of it!
- ▶ Areas likely to be included in the sustainability part of the *Technology Plan* include, but are not limited to: Tech support, hardware replacement fund, training, other service contracts (Internet, hosting, software services, etc.), and technology related consumables (ex: tapes, printer ink, toner, DVDs, etc.). These sections are included in the *Technology Plan template* as a guide.
- ▶ This meeting is an important time to discuss the ongoing costs to manage technology and the concept of Total Cost of Ownership; this will help your organization become more aware of the need for these projects, as well as the time and budget needed annually to sustain them.

Homework:

- Finish writing the Sustainability Projects section of your technology plan
- For next meeting: Gather existing tech costs, budgets, contracts or service plans and bring to the next meeting to finalize the budget for operating or sustainability projects

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No additional resources for this step

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Step 3.5: Develop your Technology Budget

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

This budget should sum up the plans put forward above and estimate out the organization's costs over the next 3 years, broken down into capital projects/costs and operating (or sustaining) projects/costs. You may need to do some homework to research estimated costs in order to complete the budget; for some of the largest capital projects, you may even need to request bids which can later be added to an appendix to support the dollar amounts included in your budget for those projects.

Ask your team to come to the meeting with a view of the *current* tech operating costs, including current technology budget or financial report on spend year-to-date, existing technology service contracts, Internet or email hosting rates, software contracts, etc. These may not be the same going forward as new projects or approaches are implemented, but they will provide a good baseline and insight into the budget. You may want to ask your finance person to pull a Profit and Loss Statement which summarizes the technology expenses, and if applicable/available, also bring the supporting detail that adds up to the technology line item on the *P and L*. It will help you review technology related expenses, and may help inform the budget. Lastly, if you've gotten any bids or cost proposals for technology projects you have identified or researched, bring them to the meeting.

You may need to do a fair amount of facilitation and questioning at this meeting to help expose the true amount of staff time spent on technology-related projects and the true costs of your other technology operating expenses. Think about the "human costs" related to technology (examples: meetings, training, people or project management, and research) as well as the monetary costs (examples: hardware, software, or training, support, and/or service contracts).

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ 3-year Technology Budget with capital and operating costs

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Tech Plan Template (budget section)
- ▶ The technology costs information the tech team gathered as homework

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ This meeting is a good opportunity to expose the hidden expense of staff time and to reinforce the importance of budgeting for the Total Cost of Ownership.
- ▶ To make the most of the meeting, you can research costs on the fly if necessary to estimate the budget. Ask your team to help with this if appropriate given the nature of the projects. For some big projects, you may need to wait until you receive bids to know what to expect for costs.
- ▶ Another area to focus on is a hardware replacement schedule. You can use the purchase price of an asset and its expected lifespan to determine how much should be put in the replacement fund annually. If you know you'll need tech support or an installation provider to replace equipment,

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include estimated labor charges associated with hardware replacement as well. Even some estimates here will help you build a more realistic replacement fund.

- ▶ While creating this technology budget may make you or the organization's leadership gulp, keep in mind that NOT budgeting for technology does *not* mean you won't spend on technology. Rather, it may mean you simply won't be as *aware of* or *proactive about* what you spend on technology. Creating a budget will help you better sustain technology in the long run and ensure technology is supporting, not detracting from, your organization's mission and goals.

Homework for the Nonprofit:

- Research additional costs and secure bids or cost estimates as needed
- Finalize 3-year budget

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ *Nonprofit Technology and Total Cost of Ownership*, by TechSoup.
<http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page10908.cfm>
- ▶ *Total Cost of Ownership Calculator*, by ServiceXen.
<http://public.sheet.zoho.com/public/scoudi/tco-and-roi-calculator>

Phase 4: Adopt the Plan

Phase 4: Adopt the Plan

Step 4.1: Meeting – Get Ready to Present to Board of Directors and Staff

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Organizational leadership representatives on the tech team (ex: the Executive Director, COO, or CFO – if they have also been participating on the tech team)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)
- ▶ *Rest of tech team (optional)*

Rationale & Description:

Once your *Technology Strategy* and *Technology Plan* are complete (keeping in mind that – like all strategic planning documents – they will evolve over time), it is recommended to share the final documents with 1) your board of directors and 2) your full staff. In planning efforts like this, implementing the recommendations in the plan (or “operationalizing” the plan, if you will) is the hardest part! It is not uncommon for an organization to complete the strategic plan and then find it collecting dust on a shelf a year later, full of great ideas that never went anywhere. Don’t let this happen to you!

Presenting the plan to your board and having them “adopt” it – formally or informally – will help position your organization to actually follow up on the recommendations in the plan. This is one the *best* things you can do to help you get your return on investment for the time you have spent researching and writing the plan. Review the plan with your board and ask them to adopt it *even if* you got their buy-in at the beginning of the planning process. They need to hear what came of it and what is next, so they can be ready to stand by you as you undertake the projects set forth.

Make a point of coordinating with organizational leadership what you will present to the board and what requests you will make of them. How can board members support your implementation of the plan? Can they help you set aside budget to implement parts of the plan, fundraise for certain projects, or lend their technology expertise or industry connections to help you pursue certain solutions? Use this meeting to brainstorm and organize the “asks” you will make of the board. Their support will go a long way to bringing the plan to life in your everyday work.

Since the Executive Director and COO or CFO are typically the organization’s liaisons to the board, they are a key part of this planning meeting, but you can involve others on the tech team if appropriate.

Once you’ve presented to the board, give a similar presentation with an overview of the technology planning results and next steps to your full staff so they can see the fruits of your labor and know what to expect. Making sure staff here the results and know what is next will be key to successful and smooth implementation of your plan!

Phase 4: Adopt the Plan

Tip! If you are working with an outside consultant/facilitator, it may be helpful to have him or her attend part of your board meeting to reinforce the importance of investing in technology and the validity of the plan, as well as to answer specific questions that come up. That said, do not leave it up to the consultant to determine your approach with the board or to make the presentation. The presentation should be at a high-level and enforce the connection between technology and mission; it should not be a detailed technical presentation of the solutions. This is your chance to show the board that you are taking ownership of technology!

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ A plan for presenting to the board (this may include a brief set of slides or an executive summary of the Technology Strategy and Plan, or perhaps just some talking points)
- ▶ An informed board of directors and staff ready to engage in plan implementation with you

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Completed Technology Strategy and Technology Plan

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ The first step to ensure the technology plan is properly resourced and executed is to have it “adopted” by the board.
- ▶ Make plans to share both your Technology Strategy and your Technology Plan with the board. The former will demonstrate the strong alignment between your mission, goals, business requirements and technology. The latter includes time and cost estimates that at some point may come back to the board for funding assistance and budget approval.
- ▶ Emphasize the importance of making the Technology Strategy and Plan *living* documents within the organization. Integrate the goals and projects outlined in the tech plan into your larger organizational plans and success metrics; this will help ensure they are not dismissed as side projects but are instead seen as integral to the organization’s plans.
- ▶ Discuss what your approach will be – not just to get the board’s approval – but also to get them excited about the organizational opportunities enabled through the Strategic Tech Planning process. Ideally, the board will see how critical technology is to the organization’s long-term success and will start making technology a recurring discussion or agenda item at its meetings, perhaps even forming a board IT sub-committee.
- ▶ Be sure to show the board how the proposed technology investments relate to mission and will help the organization improve its ability to deliver on that mission. They will care more about the community or organizational *outcomes* that the technology solution will enable, rather than the specifics of the technology itself. Keep the geeky details at bay unless asked.

More tips!

- ▶ Provide the documents as advance reading for the board (including an executive summary)
- ▶ Present the key points in a brief presentation to the board
- ▶ Be clear on what you are requesting of the board – give them a clear call to action

Phase 4: Adopt the Plan

Homework for the Nonprofit:

- Prepare to present to the board
- Present to the board
- Once the board has “adopted” the plan, present it to staff as well

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No additional resources for this step

Step 4.2: Form a Technology Steering Committee & Assign a Project Manager

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

Once the Technology Strategy and Plan are adopted by the board and presented to the staff, the fun is just beginning! As mentioned above, the plan should become a living roadmap for project implementation, and will require ongoing review and adjustments to maximize its lasting value for the organization. To help with this, we advise that you form an ongoing technology steering committee or advisory team that will meet and review the technology plan periodically to ensure the recommendations are still relevant and to adjust as needed. The committee will help inform ongoing technology decisions and advance an updated tech plan and budget to the board *at least annually*.

In addition, it is recommended that you act as (or assign someone to act as) the project manager for the *implementation* of the technology plan, which we’ll talk more about in Phase 5. The acting project manager will be the primary point person tasked with overseeing plan execution – ideally on time and within budget – and may share tasks with others or outsource as needed to get certain projects done. The technology steering committee should support the project manager to oversee implementation of the *current* plan, and will review the overall strategy and plan at milestones along the way to ensure technology planning and alignment continues in the future as well.

While it may feel like “one more thing,” forming an ongoing technology steering committee is critical to keeping technology at the surface of the organization’s discussions and operations going forward. It can help you sustain proactive technology momentum in the organization so it does not “backslide” and end up in technology crisis or disrepair in another three to five years. Also, having a committee reduces overreliance on any one person to move the technology agenda of the organization forward – if someone leaves, technology progress will not come to a screeching halt. For more information about the valuable role of the steering committee, see the *Technology Steering Committee Charter*.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Technology Steering Committee is formed; meeting schedule is set

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Technology Steering Committee Charter

Phase 4: Adopt the Plan

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Forming an ongoing Technology Steering Committee is critical to keeping the organization in a proactive and positive place with technology, especially given the pace of technology change and its need for constant “care and feeding”. This steering committee will oversee technology use at the organization so it won’t find itself in a technology crisis in three to five years, and – more importantly – to keep identifying and aligning ways for technology to support mission.
- ▶ Steering committee members need not be the same people that served on the tech planning team, but many may *want* to stay involved to bring some continuity between the planning process and implementation, or because they are passionate about the strategic use of technology at the organization.
- ▶ You also need a project manager to oversee implementation of the plan and keep it on track; the steering committee can support the project manager as needed. This means reviewing action plans and deliverables at key milestones to ensure that work is being completed on time and on budget.
- ▶ In addition, the steering committee will review the Technology Strategy and Plan at least twice a year to ensure they are still relevant. It will help make necessary adjustments to the plan, projects, schedule or budget as needed. On an annual basis, the committee will help update the technology plan and budget for the year ahead and present it to the board for adoption.

Homework:

- Assign a project manager to oversee implementation of the technology plan
- Form the steering committee
- Set up a recurring meeting schedule
- Review and complete the Technology Steering Committee Charter
- Oversee implementation of the technology plan, and update it as needed

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ *Creating a Technology Advisory Committee at Your Nonprofit*, by Chris Peters on TechSoup: <http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/page11356.cfm>

Step 4.3: Meeting – Final Closeout Meeting of Key Participants

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Tech planning champion
- ▶ Tech Team (including organizational leadership)
- ▶ Facilitator/Consultant (if using)

Rationale & Description:

Once the technology steering committee and project manager are in place, the technology *planning process* is essentially complete and it is time to shift the focus to implementing the projects in the plan. To wrap up the strategic planning *process*, it’s advised to gather all the stakeholders that were a part of the original kick-off meeting to reflect on what worked well and what could be improved the next time, and to bring some kind of closure and final documentation to the planning phase.

Phase 4: Adopt the Plan

Tip! It is important to be clear in this meeting that your organization still has the significant step of implementing the technology plan in front of it, but the process to review the current state, analyze needs and opportunities, and to create the plan is complete.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Planning phase of the process is formally closed
- ▶ Feedback is shared about the planning process
- ▶ Final documents are shared and saved with other important organizational files

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ None

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Start by celebrating the completion of the planning process, of course! It was a lot of work, and your team has devoted many meetings and hours to create a technology strategy and plan that position your organization to use tech for greater impact. That is an accomplishment worth celebrating!
- ▶ Consider the following questions or discussion prompts to guide this meeting and gather feedback from your team and other key stakeholders about this process:
 - *What did you find valuable about strategic technology planning?*
 - *What do you think worked well for our team and our organization about this approach?*
 - *What were the areas where you got stuck? Suggestions to improve them next time?*
 - *Do you think our organization will approach technology differently going forward as a result of this engagement? How? Are there changes you are excited about?*
 - *What was your biggest learning or “a-ha” moment during the process? What surprised you?*
 - *What questions or concerns do you still have before we begin implementing?*
- ▶ Congratulate your team again and thank them for their commitment. While implementation is ahead, creating the roadmap was a huge step toward effective technology use at your organization.

Homework:

- Start implementing your technology plan!

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ No further resources for this step

Phase 5: Implement, Monitor & Maintain

Step 5.1: Create Action Plans, Select Vendors, & Go!

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Project Manager (as established in Step 4.2)
- ▶ Technology Steering Committee (as established in Step 4.2)
- ▶ Vendors or other technology staff

Rationale & Description:

Phase 5 is where the rubber meets the road! Don't let all that amazing research, discovery and planning you've done go to waste by not having a clear plan for implementation! In this meeting and the many that will follow, the assigned implementation project manager needs to ensure that detailed action plans are created for *each project* in the technology plan for Year 1. (Don't worry much about action planning beyond Year 1. Technology and your needs will evolve over the course of the year). If you haven't already, now is the time to identify the lead project manager for implementation, form action plans, research and secure vendors and/or consultants, implement your projects, and train your staff. In other words, it is time to *go, go, go!* If your plan or projects are particularly intensive, you may consider assigning one project manager for *each* of the significant sub-projects being undertaken so one person is not responsible for shepherding several complex projects at one time.

As you create your detailed action plans for each project, there may be some steps or deadlines you have to guess or estimate. That's okay. Particularly if a project will require help from a vendor or consultant, you may not have to think of every last implementation detail. That said, you should still set the major timelines that matter to your organization and communicate them to the vendor or consultant in conversations or Requests for Proposals ("RFPs"). Your action plans should be rigid enough to maintain momentum and give you a framework to manage within, but flexible enough to allow for unforeseen events. You may need to break up larger or more complex projects into phases.

Some of your technology projects will require you to select a software or solution vendor and/or an implementation partner before you (or they) can implement. Use the *Resources to Learn More* below to help you follow a sound process for picking vendors and consultants that will get the job done.

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Detailed action plans for each significant project in your plan, especially the large ones
- ▶ Vendors and consultants selected (using Requests for Proposal or bidding process if needed)
- ▶ Projects in your plan get implemented

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ Action Plan Template

Key Messages to Discuss:

- ▶ Discuss the need to create an action plan for each project and to monitor the plan's implementation. Even if there is one overall project manager overseeing the implementation of the

Phase 5: Implement, Monitor & Maintain

technology plan, you may consider assigning sub-project managers to large projects in the plan, or at least asking for help fleshing out the action plan for each project.

- ▶ Try to break each project down to smaller and achievable phases in the action plan. Make your projects “SMART” – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timebound. In other words, no vague projects, steps that are too big to accomplish, or unspecified due dates!
- ▶ A key part of implementation will be selecting the software packages or solutions vendors and consultants that can help you move your projects forward. Refer to your research and the resources below to help you source vendors and consultants using a sound process.
- ▶ Once vendors or consultants are selected, you still have a key role to play. Establish agreed upon deliverables and milestones and liaise with them regularly to hold them accountable – a lot of slippage could happen even once vendors are selected and working on your projects!
- ▶ Don’t forget to plan for support, maintenance and training if you are implementing new solutions or software. All the technology investment in the world will be wasted if staff do not adopt the new tools or know how to use them to their fullest!

Homework:

- Create action plans for each key project in Year 1 of your technology plan
- Assign sub-project managers to oversee substantial projects
- Research, interview and identify appropriate vendors or consultants to implement projects
- Check in with vendors and project managers at key milestones to keep projects on track
- Oversee ongoing implementation of the plan and the work of vendors!

Resources to Learn More:

- ▶ *Following Through on Your Plan*, by W. Aniseh Khan. Available on TechSoup: www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/archives/page9749.cfm
- ▶ *Request for Proposal Library* on TechSoup – sample RFPs for technology projects that will help you craft your own RFP: <http://www.techsoup.org/toolkits/rfp/index.cfm>
- ▶ *Selecting the Right Technology Vendor*, by NPower – a helpful article on the steps to follow to identify a technology vendor: <http://www.npower.org/files/page/vendorguide.pdf>

Step 5.2: Monitor, Evaluate & Maintain Technology

Who is Involved?

- ▶ Project Manager
- ▶ Technology Steering Committee
- ▶ Vendors or other technology staff

Rationale & Description:

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not address the importance of the ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and maintenance of technology at your organization. Even after a new technology project is implemented (and you may think, “I’m done!”), it is important to monitor and evaluate the project(s) to help you determine if the project was worth the time and money. This is important for your organization’s self-assessment, but is also important to help you report back to stakeholders – particularly your board and any funders of technology initiatives. For example, if you convinced a funder to give you a grant for a new cloud-based client database, be ready to report back how much staff time

Phase 5: Implement, Monitor & Maintain

is saved by using electronic client notes instead of manual notes, how much office space was freed up by converting to electronic files, how many more clients are enrolled in more than one service now that data is easily shared between programs, how much gas/mileage reimbursement is being saved by employees being able to use the database remotely, etc. Using baseline metrics established before the new solution was implemented, measure and assess – even roughly – if the solution worked/is working as expected to help you deliver on mission and achieve goals. If not, determine what else is needed to help the project support your work, or if you should plan a different approach in the future.

Speaking of the future, strategic technology planning does not always need to be a big process like the one you followed this time. If you can find ways to integrate technology into the ongoing planning cycles and strategic discussions at your organization on a more regular basis, you may not need to do a separate technology planning process in another three to five years. Rather, technology will already be a part of your dialogue on how to advance the organization's mission. Don't be fooled – this approach will take intentional planning too, but it's about doing a little bit on a regular basis, rather than all at once.

Tips!

To help you weave technology discussions into the day to day, consider the following strategies:

- ▶ Keep meeting regularly with your technology steering committee
- ▶ Seek out opportunities for you or the Executive Director to talk to peer organizations about technology use and ideas from time to time
- ▶ Create a regular channel for staff to share technology ideas or feedback (or for that matter, any ideas on how the organization can increase its impact and efficiency!)
- ▶ Make technology a regular topic at board meetings, annual planning meetings, and leadership meetings. If you have a lead IT staff person, invite him or her to the planning table!
- ▶ If you do a strategic plan in the future, include technology as part of the overall planning effort

Outcome/Deliverables:

- ▶ Technology is integrated into regular organizational strategic and annual planning cycles
- ▶ Organization takes advantage of smaller and more frequent opportunities to seek input on technology use

Tools to Help with this Step:

- ▶ None

Key Messages to Discuss:

While this is not a “one and done” meeting, here are some key topics for your technology steering committee, project manager, and senior leadership (Executive Director and Board of Directors) to discuss at least once a year (ideally once per quarter):

- ▶ Is our tech plan on track? Why or why not? What can we do to remove bottlenecks or barriers and help best serve our staff or constituents?
- ▶ Do we have any significant risks related to technology or potential single points of failure that must be addressed as soon as possible?
- ▶ Is any of our technology causing excessive frustration or complaint?

Phase 5: Implement, Monitor & Maintain

- ▶ Are any hardware leases, software licenses, service contracts or other technology solutions or relationships that are about to expire or renew, or that need to be re-assessed?
- ▶ Is technology responsibility in the right places?
- ▶ Are there new trends in technology that we should pay attention to or consider as part of our technology strategy? Why or why not?
- ▶ Are there new or untapped opportunities we could be using technology to meet our mission, best serve our constituents, or maximize our impact in the community? What small steps can we take to start moving toward them?

Homework:

- Determine appropriate milestones to evaluate success of projects; establish baseline metrics
- Make adjustments to technology solutions or action plans as needed
- Monitor ongoing IT use & update technology plan at least annually
- Lead a discussion with the Technology Steering Committee and senior leadership at least once a year about any opportunities or risks with current technology

Resources to Learn More:

On measuring the impact of technology solutions:

- ▶ *A Very Brief Primer: Measuring the Return on Investment of Nonprofit Technology*, by Beth Kanter: www.nten.org/blog/2009/06/18/very-brief-primer-measuring-return-investment-nonprofit-technology

To keep a finger on the pulse of important trends or resources with nonprofit technology, consider the following electronic publications (all free!):

- ▶ **NTEN Change** is a free quarterly journal to help nonprofit leaders make sound IT investments and decisions to support its mission. www.nten.org/NTENChange
- ▶ **TechSoup By the Cup** is a weekly e-newsletter full of great articles, free webinars, and donated technology resources for nonprofits. www.techsoup.org
- ▶ **Idealware's e-newsletter** also offers great free or low-cost training opportunities, free downloadable guides on choosing nonprofit software, and more. www.idealware.org

Parting Wisdom

You have been through a significant endeavor and have hopefully learned a lot about your technology and – more importantly – your organization. Well-aligned technology can truly help you change the world, but you have to keep it on the planning agenda and think about your *strategy*, not just tactics! Thank you for the outstanding work you do to serve your community. Here's to finding more ways for technology to amplify the impact of your work!

“The more often you do tech planning and the more integrated your IT strategy becomes with other planning processes, the more painless it is when you do it, the more aligned IT becomes with mission, and the better it all works!”

~ From Managing Technology to Meet Your Mission.
Edited by Ross, Holly et. al. Jossey-Bass; 2009.

Appendix

Technology Planning Tools & Resources

Technology Strategy Template

Insert Organization Name

Insert Month Year

Introduction

This document shows how <Nonprofit> utilizes technology to meet its business mission. The criteria have been divided into three groups; (1) the broad mission of the business, expressed as the *business drivers*, (2) elements that would need to be present to ensure the development and maintenance of a robust infrastructure, which are expressed as the *business requirements*, and (3) the “philosophical” considerations of the infrastructure, expressed as the *technology philosophy*.

Our Organization’s Vision:

Enter your vision statement for the organization as a touchstone for all future technology decisions.

Business Drivers

The following are key business drivers or aspects of our mission (how we hope to achieve our vision):

Driver 1

Our primary mission is to xxx

Driver 2

xxx

Driver 3

xxx

Business Requirements

Business requirements define in business terms what must be accomplished to provide value. This section outlines our key business requirements. Where applicable we detail the technology choices we have made or are considering to help us achieve them.

Requirement 1: Enter your first business requirement here.

Technology Implemented: Fill in here

Technology Opportunities: Fill in here

Requirement 2: Enter your second business requirement here.

Technology Implemented: Fill in here

Technology Opportunities: Fill in here

Requirement 3: Enter your third business requirement here.

Technology Implemented: Fill in here

Technology Opportunities: Fill in here

Technology Philosophy

In addition to the business drivers and requirements detailed below, we have adopted a set of philosophical principals to help guide our technology decisions.

Philosophy 1: Fill in here.

Philosophy 2: Fill in here

Philosophy 3: Fill in here

Conclusion

Add a summary here of your business drivers and requirements and your technology philosophy going forward.

Technology Plan Template

Insert Organization Name

Insert Month Year

Overview

The overview section summarizes the primary mission of the organization and includes a technology strategy statement, as well as the status of the organization from a technological capacity perspective - and at the highest level.

Planned or Capital Projects

This section provides a brief description of projects identified which the organization needs to complete in order of priority.

Priority 1 - Project xxx, 2010

Project summary and cost

Priority 2 - Project yyy, 2011

Project summary and cost

Priority 3 - Project zzz, 2012

Project summary and cost

Sustainability or Operating Projects

This section provides a detail description of how we intend to care for our equipment and how much.

Preventative Maintenance

As an organization focused on uptime and regularity to our infrastructure, the best way to accomplish this is to budget time to look at technology solutions, systems, and equipment *before* it breaks. During this time, patches can be applied and other proactive measures to maximize lifetime, and more importantly to minimize downtime of our environment.

Month Preventative Maintenance Budget: 4 hours of consultant time for \$475

Support

When our systems break, or staff are having issues it is imperative that they are addressed swiftly. To support this objective, we budget for a retainer of an experts time to be available to answer questions, and fix small issues as they arise.

Month Support Budget: 7 hours of consultant time for \$665

Recycling

Proactive Replacement Fund

Life expectancy varies from item to item; however, we plan for an average lifespan of 6 years for technology investments. Because of this, we contribute 1/6 of the sum total of all technology install costs (including labor) to a fund. This money will be used for eventual replacement and/or upgrade of equipment/software/services.

Before any item is actually replaced its condition, maintenance, and life expectancy are once again reviewed to ensure its meets the requirements for replacement. If it is determined that we can get another year or two out of the equipment, its replacement will be delayed to a future date.

For a detailed breakdown of each item, see attached equipment breakdown.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Original Cost</u>	<u>Lifecycle</u>	<u>Annual Replace Fund</u>
Servers	\$	6 years	\$
Workstations	\$	4 years	\$
Telephones	\$	6 years	\$
Software	\$	3 years	\$
Website	\$	6 years	\$
Custom Programming	\$	7 years	\$
Wiring	\$	10 years	\$
Total	\$		

Training

There are two types of technology training that are involved in our environment: new hire training, and existing staff training. We plan to budget for each separately, and have estimated below our turnover and costs associated with that training. The time we budgeted for training includes the trainer.

We plan to utilize our own staff to serve in the training roll so that we do not require paying an outside company to perform staff education and training.

Budget for existing staff training: 10 hours per employee, 100 hours total

Budget for new hire training: 20 hours per employee, 40 hours total

Vendor Relationship Management

Our organization plans to for strategic relationships with our technology vendors. In order to support this strategy, we recognize that staff time will need to be allocated to properly foster a relationship. Because of this, we budget staff time to engage our vendors when needed, perform evaluation, offer feedback, and report to the organization on how these relationships are going.

Budgeted staff time for management of relationship: 50 hours.

Infrastructure Services

Our organization budgets for services on an ongoing basis that we utilize to conduct business. These services do not include support and maintenance, which has already been budgeted for. The staff time involved in managing these services is included in the previous vendor relationship management section.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Internet	\$5,000
Website	\$1,000
Telephones	\$5,000
E-mail	\$1,500
Total	\$12,500

Consumables

Certain items in our environment require ongoing investment to continue to be utilized. Below is a breakdown, and estimated annual cost of these items.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Printer Ink	\$200
Printer Paper	\$200
Cables, power supplies, etc.	\$200
Total	\$800

Technology Budget

Year	Item	Description		
2010	Sustainability or operating projects	<u>Project</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Staff Cost</u>
		Preventative Maintenance	\$ 60,000	
		Support	\$ 10,000	
		Recycling	\$ 500	20 hrs
		Training	\$ 0	200 hrs
		Replacement Fund	\$ 10,000	
		Infrastructure Services	\$ 20,000	
		Consumables (Ink, paper)	\$ 1,500	
		Relationship Management	\$ 0	100 hrs
	Total	\$ 60,000	220 hrs	
	Planned or capital projects	<u>Project</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Staff Cost</u>
		Project xxx	\$ 10,000	xxx hrs
		Project yyy	\$ 20,000	xxx hrs
		Project zzz	\$ 30,000	xxx hrs
		Total	\$ 60,000	xxx hrs

Year	Item	Description		
2011	Sustainability or operating projects	<u>Project</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Staff Cost</u>
		Preventative Maintenance	\$ 60,000	
		Support	\$ 10,000	
		Recycling	\$ 500	20 hrs
		Training	\$ 0	200 hrs
		Replacement Fund	\$ 10,000	
		Infrastructure Services	\$ 20,000	
		Consumables (Ink, paper)	\$ 1,500	
		Relationship Management	\$ 0	100 hrs
	Total	\$ 60,000	220 hrs	
	Planned or capital projects	<u>Project</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Staff Cost</u>
		Project xxx	\$ 10,000	xx hrs
		Project yyy	\$ 20,000	xx hrs
		Project zzz	\$ 30,000	xx hrs
		Total	\$ 60,000	xx hrs

Year	Item	Description		
2012	Sustainability or operating projects	<u>Project</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Staff Cost</u>
		Preventative Maintenance	\$ 60,000	
		Support	\$ 10,000	
		Recycling	\$ 500	20 hrs
		Training	\$ 0	200 hrs
		Replacement Fund	\$ 10,000	
		Infrastructure Services	\$ 20,000	
		Consumables (Ink, paper)	\$ 1,500	
		Relationship Management	\$ 0	100 hrs
	Total	\$ 60,000	220 hrs	
	Planned or capital projects	<u>Project</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Staff Cost</u>
		Project xxx	\$ 10,000	xxx hrs
		Project yyy	\$ 20,000	xxx hrs
		Project zzz	\$ 30,000	xxx hrs
		Total	\$ 60,000	xxx hrs

Strategic Technology Planning: Leadership Meeting Agenda

DATE:

TIME: (recommended: 90 minutes)

ATTENDEES:

READ BEFORE MEETING: What to Expect: Process Overview, Questions to Ask Before Planning,
Resources to Get Started

TOPICS TO DISCUSS:

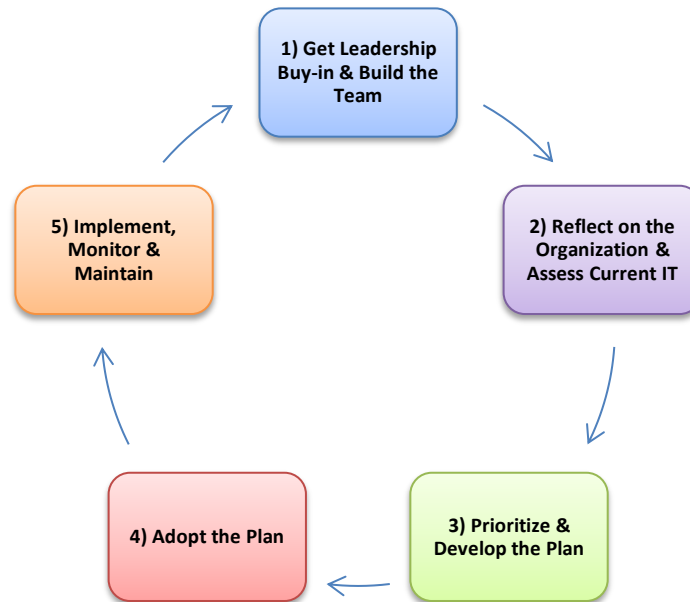
- 1. Introduction: Goals for this Meeting**
- 2. Overview of Strategic IT Planning**
 - a. Why it's valuable
 - b. What it will produce
 - c. The process & steps involved
- 3. Closer Look: Strategic IT Planning Process**
 - a. Roles & responsibilities
 - b. Time & commitment involved
 - c. Importance of board & leadership buy-in
- 4. Questions & Discussion**
- 5. Discuss Next Steps**
 - a. Board buy-in
 - b. Gather team
 - c. Team kick-off meeting

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

What to Expect: Process Overview & Checklist

Strategic technology planning is an essential part of an overall strategic plan, and critical to helping your organization make sound technology investments in support of its mission. The phases and steps described below will guide you through a strategic technology planning process. Since planning for and managing technology is cyclical and ongoing, the process is shown as a loop. It is recommended that – once you have a technology plan in place – you carefully monitor its implementation and revisit the plan *at least* annually to ensure continued relevance and make adjustments as needed. Consider adding technology as a topic to the yearly planning agenda or annual meeting.

The Phases of Strategic Technology Planning:



Phase	Step	Description	Homework
1) Get Leadership Buy-in & Build the Team	1.1 Leadership meeting: Get buy-in & build a team	Meet with your organization’s leadership (Executive Director and Board Chair, ideally) to discuss the engagement and determine if there is consensus to move forward together to create a strategic technology plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> Get board support (if not present at this meeting) <input type="checkbox"/> Review tech planning materials provided <input type="checkbox"/> Recruit tech planning team <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule 1 st team meeting
	1.2 Tech Team Kickoff meeting	Newly formed tech team (including organizational leadership) meets to discuss tech planning process and approach, how the team will work together, time commitment, and to set recurring meetings for future work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Set recurring meeting time; add to calendars <input type="checkbox"/> Update the rest of staff on tech planning (at staff meeting) <input type="checkbox"/> Create shared place for tech planning files

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Phase	Step	Description	Homework
2) Reflect on Organization & Assess Current IT	2.1 Get grounded in mission, goals, opportunities & challenges	<p>The tech team will discuss organization's mission, key goals, and current opportunities & challenges. This will provide important context to drive mission-driven technology solutions during the tech planning process.</p> <p>You will also review the IT Stages of Growth in this meeting and assess where your organization is today, and where it would like to be.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to other key stakeholders about goals, opportunities & challenges <input type="checkbox"/> Write up mission, goals, opportunities & challenges <input type="checkbox"/> Read IT Stages of Growth & rate your current level & desired level <input type="checkbox"/> Draft your Technology Philosophy
	2.2 Identify Business Requirements	<p>You will define your business requirements or elements that must be present to reach your goals (e.g. regulatory compliance, tax filing, financial management, etc.) and where there may be opportunities for technology to support your business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draft business requirements section of Technology Strategy document
	2.3a Kick-off Stakeholder Input & Analysis	<p>Consider each of your stakeholder groups and how they interact with your organization. Look at what information they use and the workflows they perform. Discuss technology solutions that could help them or for which they have expressed a need.</p> <p>Also, make a plan for how you will collect input directly from key stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collect input from each stakeholder group identified in meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Review input & look for common themes or new issues raised <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare an aggregated report/overview of stakeholder input for the next meeting
	2.3b Discuss results of Stakeholder Analysis	<p>Discuss themes or surprises uncovered by stakeholder input and capture them as potential technology projects as appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete condensed potential project list
	2.4 Assess Current IT (Site Assessment)	<p>This step is more technical. It should be completed by a tech staff person or an IT consultant who can inventory and assess your current technology assets and practices, and determine where changes should be made to make the organization stable and secure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review site assessment once completed by IT staff or consultant; ask questions <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate new recommendations onto running project list

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Phase	Step	Description	Homework
3) Prioritize & Develop the Plan	3.1 Develop your Technology Strategy	Explore and document how you can use technology to meet your mission, goals, and business requirements. You will work on the Technology Strategy during and after the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/> Finish writing the Technology Strategy
	3.2 Prioritize Potential Tech Projects	You have several potential projects now, based on your goals & business requirements, stakeholder input, and the site assessment. You may not have resources to do them all, and all may not be worth pursuing based on how closely linked to mission they are. Use this meeting to prioritize & phase your projects before writing them into your Technology Plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> As needed, conduct additional research on costs & time needed to complete certain projects <input type="checkbox"/> Finish prioritizing potential projects using the framework provided
	3.3 Develop your Technology Plan, Part 1 (<i>Capital Projects</i>)	Explore and document technology solutions to your biggest business challenges. Map out major technology initiatives (capital projects) and the overall plan for next 3 years, with rough time & cost estimates.	<input type="checkbox"/> Finish writing the capital projects portion of the tech plan
	3.4 Develop your Technology Plan, Part 2 (<i>Sustainability or operating projects</i>)	<p>Address how you intend to care for your technology systems through their lifecycle - install, operate, replace and/or disposal.</p> <p>Include these ongoing operating projects in your technology plan to ensure you are accounting for the total cost of total cost of ownership.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Finish writing the sustainability portion of the tech plan <input type="checkbox"/> Before next meeting, gather existing tech costs, budgets, contracts or service plans to inform your tech plan's budget
	3.5 Develop your Technology Plan (<i>Budget</i>)	The budget should sum up the plans put forward above and estimate out their costs over the next 3 years, broken down into capital and operating costs. This can become a key tool for fundraising.	<input type="checkbox"/> Research additional costs if needed <input type="checkbox"/> Complete budget (if not completed during meeting)

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Phase	Step	Description	Homework
4) Adopt the Plan	4.1 Get ready to present to Board of Directors and staff	<p>A successful technology strategy usually requires board level approval and acceptance. Meet with your team to help you prepare your presentation to the Board and be clear on the asks you will make of them.</p> <p>Once you have board approval, present the final plan to staff too so they are ready to support implementation. Getting this kind of buy-in and support improves plan implementation efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare presentation for the board <input type="checkbox"/> Present to the board for adoption of the plan <input type="checkbox"/> Present plan at staff meeting
	4.2 Form a tech steering committee & assign a project manager	<p>Now that the tech plan is written and adopted, it needs to be implemented and sustained. You will form a committee that will not only help oversee implementation, but will meet and review the tech strategy and plan on a regular basis to ensure technology is kept up to date and aligned with mission.</p> <p>Many members from the Tech Planning team may choose to participate, but you may also have some new members and some old members may cycle off.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assign a project manager to oversee implementation of tech plan overall <input type="checkbox"/> Form steering committee <input type="checkbox"/> Set recurring meeting cycle <input type="checkbox"/> Review & complete tech steering committee charter
	4.3 Final closeout meeting of key participants	<p>Key participants who were involved in 1st kickoff meeting gather to reflect on the process, the plans developed, and close the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Start implementing your plan!
5) Implement, Monitor & Maintain	5.1 Create action plans, select vendors, & go	<p>The tech steering committee and project manager should ensure that every initiative in the tech plan has a detailed action plan for implementation, including an owner, a timeline, and a budget. One overall project manager should be empowered to work with initiative owners to ensure the plan is being carried out on time and on budget.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create action plans for each initiative in Year 1 of tech plan (if they don't already exist) <input type="checkbox"/> Assign an owner to each major initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Research, interview & identify vendors & consultants <input type="checkbox"/> Oversee plan implementation and vendor deliverables

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Phase	Step	Description	Homework
	5.2 Monitor, evaluate & maintain technology	<p>It is important to monitor and evaluate tech projects to help you determine if the project was worthwhile, and so you can report impact to stakeholders. Using baseline metrics established <i>before</i> projects were completed, assess if the solutions are working as expected to help you deliver on mission and achieve goals. If not, determine what else is needed to help the project support your work, or if you should plan a different approach in the future.</p> <p>In addition, the tech steering committee should continue to assess the use of technology in the organization, ensure proper investments are being made to sustain technology, and plan for future upgrades, projects or initiatives as part of the regular planning of the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Determine appropriate milestones to evaluate success of projects <input type="checkbox"/> Make adjustments to the solution or plan as needed <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor ongoing IT use & update technology plans at least annually. <input type="checkbox"/> Lead a discussion with the Technology Steering Committee and senior leadership at least once a year about any opportunities or risks with current technology

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Questions to Ask Before Starting Your Strategic Technology Plan

For a strategic technology planning initiative to be successful, your organization's leadership, board and staff need to be willing and able to devote time, resources and talent to the planning process (and later, to implementing the projects!). Consider the following issues as you determine whether your organization is ready to embark on a planning process, bearing in mind that – while conditions will never be perfect for strategic planning – you do want to set yourselves up for success by being prepared!

Answer the following questions about the resources required for planning:

Is your organization's leadership (i.e. Executive Director or CEO) willing to be actively involved in Strategic Technology Planning, including participating in meetings, helping to write parts of the plan, and seeking board support and additional funding for plan implementation?

Yes No

Is your board of directors willing to make an ongoing investment of time and money to support the organization's strategic use of technology? Are they willing to commit to devoting a percentage of the annual budget for investing in, maintaining, managing and replacing technology?

Yes No

Do you have a team of both management and "front-line"/field staff willing to be a part of the planning process?

Yes No

Is leadership willing to help staff make technology planning a priority amidst competing priorities, including helping them shift deadlines or balance workload to make time for the planning process?

Yes No

Are you able to commit to about ten (10) two-hour meetings over the next few months, including spending time between meetings to complete additional tasks, writing and research?

Yes No

If you answered "No" to any of the questions above, consider what you need to do to shift your answer to "Yes" before embarking on a strategic technology planning process. If you cannot comfortably and confidently answer "Yes" to all questions above, think carefully before beginning a strategic technology planning process at this time. Leadership, board and staff investment of time and resources are critical to successful planning and help ensure the organization's time and efforts bear fruit.

(over)

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Answer the following questions about issues that could impact planning:

1. Are you in the midst of any senior leadership transition/hiring for key staff positions?
 Yes No
2. Must you do significant board recruitment or development in the next 3-6 months?
 Yes No
3. Do you have less than 3 months of cash reserves in your bank account based on current “run rate”?
 Yes No
4. Do you have significant fundraising events planned in the next 3 months such as a charity golf tournament, a gala or annual fundraising dinner, or other significant event that relies on the efforts of several of your staff at one time?
 Yes No
5. Are there any other events that will put significant demand on your staff in the next 3-6 months, such as grant deadlines, reporting deadlines, spikes in service delivery demand, etc.?
 Yes No
6. Are you facing a severe IT crisis or issue right now that’s causing major hardship? (Ex: a server is about to crash or has crashed, significant loss of organizational data, failing computers, etc.)
 Yes No

If you answered “Yes” to any of the questions above, you need to further consider whether it is an opportune time to move forward with strategic technology planning. This process is about taking the time to comprehensively assess your current IT situation, and then making long-term plans to improve it; if there are major issues affecting the organization like the examples above, this could be a challenging time to squeeze in strategic, long-term planning.

Also, technology planning is not about immediately fixing acute technology problems or crises, so if you have immediate or severe technology issues affecting your organization, it may be wise for you to focus on getting through those first, before beginning the long-range planning process.

Sample Memorandum of Understanding for a Tech Planning Engagement

Involved Parties

Organization: <<First Last>>, Executive Director of <<Name of nonprofit>> (“the Organization”)

IT Consultant: <<First Last>> of <<company>>. (“the Consultant”)

Sponsor & Funder: If applicable

Project Overview

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is intended to clarify the scope of the strategic technology planning engagement between <<Name of Nonprofit organization>> (“Organization”), <<Name of IT Consultant>> from <<Name of IT Firm>> “the Consultant.

The engagement will provide for the delivery of strategic consulting services from the Consultant to help the Organization create a technology strategy and a technology plan for the Organization. The process to create these documents is as important as the resulting documents themselves, and will be a shared effort primarily driven by the Organization and facilitated by the Consultant. The Organization may use the resulting documents to pursue grant funding for technology projects or to justify the allocation of existing funds and budget toward technology investment. This scope does not cover the implementation of technology projects identified during technology planning; it will be up to the Organization to implement projects once the strategic technology plan is completed.

Expected Deliverables:

Completing the engagement as outlined will result in the final deliverables for the Organization:

- ▶ **Site Assessment** – If it is determined that a site assessment is important for the organization, it will be conducted and written by the Consultant. The site assessment is an inventory and overview of the Organization’s current technology infrastructure and access, with recommendations for improvements or purchases to make it more stable & secure
- ▶ **Technology Strategy** – Written by the Organization with support from the Consultant, this document articulates, from a business perspective, why the Organization needs technology and what it hopes to accomplish with it. It will document the opportunities for the Organization to best use technology to further its mission.
- ▶ **Technology Plan (including budget)** –Written by the Organization with support from the Consultant, this document will spell out the tactics and activities to make the technology strategy a reality. It will include a high-level budget and timeline for major tech initiatives in the first 18 to 24 months following completion of the planning process.

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Outcomes

As a result of participating in this engagement, the Organization will complete the deliverables listed above, and – ideally – will approach technology investments, management and governance more strategically and proactively going forward. Desired outcomes include:

- ▶ Organization implements the technology initiatives identified in the technology plan to directly support the organization’s achievement of mission, goals and business requirements
- ▶ Organization understands the importance of including technology in regular strategic planning or annual planning cycles, including budgeting cycles
- ▶ Organization begins discussing technology regularly at Board meetings and other leadership meetings to ensure it is supporting the organization’s ability to deliver on mission & meet goals
- ▶ Organization has a better understanding of its ongoing costs to manage and maintain technology, including both direct and indirect costs, and budgets for Total Cost of Ownership
- ▶ Organization creates a technology team that regularly evaluates, discusses and plans for the use of technology at the organization, including putting forth recommendations to the leadership and board of the organization at least annually
- ▶ Organization is able to write more informed grant requests or budget requests for technology

Estimated Costs, Timeline & Organization Responsibilities:

Completion of the deliverables above will occur over the course of several meetings with the Consultant, including assignments and homework in between meetings. The timeline will vary based on organization size, available time to commit to the engagement, technology complexity, and other factors, but will likely take between 3-4 months to complete.

The Consultant’s will spend between several hours meeting with you and working on the project with your technology team. The Organization understands that it needs to commit staff time to ensure the successful completion of the strategic technology planning process, including meeting regularly with the Consultant and completing homework between meetings.

- ▶ The start date of this engagement is MM/DD/YY.
- ▶ Given this start date, final deliverables should be completed by <<insert date 2-3 months from start date>>.
- ▶ The cost of this project will be <<cost>>.

Dates of significance

<<Use this section to insert any pre-scheduled vacations, events or holidays that will impact the schedule of the project>>

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Modification of Scope

If the time or costs to complete this scope are more than 10% of the original estimate, or if Client requests modifications that will increase time or costs by more than 10% of the estimate, both parties will execute a written Modification of Scope that describes changes to the Services including modifications to the project schedule, Deliverables, budget, and contingencies.

Termination

If, during the planning engagement, it is mutually determined that the engagement is not well-timed or not positioned to be successful, either party may consult with the other and recommend termination of the engagement. Neither party shall be liable to the other for damages of any sort resulting solely from terminating this MOU in accordance with its terms. In the event of termination, the Organization will pay the Consultant for all work done to-date. Upon termination, the Consultant will provide all work files related to this project, finished or unfinished, to the Organization.

Confidentiality

All parties shall treat information or data disclosed through the duration of this engagement to be confidential, unless the information was already public or considered public domain before the engagement began. It is understood and agreed the Consultant may include the Organization on its representative client list for strategic technology planning, which shall not be a breach of the parties' confidentiality agreement.

Communications and Points of Contact

	For Consultant	For Organization
Name	First Last	First Last
Title	Title here	Title here
Phone		
Email		
Work hours		

After initial kick-off meeting, the expectation is that the Consultant and the Organization will meet no less than once per month but no more than once a week for approximately two hours per meeting to complete the deliverables together.

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

MOU Acceptance

I, the undersigned, have read this Memorandum of Understanding, and agree to its terms.

For Nonprofit Organization:

Staff Leadership Signature

Name (Print)

Title

Date

For IT Consultant:

Signature

Name (Print)

Title

Date

For Nonprofit Board:

Board Chair Signature

Name (Print)

Title

Date

Building a Strategic Technology Planning Team

Why do you need a technology planning team?

Technology is critical to your organization's ability to serve its constituents and fulfill its mission. It helps you manage critical data about your clients or patrons, steward donor and grant funds, and spread awareness about your issue, among other things. Technology should be aligned with your mission and key goals as an organization, not treated as a separate department or an "aside". For that reason, decisions about adopting and using technology should involve a cross-section of key stakeholders that – together – have full visibility into the way your organization runs today and where it is headed.

A team approach to tech planning helps ensure you think about the potential for technology to serve mission and goals across *all* aspects of your organization's work, from end clients to board leadership, from finance to case workers. The people on the team can become champions for the technology planning process and the technology and organizational changes that will inevitably result from it.

What will the team do?

A strategic technology planning team will meet regularly to lead the technology planning process at your organization and to write your technology strategy and plan. Your team may meet weekly or twice a month for between one and four months, depending on how quickly your organization wants to complete its technology plan. The team will do research, writing and other tasks between meetings.

The tech team members will help drive technology planning at the organization, including:

- ▶ Reflecting on the organization's current use of technology
- ▶ Interviewing stakeholders about their perceptions of and needs for technology
- ▶ Researching technology tools and vendors
- ▶ Writing pieces of the technology strategy and plan

Getting through the tech planning process and writing the plan is an initiative unto itself that this team should focus on, but you may find that your team also has a role to play (and wants to stay involved!) once the plan is complete and it is time to start implementing the technology projects identified.

At that time, the team may oversee implementation of the defined projects and ensure they stay on track, and/or become part of an ongoing IT strategy committee that meets regularly to ensure that technology is up to date and supporting the organization's mission and goals.

Who do I want on my team?

The strategic technology planning team should be made up of key staff members who will work together to create a strategic plan for technology investments, management and governance at the organization. Key among the team members will be the Executive Director or CEO of the organization (since the strategic IT plan will be inextricably based on the goals of the organization and tied to the success of the organization).

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Besides the Executive Director, the team should be large enough to represent different programs and stakeholders at the organization, but small enough to **meet regularly, make timely decisions, and sustain progress**. It is recommended to keep the team between three and six people. If additional perspectives and insights are needed to ensure the technology plan is comprehensive, you can use interviews, surveys, or occasional “open” meetings to gather further stakeholder input.

Pick people for your team that will bring various perspectives on your business, technology, and experience. For example, you may want someone who works on the “front lines” of your organization and knows your clients well, but you may also want the database administrator who uniquely understands the current processes and challenges of data management at your organization. **One need not be technical to be a valuable member of the tech team**. While one or two technical folks will be helpful, it’s just as important to have team members that are very familiar with your stakeholders, key goals, and business functions. Build a team with this mix of skills, experience and perspective in mind.

Your team may include the following:

- A senior manager & decision maker (i.e. the Executive Director/CEO)
- The IT lead/key IT staff person
- A program manager familiar with departments, programs, or key stakeholders
- A field or case worker who may use IT in the field and/or with clients
- A representative from the branch office (if there is more than one facility)

Other things to consider when planning your tech planning team:

- **Stay focused.** There can be focus groups and surveys as part of the planning process to help you solicit input. Don’t feel like you need to include *everyone* on the tech team.
- **Be inclusive.** To help others on your staff feel included and ready for change, create opportunities for those NOT on the team to hear about the tech planning process, to offer input and ideas, and to get periodic updates from the tech team. If appropriate, publicly post minutes from the tech planning meetings so those that are most interested can seek them out.
- **Make room on plates.** Make sure you help staff (particularly those on the tech team) prioritize tech planning. They already have full plates; how can you frame this as an opportunity and help them make room on their plates to participate fully?

Once you have your team:

- Distribute info about the tech planning process; give time for them to review and ask questions
- Set up consistent, recurring meeting times so that you don’t get stalled on progress because the team can’t find mutual meeting times.
- Assign roles (facilitator, timekeeper, notetaker, etc.) to keep the team on task, maintain accountability, and allow for action items to be captured and executed on after each meeting.

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Who will you recruit to be on your planning team?

Who	Part(s) of Organization They Represent	Perspective They Bring

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Resources to Help You Get Started

Before you dive into a strategic technology plan, here are a few good resources to help you learn more about the technology planning process, its benefits, and potential challenges you may encounter. These resources are a great way to orient you to the strategic technology planning process, but you may find yourself referring to them long after you've completed your plan as well.

This list is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather a selection of the most relevant resources. There are plenty of others out there if you are interested in learning more; do a quick web search on nonprofit technology planning or "NPTEch," a common shorthand term used for nonprofit technology discussions.

Strategic Technology Planning for Nonprofits

Why a Technology Plan? An older article, but still right on-the-money in its explanation of why your nonprofit *needs* a technology plan. Still doubting this whole process? Read this brief but clear article on how a technology plan will benefit your organization now and in the future.

www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/archives/page9834.cfm

Technology Leadership: The Executive Director's role in the tech planning process. This article explains the leader's critical role in tech planning and will help you set up your organization for success with tech planning. www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/techplan/archives/page9810.cfm

Preparing Your Staff Members for a Technology Change. An excellent article by Dahna Goldstein on the leader's role in managing the change that results from technology planning.

www.nten.org/blog/2008/08/20/preparing-your-staff-members-for-a-technology-change

Mission-driven Technology Planning: This one-pager from TechSoup Canada discusses the importance of reviewing three key areas in tech planning: People, Process and Technology.

www.techsoupcanada.ca/learning_centre/articles/mission_driven_technology_planning

A Basic Guide to Technology Planning: A great overview of the technology planning process from MAP for Nonprofits, a nonprofit management assistance organization based in Minnesota.

Addresses issues such as why to tech plan, who to involve, and pitfalls to avoid. Some of the links are out of date, but the overview is quite useful. <http://bit.ly/maptechplan>

Good Sites to Keep Up with Technology Trends in Nonprofits

When tech planning, it's common for nonprofit staff – particularly leadership – to say, "*I don't know what I don't know.*" In other words, how can you inform the technology planning process if you don't even know the extent of what's *possible*? The sites below will help leaders – even those with the busiest of schedules – keep a pinky finger on the pulse of important nonprofit technology trends. Of course you aren't expected to know *everything* about tech trends, but you'll find just a little light reading can go a long way in terms of advancing your tech "fluency" and thoughts on how you can use tech-for-mission.

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

NTEN – The Nonprofit Technology Network is the membership organization of nonprofit technology professionals and leaders trying to successfully manage the use of technology to serve their missions. They have a wealth of resources that make nonprofit technology topics approachable, immediately useful, and – at times – flat out funny. Here are two great places to start:

- **NTENChange:** NTEN's FREE quarterly (digital) journal for nonprofit leaders provides the guidance and practical considerations necessary for making sound IT investments and decisions that will help your organization achieve its mission. www.nten.org/NTENChange
- **NTEN Research:** Reports on trends and benchmarks in nonprofit technology. Wondering how much to pay an IT staff person? If nonprofits are actually raising funds on social media? If the sector is talking about it, NTEN is writing about it. www.nten.org/research

TechSoup.org – TechSoup is the place to learn about all things nonprofit technology in accessible, non-technical terms, *and* to request donated or discounted products. Subscribe to their By the Cup newsletter from their home page and get a weekly dose of easily digestible tech know-how, as well as the latest info about donated or discounted products for nonprofits! www.techsoup.org.

Idealware.org – Idealware is like the *Consumer Reports* for nonprofit technology (and so much more!). They review common nonprofit technology solutions such as Client Relationship Management (CRM) solutions, newsletter tools, and donor databases, providing an overview of features and functionality you may want to include in your own search. www.idealware.org

All three of the sites above also offer frequent, free (or cheap) webinars on nonprofit technology trends and concepts, ranging from social media to tech planning and everything in between. Sign up for their newsletters to hear about upcoming webinars that may benefit you and your staff.

Can't Get Enough?

If you just can't get enough, consider these "beefier" resources on technology planning as extra credit:

Joy of Computing – Planning for Success: This free downloadable workbook from TechSoup for Libraries (www.techsoupforlibraries.org) was written with public libraries in mind, but it includes a wealth of information and free tools for tech planning that are *directly applicable to nonprofits*. Start with the chapter on *Planning & Decision Making*, but you may find the others useful down the road as well. www.techsoupforlibraries.org/cookbooks/planning-for-success

Managing Technology to Meet Your Mission: A Strategic Guide for Nonprofit Leaders. NTEN's book is a resource for tech planning and ongoing IT management, and includes contributions from nonprofit leaders and nonprofit technology experts covering a range of topics, from planning and staffing, to the tech tools you need to meet your mission. Available at Amazon or other booksellers.

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

Meeting Tracker Template for a Strategic Tech Team Meeting

[Meeting Date] [Meeting Time] [Meeting Location]

TO READ IN ADVANCE	
BRING TO MEETING	

Day-of Meeting Information:

FACILITATOR	
NOTE TAKER	
TIMEKEEPER	
ATTENDEES	

Agenda topics

[Time allotted] **Review actions from last meeting** **[Presenter]**

DISCUSSION		
CONCLUSIONS		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE

[Time allotted] **[Agenda topic]** **[Presenter]**

DISCUSSION		
CONCLUSIONS		
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE

Phase 1 Tools: Get Leadership Buy-in & Build a Team

[Time allotted]

[Agenda topic]

[Presenter]

DISCUSSION			
CONCLUSIONS			
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	

[Time allotted]

[Agenda topic]

[Presenter]

DISCUSSION			
CONCLUSIONS			
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	

[Time allotted]

[Agenda topic]

[Presenter]

DISCUSSION			
CONCLUSIONS			
ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	

Phase 2 Tools: Reflect on the Organization & Assess Current IT

Get Grounded in Mission, Goals, Opportunities and Challenges

To be successful, technology use should be tightly integrated into the key work of your organization. Technology is simply a tool to help your organization deliver on its mission, strategic goals and programs. So, before diving into the weeds of specific technology problems or solutions, it is important level-set with your team about *why* your organization exists in the first place, and what “makes it tick.”

For some organizations, talking about the organization’s mission, goals, opportunities and challenges may be the norm amongst the whole staff. For others, these conversations may only happen at the leadership and board level. Either way, starting with this reflection and discussion will provide important context and focus for the rest of the technology planning process.

Instructions: *Have each team member spend 5- 10 minutes completing the worksheet below. This individual reflection time will help ensure everyone has a chance to consider their own perspective before you press forward as a group. It will help you avoid “group think.” There are no right or wrong answers; this exercise is intended to help folks step out of their day-to-day work to think about the big picture.*

In my own words, our organization’s mission is...

In my interpretation, the organization’s key, strategic goals over the next 2-3 years are (or should be):

1)

2)

3)

Phase 2 Tools: Reflect on the Organization & Assess Current IT

Some major opportunities I see for our organization to plan for or capitalize on over the next few years include:

Some important challenges I think our organization will face and needs to plan for over the next few years include:

Other thoughts, notes or questions I want our team to consider as we move forward with planning:

NOW WHAT?

Have an open discussion with your technology team about your responses. Clarity on the mission and goals of the organization, as well as key opportunities and challenges you'll encounter in the next few years, are big factors that will shape the types of technology investments you'll want to pursue.

When your team has fundamental agreement on the above, designate some from the tech team to write a shared version of these answers into your technology strategy document.

Stakeholder Perception Surveys

Below are two examples of stakeholder perceptions surveys: The first is for use with staff; the second is intended for use with outside stakeholder groups (the example here is specifically targeted for use with supporters of your organization such as donors or volunteers). Review and customize these surveys for use with your key stakeholder groups, then distribute. You should survey *each and every* staff member on technology perceptions. For other stakeholder groups such as your board, volunteers, donors, or perhaps even your clients/patrons, you may want to survey just a sampling of folks instead of the entire group. Discuss what's most appropriate with your tech planning team.

Tip! *If you are a large or a very distributed organization, you may want to use an online survey tool such as [Zoomerang](#) or [SurveyMonkey](#) to ease the distribution and collection of these surveys. If you don't already have an electronic survey tool of choice, there are many free or low-cost [survey tools](#) available.*

Sample Questions for Staff:

- 1) What are the primary goals or tasks you do (or should be doing) to be successful in your job?
- 2) What technology do you currently have access to in order to help you with the above? (i.e. do you have a laptop, donor database, e-newsletter tool, smartphone, etc.?)
- 3) Is this access (from above) sufficient to effectively accomplish your everyday tasks? Explain.
- 4) What skills or competencies do you need in order to be successful delivering on the above? Do you feel adequately trained? Is there specific technology training you feel would benefit you?
- 5) What internal processes or systems are most important to enabling you to do your job (these can be manual or automated/electronic process/systems)?

Phase 2 Tools: Reflect on the Organization & Assess Current IT

- 6) Which of the processes or systems from your reply above run smoothly and work well?

- 7) What processes or systems have bottlenecks or feel cumbersome and inefficient? How could they be made more efficient? Feel free to include both manual and automated processes.

- 8) What data, information and reports do you need to access to do your job? Do you have sufficient access to them? Please explain.

- 9) Are there other barriers, constraints, or pain points you face in your day-to-day tasks that prevent you from doing your best work? (they don't have to be IT-related)

- 10) Are there any other tools, training or resources (technology or otherwise) you need in order to be more effective in your daily work?

- 11) Any other comments regarding technology use in our organization that you would like the tech planning team to consider?

Sample Questions for Donors/Supporters

1. What information, data, news, or updates would you like to receive as a supporter of our organization? How often?
2. How do you get the above information from our organization today? Is your access to this information adequate? How could it be improved?
3. Are there bottlenecks or pain points you've faced in any of your interactions with our organization, either online or offline?
4. If you could describe your ideal interaction with our organization to donate money, volunteer, or otherwise be a patron of our organization, what would that look like?
5. What do you think our organization does really well?
6. What opportunities do you see for our organization to improve?
7. Do you have suggestions for particular technology initiatives we may want to explore during this technology planning effort that would improve our organization's ability to serve you or our community?

Project Prioritization Framework

Once you have several projects in mind, it's time to prioritize. Prioritization is crucial – it will help ensure you don't take on projects with little impact relative to the effort, and that you don't bite off more than you can chew at one time. It will help you weed out non-essential projects or projects you simply can't afford to take on due to time or financial constraints.

Start with some key questions:

- Are there infrastructure needs that must be addressed first? Any potential “single points of failure” that must be resolved immediately? Other IT weaknesses that need to be “shored up”?
- Are there projects you should eliminate because you can't identify sufficient positive outcomes or community impacts for them? (Did you get “shiny object syndrome”?)
- Do some projects have to be completed in a particular sequence to ensure they are successful (i.e. they have dependencies on other projects)? Are there any that require you to secure funding before you can pursue them?
- Are there projects that will result in immediate, positive program outcomes?
- Are there projects that will be big wins for your staff?
- Are there “low hanging fruit” initiatives that will help you demonstrate early success?

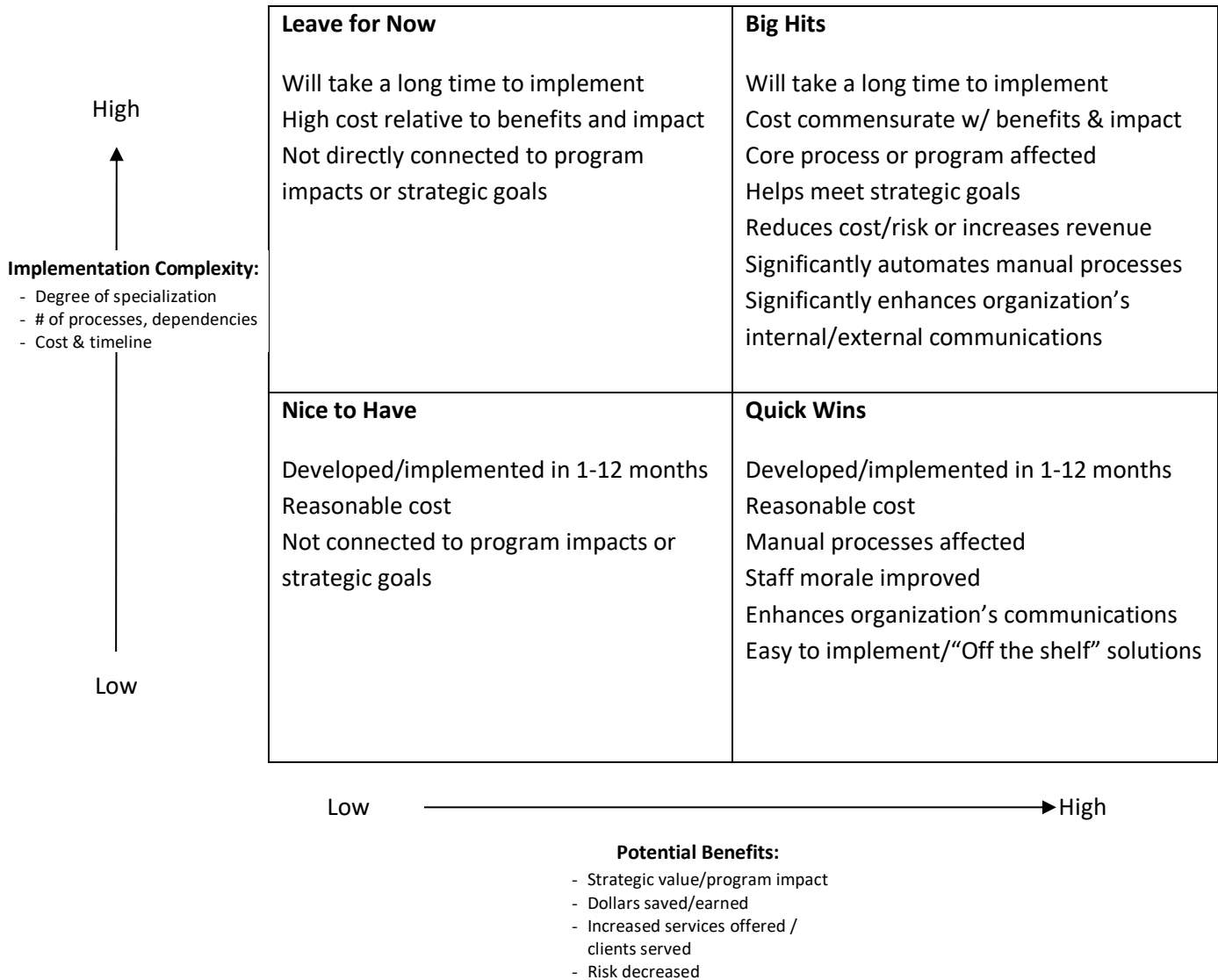
Then, use the Prioritization Framework:

For projects that don't rise to the top of the list based on the questions above, use the framework on the next page to help you assess their relative priority.

Phase 3 Tools: Prioritize & Develop the Plan

Applying the Prioritization Framework

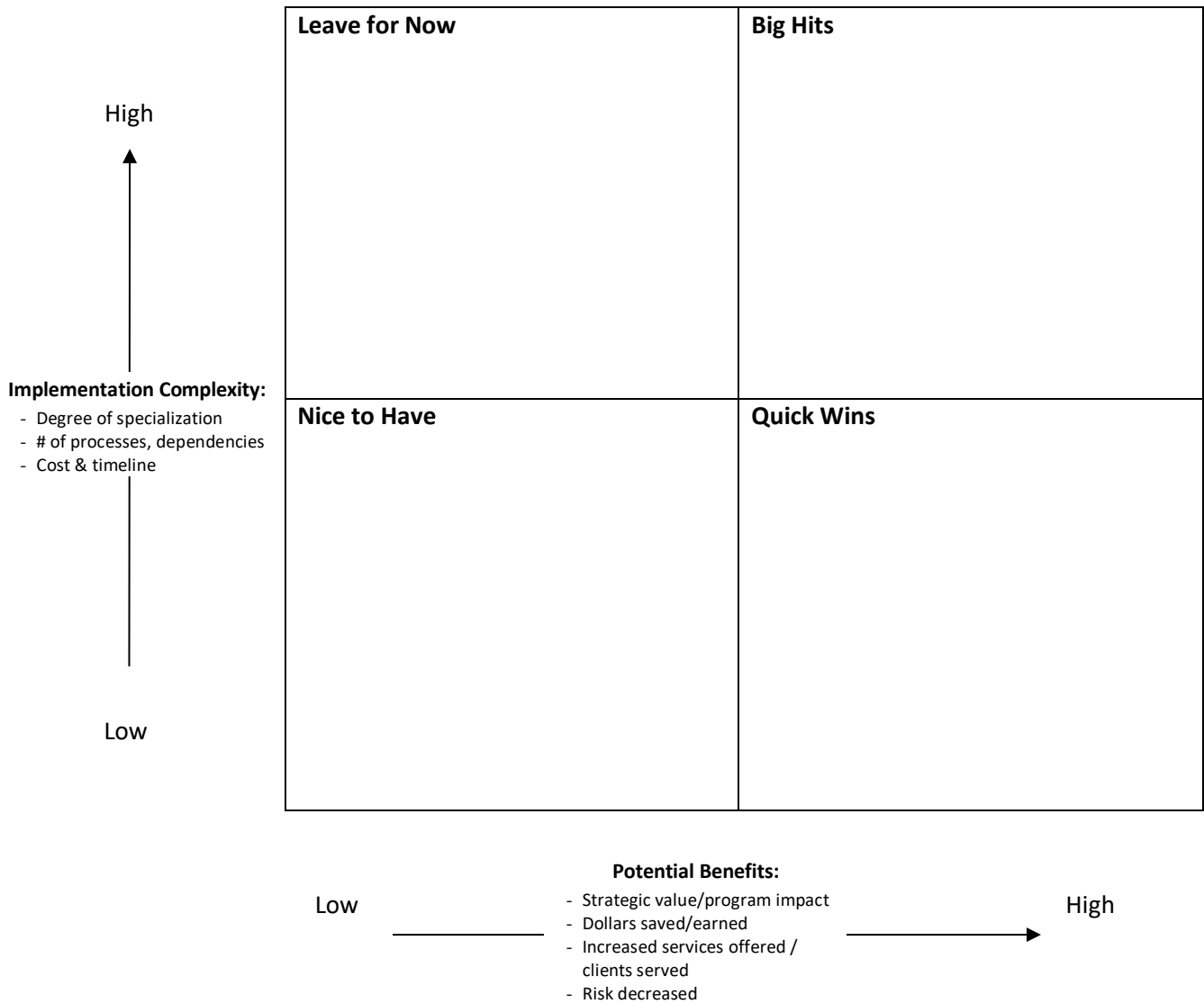
Adapted from TechBridge prioritization model (www.techbridge.org)



Phase 3 Tools: Prioritize & Develop the Plan

Project Prioritization Framework

Referring to your list of potential technology projects, use the framework below to help prioritize how those projects will be incorporated into your technology plan.



Technology Steering Committee Charter

Primary Functions

The primary function of the Technology Steering Committee is to take responsibility for the feasibility, business case and the achievement of outcomes of technology in our organization. The Technology Steering Committee will monitor and review the technology strategy and technology plan, as well as provide oversight of technology in general in the organization.

The Steering Committee provides a stabilizing influence so organizational concepts and directions are established and maintained with a visionary view. The Steering Committee provides insight on long-term vision (Technology Strategy), and multi-year plans (Technology Plan), and sometimes short term/acute technology issues. Members of the Steering Committee ensure business objectives are being adequately addressed and technology remains under control. In practice these responsibilities are carried out by performing the following functions:

- Monitoring technology and participating at regular Technology Steering Committee meetings;
- Discussing budget and scope of work as emergent issues force changes to be considered, ensuring that scope aligns with the agreed business requirements of key stakeholder groups;
- Resolving conflicts and disputes, reconciling differences of opinion and approach;
- Risk management strategies, ensuring that strategies to address potential threats to the project's success have been identified, estimated and approved, and that the threats are regularly re-assessed;
- Project management and quality assurance practices.

Approval Responsibilities

The Steering Committee is responsible for approving major technology elements such as:

- Technology projects, objectives, and outcomes as identified in the Technology Plan.
- Content, philosophy and approach as defined in the Technology Strategic Plan.
- Overall Budget, ensuring that effort, expenditures and changes are appropriate to stakeholder expectations;

Membership

The Technology Steering Committee will consist of the following members:

Name	Role	Agency
	Committee Chair	
	Member	
	Member	
	Member	
	Member	
	<u>Member</u>	

Phase 4 Tools: Adopt the Plan

Role of a Steering Committee member

It is intended that the Steering Committee leverage the experiences, expertise, and insight of key individuals within the organization to provide technology feedback, planning, or design. Steering Committee members are not necessarily responsible for managing technology activities day to day, but will be obligated to champion technology in the organization and provide support and guidance for those who do. Thus, individually, Steering Committee members should:

- Understand our business.
- Appreciate the significance of technology for some or all major stakeholders and represent their interests.
- Be genuinely interested in Technology and be an advocate for broad support for the outcomes being pursued by the Technology Plan and Strategy.

In practice, this means they:

- Help balance conflicting priorities and resources.
- Provide guidance to the project team and stakeholders of technology.
- Review the status of technology vendors.
- Consider ideas and issues raised.
- Check adherence of technology activities to standards of best practice both within the organization and in a wider context.
- Foster positive communication outside of the committee regarding technology's progress and outcomes.
- Report on the state of technology to those responsible at a high level, such as agency executive management groups, head of agencies, Board of Directors, etc.

Recordkeeping

The Technology Steering Committee will store minute meetings, templates, and other documents in the following location(s):

Item	Location
Committee Charter	
Technology Plan	
Technology Strategy	
Committee Meeting Minutes	

Phase 4 Tools: Adopt the Plan

Meeting Schedule and Process

The Team will meet on a regular basis to keep track of issues and examine the progress of the Technology Plan, and the relevance of the Technology Strategy. Currently this will be:

- monthly
- quarterly
- yearly

Meeting Agenda

At each meeting, the status of technology will be discussed using an agenda outline such as the following:

Introductory Items such as:

- Introductions
- Review Agenda
- Minutes from last meeting
- Review of actions arising from previous Steering Committee meetings.

Review Technology Status

- Discuss how technology is working for each business unit (e.g. finance, administration, operations, etc).
- Discuss how technology is working for stakeholders (e.g. clients, vendors, staff, etc)
- Review & Update Technology Strategy
- Review & Update Technology Plan

Consideration of other items of relevance

Review and summarize new actions from this meeting

Plans, date and location for next meeting

Phase 5 Tools: Monitor, Maintain & Evaluate

Action Planning Template

Use this action plan template to break the projects from your technology plan into smaller, more actionable steps. **To use:** Take a high-level project from your plan and write in the left-hand column. List the tasks you'll need to undertake to move that project forward. Assign *each task* an owner and a due date. You may want to break larger projects into phases. You should have an action plan for each Year 1 project in your plan.

Priority Project	Tasks	Responsible Party	Date to be completed	Required Resources	Success Metrics (<i>we'll know we're done when...</i>)

