# CSA Strategic Planning

Tools for Local Community Planning and Management Teams

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# Introduction

Section [2.2-5206.4](#) of *the Code of Virginia* requires Community Policy and Management Teams (CPMT) to "Coordinate long-range, community-wide planning that ensures the development of resources and services needed by children and families in its community including consultation on the development of a community-based system of services established under [§16.1-309.3](#)." Additionally, the Virginia Appropriation Act ([Chapter 2, Item 268.B.3](#)) requires that "Each locality receiving funds for activities under the Children's Services Act (CSA) shall have a utilization management process…" As a result, local CPMTs are required to engage in a long-range strategic planning process that gathers input from stakeholders and formulates a plan to achieve the community's vision for the Children's Services Act (CSA) program. With this guidance and supporting documents, the State Executive Council for Children's Services aims to support localities as they work to meet these statutory requirements.

# What is Strategic Planning

In short, strategic planning defines what we do (our mission), what we strive to be (our vision), and our aspirations (our goals). Engaging in the strategic planning process helps a CPMT clearly define long-term goals and map how short-term strategies and corresponding benchmarks contribute to achieving them. This, in turn, provides a clear sense of where the CSA program is headed and enables a locality to ensure that the system operates in a manner that maximizes its impact.

Strategic planning is formally defined as a long-term, future-oriented process of assessment, goal setting, and strategy building that develops an explicit path between the present and a future vision. It is a disciplined effort to produce an actionable future-oriented plan that shapes and guides the work of the CPMT. Strategic planning and the corresponding activities are the responsibility of the CPMT. Strategic planning activities should be data-driven, inclusive of all CPMT members, and focused on building consensus, resulting in a comprehensive plan that addresses the locality's needs and successfully carries out its programmatic mission.  As a result, engagement by the entire CPMT in the strategic planning process is fundamental.

Effective strategic planning articulates where a CSA program is headed, the actions required to make progress, and how it will measure its success. By creating a strategic plan, CPMTs help ensure that all components of the CSA program are working toward the shared vision. Strategic planning enhances programmatic operations by soliciting input from various sources and fostering a consensus on a local program's direction. Along with focusing energy and resources, the strategic planning process allows stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership of the CSA program's vision and mission.

| **Strategic Planning Is** | **Strategic Planning Is Not** |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>A deliberate and collaborative process</li><li>A future-oriented process of assessment, goal setting, and strategy</li><li>Focused on long-term measurable programmatic goals</li><li>Specific to each locality</li><li>Driven by data</li><li>Ongoing</li></ul> | <ul><li>A to-do list for the short or long term</li><li>Driven by one goal, one idea, or one set of demands</li><li>All things to all people</li><li>About everything a program does</li><li>Full of jargon</li><li>To be "left on the shelf"</li></ul> |

## Role of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) in Strategic Planning

The Code of Virginia (§§2.2-2648 D.15, 2.2-5206.13, and 2.2-5208.5) requires localities to review and analyze aggregate CSA data and develop long-range program plans. Historically, this activity has been referred to as "Utilization Management;" however, in 2019 a shift occurred, and the process is now known as Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to minimize confusion with CSA Utilization Review.

Continuous Quality Improvement is a data-driven decision-making process that ensures resources are expended effectively and efficiently. CQI focuses on detailed process improvements and data analysis to identify and address specific, isolated issues. While strategic planning and CQI aim to make programmatic improvements, CQI focuses on implementing small, incremental changes to processes and operations to enhance quality consistently. In contrast, strategic planning is a broader approach that focuses on long-term programmatic goals and defines the program's overall direction and priorities. CQI is a key component of strategic planning, and it is not uncommon for several CQI-based activities to occur throughout the strategic planning process. The CQI process implements specific initiatives to achieve the broader organizational goals outlined in the strategy.

# Components of a Strategic Plan

## Vision Statement

A CSA program's vision statement is an aspirational description of what the program or community aims to achieve in the future. It is the big-picture view and provides a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action. The vision statement defines what the community wants the CSA program to accomplish in the long term and sets the tone for the strategic plan. All elements of the strategic plan should be aligned with the vision.

## Mission Statement:

A CSA program's mission statement is a declaration of its purpose and the reasons behind its existence. Developing a mission statement brings together the individual agencies of the CPMT, unifying their purpose in support of the local System of Care. Without a mission, a CPMT lacks the clarity of purpose and direction in its work and risks individual agencies remaining isolated in their respective areas of focus. Aligning the mission and vision statements is essential for consensus building and is the first crucial step to strategic planning, as both act as a foundation for the strategic plan.

## Goals:

CPMTs should utilize data to identify the strengths and needs of their local CSA program. Several resources and tools are available in the resources section of this document to assist with this process. The identified strengths and needs gathered from the programmatic data should inform strategic planning goals. Goals should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and directly related to the mission and vision of the local CSA program. A SMART goal template, as well as a "Strategic Planning Might Ask" document, can be found in Appendix B and C to assist in developing strategic planning goals.

## Strategies:

Strategies are the specific courses of action the program will take to achieve its measurable goals.

## Action Plan:

The action plan is comprehensive, including detailed steps and timelines for implementing each strategy, along with benchmarks, responsible parties, and deadlines for milestones and plan completion.

# SWOT Analysis

CPMTs need to have a mechanism to identify strengths and weaknesses, and a SWOT analysis can be a valuable tool to assist in the strategic planning process. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool that evaluates a program's **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. Knowing these points will help a program leverage its resources, shore up gaps, and realistically plan its path to the agency's overall vision. A comprehensive SWOT analysis will ground the strategic plan, ensuring that the goals, objectives, and strategies address observable challenges and maximize a program's resources.

**Steps in a SWOT Analysis:** There are several ways to complete a SWOT analysis; however, most formats include the following seven steps. Please see Appendix D for a SWOT analysis template.

1. **Gather a Diverse Team (CPMT)**
2. **Collect Data**
3. **Brainstorm Strengths:**
   o What does the program do well?
   o What are the program's core competencies?
   o What makes the program different from others?

4. **Identify Weaknesses:**
   o What resources are lacking?
   o What can the program do better?
   o What are the program's internal barriers?

5. **Spot Opportunities:**
   o What state or local resources are available?
   o What other agencies can assist the program?
   o How broad is the locality's system of care?

6. **Pinpoint Threats:**
   o What are the negative economic trends?
   o Where is the program vulnerable?
   o Have there been any legislative or political changes?

7. **Synthesize and Strategize**
   o How can strengths be maximized?
   o How can weaknesses be addressed?
   o How can opportunities be seized?
   o How can threats be countered?

# Implementation and Plan Review

Upon implementation of the plan, evaluation and monitoring are essential to the strategic planning process. To closely monitor the plan's progress toward goals and strategies, as well as the achievement of benchmarks, CPMTs must develop a plan review schedule. This review schedule should include the frequency of plan reviews, a structure for documenting plan reviews, and modifications made to the plan. A sample Strategic Plan Review template is available in Appendix E.

# Modifying the Plan

It is essential to recognize that while a strategic plan may span several years, it is not intended to stagnate. Modification is a part of the monitoring process. If, during monitoring, the CPMT identifies that the strategies are not effectively addressing the plan's goals and objectives, it is appropriate to brainstorm the reasons and make adjustments as necessary to keep the plan moving forward. Likewise, if the locality or program identifies new priorities that need to be addressed mid-term, changing the plan is essential to moving toward the program's vision and keeping the strategic plan relevant. Some situations that may necessitate plan modifications include organizational restructuring, leadership changes, operational adjustments, legislative updates, budget or resource reallocations, and performance gaps.

# Reporting Results: "What do we do with the plan now?"

Strategic plan reporting is the process of communicating how effectively a program is achieving its strategic goals. It involves collecting, analyzing, and openly sharing data with stakeholders in a structured way. This ensures that everyone understands the program's progress toward completing the strategic plan, as indicated by ongoing data reviews. CPMTs are responsible for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), which uses the following questions to evaluate strategic goal progress:

**How much did we do?** → **How well did we do it?** → **Is anyone better off?**

# Resources for use in the Strategic Planning Process

The State Executive Council (SEC), State and Local Advisory Team (SLAT), and the Office of Children's Services (OCS) have developed various tools and resources to assist local CPMTs in strategic planning. While it is not necessary to utilize every resource, the following tools will provide CPMTs with information to fuel their strategic planning process.

**CSA Data and Outcomes Dashboard (CQI) and CQI Tools:**

The CSA CQI tools consist of the CSA Data and Outcomes Dashboard (CQI), a Documentation Template with Instructions, and a set of uniform terms and definitions. CPMTs and local CSA partners can utilize the service's expenditure and performance data on the dashboard to identify areas of focus for strategic planning, develop long-range, data-driven action plans, and continually review them to ensure strategies are on track. The CQI Documentation Template enables CPMTs to track the data elements examined, the discussions that occurred, and the planning that followed. CQI tools can be found on the OCS website at http://www.csa.virginia.gov/Resources/ContinuousQualityImprovement. The Data and Outcomes Dashboard (CQI) information is updated monthly and available under the Applications section of the CSA homepage.

**CSA Utilization Reports:**

The CSA Utilization Reports provide statewide and locality-specific service and expenditure data, filterable by mandate type, service placement type, service name, and expenditure category. Most reports include distinct child count, total expenditures, average annual expenditure, per diem, and total length of stay. CSA Utilization Reports are generally updated daily.

**CSA Financial Reports:**

The CSA Financial Reports help track and analyze CSA allocations and expenditures. Numerous statewide and locality-specific reports allow comparisons across multiple fiscal years. These reports help identify local spending trends and changes over time.

**CSA Performance Measures:**

The CSA Performance Measures/Outcome Indicators Report is an annual document of statewide performance and locality comparisons on the six performance measures established by the SEC:

- The percentage of youth who decreased their score on the Child Behavioral and Emotional Needs School Domain of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS), the mandatory CSA assessment instrument, from a baseline assessment to the most recent reassessment.
- the percentage of youth who decreased their score on the School Domain of the CANS from a baseline assessment to the most recent re-assessment.
- The percentage of youth who had a reduced score on the Strengths Domain of the CANS from a baseline assessment to the most recent reassessment (indicating improvement).
- the percentage of youth receiving Community-Based Services (CBS) of all youth receiving CSA-funded services.
- the percentage of foster children in foster care who are in family-based placements; and
- the percentage of children who exit from foster care to a permanent living arrangement.

This report can be utilized in strategic planning to identify areas that require improvement. Strategic goals can be established to improve performance when a program's percentage falls below statewide or peer locality levels.

**Service Gap Survey:**

Section 2.2-5211.1.2 requires that the CPMT report annually to OCS on "gaps in services needed to keep children in the local community and any barriers to the development of those services." This requirement is met by the CPMT's annual submission of the "Service Gap Survey." The Service Gap Survey can serve as a strategic planning resource to identify critical services lacking in a region and opportunities to coordinate with neighboring CSA programs to attract needed services to the area as a long-term goal.

**Local CSA Program Audit Reports:**

OCS Program Audits evaluate the effectiveness of internal controls and organizational practices applicable to the financial and operational activities of CSA. Local program audit reports can be found on the OCS website (https://www.csa.virginia.gov/LocalGovernment/Index/0).

# Appendix A

## Definitions

***Action Plan*** is comprehensive, including detailed steps and timelines for implementing each strategy, as well as the responsible parties and deadlines for milestones and plan completion.

***Benchmark*** is a reference point against which an agency can compare its processes, operations, and products.

***Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)*** is an ongoing cycle of collecting data and using it to make decisions to improve programs and services. CQI is the repeated process of identifying and analyzing data for strengths and challenges, testing, implementing, learning from, and revising solutions.

***Data/Data Point*** is a fact or measure that is represented numerically and/or graphically. Examples include the percentage or number of something, a pattern, or a percentage change (decrease or increase) over time.

***Focus Area*** is a specific aspect or domain in which a program chooses to concentrate strategic planning efforts. Some CSA-specific focus areas are training, service delivery, administrative procedures, and local policy.

***Goal*** is a desired outcome, result, or achievement in the strategic planning process.

***Key Performance Indicators*** are the measurable metrics used to track progress toward achieving goals and objectives.

***Mission Statement*** is a concise description that encapsulates the purpose of a company, defining its culture, goals, and values.

***Outcome*** is a measurable and observable result or change for an individual, group, organization, system, or community that results from the provision of services or support. It can also include changes that are observed after modifications to the ways services or supports are delivered.

***Performance Measure*** is a description or result of work, used to tell a story about whether an agency or activity is achieving its objectives and if progress is being made toward attaining its goals.

***Responsible Party*** is a person or group accountable for completing assigned work and activities towards the achievement of a goal.

***Results-Based Accountability*** is a framework that utilizes a data-driven decision-making process to help communities and organizations consider and take action to address problems.

***SMART Goals*** are organizational goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-specific.

***Strategic Planning*** is the process of developing a high-level plan for achieving a program or organization's long-term goals or objectives. Strategic plans provide a framework for future decision-making and guide resource allocation broadly.

***Strategy*** refers to a specific course of action that the program will take to achieve its measurable goals, objectives, and strategic issues.

***Target Date for Completion*** is a deadline by which a goal is to be accomplished, or a period during which a planned actions are to be taken.

***Utilization Management*** is a process of reviewing aggregated, program-level data to determine if program funding, resources, and approaches are adequate and provided efficiently. This is a Code of Virginia requirement for CPMTs.

***Utilization Review*** is a process of reviewing individual cases to determine if the appropriate treatment plan and services are in place based on the client's current level of need. This review includes formal assessment of the necessity, efficiency, and appropriateness of the services and treatment plan for an individual.

***Vision Statement*** is a future-oriented declaration that describes a program's long-term goals and aspirations.

**SMART Goal Formula for Strategic Planning**

**What do you want to accomplish (what is the change you want to achieve)?**

**How will you measure this change?**

**What is the time frame to achieve this change?**

# Appendix C

## Questions to Ask in the Strategic Planning Process

### When Developing Your Strategic Plan:

- Where are we now?

- Where do we want to go? What is our vision?

- What are the barriers to achieving our CSA Vision?

- Who needs to be involved?

- Who are we missing?

- What are we already doing well?

- What do we want this plan to accomplish?

- Do we possess the necessary skills, resources, etc.?

- How will we know if this plan is successful?

# When Reviewing Your Strategic Plan:

- Does the CSA Vision continue to support and reflect the priorities of the CPMT?

- Does the CPMT continue to support the CSA Team Mission?

- Do the goals, strategies, and benchmarks continue to align with the CSA Vision?

- Are we making progress toward the goal and strategies? If so, how do we know?

- If not, what barriers, challenges, or needs are hindering progress?

- What specific steps will be taken to address these barriers, challenges, and needs?

- Which benchmarks have we achieved?

- Are CPMT members actively engaged in the activities outlined in the Strategic Plan? How do we know?

- Is the Strategic Plan having the desired impact? How do we know?

- What specific updates will be made to the Strategic Plan?

# Appendix D

## SWOT Matrix Template
### INTERNAL FACTORS

| STRENGTHS  + | WEAKNESSES  − |
|---|---|
| *What do we do well? What internal resources do we have? What advantages do we have over similar programs?* | *What factors within our control hinder our ability to be more effective? What areas need improvement? What does our program lack?* |

### EXTERNAL FACTORS

| OPPORTUNITIES  + | THREATS  − |
|---|---|
| *What opportunities exist in our area of expertise that we can benefit from? Is the opportunity sustainable or one-time?* | *What factors out of our control detract from our ability to be more effective?* |

https://www.smartsheet.com/sites/default/files/2022-12/IC-Simple-SWOT-Matrix-Template-11542_WORD.docx

# Appendix E

## Strategic Plan Review Form

| Locality: | enter locality | Date of Review: | select date |
|---|---|---|---|

| Vision: enter vision |
|---|

| Mission:  enter mission statement |
|---|

1. Does the CSA Vision continue to support and reflect the priorities of the CPMT?  Yes ☐   No ☐

2. Does the CPMT continue to support the CSA program mission? Yes ☐ No ☐

3. Do the goals, strategies, and benchmarks continue to align with the CSA program's Vision and Mission?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

| Plan Goals | |
|---|---|
| **Focus Area** | enter focus area #1 |
| **Goal 1:** | enter goal |
| **Goal 2:** | enter goal |
| **Goal 3:** | enter goal |
| **Focus Area** | enter focus area #2 |
| **Goal 1:** | enter goal |
| **Goal 2:** | enter goal |
| **Goal 3:** | enter goal |
| **Focus Area** | enter focus area #3 |
| **Goal 1:** | enter goal |
| **Goal 2:** | enter goal |
| **Goal 3:** | enter goal |

4. Are the plan strategies accomplishing the intended goals?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No  How do you know?

| enter data |
|---|

5. Are there changes to the plan that need to be made?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No    If yes, list changes.

| enter changes to the plan |
|---|

6.  Next steps:

| enter next steps |
|---|