



---

---

**GCSAA Chapter  
Strategic Planning Guide**

---

---

# **GCSAA Chapter Strategic Planning Guide**

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

What are the steps in developing a comprehensive chapter strategic plan? And, once developed, how do we ensure its use so it does not gather dust on the proverbial “shelf”.

Before undertaking a planning process, the chapter leadership must understand that unless it is committed to involving the entire membership the plan won't work. For members to connect with the goals of the chapter, they must participate in the development of the strategy and associated plans and activities. Furthermore, a chapter's commitment to growth and change breathes life into strategic planning; without that sincere, demonstrated commitment, planning is an empty and futile effort.

Strategic planning answers these five questions: Why does this organization exist? How do we want others to view us? How do we view ourselves? How do we see the future? What are we going to do about it?

## **HOW OUR STAKEHOLDERS SEE US**

The words “service” and “quality” are a part of most organizations' everyday vocabulary. However, too often we assume the wants of stakeholders without actually asking them what they are. We count on others to inform us of their needs. Relying on mailed surveys, as some chapters do, often results in meager return rates and survey results that rarely reflect the entire range of opinions. Even more problematic are the missed opportunities to discover the views of our lost members and those who have never joined.

An early step in the planning process is to interview a sample of our current members, as well as those we have lost, and those targeted individuals who have never joined. We need to identify what they think of our chapter, our products and services, and other organizations in comparison to us. We will also identify their needs.

## **HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND OUR ENVIRONMENT**

This component of planning consists of two parts: an overview of our chapter's structure and systems and an analysis of our operations.

There will always be a discrepancy between how we see ourselves and how others see us, as well as what we intend and what others infer about our intentions. How well we believe we manage our chapter will differ from our members' opinions of our management style and ability. We need to identify their concerns, and their recommendations, while assuring their confidentiality. This knowledge will ensure the growth of our chapters. Member involvement is one important ingredient for eliciting their full cooperation toward our goals.

The second component entails targeting our present and future markets, as well as products and services we provide now and could provide in the future. In addition, coordinate the resources (financial, technical, and human) we offer to our members with our methods of distribution (pricing, communication, and PR).

We see ourselves as having unique and desirable services, which are efficiently developed and promoted. Our core competencies (our abilities or characteristics that are difficult or impossible for others to emulate) give us an advantage over other organizations.

## **HOW WE SEE THE FUTURE**

We can't predict the future, but we can imagine it. One way of looking down the road is to ask, what are the driving forces (technology, business and economic, political, human and social, and environmental) that will shape our industry and profession in the future? What elements move our industry? Examples of driving forces include the aging of the golfing public, new equipment, a demand for affordable golf. Trade association journals, newspapers and business magazines are full of examples of the driving forces in our industry.

Now, place these driving forces into three future scenarios: a "Dog Eat Dog" environment in our industry, where competition will be more fierce than ever; an industry that is "Fundamentally Changed in Some Significant Way"; and an industry atmosphere that is "The Same as Now, Only Better". How could these driving forces contribute to the future of our industry, which appears to be either extraordinarily cutthroat, dramatically different, or bigger and better?

Next, think about what our chapters would have to look like and be like in order to compete in any of these three scenarios. What technology would we have to use? What kinds of products and services would we need to provide? What abilities and information would our members need?

## **WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?**

By now it should be clear that we are unable to properly plan strategy by ourselves. Not only is it a heavy burden for one or two people, but its implementation is difficult at best if the people who have to carry it out are not included in the process from the beginning. For these reasons, data gathering and planning requires separate meetings between different groups of people. Besides our members, these could include get-togethers with suppliers and distributors for the explicit purpose of enhancing our strategic thinking, allied associations, and other community and business organizations for the purpose of setting standards and requirements based on need.

A meeting of chapter leadership is the next step. This meeting lays out the information that has been gathered. The leaders themselves have developed some of the data, and therefore, should be familiar with most of the material.

The task for the chapter leadership is to sketch what the chapter should look like in three years, given the information in hand. The design would include, among other elements, the size of the

chapter, the products and services, the membership base, communications, etc. Then, the leadership needs to define what the chapter would need to look like in two and a half years to provide a platform for the five-year plan.

Most of the time is spent planning for the upcoming year of business. Keep in mind the need to create a platform for the two and a half-year vision cognizant of the constraints and opportunities. This plan is specific in terms of financial goals, specific action plans to reach these goals, resources that will be needed, target membership base, etc.

But, the strategy process is not complete. The strategy, thus far, must be cascaded into the various subcommittees for discussion and for development of individual action plans. Then it is routed back to the chapter board and executive for their overview, and then sent to the members until everyone is in support or is at least in agreement with the established direction. This step is crucial to ensure the strategic planning process will take hold and be useful.

At first glance, strategy making can seem overwhelming, especially for small chapters. But on the contrary, it can and should be taken in steps and not all at once. A preliminary chapter board on planning can outline the sequence and begin the process. Further, the strategic planning process does not begin and end with definite boundaries, but rather has to be revisited throughout the year. Lastly, involving all members in the process can seem like a fruitless task. (Some may have communication problems). However, involving everyone can dramatically engage the loyalty and productivity of members.

*Adapted from THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS*

*By Bernard Liebowitz, PhD*

## **Let's get started!**

# **GCSAA Chapter Strategic Planning Guide**

## **Table of Contents**

**1. Defining the Mission**

**2. Setting Goals**

**3. Establishing Objectives**

**4. Prioritizing Activities**

**5. Specifying an Action Plan**

**6. Measuring Success**

**7. Strategic Planning Tools:**

**Tab A – SCOR the Chapter**

**Tab B – Writing the Mission Statement**

**Tab C – Goal Writing**

**Tab D – Objective Writing**

**Tab E – Activities Worksheet**

**Tab F – Action Planning**

**Tab G – Example of Completed Goals, Objectives and Activities**

# Chapter Strategic Planning Guide

## 1. Defining the Mission

An organization's mission statement briefly summarizes its basic reason for existing. The best mission statements are usually one to three sentences long. They are clear and direct, without vague language or complexity. Clarifying its mission is one of the first tasks of a chapter. It promotes discussion during early meetings, builds consensus among diverse viewpoints, and provides a reference point for chapter activities. To develop consensus about the chapter's mission, it helps to focus the discussion on several questions.

- Who does the chapter want to reach with its messages and program activities?
- Where does the chapter want to concentrate its activities?
- What makes the chapter's activities distinct from other groups or organizations in the golf community?
- How does the chapter want to carry out its activities?

The mission statement can and should be re-examined periodically. It should not be changed frequently or without opportunity for discussion among the chapter's members.

## 2. Setting Goals

Like defining a mission statement, setting goals promotes discussion, builds consensus, and strikes a balance between the ideal and the achievable. Be cautious about setting goals with too large a scope. This can make it harder to recruit and keep chapter members actively involved and energized. Build the potential for some success into the goals. Alternatively, goals worth pursuing should require effort and persistence.

Internally, goals provide a reference point for chapter activities. Externally, goals clarify both what the chapter is for and what it is working toward. They will be used repeatedly in communicating with stakeholders, the media and the general membership. It is important that they be stated in clear, direct and positive language without jargon or rancor.

Exactly what would a goal statement look like? Goal statements are general in nature and express a desired end result. For instance; To be recognized by the general public as the lead organization in the Adirondack Region regarding Golf Course Environmental issues (the "Go To" organization).

## 3. Establishing Objectives

Once the mission statement and goals have been identified, the next step is setting objectives that will support the chapter's goals and achieve its mission. The objectives should be specific and measurable. Vague objectives are virtually useless because they don't really provide much direction.

As a rule, it's best to have at least one objective per goal. If this results in too many objectives for the chapter to handle, then the goals should be scaled back to a realistic level. In deciding on objectives, chapter members should define the major activities necessary to achieve each objective, along with any estimated costs and the time frame. Once the objectives have been identified, decisions can be made regarding the need for additional resources or organizational support. In some cases, goals and objectives can be made contingent on the identification of additional resources. In those instances, if the additional money, assets or support is not forthcoming, the goals and objectives should be deleted. As the chapter moves forward, goals and objectives come full circle and must be re-evaluated for their results and impact. Goals and objectives require flexibility to reflect change, membership levels, resource availability and changes in the profession.

A major distinction between goals and objectives is that goals are broad and objectives are concrete. For example, a chapter may have as a goal to increase the environmental friendly image of golf courses. Objectives related to that goal could include: Conduct a spring time golf course nature photo contest for the public or hold nature field days at selected golf courses for K-12 schools during the fall. Objectives are practical, action-oriented and time limited.

#### **4. Prioritizing Activities**

Now that the objectives are established, it is time to isolate activities that will support and/or achieve the objectives. In some instances the objectives are activities in themselves but in many cases they can imply more than one activity. It is very important at this point that the activities required to accomplish each objective are listed and organized by priority.

#### **5. Specifying an Action Plan**

Once the mission, goals, objectives and priority activities are identified, the chapter can develop an action plan with steps for achieving its goals and implementing its priority activities. The action plan includes details about necessary tasks, the chronological order of tasks, and required resources. Most importantly, the plan assigns responsibility for each task to a specific member or committee and establishes a due date for completing the task and/or reporting back to the chapter.

Developing an action plan may seem overwhelming, but the SCOR model for strategic planning is one way to break this process down into manageable sections. SCOR is an acronym for Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Risks. This approach can be used to examine the chapter as a whole, a specific goal, a specific objective or a specific proposed activity. By applying the SCOR model, the chapter can match its internal strengths and challenges to the opportunities and risks in its area. With this knowledge of its internal and external environment, the chapter is better equipped to select appropriate activities and specify the key tasks needed to implement them.

As the chapter works through the SCOR process, it identifies characteristics related to its overall capacity to succeed, that is, to carry out its priority activities successfully. These chapter characteristics might include addressing the concerns of members, developing efficient internal

communication, working toward strong but shared leadership, or applying skills in conflict resolution. Like the reels of a greenmower, these chapter characteristics must be reconsidered and resharpened periodically. They give the chapter the cutting edge and ability to provide a smooth operating environment to move forward.

The chapter might have good ideas for activities that it cannot carry out. There might be internal or external factors related to the chapter's capacity or the membership's readiness that should be addressed first. Recognizing the need to postpone an activity is not failure; it is a sign of good planning.

The ideal action plan is both specific and flexible. During the intended life of an action plan, both positive and negative changes can occur at the national, state or local levels, including:

- New proposed laws or governmental regulations.
- Changes in GCSAA, such as PDI.
- Shifts in public attitudes toward golf courses.
- Identifying new potential partners.
- New competition.

By working through the SCOR model, the chapter is in a better position to include contingency plans and alternative options if and when adjustments are necessary.

## **6. Measuring Success**

Once a plan is developed, chapter members are eager to move forward and get on with the tasks at hand. But there is one other planning issue to consider. Chapter members should ask, "how will we know that we are being successful in achieving our goals and meeting our deadlines?" Measuring success or progress toward the chapter's goals and specific parts of its action plan is important for several reasons:

- Monitoring the status of goals and objectives promotes responsibility among the chapter members.
- Reviewing the action plan annually keeps it relevant to changes in the golf community and in the wider golf profession.
- Reporting may be required by outside providers of funds and resources.
- Obtaining resources is easier with a documented record of success.

Plans for measuring progress or evaluating the chapter's efforts can be simple and relatively informal or more structured and detailed. Basic tools for measuring success include:

- Maintaining centralized, up-to-date files of chapter correspondence, written materials and media coverage.
- Preparing accurate minutes soon after chapter meetings. Minutes are the record of oral reports from committee chairpersons or task force leaders.
- Requesting brief, periodic written reports from task forces or committees on major initiatives.

An annual review gives the chapter an opportunity both to reflect on its accomplishments and to identify areas requiring additional or more focused effort. It is an opportunity to solicit feedback from members, especially those who may not have participated in the previous goal setting and action planning processes. Some chapters distribute brief surveys to both active and "corresponding" members, that is, those less involved in week-to-week activities but concerned about chapter and GCSAA issues. It is an opportunity to re-establish consensus and a strong sense of direction. It is recommended that annual reviews be conducted at chapter board meetings, regular updates provided in the chapter newsletter, member mailings and occasional reports at chapter meetings.

# SCOR the Chapter

**Strengths:** Chapter characteristics that allow the chapter to take advantage of opportunities or reduce the impact of barriers.

**Challenges:** Chapter characteristics that could stand in the way of the chapter taking advantage of opportunities or reducing the impact of barriers.

**Opportunities:** Factors outside the chapter that allow it to take action to encourage participation.

**Risks:** Factors outside the chapter that stand in the way of achieving its mission and accomplishing its goals and objectives.

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
<b>Strengths:</b> _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

# Writing a Chapter Mission Statement

A mission statement is an important communications tool. It helps the chapter communicate with its stakeholders, helps motivate members to work toward a shared vision, and focuses efforts. To be effective, it must be used and referred to on a continual basis.

## Why do we need a mission statement?

- **It is a communications tool.** Tells everyone the reasons for the chapter's existence.
- **It is a tool for chapter leadership.** Gives chapter leadership a clear position to use when working with stakeholders and promoting the chapter with the public.
- **It is a motivational tool.** Encourages members and allies to work toward a shared vision.

## How to write a mission statement

- **Make it short.** McDonald's mission statement is only four words: quality, consistency, cleanliness and service. Brevity will enhance understandability. Make it only long enough to cover the intended purpose of the organization.
- **Make it easy to remember.** Use simple words that people can remember and actually use.
- **Make it audible.** Use words and phrases that sound good as well. Members will use the mission statement talking on the telephone and at public meetings. Try for a conversational tone.
- **Make it a "becoming" statement.** Look toward what the chapter wants the environment surrounding golf course management to become. State not just what the chapter is, but how it will reach its goals.
- **Make it unique.** Demonstrate how the chapter differs from other organizations.

Source: Adapted from *Program Trends in Business and Industry*, March, 1991.

# Write Your Mission Statement

**Directions:** Answer the questions below. Then use your answers to develop your chapter's mission statement in the box below.

---

---

1. **Why** does the chapter exist?
2. **What** would happen if the chapter *did not* exist?
3. **What** are the chapter's most important functions?
4. **Who** are the current members? **Why** have they joined?
5. **Who** are potential members? **Why** have they joined?
6. **What** jobs are limited to only the chapter's ability?
7. **What** are the organization's *unique* strengths?

**Directions:** Use your answers above as a guide. Write a succinct mission statement for your chapter below:

## Sample Missions

The Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association exists to provide its members the opportunities to excel professionally and contribute to the enjoyment and vitality of the game of golf.

### **Georgia GCSA Mission Statement**

- To provide for and enhance the recognition of the Golf Course Superintendent as a professional.
- To advance the art of greenkeeping and the science of turfgrass management; to collect and disseminate information concerning efficient and economical management of golf courses and related environmental issues.
- To provide a convenient and effective means for members to aid one another in their various problems.

## **North Texas Golf Course Superintendents Association**

The purpose of this organization is to advance the art and science of golf course turf through education, exchange of ideas and mutual cooperation.

The Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote research, interchange of scientific and practical knowledge relating to the care of golf courses and turfgrass operations, including the production, maintenance and improvement of turfgrass, to encourage cooperation with other associations whose interests parallel or complement those of this Association and to promote justice, education and benevolence to and for its members.

The objective of the  
**Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association**  
is to advance the art and science of Golf Course Management, to collect and disseminate among member Superintendents practical solutions to problems with a view to more efficient and economical maintenance and production of golf courses, and to promote the welfare of the Superintendent and the profession.

# Goal Writing Worksheet

**Goals should:**

- Support the mission
- Deal with one issue
- Have a desired result
- Be challenging

**Write your chapter's goals here:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Sample Goals and Objectives

---

## Mission, Strategic Initiatives and Goals

GCSAA is dedicated to serving its members, advancing their profession and enhancing the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf. To meet the commitments set forth in that mission, GCSAA is focused on four strategic initiatives:

- Help members achieve career success
- Advocate on behalf of the membership and the profession
- Provide authoritative information to the membership, the profession and the industry
- Provide dynamic responsive membership services to the membership, profession and the industry

In pursuing these initiatives, the association has established two specific goals to be accomplished by 2005:

- Be viewed as one of golf's leading organizations in terms of influence on and importance to the game of golf.
  - Employers to view the golf course superintendent as the key to the economic vitality of the golf facility and for golfers to view the superintendent as key to their enjoyment of the game.
- 

## What does the LAGA (Lawrence Amateur Golf Assn) hope to accomplish in the future?

In future years, we hope to add several more tournaments to our schedule, including:

LAGA Women's Amateur Championship

LAGA Four-Ball Championship

LAGA City Match Play Championship

We hope to have Eagle Bend Golf Course, Alvamar Golf Club, and Lawrence Country Club as venues for our tournaments in the first year and for many years to come. The LAGA also hopes to incorporate Alvamar Country Club to bring all four championship-level golf courses into a rotation. This would bring all golfers in Lawrence into a single unit to maximize the promotion of competitive amateur golf in the city. The LAGA also hopes to elicit membership contributions in the future by providing benefits to members, including such things as reduced entry fees and discounts at local retailers. The LAGA hopes to use these contributions for a variety of purposes, including the establishment of a website. This website will be a source of information concerning LAGA tournaments, Kansas Golf Association tournaments, as well as local news and information.

---

## Golf Course Maintenance *Goals and Objectives*

Franklin recognizes the impact and importance a well-groomed and conditioned golf course has on the success of a golf facility. Franklin's objective is to provide the finest playing conditions the approved budget will allow. Our goal is to heighten the awareness of the superintendent's attention to detail in an effort to offer exceptional turf conditions. Along with the assistance of one of the Nation's top agronomists, Franklin will coordinate with the superintendent in an effort to meet or exceed the expectation of ownership and its customers.

---

## **Goals and Objectives**

- To promote golf as a medium by motivating women to recognize the sport as a means of personal and corporate advancement.
- To create an environment for all women at all playing levels to network and enjoy this great game called golf.
- To provide quality products, teaching facilities and tournament venues for the enjoyment of all women in golf.
- To encourage all women to play golf for relaxation and lifestyle enhancement.
- To give women the opportunity to advance their careers and business network through relationships built on the golf course.

A BWG membership provides a network for members to travel and play golf throughout Australia and New Zealand with other lady golfers from all walks of life.

Our policy is to provide every opportunity for all women to golf and to become part of the game.

# Objective Writing Worksheet

## Objectives should:

- Reflect specific desired accomplishments
- Be measurable in that success should be easy to determine
- Be realistic and attainable
- Define a desire specific result
- Specify a time period for meeting the objective
- Support the goals

## Write your chapter's objectives here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Activity Worksheet

**Directions:** Select an objective, and using the workspace below, list any required chapter-level supporting activities. Remember, the objective may be an activity. Lastly, prioritize the activities.

**Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities:**

**Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities:**

**Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities:**

**Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities:**

**Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activities:**

# Action Planning Worksheet

## Proposed Activity

## Mission and Goals

1. How does this activity relate to the chapter's mission and goals?
2. What issue(s) is the chapter trying to address with this activity?
3. What more information does the chapter need *before* it can address this issue effectively?

## Members and Other Stakeholders

1. Who might have an interest in this activity?  
Are they potential partners?
2. Who might oppose the activity or be affected negatively by it in some way?
3. Are there conflict issues either inside or outside the chapter related to this activity?
4. What training or special skills will those carrying out the activity need? How will the chapter provide needed training or skills?

## Resources

1. What resources are needed to carry out the activity?
  - Partners (e.g., those with skills, access, human resources, influence, or funds)
  - Materials
  - Equipment
  - Location
  - Transportation
  - Time
2. Where can the chapter obtain in-kind services, resources or cash funds to cover the costs of the activity?

## Follow-up

1. What does the chapter expect to happen as a result of this activity? How does this relate to other activities being planned by the chapter?
2. How will the chapter know that the activity was successful or effective?

3. How will the chapter recognize people for their efforts and contributions?
<b>Timeline</b>
1. How might other GCSAA or golf course management activities have a positive or negative impact on the timeline of this activity? 2. How might other community/local activities have a positive or negative impact on the timeline of this activity?

<b>Timeline</b>		
Proposed or possible date of the activity _____		
<b>Major tasks</b>	<b>Completion date</b>	<b>Person(s) responsible</b>
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
<i>After activity follow-up</i>		
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____
■ _____	_____	_____

# Reviewing Chapter Activities Using the SCOR Process

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Internal Factors:**

*What internal factors may impact the chapter's ability to carry out this activity?*

---

---

---

## **External Factors:**

*What external factors may impact the chapter's ability to carry out this activity?*

---

---

---

## **SCOR:**

*Strengths:* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

*Challenges:* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

*Opportunities:* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

*Risks:* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

# **Example Goal, Objectives and Activities**

**Function:     Membership**

**Goal:            Serve all members and increase participation**

**Objectives:**

- 1. Provide opportunities for superintendents to network and socialize with each other to build camaraderie.**
  - A. Conduct monthly general membership meetings.**
  - B. Coordinate a minimum of two district meetings in each area annually.**
  - C. Obtain sponsorship for all general meetings to keep costs low.**
  
- 2. Provide opportunities for affiliate members to network and socialize with superintendents for business improvement.**
  - A. Form a Resource Committee of affiliates and members to:**
    - Explore ideas**
    - Examine false expectations**
    - Consider affiliate conference**
    - Pair board member with affiliate member**
  
  - B. Dedicate a portion of each meeting to a business update.**
  - C. Consider a semi-annual meeting in November.**