

Creating Responsive Strategies for Nonprofits

October 4, 2024

Agenda

- Understanding Responsive Strategies
- Examples of Successful Responsive Strategies
- Assessing Your Organization
- Creating a Responsive Strategy Framework - interactive

“Homework”??? - Designing and assessing your strategy framework

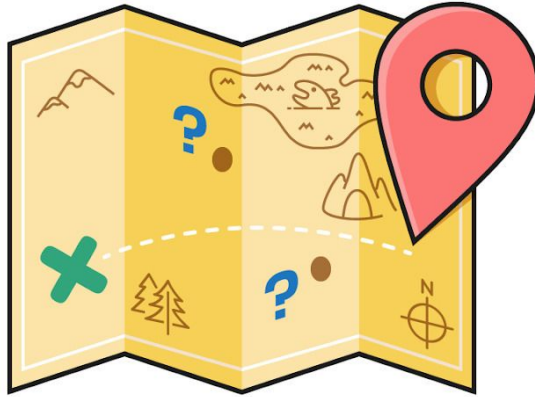


Desired Outcomes:

- Understanding how a strategic approach can contribute to organizational resiliency
- Learn about “responsive strategic planning” and how that can better meet the long term and short term goals of an organization
- Get oriented and practice using tools to create an agile and adaptive planning and evaluation process



Strategies v. Tactics



Strategy

High-level, big picture battle plan; the “What” and “Why”



Tactics

Short-term actions; day-to-day To Do items; the “How”

What are **Responsive Strategies**

- Responsive strategies are **adaptive** approaches to changing circumstances.
- They enable nonprofits to **pivot in response** to community needs.
- These strategies involve **regular assessment and adjustment** of goals.



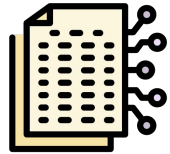
Essential elements of a responsive strategy

Mission and Vision Alignment



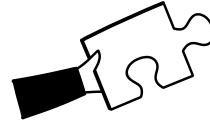
Ensure all strategies align with the organization's mission and vision, maintaining focus and purpose.

Data-Driven Decision Making



Use qualitative and quantitative data to inform strategies by analyzing community needs and program outcomes.

Stakeholder Engagement



Involve stakeholders in decision-making to gather insights and feedback from community members, donors, and volunteers.

Flexible Program Design



Create adaptable programs that evolve with real-time feedback, allowing for rapid pivots as circumstances change.

Why is this a smart way to plan?



- Helps **tame the chaos!**
- Helps nonprofits **remain relevant in a dynamic environment.**
- Responsive strategies **enhance resilience against unforeseen challenges.**
- Implementing these strategies supports **effective resource allocation and impact measurement.**

Assessing Your Organization's Strategic Framework



We conduct a landscape or informed analysis before developing our strategies to make sure our strategies meet an existing need (using feedback, data, etc.)



We consult varied stakeholders when creating our strategies, including gathering feedback about old strategies



We ensure new strategies have express success measures and evaluation criteria (we collect data and use it!)



We periodically review and evaluate how we're doing



We gather feedback regularly so we know whether we're having the intended impact



We use data and feedback to refine, improve, or move on from strategies when they aren't working as intended

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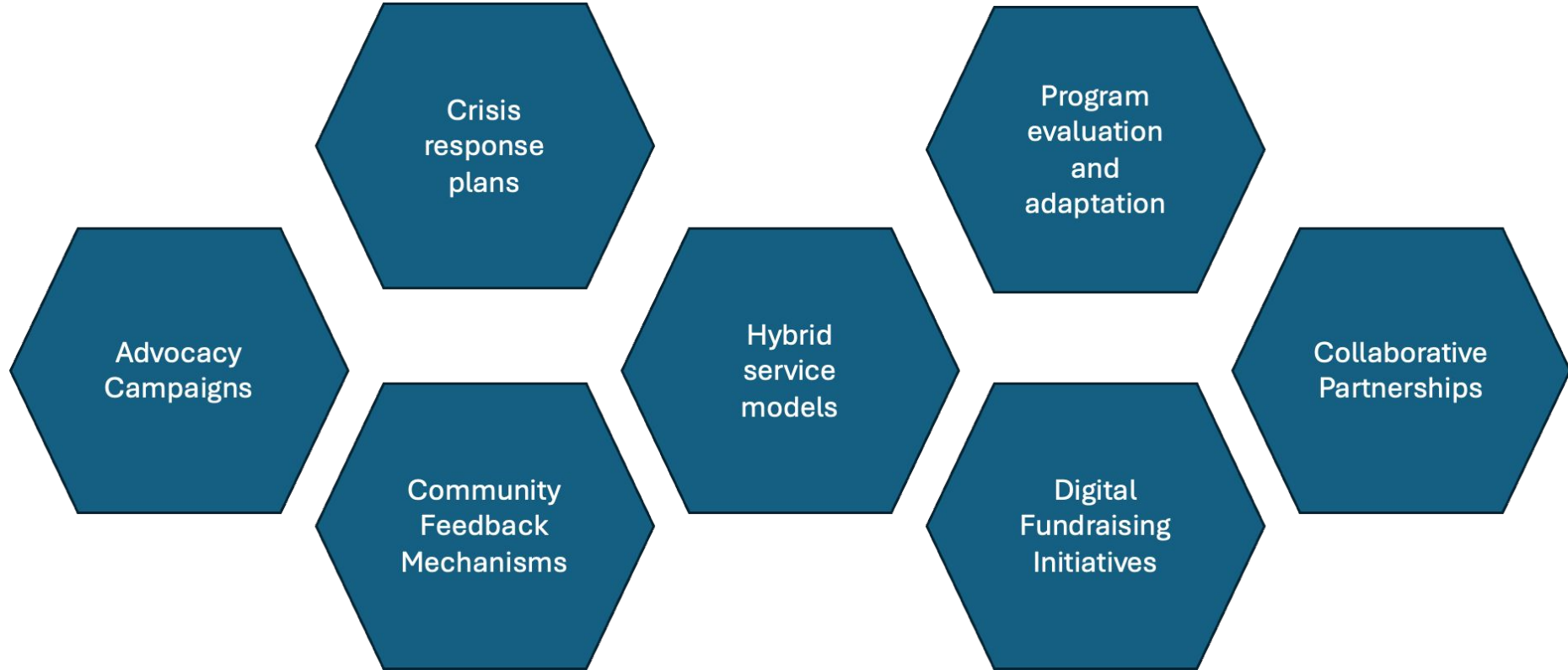


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We don't do this

We could teach a class on this

Examples



Real World Examples of Successful Responsive Strategies



Feeding America's Crisis Response: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Feeding America rapidly expanded its network and implemented drive-thru food distribution sites to meet the increased demand for food assistance, adapting to social distancing guidelines.



United Way's Community Feedback: United Way chapters often conduct community assessments and surveys to understand local needs better. They then adjust their funding priorities and program offerings based on the feedback received from the community.



Big Brother's Big Sisters Flexible Programming: The organization adapted its mentoring programs to include virtual options during the pandemic, allowing mentors and mentees to connect through video calls, ensuring continued support even when in-person meetings were not feasible.

Building our own “case study” ~~ Examples from the Pandemic

What were the most pressing challenges your nonprofits faced during the pandemic?

How, if at all, did any of your organizations pivot in response?

- Did any groups start new programs?
- Did you shift how you met?
- Did you re-prioritize funding?

When we think about responsive strategies, we should recognize we already know how to do them!

Steps to Implementing a Responsive Strategy



Identify Current Strategies

Begin by listing your organization's existing strategies and initiatives. This will provide a baseline for assessment.



Evaluate Strengths

Analyze what works well in your current strategies. Identify key successes and areas where your organization excels.



Recognize Weaknesses

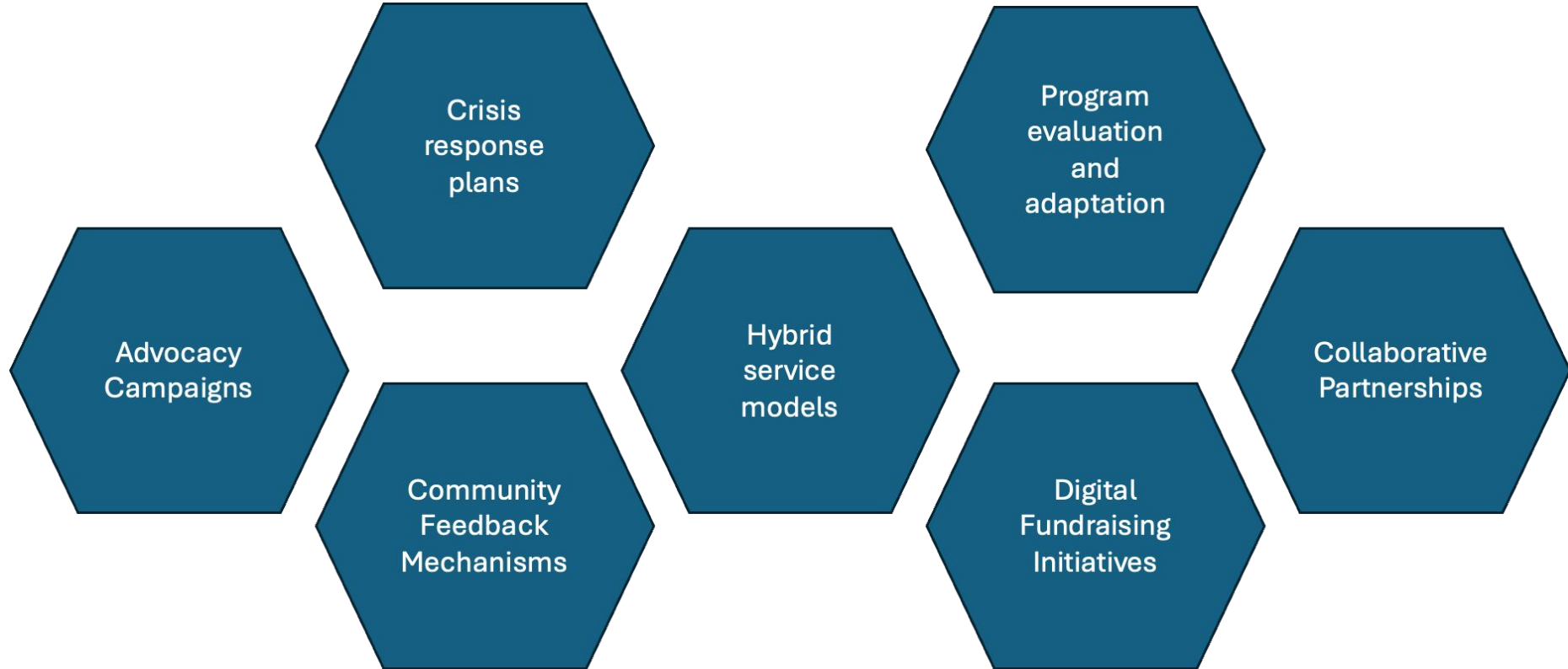
Assess areas that require improvement. Identify challenges or gaps in your current strategies that hinder effectiveness.



Gather Feedback

Collect input from stakeholders, including staff, constituents, and volunteers, to gain diverse perspectives on your organization's strategies.

Where it makes sense to try responsive strategies



Interactive Framework Development Exercise



Step 1: Key Objectives & Brainstorming

- Begin by listing the primary objectives your organization aims to achieve with its responsive strategy (what problem are you trying to solve?).
- Consider both short-term and long-term goals.
- Brainstorm the list of ideas you have that might help achieve the objectives.

Step 2: Evaluate Strategies

- Assess your list of ideas in relation to the identified objectives.
- Discuss what resources might be needed, what challenges you anticipate, and why you think something will or won't work.

Interactive Framework Development Exercise



Step 3: Draft a Framework

Once you've refined your list, pull together your plan, including timelines, a potential RACI matrix, target audiences, communication channels, and resource allocation.

Step 4: Share & Refine

Finally, share your plan with stakeholders and create a way to receive feedback so you can refine it over time.

Monitoring and Evaluating Your Strategy



Establish Clear Metrics

Establish clear metrics to assess the impact of your responsive strategies.



Regular Progress Reviews

Regularly review progress against your goals and adjust strategies as needed.



Leverage Data Analytics

Leverage data analytics tools to track performance and outcomes easily.



Schedule Periodic Evaluations

Create a schedule for periodic evaluations to maintain focus on strategic goals.



Use Surveys and Feedback

Use surveys and feedback from stakeholders to gauge effectiveness and gather insights.



Share Results

Share results with your team and stakeholders to foster transparency and collective learning.