

Planning as a Family Steps Your Family Can Follow to Make Dreams Come True

Linda J. Cox, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

Your family's future

Change affects families in many ways. Planning is the first step in helping your family cope with change. Future change will be easier if your family has a plan to serve as a road-map to a positive future.

“Strategic planning” is being done by businesses and groups everywhere as a way to prepare for the future. The “strategy” is to succeed; the “plan” helps that happen. You and your family are also a group that works together. Planning as a family unit can present some unique challenges, because its members are more closely involved with one another than are members of most groups. But just like any group, your family can plan to help make dreams come true.

Strategic planning is a model that can be used to plan for success for your family and its members. This publication outlines six steps in strategic planning that you and your family could follow to make a family plan.

Six steps to a family plan

1. Agreement to plan

Getting everyone to agree to plan is the first step. Everyone must agree that

- We are all a part of this family and we want our family to be stronger.
- We want to plan because it will help us be more successful.

2. Community and family survey

Lots of things outside the family could affect the family plan. Your community offers many different opportunities and challenges. Issues such as employment, educa-

tion, health care, transportation, recreation, and utilities need to be discussed by the family.

At the same time, the group needs to know what is happening in the family. Everyone's skills and interests, social and cultural practices, and expectations can be shared. Maybe Dad wants to work less, Mom wants to go back to school, Sister wants to be a doctor, Brother wants to fix computers, or the family will be caring for grandparents as they get older. The family needs to plan how everyone can work together to help each person get what they want.

The first few family meetings could be used to talk about what is going on inside and outside the family. Each family member can say what things in the world affect him or her and what each wants to do in life.

3. Family vision

Having a dream for the future helps people through rough times. The family's values and beliefs about what is important to them in life form the family's vision. The family can make a dream book that has pictures, quotes, and clippings of what is important to them so they can look at it together. The family can write a vision statement of their values. Here is an example of a vision statement:

“Our home is full of aloha for our family and for others. Each of us gives to the family so the family is secure. We are all learning and working to be the best we can be. We treat our earth with love.”



... continued, over

4. Listing issues

The family needs to make a list of issues that the group will have to deal with in the future. Family members can add issues to the list until everyone agrees all the issues are listed. Then the issues can be grouped into categories.

For example, the following list of issues might be grouped as money issues, communication issues, and time issues:

- paying all the bills
- spending time together and with friends
- recycling and composting
- getting the chores done
- getting yelled at all the time
- exercising more
- buying a car (or toys or clothes or . . .)
- eating healthier food
- working less

5. Getting a plan of action

The family looks at the issues in each category and decides what can be done to deal with this issue. If many steps are needed to take care of an issue, then these steps need to be written down. Then, the group can put the steps in order and make sure nothing is missing.

The family then picks the issues or steps they want to deal with over the next year. The group can decide to work on a few steps for every issue, or it may want to concentrate on one or two issues. The important thing is to get the group to agree on what they will work on over the next year.

Each family member must agree to do *something* and agree *when* they will do it. Writing down this plan of action will help everyone know what success looks like for the next year.

6. Checking back

The family can check on its progress at every family meeting. A written plan of action can be reviewed. If the plan needs to be changed, it can be.

Once a year, it is fun for the family to go back to the dream book to make sure their values and dreams are still the same. They can talk about changes in the community and the family. Issues can be added or taken off the list. Take some time as a family to feel good about and celebrate the things the group has done over the year to make the family's dreams come true.

Planning together

Regular family meetings are a good way to work on planning as a family. Meetings are also a good way to bring your family closer together. If you decide to plan together, remember that you can change your plan as your family succeeds together, or as the family's situation changes.

To understand how to have better meetings, your family can learn more about the meeting process. The CTAHR publication *Meeting as a family* (CF-1) gives some tips. Also, public libraries often have books on managing meetings.

“You’ve got to have a dream—if you don’t have a dream, how you ‘gonna have a dream come true?”

– Rodgers and Hammerstein