



Formulating Strategies

The previous Strategic Planning column described the process to identify critical planning issues and opportunities. Critical issues and opportunities serve as an essential component of the foundation to formulate a cancer program's strategic direction (eg, vision statement) and strategies.

Once the vision statement is formulated (refer to the Strategic Planning column in *The Journal of Oncology Management*, 13/1), strategies can be established. Every cancer program must choose a primary approach to achieve its strategic direction and its stated vision. The approaches can be categorized as either:

- Fundamental, requiring a significant change in direction from the past
- Formulative or incremental, requiring fine tuning and modification of a program's or an organization's established direction

Goals must be established as solutions to the critical issues. Goal statements describe what a cancer program wants to accomplish in the long-term (3–5 years) to resolve a critical planning issue. They are quantified to the extent possible and are limited in number (because the critical planning issues will likely be limited in number, for they reflect priority areas for strategic improvement).

Each goal statement will have strategies, which define the mechanisms the cancer program will use to achieve the desired outcome stated in each goal. Strategies answer “How we will get there?” and typically take 1 to 2 years to accomplish. For each set of strategies within each goal statement, there is typically a primary strategy. Other strategies may come into play in a secondary fashion. The mix of chosen primary and secondary strategies provides a unique program direction and is essential to ensure successful positioning in the marketplace.

Each strategy will have a set of objectives, which define the metric, planned outcome that will support strategies. Objectives are very specific statements and are crafted as a complementary set (when multiple strategies are required). They are designed to be accomplished within 12 months and serve as direct input into the cancer program annual management plan.

With the strategies formulated, program leadership is well prepared to assess the financial impact of the strategic direction and begin implementation planning. These 2 topics will be discussed in future columns.

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