

# Develop Your Strategic Plan

A sound organizational strategy is the foundation of a sustainable development operation. Developing a strategic vision and plan for your school takes reflection, leadership, and collaboration with key stakeholders. Your school's strategic plan illustrates how donations and gifts contribute to its financial goals and allows your community to blossom.

## The Five Types of Gifts

The advancement goals of your strategic plan should focus on acquiring a balance of five different types of gifts.

### Annual Gifts

Annual gifts are typically less than \$1,000 yearly and come from engaged families, alumni, and community members who may or may not have given to your organization in the past. Solicit annual gifts through indirect appeals, such as a button on your website, mailers to your community, or extra contributions from your supporting congregation or congregations.

**EScale Tip:** Development is about the human relationship. A united community is essential to your development efforts.

### Lead Annual Gifts

Lead annual gifts are between \$1,000 and \$10,000 yearly. They often come from engaged donors who have given to your organization in the past. Since you likely to know these supporters by name, it is possible to reach out to them directly by mail, email, or phone.

### Major Gifts

A sound development plan sets goals for major gifts. These are investments in your school between \$30,000 and \$99,999 that may be paid all at once or over three years. Advancement staff and board members may reach out individually to potential major gift donors.

### Leadership Gifts

Pursue annual leadership gifts of \$100,000 to \$1 million through one-on-one relationship building with engaged prospects. Potential donors may or may not have contributed to your school in the past. Leadership gift givers expect your school to have a clearly defined strategic plan that reassures them that their gift is a wise investment.

**EScale Tip:** If you ask for money, you'll get advice. If you ask for advice, you'll get money. People want to understand you and your dreams and invest in your vision.

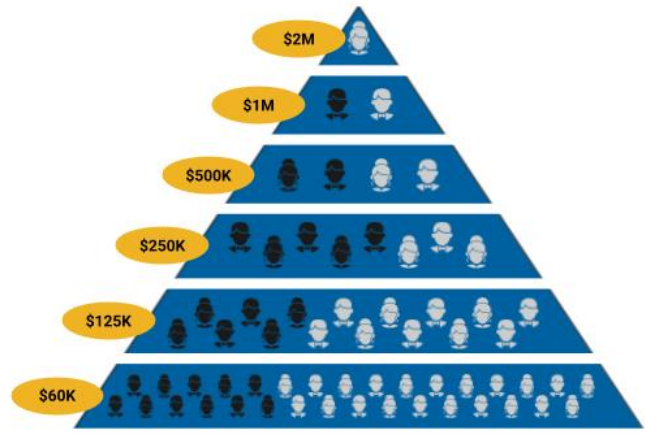
### Transformational Gifts

Every strategic plan should include the pursuit of at least one transformational gift. These gifts of \$1 million or more payable over three years can make an enormous impact on your school. Your organization's leader, in partnership with development staff and board members, should pursue

transformational gifts by building one-on-one relationships with community members who have the affinity and capability to give to your school.

### The Gift Pyramid

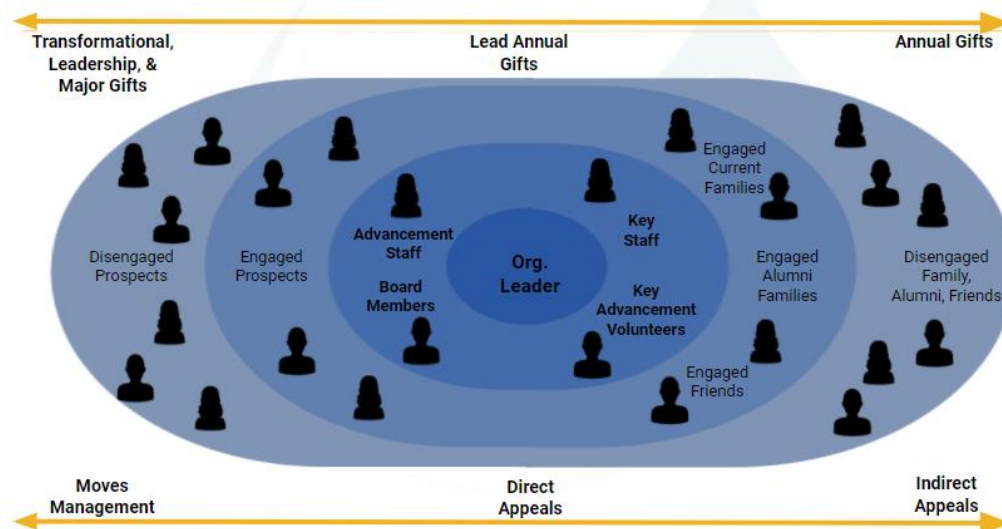
A gift pyramid illustrates how many transformational, leadership, major, and annual and lead annual gifts your school needs to meet its advancement goals. In the example at right, a single \$2 million gift at the top of the pyramid would provide 20 percent of the \$12 million goal. Two \$1 million gifts would contribute the same amount. Breaking down your advancement goals this way provides a clear path forward.



## Reaching Your Supporters

### Ripple Effects

At the heart of your development strategy are your relationships with your team, volunteers, and potential donors. These relationships have ripple effects that start with the organization’s leader and extend all the way to unengaged prospects.



To reach annual and lead annual donors, your organization’s leader should pour energy into the key staff and advancement volunteers who will pursue potential donors. Staff and volunteers should focus on engaged family, alumni, and friends of your organization who already have affinity for your

school and the capacity to give. Through their social networks, these engaged donors may passively encourage disengaged family, alumni, and friends to make their first donations.

To develop relationships with major, leadership, and transformational donors, your organization's leader should partner with advancement staff and board members to develop relationships with key individuals who have affinity for your school and the capacity to contribute larger gifts. Sharing your strategic plan and asking for advice can help cultivate relationships with these supporters so they are ready to donate to your school.

### Case for Support

*Why? Why Us? Why Now?* These are the questions a case for support document answers. Potential supporters need to know why you and your school are good investment of their giving dollars. They also need to know why you need their support right now rather than a year from now. Your case for support documents should share why donors should support your school, your school's mission and unique value, and why you need their contributions now. Building a strategic plan will help you find the answers to these questions.

## Elements of a Strategic Plan

### The Macro Environment

Successful strategic plans take into account their school's macro environment. The macro environment includes all the external factors that influence the long-term success of your school, including the economy and trends within your congregational and secular communities. Avoid focusing on shorter-term trends that may only temporarily affect your school's sustainability when putting together your financial plan.

### Vision and SWOT Analysis

At the most fundamental level, a strategic plan is your vision for getting from *here*, your current financial situation, to *there*, a more financially sustainable future. Clearly articulate where you want to lead the organization and why. Change can be difficult for teams, so be ready to address resistance among staff members. Then, perform a SWOT analysis to identify your school's strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats you may encounter along the way.

### Long-Term and Short-Term Plans

Once you have identified your macro environment, set your vision, and reviewed your SWOT analysis results, it is time to develop long-term and short-term plans. Begin by setting a 10-year plan for your organization, then develop three-year, one-year, and 90-day plans that will support your long-term plan.

### Actionable Factors

Five actionable factors power your short-term plans.

1. **Objectives.** What is your organization trying to do?
2. **Goals.** How will your team accomplish your objectives?
3. **Strategies.** What are your team's action steps?

4. **Tactics.** What actions will team members take to accomplish your objectives?
5. **Individual KPIs.** What measurable tasks will each person perform?

## Building Your Strategy Map

Once you have identified the elements of your strategic plan, use them to build out your strategy map. This flowchart gives your team a detailed look at your objectives and goals and how you will achieve them together.

### Define Several Objectives

The first element of your strategy map is your list of objectives. Define three to five objectives your organization will work on over the next three years. Your objectives can be broad and do not need to be limited to development and advancement. For example, you may choose Academic Excellence as an objective.

### Identify Goals

Once you have defined your objectives, identify the goals that will help you fulfill each objective. You may identify a single goal or several goals for each objective. A goal for the Academic Excellence objective may be to have 75 percent of students performing in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests within two years.

### Determine Strategies

With objectives and goals in place, determine strategies that will support your success. Aim for at least two strategies per goal. Using the example goal above, two strategies could be to develop individualized curriculum systems and implement a comprehensive assessment program.

### Create a Strategic Timeline

With your objectives, goals, and strategies identified, you can now develop a strategic timeline for achieving them. Discuss how to prioritize your strategies with your team to create a timeline that is achievable for everyone.

Once it is complete, share your map enthusiastically with your school's entire team, volunteers, and supporters. Showing potential donors that your school is working together on a plan for the future can help them decide to become investors in your mission.

**EScale Tip:** Your strategic map will do more to change the hearts and minds of your supporters than your mission statement. Take time to articulate and share your map.

## Getting Started

To get started on your strategic plan, gather your key team members, including staff, volunteers, and board members for an ideation session. Building a strategic plan is a community effort, so include as many key stakeholders in its development as you can. Start your planning session with five key questions:

1. If you were transported in time to 2040, what would you hope to witness, experience, and feel as you engaged in an active day at your school?

2. Considering all aspects of the outside world (the state, the country, the world), what is the greatest opportunity your organization can leverage in its journey to becoming the best version of itself?
3. What existing and emerging trends in the outside world could threaten the future of your organization?
4. What are the top objectives for your organization to achieve its vision?
5. What would be the most impactful goal for your organization to achieve in its journey to excellence?

From there, have your team work individually and in small groups to determine your organization's objectives and goals through consensus.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Potential supporters want to invest in an organization with a sound strategy. Your strategic plan will demonstrate to donors that your school has a sound structure, an efficient way of doing its work, and the right people in the right places to implement the plan and achieve its goals.