

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROPOSAL



August 29, 2024

Ben Martig  
City Administrator  
City of Northfield  
801 Washington Street  
Northfield, MN 55057

RE: Proposal for Strategic Planning Facilitation

Dear Ben,

Based on your interest in strategic planning assistance, the attached proposal is submitted for consideration.

The proposal specifically addresses the organization's desired outcomes as we understand them:

- Establish strategic priorities, measurable outcomes, and performance targets for the next multi-year performance period. Deliver a set of initiatives and actionable plans based upon a facilitated process with the governing board and staff.
- Collect and evaluate stakeholder input, from both internal and external stakeholders.

As the attached proposal reflects, we have significant experience facilitating strategic planning processes including previous work with the City of Northfield. We are committed to strategic thinking, transparency, and measurable results.

A summary of our credentials, a representative client list, and a link to examples of our work are provided. As project lead, I have conducted hundreds of workshops and strategy sessions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these services to the City of Northfield.

Yours truly,



Craig Rapp  
President

## Project Approach

The following is a description of the strategic planning process proposed by the Rapp Consulting Group. The final design will be determined by client preference.

### Project Plan

STEP	LENGTH OF TIME	ACTIVITIES
Project Initiation	30-60 days	Project planning, interviews, Kick-off senior management session
Environmental Scanning, Stakeholder Engagement	75-90 days	Board & Commission Session, Environmental scan, stakeholder engagement; SWOT, Value Proposition
Data review, preparation	21 days	Synthesis of scan and stakeholder data
Strategic planning	30-45 days	Strategic planning sessions (Governance, stakeholder review, strategy sessions)
Strategy implementation	45-75 days	Management & staff sessions Initiatives, action plans, performance management
Summary report	21 days	Report preparation, presentation
Yearly Update (years 2+)	30 days each year	Consultant-client review, strategy session

\*Timeline is a guide. Some elements overlap and/or may be out of sequence due to availability.

### Project Initiation, Governing Board/Staff engagement, kick-off meeting

Prior to initiating action, the consultants will review the results of the previous strategic plan(s) to gain insight into themes and current priorities of the organization. Following this, a project kick-off meeting with the City Administrator and the leadership team will be held for the following purposes: (1) verify expected outcomes; (2) present an overview of the process; (3) review mission, vision and values to determine the need for updating; (4) discuss & guide staff on environmental scanning and developing an organizational profile; (5) clarify and finalize the details of the engagement process for the governing board, stakeholders and staff; (6) discuss strategic issues-including any unique challenges.

Interviews with members of the governing board will be conducted to introduce the consultant(s) and acquire the perspective of the elected officials regarding the current environment, challenges, and issues.

A session with staff at all levels will be held to explain the strategic planning process, what to expect, and how it fits into a results-oriented management system. This meeting will also be used to describe the survey that will be administered to employees and/or governing board to provide feedback into the strategic planning process. Activities include:

- a. Review previous strategic plan and performance results
- b. Facilitate meeting with City Administrator and leadership team
- c. Prepare for and facilitate governing board & employee feedback
- d. Summary of meetings—outline of process

## Assess the Operating Environment

The first step in the strategic planning process is a review of the operating environment. This is accomplished in three ways: (1) an Environmental Scan; (2) an Organizational Profile; and (3) a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

### Activity #1 – Conduct Environmental Scan

Under the guidance of the consultant, the client develops the environmental scan which is a systematic review of major environmental factors affecting the organization's operating environment such as: financial and economic conditions, demographics, political and intergovernmental relations, citizen and stakeholder issues, technology changes, environmental sustainability, and the regulatory environment.

- a. Develop and distribute environmental scan documents
- b. Provide staff support as required

### Activity #2 – Develop Organizational Profile

An organizational profile is a baseline description of the organization prepared by staff with the guidance of the consultant. It provides detailed information regarding the human and capital resources of the organization and the strategic context for operations. Specifics regarding governance, organizational structure, work processes, staff capacity and capabilities, and the strategic environment are included. This serves as an on-going reference document for the board and leadership team.

- a. Prepare and distribute guides/examples
- b. Provide staff support, review as required

### Activity #3 – Administer SWOT Questionnaire

A SWOT questionnaire is administered to all strategic planning participants. This provides a leadership perspective on the current environment-both internal and external. The results are aggregated to ensure anonymity and maximize candor. The data generated is delivered at the strategy retreat.

- a. Prepare and distribute questionnaire
- b. Summarize data

## Engage the Community and Stakeholders

Concurrent with the environmental scanning effort, a stakeholder engagement process is conducted. This effort seeks to understand community needs and expectations, and determine whether the organization's mission, vision, values, and priorities are aligned with them. The final format for these efforts will be determined by the client and may include in-person and online facilitated interactions with stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders are determined by the client, but generally include community groups and members such as: businesses, schools, seniors, facility users/patrons, faith groups, historically underrepresented and hard-to-reach populations. Approaches for gathering community input include:

- Focus groups. Up to four (4), facilitated by the consulting team with groups identified by the client. Sessions consist of 8-12 individuals from each of the selected stakeholder groups. Groups can be either internal or external stakeholders (see definitions below).
- City Council – Board & Commission Session. Consultant facilitated session to elicit feedback and opinions of Board and Commission members on community needs and expectations. The focus is on collecting information relevant to the upcoming strategy sessions.
- Statistically valid community survey. To obtain community input with high confidence, the City of Northfield will contract for a statistically valid community survey with a recognized leader in the

field. The consultant will coordinate with chosen consultant and the client to integrate survey data into the process.

- **Internal stakeholders survey**—A survey of employees—determined by the client, but generally, individuals who are employed by the organization. The questions are focused on service delivery and community needs relevant to the strategic planning process.

All stakeholder engagement includes:

- a. Discuss approach with client and project team
- b. Prepare background materials
- c. Conduct process with selected approaches
- d. Summarize results

## **Governing Cohesion, Strategic Direction, Success Measures**

Following completion of community engagement, the leadership group develops the plan, beginning with a governance session to reinforce group cohesion and strategic focus. This is followed by a review of stakeholder feedback, and a retreat where strategic challenges are identified, and priorities, outcomes and performance targets are determined:

### Strategic Planning Session #1- Effective Governance, Team Cohesion, Leadership Development

An interactive session for the governing board, City Administrator, and senior management team will be conducted to familiarize the group with best practices in governance and create team cohesion. Governance topics covered will include- roles and responsibilities, teamwork, candid communications, handling conflict, the impact of politics, understanding differences, and collaborative decision-making. Participants will complete a DiSC® Personality/Style assessment and a survey of current team issues to provide base data for understanding differences and addressing team effectiveness.

- a. Prepare background materials
- b. Administer DiSC® assessment
- c. Administer Survey
- d. Facilitate session
- e. Summarize Results

### DiSC® Personality/Style Assessment

The DiSC® personality/style assessment will be administered to all participants. The results will be used during the session to enhance understanding of style differences and the impacts on team cohesion and decision-making.

### Strategic Planning Session #2- Review Stakeholder Feedback, Environmental Scan, Profile

This session is held prior to the strategic planning “working session(s)” (sessions 3, 4) and is dedicated to reviewing the results of the stakeholder feedback, the environmental scan, and the organizational profile. The consultant, in coordination with the delivery of the NCS, presents feedback results, and the staff presents the scan and profile. The session concludes with a facilitated discussion amongst the governing board regarding issues raised.

- a. Prepare and summarize data
- b. Present to governing board
- c. Facilitate discussion

### Strategic Planning Session #3- Examine Operating Environment, Identify Strategic Priorities

This session includes the governing board and leadership team and focuses on reviewing or confirming organizational purpose, examining the operating environment, and establishing priorities. The group addresses the organization's value proposition, mission, vision, and values, and updates them accordingly. A facilitated process yields a list of organizational challenges and a set of 4-6 strategic priorities. The group's effort will be informed by the results of the community engagement process and the information generated by the scan, profile, and SWOT questionnaire. *(This session and session #4 are typically 3-4 hours and can be combined into a one-day session)*

- a. Develop meeting process
- b. Review and integrate survey, environmental scan, profile, SWOT information
- c. Facilitate session and group exercises
- d. Summarize results

### Strategic Planning Session #4 –Establish Desired Outcomes, Key Indicators, Targets

This session is dedicated to defining a set of desired outcomes, and preliminary identification of performance indicators, and targets used to establish accountability and achieve results. It may also address issues not completed at the previous session. Using a facilitated group process, the strategic priorities are aligned with desired outcomes and performance targets.

- a. Prepare background materials
- b. Review previous session discussion/results
- c. Facilitate session
- d. Summarize results

## **Operationalize into a Work Plan**

Following the development of a plan delineating outcomes and performance targets, the process moves to implementation. Staff from many levels develop strategic initiatives—projects that enable achievement of targeted performance. This is followed by the creation of action plans—detailed steps required to implement initiatives. To ensure accountability and transparency, the actions are tracked and reported. This may be accomplished via existing client systems or a purchased software solution designed for this purpose.

### Strategic Plan Implementation—Develop Strategic Initiatives/Action Plans

This session focuses exclusively on developing strategic initiatives and detailed action plans for each strategic priority, in line with identified outcomes and targets. Action plans need to be developed in sufficient detail to establish accountability and make the effort real. The session includes a review of the strategic planning process and guidance on action planning.

- a. Meeting/discussion with City Administrator/Project Manager
- b. Review previous session discussion/results
- c. Prepare background materials
- d. Facilitate session
- e. Summarize results

#### Strategic Plan Implementation- Work Plan refinement and integration

This session is conducted with staff at multiple levels and focuses on refining the work of the previous session to achieve integration of effort across service areas. It includes development of the first year's workplan and the deadlines across the performance period. Performance reporting is presented along with discussion of software integration.

- a. Meeting/discussion with City Administrator/Project Manager
- b. Review previous session discussion/results
- c. Prepare background materials
- d. Facilitate session/train employees
- e. Summarize results

#### Strategic Plan Implementation- Work Plan finalization

This session is conducted with staff at multiple levels and will focus exclusively on final integration issues related to action plans, vertical and horizontal coordination, finalizing project deadlines, and software input. This will include the review of staff work by the consulting team.

- a. Meeting/discussion with City Administrator or Project Manager
- b. Review and feedback on staff work
- c. Prepare background materials
- d. Summarize results

### **Plan Updates, Continuation**

Each year following initial plan adoption (Years 2+), the consultant will work with the client to review and update the plan.

- a. Review strategic plan process, prepare background materials
- b. Facilitate retreat
- c. Summarize results

## Proposed Fee

The fee for this project (not including travel) is:

**\$42,200.00**

-Travel billed at cost

Payments shall occur according to the following schedule:

1. Twenty-five percent (25%), upon execution of this agreement.
2. Twenty-five percent (25%) upon completion of stakeholder engagement
3. Twenty-five percent (25%) upon completion of strategic planning sessions
4. Twenty-five percent (25%) upon submittal of final report
5. Payments shall be made upon receipt of an itemized invoice
6. Travel shall be included on appropriate invoices

If this proposal is acceptable, please sign below and return one copy to Craig Rapp at [craig@craigrapp.com](mailto:craig@craigrapp.com)



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Craig Rapp, President

August 29, 2024

### Approval:

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for the City of Northfield

Date



## Rapp Consulting Group Team

The Rapp Consulting Group (RCG), and its principal, Craig Rapp, have conducted over 100 local government strategic planning engagements—over forty (40) in the past five years. Primary clients are cities, counties, and special districts located in the Upper Midwest. The collaborative process used by RCG results in clear priorities, focused objectives, and targeted performance. This is accompanied by best-in-class stakeholder engagement, plan implementation and performance reporting—facilitated by a team with decades of local government and consulting experience.

### **Craig Rapp, President, Rapp Consulting Group**

Craig Rapp is a nationally recognized speaker, facilitator, and strategic advisor. He speaks and conducts workshops on subjects such as: leading in difficult political environments, alternative service delivery, and authentic leadership. The focus of his consulting practice is strategic planning, leadership development, and optimizing organizational performance. Craig has over thirty-five years of experience as a senior executive in both the public and private sectors. He was the Director of Consulting for the International City-County Management Association, City Manager in three cities, Director at a regional agency, and a senior executive in two privately held companies. He has a master's degree in public administration, a bachelor's degree in urban studies, and is a graduate of the Senior Executive Institute at the University of Virginia.

### **Mark Nagel, Consultant- Former City Manager, Professor of Business Administration**

Mark Nagel has over thirty-five years of experience in local government, as a City Manager, HRA Executive Director and Community Development Director. He was also a Professor of Business Administration at Normandale Community College and adjunct faculty at Metro State University. In addition to these responsibilities, Mark regularly serves as an interim manager for local governments- providing an experienced perspective to a variety of organizations.

### **Dr. Craig Waldron, Consultant-Former City Administrator/Community Development Director**

Dr. Craig Waldron is the owner of The Waldron Company—a local government consultant practice. Prior to his current position, Dr. Waldron was Director of the Public Administration Programs, Co-Director of CPAL, and lecturer at Hamline University. In addition, he served as City Administrator for the City of Oakdale and City Manager for the City of North St. Paul. Dr. Waldron was recognized as manager of the year for his efforts in career development in Oakdale. He also served as a Community Development Director, a Regional Development Commission Executive, and as an elected official. He has also chaired several municipal organizations in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Dr. Waldron earned his Doctorate in Public Administration from Hamline University, his M.A. in Urban and Regional Studies from Minnesota State University and has a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Iowa.

## Clients

The primary clients served by Rapp Consulting Group are cities, counties, and special districts. The organizations vary but are generally similar in size and complexity. Over 100 strategic plans have been delivered to clients w/ more than 40 in the past five years. Representative clients and plans are linked below.

## Examples of Strategic Plans, Implementation

Examples of strategic plans, environmental scans, and do-it-yourself performance reports are available at: [Examples of Strategic Plans, Initiatives/Action Plans, and DIY Performance Reports](#)

The Rapp Consulting Group has business alliances with POLCO© and Envisio©. They are best-in-class providers of stakeholder engagement and performance management. An example of how Envisio's software and dashboard solutions are being implemented by a Rapp Consulting group City is found here: **City of Maplewood, MN** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48vqbpOpNyo&t=0s>

POLCO [www.POLCO.us](http://www.POLCO.us)

Envisio [www.envisio.com](http://www.envisio.com)