

California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision Project

Definitions for Commonly-used Planning Terms

October 10, 2011

During the October 6, 2011 joint meeting of the California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision Blue Ribbon Citizen Commission and Stakeholder Advisory Group, it was highlighted that a variety of terms were being used that may not have shared meaning. To help facilitate a common understanding of terminology, this document provides definitions for various terms being used in developing the California Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision.

Organization: An organization is a person or group of people intentionally organized to accomplish an overall, common goal or set of goals. There are several important aspects to consider about the goal of the business organization. These features are explicit (deliberate and recognized) or implicit (operating unrecognized, "behind the scenes"). Ideally, these features are carefully considered and established, usually during a strategic planning process.

Mission: An organization operates according to an overall purpose, or mission. In government the mission is typically influenced by a mandated responsibility (e.g. statute, policy, etc.) and/or inherited values (e.g. good steward, etc.).

Vision: An image about how an organization should be working or how it should appear when things are going well; it is often expressed as a future, forward-thinking condition.

Strategic Vision: A picture or mental image of what an organization should look like in the future with strategic elements that support successful achievement of the vision under a variety of external and internal conditions.

Values / Core Values / Operating Principles: All organizations operate according to a set of explicit or implicit values; these represent priorities in the nature of how people within the organization should carry out their activities. These values create the culture or "personality" of the organization. It is important to note any discrepancies between stated and operating values.

Strategic Priorities: Overarching strategies that apply to everything an organization does, no matter the subject area or process (i.e., quality over quantity, simplified decision-making, internal and external excellence in customer service, empower employees, lead by example).

Goals: It is best if overall goals are defined by the overall impact desired (outcomes) to describe *what* an organization will achieve.

Objectives: Smaller goals that help achieve each overall goal. Objectives should be SMART: Specific (concrete action, step-by-step actions needed to make the goal succeed), Measurable (observable results from accomplishing the goal), Attainable (it is both possible and done at the right time with sufficient attention and resources), Realistic (the probability of success is good, given the resources and attention given), and Time-bound (goal is achieved within a specified period of time in a way that takes advantage of the opportunity before it passes by). Achieving several of the goals usually means you are achieving the goal.

Action: A specific task that, when carried out with other actions, helps to achieve the objective.

Strategies: These are methods by which to achieve objectives and goals; this is *how* an organization will achieve its goals. An organization will often use several, overall, general strategies (see strategic priorities) and then tailor appropriate, specific strategies to individual goals and objectives.

Organizational vitality: Measured in various areas, including vision, communication, decision-making, adaptability, leadership, productivity, integrity and quality.

Organization Systems and Processes: Organizations have major subsystems, such as departments, programs, divisions, teams, etc., with a particular way of doing things to achieve the mission and goals of the organization; plans, policies and procedures often define these systems and processes. Various inputs to these systems are processed in some way to create outputs and outcomes that, together, should accomplish the mission and goals of the organization.

- **Inputs** to the system include resources (e.g. raw materials, money, technologies and people). Inputs should be defined by who provides them and when they should be provided.
- **Outputs** are tangible results produced by processes in the system, such as products or services for consumers.
- **Outcomes** are the overall impacts of, or benefits received as a result of, the processes applied to inputs and resulting outputs.

Efficient: Acting or producing with a minimum of waste, expense, or unnecessary effort.
(TheFreeOnlineDictionary)

Effective: The degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved. In contrast to efficiency, effectiveness is determined without reference to costs and, whereas efficiency means "doing the thing right," effectiveness means "doing the right thing."
(BusinessDictionary.com)

Enhance: Heighten, increase; especially to increase or improve in value, quality, desirability or attractiveness.
(Merriam-Webster.com)

Improve: To enhance in value or quality: make better. To make more acceptable or to bring nearer a standard.
(Merriam-Webster.com)

Sustainable: Capable of being sustained. Of, relating to, or being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged. (Merriam-Webster.com)