



Planning Weed and Seed

# Chapter 5. Planning a Weed and Seed Effort

## Overview

This chapter provides guidance on the Weed and Seed planning process as you begin to tailor the national Weed and Seed goals to create your own local strategy and subsequent implementation plan. The local strategy should mirror the national strategy. Although you may be tempted to view the design of the Weed and Seed strategy as a program, it is not. On completing this chapter, you should have a thorough understanding of the steps required to begin and carry out your planning process, the elements required for your local strategy, and some techniques for assembling your plan to serve as a management tool as you implement your strategy.

## Vision

Neighborhoods selected for inclusion in Weed and Seed generally have some common features that are not considered desirous. Crime and poor social and economic conditions are some of the factors that make these communities the most challenging to restore. Given your commitment to overcome these challenges, it becomes important to develop a plan of action that can be followed by everyone involved in Weed and Seed. This plan serves as a blueprint for determining which actions will be taken and by whom and how certain goals and objectives will be achieved.

Once completed, the plan also provides a clear and concise vision of the community given the positive interventions by all Weed and Seed activities. Some of these activities already may be in place; others may have to be developed. You may find that some activities have previously been contemplated, but players were missing

who were needed to implement them. That is one of the unique features of Weed and Seed. Your local plan will bring stakeholders together to address issues affecting the community. For many, this is the first time they will work with one another. The plan helps provide guidance to ensure that everyone is following his or her role.

Imagine the work that goes into a Broadway production. Actors, sound stage, electrical technicians, musicians, props—all are critical components to pulling off a successful play. Do you think this can be done without a strategic plan? Some might say the script is the plan. The point is that Weed and Seed, like the Broadway production, needs a carefully crafted plan if the strategy is going to be effective.

Two types of plans are needed for the Weed and Seed strategy. The first is the strategic plan, which outlines the vision, mission, critical priorities, goals, and objectives. The second planning document, an operational or tactical plan, is a continuation of the strategic plan and defines, in greater detail, the tasks and resources required and the timeline needed to achieve the goals and objectives.

## Implementation Process

Several steps are required in planning your local Weed and Seed strategy.

### Step 1: Assemble Your Planning Team

Before you can begin you should know who will participate in the planning process and who will help guide the process so that your final product—the local strategy—will be embraced by all community stakeholders. Each community

varies in the degree and level of participation of individuals during the early stages of Weed and Seed. Some communities quickly form a Steering Committee that is prepared to lead the planning process. In other communities, a core group of individuals takes responsibility for putting the planning process into action and keeping other individuals—particularly the residents—informed of the progress. (This group may later become the Weed and Seed Steering Committee.)

Who should be part of your planning team? What if your Steering Committee has not officially “moved into gear”? Experience has demonstrated that assembling individuals from the community to serve as members of the Planning Committee is a strategic decision that helps move the planning process forward. Individuals who agree to serve on the Planning Committee may ultimately serve on the Steering Committee. For this phase, emphasis should be placed on identifying individuals who have the time, expertise, influence, and commitment to work through the planning process to create a realistic local strategy. Emphasizing that this is only temporary and created specifically for the purpose of planning should ease anxiety around the composition of the Steering Committee and its responsibility in leading the execution of the local strategy.

The development and implementation of a local strategy require a team of individuals that represents the various elements of a community. Once you determine who will serve on the Planning Committee (which could entail all the Steering Committee members, if operational), you must ensure that it reflects the diversity of the community’s individuals and organizations.

## Step 2: Identify Resources for Planning

Now that you have assembled your Planning Committee, you must think about how to implement the planning process. You could identify a person to serve as a facilitator during the meetings. Another option is to have members of the

committee lead different components of the planning process, making it more of a group-led process. Should you desire, a professional facilitator from outside the community can be found through a local university or consultant agency experienced in working with nonprofit organizations. Do not underestimate your ability to lead your own planning process. Talk with others who have been involved in implementing Weed and Seed sites to learn about their planning experiences. Planning can be a great team-building exercise for all your Weed and Seed supporters.

Before starting, everyone included in the planning process should understand what is involved. Often, residents who have never been a part of this type of process feel reluctant to become fully engaged unless information or “preplanning” activities are provided.

Before outlining the local context for developing a strategy, some of the primary tasks and sub-tasks associated with the development of a strategy should be outlined. This list can be used as you initiate your planning process and should include the following:

- Identification of critical priorities.
- Confirmation of strategic thrusts.
- Development of goals.
- Development of objectives to support the goals.
- Development of the implementation plan to support the goals and objectives.

## Step 3: Prepare to Plan

Based on the information collected during the community assessment, the Planning Committee should have sufficient information to identify the neighborhood’s priorities. These priorities should be based on factors contributing to neighborhood stress and resources that should

but do not exist in the community and are desperately needed. In addition, residents can provide information on what they perceive are requirements for revitalizing the neighborhood.

Collectively, the Planning Committee has several datasets to work with in developing the priorities. The challenge for the committee is to rank and allocate these priorities based on the four prongs of the national Weed and Seed strategy: law enforcement; community policing; prevention, intervention, and treatment; and neighborhood restoration.

At the outset of planning and developing a local Weed and Seed initiative, the Planning Committee needs to fully integrate the needs and views of the community. The sum of experiences and philosophies of Planning Committee or Steering Committee members and other stakeholder representatives responsible for implementing goals and objectives greatly affects the potential and ultimate success of the initiative. The combined experiences include operational styles of agencies, traditional patterns of agency-community relations, and social experiences within the neighborhood. Opinions about the causes and effects of violent crime vary greatly. Consequently, these opinions influence how the parties involved evaluate the potential of strategic interventions.

These differences in emphasis also exist at the Federal level. The U.S. Department of Education, for example, views open-air drug trafficking as a threat to the quality of education for many reasons, including a threat to children who must walk to and from school. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services assesses it as a problem related to the potential increase of transmittable diseases. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development views the problem as a threat to the quality of life and viability of public housing programs.

These dynamics become complex at the local level. Law enforcement officials view the same

problem—open-air drug trafficking—as a violation of law requiring arrest and incarceration. The view from the community, however, may be quite different. Open-air drug trafficking, while acknowledged as illegal and dangerous, may be seen as a direct result of social alienation, poverty, and discrimination. The community may view employment, job training, and equal opportunity initiatives as equally important primary interventions that should be coupled with law enforcement. Coordinating different strategies can produce powerful new approaches to a standard. The list of examples is extensive, as is the range of appropriate interventions.

Differences in perspective and context are evident in other important aspects of the planning process. The intentions and design of an initiative may be viewed unfavorably by members of the community. Whereas the Steering Committee might design the local Weed and Seed strategy to assist communities, neighborhood residents may or may not view the goals and objectives as meeting their needs. For example, research indicates that certain types of interventions are effective in addressing selected risk factors such as substance abuse. Parental involvement in early education reduces the risk factor of academic failure, prevention programs decrease drug use, and employment and community development diminish economic deprivation. Although these programs are effective in preventing substance abuse, their implementation does not necessarily receive strong support and cooperation from the community. This is why you must ensure strong resident participation on the Steering Committee at the onset of Weed and Seed.

Differences in perspective shape attitudes and responses. For example, a neighborhood may suffer from various ills, such as graffiti, abandoned homes and automobiles, poor lighting, dilapidated and trash-filled streets, and ineffective code enforcement, compounded by police indifference. In the community, these problems



are perceived as symbols of wide-scale victimization and a lack of social support and government responsibility. A strategy that incorporates the perspective of only a few residents in an effort to reduce any of these problems may anger other community members because they believe that officials are attaching a high priority to one problem and not addressing others. Sound strategy development and planning must incorporate multiple perspectives that include effective programs or services and creative solutions to important community issues. For example, strategies should combine programs to reduce academic failure with substance abuse prevention and intervention activities.

Understanding the local context is crucial in formulating any strategy and subsequent plan. Understanding the local aspects of past and current working relationships helps the implementation process. For example, in some instances, law enforcement agencies are unwilling to share interdiction strategies because of a belief that operational efforts might be compromised. However, the police and neighborhood residents are dependent on one another. Residents may want to be legitimately included in community-targeted efforts. Therefore, the parties must

reach an agreement that is in everyone's best interest. If there have been problems with these relationships, it may be important to incorporate additional strategies to address the barriers that may have formed between residents and non-residents as a first step in working together.

A primary objective in preparing a solid strategy and plan must be the development of open communication, cooperation, and trust. This can only be achieved through a planning process that is inclusive and respectful of the community and its residents.

Community residents may feel strongly that they know where the more serious problems lie and should set priorities for addressing them. Residents may feel that out-of-town drug dealers who set up operations in rental properties are a greater, more immediate threat than neighborhood youth selling drugs on the corner. In addition, community members may consider it an advantage for everyone to be aware of police interdiction strategies in the belief that this knowledge would deter crime. For residents, the suppression of crime might be a more desirable objective than an increase in the number of arrests. As a result, a planning process that considers the neighborhood perspective leads to creative approaches to achieve desired results.

#### **Step 4: Move From Community Needs to Critical Priorities**

Understanding the local context, combined with the planning process, prepares the Steering Committee to begin formulating local goals and objectives. The Steering Committee should now focus on identifying the priorities of the neighborhood. By this time, the Steering Committee should have taken steps to ensure the planning process includes a balanced approach to developing community goals and objectives.

During the needs assessment process, both assets and gaps were identified. Part of the

process in identifying gaps was to encourage community residents and other stakeholders to help shape a vision of what the community could be if everyone contributed something to the “community-building pot.” Critical priorities are issues that could affect the ability of the community to achieve this vision. After identifying these priorities, you should assess the ability of the community to address them. Given the multitude of stakeholders who are involved in this process, certain questions must be asked of the organization’s representatives and residents separately and collectively to determine what priorities should be addressed by Weed and Seed. These local priorities should be consistent with the goals and objectives of the national Weed and Seed strategy.

Benefits of completing this type of exercise are the critical thinking that emerges and the synergy that is created from having the different groups come together to work on the Weed and Seed strategy. After making what may be a long list of priorities, the committee should ask the following questions about each priority:

- How does this issue relate to the national Weed and Seed strategy?
- What are the strengths of the Weed and Seed site in responding to this issue? Consider the contributions of each partner.
- What are weaknesses of the Weed and Seed site in responding to this issue? Consider the contributions of each partner and their investment in the process.
- What opportunities can Weed and Seed pursue in addressing this issue? What are some programs or services currently being offered by each partner?
- What threats should Weed and Seed be aware of in responding to this issue?
- What are the consequences relative to achieving the vision of the community if this issue is not addressed under Weed and Seed?
- What should your goal be in addressing this issue? What do you want to change or improve in the community?

After completing this exercise for each of the selected priorities, you will find that many of the items can be condensed as you work to ensure they correspond to one or more of the four Weed and Seed components. When the list is completed, you are ready to begin developing goals and objectives to respond to each issue.

For planners involved in this process, note that the following four components of Weed and Seed remain constant for all Weed and Seed sites:

- Law enforcement.
- Community policing.
- Prevention, intervention, and treatment.
- Neighborhood restoration.

### Step 5: Link Critical Priorities to Goals and Objectives

During the past several years, there has been a debate about the distinction between the meaning and order of goals and objectives. Many agree that a goal is a broad target to be achieved through the implementation of tasks that connect to some measurable objectives. Objectives are viewed as the tools needed to provided some specificity to the goal. Objectives can be either qualitative or quantitative. Although the initial goals are often easy to formulate, it is usually the measurement of these goals that presents a challenge.

For example, a committee selects a goal to significantly reduce drug trafficking in the neighborhood. Specific objectives implied by that goal include closing open-air markets and crack

houses. Another goal is to reduce the level of violence involving guns. Objectives would be to incarcerate people who use guns during the commission of a crime and to severely restrict the availability of guns.

The goal statements should reflect major desired changes in conditions as a result of the Weed and Seed effort. Goal statements can be made by reversing problem statements so that they express the desired result. For example, if the problem is open-air drug trafficking in the neighborhood, the goal statement should read: “Eliminate open-air drug trafficking.” The following are examples of goal statements:

- Goal 1: Reduce the occurrence of violent crime.
- Goal 2: Provide local, State, and Federal programs to prevent drug abuse.
- Goal 3: Eliminate open-air drug trafficking.
- Goal 4: Improve the economic viability of the community.

The use of goals and objectives enhances the potential success of the Weed and Seed effort and facilitates the effective implementation, management, and evaluation of Weed and Seed activities. Goals and objectives must connect to the critical priorities of the community. When completing the questions relative to each critical priority (see step 4, above), the last question begins the connection between the three. By answering the last question, the Planning Committee can begin to formulate the goals and objectives for the local Weed and Seed strategy.

Although each of the four Weed and Seed components must have goals and objectives, these components do not operate in isolation from one another.

The goals for prevention and community restoration should work in conjunction with all the other goals. Community policing can and should be a bridge between goals. As the police develop positive relationships with residents, they will gain insights about some of the problems that plague the community.

As mentioned previously, law enforcement activities should complement the other goals. For example, if an objective is to construct a small business “incubator,” the implementation task should be to reduce and prevent crime by targeting that location and providing a secure area for the facility. Crime prevention should also support other economic development goals. Several questions concern links: How can community policing support drug treatment and prevention? Can alternative sentencing complement treatment? Would bail restriction improve neighborhood safety? These and other questions support the intent of the program—to coordinate and collaborate multiagency and private resources in the community. They must work together. Ensuring that goals, objectives, and tasks include these links is the best way to meet this requirement.

How are the goals identified? The data collected through the needs assessment and neighborhood selection processes are important sources for helping to determine the critical priorities. These priorities drive the creation of the goals and objectives (see exhibits 5-1 and 5-2).

How will you achieve these goals? You will need to identify selected objectives and make a commitment to achieving them. Objectives connect the specific Weed and Seed activities that will result in the achievement of your goal. The objectives must be measurable so you can gauge whether you are working toward your goal. In formulating the objectives that will correspond to each goal, ask yourself the following

## Exhibit 5–1. Identifying Critical Priorities and Their Corresponding Components

<b>Critical Priorities</b>	<b>Corresponding Components</b>			
	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment</i>	<i>Community Policing</i>	<i>Neighborhood Restoration</i>
High level of open-air drug trafficking	✓			
Lack of affordable housing				✓
Poor relationships between law enforcement and the community	✓		✓	
High level of youth gang activity	✓	✓		
High truancy and school dropout rates		✓		

## Exhibit 5–2. How Can We Develop Goals To Address Our Critical Priorities?

<b>Critical Priorities by Component Area</b>	<b>Goal Statement</b>
<p><b><i>Law Enforcement</i></b>                      High level of open-air drug trafficking                      High level of youth gang activity</p>	Significantly reduce open-air drug trafficking Reduce level of youth gangs
<p><b><i>Community Policing</i></b>                      Poor relationship between law enforcement and the community</p>	Strengthen lines of communication between residents and law enforcement officers
<p><b><i>Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment</i></b>                      High truancy and school dropout rates                      High level of youth gang activity</p>	Reduce truancy and school dropout rates Establish alternative programs to help deter youth from participation in gangs
<p><b><i>Neighborhood Restoration</i></b>                      Lack of affordable housing</p>	Increase number of new or rehabilitated homes in community

question: “What do we need to do to achieve our goal?” For example:

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>
1. Eliminate open-air drug trafficking.	1. Implement 12 <i>monthly</i> stings in hot spots.
2. Create new housing developments.	2. Support the creation of an <i>18-unit</i> multi-family housing development.

What is the measurable outcome associated with each objective? In other words, what should you be assessing to see whether you are working toward your goal? For goal 1, did you conduct 12 stings or only 2? For goal 2, are plans under way for an 18-unit housing development?

Although you may be tempted to develop several goals for each of the four components, it is not recommended. In addition to addressing several—not all—of the critical priorities identified, the local strategy must be viewed as realistic. It may be more advantageous to refine the list of critical priorities for Weed and Seed to 10 and ensure that those selected can be dispersed across the four components. Each component should have no more than four goals. Each goal may have several objectives; however, you should limit the objectives to four.

Below is a review of the planning process:

1. Identify your critical priorities based on the community assessment. The top 10 issues will be your priorities for the local strategy.
2. Separate these priorities into one or more of the four Weed and Seed components.
3. Attempt to formulate goal statements for each of the priorities by asking, “What do we want?”

4. For each goal, develop measurable objectives that you believe will move you toward achieving the goal. Take note of what you will be measuring to assess your progress.

Remember, completing the goals, objectives, and tasks correctly with everyone’s participation simplifies the process of developing the implementation plan. The following sections cover the implementation and management plan for Weed and Seed.

### Step 6: Develop the Implementation Plan

Developing a Weed and Seed strategy can be challenging. Unlike independent organizations involved in strategic planning, the overall planning process for Weed and Seed involves several important actors who may never have worked together. Not only is there pressure to develop close working relationships quickly, these relationships must create a marriage of different perspectives, beliefs, and, often, biases. Developing common goals and objectives is one of the major hurdles to overcome; the design of an implementation plan is another.

The implementation plan for Weed and Seed involves several organizations undertaking a sequence of activities. Some of these activities are performed concurrently; others are sequential. *Weed and Seed principles reflect real-life circumstances. There are natural sequences. You must crawl before you walk.* Similarly, suppression of



violent crime and drug trafficking must precede community restoration. No one wants to live or invest in a crime-ridden, drug-infested neighborhood. Community policing can begin with crime suppression efforts; however, maintaining peace and order in the neighborhood are required duties. Weed and Seed uses a holistic approach; therefore, law enforcement efforts should be reinforced with prevention, intervention, and treatment to make it difficult for the neighborhood to slide back to its preresoration condition.

Developing an implementation plan requires linking goals and objectives with tasks, assigning responsibility for these tasks, creating a timeline for action, and identifying resources necessary to implement the tasks. The tasks developed in the implementation plan should correspond to the commitments made in the Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs). Remember, everything in an effective Weed and Seed strategy is connected—neighborhood selection, needs assessment, identification of goals and objectives, implementation plan, and MOAs. A sequence of activities reinforces each Steering Committee member's or other stakeholder's commitment to Weed and Seed by helping them to see where they fit in the total plan. The implementation plan is where “the rubber meets the road.”

To determine what tasks should be initiated to address each objective, the Steering Committee should ask the following questions:

- What practical solutions might we pursue to address this issue and achieve our goal? Is an organization currently offering a solution that could be leveraged?
- What are some barriers to realizing these practical solutions? Is there no community organization responding to the issue? Is there a lack of financial resources? Is there no expertise represented on the Steering Committee?
- What major initiatives or actions might we pursue to achieve these practical solutions directly or indirectly to overcome these barriers?
- How much time is required to implement this strategy?
- Who will be the lead for this strategy, and what partners should be involved in its implementation?
- How will we measure the success of the strategy?

Historically, some communities have argued that nothing can begin in a community until the weeding activities have been executed. Do not be misled. Activities relating to the four Weed and Seed components can begin at the same time. Although some tasks may take much longer to implement than others, community residents must understand and see activities occurring on all four fronts. Community stress did not occur sequentially; why should community solutions be sequential?

In developing the implementation plan, it is important to determine which organization will take the lead for each of the proposed tasks. Other organizations will also be needed and will take direction from the lead organization. The time required to complete a task may exceed the total time allotted for the implementation plan, which happens because certain tasks may take several years to complete. Most important, the tasks should be cited in the plan and progress toward achieving the objective(s) should be reported to the Steering Committee on a consistent basis.

The following steps are necessary to develop an implementation plan:

1. Think about all the tasks that must be completed to achieve *each* objective. Consider them one at a time. Do not try to group all objectives and tasks under one heading.

2. Determine which agency or organization should be responsible for implementing the tasks. You could indicate which agency will serve as the lead and which others will be involved in carrying out the task. This section should also correspond to the MOAs signed by all participating organizations.
3. Establish a realistic timeline for achieving the objectives. This timeframe can be presented in terms of months or years. Remember, you will be using this to monitor your activities.
4. Think about barriers that might hinder your work. Although this is not a required section in the EOWS Official Recognition application, considering barriers could be useful before you implement your plan. It is better to be prepared for potential problem areas than to have to deal with them after implementing your strategy.

### Step 7: Design a Planning Format for Your Local Strategy

The beauty of Weed and Seed is that it is designed to be flexible, proactive, and interactive. Continuous commitment of multiple resources is a key requirement for overall success. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to assume that local officials can confirm the availability of all the necessary resources during the initial planning phase. As your strategy develops, local agencies will discover new ideas and resources to assist the community. The neighborhood, law enforcement agencies, resource agencies, and others will continually recommend adjustments to the plan. The Steering Committee should encourage all participants and other interested groups to make recommendations for changes. Managers should not assume that the original goals and objectives are cast in stone.

The purpose of well-defined goals, objectives, and tasks is to ensure that the proper mix of activities results in a successful Weed and Seed initiative. Even if complete goals and objectives

exist, efficient or systematic implementation cannot be guaranteed. Management is responsible for converting these processes into a format that advances the functional operation of the strategy.

Organizing an implementation plan for Weed and Seed helps to identify

- Additional essential tasks that are missing from the initial goal and objective statements.
- Dependent relationships among tasks.
- Responsibility for execution of tasks and any overlap of authority that might affect the outcome.
- The implementation sequence.

Managing the ongoing relationships among the tasks and their timely implementation is the backbone of the management process. Successful management of Weed and Seed involves assigning specific responsibility for executing each task. A task timeline organizes the tasks by each objective and enables managers to arrange the tasks in sequence. Managers can format the chart in various ways, depending on the type of equipment available, level of experience with the process, and personal preference. Program status is easy to follow with this format.

Other advantages are also evident. A timeline shows when additional tasks are needed, responsibilities are to be identified, and the link between tasks are to be organized.

Site coordinators who use project management software for Weed and Seed can input changes and generate reports by task, agency, milestone, and other criteria. Those without access to the software should maintain a manual system. This type of management system not only improves program oversight but also assists with program reporting.

The Weed and Seed strategy design should be sufficiently flexible to quickly accommodate any program enhancements and approaches not identified during the planning phase (e.g., removing structures that support drug trafficking). When the Steering Committee accepts a new activity recommended by residents, the new task should energize and support all the community efforts designed to prevent crime.

## Implementation Issues

Many changes in the original strategy may occur during implementation phase. These changes can easily be accommodated if the Steering Committee does not view the original goals and objectives as rigid guidelines subject to strict compliance audits. You should document each change and ensure that administrative and funding guidelines are followed.

### Exhibit 5–3. Additional Estimates of Contributed Resources

#### **Federal**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will assist in the provision of meals in the Safe Havens.

#### **State**

The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse is contributing a grant-writing expert to assist individual agencies in applying for direct grants.

#### **Local**

The City Manager has agreed to encourage all city agencies to cooperate in the establishment of Safe Havens and service provision.

#### **Private**

1. A local T-shirt printer will provide 50 T-shirts with Safe Haven Safe Corridor Guard printed on them for members of the target area communities.
2. One dentist has pledged to provide free dental care to target community residents.
3. One medical doctor who is a family practitioner has offered her services free of charge to Weed and Seed communities.
4. A private small business has offered to employ some of the graduates of the jobs/literacy program.