The Civil Air Patrol Strategic Plan
Student Guide

The E&T program uses the flipped classroom format where students read the material before class and come prepared to discuss the topics. All students are required to come prepared to participate, which includes completing the reading and all assignments in advance.

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to identify the key components of the CAP Strategic Plan and explain how region and national plans support the vision laid out.

Desired Learning Objectives (DLO):

1. Students will be able to define strategic planning and explain its importance in organizational success.
2. Students will be able to identify and describe the key components of a strategic plan, including mission, vision, goals, and Objectives and Key Results (OKR).
3. Students will understand CAP's strategic and business portfolio processes.
4. Students will understand how CAP uses SWOT and PESTLE analysis in strategic planning.
5. Students will be able to explain the role of key groups and leaders in the strategic planning process and how effective leadership can drive successful implementation.
6. Students will be able to effectively communicate how they support CAP's strategic planning efforts.

Suggested Time to Complete Module (reading, discussions, and assignments):

Synchronous onsite/ViR classes: 120 minutes

Asynchronous online: 120 minutes

Required Reading:

- Student Guide
- 2024 CAP Strategic Plan (on the national website on the governance page)
- Trends Impacting Monterey County Nonprofits: A PESTLE Analysis (skim the study, focus on categories)
- 36 U.S. Code § 40302 – CAP Purposes, Legal Information Institute (cornell.edu)

Introduction

Strategic plans permeate our everyday lives whether we know it or not. From a Fortune 500 company to our government, strategic plans are made to establish priorities, goals, and objectives that serve two purposes: contribute to the next higher echelon's plan, goals, and objectives; to make the organization better internally. CAP's Strategic Plan was first developed in 2016 and since then has undergone several revisions. We continue to revise the process to better serve our dynamic organization.

1. Students will be able to define strategic planning and explain its importance in organizational success.

Strategic planning is the process of defining an organization's direction and making decisions on allocating resources to pursue this strategy. This process encompasses establishing objectives for the future, determining the steps required to reach these objectives, and allocating the necessary resources to implement the plan. Strategic planning is critical for organizations for a variety of reasons.

- First, strategic planning provides direction and focus.
- Strategic planning also requires organizations to define their vision and mission which provides a clear direction and ensures that everyone is working towards common goals.
- Strategic planning helps identify the priorities for an organization and ensures resources are utilized efficiently.
- Organizations with a strategic plan are better equipped to anticipate and respond to changes in the environment.
- A strategic plan aligns the efforts of different departments and teams, fostering better communication and collaboration. A strategic plan helps ensure that everyone understands their role in achieving the organization's objectives.
- Strategic planning encourages leaders to think ahead and anticipate future challenges and opportunities.
- Finally, by focusing on long-term goals, strategic planning helps organizations build a sustainable future. Strategic planning ensures that short-term actions are aligned with long-term objectives which promote growth and stability.

2. Students will be able to identify and describe the key components of a strategic plan, including mission, vision, goals, and Objectives and Key Results (OKR).

Every organization approaches strategic planning slightly differently but there are some common components. A strategic plan typically includes a clear mission statement, a vision for the future, and specific, measurable goals aligned with the organization's long-term objectives. It also outlines objectives and key results used to track progress and identifies the resources and capabilities needed to achieve the desired outcomes.

In Civil Air Patrol, our mission/vision statement is combined. It was crafted in 2021 and is, “Volunteers serving America’s communities, saving lives and shaping futures.” It’s an elegant, powerful statement that perfectly encapsulates what we do in CAP.

3. Students will understand CAP’s strategic and business portfolio processes.

CAP's Strategic and Business Portfolio is divided into two parts. Elements of both areas lead to a list of programs, projects, and activities that CAP invests in to achieve our operational and strategic aims. Think of this portfolio just like any investment portfolio: we want to see the best return on investment we can get, and it may be necessary to adjust that mix of investments from time to time.

How will Civil Air Patrol change at each interval below? How might our missions and programs change?

2 years
5 years
10 years
20 years

- Business Planning - 1 to 10 years divided into three horizons
    - 1 - 2 year horizon: objectives and key results that relate to keeping the core of what we do strong
    - 3 - 5 year horizon: objectives and key results that relate to program or service enhancements (3 - 5 years)
    - 6 - 10 years: objectives and key results related to building our future strengths and capacities to embrace and execute new program / service areas
    - Business planning is aimed at determining our priorities and to focus the work across the team. You have heard that if everything is important then nothing is important. Business planning involves our volunteer, corporate, and program leaders in evaluating what’s most important to ensure a return on CAP’s investment in our programs and activities – how does the member, partner, customer, etc. benefit?

- Strategic Planning - 10 - 20 years - exploring, developing, and implementing new program / service areas.
    - Strategy is as much about what CAP will NOT do as much as what we will do. For example, we are not the Civil Boat Patrol. We have chosen aerospace, emergency services, and youth development as our strategic domains. The question for our future is both, “How do we strengthen the core of who we are?” and “What other opportunities to serve communities, save lives, and shape futures could we embrace and develop for tomorrow’s members.”
    - Strategic planning is the process we will use to hone in on our strategic priorities. Inevitably, that process will leave some cool stuff on the table, but we can’t be all things to all people; we have to choose. Planning evaluates the cost-benefit of choosing one thing over another so we can invest in the best things possible for CAP.

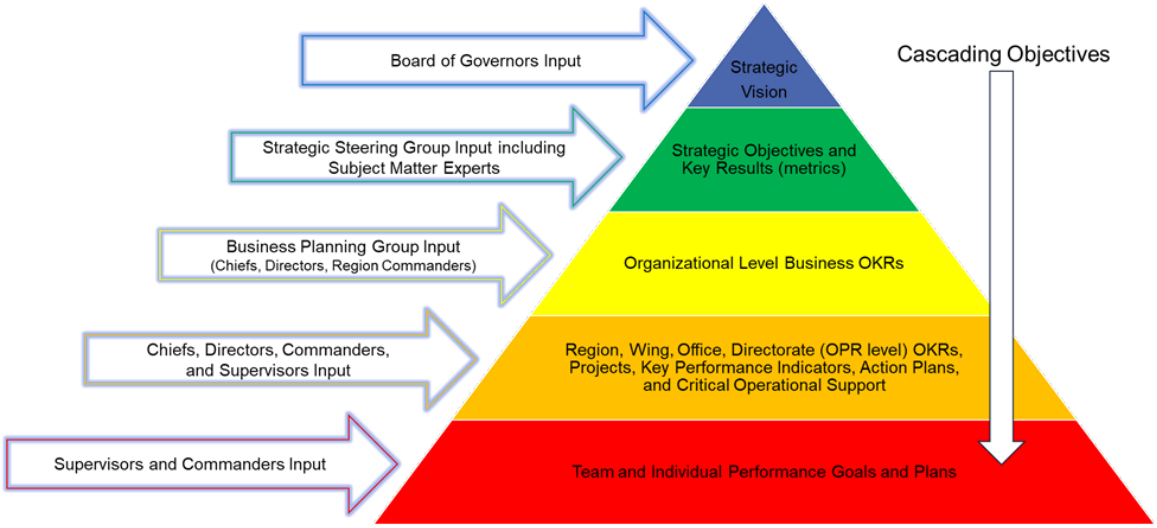


Figure 1: Strategic and Business Planning Process

How does it all fit?

Strategic Vision, an aspirational description of what CAP aims to achieve in the long term (10 - 20 years), serves as a guiding framework for understanding our purpose, values, and direction. Here are some key components of a strategic vision:

- Direction: Indicates where CAP is headed, often including specific goals or a general direction of growth.

- Aspiration: Ambitious and aspirational, pushing CAP to strive for excellence.
- Alignment: mapped to CAP's core values and mission vision.
- Clarity: Clear and simple to understand, so everyone can relate it to their work.
- Inspiration: Motivates and inspires people to invest their best efforts to achieve it.

A well-crafted strategic vision helps align members and employees around a common long-term direction, inspires engagement and commitment, and guides decision-making and resource allocation.

Does CAP have a strategic vision?

Yes, currently CAP's strategic vision has three focus areas. While they may be redefined in the coming years, elements of each will still carry forward into our objectives and outcomes. These focus areas are:

- **Prepare** CAP for the future as a disciplined and effective non-profit
- **Shape** lives, build character, and ready young people for futures in aerospace and beyond.
- **Innovate** and explore new ways to provide relevant solutions to the dynamic nation we serve.

Strategic and Business Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) - a goal-setting framework for CAP to define and track our goals. Here's a breakdown of each component:

- Strategic and Business Objectives:
    - Strategic Objectives - long-term (10-20 years out) aspirational aims that outline what CAP wants to achieve.
    - Business Objectives - aims CAP is focused on within its existing programs and portfolio for achieving during the three time horizons referenced above (1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years).
    - Organizational level - CAP as an organization will set some objectives and key results that we need to ensure that we address enterprise risk or to strengthen programs or program enablers.
    - Office/Directorate level - Commanders and staff will set office/directorate level OKRs, develop projects within their area of responsibility, and formulate action plans to support the strategic and business objectives.

    - Characteristics:
        - Inspirational: They should motivate and inspire the team.
        - Clear and Concise: Easy to understand and communicate.
        - Aligned: Should align with the overall strategic vision of the organization.
- Key Results - specific, measurable outcomes that indicate progress towards achieving the objectives.
    - Characteristics:
        - These represent the outcomes we expect to see because of actions we take to meet the objectives.
        - Measurable: Quantifiable and trackable.
        - Time-bound: Have a clear deadline.
        - Aggressive yet Achievable: Challenging but realistic.

How OKRs Work

- Set Objectives: Identify 3-5 key objectives that are most important.
- Define Key Results: For each objective, set 3-5 key results that will measure progress.
- Track Progress: Regularly review and update the progress on key results.
- Align and Engage: Ensure that everyone understands and is aligned with the objectives and key results.

OKRs help organizations focus on what matters most, align their teams around common goals, and track progress in a structured way.

4. Students will understand how CAP uses SWOT and PESTLE analysis in strategic planning.

These tools are used as inputs to Strategic Planning:

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. The SWOT analysis is a common tool used in strategic planning. CAP's SWOT is reviewed annually and revised

to reflect our current state. This analysis helps us embrace opportunities based on our strengths and areas we can improve to become more capable and agile. SWOT also helps us manage threats (or risks). Strengths and Weaknesses are internal to CAP. Opportunities and Threats are external forces.

What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats do you envision for CAP? Complete the table below.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths (Internal)	**Weaknesses (Internal)**
Opportunities (External)	**Threats (External)**

PESTLE: Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Legal, Economic. A PESTLE analysis looks at these six external factors and how their current or future state can impact their operations, fundraising, and goals. When evaluating opportunities and risks, we consider these main categories to form our analysis.

Similar to businesses, nonprofits and charities are subject to external factors that can affect fundraising, donations, operations, and volunteerism. According to the nfpResearch website, performing this type of analysis during strategic planning allows an organization to:

- **Identify Opportunities:** A PESTLE analysis can help you identify potential opportunities to expand your reach, engage with new audiences, and better utilize technology.

- **Mitigate Risks:** By identifying potential risks, such as changes in public sentiment or economic conditions, a charity can take steps to mitigate these risks and ensure long-term sustainability.

- **Plan Strategy:** A PESTLE analysis should inform the strategic planning process, informing mission, services, and operations.

- **Engage Stakeholders:** A PESTLE analysis can help a charity to better understand the needs and priorities of its stakeholders, including donors, volunteers, and the communities it serves.

- **Evaluate Impact**: By regularly conducting a PESTLE analysis, a charity can evaluate the impact of its programs and operations on the external environment and identify areas for improvement

Monterey County, CA, performed a PESTLE analysis of trends impacting nonprofits in the county. The study provides an extensive list of factors to consider in a nonprofit PESTLE analysis. Skim the report (focus on the topics) to get ideas for your own PESTLE analysis for CAP.

In the Additional Readings at the end of this lesson are several articles that discuss performing a PESTLE (or PEST) analysis for a nonprofit. They provide a general overview but give insight into how these factors may affect a nonprofit like CAP and provide a starting point to develop your own PESTLE analysis.

To do a PESTLE analysis, think about the following questions. Record your answers to discuss in class or to submit to your instructor.

- **Political factors**: What is the country's political situation and how can it affect nonprofits and specifically CAP? Is the political environment changing, and what are the current trends? For example, how might changes to tax law or federal funding affect CAP? What does the current support for the military look like and how might that impact CAP as the Air Force Auxiliary?

- **Economic factors**: What does the economy look like currently? Is the economy growing or shrinking? What is the effect of the current inflation rate? How might these impact donations, volunteerism, budget, recruiting, retention, etc.?

- **Social factors**: Are there any significant shifts in consumers' preferences and buying trends? What are the latest social patterns, and how have they influenced people's behavior? What is the social context in which we operate–including demographic trends, cultural norms, social attitudes, and community dynamics–and how is it changing? Are there changes to how people prioritize their time that could affect volunteering in CAP?

- **Technological factors**: What are the latest technological advancements and breakthroughs? How can we leverage this to improve efficiency, enhance our

missions, and support our members? Will new technology change how we communicate with our members or the public?

- **Legal factors**: What kind of regulations and legislation are put into effect? Are there any key changes in the legal system and compliance policies that might impact the organization?
- **Environmental factors**: What are the current environmental trends and policies? How might these impact our activities, purchasing (e.g. vehicles, fuel), or other aspects of our programs?

More to come: As we stand up the new Strategic Steering Group (SSG), the team will identify additional inputs that can help us evaluate our current state and possible mission and program areas we may want to expand into.

Annual Timeline and Activities

- The cycle of planning occurs within the context of the calendar year (January through December).
- Each year in April, the SSG will submit recommendations to the Board for new or adjusted strategic objectives.
- The CSAG and chiefs and directors from National Headquarters will meet annually in June to review and, if necessary, revise current Organizational OKRs and include new OKRs as needed to ensure alignment with the Strategic Vision.
- From June through October, the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) chiefs and directors work to create their OPR-level business objectives, key results (metrics), project plans, and key performance indicators. These plans will become part of CAP's portfolio for the coming two years. By planning for a two-year period, we also plan our budget and fundraising needed to meet our strategic and business needs.

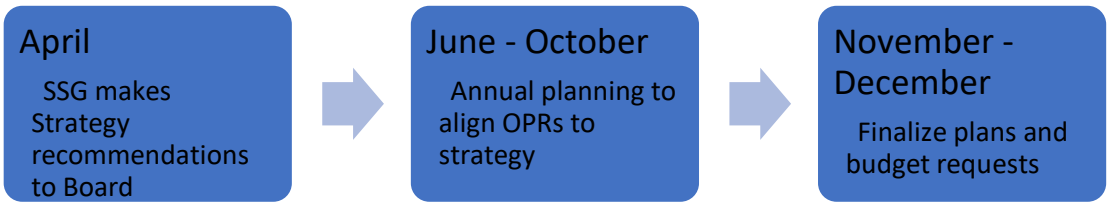


Figure 2: Strategic Analysis Annual Timeline

Does CAP currently have any strategic objectives and key results?

Sort of. The current strategic plan for 2024 - 2026 is more like a business plan (focused on the next 1- 5 years) and was intended to be a transition plan with objectives and actions that carried over from the 2023 strategic plan. We used the word "initiative" thinking these would contain grouped related objectives and take several years to complete. Starting in 2025, we'll focus on OKRs and key performance indicators (KPIs).

Project Plans

Project plans will reflect how each OPR will contribute to achieving the business or strategic objectives and key results. Project plans will also include key performance indicators that will help identify progress milestones and ensure the project stays on track.

Currently, NHQ tracks nearly 150 projects and more than 50 routine complex activities (like the National Conference, Legislative Day, and more).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPIs represent the observable outputs (versus outcomes which are the Key Results) that lead to achieving a key result. KPIs are progress indicators that tell us whether a project is on track or off track and what we can do to get it back on track.

5. Students will be able to explain the role of key groups and leaders in the strategic planning process and how effective leadership can drive successful implementation.

CAP Strategic Steering Group (SSG) – a Board of Governors (BoG) chartered group of leaders, stakeholders, internal and external subject matter experts, and industry representatives tasked with making recommendations to the Board for strategic direction, objectives, and metrics. What is the purpose of the SSG?

Strategic Direction:

- Identifying CAP's top strategic challenges and opportunities while being mindful of the scope and purposes laid out in 36 USC §40302. 36 USC §40302 should be the minimum considered but not serve to limit new ideas from being considered. For more information, check out 36 U.S. Code § 40302 – CAP Purposes, Legal Information Institute (cornell.edu).
- Researching and recommending strategic direction, initiatives, objectives, and metrics to the Board.

- Providing strategic guidance and recommendations for CAP's portfolio of programs and projects.

Advisory Role:

- Ensuring and justifying the feasibility and alignment of endeavors with CAP's mission-vision.
- Recommending consideration and/or approval of strategic initiatives, objectives, and key metrics to the Board to improve, change, or adapt for the future.
- Reviewing communication efforts and outreach related to organizational strategic objectives.

Portfolio Inputs:

- Clearly Identifying, defining, and prioritizing strategic initiatives and objectives.
- Reviewing budgets allocated to strategic initiatives and objectives.
- Monitoring progress toward strategic objectives.
- Make recommendations to prioritize or identify programs or activities that should start, stop, or continue.

Who is Involved in the SSG?

The BoG appoints members from the following groups to the SSG:

- Members of the BoG
- The National Commander/Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, and CAP-USAF Commander (or their designee)
- Current or former members of the CAP Senior Advisory Group (CSAG)
- Chief officers from National Headquarters

The SSG then invites a variety of subject matter experts (SMEs), stakeholders, industry leaders, and partners to join the discussions and help the SSG make the best possible recommendations to the Board for a Strategic Vision and Strategic Objectives and Key Results (or Metrics).

6. Students will be able to effectively communicate how they support CAP's strategic planning efforts.

How do regions, wings, groups, and squadrons help with achieving CAP's strategic and business objectives?

They can help to champion change! Change is both necessary and inevitable in all organizations, and leaders at all levels play a major role in keeping things on track. Strategic and business objectives that reflect changes impacting our members will include change management as part of the project plans. Region, wing, group, and squadron leaders and staff will be important messengers, advocates, coaches, and liaisons to ensure we address concerns and remove barriers to change.

The goal of strategy is to establish and sustain change that helps an organization meet its strategic objectives. To sustain a change, the people in an organization must adopt new ways of thinking and behaving – we call that ***change adoption***. The more people that adopt a change, the more sustainable that change becomes.

Annual goals within the region, wing, and unit should include key performance indicators helping effect change. Every volunteer staff member at every level plays a critical role in helping CAP always be the world-class organization it is through coaching, mentoring, advising, and/or directing (where appropriate). As part of the planning cycle, in partnership with the region commanders, recommended KPIs will be developed for region commanders to share and refine as needed to meet local conditions and opportunities.

Here's a hypothetical (but not unrealistic) example:

Organizational objective: Reduce damage to aircraft on flights with instructors or check pilots on board.

Key Result (from CAP Safety): Improve the quality of aircraft Safety Significant Occurrence (SSO) reviews, ensuring that reviews include all contributing factors that help commanders make good decisions on mitigating actions. Metric – annual 20% increase in aircraft SSO reviews that meet an established (and published) quality standard.

Recommended KPI: By March 31, 2025, each wing commander selects at least two qualified review officers who have received additional training (internal or external to CAP) to exclusively conduct aircraft SSO reviews.

Performance management plans

We use performance plans to provide individuals and teams with outcomes they are to achieve, usually on an annual basis. Primarily something we use for employees at NHQ but important to ensure we individually and collectively make progress on our projects.

What’s next?

The SSG will make initial recommendations to the BoG for strategic objectives sometime early 2025.

CAP's Business Planning Group will complete planning for 2026 before the end of 2025. The plan will be published in January 2026.

Assignment

Complete a SWOT and PESTLE analysis for CAP.

Identify one objective in the current CAP Strategic Plan that relates to your position or unit in CAP. Identify at least two activities or goals that support this objective. These can be current activities and goals or can identify new activities and goals. Briefly summarize the activity or goal in a point paper, identifying at least one KPI for each, using the point paper template available on the CAP National Publications web page.

Instructions for Synchronous Onsite/ViR Classes

Complete your SWOT and PESTLE analysis and bring it to class to discuss.

Submit your activities or goals and KPI to your instructor to review.

Instructions for Asynchronous Online Students

Upload your SWOT and PESTLE analysis for your instructor to review.

Upload your activities or goals and KPIs point paper for your instructor to review.

Aim Higher! (optional activities)

Read the articles in the Additional Readings section.

Develop additional annual goals and KPIs for your position. Take action to accomplish these goals and KPIs and provide regular updates to your supervisor.

Lesson Summary and Closure

Strategic plans establish priorities, goals, and objectives that serve two purposes: to contribute to the next higher echelon's plan, goals, and objectives and to make the organization better internally. We continue to revise the CAP Strategic Plan process to better serve our dynamic organization. As leaders in the organization, you can help to champion change, develop and support annual goals, and refine KPIs for local conditions and opportunities. Every volunteer staff member at every level plays a critical

role in helping CAP always be the world-class organization it is through coaching, mentoring, advising, and/or directing (where appropriate).

Key Takeaways

Strategic planning = 10 – 20-year timeframe; focused beyond what we do now into other mission or program areas

Business planning = Three Horizons (1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years)

What can you do? Champion change!

Additional Readings (optional)

1. PESTLE Analysis for Charities
2. PESTLE Analysis | nfpResearch
3. Example Charity SWOT & PESTLE Analysis (charityexcellence.co.uk)

Acronyms and Abbreviations Used in this Document

- BoG: Board of Governors
- CSAG: CAP Senior Advisory Group
- KPI: Key Performance Indicator
- OKR: Objectives and Key Results
- OPR: Office of Primary Responsibility
- PESTLE: Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Legal, Economic
- SSG: Strategic Steering Group
- SSO: Safety Significant Occurrence
- SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats