



**STRATEGIC PLAN
2007**

**Prepared
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The Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan for the Grand Traverse Conservation District

The Grand Traverse Conservation District

The District was originally established in 1937, along with all of the other conservation districts in the state of Michigan. These entities, originally called Soil Conservation Districts, were formed by state government to provide assistance to farmers in wisely using soil resources in producing crops during the era of the “Dust Bowl.”

Over time, the Grand Traverse Conservation District has developed programs and services well beyond the scope of the original enabling legislation, reflecting leadership that has been attuned to the needs of the county it serves. Largely by writing grants, the District has been able to provide services across the spectrum of natural resources, including, of course, soil conservation, but also encompassing forestry and wildlife assistance, park land management services, river restoration, environmental education, groundwater stewardship, and invasive species elimination programs. The communities served by the District have come to expect these services, and their long-term viability requires additional non-grant resources. Further, as the needs of the county of Grand Traverse change, because of increased population, increased and varied use of natural resources, etc., the District must be able to respond to new needs as they arise. Like many small organizations, the District must increase its own internal capacities if it is to be successful in meeting ever-changing needs. Thus, the strategic planning process has been designed to help the District identify its strategic direction and how it must refine its infrastructure to be successful in the long-term.

The District’s Mission

The District’s current mission statement has served the organization well. It has been refined as follows:

The Grand Traverse Conservation District inspires exploration, appreciation and conservation of our natural world by all who live, work, and play in it.

The District’s Vision

The District has set a strategic ambition for itself, seeing its future in this way:

The Grand Traverse Conservation District is the leader in providing responsive services to gain a commitment from the diverse communities it serves to sustain, improve and preserve the quality of our natural environment.

The District's Values

The work of the District is guided by these guiding principles:

- We interact with others in a respectful and open manner, with honesty and integrity
- Our advice, decisions and actions are responsive and responsible, based upon our understanding of the current science
- Our services, products and information are high quality and cost-effective
- We are driven by the needs of our natural environment and the needs of those who seek our services
- We focus our work to achieve changes in behavior that will help all of us to sustain, improve and preserve the quality of our natural environments.

Outcomes to be Achieved

The board and staff identified the following as outcomes:

- Sustaining natural resources
- Educating the community about the environment
- Changing people's behavior about how they use natural resources
- Repairing damage to natural resources
- Sustaining good quality of life

The Strategic Issues to be Addressed

The planning process has resulted in identifying the following major issues which are addressed by the work plans developed here:

1. Refining the District's mission, vision and identity
2. Increasing the District's capacity to undertake long-term funding
3. Assuring the District's capability to complete its Nature Center and fully utilize it as a resource
4. Increasing the District's capacity to sustain itself as an organization for the long-term

Introduction

In the fall of 2006, the Grand Traverse Conservation District (the District) published a Request for Proposals calling for a strategic planning process to help position the organization for the future. Ameen Consulting & Associates (Ameen Consulting) submitted a plan that would produce the following:

1. Increased definition of the organization's mission in the context of community need, including an evaluation of the link between our stated vision, mission and goals, and our actual program and activities.
2. A strategic plan that includes measurable strategies, objectives and goals that support fulfilling the mission.
3. Identification of strengths and gaps in necessary resources (human, technical, financial).

Ameen Consulting worked closely with the Executive Director of the District to create a planning process that would be inclusive of feedback from the board, staff, and a select group of stakeholders. This document contains an overview of the process used, the feedback gathered during the process, and the identification of the strategic issues to which the District must attend. For each issue, specific work plans are also included to guide the work of the District for the next 2-3 years.

Organizational Background

The District was originally established in 1937, along with all of the other conservation districts in the state of Michigan. These entities, originally called Soil Conservation Districts, were formed by state government to provide assistance to farmers in wisely using soil resources in producing crops during the era of the "Dust Bowl." Enabling legislation originally called for these districts to:

- Conduct surveys, investigations and research related to the conservation of farmland and natural resources and to disseminate findings;
- Conduct demonstration projects to identify effective ways of conserving farmland and soil;
- Carry out preventive and control measures regarding such things as method of cultivation;
- Acquire the rights or interests to property and to manage, improve, receive income and expend income related to conserving farmland and natural resources;
- Make available equipment, fertilizer, seeds and seedlings to assist landowners in conserving farmland and natural resources;
- Propagate plant species that support conservation;
- Provide technical assistant to other districts;

- Develop comprehensive plans for the conservation of farmland and natural resources;
- Enter into agreements with landowners that will tend to prevent or control erosion.

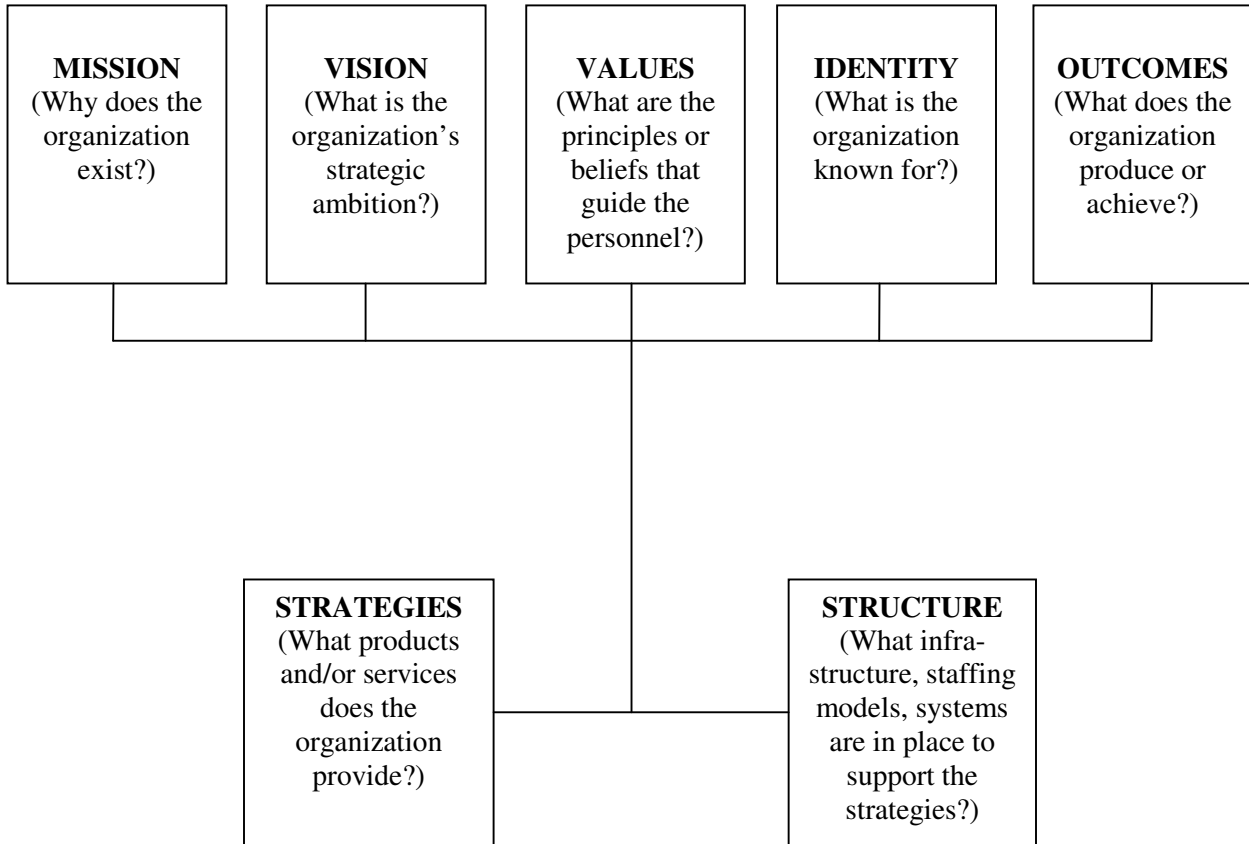
Over time, the Grand Traverse Conservation District has developed programs and services well beyond the scope of the original enabling legislation, reflecting leadership that has been attuned to the needs of the county it serves. Largely by writing grants, the District has been able to provide services across the spectrum of natural resources, including, of course, soil conservation, but also encompassing forestry and wildlife assistance, park land management services, river restoration, environmental education, groundwater stewardship, and invasive species elimination programs. The communities served by the District have come to expect these services, and their long-term viability requires additional non-grant resources. Further, as the needs of the county of Grand Traverse change, because of increased population, increased and varied use of natural resources, etc., the District must be able to respond to new needs as they arise. Like many small organizations, the District must increase its own internal capacities if it is to be successful in meeting ever-changing needs. Thus, the strategic planning process has been designed to help the District identify its strategic direction and how it must refine its infrastructure to be successful in the long-term.

The Planning Process

The strategic planning begins with the recognition of the major components that underlie the structure and functioning of any organization. Some of these elements reflect what is often thought of as organizational planning, e.g., establishing the organization's vision. Others reflect how the organization operates, e.g., the strategies an organization engages in that reflect the work it does.

Taken together, these components may be used as the foundation for strategic planning or long-term planning, to guide the organization into the future. The figure on the following page depicts these components and their relationship to each other.

The Elements of Strategic Thinking for Organizational Development



The Elements of Strategic Thinking

Mission

Every organization has a mission, a purpose for existing. It is the reason for which the entity was originally created. Mission is one of the first elements of strategic thinking because it is a driving force for what the organization does and what it accomplishes. It can be one of the characteristics of the organization that attracts leadership and staff. Mission is the basis from which all planning proceeds. It gives a point of reference for garnering common understanding with staff. And for non-profits, it's one of the elements that compel donors to give of their time, talent and resource.

Vision

Vision is the answer to the question, what is this organization's strategic ambition? What does it hope to accomplish in the future? Vision communicates the expectation for the future and helps

guide decision making. This element helps to keep the organization pointed toward the future in a purposeful and powerful way.

Values

Values are the principals and basic beliefs that guide how the organization and its personnel behave. They reflect what the organization stands for. This element should permeate the organization so that anyone who comes in contact with it experiences strongly held positive, professional and interpersonal interactions consistently throughout the organization.

Identity

Identity speaks to the issue of what the organization is known for. This is an important key element of strategic thinking because the assessment of it dictates what kinds of marketing strategies the organization might need to create and implement. The ideal is that what the organization is known for is an exact match with its mission and vision.

Outcomes

Outcomes are what the organization produces, or hopes to achieve. The Big 3 auto makers produce cars. Educational institutions “produce” educated students. For non-profits, and not-for-profits, customers are often seeking services to help them solve problems or learn new things. In these cases, an outcome is the impact that service has had on the customer... how that customer is different for having received the services.

Strategies

Strategies are all the things the organization does that support its Mission, Vision and Outcomes. Products offered to customers are strategies. Services provided to clients are strategies.

Structures

Structures are those elements of the organization that make it possible to engage in the strategies. These include infrastructures such as information systems, facilities, and so forth. Also included are staffing models, the organization’s leadership model, its governance or ownership structure and so forth.

Taken together, the elements of strategic thinking represent a logic about how and why organizations operate. The Mission establishes why and organization exists while Identity speaks to how the organization is known. Ideally, these two elements are consistent with one another. Vision represents the organization’s strategic ambition, where it’s going in the future. And Outcomes address what it hopes to accomplish. Values reflect the principals and beliefs that guide how the organization and its employees behave.

Strategies are those things that the world outside of the organization sees. Whether products or services, strategies are the activities the organization undertakes to implement the mission and to

achieve its vision. Structures are all the underlying parts of the organization that allow it to deliver its products and/or services.

The study of the elements of strategic thinking, from multiple perspectives, results in information, couched as findings, to be studied by the agency board and leadership. Through a facilitated process, the board and leadership identify the critical strategic issues they must address to move the agency closer to its vision in the next 18 to 24 months. Work plans are then created for each identified issue.

Planning Activities Undertaken

The phases undertaken during the planning process consisted of the following:

1. Research – to gather information already known about the District and to collect new information helpful to the planning process. This included:
 - a. A review of the enabling legislation and current legislation about the creation and operation of conservation districts;
 - b. A review of the last strategic plan for the District;
 - c. An analysis of existing feedback from consumers of services, donors and potential donors;
 - d. Individual interviews with:
 - i. 5 board members
 - ii. 8 staff members
 - iii. 15 stakeholders

Note that the interview guides may be found in Appendix A.

The names of those interviewed may be found in Appendix B.

2. Analysis of findings – to share the results of the interviews with the board and all staff; done in two meetings.
3. Identification of the strategic issues – to use all that has been learned to identify and prioritize the strategic issues the District must address in the next 2-3 years; accomplished in one meeting with the board and all staff.
4. Refinement of mission, vision and values – using the results of the interviews and currently existing documents to refine these components of the organization; accomplished during part of one of the work plan meetings.
5. Development of work plans – to write specific work plans for each of the strategic issues identified and to prioritize how those will be implemented; achieved in two meetings of the board and all staff and individual work groups of staff finalizing the plans.

Results

All of the Elements of Strategic Thinking were explored through the interviews and during the various deliberations facilitated with the board and staff. Each element is addressed below, followed by the identifications of the strategic issues. Results for board and staff were aggregated for two reasons. First, there were five board members interviewed, a small number upon which to base data analysis and be able to guarantee anonymity when reporting results. Secondly, with the exception of one question, the responses from board and staff were very similar. Thus, they are reported together. Throughout this section of the report, their results will be compared to those received from the external stakeholder group.

MISSION

The board and staff see the mission of the District focused on environmental education, sustaining natural resources and land management. Its stakeholders see the mission focused on environmental education, stewardship of natural resources, and technical assistance. These two perspectives are closely aligned.

During the planning sessions, the board and staff expressed that the current mission statement reflected their work but needed to be written in a more inspiring way. After several versions, the final statement adopted is this:

The Grand Traverse Conservation District inspires exploration, appreciation and conservation of our natural world.

VISION

Prior to this planning process, the District did not have a written vision statement, though how the organization has developed over time does suggest its leaders have seen its vision as well beyond what most conservation districts currently address. The consultant facilitated a discussion with the board and staff, asking them to identify the strategic ambition for the District. The final statement adopted is this:

The Grand Traverse Conservation District is the leader in providing responsive services to gain a commitment from the diverse communities it serves to sustain, improve and preserve the quality of our natural environment.

VALUES

Another key element explored in the planning process was the notion of values, the beliefs and principles that guide how the District conducts itself. The board and staff identify their top values as customer service, honesty, friendliness, frugality and a willingness to help. Stakeholders reported they experienced the District's values as dedication, hard working,

collaborative, community-minded, professionalism and integrity. The board and staff were pleased with the feedback from stakeholders and used those results, along with their own strongly held beliefs to articulate the following as their guiding principles:

- *We interact with others in a respectful and open manner, with honesty and integrity*
- *Our advice, decisions and actions are responsive and responsible, based upon our understanding of the current science*
- *Our services, products and information are high quality and cost-effective*
- *We are driven by the needs of our natural environment and the needs of those who seek our services*
- *We focus our work to achieve changes in behavior that will help all of us to sustain, improve and preserve the quality of our natural environments.*

IDENTITY

Identity speaks to the issue of what an organization is known for in the community it serves and by the consumers it touches. For the District, feedback about identity was particularly helpful in identifying a gap between what the District is and how it is known. Staff and board identified this issue themselves. In interviews with these participants, one-fourth felt the District is known for being efficient and effective, with emphasis on being frugal. But over half of the staff and board felt that the identity of the District is defined by consumers based upon the specific service or services they received. Almost three-fourths indicated they didn't think the residents of the county had a common identity of the organization. And nearly as many felt that a key to the continued future success of the District was to assure those residents understood the breadth and depth of the services provided by the District.

Stakeholders confirmed what the staff reported. The 15 stakeholders interviewed generated eight (8) different responses to the question about identity. Almost half also reported that identity is defined based upon consumers receiving specific services. They noted, as did staff, that it is important for the continued success of the District that there be a more common sense of identity, one that speaks to the breadth and depth of its services.

Based upon reviewing all of the data gathered in interviews, and discussing the future of the organization, the board and staff concluded that it wants the District to be known for its mission, its values, and the array of services it offers.

OUTCOMES

Outcomes are statements about what the District hopes to accomplish, what impact it will have because of the work it does. The board and staff identified the following as outcomes:

- Sustaining natural resources
- Educating the community about the environment
- Changing people's behavior about how they use natural resources
- Repairing damage to natural resources
- Sustaining good quality of life

These are very similar to the outcomes identified by the external stakeholders. And the majority of the board, staff and stakeholders suggest the District remain focused on these.

STRATEGIES

Strategies speak to the products and services that an organization provides. In the planning process, participants were asked to rate current services in terms of effectiveness, using a scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent). The ratings are shown below:

<u>Services</u>	<u>Board/Staff</u>	<u>Stakeholders</u>
1. Current educational programs	3.8	4.1
2. Parkland Management	3.7	4.1
3. Boardman River Project	4.5	4.4
4. Gypsy Moth Suppression	4.5	4.5
5. Groundwater Stewardship Program	4.6	4.3
6. Forestry and Wildlife Assistance Program	3.7	4.2
7. Native tree seedling sale	NA	4.6

Ratings for current services suggest that services are seen as functioning very well. The variation in some of the scores between the two groups are not statistically significant.

Participants were also asked what they thought the services of the future ought to be. Both groups see an expansion of educational programs in the future for the District, especially as the Nature Center is built. Stakeholders emphasized the need to continue current programs while the board and staff emphasized the need to remain flexible in responding to changing needs.

STRUCTURE

The structure of an organization is those elements of staffing, board governance, infrastructure, technology and so forth that support delivering services. Board and staff were asked to rate various aspects of the infrastructure in terms of effectiveness, using the same 5-point scale. The ratings are shown below:

<u>Infrastructure</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Staff</u>
1. Board of Directors' vision and support	3.4	2.8
2. Executive Director's leadership/management	4.8	4.1
3. Development and fundraising	3.0	2.9
4. Financial and business management	3.6	4.3
5. Personnel functions	3.5	4.3
6. Communications and public relations	3.1	2.5

This self-evaluation suggests there are some issues with how some of the infrastructure services are performing. The three issues most prominent relate to board functioning, development and fundraising, and communications/public relations. When asked which infrastructure service will need to change the most to help position the District for the future, these same three issues were expressed.

Stakeholders were not asked to rate internal functions, for obvious reasons. However, they were asked what resources the District needs to be more successful. They suggested:

- Fund development
- Funding for the Nature Center
- Marketing
- More staff to respond to growing needs

As with many smaller organizations, there are several needs for building capacity, some of which are short-term and some of a longer-term nature. When the board and staff were asked what is the single most important strategy to undertake immediately, the most prominent responses were:

- Long term funding
- Finishing the Nature Center
- Strategic planning

Stakeholders were asked the same question and their most prominent responses were:

- Finishing the Nature Center
- Marketing and promotion
- Board development

Strategic Issues to be Addressed

The process of identifying the strategic issues to be addressed started with the consultant reviewing all of the findings and based upon that analysis and her experience, highlighting potential strategic issues. The next step was a series of facilitated discussions with the board and staff that began with each individual answering the following questions:

- What is the most significant finding from the interviews with board members and staff?
- What is the most significant finding from the interviews with stakeholders?

The dialogue about their answers allowed the discussion to then focus on determining what strategic issues the District must address if it is to continue to be successful in the future. Those are:

1. The lack of a consistently held view of the District's identity;
2. A strategic plan for long-term funding;
3. A strategic plan for the Nature Center;
4. The need to establish organizational sustainability by addressing the following issues:
 - a. Board development
 - b. Infrastructure development
 - c. Staff development/staff retention
 - d. Succession planning for the executive director
5. The need to clarify the District's mission;
6. The need to clarify the District's vision.

The final step in the planning process is the development of work plans that address each of these issues. The consultant conducted a mini-training session with the board and staff regarding writing work plans and provided tools to be used during this phase. Work teams were identified to address each of the issues, with some issues being addressed simultaneously by the same work group. As a result, the work was organized in the following way:

5. Refining the District's mission, vision and identity
6. Increasing the District's capacity to undertake long-term funding

7. Assuring the District's capability to complete its Nature Center and fully utilize it as a resource
8. Increasing the District's capacity to sustain itself as an organization for the long-term

The board and the staff felt it would be helpful to move head immediately to address the first set of issues related to mission, vision and identity. That work has been completed and is referenced elsewhere in this plan. The plans for the remaining issues may be found on the following pages. To give some context for some of the action steps within some of the work plans, a perspective about building capacity for the District would be helpful.

Building Capacity

A common theme heard during interviews, from board, staff and stakeholders, noted that the District is very cost-conscious, in fact frugal, in how it spends its resources. A second theme emphasized the District's focus on the quality of the services it provides. Every organization would love to hear this kind of feedback. But, like many small organizations, whether public, private, or non-profit, the majority of its resources have traditionally gone to providing services and products to its consumers. Little attention has been given to its own internal capacity to conduct the business of managing the organization. While not an uncommon problem, it is a troublesome one because lack of internal capacity often deters future growth and success for the organization.

The planning process has resulted in the identification of needs for developing internal capacity that will be needed to keep up with the program and service growth the District has enjoyed and will continue to pursue. Those needs are:

- Increased capacity to raise funds, both for the Nature Center and for the long-term viability of programs and services: with a part-time development coordinator and no established giving program, the District has been able to raise the majority of the funds needed for its new Nature Center. That is quite an accomplishment and is reason to be hopeful that with additional investment in this area, not only will the campaign for the Center be successful, but a successful giving program will be established long term. Capacity building here would include consultative services from an expert in development and fundraising to assist in developing fund raising plans, training the board and executive director on their role in raising funds, developing tools, and training and coaching the development coordinator.
- Increased capability to market the District and its programs to establish a more consistent and more broadly understood identity of the organization: the District has a part-time marketing coordinator who also provides administrative support for the organization. She has addressed the marketing needs of the individual programs and services of the District. However, again using an expert consulting, some planning and development would occur to

help address the marketing needs for the fund raising activities as well as the broader issue of establishing an identity for the District.

- Increased capacity to continue effectively governing and managing the District as a whole: per the enabling legislation, the District has a 5-member board, elected to take on certain fiscal and governance responsibilities. Those members were not elected with the expectation that they would be actively involved in raising funds or marketing the District, however. Given the growth the organization has pursued, the continued depletion of state funds, and the ever-changing needs of the Grand Traverse County, the District needs to raise funds to supports its efforts. The board must, and is willing to become involved in fundraising and marketing but needs some training, coaching and tools to do so.

The growth and variety of programs and services, and the breadth of consumers served by the District also requires that functions such as financial management, personnel management, and administrative services continue to grow. For example, District staff could benefit from some team development and staff development opportunities to enhance their expertise and professional skills. Tapping into training events and using consultants to address these kinds of needs will increase the capability of staff to continue to successfully provide services.

Work Plans

STRATEGIC GOAL	ACTION STEPS TO BE UNDERTAKEN	Lead	Done by
1. Complete the Nature Center			
1a	Complete Nature Center Campaign Process		
	1. Engage Campaign Consultant (for all aspects; fundraising & marketing)	LC	Dec-07
	2. Clarify our Nature Center Message	RT	Mar-07
	3. Market our Nature Center Message	RT	Jun-08
	4. Raise Funds	RT	Jun-08
	5. Grand Opening (Spring 08)	RT	Spring 08
1b	Complete Nature Center Building Process		
	1. Complete (Approve) Design Phase	DB	Mar-07
	2. Complete Bid Process	JE, LC	Apr-07
	3. Break Ground	DB	Jun-07
	4. Complete Construction Process	DB	Apr-08
	5. Keep Board & Staff Informed of Key Progress	DB	Ongoing
1c	Complete Nature Center Business Plan (including Budgets)		Apr-07
	1. Establish Business Planning Committee for all Programming with Nature Center Specific Programming as a priority	CR	Mar-07
	-- Plan for Programs	CR	
	-- Plan for Operations	LC	
	-- Plan for Facilities Management	LC	
2. Clarify & Promote Identity of District			
2a	Engage Marketing Consultant	RT	Jul-07
	-- Create Marketing Plan	RT	Oct-07
	-- Implement Marketing Plan	RT	Ongoing
2b	Revise Mission & Vision	LC	Mar-07
2c	Develop Our Public Message (Long Term Package)	RT	Aug-07

STRATEGIC GOAL	ACTION STEPS TO BE UNDERTAKEN	Lead	Done by
3. Establish Fully Sustainable Long-Term Funding Plan (include Marketing)			
3a	Engage Development Consultant	RT	Jul-07
	-- Develop Fundraising Plan	RT	Oct-07
	-- Implement Fundraising Plan	RT	Ongoing
3b	-- Increase Fundraising Skills of Staff & Board	JE, RT	Dec-07
4. Build Organizational Capacity to Achieve Organizational Sustainability			
4a	Engage Capacity Consultant to assist as needed	LC	Aug-07
4b	Complete Business/Operational Plan for District Operations & Programming	KZ	Sep-09
	-- Review and update internal policies to meet current & future needs	KZ	Dec-07
	-- Assess & Achieve Infrastructure needs re: staffing	KZ	Aug-08
	-- Volunteer Engagement Plan	CR	Sep-08
4c	Develop Board (Governance)		
	-- Create Plan for Board Development	JE	Oct-07
	-- Implement Plan for Board Development	JE	Ongoing
4d	Establish Ongoing Training & Evaluation Plan for Staff & Board		
	-- Teamwork training (Improve Communications/Reinforce Working Relationships)	KZ	Jan-08
	-- Content training	KZ	Jan-08
4e	Provide adequate Equipment & IT needs for Operations		
	-- Identify needs, budget, and ongoing equipment maintenance schedule	KZ	Sep-07
	-- Capital Improvements Plan	KZ	Nov-07

APPENDIX A
Interview Guides

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
FOR
GRAND TRAVERSE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

Full Name: _____

How long have you been affiliated with the District? _____

When is your board term up? _____

II. IDENTITY, MISSION, STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES

A. Identity

1. How would you describe the District's identity? What is the District known for?
2. How well is this identity understood in the areas in which the District does and should do business?
3. As you think about the future for the District, should this identity remain intact or will it need to change? Why or why not?
4. There are a number of organizations that provide services related to conservation, water quality, forestry and so forth. Where does the District fit? Is the District unique in any way? Does the District compete or conflict with any other related organizations' missions locally?
5. What are the District's values? If I spent some time interacting with the employees here, how would I experience those values?
6. As you think about the future for the District, should these values remain intact or will they need to change? Why or why not?

B. Mission

1. What is the mission of District? Why does the District exist?
2. How well is this mission understood by the District's employees? By Board Members?
3. As you think about the future for the District, should this mission remain intact or will it need to change? Why or why not?

4. What outcomes is the District trying to achieve?
5. As you think about the future, should the District remain focused on these outcomes, or should they change in some way. Why or why not?

C. Strategies

1. For each listed below, how well do you see the District performing these programs/services? Use the scale of 1, meaning very poor, to 5 meaning excellent:

- a. Boardman River Nature Center
and current educational programs _____
- b. Parkland Management _____
- c. Boardman River Project _____
- d. Gypsy Moth Suppression _____
- e. Groundwater Stewardship Program _____
- f. Forestry and Wildlife Assistance Program _____

2. As you think about the future for the District, what program and services will need to remain, change or be added to help the District be successful?

D. Structure

1. How is the District organized to perform the programs and services?
2. To what extent do you see the organizational structure as adequate in meeting the needs of the programs and services provided?
3. What do you see as the strengths of the District?
4. What do you see as the weaknesses or concerns it needs to address?
5. Every organization has internal functions that support how it operates. Use the scale of 1, meaning very poor, to 5 meaning excellent to rate how well each of these functions operates:

- a. Board of Directors in providing vision and support _____
- b. Executive Director in providing leadership and management _____
- c. Development and fundraising _____
- d. Financial and business management _____
- e. Personnel, including performance reviews, staff development _____
- f. Communications and public relations _____

III. FUTURE VISIONING

1. Of all of the major functions within the organization, which will need to change the most to respond to the challenges of competing in the future? Why?
2. What do you see as the major challenges facing the District?
3. What strategies should the District undertake to address those challenges?
4. What is the single most important activity the District should undertake that will help it prepare for the future?

Do you have any other comments or feedback that I should be aware of as we move forward with developing the District's strategic plan?

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
FOR
GRAND TRAVERSE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Full Name: _____

How are you affiliated with the District? _____ For how long? _____

How well do you know the District? _____

II. IDENTITY, MISSION, STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES

A. Identity

7. How would you describe the District's identity? What is the District known for?
8. How well is this identity understood in the areas in which the District does and should do business?
9. As you think about the future for the District, should this identity remain intact or will it need to change? Why or why not?
10. There are a number of organizations that provide services related to conservation, water quality, forestry and so forth. Where does the District fit? Is the District unique in any way?
11. What are the District's values? If I spent some time interacting with the employees here, how would I experience those values?
12. As you think about the future for the District, should these values remain intact or will they need to change? Why or why not?

B. Mission

6. What is the mission of District? Why does the District exist?
7. How well is this mission understood by the District's constituents?
8. As you think about the future for the District, should this mission remain intact or will it need to change? Why or why not?

9. What outcomes is the District trying to achieve?
10. As you think about the future, should the District remain focused on these outcomes, or should they change in some way. Why or why not?
11. Do you feel the District is making adequate progress toward achieving its mission?

C. Strategies

3. For each listed below, how well do you see the District performing these programs/services? Use the scale of 1, meaning very poor, to 5 meaning excellent:
 - a. Boardman River Nature Center _____
 - b. Conservation/environmental educational programs _____
 - c. Parkland Management _____
 - d. Boardman River Project _____
 - e. Gypsy Moth Suppression _____
 - f. Groundwater Stewardship Program _____
 - g. Forestry and Wildlife Assistance Program _____
 - h. Native trees, shrubs and plant sale program _____
4. As you think about the future for the District, what program and services will need to remain, change or be added to help the District be successful?

D. Structure

6. What do you see as the strengths of the District?
7. What do you see as the weaknesses or concerns it needs to address?
8. What additional resources, if any, do you think the District needs to provide effective services?

III. FUTURE VISIONING

5. What do you see as the major challenges facing the District?
6. What strategies should the District undertake to address those challenges?
7. What is the single most important activity the District should undertake that will help it prepare for the future?

Do you have any other comments or feedback that I should be aware of as we move forward with developing the District's strategic plan?

APPENDIX B
Board, staff and stakeholders interviewed

Board members:

- Joe Elliot, Chairman
- Ed Breitmeyer, Vice Chairman
- Dean Templeton, Treasurer
- Jim Teahen, Director
- Jennifer Jay, Associate Director

Staff:

- Lew Coulter, Executive Director
- Dan Busby, Ground Water Program Coordinator
- Steve Largent, Director of Land Management Services
- Ben Purdy, Land Management Specialist
- Cindy Retherford, Gypsy Moth Coordinator/Education Specialist
- Daniel Schillinger, District Forester
- Rebecca Teahen, Development Coordinator
- Kath Zatorski, Administrative Assistant

Stakeholders:

- Dennis Aloia, GT Administrator
- Russ Clark, Community planning and architect consultant
- Duke Elsner, MSU Extension Agricultural Agent
- Ken Engel, Fruit grower
- Mark Johnson, CRA Biologist
- Jim Horton, Township trustee and former Park board member
- Matt McDonough, Land protection specialist with GT Regional Land Conservancy
- Karen Rosa, Long Lake Twp Supervisor; has also used their services personally
- Tim Schreiner, Parks and Recreation Director
- Marsha Smith, Executive Director of Rotary Charities
- Jeanne Snow, Executive Director of the Community Foundation
- Sarah U'Ren, District is a subcontractor
- Tom Wessels, ISD Science Coordinator
- Lee Wilson, Township Supervisor
- Des Worthington, Ex Director of Munson Foundation