

COMMUNITY IN CONCERT: BALTIMORE'S VISION TOWARD THE YEAR 2000

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To be successful, a strategic planning process should be comprehensive in scope, should aim to build community via consensus, and should set the context for decision making by carefully developing mission-affirming criteria. The strategic planning process, begun by the Baltimore federation in 1988 and still continuing, follows such a comprehensive, multidimensional approach.

When describing strategic planning in federated Jewish communities, analogies abound. A particularly apt analogy is that between community planning and the making of music, from concept and composition to orchestration and performance.

In this article we discuss strategic planning in the Jewish communal context, using the Baltimore process as a model and following the musical analogy in the key of C-Major, with the C's presented here as the keys to successful strategic planning.

The strategic planning process of THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore (hereafter referred to as the Baltimore federation) has had two phases that literally have changed the nature of community problem solving and resource development in the Baltimore Jewish community. Phase I (generation of and consensus-adoption of the Strategic Plan) was initiated in January 1988 and continued for 18 months, concluding in June 1989. Phase II (implementation of the Strategic

Plan) began in July 1989 and continues to unfold in full force as of this writing.

PHASE I

Conception of the Strategic Planning Process

As the community looked to the future in January 1988, it was clear that the federation, and Baltimore's Jewish community as a whole, faced a number of critical questions. Were demographic and economic trends in the community altering service needs, and if so, how? Where should service facilities be located? What were the community's goals for Jewish education, and how should they be funded? Could relations within the community be strengthened? What capital requirements would the community face over the next decade? Could annual campaigns alone meet both local requirements and the growing needs of national and overseas agencies?

Comprehensive Strategic Planning versus Compartmentalized Planning

It seemed clear that these questions could not be answered in isolation, but rather needed to be considered together. More importantly, they needed to be illuminated by the best information available on the changing needs and concerns of our Jewish

Copies of the final report of the Baltimore federation's strategic planning process, *Building a Stronger Community: Toward the Year 2000*, are available from THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, 101 West Mt. Royal Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21201.

community. And they needed to be answered in light of the community's fundamental goals. To build upon the 1985-86 Jewish Population Study of Greater Baltimore and various long-range planning studies, the federation authorized a broad strategic planning process. The report and the recommendations it would offer would be comprehensive in scope, involving simultaneous inquiries into the areas of services, relationships, and finances. It would review and potentially reshape the way in which the Baltimore federation conducted its business in all of its aspects.

In past years, the federation had initiated planning on a more limited scope, choosing one or two key functional areas in any given year for intensive review. For example, a Task Force on the Jewish Family was established several years ago to conduct a year-long study and recommend new initiatives. That task force issued an important report with significant recommendations; however, in the absence of a comprehensive context for implementing those recommendations, the report could not achieve its intended impact on services and programs in the Baltimore Jewish community. What set the strategic planning process apart from long-range planning efforts undertaken in the past was its comprehensiveness, specificity, and the community context within which it has been conducted.

Community Building via Consensus

The Baltimore strategic planning process involved all elements of the Jewish community. Nearly 300 lay leaders and virtually the entire professional staff of the federation have participated intensively on more than 25 strategic planning committees and task forces to date. In addition to federation lay and professional leadership, the strategic planning enterprise has benefited by the active, ongoing involvement of all constituent agencies (both lay and professional leadership of those agencies), rabbinic/

synagogue leadership, and at-large Jewish community representatives. This broad-based community-building process has culminated in the consensus approval of the final strategic planning report and of each "action implementation recommendation" to date.

Central Address for the Jewish Community

The diversity of the Baltimore Jewish community reflects the many forms that Jewish commitment can take. It is a source of strength and must be preserved. At the same time, the Baltimore Jewish community must have some way to assess its needs periodically, formulate its priorities, and lead communal efforts to reach common goals. That requires a central institution for the Jewish community with a mission encompassing those tasks. The needs of the Baltimore Jewish community as a whole cannot be met without some entity undertaking that central responsibility.

Perhaps the most surprising and most significant development in Phase I of Baltimore's strategic planning process was the consensus sentiment expressed by leadership of the federation's constituent agencies and of virtually every other segment of the Baltimore Jewish community; although no organization in the Jewish community is ideally suited to assume that central responsibility, the federation is better suited to do so than any other. In other words, a clear and strong consensus was expressed that the federation should be the central address for the Baltimore Jewish community. This consensus included the endorsement of a unified, centralized, annual fund-raising campaign, as well as centralized endowment-development and capital campaigns for the enhancement of financial resources in the Baltimore community. It is also important to note that what is meant by "the central address" is not that all important community decisions are made *by the federation*, but rather the

important community decisions are made *at the federation*. In this way, the federation becomes the address at which critical community discussion and debate are conducted.

Component Parts of the Process

Composition of Committee

A past chair of the Baltimore federation who had also served as president of the Council of Jewish Federations was chosen to chair the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). Under her leadership, the SPC was formed in January 1988. In the Baltimore model, the membership of the Strategic Planning Committee and that of the Strategic Planning Subcommittees were markedly different by design. The SPC members were representative of the top federation lay leadership, whereas the subcommittee membership was broader-based by far, including agency and community representation in significant numbers. Furthermore, the larger number of subcommittees (and later of task forces in the implementation phase of Baltimore's strategic planning process) naturally presented the opportunity for participation by a larger number of lay people than did the SPC. The overlap in leadership between the SPC and the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the federation was a critical element in the eventual ownership and approval of the SPC report by the leadership bodies of the federation.

Consultancy

Should an outside consultant be engaged to conduct interviews, do a personal investigation, and draft an independent report for the Strategic Planning Committee to then review critically? Or should an outside consultant be engaged to act as a "recorder of the court" and assist the committee in drafting and creating a consensus document?

For Phase One of the strategic planning

process, the federation leadership chose the second option, engaging an expert outside consultant to help shape and steer the strategic planning process. It was determined that the objectivity that an outside consultant could bring to this community's self-inquiry was an element essential to the successful building of consensus for approval and acceptance of the strategic plan and its recommendations for the coming decade. An experienced consultant on strategic issues, who had recently written a major foundation-sponsored report analyzing the social and financial health of the Baltimore metropolitan area and recommending actions to improve that health, was retained to assist the SPC. Over the first 18 months of the strategic planning process, which culminated in the writing and acceptance of the SPC's formal report, *Building A Stronger Community: Toward The Year 2000*, the consultant worked hand-in-hand with federation lay and professional leadership in a careful and deliberate process.

Calendar

Initially, it was estimated that Phase I of the strategic planning process could be accomplished in six to nine months. However, it quickly became evident that the process would take at least twice that length of time. In fact, Phase I spanned 18 months and required the intricate coordination of calendars and of deployment of federation lay leaders and professional staff so that the ongoing business of the federation, such as the annual campaign and budgeting and allocations process, could be conducted with minimal interference and/or disruption.

Coordinating "Cabinet"

To ensure the coordinated sequencing of tasks between the SPC and its subcommittees, a Strategic Planning "Cabinet" or Steering Committee was established for Phase I. Members of this Cabinet included the chairperson of the federation board

and of the SPC, the chairpeople of the three subcommittees, the consultant, and key professional staff of the federation, including the federation executive director. An illustrative example of the crucial importance of proper sequencing of tasks between the subcommittees is the relationship between the Services Subcommittee and the Financing Subcommittee. The Services Subcommittee had to make decisions about service needs and client projections before the Financing Subcommittee could estimate service requirements or quantify the gap between projected resources and projected requirements. It is as if the subcommittees played a game of "leap frog" in which each key decision made by one subcommittee moved the strategic planning process one step forward and then that subcommittee had to wait as the other subcommittees in turn leapt forward with the next sequential decisions. In this way, the process moved toward a coordinated and comprehensive result.

Constitutional Tenets of the Strategic Planning Process

Context for Community Decision-Making: Criteria

In matters of sustenance, most often the container is equally as important as—if not more important than—the contents. For example, if a townspeople has much water in their village but have only their hands with which to hold it, then they will quench their thirst only for a short time and the greatest portion will spill through their fingers. However, with even a single bucket, they can draw water and store it; and with that bucket and several cups, they can apportion it in a most equitable and effective way, with more benefit and less wastage of their precious resource.

So it is in communal strategic planning. Context is as important—and initially is more important—than content. And in the process of strategic planning, the material

from which the container is fashioned serves as the criteria that can hold all of the services that the community currently offers or eventually might wish to offer.

The most important step in our strategic planning process was the crafting and consensus-acceptance of the two criteria by which all services within our federated service delivery system would be categorized and evaluated. These criteria needed to reflect the mission of our federation and of our service agencies while being broad enough to include all present and future services and at the same time specific enough to provide a common language and a common conceptual framework for all of our discussions and deliberations.

In Baltimore, we developed and adopted these two "mission-affirming" criteria by which to evaluate services.

1. Provide the Jewish poor and disadvantaged with essential services not available through public sources at an adequate level of quality or quantity
2. Promote Jewish identity by strengthening ties between the Jewish community and (a) Jews at risk of not feeling Jewish or (b) Jews who want inherently "Jewish" services

The various services that the Baltimore federation supports meet those criteria in differing degrees. They therefore have claims of differing strength on the community's resources. The Baltimore federation believed that the community should establish priority rankings to reflect that fact. Judgments about those rankings would differ, but establishing such rankings is essential; the rational allocation of the community's resources requires it.

Therefore, the Strategic Plan proposed four priority levels.

- Level 1: *Fundamental Services*—These services meet the two main criteria fully. Many meet them in more than one way. Services given this ranking should receive full and preferential funding.

- Level 2: *Important Services*—These services also meet the two main criteria, though less fully than those at Level 1. Unless sharp financial stringencies occur, these services too should be provided and at a high level of quality.
- Level 3: *Legitimate Services*—These services fall within the spirit of the main criteria or meet some lesser standard, but respond to less pressing concerns. They deserve support, but not to an extent that compromises the full funding of services at Levels 1 and 2.
- Level 4: *Optional Services*—These services do not fully meet either our main or lesser criteria. Typically, they need not be provided in a Jewish manner under Jewish auspices, or are available at reasonable quality outside the Baltimore Jewish community, or should be provided independent of the federation. Services assigned to Level 4 may be funded, but they should be scrutinized afresh at every budget review.

Charges to the Strategic Planning Committee and Its Subcommittees

After thoughtful review and discussion, the SPC specified the issues needing study and concluded that these fundamental questions fell naturally under three headings: (1) the services the Jewish community needs; (2) relationships among the many elements of the Jewish community in Baltimore and between that community and various external organizations and groups; and (3) the community's projected capital and operating needs and its capacity to fund those needs, both at present and in the future. Therefore, the Strategic Planning Committee established three subcommittees—service delivery, relationships, and financing—and issued them detailed charges as follows:

Service Delivery Subcommittee: Develop recommendations to provide policy (and ultimately programmatic) direction in the following critical issue areas:

- I. Services for Whom?
 - A. Core area/periphery
 - B. Persons requiring subsidy/persons not requiring subsidy
 - C. Services of last resort/broad-based services
 - D. Current priorities/potential priorities
 - E. Current clients/potential clients
- II. Where Provided?
 - A. Current/prospective sites
 - B. Single/multiple sites
 - C. Area-based/agency-based/constituent-based
- III. Which Services?
 - A. To what extent?
 - B. How delivered?
 - C. Is the current mix of services appropriate? (If services have to be augmented, which should be initiated or expanded? If services are to be cut, which might be reduced or eliminated?)
 - D. Consolidation and integration

Relationships Subcommittee: Develop recommendations to provide policy (and ultimately programmatic) direction regarding relationships between the federation and:

- I. Those affiliated with the organized Jewish community
 - A. Donors
 - B. Synagogues
 - C. Organizations and institutions
- II. Unaffiliated Jews
- III. Constituent agencies
- IV. Those within the federation
 - A. Governance (federation model)
 - B. Structure
 - C. Process
 - D. Composition
- V. Those outside Baltimore
 - A. Israel
 - B. Other lands
 - C. National/continental organizations
- VI. Non-Jews

Financing Subcommittee: Develop recommendations to provide policy and (ultimately programmatic) direction for the enhancement of financial resource development for client services and capital requirements, both current and future, for the Baltimore Jewish community

- I. Analyze historic growth and forecast projections of budgetary needs of
 - A. Local agencies (including priority reserves and requests)
 - B. Federation
 - C. UJA allocation
 - D. National agencies
 - E. Local services allocations other than to constituent agencies
- II. Analyze historic growth and forecast projections of revenue from
 - A. Agency clients' fees
 - B. Annual campaign
 - C. Endowment
 - D. Public sources (City, State, and Federal government)
 - E. United Way
 - F. Private foundation grants to designated programs
 - G. Other
- III. Evaluate and quantify capital short-term and long-term needs for
 - A. Additional endowment for designated programs and campaign
 - B. Replacement and expansion of facilities
 - C. Rehabilitation of facilities
 - D. New programs and services
- IV. Analyze and evaluate historic sources of capital funds
- V. Define goals and develop strategies:
 - A. As indicated by data under I, II, III, and IV above
 - B. Answer these philosophical questions:
 1. Should agencies be permitted to charge fees in excess of cost?
 2. Should agencies provide services on a "nonsectarian" basis?
 3. Should agencies be permitted or encouraged to raise funds for

operating and capital needs or restricted from doing so?

4. Should there be special community-wide capital campaigns where the need for funds is identified?
 - a. Separate campaign
 - b. Second-line campaign
 - c. Campaign built into endowment funding

Each of the three subcommittees was charged to issue its own formal written report to the SPC, which in turn was charged to review and integrate the three reports into one formal report for submission to the federation's Executive Committee and Board of Directors for final amendment and approval (Figure 1).

Collaboration and Cooperation Between the Federation and Its Agencies

It is not enough that the services provided be of high priority. They must also be responsive to the needs of clients, of high quality, and delivered efficiently, and related services must be well coordinated.

It is the task of the service agencies to maintain high levels of responsiveness to client needs and to deliver services of high quality efficiently. The federation looks to the service agencies, in the first instance, to assess the quality, responsiveness, and efficiency of services, as well as their conformance with community priorities. The

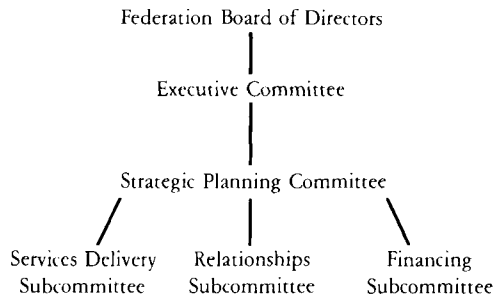


Figure 1. Strategic Planning Phase I Structure.

federation also expects the agencies to initiate proposals for whatever additions, improvements, coordination, consolidation, or restructuring of services may be necessary.

To ensure a continued cooperative relationship between the federation and its agencies, the SPC proposed a better informed and more cooperative budget process. Such a process would assist the federation and the agencies jointly to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of services. However, it must be recognized that the federation bears the ultimate responsibility for assuring that services meet the community's standards. The Strategic Plan therefore mandates the following:

THE ASSOCIATED should work with its constituent agencies to assure continuous review of the quality, responsiveness and efficiency of services, as well as their conformance with community priorities. THE ASSOCIATED and the agencies should together develop plans for any additions, improvements, coordination, consolidation or restructuring of services that may be necessary. But the ultimate responsibility for determining the necessity for such measures must rest with THE ASSOCIATED.

Client-Focused/Constituency-Focused versus Agency-Based Prioritization

Baltimore's Strategic Plan mandated that the community's service priorities, including health care, should be established by the federation and then communicated to all service providers. Those priorities should be established in terms of the needs of clients. They should focus not on the programs that particular agencies operate, but on the services the various client groups need, regardless of which entity is to provide them.

Priorities will evolve as circumstances change, but those in effect at any given time should guide the service agencies, the federation's planning and budgeting decisions, and the federation's resource development efforts (including endowment solicitation).

Conformance Between Funding of Services and Priority Level Rankings

In Phase I, the Services Subcommittee reviewed each of the services presently supported by the Baltimore federation, and, using the four-level priority system described above, assigned each service to one of the four levels. Baltimore's Strategic Plan determined that the current funding of services is not fully consistent with the priorities set out by the community. Nor does it follow any other set of explicit priorities. The Strategic Plan therefore mandated that, once clear priorities are established, the funding of services should be altered, within fiscal constraints, to match those priorities. That matching should begin immediately and be accomplished fully no later than the 1993 budget year. Achieving that match will require that federation's funding decisions affect not only the agencies' priority reserves but core programs within their base budgets.

Consensus Adoption of The Strategic Planning Committee's Report

When the federation board unanimously approved the formal document, titled *Building a Stronger Community: Toward The Year 2000* (Report Of The Strategic Planning Committee), in June 1989, Phase One of Baltimore's strategic planning process concluded and Phase Two (implementation of the Strategic Plan) began immediately. Translating the report into a living document, into a "community constitution" with visible, substantive, and ongoing impact was a commitment that Baltimore federation leaders took most seriously.

PHASE II

Commitment to Implementation of the Strategic Planning Report

The transition from Phase I to Phase II of the strategic planning process coincided

with the transition of lay administrations at the Baltimore federation. A Strategic Planning Implementation Council was established in July 1989 and was authorized to deliver on the community's promise of effecting significant modifications and improvements as mandated in the Strategic Plan.

At the outset of Phase I, Baltimore's leadership had resolved not to rest upon our community's past success, but rather to build upon it. In fulfilling that commitment, the federation allocated more than \$1,500,000 new dollars during the first year (FY91) for implementation of strategic planning directives. Without this immediate financial commitment, our Strategic Plan would merely have remained a "shelf-and-drawer document" and the credibility of our federation would have been compromised severely.

Continuity and Consistency

To ensure continuity and consistency in the transition from adoption of the Strategic Plan to its implementation it is essential to replicate in Phase II virtually all of the C's used in the initial phase. Doing so facilitates continued use of a common language and a common philosophical context. It is important to remember that Phase II does not redo or *undo* the understandings and decisions achieved in Phase I. Rather, the charge to those community members who participate in Phase II is to implement the Phase I mandates, to translate them into action, to make them happen.

Consultancy

At the conclusion of Phase I, a decision was made by federation leadership that the Senior Vice President and the Director of Community Planning and Budgeting would be responsible for implementation of the Strategic Plan in all its aspects, in effect serving as in-house professional consultants.

Charges to the Strategic Planning Implementation Council and Its Task Forces

The Strategic Planning Committee "handed the baton" to the Strategic Planning Implementation Council (SPIC) at the conclusion of Phase I. To foster continuity and consistency, membership of the SPIC in large part matched that of the Strategic Planning Committee, with the addition of several new members.

Lay and professional leadership of the Implementation Council reviewed the recommendations of the Strategic Plan and concluded that they fell naturally into six categories. Task Forces were established in each of these categories (as listed below) and were respectively assigned responsibility for implementation of specific numbered recommendations, i.e., the Services Task Force is responsible for implementing recommendations 2, 3, and 9-11 of the Strategic Plan, and the Facilities Task Force is responsible for implementing recommendations 5-8 and 25. In this way, the Strategic Plan not only mandated but also dictated the structure for its implementation (Figure 2).

1. Services Task Force
2. Administration, Budget, and Decision-Making Task Force
3. Financial Resource Development Task Force
4. Facilities Task Force
5. Communications, Image Building, and Community Relations Task Force
6. Human Resource Development Task Force

Each of the six Task Forces of the Implementation Council was charged with (1) assessing the costs and benefits of implementing its assigned "directional recommendations" of the Strategic Plan report and (2) making specific "action recommendations" regarding how, when, and with what funds these proposed new programs and/or policies should be implemented.

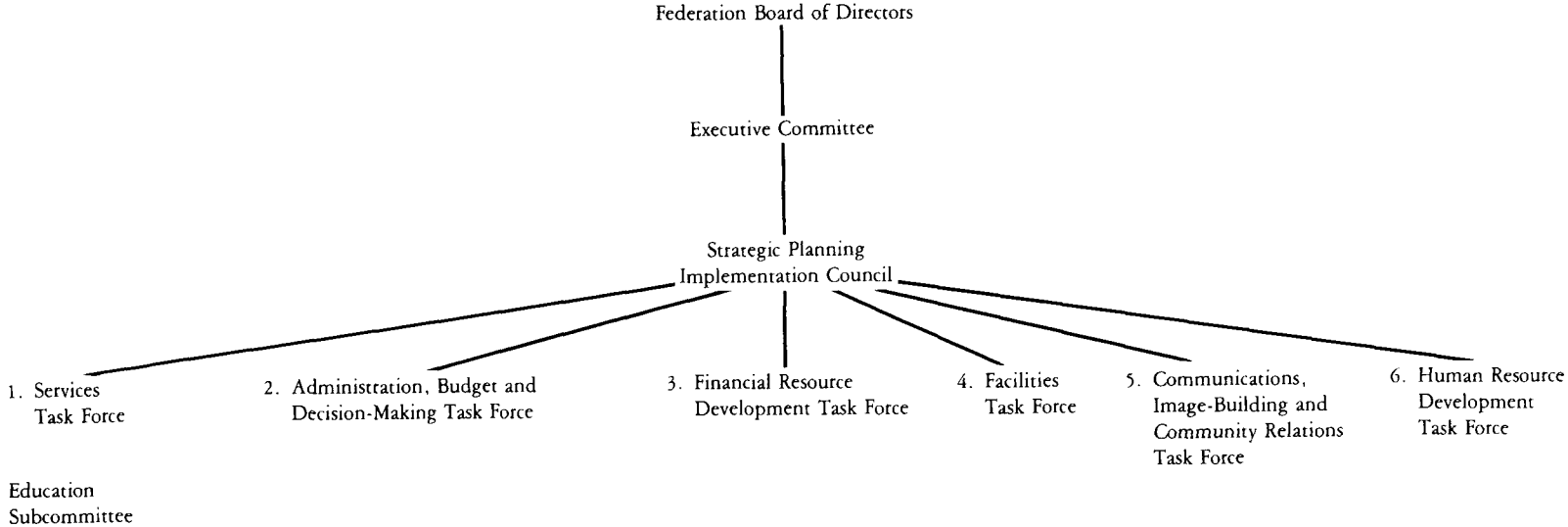


Figure 2. Phase II (Implementation) Structure.

Critical Outcomes

Already many important and tangible benefits have been realized during Phase II of our strategic planning process. Some examples of implementation recommendations that have been adopted and enacted to date are the following.

- Priority rankings of all services by specific priority level and by client group, rather than by agency
- A Comprehensive Directory of Services describing every service offered with federation funding in Baltimore
- An annual allocations analysis identifying the use of every federation dollar allocated for local services
- A specific three-year phase-in plan for 100% conformance between our federation's fiscal allocations and the community service rankings
- A detailed multiyear financial resource development plan to augment revenue during the next decade, including targeted outreach to contributors at upper levels and specific new revenue-enhancement programs for both annual campaign and endowments to bridge the projected gap between needs and resources
- A sophisticated marketing plan to better inform the community of current activities and available services, as well as to enhance the image of the federation in both the Jewish community and the general community (including changing the name of the Associated Jewish Charities & Welfare Fund to reflect more accurately the identity and role of Baltimore's federation)
- A new structure for Jewish education involving a local Commission On Jewish Education that applies a systems approach and implements a communally mandated commitment to significantly increased funding, including creation of a new Fund for Jewish Education with an initial corpus goal of \$10,000,000
- A \$1,000,000 facilities repair fund to address immediately the critical capital

needs of our physical plants that have resulted from chronic deferred maintenance during the past decade and that can be projected and proportionately prevented during the next decade

- A systematic and comprehensive format for human resource development, including new recruitment and placement programs for lay leadership, as well as enhancement of volunteer portfolios

CONCLUSION

Extending the musical analogy, the art of community planning is not unlike that of conducting a philharmonic orchestra. The multiple players in the Jewish communal enterprise parallel the different yet complementary sections of the orchestra comprised of varied instruments. Comprehensive strategic planning, like that undertaken in Baltimore, is a magnum opus composed in the key of C-major. In this article, we have recommended that local federations make sure that the C's outlined here are highlighted in the community's performance of the work, thereby ensuring synchronicity and harmony.

The underlying philosophy of Baltimore's strategic plan is that community problems require both a community-wide perspective in planning and delivering services and a community setting of priorities for the development and allocation of necessarily limited resources. The budgeting constraints, the size and complexity of the problems facing our community, the pace of change in demography and demand for services, and the need for organizational efficiency all require a comprehensive, multidimensional process to ensure that the federations in our continental Jewish communities are strong, stable, flexible, and effective. We see our recommendations, in both Phase I and Phase II, as necessary and effective means to the achievement of that end.

Above all, the local federation must seek out and foster the participation of all elements of the community. If it does so,

and if it evolves in the ways proposed in Baltimore's Strategic Plan, then we believe it will make even greater contributions than in the past to a stronger and more vibrant Jewish community, locally, continentally, in Israel, and throughout the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The strategic planning process of THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Feder-

ation of Baltimore was initiated through the vision of Samuel K. Himmelrich, Chairman of the Board, and Darrell D. Friedman, President. Shoshana S. Cardin, a past Chairman of THE ASSOCIATED, served as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. In 1989, under the leadership of newly elected Chairman of the Board, Suzanne F. Cohen, the Strategic Planning Implementation Council was created, headed by Michael Hettleman.