

Section 14
Strategic Planning

NUMBER 14.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Approved: November 2016
Revised: October 2025

Policy

Strategic planning is the ongoing process of defining organizational priorities, aligning resources, and positioning INFORMS to fulfill its mission and vision. More than producing a document, strategic planning is a way of thinking and one of the primary responsibilities of the Board. It includes engaging in substantive, forward-looking discussions on high-impact topics during Board meetings, considering both internal realities and external trends.

Because of the dynamic nature of strategic planning and the ever-changing internal and external environment in which INFORMS operates, the process must remain flexible. This policy avoids prescriptive, step-by-step procedures so the Board and staff can adapt their approach as needed to address emerging opportunities, risks, and member needs. Strategic planning should also be integrated with budgeting, new initiative evaluation, and other major decision-making processes to ensure alignment across the organization.

Board meetings should regularly include strategic discussions that address timely and important topics to help the Board anticipate opportunities and challenges and guide decision-making. Key insights from these discussions may be summarized, as appropriate, to inform ongoing strategic direction. These ongoing discussions contribute to the Board's strategic perspective but are not intended to result in continuous edits to the strategic plan.

The strategic plan is the written output of the strategic planning process — a high-level, multi-year, document that outlines INFORMS' mission, vision, and strategic goals, and may also include other components. While the Board should review the plan annually, edits or full rewrites should be undertaken sparingly, when significant changes in priorities, opportunities, or the environment warrant them. Only the Board may approve the strategic plan, and this authority may not be delegated. The strategic plan should be kept current and made publicly available to ensure transparency and promote its use throughout the organization.

Procedure

- Annual Review – The Board will review the strategic plan annually, typically at its first meeting of the year, to confirm alignment with INFORMS' mission, vision, and strategic priorities, and to determine whether environmental changes, performance gaps, or new opportunities warrant revisions.
- Initiating Plan Revisions –The Strategic Planning Committee may recommend revisions for the Board's consideration. The Board determines when revisions are warranted.

- Delegating Drafting – When revisions are needed, the Board may delegate the drafting of proposed changes to the Strategic Planning Committee.
- Committee Role – The Strategic Planning Committee may gather member input, conduct research and benchmarking, scan the environment, and identify emerging trends to inform the Board's review and any proposed revisions.
- Alignment – All activities of INFORMS (for example, budgeting, new initiative evaluation) — shall align with the strategic plan to ensure that resources and actions support the organization's strategic priorities.
- Transparency – The most current strategic plan will be posted on the INFORMS website.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 4.3 Board Member Responsibilities
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 14.2 Strategic Planning Committee

NUMBER 14.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Approved: November 2016
Revised: October 2025

POLICY

The purpose of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) is to assist the Board and Executive Director in identifying long-term trends and needs affecting the profession, defining areas of focus for INFORMS and its communities, and recommending plans for addressing these needs.

PROCEDURES

The Strategic Planning Committee shall be co-chaired by the Immediate Past President and Executive Director and shall include the President-Elect. No committee size is mandated, but there generally have been up to nine members. The committee membership shall be nominated by the Immediate Past President and Executive Director with approval by the Executive Committee. Committee members serve a one-year term and may be reappointed for up to three consecutive terms to provide continuity. In recognizing the dynamic nature of strategic planning, the co-chairs are asked to consider the unique opportunities, challenges, and tasks in the given year, when identifying potential committee members.

As INFORMS seeks to recognize and promote excellence through a broad range of achievements and inclusive participation within the membership and profession it represents, efforts must be made to assemble committees with a range of expertise and backgrounds. Committees should aim for broad representation in professional experiences, employer type, career and/or education level, areas of expertise, demographics, lived experiences, and other related considerations. While two current members of the committee are sitting board members (i.e., Immediate Past President and President-elect), to encourage additional viewpoints, no more than 50% of the entire committee should be current board members.

Activities of the Strategic Planning Committee shall include:

- Annual review of the Strategic Plan, which may also include
    - Assessing the health and relevance of the strategic plan and monitoring progress;
    - Maintaining a biennial SWOT analysis;
    - Gathering input from stakeholders (e.g., members, non-members, customers, authors, etc.), conducting research and benchmarking, scanning the environment, scenario planning, and identifying emerging trends.
    - Providing recommendations to the Board for rewriting the strategic plan and/or mid-course corrections where priorities, resources, or external context have shifted.
- Oversight of the initiative process (P&P 14.3).
- Ad hoc projects, as needed

The Immediate Past President serves as the Board liaison. The Board liaison shall submit the necessary reports to the Board.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 2.1 General Committee Procedures
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 4.1 Duties of the President, the President-Elect, and the Immediate Past President
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 4.3 Board Member Responsibilities
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 4.7 Board Liaisons
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 14.1 Strategic Planning
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 14.3 Strategic Initiatives

NUMBER 14.3 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Adopted: Fall 2025

POLICY

INFORMS recognizes two categories of major expenditures that fall outside of the regular annual operating budget - Strategic Initiatives and Operational Initiatives. Strategic Initiatives are described below. Operational Initiatives[1] are described in Section 5.

Strategic Initiatives

- Purpose: Expand INFORMS' future impact and value to members, the broader community, and the public.
- Examples: New member benefits, programs that advance science for the public good, initiatives that strengthen INFORMS' visibility and credibility.
- Financial Lens: These typically have revenue potential—whether directly (new programs, services, events) or indirectly (strengthening reputation and attracting members/sponsors).
- Scale: Strategic initiatives generally require a significant investment, typically at least $50,000 over the course of the initiative.
- Time Horizon: Outward-facing, future-oriented.
- Reviewed by: Strategic Planning Committee (SPC)

When an initiative does not clearly fit into either a strategic or operational initiative, the President, Treasurer, and SPC Co-Chairs will determine how it should be classified.

There are no requirements that strategic or operational initiatives be undertaken every year.

Funding Authority

- The Treasurer provides SPC with its annual initiative allocation in accordance with Policy and Procedure 5.6.
- This allocation accounts for prior commitments to multi-year projects.
- All allocations to specific initiatives must be approved by the Board of Directors.
- Multi-year commitments must be authorized by the Board at the time of approval.
- In exceptional circumstances, the President and Executive Director may temporarily reduce or defer allocations to address financial concerns. Any such changes must be reported to the Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

[1] As of October 2025, the P&P has not yet been written related to operational initiatives. The assumption is that it will be written in 2026 and then this footnote will be deleted.

PROCEDURES

The SPC provides strategic oversight and authority, while the Executive Office manages the administrative and operational responsibilities needed to implement these procedures.

Proposal and Review

- Proposals may be submitted by INFORMS members, committees, or staff.
- Member-submitted proposals require department staff support; staff-submitted proposals require support from at least one member.
- SPC shall maintain and publish a comprehensive operating manual that specifies proposal requirements, evaluation criteria, forms, submission deadlines, and review timelines. The SPC may highlight specific areas of opportunity for proposals or broad areas if desired.
- All proposals must include a risk assessment addressing potential implementation challenges, financial risks, and mitigation strategies.
- SPC will review proposals and recommend a prioritized portfolio of initiatives to the Board for consideration and approval.

Communications and Reporting

- SPC is responsible for communication with submitters throughout the review process.
- Once approved, SPC will notify submitters and outline next steps.
- Initiative leads must provide regular progress reports to SPC and an annual summary to the Board. Reporting cadence will be specified in the operating manual.
- Risk assessments must be updated in progress reports if new risks or mitigation strategies emerge.
- Major deviations or challenges must be communicated promptly to SPC.
- At the conclusion of each initiative, a final report shall be submitted to SPC and shared with the Board.
- SPC co-chairs shall provide the Finance Committee with a funding summary at least twice per year.

Conflict Avoidance

- SPC will publish annually the list of approved initiatives.
- Submitters must review this list before proposing new activities to minimize duplication and potential conflicts.
- Any conflicts will be referred to the Executive Director for assessment and resolution in consultation with relevant parties.
- The Board retains final authority in resolution.

Accountability

- SPC will maintain evaluation criteria and success metrics, documented in the operating manual, to assess initiative quality, execution, and outcomes.

Policy Review

- This policy, including funding thresholds and procedural effectiveness, shall be reviewed by the Board every three years, or sooner if circumstances warrant.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 5.x Placeholder related to footnote 1
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 5.6. INFORMS Restricted Reserve
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 14.1 Strategic Planning
INFORMS Policies and Procedures Manual, Section 14.2 Strategic Planning Committee