

EDGES

N E W P L A N E T A R Y P A T T E R N S



Collaborating

to make

a

difference

Holistic Strategic Planning

Integrating Strategic and Operational Plans in the Public Sector

THOMAS PLANT

Introduction: The Challenge of Integrated Planning

Many people see the process of strategic planning as a complex and time consuming exercise. The intent of course, is to develop a strategic plan document which represents an organization's vision for the future. But sometimes this plan fails to become a "living" document. After being composed with great effort, it may have little impact on the daily operational decision making process. So it is important when engaging in a strategic planning exercise to consider how to align the organization's strategic vision with the front line operations of the organization, so that the vision guides decision making at all levels of the organization.

This article will focus on the strategic and the operational components in the strategic planning process. It suggests that a successful approach will view these two components as an integrated whole system through a holistic strategic framework. Additionally, the article will focus on strategic planning in the public sector, reviewing the gaps which can develop in applying strategic and operational planning. It discusses ways to

overcome those gaps in order to ensure a successful strategic planning process.

Background: The Pressure for Better Results

The current environment in which the public sector operates is defined by heightened fiscal caution and increased scrutiny of public organizations. These organizations are under growing pressure to become more responsive to the needs of their constituency. One way to respond to these challenges is to develop a strategic plan which outlines the organization's vision and strategic priorities. And to successfully implement this, an operational planning mechanism needs to align the service delivery departments with the organization's strategic vision. In this way a strategic direction can be set for the organization which can be used to guide daily management decisions, focus performance, and prioritize resource allocation.

The challenge here is to develop a system which allows the organization to meet its long-range challenges, and this requires a planning system that is integrated into the senior management decision making process. The first step is to create a strategic plan document which

outlines the broad vision, key goals and strategic initiatives. The next step is to operationalize this plan, by aligning it with the goals of all operational teams that are delivering the service to the public. Implementing both of these components of the strategic plan process creates a holistic framework.

Components of a Holistic Strategic Planning Model

The ICA facilitated planning model sets out a number of steps which an organization can take to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. They include establishing a practical vision, identifying underlying obstacles, and then setting strategic directions with action plans. The result is a plan which encompasses a vision, identifies obstacles in achieving the vision, sets priority directions to focus the organization on achieving the vision, and lays out action plans to implement the strategies. Then an operational planning model provides a template to apply this process within the organization's more specialized operational teams, projects, or departments. This process involves the following stages of project development: analysis of opportunities, identifying aims, exploring options, selecting the

best options, planning in detail, evaluating plans, then implementing and bringing the plan to closure.

When the facilitated and the operational planning models are integrated together in a common approach, a holistic strategic planning model is created. A holistic system is based on the assumption that all of the system elements are interrelated and interdependent. As can be seen in Figure 1 (The Holistic Strategic Planning Model), the model consists of four key elements as follows:

Holistic Strategic Planning Model

Facilitated Strategic Planning:

- 1) Developing a strategic vision involving stakeholder input
 - 2) Aligning and prioritizing strategic goals and initiatives with the vision
- Operations Level Planning:*
- 3) Developing operational business plans which align with the strategic plan
 - 4) Measuring and reporting the results

The first two elements are part of the facilitated planning approach. And the first step in the development of a holistic model is to develop a strategic vision involving all relevant stakeholders in the process, in order to achieve buy-in. Once a strategic vision has been developed, there needs to be alignment between this vision and the strategic goals and initiatives which were established to implement the vision.

The last two elements of the holistic model are part of the operational planning approach. The main component is the development of an operational business plan which is essentially an action planning document. This highlights the key business objectives for the organization's operations, and the key strategic goals which all levels of the organization are linked with. Further, the last major element is the establishment of a performance measurement system, in order to be able to evaluate success in achieving strategic goals and furthering the organizations' vision.

Overall, the creation of a holistic strategic planning system creates a framework which supports the review of the strategic priorities, analysis of results, and taking corrective actions. The key components are the following:

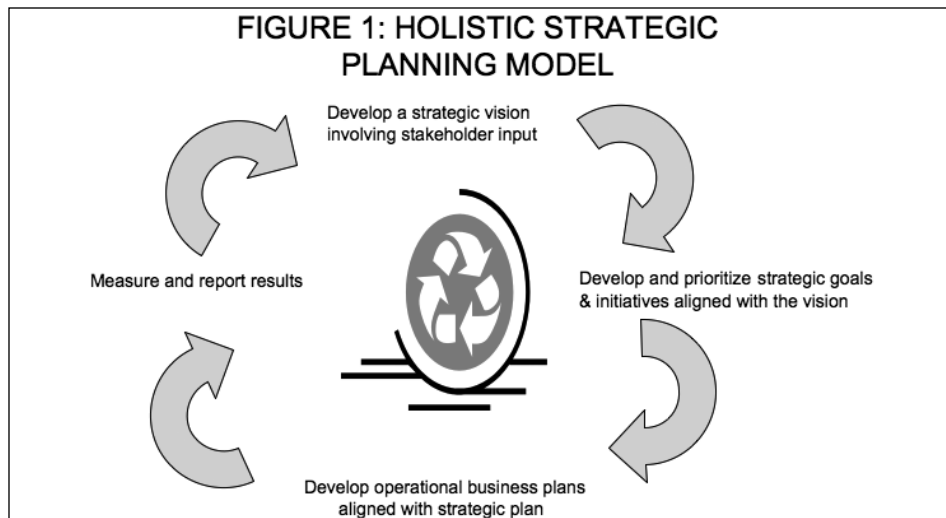


FIGURE 1: HOLISTIC STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL

a) Creating accountability for results through timely review and discussion with senior management that specifically focuses on the measures, variances to plan, analysis of problems and plans for corrective action

b) Operational business plans, or some other mechanism that is used to plan specific actions to realise the strategy

c) Tight alignment between the strategic plan, operational business plan, and performance measures

Gaps Between Strategic and Operational Planning

Implementing the holistic strategic planning model is of course easier said than done. The integration between strategic and operational planning is often tenuous if a strong connection has not been developed linking the two approaches. Also there are many organizational dynamics which can over time create growing gaps between the strategic and operational planning.

One gap that can develop is a lack of distinction between strategic and operational initiatives. This can easily develop when brainstorming potential initiatives during the visioning stage. If there has not been any criteria established to distinguish major strategies from operations-level initiatives, the result can be a confusing mixture of broad directions and specific tasks. So it is important to utilize criteria in defining a strategic initiative such as the following:

- Major cost implications, both short and long term

- Significant community wide impact
- Strong intergovernmental or inter-departmental impact
- Long term implementation time horizon (2+ years)

Another gap which can develop is between formulating strategy and executing it. It is not enough for senior management to know where the organization is headed; it is also important to put strategy into action and learn from experience. However, this inevitably involves taking a risk. It involves incorporating the knowledge and experience of staff at all levels of the organization, and generating these into tangible, actionable strategic goals. This can be accomplished by involving operational staff in the development of an operational business plan. It is also essential to ensure there is a process in place for accountability in accomplishing strategic priorities, and for tracking or measuring progress.

A third gap which can develop is a lack of prioritization in establishing strategic initiatives or action plans. If the strategic plan contains a long list of initiatives which need to be done, but no clear priority has been set between them, then operational decision makers inevitably initiate work on all of the initiatives, without understanding what is most important to senior management. The end result is often some work done on all the initiatives, without completing any. Thus, in establishing the strategic plan and setting operational action plans, assigning priority to various strategic initiatives is paramount. An example of criteria which can be used to prioritize is:

- Level of impact on the organization or community
- Interdependencies (timing with other strategic initiatives)
- Municipal risk exposure (legal, political or financial)
- Corporate-wide implications

Finally, strategy that isn't measurable will not provide an indicator of success. Successful organizations also establish a review mechanism to allow senior decision makers to be updated on progress in implementing the strategic vision. Often this step is missed in the strategic process, since the expectation is that once the plan is created it will automatically be implemented. Often there is little thought given to follow up. Establishing key operational performance measurements can assist in this by providing timely information on progress in achieving key strategic objectives and goals. Then senior management will have a tracking tool for comparing performance year to year.

Conclusion

Implementing a holistic strategic planning process helps ensure that public organizations are able to establish a clear strategic vision for all stakeholders, and deliver value-added results to their constituents. Through the alignment of the organization's strategic vision and the delivery of services at the operational level, a process is established to create a "living" strategic plan to guide the whole organization. The end result will be greater success in providing service to the citizens and actualizing the strategic goals of the organization. ♦



Thomas Plant MBA, MPA is the Senior Manager of Strategic Planning with the City of Vaughan. He has worked in the municipal government strategic planning field over the past ten years and is currently writing a book entitled Strategic Planning for Municipalities: A Users Guide which will be published by Municipal World in fall 2007. To reach Thomas, contact him at thomas.plant@vaughan.ca

Radical Collaboration

DEBBIE ACKLEY

When I think of the words "We value the collaborative approach as a means to making a difference", I usually think of a group of people working together. I picture them working collaboratively... stepping inside and growing the "participation paradigm" as ICA has been known to call it. My own training in organization development has given me ways of knowing, seeing and valuing this collective approach to work and life.

But in 2004, my work and my world as I had come to know it, ended. I had reached the limits of my understanding of work and life, as is often the case in mid-life. And then this "ending" was compounded by an "intruding event" which brought me face to face with evil and violence. Our then eighteen year old son, Scott, was brutally assaulted by somewhere between twelve to fifteen guys on a front lawn in Rosedale, Toronto, on a Sunday evening around ten o'clock.

Born from Silence is the name of the book of poetry (2007) that I wrote to tell the story of the assault, the judicial process that failed everyone, and the healing that came through uncommon ways. The book is written from the perspective of the mother, through the heart of one who has been assessing and working with organizational systems for nearly thirty years. It is written in the language of poetry to reach up and burst the limits of all institutional language (legal, psychological, medical) — languages which distance, abstract and conceptualize — to search for a more holistic and ecological voice; a language of peace.

Born from Silence is a metaphor that stresses the collaboration with Silence... with the dark, the dark night of the soul, which is often thought of as a very lonely place, torn from the edges of comfort and that which is known. And yet the paradox is, silence is still a collaboration... a collaboration that took me to the deepest roots of my own fears, my own capacity for evil and injustice, my own deepest emptiness... so that I could interrupt the cycle of projecting it out and on to others, in the name of heroism, and find a creative way to move beyond what Walter Wink calls the "myth of redemptive violence."

Here are two poems from *Born from Silence*.

The Dance of Becoming

To choose life
to choose peace
when all around me
is a death wish
a world gone supernova
spiraling into a vast black hole
before it dies into that void
sparks of wisdom fly toward freedom.
I long to catch a flying fire feather
but the firebird will not be caught
and anyway
my body will not move
not even to reach for your flame.
Tending the broken boys and men
First you, dear boy
mending the bruises, cuts
and bleeding brain
And then the fear
the bone-pulverizing affliction
You cannot find your old self
in your body or your life
so you flail about
becoming new
on the pyre of an old self.
And then you, the father,
whose broken heart
now beats in chaotic staccatos
steals your breath
and bends your body low
How many nights I prod
your breathless sleep
into beats of life once more.
My body is now spent
from the vigils at the
precipice of life and death
one more trip to the hospital
can I summon the strength?
For one whole summer
I sit
I rock
and I rock
this body back to life
the words come slowly
acid drips on paper
at first
until I can calm the edges of my rage
breathe and rock
it is all I can do at first
Breathing and rocking
turns circular
and a sacred dance
impels my body to
move first forward
and then back
like a dancing cross stitch

whole body, whole heart.
 and the music slides into
 cells that have been wrung out
 wrung dry
 the music fills the black hole
 like Ruah filling
 a lifeless kite
 inspiring it
 to dance on the winds of Gaia.
 one hand holds me on the left
 as my hand supports another on my right
 and we dance
 and we breathe
 as one
 and slowly in the dance of the round
 I dance myself back to
 Wholeness.
 what good is a dance when
 the politics of this story
 begs resistance
 and clear eyed naming?
 I have barely started to breathe and dance
 again
 choosing life I learned
 from the courageous ones
 is an act of resistance.
 Edith, Etty and Simone
 at the edge of unspeakable
 horror and terror
 the holocaustum...
 they chose life
 even as they died
 the victors claimed exterminated vermin
 but they live on
 and teach me how to
 choose life
 And so I dance
 with their dangerous memory inflaming
 my steps
 an ethical power
 born from memory
 not as a thought
 but a still point
 in the dance itself
 and my body begins
 to remember life
 in the sacred spiral of the dance
 as we breathe together
 in the beauty of the round
 I take back the power of the circle.

Dancing Into Justice

I stepped into the circle
 We were only three
 but the circle spun out from us and
 I could feel the magic and the mystery
 of the unseen weave.
 The music sounded
 and an ancient YES
 rose up and was
 breathed out
 as a deep prayer of
 Thanksgiving.
 I was home
 in this unruly garden
 grass growing high
 blades of emerald
 combed by my toes.
 I took one hand
 my right hand supporting one
 and my left hand
 supported by another.
 The music filled
 each living cell until
 my cells and the music
 became One Shimmering Dance...
 one dancing spiral
 connected and free.
 Barnyard kittens
 danced and watched
 The birds did too from above
 All was right with the world
 for this moment.
 And the dance became
 the midwife
 in that wild and stormy
 birth.
 The words that had been
 silenced, stuffed down
 and buried
 began to loosen
 to dance into form
 Until one day
 the words formed and a voice was born.
 A voice no longer rooted in anger and rage
 A voice that had
 found the spaciousness
 the freedom born from the dance
 A voice of justice
 A voice to uphold
 the fidelity to the
 demand of right relationship
 A voice that could say
 NO
 and
 Enough is Enough
 And finally be heard. ❖

Debbie Ackley Writer and Consultant

Debbie Ackley is a change management/organizational learning facilitator and consultant with over twenty-seven years of management, change management (cultural orientation), and leadership development experience in the private and public sectors. She founded DAPA Consulting in 1989; delivering facilitation, consulting and coaching services. She is co-author of the book, *Towards the Learning Organization: A Guide*.

Debbie is co-founder of the non-profit learning organization, The Center for Emerging Leadership, whose flagship program is "Women in Leadership: A Learning Community Exploring the Path of Wisdom". She co-led and edited the leadership anthology book, *My Story Listens to Your Story: An Anthology of Women's Leadership Images and Stories*.

Debbie has taught change management in the International MBA, and leadership development in the Executive Development programs at the Schulich School of Business, York University. She has served as academic advisor to interdisciplinary students from the University of Toronto and Royal Roads University.

She has a B.Sc. from the University of Toronto and a Masters of Science in Organizational Development from Pepperdine University, Malibu, California. Debbie was educated in Canada, the US and Europe, and brings a strong cultural lens to all her work.

Just back from a sabbatical, Debbie brings a renewed sense of commitment to organizations and communities who are wholeheartedly searching to "find the story as the basis of wise of action", and to re-mythologize cultures towards peace, justice, and sustainability.

She has just published her first book of poetry, *Born from Silence*, in May 2007.

Debbie is a recent semi-finalist in a poetry contest sponsored by Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, and *Walrus Magazine*. Her prize was a partial scholarship to study poetry in St. Petersburg, Russia in July, 2007.



Collaboration

Nobody ever came up with a great idea all by themselves. —Thomas Edison, 1847-1931

M. MYATT

For our country to succeed requires the combined efforts of all of us, in all walks of life. By working together we can build the country of our dreams. (Then) together let us work with other nations for peace and happiness across our continent and our globe.

—Nelson Mandela

This powerful challenge of Mandela's is a call to a certain group of people to unity of action or collaboration, so as to achieve a greater good for themselves, and ultimately for those beyond their ken.

Perhaps most of us are not considering the unity of a whole country as our immediate goal. But for any worthwhile concern, exploring the call to collaboration is a popular exercise these days!

Collaboration may be defined as the interdependence of all parties' gifts and talents for the achievement of a mutually agreed upon goal. It has many characteristics, such as:

- a common mission
- a desire to work together toward this mission, and
- a delineation of the values, gifts and commitment of all parties.

Some authors, for example Loughlan Sofield and Carrol Juliano, describe the nature of collaboration as relational, with a danger that group relations may erupt into anger and conflict. But the opposite result is probably more common: many friendships are forged, and the few difficult situations are often overcome through the commitment of the parties to a stated goal.

I would like to offer two examples of collaboration which may illustrate some of the above comments and relate to ICA Canada's emphasis on the "value of the collaborative approach as a means to making a difference".

In the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto there are many religious congregations of women and men. Historically,

these groups have, for the most part, carried out their ministries independent of one another. Today, due to many factors, new and different types of ministries are needed. So, one congregation posed a question to the others: "Would you be willing to have a conversation about a shared or joint ministry?"

Because of a positive response from everyone, a meeting was held of the leaders of these congregations. So the concept of a Joint Apostolic Ministry was born—affectionately known as "jam". It took approximately one year to determine the overall focus of the ministry: a ministry to and with new immigrants living in Toronto. A small group of dedicated women and men religious spent many months of the second year working out the practical issues of this collaborative venture:

- a board of directors was formed, which organized corporate status in order to ensure visibility of the ministry
- each congregational member determined their commitment: financial, personnel, and/or prayer,
- an executive director was hired—who is a male religious,
- a pilot project was established, to be reviewed for its sustainability after 2 years
- a charitable number has been received so as to provide receipts for donations;
- personnel from the member congregations were recruited—to date 35 companions for new families to Canada, and 45 prayer partners for individuals.

"Jam" has just completed its first year of this ministry, and at the year-end party over 100 people attended. Many new immigrant families came, some in their native attire, as well as the women and men companions and prayer partners.

Only through this collaborative approach could this outcome be achieved,

i.e. no one religious congregation could make such a difference in the lives of the participants.

The next example is a collaboration of the women religious of Toronto. It began in 1999 with a "working group" which recommended a programme to build affordable housing to celebrate the Jubilee Year of 2000. Because their concept was different than other affordable housing projects (ownership instead of rental housing) the City Council determined this would be a pilot project.

Since the inception of this endeavour, some 41 women religious congregations have partnered with Habitat for Humanity, and a developer well known for innovative approaches to providing affordable housing. So far the accomplishments of this collaboration include:

- forming a board of directors
- obtaining a corporate status and charitable number
- gathering a wonderful group of volunteers, including a very well known architect and a group of dedicated lay professionals, who have piloted this project through City Hall.

The group may begin construction in the fall of 2007—but you really don't want to read about the difficulties the Board has endured to reach this point! Suffice it to say, this collaborative approach has provided those of us on the Board with extended experience at various committees of the City Council and several appearances before Council itself. However, when the 60 houses are built, a huge difference will occur in the lives of the families who will own their homes.

My personal preference for new ventures is this collaborative approach. The setbacks, the celebrations, the newly formed relationships plus the wonderful ideas that have been generated are incentive enough to constantly renew our commitment to the projects at hand. ❖

Collaboration

WAYNE NELSON

Values are guides we use in making intentional choices. They become reference points to use in seeking direction. In this issue, we explore collaboration, one of ICA's core values.

When we say we value collaboration, we often think first of "collaborative initiatives"; groups working together on a specific project. We are also learning that any group can adopt a "collaborative approach" in their discussion and work.

Leaping into the 21st Century We live in a complex, networked, relational world. We are, as a society, breaking through the bonds of 20th century "go it alone" individualism. We are learning to find what we have in common and we are learning to form relationships that bring us together and make us larger. Some companies, like Nike, are emerging from this sea of change as networks operating under a common brand identity. The global dialogue over climate change says we are seeing our world in new ways.

Working collaboratively turns traditional hierarchical models upside down by seeking participation, encouraging consensus and generating commitment. Collaboration may be one of the key building blocks toward a truly new form of economic, political and social interaction and one of the major ways for us to live creatively in the complexity we face.

Toward a Common Purpose

Collaboration is about working together toward a common purpose. It involves thinking, organizing and acting together. Cooperation suggests doing things in a harmonious way. Partnership suggests a deeper, longer term, more formal relationship.

We've experienced requests to collaborate, only to find that it meant buying software or finding clients for someone. Collaboration may involve investment of those involved, but authentic collaboration is not a matter of sales.

ICA Canada's collaboration with Il Ngwesi, Kenya began with a common desire to find ways to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic at the community level. Everyone involved is clear that this means working intensively in the community and finding ways to replicate the project in other communities.

Making it Work

Successful collaborations are made up of groups that are viable on their own. People come together because they share clear common interests. It is the common task that truly binds collaborative groups together.

Collaborative initiatives use methods and approaches that promote healthy interaction and transparent, participatory decision-making processes. Successful collaborative ventures have plans for sustaining membership, resources and activity. They have policies, structures and systems that allow the venture to function effectively; as well as implementation, monitoring, accountability and evaluation plans to ensure effective action and learning from experience. Collaborative leadership facilitates team building, and weaves the strengths of the members together.

The Impact of Collaboration

Collaboration brings more people to the table. Multiple perspectives generate a greater variety of ideas and enable the flow of creative energy toward innovative solutions. Successful collaboration leads to increased motivation and a commitment to increased productivity and tangible results.

As we strengthen our social networks; respect, trust, connections and practical results generate social capital. Working together reduces social distance among people and builds the common good. This is a substantial re-patterning of society and collaborators act as social pioneers; opening the way for new modalities of social interaction.

ICA as a Collaborative Organization

ICA needs to be thinking of the "Big ICA"—the larger network in Canada and the global "movement of those who care" for the future of the planet. The global ICA network has an amazingly diverse texture of social entrepreneurs and organizations active in progressive social change. We need ways to weave this network together to be the "force of nature" we have always wanted to become.

ICA needs to make connections that are substantial and can deliver, like the relationship with the Toronto Marathon. We also need relationships that build long-term sustainability; like the relationship with ICA Associates whose royalties for use of

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Rhonda Mauricette

Five years ago Rhonda Mauricette first connected with ICA the same way many of its current volunteers do, through the Group Facilitation Workshop. At the time, she was in transition to a new role as Education and Training Specialist to Organizational Development Consultant at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto, a role she still has today. Rhonda applies her MA in health promotion and ICA tools to this task, providing training in conflict management, honoring diversity, workplace health promotion, team effectiveness, personal coaching and leadership development to staff at all levels in her organization. She has developed leadership training programmes for managers and informal or emergent leaders, and provides human rights training and consultation to CAMH and other organizations.

Progressively over the years, Rhonda wanted to explore the application of her facilitation skills and experience in organizational development to the field of social justice. The ICA Canada and the Youth as Facilitative Leaders program seemed the perfect vehicle with which to begin this journey. Rhonda joined the ICA Canada Board in April 2007 and has assumed responsibility to oversee the operations of the Youth as Facilitative Leaders programme. ❖

intellectual property provide core funding. A key challenge for ICA is creating a deeper framework of collaboration and support to intensify the "on the ground" impact.

As ICA moves forward, we need to continue our strategic thinking. What trends are emerging? How do we address the "moral issues of our time?" What programmatic activity does ICA need to engage in to make the kind of impact that fuels our dreams? Who do we need as collaborators?

As we work together, we give shape and meaning to the emerging world. We are at the edge of a new social form that will be a part of the "new social vehicle" that carries the world into coming centuries. ❖

Wayne Nelson is a senior consultant with ICA Associates Inc. He has worked with organizations and communities around the world to plan and implement projects. He is currently working on a book focused on facilitative leadership in strategy implementation.

Youth as Facilitative Leaders

In the last four months, YFL has trained more than 80 youth from a variety of different backgrounds and organizations. This is a result of two fee-for-service agreements and our first ever free public course offerings for each of our three core courses, Tools for Teamwork, Group Facilitation and Facilitated Planning.

The Courage to Lead

Two Study Groups are being held this Fall—one at University Health Network and one at ICA. A committee is being struck to do a rewrite of the book. It will be headed by Jeanette Stanfield.

Worldviews Research Project

The research committee is in the process of putting together a series on worldviews for participants to explore the various questions they have and see how the exploration informs our worldview. Questions are the lubricant for consciousness change.

An update on Listen to the Drumming:

The Toronto Marathon fundraising event was a huge success! The Listen to the Drumming Team had over 70 runners running and raising funds for youth HIV/AIDS prevention programs in 5 African ICAs including: Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Our fundraising goal was \$40,000. We do not have a tally as of yet, but we believe we will be very close!

Upcoming:

ICA Canada is hosting an incredible benefit night on November 13 featuring Stephanie Nolen as our keynote speaker as well as presentations by Philip Berger, Canadian Physician focused on HIV/AIDS, and Anurita Bains, former assistant to Stephen Lewis. To purchase tickets please go to: www.icacan.ca. Proceeds from this evening will go toward women's programs throughout Africa.

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Individual members form a valuable part of our network and at ICA Canada we depend upon and deeply appreciate your support. As an Individual Member, you will be connected to ICA activities all over the world. You will receive a copy of our quarterly newsletter *Edges* and you will be a part of a great group of people who are committed to social responsibility in Canada and elsewhere. To become an Individual Member, please fill in the form below and send it to 655 Queen St. E. Toronto ON M4M 1G4 or simply reply by e-mail to membership@icacan.ca

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I enclose my payment for \$ _____ I enclose a cheque for \$ _____

(We no longer accept payment by charge cards.)

Your name: _____

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Is this your home address or office address?

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Send this form to ICA Canada, 655 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario M4M 1G4.

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ICA Canada exists to develop the capacity of all people to contribute to positive social change through *research, publishing, education and social change projects* that demonstrate positive social change.

Statement of Purpose for Edges

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