

The Association Preferred Future – A Session Facilitated by MSAE

You can take any path, but a pre-chosen path will more likely get you to where you want to be.

Perspective

You can stroll and just enjoy the day or if you know where you are going and what you have to achieve, take the direct path and get done what needs to be accomplished.

The goal of the Preferred Future exercise is to determine what the organization wants to be. It involves the Board and or strategic key stakeholders in forecasting the future and how the association will help create the preferred outcome. This is “WHAT” the association is going to accomplish, not “HOW” to accomplish the work.

Max DePree began his influential and insightful book, “[Leadership is an Art](#)”, by saying that “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality”. I would suggest that the most important element of the reality to be defined is the preferred future. What future do you imagine? What future are you hoping for, working toward, and dreaming of? The preferred future matters because it can steer the present and the plans for the future.

Outlining the Preferred Future is a scanning function. It leads to creating a vision for what the organization wants to accomplish. That’s the power of the future. It provides the plan, the goal, and the vision toward which all present activity is directed. The preferred future, in combination with setting priorities, provides direction.

Think of it this way: there are two ways to travel. One is to set out and drive along, waiting to see what comes. We do this kind of thing at times to relax, perhaps to see the countryside on a Sunday afternoon. The other way to travel is to have a destination. And that destination shapes most every decision we make in order to reach it. The future is what holds the present accountable.

Moreover, keeping a preferred future in mind can help set the priorities by which you navigate through crises and distractions. What resources are expended or conserved? What personnel are invested in or let go? You make all decisions with an eye toward answering the question of what resources, people, and programs will we need to come closer to our preferred future.

Process

The participants are provided with homework prior to the meeting to record ideas.

During the session (time to be determined) the group discusses what is impacting the business in the areas of:

- Socio-demographics
- Economical
- Environmental
- Technological
- Political

We work to have the participants vividly describe the preferred future, (or the 'desired state'). The Preferred future gets described in terms of concrete, positive results. Each program is customized with input from the chief staff executive and chief elected officer. The agenda is created with the participants and outcome in mind.

The Preferred Future is different than strategic planning. Strategic planning is a comprehensive look at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It includes a research element. The data influences the direction. The Preferred Future is a collaborative thought-leader facilitated session.

Cost

MSEA Members: \$2,300 per day.

Includes:

- Pre-meeting consultations
- Facilitator reads primary and secondary research if available
- Facilitation of meeting(s)
- Handouts including Agenda
- Summary Report of Findings

To learn more, contact [Angela DeVries](#) or [Cheryl Ronk, CAE](#).