

NASBLA BOAT OPERATIONS AND TRAINING PROGRAM

Prepared by the BOAT Advisory Board, June 2014

*2014-2019
Strategic Plan*

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The Purpose of the BOAT Program

For over 50 years, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) has represented the recreational boating authorities of all 50 states and the six U.S. territories, focusing on public policy, boating safety educational standards, and strategic partnerships. In 2009 NASBLA established a Council of Partners through its Preparedness & Response Committee to address the gap in training for our maritime law enforcement officers and emergency responders. Specifically, the Council was tasked to:

- Develop a national standard of training, credentialing, and typing for the maritime public safety community.
- Create a self-sustaining model that lays out a path to true interoperability across all local, county, state, federal and tribal jurisdictional lines.
- Empower partners to implement and nurture the standard from within, and train themselves and others all around.

The Boat Operations and Training (BOAT) Program was created and implemented in April 2010 and has since trained thousands of officers and first responders throughout the country. In May 2012, the United States Coast Guard signed a Memorandum of Understanding recognizing NASBLA's BOAT Program as a national standard of training, credentialing and typing for the maritime public safety community.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this document to outline a Strategic Plan that will assist and guide the management, delivery and continued enhancement of the BOAT Program.

Why We Developed a Strategic Plan

Strategic planning is a tool for changing our mode of functioning from "reactive" to "proactive." It allows us to chart a course into the future by anticipating, planning and creating the pathway. The process of Strategic Planning stimulates creative thinking about the future, inspires ingenuity and new approaches, increases everyone's investment in the organization, develops a common vision, clarifies values and beliefs, anticipates opportunities and obstacles, provides a framework for day-to-day decisions, and creates a marketing and fundraising piece. It gives us a chart and a course to follow, complete with waypoints, and ETAs. It is a blueprint for our organization's growth.

The Strategic Planning Process

A. Situational Assessment

A sound Strategic Plan begins with a Situational Assessment, or a picture of what the current environment looks like, identifying critical issues and opportunities concerning the future of the organization or program. Questions the Advisory Board asked were:

- What are our strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the critical issues for the future?
- What opportunities face the organization?
- What threats exist?
- What do clients/members need from the organization?

Based on these discussions and the Situational Analysis that was conducted, the areas that the Advisory Board feels are most important, in order of priority, are the following:

High Priority Critical Elements

1. Continuous quality control of our course delivery and enhancement of the student experience.
2. Integrity of our Instructors and their currency.
3. Maintaining mission relevance to customers (staying current to their needs and evolving/changing environment and demands).
4. Uniformity of NASBLA BOAT, FLETC, USCG (including sharing of lessons learned) and other training, providing true interoperability for our customers.
5. Sustainability of the program (customers' funding and affordability, and our internal financial stability).
6. Thorough evaluation of ANSI Standards and the risk of divergence from our strengths (agility, our delivery model, etc.).
7. Continuing to provide Professional Development opportunities for our customers and our instructors.
8. Ensuring that our courses that are recognized for their reasonable cost.
9. Maintaining, enhancing, leveraging and sharing our national database of trained professionals for our stakeholders and incident commanders.
10. Developing a community environment for our students, including professional certification/credentialing, and embracing the entire first responder/emergency response network.

B. Defining a Mission

The Mission Statement is a means for us to articulate our goals for all to see and to help determine whether new program ideas fall within the scope of our organization and the BOAT Program. The Advisory Board contemplated several questions:

- What need do we fill?
- What niche do we occupy?
- What problem are we attempting to solve?
- Whom do we serve?
- Who are your clients/members/students/population base?
- What are our geographic boundaries?
- How do we service your clients/members/students/population base?
- How do we solve the problem?
- Through what methods and programs?

Following much discussion, the Advisory Board decided on the Mission Statement:

Our Mission Statement

The BOAT Program will continuously enhance the safety and security of the nation's waterways through the flexible, adaptive and cost-efficient delivery and sustainment of a national standard of training for the maritime public safety and recreational boating safety professional. We ensure an exceptional learning experience through expanded partnerships, consistent quality of our curricula and integrity of our instructors.

C. Developing a Vision

An important part of strategic planning is envisioning the future of our organization/program. The vision constitutes a future image of the organization and includes a picture of how the world would be changed if our purpose were accomplished. Questions asked and discussed by the Advisory Board in that future view of the BOAT Program were:

- What can we be?
- What do we accomplish?
- What does our world look like?
- How have we changed the world?
- What have we done specifically?

Based on this examination of the future, the Advisory Board created the following Vision:

Our Vision Statement

Guided by its unwavering commitment to the quality of delivery, the BOAT Program will provide a safer and more secure boating environment through the nationally accepted and integrated standard of training. Utilizing an interconnected and collaborative community of training authorities, we will reach every maritime public safety and recreational boating safety professional and organization, creating true Partners on the Water.

D. Developing a Strategy

A strategy is a broad method or approach to be taken to accomplish a particular purpose and execute the mission statement. How can we best carry out our mission and implement our vision? What are the means that will get us to where we want to be? This looks at the organization's strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) to decide which strategy is wisest. What do we want to do, what do we not want to do?

Goal setting focuses on defining organizational aims/purposes for the next three to five years. Objectives set a quantifiable standard for each. A key step is identifying realistic goals and measurable objectives that utilize the best strategies for creating our vision of the future. Each goal and objective can be prioritized as part of the planning process. This makes the evaluation process much easier.

Utilizing the Critical Elements that the Board identified in previous meetings, the following Goals and Objectives were established.

Our Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Maintain continuous quality control through enhancement of our course delivery, student experience and instructor development.

- Objective 1.A. Continue to enhance our course design, delivery and improvement through best practices and applied science principles of adult learning.
 - Task 1.A.1. Evaluate and compile best practices from recognized training partners and authorities.

- Objective 1.B. Ensure the professionalism and integrity of the instructors and their currency through a comprehensive review and auditing program.
 - Task 1.B.1. Institute and maintain an annual evaluation process for all instructors.
- Objective 1.C. Provide professional development opportunities for instructors.
 - Task 1.C.1. Deliver an annual instructor development conference that will enhance their professional skills.
- Objective 1.D. Improve the student experience through appropriate tools and evaluation techniques.

Goal 2. Maintain mission relevance to customers (staying current to their needs and evolving/changing environment and demands).

- Objective 2.A. Develop programs based upon emerging needs of the maritime public safety and recreational boating safety community.
- Objective 2.B. Develop a community environment for our students.
 - Task 2.B.1. Capture student registration profile for distribution of *Small Craft Advisory* and *Currents*.
 - Task 2.B.2. Provide opportunities for interaction beyond the training experience.

Goal 3. Ensure uniformity of NASBLA BOAT, FLETC, USCG and other training, providing interoperability for our customers.

- Objective 3.A. Maximize and leverage the relationships with our strategic partners through the work conducted by the BOAT Advisory Board.
 - Task 3.A.1. Examine course curricula with partner training authorities to ensure alignment with appropriate competencies on an annual basis.
 - Task 3.A.2. Ensure sharing of lessons learned between and with recognized training authorities.

Goal 4. Sustain the program through customer funding assistance, affordability, and our internal financial stability.

- Objective 4.A. Ensure that our courses are delivered efficiently and as cost-effectively as possible.
 - Task 4.A.1. Program managers will monitor costs associated with all courses delivered and report any concerns to the BOAT Program Director.
- Objective 4.B. Maintain programmatic fiscal responsibility.
 - Task 4.B.1. Review, modify, improve the business model on a quarterly basis and report actions to the Executive Board.

- Objective 4.C. Provide consulting services that enhance the potential for our customers to acquire the grant funding necessary to support training needs.
 - ☐ Task 4.C.1. Provide BLAs and membership with current grant guidance upon release through newsletters.
 - ☐ Task 4.C.2 At the request of NASBLA partners and membership, the advisory board will identify SMEs that can provide requesting agency with grand application assistance.

Goal 5. Develop a professional certification/credentialing process that embraces the entire first responder/emergency response network.

- Objective 5.A. Establish the BOAT Program Advisory Board as a Standard Setting Body.
 - Task 5.A.1. Review Advisory Board Bylaws and make modifications as needed.
- Objective 5.B. Establish levels of proficiency that can be recognized by a professional credential.
 - Task 5.B.1. Work with the Board, SMEs and our strategic partners to define those levels of competency and proficiency.
- Objective 5.C. Improve functionality, accuracy and access to our database for State Program Managers, Coast Guard Sectors, FEMA, and State Emergency Operations Centers.
 - Task 5.C.1. Identify software, technology and best practices that will allow us to accomplish this objective.
- Objective 5.D. Explore opportunities to produce credentials linked to NASBLA database.
 - Task 5.D.1. Collaborate with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the U.S. Coast Guard and DHS Science and Technology to facilitate this objective.

Evaluation

A crucially important last step is to plan for evaluation. It is the plan of the Advisory Board to evaluate the BOAT Program through a regular review that will look at the following:

- Are we meeting our goals?
- Are things running smoothly?
- Do we need to make changes?
- Was our thinking fuzzy?
- Have things changed unexpectedly?
- Do we need to implement alternative plans?