SECOORA Strategic Planning Assessment Findings

In fall of 2015, SECOORA hired a contractor to help draft the Strategic Plan. The contractor conducted interviews with three former board chairs and circulated web surveys to staff, current board, and members for input on the SECOORA organization. The purpose of the survey was to identify key findings from a range of stakeholders and SECOORA members to inform the strategic thinking and decisions on the plan. The preliminary findings were synthesized, filtered and grouped qualitatively as part of a SWOT analysis and to begin the process of defining SECOORA's vision for the new Strategic Plan.

Strengths
1. Good observing, data
2. Conflict of interest (PI's on board) issue has improved as new policies are added and board diversifies membership
3. Talented staff team, Debra's leadership of staff
4. Staff feel good about roles, supportive team, flexibility
5. Relevance to climate change
6. Great network of stakeholders, members, participants, strong group of researchers
7. Board is relatively engaged, high-quality individuals, strong committee structure
8. Cross-region, diverse members, issues, stakeholders
9. Organizational leadership -- particularly Conrad -- and staff
10. Well-respected, good reputation, well run
11. Board appreciates networking opportunities regionally and nationally; supporting success of staff and organization; working with talented fellow board members generally and on board teams; working on ocean goals
12. Members appreciate networking, collaborations, access to information, funding opportunities, having a voice in direction and decisions of SECOORA

Weaknesses
1. Sustainability, lack of resources, insufficient funding, funding from one source, traditional academic's approach to funding
2. Governance structure – lends itself to conflicts of interest, agenda is PI driven rather than stakeholder driven, structure promotes individual agendas rather than shared interest in SECOORA's success
3. Lack of clearly defined role, priorities, coordinated strategy – regionally, nationally, challenge with national IOOS
4. Old/Inadequate infrastructure, equipment
5. Some lack of coordination, integration of information produced
6. Limited range of partners – academics, narrow swath of them
7. Inability to organize members, different opinions and agendas of board members, board not unified
8. Members don't see much current benefit to membership

Opportunities/Changes
1. Themes-related: Coastal hazards, fisheries, climate change, etc.
2. Have real world focus, doing good in world
3. New collaborative relationships – other universities, students, business, other government sector, new regional partners
4. Create products, more outreach and educational activities (e.g. Fisheries workshop!)
5. Recently raised idea of a "super-board" of non-conflicted members, higher level folks, more political sway
6. Members would like to see more funding opportunities and collaborations, more coordination on the information they get, access to information that they would not be able to get if not for being a member, more shared technical expertise, new products, more and more diverse members,
7. Smaller, more diverse board from range of industry, academia, NGO's, clearer roles
8. Board should champion organization – promote it more; recruit new members, use networks to create opportunities for org; ensure financial health, help with fundraising and big picture; support and evaluate ED, stay out of weeds – more traditional NGO board role
9. Staff roles more clearly defined or communicated
10. Better communication, -- internally, across staff to board and members, including via website; from Executive Committee to rest of board, from PI's to everyone
11. Intensify link to national level, politics, lobby
12. Increase "event-response" capacity
13. Would benefit from developing a fundraising plan that involves board and staff

Threats/Issues
1. Sustainability, lack of resources, insufficient funding, funding from one source, limiting relationship of organization to being an RA rather than full non-profit organization
2. Old/Inadequate infrastructure, equipment
3. National IOOS
4. Managing certification, additional requirements coming down the road
5. Losing members as lose funding
6. Competition

Vision/Direction
1. Leverage full non-profit organizational status
2. Look beyond academics' frame, IOOS
3. Be entrepreneurial, more clearly defined products and services, customer driven
4. Integrate into more Southeast regional "stuff", work with range of partners, lead collaborative funding efforts
5. Smaller board

6. More diverse, increased funding (modestly)
7. Align with IOOS priorities, strengthen RCOOS coordination
8. Strong membership with real benefits (outside of funding)

Some tensions (differences of perspective)
1. Connected to stakeholders vs. disconnected
2. Regionally well-coordinated and fair vs. neither
3. Strong board members and leadership vs. self-interested board members
4. Safe (continued path) as RA – align more strongly with IOOS priorities vs. New Path, be a non-profit, set own course