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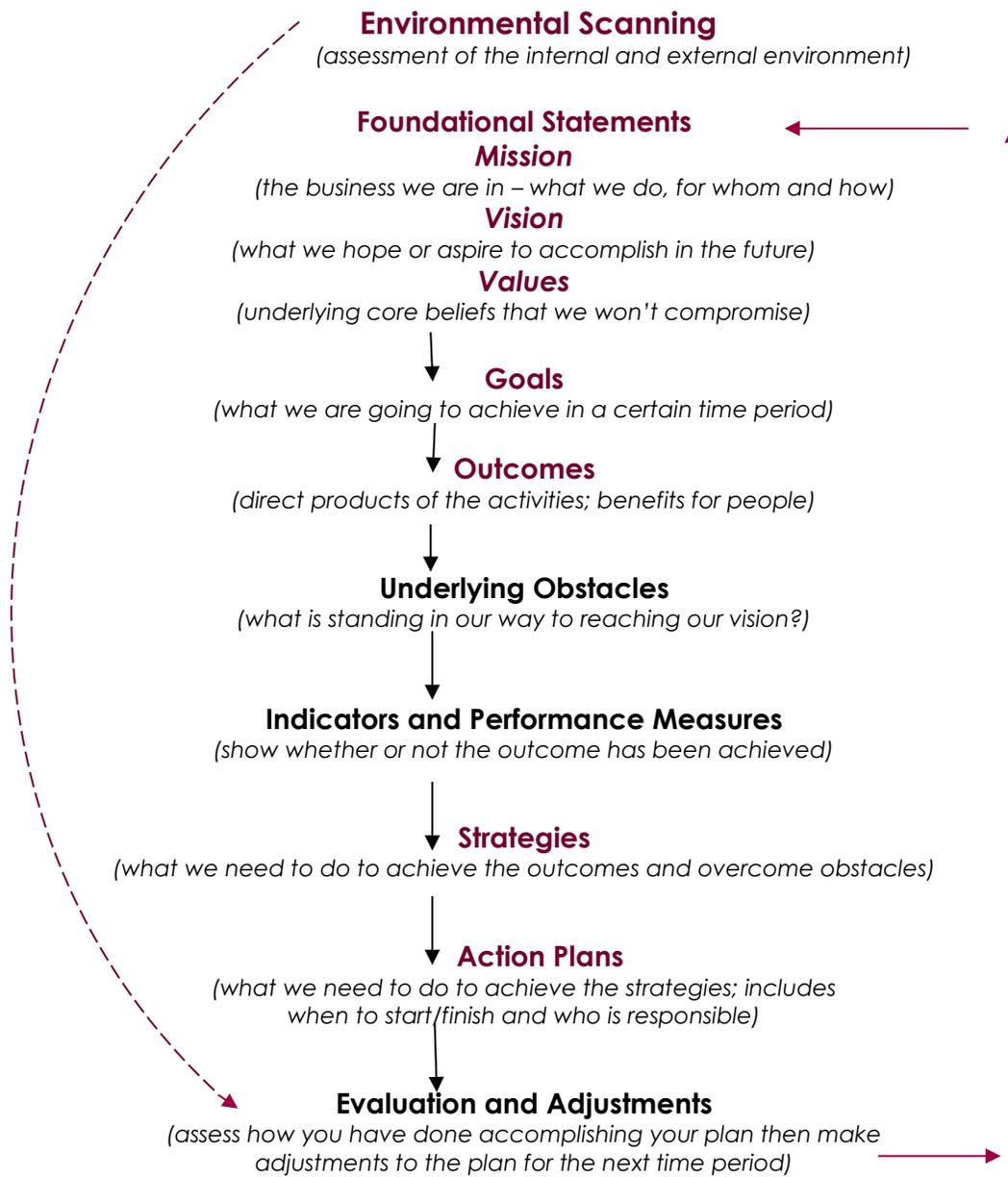
# Strategic Planning Overview

## Strategic Planning Definition

Strategic planning is a systematic, organized, future-oriented process that involves making fundamental decisions that shape and guide what an organization does, why it does it, what results it will focus its energy and resources on achieving, how it will achieve those results and how success will be measured. Simply put, strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next specified period of time, how it's going to get there and how it will know if it got there or not. The purpose of strategic planning is to provide a road map to guide the organization and decisions it makes.

## Elements of Strategic Planning

The following are some elements commonly included in strategic planning:



# Environmental Scanning

**Environmental scanning** is the practice of systematically exploring and interpreting the internal and external environment in order to better understand the trends and drivers of change and their impact on your organization.

Environmental scanning helps your organization:

- 1) better understand the nature and pace of change in your organization and its surrounding environment,
- 2) identify potential opportunities, challenges, risks and likely future developments relevant to your organization and those you serve, and
- 3) prepare your organization and your team to pro-actively respond to opportunities, challenges, risks and future events.

A well-developed situational analysis is **critical** to any successful strategic planning process. By the end of an environmental scanning process, your organization should have enough information about relevant trends in the internal and external environment that are likely to have a significant impact on the way your organization may operate in the future, and the implications of those trends on your organization's strategy development now.

Effective environmental scanning practices cover your organization's past, present, and future situation. You should focus on factors spanning across time, such as past successes and failures, present circumstances, and future trends and issues. Organizations should use a variety of "tools" (see pages 4-6) that will provide a variety of lenses and diverse perspectives in which to seek out, interpret, and assess information.

In order to complete a scan well, you will need to spend time researching information from various credible sources. If you only rely on what you currently know, you will very likely miss critical information that may have a significant impact on your organization and your ability to achieve your goals.

In your research, you are looking for information that relates to your sector, community, industry, and stakeholders— that is, not about what you do on a day-to-day basis, but what you need to consider **BEFORE** you define your future strategy and write your action plans. You should explore both new, strange and weird ideas, as well as persistent challenges and trends today.

Identifying and creating a list of factors that impact your organization and those you serve is only the first step. The important part is reflecting on the key factors impacting your organization and/or its stakeholders and what will challenge your "relevancy" in the future. Finally, your organization should prioritize those factors and decide on a few critical factors for consideration in your strategic planning process.

# Environmental Scanning: SWOT Analysis

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

**SWOT Analysis** is a useful technique for understanding your Strengths and Weaknesses, and for identifying both the Opportunities open to you and the Threats you face. A SWOT Analysis provides insight into what direction we want to take our organization. It is a tool that helps us look at our internal and external environments and what impact this makes on our organization. It also provides valuable information that helps in making decisions and creating a meaningful analysis of the potential implications that an organization faces

## Sample SWOT Brainstorm Process

### Step 1: Brainstorm Factors Individually

- using the worksheet and an example or two
- give some time for people to work on their own

Questions:

Strengths – *Things we do well or have.* Ask: Internally what does the organization do well? What has been working? What skills, abilities and assets do you have? Resources, capabilities? What sets us apart? What helps us achieve our purpose?

Weaknesses – *Things we do not do well or lack.* Ask: Internally what does the organization struggle with? What might be missing? What deficiencies exist? Resources, capabilities? What hinders us from achieving our purpose?

Opportunities – *Actions we can capitalize on due to our strengths and/or opportunities that currently exist in the environment.* Ask: Externally (usually) what is happening out there that you could take advantage of? What gives people a sense of hope? What do you hear from clients or the community? What are other groups up to? Outside factors that affect the organization in a positive way.

Threats – *Things we largely do not have control over that impact us (or could impact us) negatively.* Ask: Externally (usually) what is happening out there that could have a negative impact on your organization? What are people worried or concerned about? What do clients and people in the community warn you about? What competition exists?

### Step 2: Collect insights

Collect ideas from each participant for each category. Ask if there are any questions of clarification.

### Step 3: Discuss

- What stands out? What jumps out at you?
- What is exciting or encouraging?
- What concerns you or is troubling?
- What can we learn from this discussion? What insights have you gained?
- What implications does this information have for us as we begin to look at our plan?
- What might we need to do differently in the future?
- What might we need to maintain?
- How do we incorporate some of these insights in to our plan?
- What do we do next?

# Environmental Scanning: The SWOT Worksheet

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

# Environmental Scanning: PEST Analysis

(Political, Economic, Social, Technological)

In a **PEST analysis**, individuals brainstorm the "big picture" characteristics of your organization's external environment (this could be a community, region, country, etc), and, from this, draw conclusions about the significant forces of change operating within it. This provides a context for more detailed planning, within which you will be able to minimize risk and take full advantage of the opportunities that present themselves.

PEST Analysis is useful for three main reasons:

1. It helps you to spot organizational opportunities, and it gives you advanced warning of significant threats.
2. It reveals the direction of change within your organization's environment. This helps you shape what you're doing, so that you work with change, rather than against it.
3. It helps you avoid starting projects that are likely to fail, for reasons beyond your control.

## Note:

PEST Analysis is often linked with SWOT Analysis, however, the two tools have different areas of focus. PEST Analysis looks at "big picture" factors that might influence a decision, an industry, or community. SWOT Analysis explores these factors at an organizational, program, or service level. These tools complement one another and are often used together.

## Sample PEST Brainstorm Process

### Step 1: Brainstorm Factors Individually

Use PEST to brainstorm the changes happening around you. Use the prompts below to guide your questioning, and tailor the questions to suit the specific needs of your organization.

#### Political Factors to Consider

- When is our next local, provincial, or national election? How could this change government or regional policy?
- Who are the most likely contenders for power? What are their views on social policy, and on other policies that affect your organization?
- Could any pending legislation or taxation changes affect your organization, either positively or negatively?
- What is the likely timescale of proposed legislative changes?
- Are there any other political factors that are likely to change?

#### Economic Factors to Consider

- How stable is the current economy? Is it growing, stagnating, or declining?
- Are clients' levels of disposable income rising or falling? How is this likely to change in the next few years?
- What is the unemployment rate? Will it be easy to build a skilled workforce? Or will it be expensive to hire skilled labor?
- Are there any other economic factors that you should consider?

#### Socio-Cultural Factors to Consider

- What is the population's growth rate and age profile? How is this likely to change?
- Are generational shifts in attitude likely to affect what you're doing?
- What are society's levels of health, education, and social mobility? How are these changing, and what impact does this have?

- What employment patterns, job market trends, and attitudes toward work can you observe? Are these different for different age groups?
- What social attitudes and social taboos could affect your organization? Have there been recent socio-cultural changes that might affect this?
- How do religious beliefs and lifestyle choices affect the population?
- Are any other socio-cultural factors likely to drive change for your organization?

### Technological Factors to Consider

- Are there any new technologies that you could be using?
- Are there any new technologies on the horizon that could radically affect your work or your industry?
- Do any of your competitors have access to new technologies that could redefine their products?
- In which areas do governments and educational institutions focus their research? Is there anything you can do to take advantage of this?
- How have infrastructure changes affected work patterns (for example, levels of remote working)?
- Are there existing technological hubs that you could work with or learn from?
- Are there any other technological factors that you should consider?

### **Note:**

There are variations of PEST Analysis that bring other factors into consideration. These include:

- PESTLE/PESTEL: Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Legal, Environmental.
- PESTLIED: Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Legal, International, Environmental, Demographic.
- STEEPLE: Social/Demographic, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal, Ethical.
- SLEPT: Socio-Cultural, Legal, Economic, Political, Technological.

Choose the version that best suits your situation.

### **Step 2: Step 2: Collect insights**

Collect ideas from each participant for each category. Ask if there are any questions of clarification.

### **Step 3: Discuss**

Use the following focused conversation.

- What stands out? What jumps out at you?
- What is encouraging? Where do opportunities exist?
- What concerns you or is troubling? What is threatening your organization?
- What can we learn from this discussion? What insights have you gained?
- What might we need to do differently in the future?
- What might we need to maintain?
- How do we incorporate some of these insights in to our plan?
- What do we do next?

# Environmental Scanning: The Wave Process

**The Wave Process** assumes that at any given time, in any setting, ways of thinking, organizing and acting are changing. There are approaches, practices and trends that are on the horizon, emerging, existing and disappearing. In this process, you look at the trends, changes in approaches and practices that have an impact on your organization.

## Sample Wave Process

Focus Question: "In the field of \_\_\_\_\_ and in the non-profit world, what concepts, trends, practices and approaches are On the Horizon, Emerging, Established and Disappearing?"

### Questions:

- **On the Horizon Trends:** What forces, concepts, practices or trends are coming down the pike, new horizons, or radical ideas?
- **Emerging Trends:** What forces, concepts, practices or trends are gaining popularity, getting more support and inviting active experimentation?
- **Established Trends:** What forces, concepts, practices or trends are "tried and true" ways, standards in the field, or status quo approaches?
- **Disappearing Trends:** What forces, concepts, practices or trends are "out", no longer relevant, or outdated ways?

### Step 1: Record Individual Observations

- using the worksheet and an example or two
- give some time for people to work on their own
- have them start with the "horizon" category first and work backward
- move into small group discussions
- have them record their collective items on 5x8 cards (brief, print big, etc)

### Step 2: Collect Insights

- start with the "horizon" category
- collect all the cards from each group in the "horizon" category and place on the wall under the right sign
- ask if there are any questions of clarification
- keep collecting all cards in each category until all cards are up (asking for clarification after each set goes up)

### Step 3: Discussion

- once all the cards are up you can probe for insights
- use the focused conversation:  
*As you look at the wall in front of you:*
  - *What stands out, what jumps out at you?*
  - *Any surprises?*
  - *What is exciting or encouraging?*
  - *What is troubling or concerns you?*
  - *What patterns/trends do you see?*
  - *What insights or learnings can we glean from these trends? What does all this mean to the organization? To your clients? To the community? To your members?*
  - *What do we need to consider or be sure to plan for as we move into the planning phase?*

# Environmental Scanning: The Wave Worksheet

In the area of \_\_\_\_\_ and in the non-profit world, what concepts, trends, practices and approaches are...

## ... on the Horizon?

*Which new ideas are pushing to become accepted trends and practices?(not desired but predicted future)*

## ... Emerging?

*Which trends and practices are picking up momentum and acceptance?*

## ... Existing?

*Which trends and practices are mainstream or standard operating procedures?*

## ... Disappearing?

*Which trends and practices are no longer useful or whose viability is overtly questioned?*

# Foundational Element: Vision Statements

A **Vision** is a brief, simple statement or two that provides a compelling description of the desired future or end your organization is striving for or the ideal state that might exist in your community if the organization were to achieve total success in all it does. The process of 'visioning' involves asking what results you want to see or have 10, 15, 20 or more years from now, the keyword being results. A vision serves to inspire the people of your organization and motivates you to stretch and achieve your highest potential as an organization. In the past, visioning focused on generating short, exciting vision statements that 'could fit on a t-shirt'. However, this type of visioning can result in banners and slogans so abstract that they have little utility. Therefore many organizations now use a sentence or two to capture all that you would like to see or have.

Elements of an effective vision statement include:

1. **External focus:** The vision statement should describe the ideal future for your community or those you serve.
2. **Large scope:** A great vision statement will describe an end result that is greater than what your organization can achieve alone. In the mission statement, your organization will identify how your organization contributes to that end state.
3. **Future orientation:** While written like it have been achieved, a vision statement should describe the results you want to see several years from now – 10, 20, or more years.
4. **Clarity:** A vision statement should be free from jargon and buzzwords so that anyone who reads your vision statement can understand it easily and be compelled by it.

## Examples:

Habitat for Humanity: **A world where everyone has a decent place to live.**

Oxfam: **A just world without poverty**

Feeding America: **A hunger-free America**

National Multiple Sclerosis Society: **A World Free of MS**

Ducks Unlimited: **Wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.**

Teach for America: **One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.**

**People are responsible for their personal and sexual health.**

**Every resident lives and thrives with access to local healthy food from a regenerative food system.**

# Foundational Element: Vision Statement Worksheet

## Step 1: Visioning Activity – Individual Activity

- Use the following scenario to prompt creative thinking in participants.
- Have participants individually record their answers in response to the scenario.

Imagine you have moved away from the area. You come back in fifteen years to visit the area and the organization and you are totally elated about what you find. Things are even better than you could have imagined. The organization has been incredibly successful and has made a significant impact in achieving its mission and addressing its cause. In an email you send back home, you describe the organization and the wonderful results it has achieved.

What are some phrases you would use in your message to describe the organization's success in fulfilling its purpose, what it is providing, and the outcomes and benefits it has created for those it serves?

## Step 2: Report Back

- Have each participant share what they came up with.
- Write each idea visually on the wall (projected computer screen, flipchart, whiteboard)

## Step 3: Identify Common Themes

- Use multi-color markers to identify common ideas and ideas that participants feel most compelled by (Ask: What ideas are similar? Which ideas excite you?)

## Step 4: Draft Statements

- Begin to craft a statement using some of the ideas that stood out in step three

## Step 4: Audit the Created Statement

- Does it describe your preferred future or dream for your community or those you serve?
- Does it describe what you hope is the end result of all of your hard work, ideally in partnership with other organizations?
- Is it aspirational i.e. does it challenge you to achieve more?
- Is it inspirational and motivating?
- Is it clear enough to be understood by all your stakeholders?

## Foundational Elements: Mission Statements

A **Mission** is a brief, simple statement or two that expresses or defines the purpose of the organization and its business or function. It is the true identity of the organization, telling what needs are intended to be met and with what services. It should convey what makes you unique from other organizations. Your mission statement easily, clearly and concisely explains to the average person, who you are, why you exist, and what you do for whom. It provides:

1. **Name and kind of group:** The name of the organization, group (or initiative) and what kind of group it is (non-profit organization, publicly funded institution, community coalition, government agency, community program, partnership project).
2. **Purpose phrase:** The purpose or reason you exist (your cause or why you do what you do). The purpose may be worded as the need you are trying to meet, or the problem or condition you address.
3. **Business phrase:** In broad, overarching terms, what activities, programs and services you provide to address the problem or condition (what/how). Emphasize the uniqueness and distinctiveness of this organization compared to similar organizations. Business phrases often include a link to the purpose phrase with the words 'by' or 'through' or 'in order to'.
4. **For whom / where:** Who the direct and indirect clients of the organization or the beneficiaries of your work are. Is your organization confined by a specific demographic or geographic location?

### Examples:

Watts of Love is a global solar lighting nonprofit bringing people the power to raise themselves out of the darkness of poverty.

Fresh Start is a partnership initiative of faith-based organizations in the community of Anytown, Alberta that works to decrease homelessness and break the cycle of poverty by providing job and life skills training to homeless men and women in rural Alberta.

On the Go provides older adults in Anytown Alberta with a location, information, programs and services that encourage active living in order to improve health, wellness and quality of life.

The Anytown Home Away Women's Shelter Society is a grassroots community organization that provides support services and emergency shelter to women and children in our community in order to protect them from harm and help stop the cycle of family violence.

We develop and operate a co-location site called Family Village that brings together family and community social service organizations to share resources, collaborate and improve access to services for the citizens of Anytown Alberta.

The Developmental Studies Centre is a national publicly funded institution that develops, evaluates and disseminates child development programs to day cares across Canada in order to foster the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of pre-school children.

Teach for America is growing the movement of leaders who work to ensure that kids growing up in poverty get an excellent education.

# Foundational Elements: Mission Statements Worksheet

Name of group:

Kind of group:

Business / what you do:

Purpose / benefit / why you are doing it:

For whom / where:

Proposed Mission Statement:

# Foundational Elements: Values

**Values** are the fundamental principles and beliefs that form the foundation of the organization. They are strong statements of conviction which ideally will not be compromised. These principles guide the organization's behaviour, services and decisions. Values establish the moral and ethical priorities to guide all activities.

## Values are also:

- The essence of the organization's message to its people and the public
- An organizational environment of common purpose and shared trust
- Guidelines for acceptable or unacceptable behaviours
- The motivation to develop a vision for the organization's future

## Questions to ask about each value statement:

- Can our organization support the implementation of this value?
- What might block the implementation of this value?
- If there is a block, can it be overcome?

## Examples

- We believe in fostering innovation and creativity
- We believe that people are our most valuable resource
- We value integrity, mutual respect and trust

## Sample Values Development Process:

1. Individually, complete the values worksheet (see next page)
2. Using a round table format, have each person take turns sharing one of their top values
  - a. Write the values in a large area visible to everyone
  - b. Note how many other people had the same value
  - c. Keep going around the table until everyone's values have been captured
3. Once all values have been shared, cluster any values that may be similar
  - a. E.g. acceptance, equality, diversity and inclusion
4. Note the values that were common amongst the vast majority of the group
  - a. E.g. if everyone had compassion as a value, it is core value for your group and does not need to be voted on in the following process
5. Give everyone 3 "votes" to vote for the values that they think are most important for your group. Let individuals go up the list of values and place a checkmark beside their top three values
6. Identify the top values that have the most votes
  - a. In total, your group should aim for between 3-6 values
7. Write a definitional statement for value statement, so everyone has a common understanding of what the value means

# Foundational Elements: Values Worksheet

## Questions to Consider

What do we stand for?

What behaviours would mirror these values?

How do we treat our clients, volunteers, staff, Board?

What do we mean by ethical behaviour?

How do we want to be seen by the community?

What are the core values that are the most important to us?

## **My Top Five Values for this Group**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

# Goal Statements

**Goals** are outcome based statements that describe what results the organization wants to accomplish in order to move the organization closer to its vision, while working within its mission, values and beliefs. Goals identify key areas that your organization will focus on over a set period of time and may be short or long term. They help appropriately focus your resources, energies, efforts, and time. For instance, programs, services, and resources should be aligned for the achievement of strategic goals.

## Sample Process: Consensus Building Workshop

Focus Question: "What do you hope your organization can achieve in the next 3-5 years to move closer to its vision of \_\_\_\_\_"

### Step 1: Individual Brainstorm

1. Take 5 minutes to individually brainstorm answers to the focus question
2. Have each person, individually, list their answers to the focus question on a scrap piece of paper; there are no wrong answers
3. After the five minutes are up, have participants put a star on their best 4 ideas. They can chose any criteria they want to choose their best four answers.

### Step 2: Small group sharing

1. Have individuals break into groups of 2-3
2. Instruct participants to share their ideas with each other
3. Instruct participants to come up with one list of 8 of ideas in response to the focus question, eliminating overlap yet honouring the diversity of different perspectives within the group
4. Ask each group to write their answers on index cards using the following guidelines: One idea per card; 3-5 words per idea; Write Big!
5. Ask the groups to wait until the others are finished and you will ask for the cards a few at a time

### Step 3: Post ideas on the wall

1. Tell the groups you are going to put all the ideas on the wall, but you will ask for cards in stages
2. Ask for **3 cards** from each group, have them chose the ones they are **most passionate about or feel are most important**
3. Once you have three cards from each group, read each card out one at a time and post it on the wall randomly
4. Explain that if there are questions of clarification, we will ask the group who wrote the card to explain

### Step 4: Grouping

1. After cards are clear, ask if any two cards seem to go together. You may want to frame them around the: **How do these strategies fit together to form aligned directions?**
2. Cards may be grouped according to similar words, traits, relationships, functions, actions, but try to encourage new relationships, not the most obvious
3. Try to keep the groupings as pairs for the first round so that not all the cards are forced into one group at the start (and it compels the group to separate the themes)
4. Put symbols above the clusters so the group can refer to the symbol rather than assigning a label for the cluster yet (do not allow the group to categorize the clusters yet – encourage different ideas to be put in the clusters allowing the emerging insight to broaden, grow or change)

### Step 5: Round Two Posting and Grouping

1. Ask for two more cards from each group (important but different than what is already on the wall)
2. Repeat Steps three and four: put them up randomly on the wall similar to the first round; ask for clarification; group them into existing clusters or into new ones

### Step 6: Placing Remaining Cards

1. Ask the group to relate their remaining cards to the columns already formed and mark the symbol on the card as to which cluster they belong. If they are unsure, tell them to leave it blank and you will find a place for the card as a large group.
2. Gather the remaining cards, read them each aloud, and put them where the groups indicated they fit. Ask the rest of the group if the ideas are clear and seem to fit where the group put them. For cards that are unlabeled, ask the group where it best fits.
3. Ensure that everyone's cards are all up.

### Step 7: Naming the Groups / Writing Goal Statements

1. Start with one cluster.
2. Read cards aloud
3. Ask for key words in the cards.
4. Ask for clues to the vision the cards are pointing to. What is the insight beyond the groups of cards? What makes this column different than the rest?
5. Write a short statement that captures the key words and intent of the column in outcome based language: subject first, present tense, and describing the different state you wish to be in

## Examples

- Increase our membership base in rural areas by 20%.
- Increasing the percentage of clients who actually remain employed for at least six months from 60 percent to 85 percent
- Develop a volunteer leadership training program in partnership with other community organizations.

# Outcomes

Outcomes are the product or result that occurs when the goal is achieved. Outcomes describe the benefit or change for an individual during or after participating in your program or services.

- “If- Then” logic → “If” the goal is achieved “then” what would you see?

There are Three Levels of Outcomes:

**Level 1:** Change in skill or knowledge

**Level 2:** Change in attitude or behavior

**Level 3:** Change in status or condition

Bullying Example:

- Knowledge of what bullying looks like
- Attitude that it is not acceptable behavior
- Bullying is reduced so kids feel safe

## Writing Outcome Statements

- Below are the common elements and examples of creating an outcome-based statement. The sequence of this formula could be re-arranged.



Low-income families	increase	their financial literacy skills	to learn how to manage and save money.
ABC organization	builds connections	amongst community groups	to enhance our services and impact.
Our volunteers	develop	new skills, abilities, and relationships	to grow as individuals and strengthen their impact.

## Indicators and Performance Measures

- Indicators are milestones you will watch for to ‘indicate’ that you are reaching your goals/achieving your outcomes
- Performance measures tell you what information to collect to measure how well you have reached your goals/outcomes (both quantitative and qualitative)
- They are very similar – get someone who is good at logic models to help you

# Strategy Formulation

Strategies are a plan of action designed to achieve a long term or overall aim. They should create or sustain an advantage for the organization. For example, effective strategies promote a superior alignment between the organization and its environment and the achievement of goals. The most common forms of strategy are:

- 1) Application of a strength against a weakness or to neutralize or eliminate threats.
- 2) A strength applied to the most promising opportunities
- 3) Creation of strength through coherent set of actions. A good strategy doesn't just draw on existing strength; it creates strength through the coherence of its design. A coherent strategy is one that coordinates policies and actions. Most organizations of any size don't do this. Rather, they pursue multiple objectives that are unconnected with one another or, worse, that conflict with one another.

## Tips for strategy formulation

- Use the information gathered in the environmental scan to inform possible scenarios, options, and strategies.
- Incorporate stakeholder input into the process. A great strategy reflects the voices of all the key stakeholders of an organization, in particular the employees/volunteers, partners, and the clients. Seek their input and be intentional in incorporating their feedback in a meaningful way.
- Strategize for obstacles or opportunities, but also incorporate space and time for “wild guesses.” A good strategy doesn't just draw on existing strength; it creates strength through the coherence of its design and through reframing of issues and perspectives.
- Promote divergent (many) ideas – from conservative to crazy, then narrow ideas down. This promotes creative thinking, new perspectives and large picture thinking.
- Develop criteria and screen your strategies. Identify core criteria that will be used to screen and evaluate the strategies you come up with.
- Consider your organization's relationships with other organizations. Non-profits do not operate in a vacuum. Identify how other organizations influence your organization and the clients you serve. Some great strategies will capitalize on partnerships or collaborative opportunities, other great strategies will capitalize on what makes the organization unique or competitive against other organizations. Non-profit organizations need both ends of the spectrum to be successful.
- Incorporate a test for assumptions – many assumptions are made throughout the strategy formation process, but assumptions are the foundation of bad strategy. A strategy formation process needs a way of checking assumptions, which may mean that participants need time between generating ideas, evaluating ideas, and making decisions to go and find information and resources to test their assumption. How does this impact the one day strategic planning session (also referred to template strategy earlier).
- Ensure strategies are realistic. Strategies must be realistic for the organization and its current capacity. Strategy that stretches the organization well beyond its means or outlines completely unrealistic and unattainable objectives will likely not be successful. An internal and external situational analysis that is well thought through and used will ground the organization in realism.

# Action Planning

An **action plan** lays out what activities or tasks will be undertaken for each goal, who will be responsible or accountable (lead person); when activities will occur (target dates); and what resources will be needed (human, financial, other).

## Tips for Writing Action Plans

- Use the information gathered in the environmental scan to inform possible options and strategies
- Think of actions or strategies to capitalize on opportunities or minimize risks identified in the environmental scan
- Incorporate input from many sources such as board, staff, and volunteers
- Generate many ideas without evaluation or criticisms; generate as many crazy ideas as possible
- Develop criteria and evaluate your strategies and actions to narrow it down

## Action Planning Considerations:

What is the issue or goal?

What barriers/challenges need to be overcome?

What solution/ or action needs to be done?

Who should take the lead role to ensure this action is carried out?

Who will be involved in doing the work? How?

What is the time period for doing the work?

What resources will be required?

How will you measure success?

## Action Planning Chart

**GOAL AREA #** \_\_\_\_\_ :

General STRATEGY to achieve the goal area (the “what”)	Specific STEPS or TASKS to achieve the strategy (the “how”)	Responsibility (the “who”)	Start Date & Finish Date (the “when”)	Resources required (the “with what”)	Measurement (how will we know we have succeeded? “Indicator”)

# Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation

## Implementation

- Adopt The Plan Formally
- Assign A Plan Coordinator
- Establish A Plan Calendar

## Monitoring

- have your monthly report linked to your goals
- review the plan every 2 - 3 months, status report of where things are
- assign tasks to people
- have the board review the plan each year, and identify priorities for the year

## Evaluation

*Evaluation is Done to Improve a System, Process or Plan and to Make it Better in the Future*

### **Evaluation has two purposes:**

- to determine our progress towards the goals
- to make any changes necessary for the upcoming period

### **We Evaluate:**

- THE PAST - compares what we did with what we said we were going to do
- THE PRESENT - reassess the plan in light of today's situation
- THE FUTURE - are we still headed the same way?

# Keeping your Plan Alive

Strategic plans must be implemented and continually monitored and evaluated. Many cases where plans have failed can be attributed simply to the work not being done. Often this is because the plan was unrealistic to begin with or planners did not assign tasks or provide appropriate resources. Strategic plans are “living” documents. This means they should be constantly monitored, evaluated and updated to respond to organizational or situational changes. Strategic planning does not stop once the document is completed – it continues throughout the complete cycle and then begins anew as organizations celebrate their successes, prepare for planning again, and re-assess their environment in light of their achievements and new challenges.

## THE 4x8 IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

1. **UPDATE**
2. **EVALUATE**
3. **DEVIATE**
4. **CELEBRATE**



## 8 EXCEPTIONAL EXERCISES FOR MOVING YOUR PLAN FORWARD

### 1. Get To Work: Make Assignments

- Measure.
- Reward and recognize.

Best-laid plans can go to pot if no-one is responsible for results. Make sure that someone is assigned to champion each initiative, that they have a good understanding of what is required of them and what they are meant to accomplish, that they have the resources that they need to move forward, and that the board is monitoring their progress. Not achieving the intended targets may not be a bad thing – it may mean that targets need to be changed, or that more or different resources are required. How will you know if you don't check it out?

Who is your champion? At key points you need to assign leaders who can move the initiative forward and can motivate others to action. While leadership at the top is essential, strong leaders at other key points is also important.

## 2. Can You Hear Me Now? Communicate Your Plan

- Tell everyone inside your organization.
- Tell key people outside your organization.

People working in your organization need an understanding of the plan. This includes board members, executive, staff, volunteers, and contracted workers. Use your plan to communicate your shared direction and goals – then everyone can work together to move your organization forward!

Use your plan as a communication tool to tell people outside your organization what you do, how you do it, and what you're aiming for. Your plan is a wonderful tool for informing your community about your initiatives and goals.

## 3. You Are Your Plan: Integrate Planning Into All You Do

- Monitor! Monitor! Monitor!
- Board business and committee meetings.
- Your AGM.

Your plan is really a living document, so make sure it comes alive by bringing it out and following it! Take the key dates and targets from your plan and move them immediately to your agendas. At each monthly meeting, check to see that you are evaluating your progress. Use your plan to tell committee members how they fit in the overall scheme. Before the end of your leadership year, have your outgoing leadership review the plan and communicate the challenges, progress and accomplishments to the members at your Annual General Meeting. Use any and all opportunities to keep your membership involved in your plan. When monitoring your plan, ask the following:

- A. Are goals and objectives still realistic?
- B. Have your priorities shifted?
- C. Are they being achieved or not?
- D. Will they be achieved according to the set timelines?
- E. Do you still have adequate resources to achieve the goal?
- F. What can we learn from our monitoring and evaluation?
- G. What changes need to be made?

## 4. Planning And Organizational Structure Go Hand In Hand

- Governance.
- Staffing.
- Committees.
- Policies.

Organizations can be held back by structures that don't support what they are trying to do. If your planning takes your organization in a new direction, will your structure support it? Do you have good people on bad committees? A lot of committees that do nothing and one committee that does it all? Are your job descriptions up to date to reflect the work that needs to be done? Remember, form follows function. An organization's structure will enable the organization to carry out its mission and fulfill its vision. Ensure your policies are current, reflect your new plan, are known and understood by your members and staff, and are enforced.

## 5. Develop Fabulous Committees

- Involving new members and the community.
- Terms of reference.
- Recruit new leaders.

Committees are by far the most valuable tool for ensuring that the work of the organization gets done and that new people are introduced to and involved in your organization. Learn how to properly set up committees that will move you forward in your plan. Use committees as a recruitment tool and a way to involve all your members. And use your plan to let your committees know what you do, where you're going, and how you're going to get there.

### IDEAS FOR RECRUITING NEW LEADERS

(From *Helping Small Towns Survive* – Heartland Center for Leadership Development)

- IDEA 1. Ask "Who's not here?"
- IDEA 2. Look for skills, not names.
- IDEA 3. Try involvement by degrees.
- IDEA 4. Appeal to self-interests.
- IDEA 5. Use a wide-angle lens.
- IDEA 6. Define the task.
- IDEA 7. Use current leaders to recruit new leaders.
- IDEA 8. Create a history of efficient use of people's time.
- IDEA 9. Offer membership "premiums."
- IDEA 10. Market your wares.

## 6. Manage Your Changes

- What have you changed or what are you doing differently since you've developed your plan?
- How well do you like cats?

**DEFINITION OF INSANITY:** Trying to get different results by doing the same thing.

Adapt to change by learning to manage it. This doesn't mean accepting unplanned change, but rather anticipating it, preparing for it, and working to direct it. If your plan requires changes, how will you bring everyone on board?

### SEVEN SECRETS FOR COPING WITH CHANGE IN SMALL TOWNS

(Adapted from *Helping Small Towns Survive* – Heartland Center for Leadership Development)

1. Believe that you can do it!
2. Take risks! Learn from your successes and failures!
3. Show a bias for ACTION! Sustainable and growing communities don't wait for someone to tell them what to do!
4. Focus on what you can control! You may not be able to control location, but you can always control attitude!
5. Plan for development! Work together with all your community members!
6. Find opportunities where others see threats and challenges!
7. Have a vision for the future and a positive attitude!

## 7. Deviate From The Plan If You Need To

- It's okay to deviate from the plan.
- Adapt!

The plan is a guideline. It is a road map for getting you where you need to go, but there are a lot of roads that will get you to your destination. If you run into potholes, speed bumps, or washed-out bridges, you'll need to adapt so that you can continue on your journey. As you progress through your plan, you'll need to adapt to changes in your environment, changes to resources, changes to stakeholder needs, and increases in your capacity to get things done.

## 8. Celebrate Your Progress

- A pat on the back.
- It's not just about the challenges and issues. Recognize your successes, too!
- Blow your own horn!

### GET YOUR STORY IN THE NEWS

- Know your audience.
- Know your community. Practice co-opetition.
- Get to know your media.
- Make your story an event.
- Get to the point.
- A picture is worth a thousand words.
- Designate a spokesperson.
- Know the deadlines.
- Follow-up.

## Why Plans Fail

- Successes are not celebrated.
- Not based on concrete, workable goals. Activities treated as additions or enrichment, not as core work.
- Failure to anticipate obstacles and develop strategies.
- Lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation system.
- Lack of commitment.
- Ongoing work or operations not included in the plan, resulting in inadequate resources, poor morale, or exhausted staff and volunteers.
- Inflexible plan breaks down under stress of changing circumstances.
- Poor leadership.
- Resistance to change.