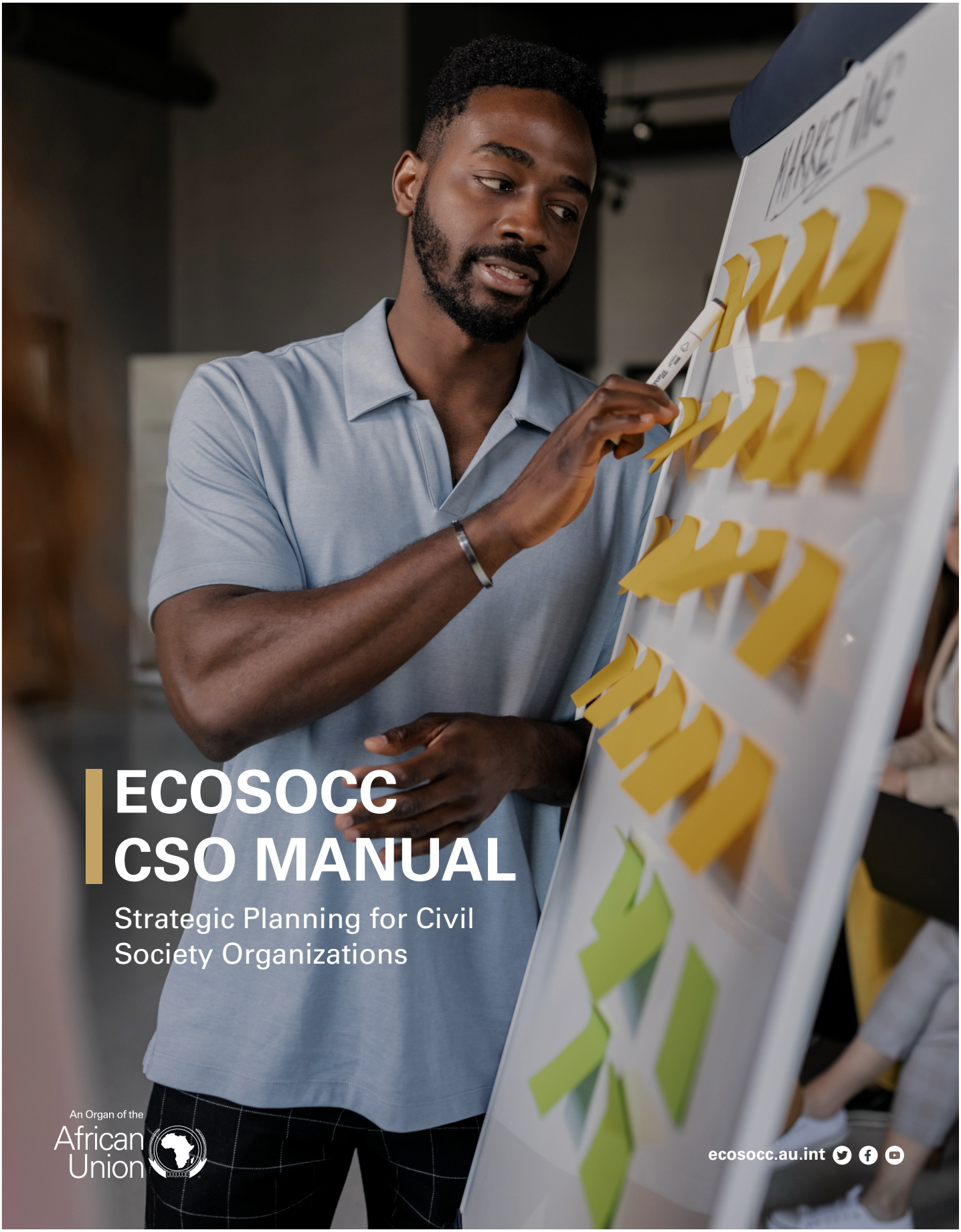
ECOSOCC
Economic Social & Cultural Council

The Voice of the
African Citizenry



ECOSOCC CSO MANUAL

Strategic Planning for Civil Society Organizations

An Organ of the African Union

ecosocc.au.int

Economic Social & Cultural Council 8658 Kudu Road, Kabulonga Lusaka, Zambia

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social & Cultural Council
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
UN	United Nations

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established under the provisions of Articles 5 and 22 of the AU Constitutive Act and its statutes adopted by the general assembly in July 2004, ECOSOCC was established as an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU member states. The establishment of ECOSOCC was to provide an opportunity for African civil society organizations to play an active role in contributing to the African Union's objectives, policies, and programmes. As an advisory organ, ECOSOCC has contributed to the effective translation of the AU's objectives, principles and policies into concrete programmes as well as evaluating those programmes. The organ continuously undertakes studies and makes recommendations to the AU as per its mandate and has helped in the promotion and
realization of the AU's vision and objectives. Through the support provided to CSOs, ECOSOCC has contributed to the promotion of human rights, rule of law, good governance, democratic principles, gender equality and child rights.

By commissioning the development of a Strategic Planning manual for CSOs in Africa, the AU ECOSOCC continues to play its role in contributing to the implementation of Agenda 2063. As it stands, the ECOSOCC's activities have increased visibility and the social economic transformation agendas of the AU through its civil society engagement.

This toolkit provides a template for conducting strategic planning processes within an organization. The toolkit covers the steps from planning for the strategic planning sessions, the background issues that need to inform or direct the strategic planning process, and the steps in defining the framework for the strategic planning project or related organizational activities. The strategic framework brings coherence and direction to the process. The toolkit also includes practical exercises to use during a strategic planning process.

> *The toolkit is designed to guide the CSOs in developing strategic plans that help meet the citizen needs as well as champion inclusive growth and the AU development agenda.*

Strategic planning is the core of the work of any organization without which an organization will not know where they are going or why they are going there. This toolkit offers CSOs a way to do detailed strategic planning by offering a step-by-step guide and practical examples. The aim of this toolkit is to support even organizations with limited experience to develop and implement a strategic plan.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

Established under the provision of Articles 5 and 22 of the constitutive act, the African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) has its mandate anchored in Article 2 of the its statutes. The development of the strategic planning manual is aligned to the organ's objective number 7 under Article 2. The toolkit aims to promote and strengthen the institutional, human, and operational capacities of African civil society organizations.

Article 3 of the ECOSOCC statutes defines the mandate of the organization as an advisory organ of the African Union. ECOSOCC works with CSOs to appreciate their experiences, challenges and to identify what is working and what is not working, as well as areas of improvement.
The findings of these engagements with CSOs leads to the development of CSO reports which are submitted to the relevant AU organs for informed decision making. The organ provides networks and a community of practice to African CSOs in addition to offering capacity building through training and access to policy and operational tools.

The Strategic Planning toolkit has a causal impact of influencing CSOs to follow the right planning processes and to add value to their operations by aligning their programming to national, regional and continental development blueprints. The AU Agenda 2063 gives a policy direction and the commitment of the AU heads of States on the path to achieving the Africa We Want.

Agenda 2063 promotes inclusive and sustainable developments through the identified seven aspirations reflecting on the desire for shared prosperity and well-being, unity and integration, a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, a continent free from want, fear, and disease where the full potential of women and youth are realized.

2.2. Evolution of ECOSOCC

The Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) was established under the provisions of Articles 5 and 22 of the AU Constitutive Act in July 2004 and inaugurated in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October 2005 as an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of AU Member States. The purpose of ECOSOCC is to provide an opportunity for African civil society organizations (CSOs) to play an active role in contributing to the AU's principles, policies, and programmes.

2.3. The Mandate of ECOSOCC

As an advisory organ of the AU, ECOSOCC's mandate include;

a.	Supporting, through advice, to the effective translation of the AU's objectives, principles, and policies into concrete programmes, as well as evaluating those programmes
b.	Commissioning studies and making recommendations for informed decision making
c.	Promoting the realization of the AU's vision and objectives
d.	Promoting human rights, the rule of law, good governance, democratic principles, gender equality and child rights
e.	Promoting and supporting the efforts of institutions engaged in reviewing the future of Africa and forging pan-African values in order to enhance an African social model and way of life
f.	Fostering and consolidating partnerships between the AU and CSOs
g.	Assuming functions referred to it by other AU organs

2.4. The AU Organs

The AU structure promotes participation of African citizens and civil society through the Pan-African Parliament and the Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). The work of the AU is implemented through principal decision-making organs that includes: The Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Executive Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), Specialized Technical Committees (STCs), the Peace and Security Council and The African Union Commission.

The AU Organs that handle judicial and legal matters as well as human rights issues include African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL), AU Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). The AU is also working towards the establishment of continental financial institutions (The African Central Bank, The African Investment Bank, and the African Monetary Fund). The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Peer Review Mechanism are also key bodies that that constitute the structure of the African Union.[1]

1 Source: https://au.int/en/overview

2.5. The Structure

The structure of ECOSOCC is provided for in Articles 8–12 of its Statutes. Under Article4, ECOSOCC is composed of two CSOs from each Member State; 10 CSOs operating at regional level and 8 at continental level; 20 CSOs from the African Diaspora, as defined by the Executive Council and covering the continents of the world; and six CSOs, in ex officio capacity, nominated by the AUC and based on special considerations, in consultation with Member States. Article4 also provides for Member State, regional, continental and Diaspora representatives to be elected on the basis of 50 percent gender equality and 50 percent aged between 18 and 35. Members are elected for four-year terms and may be re-elected once.

The AU ECOSOCC CSO members include but are not limited to:

a. Social groups, such as those representing women, children, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities and special needs

b. Professional groups, such as associations of artists, engineers, health practitioners, social workers, media, teachers, sport associations, legal professionals, social scientists, academia, business organizations, national chambers of commerce, workers, employers, industry, and agriculture, as well as other private sector interest groups

c. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and voluntary organizations

d. Cultural organizations

e. Social and professional organizations in the African Diaspora (in accordance with the definition approved by the Executive Council)[2]

The ECOSOCC Statutes, Articles 8–12, provide for the following structure:

a. General Assembly: ECOSOCC's highest decision- and policy-making body is its General Assembly, which is composed of all members as provided for in Article4 of the ECOSOCC Statutes. The role of the General Assembly is to submit advisory opinions and reports as well as proposals on the budget and activities; approve and amend the Code of Ethics and Conduct developed for CSOs affiliated to or working with the AU; and review and make recommendations on ECOSOCC activities.

b. Bureau: Composed of the Presiding Officer and four deputies elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and rotation, including one member representing the diaspora.

c. Standing Committee: the ECOSOCC Statutes provide for the General Assembly to elect an 18-member standing committee composed of the Bureau, Chairpersons of the 10 Sectoral Cluster Committees and two AUC representatives. The term of office for Standing Committee members is two years, renewable once. The functions of the Standing Committee are to coordinate ECOSOCC's work, prepare its General Assembly meetings, follow up implementation of the Code of Ethics and Conduct developed for CSOs, and prepare and submit the ECOSOCC annual report to the AU Assembly.

d. Sectoral Cluster Committees: the ECOSOCC Statutes (Article 11) provide for 10 Sectoral Cluster Committees as key operational mechanisms to formulate opinions and provide input into AU policies and programmes.

The Committees, which mirror the AUC technical departments, are:

i. Peace and Security- Conflict Management, Peace Building, Prevention and Combating Terrorism, Drug & arms trafficking, Security reforms.

2 Source: https://au.int/en/overview

ii.	Political Affairs- Human Rights & Rule of Law, Democratic and Constitutional Rule, Good Governance, Electoral Institutions, Humanitarian Affairs.
iii.	Social Affairs & Health- Health, Children, Drug Control, Population & Migration, Labour and Employment, Family & Elderly, The Physically Challenged, Sports & Culture, Social Integration.
iv.	Trade and Industry- Trade, Industry, Handicrafts, Customs and, Immigration Matters.
v.	Infrastructure and Energy- Energy, Transport, Communications, Infrastructure, Tourism.
vi.	Human Resources, Science and Technology- Education & ICT, Youth, Human Resources, Science and Technology.
vii.	Rural Economy and Agriculture- Rural Economy, Agriculture and Food Security, Environment; Water and Natural Resources, Desertification.
viii.	Economic Affairs- Economic Integration, Monetary and Financial Affairs, Private Sector Development.
ix.	Women and Gender- Women; Gender and Development.
x.	Cross-Cutting Programmes- Such as HIV/AIDS, international cooperation and coordination with other AU institutions and organs.

e. Credentials Committee: Composed of one CSO representative from each of the five regions and one from the African diaspora, one nominated representative for special interest groups and two AUC representatives and established by the General Assembly.[3] The Committee's role is to examine the credentials of ECOSOCC members and their representatives. Its Rules of Procedure are adopted by the General Assembly.[4]

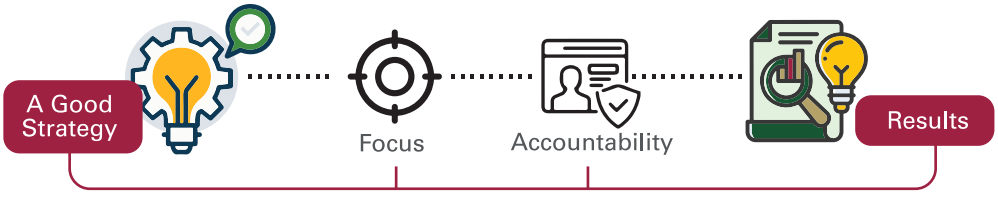
3. BASIC PRINCIPLES

3.1. What is Strategic Planning

A strategy provides an overall approach and plan for the organization to achieve its intended objectives. Therefore, strategic planning is the overall design that helps in managing the entire process. Strategic planning takes you outside the day-to-day activities of your organization or project by providing the big picture of what you and your organization are doing and where you are going. Strategic planning also gives clarity about what you actually want to achieve and how to go about achieving it, instead of a plan of action for day-to-day operations.

Strategic planning is a process of looking into the future and identifying trends and issues against which to align organizational priorities. Within the departments, it means aligning a section, unit, or team to the organization level strategy. Strategy is often about achieving a goal in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Strategy is also about achieving a mission comparatively better than the competition.

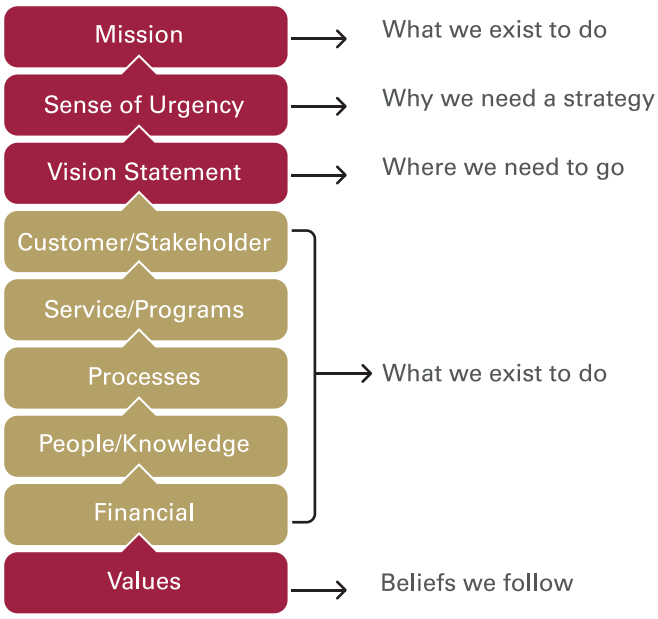
Strategic planning is therefore about understanding the challenges, trends, and issues; understanding who are the key beneficiaries or clients and what they need; and determining the most effective and efficient way possible to achieve the mandate.
A good strategy drives focus, accountability, and results.



3 Source: African Union Handbook 2021
4 Source: https://www.auecosocc.org/about-sccs

A strategic plan enables you to answer the following questions:

a. Who are we?
b. What capacity do we have/what can we do?
c. What problems are we addressing?
d. What difference do we want to make?
e. Which critical issues must we respond to?
f. Where should we allocate our resources? /what should our priorities be?



Once the above questions are answered, it will be possible for you to answer the following:

a. What should our immediate objective be?
b. How should we organize ourselves to achieve this objective?
c. Who will do what when?

A strategic plan is not rigid. It does, however, give you parameters within which to work. That is why it is important to:

- Use your understanding of the external environment to base your strategic planning process.
- Capitalize on your work experience and extend your understanding of the external environment, your own capacity, strengths, and weaknesses.

3.2. How and where to apply strategic planning

Strategic plans are developed to guide the delivery of an overall mandate of the organization or department and directs multiple streams of work. Units or sections then create compatible strategies depending on their size and operational focus. Smaller teams within a department/office or mission may not need to create strategies; there are, however, situations in which small and medium teams may need to think strategically, in which case following best practices can help structure the thinking.

Strategic plans should integrate, drive, and connect to the organizations budgeting process, providing the inputs to the 'regular budget' (or 'programme budget') via the Strategic Framework model. The Strategic Framework, on a biennial basis or your organization's chosen cycle, captures the objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for each sub-programme, which would, by definition, be found in a strategic plan.

Strategic plans should also integrate with work-planning efforts. Work-plans (also called operational plans) outline the specific, shorter-term operational objectives, outputs, projects, and processes of an entity.

At the individual level, it is valuable to fit strategic planning tools and technique to your own job and position. Thinking and planning 'strategically' at the personal level requires similar inputs, questions, and approach, and develops your capacity to contribute to planning efforts for teams and higher-level entities.

3.3. When strategic planning is done

Strategic planning is best undertaken in line with your organization's chosen budget cycle. This planning feeds into "Strategic Framework" and "Programme Budget" documents for each Department.

Other strategic plans may need to be developed outside the timeframes and parameters of the budgeting process. For example, if the organization or function is suddenly faced with a new challenge or mandate, a change in its operating environment, or other strategic change, it may be valuable to undertake a strategic planning exercise. When a new team or unit is to be established, it is imperative to develop a strategic plan at the very outset.

4. PLANNING FOR A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A strategic planning process is not something that can happen in an ad hoc way, at a regular planning meeting or during a staff meeting. It requires careful planning to set it up so that the process is thorough and comprehensive. When you develop or revise a strategic plan, you are setting the parameters for the work of your organization, *usually for two to three years or longer*. So, it does make sense to spend some time and energy planning for your strategic planning process.

The points to consider and the questions to ask here are:

a. When do you need to undertake the strategic planning process?
b. The frequency of the strategic planning process.
c. The trigger points to undertake a strategic planning process.
d. The duration of a strategic planning process.

4.1. Guides on the need for a strategic planning process

a. You need a strategic planning process when the strategic framework within which your organization or project functions needs to be developed, clarified, or consolidated.

b. Don't do a strategic planning process more than once every two years unless the external or internal context has changed dramatically. Usually once in three years is enough.
This does not exclude you from doing a strategic review more often, say once a year.
A strategic review is quick - a day or less where you look at the strategic framework, against what is happening internally or externally, as a sort of reality check.

c. There are various times in the life cycle of a project or an organization where it makes sense to develop a new strategic plan. Some of those times include but not limited to:

i. When you are initiating a new project or new organization,

ii. If you have just had a major evaluation of the organization or work, and this has led to challenging recommendations,

iii. When you reach the end of a major phase in a project, it makes sense to review progress and prepare for the next phase through a strategic planning process.



It is not possible to do a thorough strategic planning process in fewer than three days. If you are not used to this sort of process, you will need at least four or five days.

4.2. Questionnaire: Do we need a strategic planning process?

The management team of the organization or project should work through the following questionnaire.

Where a statement has two parts and you would answer "definitely" to one part but not another, then go with the weaker response. So, for example, in the first statement, you may be able to answer "definitely" your organization has a clear vision, but not be sure whether there is consensus about the vision. Your response then is "not sure".

Score your project or organization as follows on each statement:

1 = Definitely
2 = Maybe/Not sure
3 = Definitely not

Statement	Definitely	Maybe Not Sure	Definitely Not	Score
The organization/project has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve and there is consensus around this vision.				
Value issues are often discussed in the organization/project and there is agreement on the values base of the organization/project.				
The current mission statement of the organization/project reflects clearly what the organization/project does, for whom, and why it is important.				
The organization/project regularly reflects on its strengths and weaknesses and on the opportunities and threats in the environment.				
The organization/project has clear goals and objectives for what it wants to achieve – these goals are SMART				
The organisation/project finds it easy to prioritize, making a distinction between what it must do, what it should do and what it would like to do.				
The organisation/project has clear indicators by which it measures the impact of its work.				
The way in which the organisation/project is structured internally makes sense in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.				
The work done by the project/ organisation fits together coherently – the different areas of work fit well with one another.				
The external and internal contexts in which the organisation/project operates are relatively stable and there have been no major changes in the past year.				
			Total Score:	

- If your total is 20 or more, then your organisation or project is ready for a strategic planning process.
- If it is 15, or between 15 and 20, then your organisation probably would benefit from a strategic planning process.
- Under 15, then there is no urgency, but you should at least do strategic planning three years after your last strategic planning process.

4.3. Who should be involved in a strategic planning process?

The two key questions here are:

a. Who should participate in the strategic planning process? and

b. Who should facilitate the strategic planning process?

Who should attend?

The strategic planning process helps an organisation clarify, consolidate, or establish its strategic framework. Embedded in the strategic framework are the values and vision of the organisation. Because of this, it is important to involve the whole organisation in at least part of the planning process.



Strategic planning phase	*Who should be involved?*
Planning the process	The management team of the project or organisation.
Understanding the context	All staff and Board members: Administrative staff should be involved if it is important for them to understand the organization's issues and problems.
Vision, values, and mission discussion	All staff and Board members. It is very important to involve all staff categories, including administrative staff in this discussion as it is likely to provide a set of operating principles – in other words, to make it clear why people who work in the project or organisation are expected to work and behave in a certain way.
Review of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats	Programme or professional staff for the whole of this process; include administrative staff in the discussions around internal strengths and weaknesses.
Discussion of strategic options and goals.	Professional staff and Board members.
Organizational structure	The management team with input from the rest of the staff.

When administrative staff are very interested in the professional work, you may want to invite them to participate in all stages where professional staff are involved. Certainly, senior administrative staff should be involved throughout.

If the organisation has an accountant, she should be involved throughout. But it is not necessary for the receptionist to come to all the sessions. However, once the strategic framework is in place, then all staff should be taken through this, with time to ask questions and get clarification, preferably in the smaller units or departments within which they work.

4.4. Using an outside facilitator

When an organization decides to use an external facilitator, it is advisable that you use a skilled outside facilitator for a full-scale strategic planning process so that:

a. There is a designated (assigned) person to keep order, to prevent issues from being personalized, and to keep the process on track without becoming emotionally involved.

b. Everyone else is freed up to get involved in the process without worrying too much about process issues.

c. A skilled person is available to deal with conflict that may arise so that it is handled constructively rather than destructively.

d. Someone with specific organizational expertise is available to raise issues and prevent the organisation/project from avoiding difficult issues.

e. Someone with extensive experience is available to offer insights, ideas, and an outside perspective.

f. Disadvantages have mainly to do with cost. However, provided you get the right person, the investment should be cost-effective in terms of results.

4.4.1. Checklist for selecting an external facilitator

When deciding to hire an external facilitator, look for the following:

- [ ] an understanding of development issues generally
- [ ] an understanding of organizational issues
- [ ] insight and empathy
- [ ] authority/credibility
- [ ] experience in running strategic planning processes
- [ ] a good reputation with previous clients (check this!)
- [ ] conflict management skills and confidence about handling conflict
- [ ] able to help you clarify your outcomes
- [ ] a commitment to helping you reach your desired outcomes
- [ ] honesty and fairness (don't look for total objectivity – anyone worth using will have opinions, you just want him or her to make a clear distinction between opinions and facts)
- [ ] logic, self-discipline, and the ability to operate systematically
- [ ] commitment to deadlines
- [ ] verbal and written skills
- [ ] a style that suits your organisation, and
- [ ] reasonable rates, measured against market prices.



Once you have found the right person, agree on a clear, written brief so that there is no miscommunication about what is wanted and expected.

5. BUILDING A STRATEGIC PLAN

5.1. External Input Gathering

5.1.1. External Issue Scanning and Client Segmentation Analysis

The first step in strategic planning is to gather the information needed to understand and identify the issues, challenges and trends that will shape and affect the organization or programme strategy. The result of such input gathering is commonly thought of as external environmental scanning. "External" issues refer to all factors with roots outside your organization.

It is also important to gather information about the target clients (i.e., those who are the recipients and beneficiaries of the services delivered). Such inputs help to identify and understand how to group clients, and more importantly, how to characterize their desired outcomes that would result from receiving the services.

5.1.1.1. How to conduct external stakeholder and issue scanning

The following chart shows common lenses through which to consider collecting and analyzing information:

Lens	Considerations
Political	What are the major current political realities or anticipated political developments that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Economic	What are the current or future anticipated economic conditions that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Social	What are the current anticipated realities of the relevant societies and cultures that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Technological	What are technological realities or anticipated developments that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Environmental/Climate	What are the current environmental or climate conditions that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Legal	What are the current legalities or anticipated legal issues that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Security/Safety	What are the current security and safety or anticipated developments that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Religion	What are the current religious considerations that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Regulatory	What are the current regulatory or anticipated relgulatory changes that could affect the achievement of the strategy?
Demographic	What are the current demographics that could affect the achievement of the strategy?

The methods for collecting external information or issues depend on the context of the work the organization is involved in and who it is intended to serve. Issues are generally identified through either research and/or through consultation with a number of key stakeholders.

Consider what sources of information are available to capture data and information about the issues in each category, or those most relevant to your work.

The external input should make it clear what the opportunities, challenges and threats in your organization's external context are. Organizing external input should be the work of the group or person planning the process.

Who should give input?



- You are looking for someone who understands development, has particular insights into the sector of development in which you are involved or are planning to be involved, and who has some understanding of the kind of contribution an organisation or project such as yours could make.
- It is also important to have an authoritative person – someone who is respected in the sector and whom your staff and Board will take seriously.
- You could have more than one person. So, for example, you might have someone giving a government perspective and someone else giving a community perspective.
- Sometimes a Board member, or even a particularly well-informed staff member can give the input. It is usually, however, a good idea to get someone in from "the outside" as well.

What should be covered in the input?

- By the end of the input, you want everyone to have a comprehensive understanding of the context and some new thoughts to inform your strategic planning process.
- Make sure that you cover the three main ingredients of the context: development globally and nationally, **your sector** globally, nationally, and locally, **your area of expertise** (e.g., training, drilling wells, etc.) globally, nationally, and locally. Try to get an overall perspective – not just from one point of view – either by having more than one speaker or by inviting a speaker who is able to give an overall view. Remember that no-one is neutral – people have opinions, and you need to assess these in the light of a number of different opinions.

When should you organize this?

- As soon as you have a date for the strategic planning process and at least two weeks in advance. This will make it more likely that you will get the person or people you want, rather than just someone who happens to be available.

What should the brief say?

- The brief should state clearly what the venue will be and the time you want the speaker to arrive. You want him/her to hear what goes before his/her input.

  Make sure your brief includes the following:

  - The purpose of the input – what you hope will happen as a result of the input.
  - How long the input should be.
  - What the speaker should cover in content, information, etc.
  - How the input will fit into the strategic planning process.
  - How interactive/provocative you would like the input to be.
  - Whether or not you are hoping that the speaker will take part in any other part of the process.

- Remember to find out in advance whether the speaker needs any special equipment- from a flipchart and markers to a computer and screen for a PowerPoint presentation.
- Most people involved in development will be prepared to give their time free if your organisation or project has credibility or potential to make a difference to a problem that concerns them. However, your organisation/project should pay for transport, accommodation and so on.
- It is also customary to give the speaker a small gift as a token of appreciation for giving up his/her time.
- Do not rely totally on external input. Make sure that the important statistics, policies, stakeholder information that affect your work are available, possibly even as a handout.

5.1.1.2. How to conduct client segmentation analysis

a. Clients are those who are the immediate recipients or beneficiaries of the services or products that your organization offers. Client analysis begins with an initial step of identifying how to segment or group clients in a way that allows your organization to best align its services. There are a number of ways to segment or group clients. Your senior officers should determine the groupings that make sense in the context of your organization.

   For example:

   i. By entity type (e.g., people, governments, organizations, etc.)
   ii. By internal structures of your organization (e.g., departments, functions)
   iii. By behaviour or condition (e.g., injured, displaced, etc.)
   iv. By demographic (e.g., population size, age, gender, profession, etc.)
   v. By geography (e.g., country, region, urban, rural, etc.)

b. Once you have determined the groups or segments, assess the needs and expectations, by gathering direct input (e.g., via surveys or focus groups). In some cases, you may have to hypothesize about the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries from other data that is gathered when you cannot easily access clients or stakeholders (e.g., disaster victims).

c. Once the client needs are known, document them by crafting statements in the first-person voice (i.e., "I…") that articulates what they would say, think, or do if their needs had been met (e.g., "I believe the XYY assistance has significantly enhanced our dwelling environments.").

5.2. Internal Input Gathering

5.2.1. Internal SWOT Analysis

After looking outward, the next step in the strategic planning process is to look inward to understand the matters facing your organization that may affect the achievement of the strategic plan. Consider the following:

a. Financial resources- is there funding/budget to roll out or implement the intended strategic activities.
b. Core competencies- what is that thing that your organization is good at doing and does work get done within the organization (business processes)?
c. Capacity to deliver the intended customer services.
d. Staffing- Do you have the right talent to deliver competently (think of roles, skills, and knowledge within the organization).
e. Assets -what do you have in terms of buildings and equipment?

The most common internal analysis method is the SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Your SWOT analysis will summarize the perceptions of an internal constituency (i.e., leadership and staff) regarding the internal strengths of your organization, its internal weaknesses, the external opportunities for potential pursuit and the external threats to consider.



How to conduct a SWOT analysis

A simple SWOT analysis can be carried out at a team retreat or strategic planning conference with a facilitator guiding the discussions and collecting views based on some pre-work. A more detailed SWOT analysis involves formally surveying a leadership team, staff, business partners, and/or clients and other stakeholders. The resulting SWOT feedback is then compiled, grouped by common affinities, and prioritized to identify the most important strategic issues.

5.2.2. Staff Surveys

Surveying the staff of an organization can provide the internal input needed. Though not as holistic as a SWOT analysis, a staff survey typically provides insights into staff perceptions related to internal capability, readiness, internal motivation, satisfaction, and internal communications. It is important to first understand the reason for a staff survey and the purpose to which it must align before designing one.

Designing a Staff Survey

With the dawn of online survey tools, designing and conducting a staff survey is now quite straightforward. The most difficult step is deciding what to ask and how to ask it. Again, there are a number of ways to design a staff survey;

> *the key point is that questions should be tailored and focused to shed light on issues that are relevant to your organization's goals or mandate and the execution of its yet-to-be-decided strategy.*

5.3. Preparatory work

There are two important tasks that need to be done before a strategic planning workshop:

a. A review of your organization's work. This can be done by:

i. An extensive external evaluation before the strategic planning process in order to feed into it.

ii. A departmental/project/unit level analysis of the work done, including achievements against targets and indicators of impact.

iii. A management team review of the work done across the organization, including achievements against targets and indicators of impact.

b. A review of your organization's internal functioning. Even if you have an external review, it is useful if the teams have done some internal reflection as well. This can be done by:

i. An external review conducted by someone with an in-depth understanding of development and non-profit organizations, although not necessarily of your particular sector.

ii. A management review of the internal functioning of the organization or project.

iii. Input from staff.

These are not mutually exclusive – even with external input it is useful for teams to do some internal thinking and reflection.

In addition, it is useful to get all those who will be participating in the strategic planning process to do some preparatory work individually.

5.3.1. Preparatory work for a strategic planning process – Individual staff Questionnaire

This questionnaire will help participants in a strategic planning process to prepare themselves so they can make a useful contribution to the process.

a. Thinking about our context:

1. What has happened in the past three years in the external environment that could affect our work as an organization/project?

_____
_____
_____

2. What are the challenges and threats facing us as an organization/project in our external environment?

_____
_____
_____

3. What are the opportunities we should be taking advantage of in the environment in order to:
   a. Make us more sustainable as a project/organization?
   b. Help us achieve our vision?

_____
_____
_____

4. What information do you have that you think is important to share with others in the strategic planning process?

_____
_____
_____

b. Thinking about our organization:

5. What are the important strengths of our organization/project?

_____
_____
_____

6. What weaknesses are preventing our organization/project from achieving its vision?

_____
_____
_____

7. Do you think we are clear about our vision, values, and mission? Make some notes about what you think our vision, values and mission are.

_____
_____
_____

8. What challenges have we failed to meet in the past two to three years and why have we failed to meet them?

_____
_____
_____

9. What challenges have we met well in the past two to three years and what helped us to meet them?

_____
_____
_____

10. What is the most important outcome that you would like to see emerging from this strategic planning process? Why do you think it is so important?

_____
_____
_____

5.4. Planning the agenda/process

You have worked out what you are going to do about timing, participants, input, and pre-work. You have set things in motion so that the right people will come, useful information will be shared, and everyone knows what time to set aside for the process. Now you are ready to plan the actual process and to draw up an agenda. You do this in much the same way you would plan for a workshop.

The important things to remember are:

a. Whether or not you decide to use an outside facilitator (we recommend you do), make sure that someone is responsible for chairing each session and that they are skilled enough to do so properly.

b. Know what you have to cover to achieve these outcomes – know what steps you have to work through.

c. If you have asked people to do preparatory work, make sure this is considered in the agenda so that people feel their efforts are valued.

d. Build in steps that involve all participants – you need to take people with you, not just get the tasks done.

e. Know what you want to achieve – have clear outcomes for the process.

f. Know what additional issues need to be dealt with in the time available.

g. Prioritize sensibly. Do not, for example, allow half an hour for a discussion around values, vision and mission, and two hours for a discussion on whether or not there is a need for additional administrative staff.

h. Make sure that someone records what is said and, most importantly, what is agreed. This does not mean verbatim (word-for-word) notes, but rather a record of important discussions and decisions.

i. Don't be inflexible. But do have a commitment to timekeeping.

Keeping this in mind, the planning team should:

a. Draw up an agenda for the whole process.

b. Divide it roughly by day i.e., Day One, Day Two, etc.

c. Allocate responsibilities.

d. Circulate the agenda for comment.

If you are using an outside facilitator, then work on the agenda together with him or her. At the very least, brief him or her very carefully. Get a draft agenda, draw him/her, and see whether it addresses the issues listed above. As the client, you are entitled to query the agenda and express concerns you may have.

6. COVERING THE BACKGROUND

For your strategic planning process to go well, you need to include certain background steps which "set the stage" for your planning. Without them, the planning takes place in a vacuum. ***The background steps form the initial steps in your strategic planning process and include:***

a.	Input – discussion
b.	Clarification of problem analysis
c.	Review of programmes and of the organization as a functioning system
d.	Clarifying the planning parameters – what is the broad framework within which we will plan?
e.	Identifying critical issues that must be addressed during the strategic planning process
f.	Synthesizing – putting together the key learnings for the organization or project that emerge from this background work.

You should aim to complete this stage of the strategic planning process by the end of Day 1 of a four-day workshop, at the latest. Alternatively, you could run a one-day session which covers all of this, a week or so before the actual strategic planning workshop.

6.1. Input – Discussion

We have already discussed the importance of getting some input on the big picture at the beginning of the strategic planning process. What you do with the input is just as important as having the input. Here are some suggestions.

After the input you might have:

a. A question-and-answer session with the person giving the input, to get clarification and raise issues.

b. Small group discussion around some of the key issues. These may have been raised by the presenter, or taken out of the input by the facilitator, or pre-decided.

c. A discussion, either in small groups or in plenary, on "what are the implications for us?"

d. A summary of what has been said in the form of a PESTEL analysis

e. Integration of work done in preparation for the process.

f. A relevant video or photographic presentation.

g. Additional input from communities to highlight issues.

h. A clarification process around what the problem is you are addressing through your work.

i. It is worthwhile spending the whole of the first morning of the strategic planning process on this discussion since it forms the basis for the rest of the workshop.

6.2. Clarification of the problem analysis

A problem analysis is an attempt to understand the problem you are addressing, and the various cause and effect links that are involved.

If you are a new organization or project then you need to do a careful problem analysis, based on your understanding of the context in which you want to work. If you are an established project or organization, then you need to revisit your original problem analysis and check that you think it is still valid.

If necessary, do the full problem analysis process in the workshop.
At the end, the questions you need to be able to answer are:

a. Is the problem we plan to address, or are addressing, a significant problem?

b. Will solving the problem make a significant difference to the lives of people in development terms?

6.3. Review

This step involves a review of the work already done and of how the internal system of the project or organization is functioning. It is this review that enables you to do a SWOT Analysis.

a. When you do a review of programmes, you look at the impact and effectiveness of the work you are doing. Is it making a difference?

b. When you do a review of the organization, you look at the efficiency of the way in which the work is done. Do we do our work in a way that is cost-effective and that produces maximum results with the least possible input?

6.3.1. Programmes

You need to ensure that the preparatory work done on the impact and effectiveness of your programmes is shared with the workshop or those involved in the process as this forms essential background to your strategic planning process.

Depending on the form in which the preparatory work was done, you may decide to do any of the following:

a. If you have gone the route of an external evaluation, let the external evaluator present a summary of his/her findings, conclusions, and recommendations for discussion. It is probably best if people have already read the written report.

b. If the evaluator has already done a presentation, then focus discussion on the conclusions and recommendations during the strategic planning process. The organization or project needs to reach consensus on which conclusions and recommendations they agree with, and which they do not.

c. If units, departments, projects, or programmes within your organization have done their own work progress review, provide an opportunity for them to present what has come out of their deliberations. Any individual work that has been done should be incorporated into this level when the unit, project, department prepares for the presentation.

d. If management has done a review process, then this should be presented at this point.

e. Whichever options or set of options you select; it is important to draw out learnings and reach conclusions. This can be facilitated either by the external facilitator or by someone within the organization. Write these learnings on a flip chart as a reference point for the rest of the process. The question to answer here is:

f. What have we learned from this programme review that we must keep in mind as we go forward with our strategic planning?

6.3.2. Organization

You need to ensure that the preparatory work done on the efficiency of your project or organization, and on the way in which you organize and carry out your work, is shared with the workshop or those involved in the process. This also forms essential background to your strategic planning process. Depending on the form in which the pre-work was done, you may decide to do any of the following:

a. Get an external organizational development expert who has looked at your organization to present his or her findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

b. If the expert has already done a presentation, then focus discussion on the conclusions and recommendations during the strategic planning process. The organization or project needs to reach consensus on which conclusions and recommendations they agree with, and which they do not.

c. If units, departments, projects, or programmes within an organization have done their own work progress review, then provide an opportunity for them to present what has come out of their deliberations. Any individual work that has been done should be incorporated into this level when the unit, project, department prepares for the presentation.

d. If management has done a review process, then this should be presented at this point.

In bringing this all together, the facilitator, or person facilitating this session, should ask questions such as:

a. What are the internal strengths on which we need to build?

b. What are the internal weaknesses we need to remedy?

c. What are the internal problems that are negatively affecting our ability to have an impact through our work?

Do not try to sort out these problems now. Just be aware of them. In the end, how we organize what we do depends on what it is that we do. That will only emerge clearly and definitively during the strategic planning process.

6.4. Clarifying planning parameters

Once you get to this stage in your strategic planning process, you are ready to clarify your planning parameters.

What are planning parameters?

There are certain parameters or boundaries that define or limit what an organization can and cannot do, what it is most likely and least likely to do well. So, for example, a health project in a disadvantaged community won't suddenly decide rather to focus on providing bursaries for tertiary education, but it might link its health work to basic literacy. Its parameters are defined by its understanding of the problems and of what causes them, and by the particular expertise of the project. This needs to be considered in the strategic planning process.

What needs to be considered in clarifying the planning parameters?

Your planning parameters will be defined by:

a. **The problem analysis.** Strategy must aim to solve significant problems. The intention is to make a significant and positive difference to the lives of the proposed beneficiaries.

b. **The stakeholders**. Who the stakeholders are, be they partners, beneficiaries, donors, influences what you do and how you do it.

c. **Your distinctive competency.** It refers to what you are particularly good at. Your distinctive competency might be working with community health workers, or developing literacy material, or producing socially relevant but entertaining media. Knowing your distinctive competency, or distinctive competencies, helps you to clarify your planning parameters.

d. **Your competitive advantage.** It refers to that which makes you preferable as an agent of development to other similar organizations. It is the special something that makes stakeholders such as donors or beneficiary communities say: "We want to work with them". So, for example, you might have a competitive advantage compared with other organizations doing similar work because you have a good track record in the sector, or in the communities in which you work. You might have a competitive advantage in lobbying and advocacy work because some of your staff come from government backgrounds or have worked for big corporations that you now want to influence. Again, knowing what your competitive advantage is, and exploiting it where you can, should be part of your strategy.

e. **Your values**. The values of the organization or project provide parameters or boundaries to the strategic options. If the organization believes in "nothing for the people without the people", then its strategic options will be bound by this belief.

f. **Access to resources.** The level of resources you believe you can access is an important parameter in your strategic planning. It may not affect your vision or your values, but it will influence how you define your goals and objectives. Resources include money, people, and expertise.

g. **Assumptions.** These are external conditions that your project or organization cannot control but which it assumes will exist and which are necessary to the success of the project. So, for example, a project that works with informal sector businesses may assume that government will support the informal sector through legislation and regulation. To make this assumption, the organization/project must have good reason to believe it. If it does, then this becomes one of the planning parameters. We can rely on government support at the legislative level. However, if it believes the opposite, then this also needs to be considered in planning, as a hindering factor. Other such assumptions might be:

The economy continues to improve.

i. Government continues with its policy of privatizing state-owned businesses.

ii. Business is keen to co-operate with civil society in this matter.

iii. Laws restricting the employment of women are liberalized.

iv. There is no increase in the current levels of violence.

6.4.1. Exercise to help a project or organization define or clarify its planning parameters



This exercise will take about an hour:
30 minutes in small groups, and 30 minutes sharing in plenary.

It should be done in groups of about five or six people. The groups could be random or could be based on work units. Decide which you think will be most productive.
To do the exercise, you need flip chart paper, felt-tipped pens, preferably in a few different colours, and some way to stick the flip chart sheets on a wall.
Begin by explaining the various terms.

Step 1:

Ask each group to draw a picture on a sheet of flip chart paper. The picture should show what the group thinks its planning parameters are in terms of:

a. The problem analysis
b. The stakeholders
c. The distinctive competencies of the organization or project or group
d. The comparative advantages of the organization or project or group
e. Values
f. Access to resources
g. Assumptions that can be made about the external environment

Step 2:

Get each small group to present and explain its picture.

Step 3:

List the parameters about which there is agreement on a separate flip chart sheet.

Step 4:

Discuss those parameters about which there is disagreement and reach some sort of consensus. Add the consensus parameters to your list.

This list should be prominently displayed throughout the process to keep the process in touch with reality.

6.5. Identifying critical issues

The work you have done so far has looked at the context in which your organization or project operates, at the strengths and weaknesses of the organization or project, and at how you define your planning parameters. You should now be in a position to identify the critical internal and external issues which need to be addressed.

A critical issue is one that meets most or all of the following criteria:

a.	Is related to a core problem.
b.	Affects the lives of a significant number of people either directly or indirectly.
c.	Can be addressed through the competencies and resources of the organization or project.
d.	Needs to be addressed if the organization or project is to be able to progress in its work.
e.	Builds on the strengths of the organization or project and/or the opportunities available to it.
f.	Addresses weaknesses in the organization and/or assists the organization to deal with threats to its work or existence.

To proceed with your strategic planning process, it would now be useful for you to identify the critical issues that must be addressed by the end of the process. These issues can be external or internal, to do with the organizational or project vision, or to do with the way in which the organization or project carries out its work.

6.5.1. Exercise to help a project or organization to identify the critical issues it has to deal with



This exercise will take about 45 minutes: 15 minutes in small brainstorming groups, 30 minutes reaching consensus in plenary.

Let people talk to their neighbours in the first step.

To do the exercise, you need flip chart paper and felt-tipped pens, and some way to stick flip chart sheets on a wall. Begin by explaining the criteria for a critical issue. Suggest that the critical issues they come up with meet at least three of the criteria.

Step 1:

Let each small grouping of people come up with at least four critical issues that meet at least three of the criteria.

Step 2:

In plenary, brainstorm a list of critical issues, dividing them into internal and those related to the actual problem analysis.

Step 3:

Go through the brainstormed list and check each item to see that it meets three of the critical issue criteria. Cross out those that do not.

Step 4:

Prioritize the list related to the problem analysis by using the questions on prioritizing in the toolkit: Mark those that are very important with one symbol, those that are important but could wait with another symbol, and those that would be nice to address but are not that important with a third symbol.

Step 5:

Prioritize the internal list by answering the following questions:

a. Which of these must we deal with within the next six months if our work is to progress effectively?

b. Which of these should be dealt with within the next year to ensure the long-term ability of the organization or project to survive and do its work?

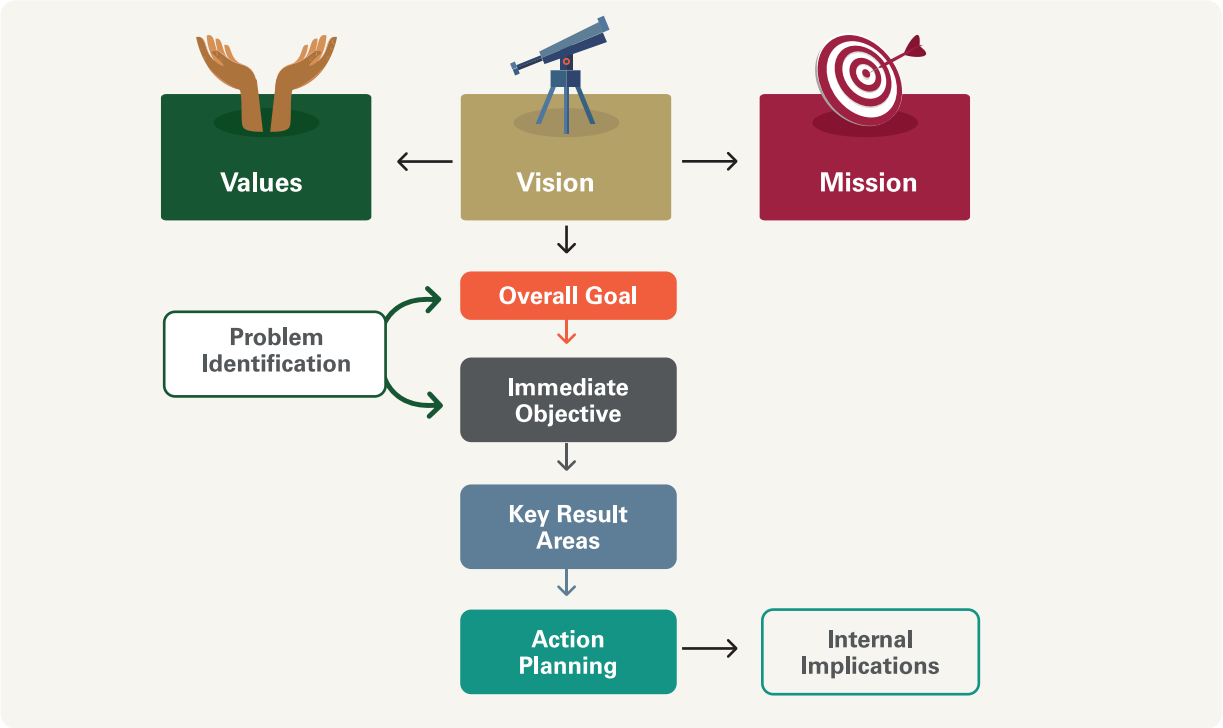
c. Which of these should probably be dealt with in order to improve our working environment?

Mark those that are very urgent with one symbol, those that are important but could wait with another symbol, and those that would be nice to address but are not that important with a third symbol.

By the end of the strategic planning process, you should have a strategy to address your top two categories in each list.

7. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

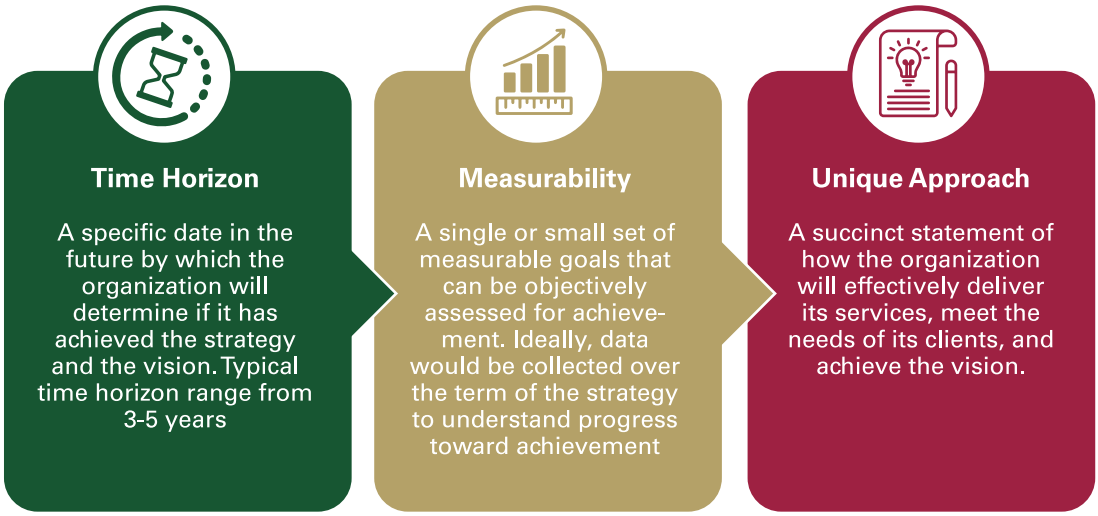
The process for defining the strategic planning framework is captured below:



7.1 Vision Statement Setting

Once the external and internal inputs are analyzed, management sets the overall direction and goal for the office or team. Vision statements play the role of a strategic 'north star,' providing focus and long-term alignment.

Vision statements must be meaningful to be truly valuable. Positive slogans like "Be the best" may help inspire staff but are too vague and generic to truly focus and provide direction. Successful vision statements have three ingredients: **Time, Measurability & Unique Approach.**



Organizations and projects in the not-for-profit sector usually exist because they want to make a difference in society. They have a vision of how society could or should be in the future. This vision is not something they can achieve on their own. It is something that guides them in their work and which they believe can be achieved if enough projects and organisations share the vision and work towards it.

7.1.1. How to develop a vision statement

Vision statements are often difficult to craft even though they consist of only a few sentences or a short paragraph.

The most effective and appropriate method to develop a vision is for an individual to develop an initial draft statement. This step is an opportunity to set the initial tone (i.e., the degree of change or difficulty necessary for success). The broader team can then provide feedback and help fine-tune to focus and improve upon the draft, drawing out more views of the time horizon and the measurability. The final text can then be decided and 'published' to the group as the 'north star' to which the strategy should align.

Example of a vision statement

Time frame

Quantifiable

We believe that by the end of 2025, XYZ will lead the continental community to resolve pressing issues by implementing measures to impact early marriages through *20% reduction in early marriage cases.*

XYX will achieve the above by being highly consultative with all stakeholders, focusing on technical co-operation, capacity building and *implementation*

7.1.2. Exercise for developing a vision statement

60 mins This exercise will take about 60 minutes:
30 minutes in groups and 30 minutes in plenary.

Divide participants into groups of about four or five so that everyone participates.
To do the exercise you need flip chart paper, felt-tipped pens, and something for sticking up the flip chart sheets.

Step 1:

Ask participants to describe the three or four key problems they are trying to address and to write these down.

Step 2:

Ask the groups to imagine that they have been out of the country for ten years. They have arrived back to find that their dreams of how the society should be, in terms of the problems they have identified, have been fulfilled – the problems are solved, and the society is functioning just as they had always hoped. They should draw or construct a picture of what such a society would look like, using colour, shape, words, and/or images.

Step 3:

Let each group present its picture and explain what it represents. The facilitator should capture key words, especially anything that is value-related (e.g., equal access, affordable, quality health care, equitable allocation, democratic, etc.).

Step 4:

The whole group studies the words and statements and jointly (in smaller groups if necessary) constructs a vision statement that reflects the range of input. Begin the vision statement with phrases such as:

> We strive for ...
> We believe that ...
> We are committed to ...

When everyone is happy with the statement, you will have a vision, stated in a vision statement, around which there is consensus.

7.2. Values

Organizational values are the shared values that underpin your work as an organization and your relationships with users and other stakeholders. They are what you believe is the right way to do things and to deal with people, and what you believe about the way that, ideally, the world ought to be organized. Your organizational values will determine your strategies and your operational principles. If, for example, you have an organizational value that emphasizes doing things with rather than for people, then you are likely to involve beneficiaries, or potential beneficiaries, closely in your planning process.

Clarifying and reaching consensus on your organizational values is very important because it is this that provides a basis for you to make difficult decisions.

The kinds of decisions you need to make based on your organizational values include:

a.	Is what we are doing worthwhile, or could the money be better spent doing something else?
b.	Is the way we are going about this project consistent with our values? If not, what should we do?
c.	Is the work we are doing consistent with our stated values?
d.	Can we tender for this particular work?
e.	Should we work with this group of people, or project, or organization?
f.	Should we spend money on this?
g.	How should we respond to this statement from business, government or a donor or other civil society organisations?

7.2.1. Exercise for developing consensus around your values



You need about 30 minutes for this exercise, which is a continuation of the exercise on developing a vision statement. The exercise can be done in plenary. You need flip chart paper and felt-tipped pens.

Step 1:

Write up the vision statement developed during the strategic planning process. Then ask the plenary:

What are the values implicit in this vision statement that should guide our work if we are to contribute to our vision?

Step 2:

List the values and value statements that come up.

Step 3:

In the plenary, develop a set of principles (Do's and Don'ts) for:

a. How the organisation or project functions;
b. How staff/volunteers behave when they approach and do their work.

Write these up on a flip chart. They should provide the organisation or project with a benchmark against which to measure itself ethically.

7.3. Mission

A mission statement describes what your organization does, with whom or for whom it does it, and, in broad terms, how it does it.

So, your mission statement will have four components:

a.	What the organization or project is.
b.	What the organization or project aims to do or achieve.
c.	Who the work is aimed at (the target group) and who it is done with.
d.	How it does its work – in broad terms, what methods it uses.

An example of a mission statement in a development context might be:

> *We are a child-based organization working in East Africa. We aim to improve the conditions in which children in our society live. We do this by providing children who have limited resources with legal, health and nutritional support.*

Note that, when it is possible, a mission statement gives the geographical area in which the organization or project works.

A working principle of working with others whenever possible reflects a value about combining, complementing, and reinforcing efforts. This is different from working with a particular stakeholder group such as government, as an ongoing strategy for achieving your vision.

An example of a mission statement reflecting the latter is:

> *We are an NGO working to ensure that all people in our country, particularly the landless poor, have access to land for sustainable development. We do this by helping government develop land policies that will benefit the disadvantaged.*

In this example, the work is not geographically defined.

Can you identify the four components of a mission statement in the two examples given?

It is important for an organization or project to be very clear about the target group. So, for example, in the mission statement above which deals with land, the target group is landless people, although the actual work may involve improving the understanding about land issues of government officials. The government officials are an interim target, but the actual target is the landless poor. The project is meant to benefit the landless poor not the government officials.

Why is a mission statement important?

A mission statement is important because:

a. It is an easy way to communicate to others what you do and how you do it.
b. It helps you to clarify and focus your work.

If any of the components change, then the mission statement needs to change as well. That is why it is important to revisit your mission statement from time to time.

> In the context of a strategic planning process, it is useful to introduce the mission statement once you have clarified your vision and values, but you cannot finalize it until you have reached agreement on your overall goal and immediate objectives.

7.3.1. Exercise to help you develop a Mission statement



You need about 45 minutes for this: 20 minutes in groups and 25 minutes in plenary. Unless the group participating in the process is very small, you need to work in small groups of about five or six people each.

You need flip chart paper, felt-tipped pens, and something to stick up your sheets of flip chart paper.

Step 1:

In groups, ask participants to answer:

a. Who do we expect to benefit from our work? (the main or primary target group);
b. Who, if anyone, will we work with on an ongoing basis to achieve this?

Step 2:

Participants should then write a statement which encompasses who they are, what they are aiming to achieve and how they are aiming to achieve it.

Give them an example such as:

> *Economic Development for All is an NGO that advises government on economic development policy that will ensure that all citizens have access to equal economic development opportunities. or*
>
> *Manaid is a network of men's organizations that helps to create a healthy environment for men and boys to reach their full potential by providing counselling and referrals throughout the country.*

Step 3:

Now ask them to put together the two steps in a mission statement with the four key components.

Step 4:

In plenary, put up all the suggested mission statements and explain that you will come back to them once there is agreement on the overall goal and the immediate objectives of the organization or project. The results from the current stage might be something like:

> *Manaid is a network of men's organizations that helps to create a healthy environment for men and boys who are physically or psychologically abused to reach their full potential by providing counselling and referrals throughout the country.*

Ask participants:
Why do you think it would be a mistake to finalize the mission statement now?

The answer you are looking for is: Because the mission statement must reflect our agreement on goals and objectives, and we still have to reach that.

8. STRATEGY TREE

One of the best approaches to mapping out your strategy is using something called the Strategy Tree. This framework allows you to analyze, adapt, and communicate your strategic plan, supporting both OKR (Objectives, & Key Results) and KPI (Key Performance Indicators) models.

A Strategy Tree is a way to lay out and define your strategic plan. It can be used to guide your strategy formation, communicate the plan to your team or stakeholders and as a way to report on progress against your overall goals.



Your forward-looking starting point - it establishes where you want your organization to be in the future and why it matters

What are the big things you're trying to achieve?

The broad things you want to achieve

Goals are the targets you want to achieve. They are the real, tangible, measurable results you need to hit to achieve your Strategic Objectives

KPIs are quantifiable measures of performance over time for a specific gooal

The day-to-day operational activities that have to happen to ensure your Goals & Initiatives are hit.

8.1. Overall goal

There are many different names for the different levels of goals and objectives. Here we are going to refer to:

a.	Your **overall goal/strategic objective** which we are defining as the accumulated benefits which beneficiaries will enjoy when the development work is successful; and
b.	Your **immediate objective/goal** or the **project purpose** which describes the specific situation which the project or organisation hopes to bring about.

The overall goal is directly related to the significant problem you have identified in your problem analysis. So, for example, if you identified as the core problem that you want to address the fact that there is an unacceptably high rate of child mortality in the community, then your overall goal might be:

> *Rates for all child mortality in our community decline significantly (by at least 70% within five years).*

Everything you do should have the long-term aim of bringing the child mortality rate down. It is to this end that the project or organization exists. The overall goal is related to your vision. You arrive at the overall goal by turning your significant problem statement into a positive statement and describing the situation that will exist when the problem has been addressed.

The purpose of your strategy is to get you there or to make a significant contribution to getting there.

How do you know when your overall goal has been achieved?

By setting indicators or signs that are measurable. In the case of the example given, you will need official figures for rates of mortalities when you begin and at various stages along the way, including at the end of the five-year period.

But this overall goal could be the overall goal for a number of organizations. For example, a health research organisation and a Not-for Profit organisation could both have this goal. To achieve it, you probably need a number of different organizations working towards it. It is in the next step, defining your immediate objective or project purpose, that you make the process specific to your organisation.

8.1.1. Exercise to help you clarify the overall goal/strategic of your organisation or project



This should not take very long – probably only about 20 minutes in plenary, on a flip chart.

Step 1:

Refer back to the problem analysis and to the problem which you agreed as the significant focus for your activities.

Step 2:

Rewrite the problem statement as a positive situation. If the problem did not exist what would the situation be? That is your overall goal.

Step 3:

Write down what the indicators or signs will be that the overall goal has been achieved.

Now you have an overall goal for your work, something you think you can work towards with confidence.

8.2. Immediate objective/goals

If the overall goal is directly related to the significant problems you have identified in your problem analysis, then your goals are directly related to the causes of that problem.
So, for example, if your overall goal is:

> Rates for all child mortality in our community decline significantly (by at least 70% within five years)

and your expertise lies in child healthcare and development, then your immediate objective or project purpose may be based on the problem statement which says there is a high rate of child mortality in your area/region of focus. You might word the immediate objective or purpose as:

> Within two years, there will be a drop in child mortality rates of at least 70% in our country.

Based on your problem analysis, you believe that, by bringing down child mortality rates you can reduce crime. Your goals need to be measurable. In this case you can use figures on child mortality in your country when you start and figures after two years to measure your progress. Your indicator is child mortality rates.

Once you have your goals, then you have set the agenda of the organisation or project. You now need a strategy to help you achieve the objective and that is where your key result areas come in. In order to achieve your goals, you need to achieve certain results that will, together, lead to the positive situation you desire.

The strategy is aimed at contributing to the achievement of the strategic objective by achieving the goals. The project or organisation assumes that by following this logic, it will make a difference to the significant problem identified.

Exercise to help you clarify the immediate objectives of your project or organisation



This exercise should not take very long, probably only about 20 to 30 minutes in plenary, on a flip chart.

Step 1:

Refer back to your overall goal.

Step 2:

Look at the problem analysis and at the significant problem that you identified as contributing to the undesirable situation (the opposite of your overall goal) and as something you could address.

Step 3:

Turn that significant problem into a positive statement.

Step 4:

Identify an indicator or indicators that make it possible to measure the achievement of the immediate objective.

8.3. Key result areas

Key result areas define the outputs that are needed to achieve the immediate objective of a project or organisation. So, for example, if your immediate objective is that employment/self-employment rates increase by 50%, the following key result areas might apply:

a.	Non-formal courses to teach skills for which there is a market niche are offered in the community.
b.	A revolving fund to finance micro business set-ups is established in the community by a micro-financing company.
c.	A business development/advisory service is available for informal sector businesses in the community.
d.	A business hub (centre) has been created for the informal sector in the community.

You will notice that the key results are written as output statements – not "we will run courses", but "courses are offered". This is to emphasize that, as a result of what the project does, an output will be achieved. The project may not run the courses itself, but it will take responsibility for seeing that they take place. The project is guaranteeing that these courses will be run and it should be held accountable for making sure this happens.

These result areas form the basis of the action planning that needs to take place (there is a separate toolkit on Action Planning). So, for example, the project might arrange for a local technical college to offer appropriate skills courses and help to upgrade lecturers so that they can teach non-formal courses. The project might do a survey to find out what the market niches are. Many activities will go into ensuring that the outputs occur.

The project's assumption (this is a methodological assumption) is that, if it achieves the outputs specified as key result areas, then the immediate objective of increasing employment/self-employment will be achieved. The further assumption is that this will contribute towards the project's overall goal of reducing crime. The result areas spell out the project's strategy for reducing crime. The project does not yet know whether or not the strategy will work.

There are a number of elements and stages that will need to be monitored in order to know this. They include:

a. Monitoring that achieving the key results does lead to the immediate objective being achieved. For example, does strengthening local businesses increase employment opportunities?

b. Monitoring whether achieving the immediate objective makes a difference to the problem identified or put differently, to achieving the goal. Does a decrease in unemployment lead to a reduction in the crime rate?

Strategies are not set in stone. If a particular strategy does not work, then it can, and should, be changed. This makes monitoring and evaluation a very important part of a planning cycle. That is why we say you need indicators for the successful achievement of your overall goal and your immediate objective.

8.3.1. Exercise for turning an immediate objective into key result areas

You probably need about an hour to work out the result areas for your immediate objective. This is not an exercise in action planning, but in determining what the outputs are for which the organisation or project needs to plan. You are deciding what key outputs need to be achieved if an immediate objective is to be met.

If necessary, give the following example to show the difference between clarifying key result areas and action planning:

- **Overall goal:** Reduction in crime
- **Immediate objective:** Increased employment/self-employment.
- **Key Result Area:** Non-formal courses to teach skills for which there is a market niche are offered in the community.

Activities:



- Do a survey of skills currently offered by the relevant institutions of learning.
- Do a survey of businesses and needs to establish market opportunities.
- Identify training service providers in three marketable skills.
- Provide upgrading support to service providers to enable them to service the informal sector and micro-businesses.

You will need flip chart paper, felt-tipped pens, and something with which to stick the sheets up.

Step 1:

In plenary, ask participants to answer the following question:

What are the key outputs that must be achieved if this objective is to be met?

Step 2:

In plenary, get the participants to check that the "vertical strategy" makes sense – that there is a legitimate assumption that each stage will lead to the next.

9. INTERNAL IMPLICATIONS

Once you have a strategic plan, you are in a position to:

a.	Structure the organisation appropriately
b.	Identify where specific change management will be required
c.	Identify potential problems
d.	Clarify where you want to go to next.

One of the tools you could use here is a Gap Analysis. When considering these issues, it is important to remember that form follows function.

9.1. Structure

Structure follows strategy. This will mean that your organizational structure will only be clarified once the strategic planning process is complete. It may be necessary to organize, or reorganize, the structure if the organizational objectives are to be met.

Here the questions to ask are:

a. How should we group ourselves? What units, departments, projects, teams are needed to achieve all our objectives for the next two years?

b. What administrative and financial support will be needed?

c. What policies do we need to have in place?

d. Does it make sense to change any of the existing structures?

e. Do we need any additional structures?

f. Do we have the skills to do what needs to be done? If not, what additional skills do we need?

g. What information systems will we need?

> In the end, the form or structure of the organisation should follow its function – what it plans to do. Do not assume that the structure you have used before will fit, particularly if your strategy changes in some way. Be open to changes.

9.2. Change management

Your strategic planning process may result in some things in the organisation changing, either in terms of the work done or in the internal structuring of the work. People struggle with change. They may need help to accept and respond positively to change.

When change is needed, the following steps should be followed:

a.	Make sure everyone understands the change and why it is necessary. Even if people have been part of the strategic planning process, they may need the implications of decisions explained to them afterwards. Where the change affects people outside the organisation, explain it to these stakeholders as well. So, for example, if all your support has previously gone to civil society, but you have now decided it will be strategic to work with government as well, make sure the civil society stakeholders understand why you have taken this decision and what the implications will be for you, and them.
b.	Respond to people's ideas and feelings. Let them express their concerns and respond to them. If you cannot agree, at least be empathetic about the feelings that are generated by change.

c.	Develop a planned process of change and share this with everyone in the organisation or project so that people know what to expect and when to expect it.
d.	Implement change.
e.	Consult, support, give feedback during the change process.
f.	Acknowledge and celebrate successful change.

9.3. Potential problems

No strategic plan will be implemented without hitches. Each organisation or project will have its own set of problems. Below we have listed some common problems with which you may have to deal, along with possible solutions.

Potential problem	Possible solution
Resistance from your Board to major changes	It would be best to have some Board members participating in the strategic planning process. Before the meeting at which you present the plan, go, and see those influential Board members most likely to support the changes. Explain the changes and why they were considered necessary. Present a plan to deal with possible problems. Then, at the Board meeting, present the proposed changes, the thinking behind them, and the plans to address problems. Ask for Board input and support.
Resistance from donors to major changes	If you have a few major donors, you need to make appointments with them to explain the proposed changes. Have a clear presentation that shows why the changes are considered necessary, how they will be implemented, and how problems will be addressed. Focus on the strategic importance of the changes in terms of increasing impact on the problems the project or organisation is addressing. Make sure you have thought through the financial implications, what these are likely to mean, and how you will deal with them. For smaller donors, prepare a briefing document that can go out, explaining the changes. Another option is to organize a one-off presentation for all your donors.
Resistance from staff to changes	Be prepared to deal with conflict in an empathetic, but firm and assertive way.
Resistance from beneficiaries to changes	If the changes impact on beneficiaries, you need to explain to them to the beneficiaries up-front and give them support to cushion any negative impacts.
The need to make some staff redundant	If the strategic planning process leads to a major re-orientation of the work, or to a rationalization of the organisation, then it may be necessary to make some staff members redundant. In addition to ensuring that you follow the labour legislation of your country, you should also do everything you can to help redundant staff find alternative employment, get retraining, and, if they would like it, to get counselling.

The need to raise additional funds	It may well be that your strategic planning process means the need to expand what the organisation is doing. This may involve you in fundraising, developing a financing strategy, rationalizing other areas of work, or negotiating with existing donors. Provided your expectations are reasonable, and you plan ahead of time, this problem should not be insurmountable. Remember, having a good track record will help you raise more funds.
The need for different/ additional expertise	The need for different/additional expertise. This may mean employing new people or training existing staff or volunteers. You need to decide which is most appropriate. Do not think that you can train existing staff or volunteers to do anything and everything. Sometimes specific expertise and experience is needed. However, where staff and volunteers are interested, every effort should be made to involve them in new areas of work.

10. APPENDIX

10.1. Appendix 1: Agenda

Agenda for a four-day strategic planning process

DAY 1

- Welcome and introductions (15 minutes)
- Input from the CEO (20 minutes)
- Questions/Discussion (20 minutes)
- Input from departmental heads/representatives (20 minutes)
- Questions/discussion (20 minutes)

TEA (15 minutes)

- Summing up by facilitator (20 minutes)
- Clarification of problem analysis – in groups (30 minutes)
- Clarification of problem analysis – plenary (30 minutes)

LUNCH (45 minutes)

- Team building exercise – my personal values regarding education (45 minutes)-(optional)
- Summarized individual input (preparatory work) – presented by cluster/departmental representatives (25 minutes)
- Responses (15 minutes)
- Presentation by external evaluator (45 minutes)
- Discussion of conclusions and recommendations – small groups (30 minutes)
- Discussion of conclusions and recommendations – plenary (30 minutes)
- The way forward – summing up by the director (20 minutes)

END OF DAY 1

DAY 2

- SWOT Analysis – groups (30 minutes)
- SWOT Analysis – plenary (30 minutes)
- Clarifying the planning parameters – presentation by programmes manager (15 minutes)
- Clarifying the planning parameters – small groups (30 minutes)
- Clarifying the planning parameters – plenary (15 minutes)
- Identifying the critical issues – plenary (30 minutes)

TEA (20 minutes)

- Developing a vision statement – groups (30 minutes)
- Developing a vision statement – plenary (30 minutes)
- Developing consensus on values – plenary (30 minutes)

LUNCH (1 hour)

- Drafting a mission statement – groups (20 minutes)
- Drafting a mission statement – plenary (25 minutes)
- Clarifying our overall goal – plenary (20 minutes)
- Consolidation – how far have we gone? - facilitator (30 minutes)
- Clarifying our immediate objective – groups (20 minutes)

TEA (20 minutes)

- Clarifying our immediate objective – plenary (20 minutes)
- Understanding the vertical logic of strategic planning – facilitator (30 minutes)
- Overnight work – in preparation for day 3

END OF DAY 2

DAY 3

- Key Result Areas – Input – Facilitator (30 minutes)
- Key Result Areas – group work (3 hours)

TEA (30 minutes)

Key Result Areas – group work (continued)

LUNCH (1 hour)

Key Result Areas – plenary presentations (2 hours)

TEA (30 minutes)

Consolidation – what is our strategy? – director (30 minutes)

END OF DAY 3

DAY 4

- Responses to strategy – group work (30 minutes)
- Responses to strategy – plenary (20 minutes)
- Form follows function: how should we organize our work? – group work to produce organization structure (1 hour)
- Form follows function – plenary presentations and reaching consensus on structure (1 hour)

TEA (20 minutes)

- Implications of structure – group work (30 minutes)
- Implications of structure – plenary (30 minutes)
- Identifying potential problems – plenary (30 minutes)

LUNCH (1 hour)

- Dealing with problems: strategies for survival – groups (1 hour)
- Dealing with problems: strategies for survival – plenary (30 minutes)
- Consolidation – facilitator (30 minutes)
- Feedback on process (30 minutes)

CLOSURE

TEA

END OF DAY 4

10.2. Appendix 2: Planning tools

There are many tools you can use when you do your planning. This toolkit presents some of these tools that can help you in the strategic planning process, but this does not mean that you have to use them. If you think they might be useful, then use them. It is possible to do your planning without them, but by simply asking the right questions.

10.3. The SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis serves to identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of an organisation or project, and the external opportunities and threats the organisation or project faces.

The best time to use a SWOT Analysis is after you review progress and after you have done some sort of environmental scan.

The process can be done for the organisation, departments, projects, and units.
It can make a useful contribution to an organizational diagnosis.

SWOT stands for:



Strengths and weaknesses are factors that are internal to the organisation and can be addressed within the organisation. Opportunities and threats are external to the organisation and provide challenges to the organisation.

Time: You probably need about an hour to do a SWOT Analysis.

Steps in carrying out SWOT Analysis:

1. Give each participant in this stage of the process a set of blank cards to record Opportunities and Threats. They must answer the questions:
   a. What are the Threats facing us in the next period of time?
   b. What are the Opportunities facing us?

They should write only one threat or one opportunity on each card but can have as many cards as they need.

Ask the participants to place the cards in columns under the headings Opportunities and Threats which you should put up on a board or wall.
Cluster similar issues and discuss. Get rid of duplicates. Reformulate if necessary.

2. Ask participants to identify Strengths and Weaknesses and follow the same process as above.
3. You should end up with something that can be transferred into the following format:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

4. In discussion, answer the following questions:
   a. What can we do to maximize our strengths?
   b. What must we build or develop to overcome weaknesses or problem areas?
   c. What do we need to do to make use of the opportunities?
   d. What can we do to minimize or neutralize threats?

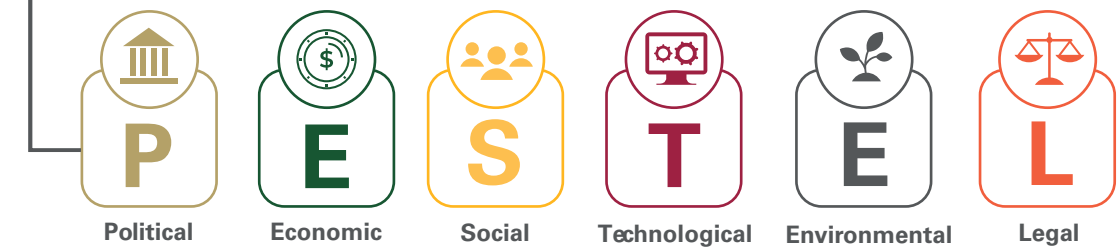
6. Finally, prioritize by asking these sorts of questions:
   a. What is really important for our current and future work?
   b. What is too serious to ignore?

10.4. The PESTEL analysis

This analysis is used to scan the external environment for forces and trends that may be opportunities or threats for the project or organisation. To help the project/organisation understand its context.

The best time to use a PESTEL Analysis is probably after you have had input on "the big picture" and before you do a SWOT Analysis (see previous pages).

PESTEL stands for:



You could add other categories if you thought they might be useful. e.g., Legislative, Psychological, Cultural, religious, Ecological.

Time: You probably need about an hour for the PESTEL Analysis process.

Steps:

1. Ask the participants in the process to break into four groups. They should then identify potential opportunities and threats under the headings given. Each group should deal with one aspect. If you add any categories, form extra groups. Get the groups to write one opportunity or threat only on each card. As a variation, you could get them to use different coloured cards for opportunities and threats, with a third colour for a factor that could be both.
2. Let the groups put up their cards under the appropriate headings on a wall or board.
3. Cluster similar things, discuss the ideas presented.
4. Identify those things that are most significant for your current and future work.

10.5. Stakeholder analysis

This tool is used to identify the organization's, or project's, key stakeholders and their concerns and expectations, and to explore how they influence the organisation. A stakeholder is anyone or any group or any institution or structure that has any kind of stake in your organisation or project.

This is a useful exercise to do when you are thinking about partnerships and also before you do your action planning.

Time: You probably need about an hour to go through this process.

Steps:

1. Ask the participants in the process to identify all the organization's or project's stakeholders. You can do this as a brainstorm. They must understand that stakeholders are not necessarily positive. So, for example, there may be another organisation that sees this one as a competitor for funds. The other organisation is still a stakeholder. It has an active interest in the organisation or project.

2. Divide participants into groups to answer the following questions about each stakeholder group:

   a. What is their interest in our organisation?
   b. What are their expectations from their relationship with us?
   c. What contribution could they make to the organisation?

3. Do a stakeholder map on a flipchart. It will look something like this:

	Interests	Expectations	Potential
Stakeholder	What is their interest in the organisation?	What do they expect from their relationship with the organisation/	What contribution could they make to the organisation?
1. 2. 3.			

4. Evaluate the organization's performance against the positive expectations.
5. Ask the participants what influence the stakeholder has on the organisation.
6. Let the participants rank the stakeholders in order of importance for the organisation when it does its planning.

10.6. GAP analysis

GAP analysis helps in identifying the gaps that need to be addressed between where the organisation is now and where it aims to be in the future. This technique is better used after you have done a vision and mission statement, an organizational diagnosis, and an environmental scan, and programme planning. It is a good introduction to planning the internal changes needed to meet your targets and goals. You need to know where you are, and where you want to be.

Time: You probably need about an hour to do a Gap Analysis.

Steps:

1. Identify the gaps between

   a. what we have NOW and what we must have IN THE FUTURE
   b. what we can do NOW and what we must be able to do IN THE FUTURE.

2. Identify those gaps which are quantitative (we need more … people, systems, financial resources, knowledge, etc.) and which are qualitative (we need improved … capabilities, systems, methods, relationships, etc.)

These gaps show what must be done to make the organisation efficient and effective.

10.7. Logical Framework Analysis (LFA)

The LFA is a very good tool for planning for monitoring and evaluation. Many donors now insist that organizations use the LFA to do their planning.

Time: The LFA can take about a week to do properly.

Steps:

Although different headings are used by different LFA practitioners, the matrix usually looks something like this:

Narrative Summary	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
Overall goal/development goal: The boader objective to which this project contributes			
Project Purpose			
Outputs: Result Areas: What must be achieved in order to fulfil the project purpose:			
Inputs: Activities and types pf resources			

10.8. Action Planning

Below is an example of an action planning model to help in strategic planning. It is a basic model for building your action plan and help in thinking through the resources or inputs required.

Results Area:
Indicator:
Means of Verification:
Progress Indicator:

Activities	Time Frame (begin by, completed by)	Person responsible	Costs/inputs

10.9. The Strategic Plan Structure

A strategic plan for a civil society organisation or project will have the following sections. This may vary from one organization to another, but these cover the main areas.

a.	Cover page
b.	Executive summary
c.	Contents page
d.	Profile of the organisation or project presenting the plan and of the service or product being offered i. Mission statement ii. Vision statement iii. Core Values iv. Goals v. Objectives
e.	Management/governance information
f.	Industry analysis
g.	Problem analysis and solution analysis
h.	Action plan i. Marketing plan ii. Capacity iii. Operational plan
i.	Performance indicators- Summary of outputs and timeframe
j.	Summary of staffing and human resource needs
k.	Financial projections- Budget
l.	Appendices and supporting documentation.

What would you include under the different headings?

Cover page	This should be clear and well designed. It should state the name of the project, the name of the organisation presenting the project, with contact details, and the date on which the business plan was completed.
Executive summary	The executive summary is very important. Some readers will only look at the executive summary. Try to make it no longer than one page. Include: • *A brief statement of the problem and solution analyses.* • *A brief statement of why your organisation is well-placed to address the problem/provide a solution.* • *A "summary of the summary" of outputs and timeframes.* • *A summary of the budget.* You would usually write the executive summary last to encapsulate the main points made in the document overall. It should be "stand alone" and not require the reader to refer to any other part of the document in order to get a quick overview of the project.

Contents page	Remember to put page numbers on your contents page – and check that they are correct. Sometimes, when you make corrections to a document, page numbers shift, and it creates a bad impression if the page numbers on the contents page are incorrect.
Profile	Here you would: • Give brief information on the background and history of the organisation and/or project. • Indicate what sort of legal entity it is (e.g., voluntary association, not-for-profit company, etc.). • Give the mission statement. • Provide some kind of statement of main methodologies and operating principles. • Provide some description of your track record.
Management/ governance information	Here you explain how the organisation/project is governed and managed, where accountability is located, and who the key people are, including brief descriptions of their background to show credibility, track record, etc.
Problem analysis/ solution analysis	Here you would briefly explain the problem the project seeks to address, your understanding of the causes and effects, what you intend to achieve in addressing it, and your strategy.
Action plan	Will cover you marketing plan, capacity, and operational planning
Summary – outputs and timeframe	Present your outputs, timing, and when must steps happen
Summary– human resource needs	A plan on how to actualize your strategy, the structure to implement the strategy and human resources needed to implement the strategy.
Financial projections - Budget	What Inputs/Resources are Needed
Appendices and supporting documentation	Here you could include anything that might support your case, e.g. • Brochures about the organisation and/or project. • Newspaper cuttings that support your case in some way. • Recent audited financial statements. • An organogram. • Letters of support

10.10 Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation tool

Strategic Objective	Key Perfomance Indicator (KPI	Target	Actual Perfomance	Strategic Initiative	Timelines for initiative Implementation	Responsible Manager	Budget	Actual Expenditure	Comments (on objective Achievement & Initiatives Implementation)	Comments (on Challenges encountered and how they will be addressed)

ECOSOCC
Economic Social & Cultural Council

ECOSOCC Secretariat
8658 Kudu Road Kabulonga,
Lusaka, Zambia

Email: ecosocc@africa-union.org
Tel: (206) 211429405
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An Organ of the
African Union