

Strategic Planning Readiness Assessment Tool

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Introduction

1. Are you thinking about strategic planning for your organization?
2. Is your current strategic plan reaching its end-date?
3. Has the end-date passed on your strategic plan?
4. Does your organization not have a strategic plan?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please review the Strategic Planning Overview below. It offers a brief summary of what strategic planning is and why it is important and then provides an outline of the steps involved in completing a strategic planning process. Following the overview is a Readiness Assessment that will help you to determine if this is the appropriate time for your organization to begin a strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning Overview

A) What Is Strategic Planning?

- A management tool that helps an organization:
 - focus its energy and priorities;
 - ensure that members of the organization are working towards the same goals; and
 - assess and adjust its direction in response to a changing environment.
- The process is **strategic** because it involves choosing how best to respond to the circumstances of the organization's dynamic environment which includes being clear about the organization's objectives and aware of its resources.
- The process is about **planning** because it involves intentionally setting goals and developing an approach to achieving those goals.

B) What Is Strategic Planning Not?

- A predictor of the future.
- A substitute for the exercise of judgment by an organization's leadership.
- An operational or work plan that focuses on the day-to-day implementation of strategic decisions.

C) What Is The Process For Strategic Planning?

1. *Getting Ready* – determining the right time to engage in a strategic planning process, designing the process, including creating a Planning Committee, and identifying information that must be collected.
2. *Assessing the Environment* – reviewing an organization's mission, vision and values, and analyzing its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in order to identify its strategic issues.
3. *Agreeing on Priorities* – identifying an organization's strategic directions and broad approaches to be used.
4. *Writing the Strategic Plan* – writing and approving the strategic plan.
5. *Planning Action* – setting short-term objectives and mapping out who will be responsible for what by when.
6. *Evaluating the Process and Monitoring the Plan* – reflecting on the planning process and putting monitoring mechanisms in place for the strategic plan.

Strategic Planning – Readiness Assessment

Initiating a planning process at the appropriate time is important to achieve success. The table below identifies conditions for successful planning. Please complete the table and answer the questions that follow.

	The following conditions for successful planning are in place:	Yes	No	Unsure or N/A
1.	Commitment, support, and involvement from top leadership, especially the Executive Director and Board Chair/President, throughout the entire process.			
2.	Commitment to clarifying roles and expectations for all participants in the planning process, including clarity as to who will have input into the plan and who will be decision makers.			
3.	Willingness to gather information regarding the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; the effectiveness of current programs; needs in the community, both current and future; and information regarding community partners and (potential) collaborators.			
4.	The right mix of individuals on the planning committee — strategic thinkers and actionaries (individuals who are in a position to see things through to completion), as well as big-picture (conceptual) thinkers and detail-oriented (perceptual) thinkers.			
5.	Willingness to be inclusive and encourage broad participation so that people feel ownership of and are energized by the process.			
6.	An adequate commitment of organizational resources to complete the planning process as designed, e.g. staff time, Board time, dollars for stakeholder engagement, consulting support, etc.			
7.	A Board and staff that understand the purpose of planning, recognize what it is and is not able to accomplish and have clarity about the desired outcomes of the process and issues to be addressed.			
8.	A willingness to question the status quo, to look at new ways of doing things; a willingness to ask the hard questions, face difficult choices and make decisions that are best for the organization's current and future stakeholders; and a willingness to support organizational change as a result of the planning efforts.			
9.	The organization has the financial capacity to sustain itself for the immediate future without a financial crisis appearing to detract from strategic planning.			
10.	Management's commitment to carefully considering recommendations made during the planning process rather than disregarding decisions in favour of his or her intuitive decisions.			

	The following conditions for successful planning are in place:	Yes	No	Unsure or N/A
11.	There is no serious conflict between key players within the organization (although a healthy dosage of disagreement and perhaps some heated discussions can be expected during a strategic planning process).			
12.	There are no high-impact decisions to be made in the next six months by an external source.			
13.	No merger or other major strategic partnership effort is under way (separate strategic planning conversations are not taking place while strategic restructuring negotiations are taking place).			
14.	Board and management are willing to articulate constraints and non-negotiables upfront.			
15.	A commitment to tie the strategic planning process to the organization's annual planning and budgeting process—to create a detailed annual operating plan for the upcoming year, and monitor/revise the strategic plan as needed.			
16.	A commitment to allocating sufficient resources to support the implementation of core strategies.			

17. Comments to explain and/or suggestions on how to respond to “No” or “Unsure or N/A” answers.

18. Other issues/ concerns?

19. Based on your response to all of the above, is this the appropriate time for your organization to initiate a strategic planning process?

- ☐ Yes – contact the OODP to discuss how the OODP could support your process.
- ☐ No – identify the next step(s) for the organization? Where should you go from here? Be specific.

Strategic Planning Overview and Readiness Assessment adapted from M. Allison & J. Kaye, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations*, 2005.