

OVERVIEW

Brief description

This toolkit provides a model for taking an organisation through a strategic planning process. It covers planning to do strategic planning, covering the background issues that need to inform or direct the strategic planning process, and then defining the strategic framework for the project or organisation activities. It is this strategic framework that gives the activities coherence and direction. We have included practical exercises to use during a strategic planning process. The toolkit expands on the short introduction to strategic planning in the toolkit on Overview of Planning.

Why have a detailed toolkit on strategic planning?

Strategic planning is the core of the work of an organisation. Without a strategic framework you don't know where you are going or why you are going there. So, then, it doesn't really matter how you get there! This toolkit offers you a way to do detailed strategic planning. You can replicate the method in any organisation or project that needs to do strategic planning.

Another toolkit in the CIVICUS toolkits project deals with an Overview of Planning. That toolkit will help you see how strategic planning fits into the overall planning process. The toolkit on Action Planning will help you take the process further. The toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation will help you to expand on the process of impact evaluation. You do strategic planning to help your project or organisation make a significant impact.

Who should use this toolkit?

This toolkit will help you if you have had only limited experience in planning or in strategic planning. Perhaps you have not been involved in running an organisation, project or department before. Or perhaps you have not been involved in the planning side of the work before. Or perhaps you have always focused on action planning and now realise how important strategic planning is. If strategic planning is new, or fairly new, to you, then you should find this toolkit useful.

When will this toolkit be useful?

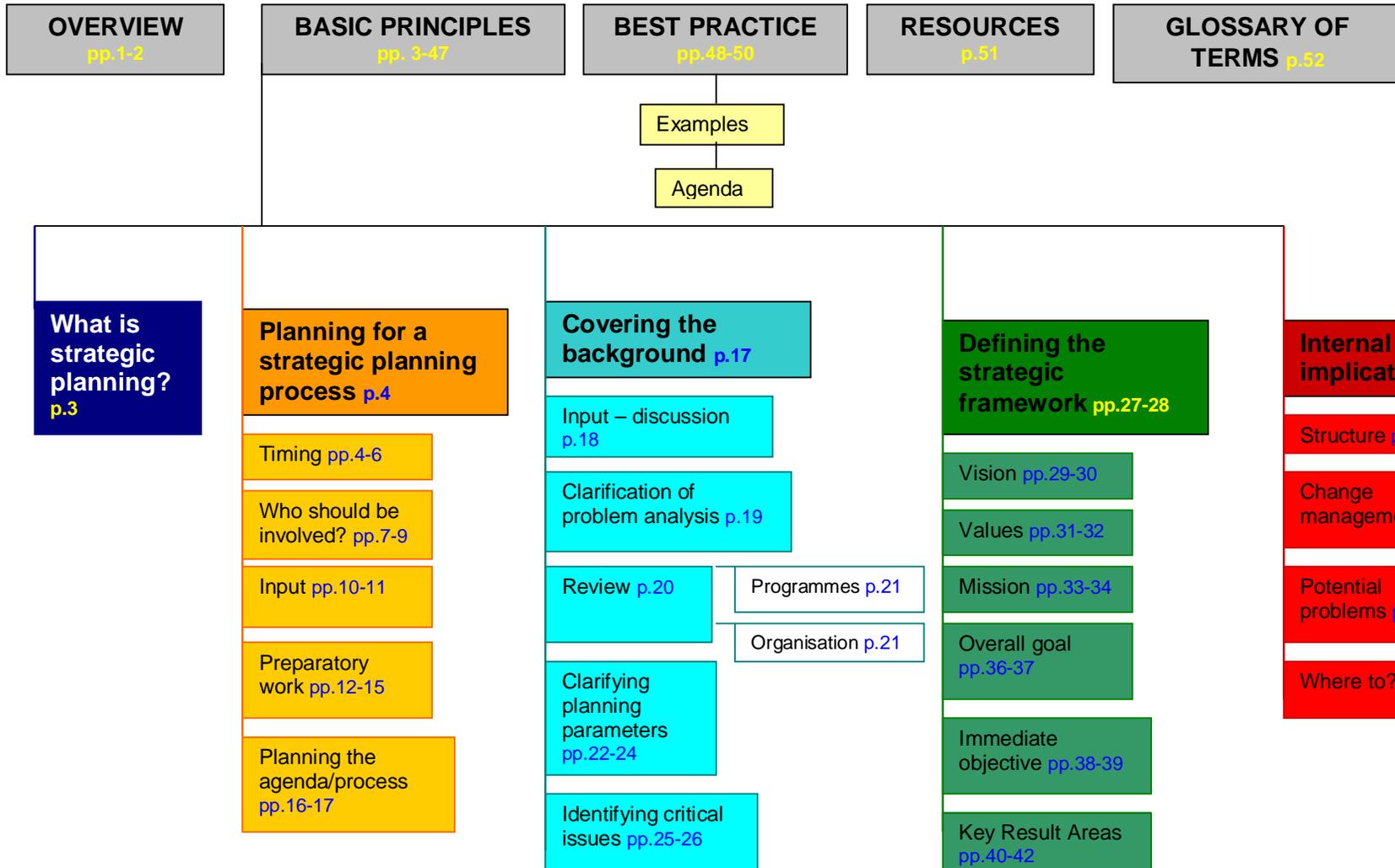
You will find this toolkit useful when:

- You need to plan strategically as well as operationally and to make a distinction between the two.
- You need some ideas to help you plan a strategic planning process.
- You begin the planning for a new project or organisation.
- You feel you need to review your strategic framework.

A strategy is an overall approach, based on an understanding of the broader context in which you function, your own strengths and weaknesses, and the problem you are attempting to address. A strategy gives you a framework within which to work, it clarifies what you are trying to achieve and the approach you intend to use. It does not spell out specific activities.



Strategic Planning



Strategic Planning

BASIC PRINCIPLES

What is strategic planning?

A strategy is an overall approach and plan. So, strategic planning is the overall planning that facilitates the good management of a process. Strategic planning takes you outside the day-to-day activities of your organisation or project. It provides you with the big picture of what you are doing and where you are going. Strategic planning gives you clarity about what you actually want to achieve and how to go about achieving it, rather than a plan of action for day-to-day operations.

Strategic planning enables you to answer the following questions:

- Who are we?
- What capacity do we have/what can we do?
- What problems are we addressing?
- What difference do we want to make?
- Which critical issues must we respond to?
- Where should we allocate our resources?/what should our priorities be?

Only once these questions are answered, is it possible to answer the following:

- What should our immediate objective be? (See the section on Immediate Objectives)
- How should we organise ourselves to achieve this objective? (See the section on Internal Implications)
- Who will do what when? (See the toolkit on *Action Planning*)

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

- Base your strategic planning process on a real understanding of the external environment (See the section on Input – discussion);
- Use work you have already done to extend your understanding of the external environment and of your own capacity, strengths and weaknesses (See the section on Review).



Strategic Planning

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 organisation, 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.

TIMING

The questions to ask here are:

- When do you need to do a strategic planning process?
- How often do you need to do a strategic planning process?
- At what point in an organisational or project cycle do you need to do a strategic planning process?
- How long should a strategic planning process be?

Some suggestions:

- You need a strategic planning process when the strategic framework within which your organisation or project functions needs to be developed, clarified, or consolidated. On the next page, you will find a questionnaire to help you decide whether or not your organisation or project needs to organise a strategic planning process.
- 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.
- There are various times in the life cycle of a project or organisation where it makes sense to do a strategic planning process. So, for example, when you are initiating a new project or new organisation, then you need to do a strategic planning process. If you have just had a major evaluation of the organisation or work, and this has led to challenging recommendations, then you may decide to have a strategic planning process immediately afterwards. 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.



Strategic Planning

Ψ QUESTIONNAIRE: DO WE NEED A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS?

The management team of the organisation 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 organisation 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 organisation as follows on each statement:

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

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.

Statement	Definitely	Maybe Not Sure	Definitely Not	SCORE
The organisation/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 organisation/project and there is agreement on the values base of the organisation/project.				
The current mission statement of the organisation/project reflects clearly what the organisation/project does, for whom, and why it is important.				
The organisation/project regularly reflects on its strengths and weaknesses and on the opportunities and threats in the environment.				
The organisation/project has clear goals and objectives for what it wants to achieve – these goals are SMART (see Glossary of Terms for an explanation of SMART).				
The organisation/project finds it easy to prioritise, making a distinction between what it must do, what it should do and what it would like to do.				



Strategic Planning

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: _____



Strategic Planning

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Who should be involved in a strategic planning process?

For a breakdown of who should be involved at different stages across the planning spectrum, look at the toolkit: Overview of Planning, in the section on Who Plans?

The two key questions here are:

- Who should participate in the strategic planning process? and
- 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. We suggest the following:

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 organisation's issues and problems.
Vision, values and mission discussion	All staff and Board members. It is very important to involve all staff, 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.
Organisational 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. So, for example, 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.



Strategic Planning

Using an outside facilitator

We recommend that you use a skilled outside facilitator for a full-scale strategic planning process so that:

- There is a designated (assigned) person to keep order, to prevent issues from being personalised, and to keep the process on track without becoming emotionally involved.
- Everyone else is freed up to get involved in the process without worrying too much about process issues.
- A skilled person is available to deal with conflict that may arise so that it is handled constructively rather than destructively.
- Someone with specific organisational expertise is available to raise issues and prevent the organisation/project from avoiding difficult issues.
- Someone with extensive experience is available to offer insights, ideas and an outside perspective.

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

On the next page you will find a checklist to help you choose the right external facilitator for your strategic planning process.



Strategic Planning

CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING AN EXTERNAL FACILITATOR:

Look for the following:

- an understanding of development issues generally
- an understanding of organisational 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.



Strategic Planning

INPUT

Because a strategic planning process looks at the big picture, it is useful to get external input into the process. It is easy for those of us who are involved in the work of the project or organisation to lose sight of the overall picture and to think about the issues from the point of view of our own work only. Getting someone in with a wider view and wider concerns may open doors to new ideas and ways of thinking. This helps to keep an organisation at the cutting edge of development work. The external input should make it clear what the opportunities, challenges and threats in your organisation's external context are. (See also the toolkit: Overview of Planning and the section on a SWOT Analysis).

Organising external input should be the work of the group or person planning the process.

<p>Who should give input?</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>What should be covered in the input?</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>When should you organise this?</p>	<p>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.</p>

Strategic Planning

<p>What should the brief say?</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Make sure your brief includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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.



Strategic Planning

PREPARATORY WORK

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

- A review of your organisation's work; and
- A review of your organisation's internal functioning.

The review of the work

This can be done by:

- An extensive external evaluation before the strategic planning process in order to feed into it;
- A departmental/project/unit level analysis of the work done, including achievements against targets and indicators of impact (See also the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*, the section headed *Tools 1: Structuring the Work Progress Analysis*);
- A management team review of the work done across the organisation, including achievements against targets and indicators (see *Glossary of Terms*) of impact.

Even if you have an external review, it is useful if the teams have done some internal reflection as well.

The review of the internal functioning of the organisation

This can be done by:

- An external review conducted by someone with an in-depth understanding of development and non-profit organisations, although not necessarily of your particular sector;
- A management review of the internal functioning of the organisation or project;
- Input from staff (see also the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*, the section headed *Tools 1: Structuring the Work Progress Analysis*).

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.

On the next page you will find a questionnaire you could give participants as preparation for a strategic planning process.



Strategic Planning

PREPARATORY WORK FOR A STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS – INDIVIDUAL

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

Thinking about our context:

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

2. What are the challenges and threats facing us as an organisation/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/organisation?
- b Help us achieve our vision?



Strategic Planning

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

Thinking about our organisation:

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

6. What weaknesses are preventing our organisation/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.



Strategic Planning

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?



Strategic Planning

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:

- Know what you want to achieve – have clear outcomes for the process.
- Know what you have to cover to achieve these outcomes – know what steps you have to work through.
- Know what additional issues need to be dealt with in the time available.
- Prioritise 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.
- Don't be inflexible. But do have a commitment to time-keeping.
- 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.
- 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.
- Build in steps that involve all participants – you need to take people with you, not just get the tasks done.
- If you have asked people to do preparatory work, make sure this is taken into account in the agenda so that people feel their efforts are valued.

Keeping this in mind, the planning team should:

- Draw up an agenda for the whole process;
- Divide it roughly by day i.e. Day One, Day Two, etc;
- Allocate responsibilities;
- Circulate the agenda for comment;
- Finalise it.

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.

In the section on Examples, you will find an example of the agenda for a four-day strategic planning workshop.



Strategic Planning

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:

- Input – discussion
- Clarification of problem analysis
- Review of programmes and of the organisation as a functioning system
- Clarifying the planning parameters – what is the broad framework within which we will plan?
- Identifying critical issues that must be addressed during the strategic planning process
- Synthesising – putting together the key learnings for the organisation 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.



Strategic Planning

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. They are not mutually exclusive. There may be times when it makes sense to combine them.

After the input you might have:

- A question-and-answer session with the person giving the input, to get clarification and raise issues.
- 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.
- A discussion, either in small groups or in plenary, on “what are the implications for us?”
- A summary of what has been said in the form of a PEST (see Glossary of Term) analysis (For how to do a PEST Analysis, see the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*).
- Integration of work done in preparation for the process (see above for some ideas on preparatory work).
- A relevant video or photographic presentation.
- Additional input from communities to highlight issues.
- A clarification process around what the problem is you are addressing through your work (for more on this, see the next page)

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.



Strategic Planning

CLARIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM ANALYSIS

In the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*, we looked at problem analysis and how to do a problem analysis in detail. 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 organisation 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 organisation, then you need to revisit your original problem analysis and check that you think it is still valid. We suggest you visit the *Overview of Planning* toolkit now to familiarise yourself with the steps involved in doing a problem analysis. (See the section in the toolkit with the heading Tools 2: Doing a Problem Analysis).

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

- Is the problem we plan to address, or are addressing, a significant problem?
- Will solving the problem make a significant difference to the lives of people in development terms?

Clarification here will help you as you move ahead in your strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning

REVIEW

This step involves a review of the work already done and of how the internal system of the project or organisation is functioning. It is this review that enables you to do a SWOT (see Glossary of Terms) Analysis. (See the toolkit: *Overview of Planning* for more on how to do a SWOT Analysis.)

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? (This is dealt with in more detail in the toolkit: *Monitoring and Evaluation*).

When you do a review of the organisation, 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? (This is also dealt with in more detail in the toolkit: *Monitoring and Evaluation*).

For an introduction to the review process, look at the section on preparatory work above.

Here we are more concerned with how you process the preparatory work during the strategic planning process.

Once this preparatory work has been processed (dealt with below), then bring it all together using a technique like a SWOT Analysis.

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 (again, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive – you could use more than one of the suggestions):

- 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.
- If the evaluator has already done a presentation, then focus discussion around the conclusions and recommendations during the strategic planning process. The organisation or project needs to reach consensus on which conclusions and recommendations they agree with, and which they do not.
- If units, departments, projects or programmes within an organisation have done their own work progress review (using something like the tool for structuring the work progress analysis given in the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*), 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.
- If management has done a review process, then this should be presented at this point.

Strategic Planning

- 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 organisation. Write these learnings on a flip chart as a reference point for the rest of the process. The question to answer here is:
- What have we learned from this programme review that we must keep in mind as we go forward with our strategic planning?

Organisation

You need to ensure that the preparatory work done on the efficiency of your project or organisation, and on the way in which you organise 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 (again, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive and you might use one or more of the suggestions):

- Get an external organisational development expert who has looked at your organisation to present his or her findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- If the expert has already done a presentation, then focus discussion around the conclusions and recommendations during the strategic planning process. The organisation or project needs to reach consensus on which conclusions and recommendations they agree with, and which they do not.
- If units, departments, projects or programmes within an organisation have done their own work progress review (as suggested in the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*), 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.
- 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:

- What are the internal strengths on which we need to build?
- What are the internal weaknesses we need to remedy?
- 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 organise what we do depends on **what** it is that we do. That will only emerge clearly and definitively during the strategic planning process.

CLARIFYING PLANNING PARAMETERS

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

What do we mean by planning parameters?

No project or organisation can operate in a completely limitless or boundless way. There are certain parameters or boundaries that define or limit what it 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 taken into account in the strategic planning process.

What needs to be taken into account in clarifying the planning parameters?

Your planning parameters will be defined by:

1. 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.
2. The stakeholders (see Glossary of Terms). Who the stakeholders are, be they partners, beneficiaries, donors, influences what you do and how you do it.
3. Your distinctive competency. This is a term borrowed from business but it is useful in the development context. 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.
4. Your competitive advantage. This is another term borrowed from business but useful in the development context. It refers to that which makes you preferable as an agent of development to other similar organisations. 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 organisations 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.
5. Your values. The values of the organisation or project provide parameters or boundaries to the strategic options. If the organisation believes in "nothing for the people without the people", then its strategic options will be bound by this belief.
6. Access to resources. How many 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.



Strategic Planning

You may have other planning parameters that you can identify for your project or organisation.

Another element in the planning parameters is **assumptions**. Assumptions are external conditions that your project or organisation 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 make an assumption that government will support the informal sector through legislation and regulation. To make this assumption, the organisation/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 taken into account in planning, as a hindering factor. Other such assumptions might be:

The economy continues to improve.

Government continues with its policy of privatising state-owned businesses.

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

Laws restricting the employment of women are liberalised.

There is no increase in the current levels of violence.

There are no floods this year.

It is important to keep monitoring the assumptions that have been made in case external circumstances change and you have to adjust your plans. (See also the toolkit on *Monitoring and Evaluation*).

On the next page you will find an exercise you could use to help you establish what the planning parameters for your project or organisation are.



Strategic Planning

Ψ EXERCISE TO HELP A PROJECT OR ORGANISATION 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 smallish groups – about five or six people in a group. 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:

- The problem analysis
- The stakeholders
- The distinctive competencies of the organisation or project or group
- The comparative advantages of the organisation or project or group
- Values
- Access to resources
- 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.



Strategic Planning

IDENTIFYING CRITICAL ISSUES

The work you have done so far has looked at the context in which your organisation or project operates, at the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation 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.

What is a critical issue?

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

- Is related to a core problem
- Affects the lives of a significant number of people either directly or indirectly
- Can be addressed through the competencies and resources of the organisation or project
- Needs to be addressed if the organisation or project is to be able to progress in its work
- Builds on the strengths of the organisation or project and/or the opportunities available to it
- Addresses weaknesses in the organisation and/or assists the organisation 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 organisational or project vision, or to do with the way in which the organisation or project carries out its work.

On the next page you will find an exercise you could use to help you establish what the critical issues for your project or organisation are.

Strategic Planning

Ψ 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 (see previous page). 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: Prioritise the list related to the problem analysis by using the questions on prioritising in the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*. 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: Prioritise the internal list by answering the following questions:

- Which of these must we deal with within the next six months if our work is to progress effectively?
- Which of these should be dealt with within the next year to ensure the long-term ability of the organisation or project to survive and do its work?
- 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.

Strategic Planning

Defining the strategic framework

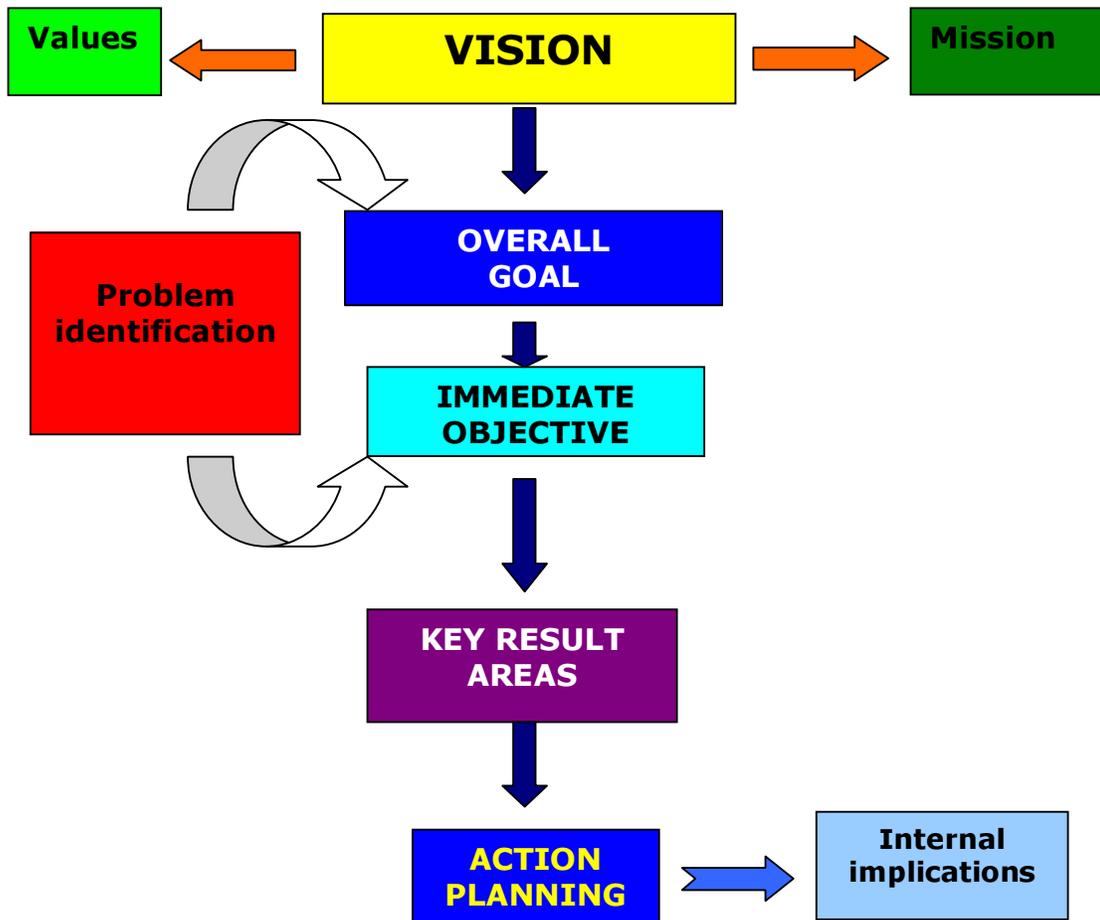
With the groundwork done, you are now ready to move to the “meat” of the strategic planning process. This is defining the strategic framework within which your organisation or project functions. A strategic framework includes:

- A clearly stated **vision**;
- Clearly articulated **values**;
- A **mission**, articulated in a mission statement;
- The **overall goal** of the project or organisation;
- The **immediate objective** of the project or organisation;
- The **key result areas** on which the project or organization intends to focus;
- An understanding of the **gaps** between where an organisation or project is and where it needs to be to achieve its goals and objectives and of the forces that are likely to help and hinder it.

All these elements need to be in **alignment**. This means that they should fit together and complement one another, rather than contradict one another. So, for example, the mission should fit with the values and vision of the organisation, and should address the needs of the key stakeholders who are the intended beneficiaries of the work. The key result areas should, accumulatively, enable the objectives and goals to be met, and should contribute to the fulfilment of the vision. Assumptions that are made (see the section earlier on clarifying planning parameters) should be carefully considered in terms of their effect on the ability of the project or organisation to make an impact. The consideration of gaps and opposing and supporting forces should be done in relation to where the organisation is and what it wants to achieve. **The strategic framework should give coherence and clarity to the work of the organisation or project.**

Strategic Planning

In a diagrammatic form, the process of defining the strategic planning framework looks like this:





Strategic Planning

VISION

What is an organisational or project vision?

Organisations 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. An example of a vision might be:

We strive to contribute to a society where every citizen has equal access to quality health care and is able to live in an environment which supports quality health through access for all to clean water, healthy food and sanitary living conditions.

The particular organisation with this vision may be an organisation that trains and supports community health workers in rural villages. It believes that its work will contribute to this vision.

The vision is the starting point for any strategic framework. It shapes the framework and gives the organisation or project a basis on which to answer the following question:

Will this goal, objective or activity help us to make a contribution to our vision?

On the following page, you will find an exercise you could use to help you develop a vision statement for your project or organisation.



Strategic Planning

Ψ EXERCISE FOR DEVELOPING A VISION STATEMENT

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.



Strategic Planning

VALUES

Your **organisational values** are the shared values that underpin your work as an organisation 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 organised. Your organisational values will determine your strategies and your operational principles. If, for example, you have an organisational value that emphasises 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 organisational 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 organisational values include:

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

On the next page you will find an exercise you could use to help you develop consensus around the values of your project or organisation.



Strategic Planning

Ψ 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 make a contribution 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:

- How the organisation or project functions;
- 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 touchstone against which to measure itself ethically.



Strategic Planning

MISSION

You should now be in a position to express your organisation's mission in a mission statement. Your mission includes the particular way in which your organisation intends to make a contribution towards your vision.

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

So, a mission statement will have four components:

- What the organisation or project is;
- What the organisation or project aims to do or achieve;
- Who the work is aimed at (the target group) and who it is done with;
- 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 church-based group working in the Grassylands area. We aim to improve the conditions in which elderly people in our society live. We do this by providing people over the age of 65 who have limited resources with transport, meals and the opportunity to socialise.

Note that, when it is possible, a mission statement gives the geographical area in which the organisation 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 organisation 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:



Strategic Planning

- It is an easy way to communicate to others what you do and how you do it;
- 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 finalise it until you have reached agreement on your overall goal and immediate objectives.

On the next page you will find an exercise you could use to help you develop a mission statement for your project or organisation.



Strategic Planning

Ψ 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:

- Who do we expect to benefit from our work? (the main or primary target group);
- 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:

Arable Land for All (ALFA) is an NGO that advises government on land policy that will ensure that all our people have access to arable land.
or

Womenaid is a network of women's organisations that helps to create a healthy environment for women and children to reach their full potential by providing shelters, 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 organisation or project.

The results from the current stage might be something like:

Womenaid is a network of women's organisations that helps to create a healthy environment for women and children who are physically or psychologically abused to reach their full potential by providing shelters, counselling and referrals throughout the country.

Ask participants: *Why do you think it would be a mistake to finalise 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.



Strategic Planning

OVERALL GOAL

Depending on what approach you are using, there are many different names for the different levels of goals and objectives. (See, for example, the section on LFA in the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*.) Here we are going to refer to:

- Your **overall goal** which we are defining as the accumulated benefits which beneficiaries will enjoy when the development work is successful; and
- Your **immediate objective** 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 crime in the community, then your overall goal might be:

Rates for all crimes in our community decline significantly (by at least 50% within five years).

Everything you do should have the long-term aim of bringing the crime rate down. It is to this end that the project or organisation 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.

This makes it clear where you want to get. 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. (See Glossary of Terms for an explanation of indicators). In the case of the example given, you will need official figures for rates of different crimes 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 organisations. For example, an educational organisation and a small business organisation could both have this goal. To achieve it, you probably need a number of different organisations 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.

On the next page you will find an exercise you could use to help you clarify the overall goal of your project or organisation.



Strategic Planning

Ψ EXERCISE TO HELP YOU CLARIFY THE OVERALL GOAL OF YOUR ORGANISATION OR PROJECT

If you have worked through covering the background carefully, then 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.

Strategic Planning

IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE

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

Rates for all crimes in our community decline significantly (by at least 50% within five years)

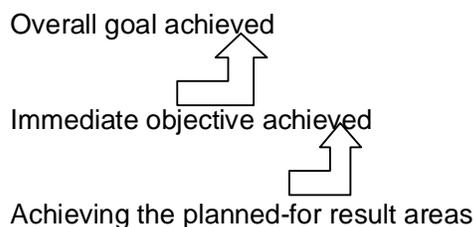
and your expertise lies in micro and small business development, then your immediate objective or project purpose may be based on the problem statement which says there is a high rate of unemployment in the area. You might word the immediate objective or purpose as:

Within two years, there will be a drop in unemployment rates of at least 50% in our community.

Based on your problem analysis, you believe that, by bringing down unemployment rates you can reduce crime.

Your immediate objective needs to be measurable. In this case you can use figures on employment/self-employment in your community when you start and figures after two years to measure your progress. Your indicator is employment/self-employment rates.

Once you have your immediate objective, **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 immediate objective, you need to achieve certain results that will, together, lead to the positive situation you desire. By now you should be able to see that there is a vertical (up/down) logic at work here:



The strategy is aimed at contributing to the achievement of the overall goal by achieving the immediate objective. The project or organisation assumes that by following this logic, it will make a difference to the significant problem identified. This vertical logic is how you think strategically, answering the question:

What must we do, if this is what we want to achieve?

On the next page, you will find an exercise you could use to help you clarify the immediate objective of your project or organisation.



Strategic Planning

Ψ EXERCISE TO HELP YOU CLARIFY THE IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES OF YOUR PROJECT OR ORGANISATION

If you have covered the background carefully, then this 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.

Now you have a path forward for achieving your overall goal. By adding in key result areas for the immediate objective, you will have a strategy for achieving your overall goal.

Strategic Planning

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:

- Non-formal courses to teach skills for which there is a market niche are offered in the community.
- A revolving fund to finance micro business set-ups is established in the community by a micro-financing company.
- A business development/advisory service is available for informal sector businesses in the community.
- 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 emphasise 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:

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

Why is it important to monitor this?

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. This is dealt with in detail in the toolkit on *Monitoring and Evaluation*.



Strategic Planning

On the next page you will find an exercise you could use to help you decide on the key result areas for each of your immediate objectives.



Strategic Planning

Ψ 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 in the community.*
- *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.

Point out that the organisation now has a strategy for achieving its overall goal.



Strategic Planning

Internal implications

Now you can look at the internal implications of your strategic plan. One of the tools you could use here is a Gap Analysis (see the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*). Once you have a strategic plan, you are in a position to:

- Structure the organisation appropriately
- Identify where specific change management will be required
- Identify potential problems
- Clarify where to next.

When considering these issues it is important to remember that form follows function. (See this section in the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*.) By this we mean that you cannot decide how you should organise your work until you have a clear idea of what the work is going to be.



Strategic Planning

STRUCTURE

In the toolkit: *Overview of Planning*, under the section on Form follows Function, you will find a set of questions which you need to answer when you have completed the process of defining your strategic framework. The answers to these questions will help you to determine how to organise the way the work gets done.

Most organisations have a structure that has both hierarchical and team elements. An hierarchical structure is one in which people report to someone who has authority over them, and who is accountable for ensuring that other people do their jobs properly. Some organisations are very hierarchical, with many levels, and others are flatter; so, for example, there might be a director, but most other people would be on the same level. This only works in fairly small organisations. Other organisations may decide not to be hierarchical at all, with everyone in the organisation at the same level, and everyone equally accountable for ensuring that the work gets done. This can work in a small organisation in which people have equal levels of skill and commitment, but it does not work when people have different levels of skill and commitment.

Within an hierarchical organisation, it is still possible to work in teams. Teams can take different forms. The most important thing to remember about teams is that they are **functional groups**. Their reason for existing is to get a specific and clearly defined job done. This may be determined by the strategic framework, or by specific jobs that need to be managed. Each member of the team has a particular role which complements (fits together with) the role of other team members. The successful completion of the work depends on the team members working together. Within organisations and projects, teams could take the form of departments that specialise in different kinds of work. So, for example, there might be a Finance and Administration Department, or a Training Department, or an Advocacy Unit. The teams could, however, also cut across specialisations to form multi-disciplinary teams. So, for example, an organisation that supported informal sector building contractors might put together a team that had technical expertise, training expertise and tendering expertise to help an association of informal sector contractors tender for a particular job.

All functional teams need leaders. If the people in the team are of roughly equal skill, then it is probably enough to have a co-ordinator. That person is responsible for seeing that the team meets and that everything is on track. If there are discrepancies in skill and, possibly, commitment, then something more hierarchical, where the team leader has authority, is needed. Team leadership is a way of developing confidence and skills in people who have never thought of taking leadership positions. A team leader's authority does not cut across a line manager's authority. The line manager is the person to whom someone reports and who is accountable for his/her performance. Performance problems that affect a team should be referred back to the line manager.



Strategic Planning

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Implement change.
- Consult, support, give feedback during the change process.
- Acknowledge and celebrate successful change.

Strategic Planning

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

No strategic plan will be implemented without hitches (problems). 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. Failing that, you need to get some influential Board members on your side. Before the meeting at which you present the plan, go and see those 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 organise a one-off presentation for all your donors.
Resistance from staff to changes	Follow the suggestions in change management. Be prepared to deal with conflict in an empathetic (understanding), but firm and assertive way.
Resistance from beneficiaries to changes	If the changes impact on beneficiaries, you need to explain 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 rationalisation 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 (there are special toolkits for both of these areas), rationalising other areas of work, or negotiating with existing donors (see earlier). Provided your expectations are reasonable, and you plan ahead of time, this problem should not be insurmountable. Remember, having a good track record will stand you in good stead in such instances.
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.



Strategic Planning

WHERE TO?

You have now completed the strategic planning part of your planning process. You have a framework within which to locate your activities but you still need to plan those activities. This process is dealt with in the toolkit on *Action Planning*.

Many organisations and projects make the mistake of focusing all their energies on planning of activities. They see the strategic part of the process as “a waste of time”. We hope that, by the time you get to this stage in the toolkit you will be able to recognise the importance of strategic planning, and of doing action planning in the context of a strategic framework. If so, you are ready to do your action planning. This is probably most effectively done in the units, teams or departments responsible for getting the work done.



Strategic Planning

BEST PRACTICE

Examples

AGENDA

AGENDA FOR A FOUR-DAY STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

(This was a strategic planning process for an educational policy support NGO. The director wanted to combine strategic planning with team-building).

DAY 1

Welcome and introductions (15 minutes)

Input from Department of Education (20 minutes)

Questions/Discussion (20 minutes)

Input from National Association of School Governing Bodies (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)

Summarised individual input (preparatory work) – presented by projects officer and senior administrator (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)



Strategic Planning

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 – teams to develop a new logo for the organisation

End of Day 2

DAY 3

Presentation of logos (45 minutes)
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 organise our work? – group work to produce organograms (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)



Strategic Planning

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



Strategic Planning

RESOURCES

CIVICUS would like to acknowledge the following as invaluable resources in the preparation of this toolkit:

Olive Publications *Ideas for a Change: Part 1: How are you managing organisational change?* July 1997

Olive Publications *Ideas for a Change: Part 2: Organisation diagnosis* December 1997

Olive Publications *Project Planning for Development*, Olive 1998

Shapiro, Janet *Evaluation: Judgement Day or Management Tool?* Olive 1996



Strategic Planning

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Indicator An indicator is a measurable or tangible sign that something has been done. So, for example, an increase in the number of students passing is an indicator of an improved culture of learning and teaching. The means of verification (proof) is the officially published list of passes.

PEST

P	=	Political
E	=	Economic
S	=	Social
T	=	Technological

SMART

S	=	Specific
M	=	Measurable
A	=	Agreed upon (by everyone involved)
R	=	Realistic
T	=	Timebound

Stakeholders Anyone, group or individual, with some kind of interest in the project or organisation.

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation is an international alliance established in 1993 to nurture the foundation, growth and protection of citizen action throughout the world, especially in areas where participatory democracy and citizens' freedom of association are threatened. CIVICUS envisions a worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens in confronting the challenges facing humanity.

These CIVICUS Toolkits have been produced to assist civil society organisations build their capacity and achieve their goals. The topics range from budgeting, strategic planning and dealing with the media, to developing a financial strategy and writing an effective funding proposal. All are available on-line, in MS-Word and PDF format at www.civicus.org and on CD-ROM.

For further information about CIVICUS:
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
24 Pim Street, corner Quinn Street
Newtown, Johannesburg 2001
South Africa
P.O. Box 933
Southdale, 2135
South Africa
Tel: +27 11 833 5959
Fax: +27 11 833 7997



Strategic Planning

1112 16th NW, Suite 540
Washington D.C. 20036
USA
Tel: +202 331-8518
Fax: +202 331-8774
E-mail: toolkits@civicus.org

Web: <http://www.civicus.org>

We wish to acknowledge GTZ for its support in translating these toolkits into French and Spanish.