



How to Make a Strategic Plan

A guide for animal welfare organisations





The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) saves individual animals, animal populations and habitats all over the world.

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Introduction

I know what you're thinking... even just the words "strategic plan" are enough to make anyone want to stop reading. This doesn't sound like it's going to be a particularly exciting document, does it? And I know you've already looked ahead to see how many pages there are but please, stay with me for a little longer and I'll show you just how valuable and worthwhile making a strategic plan can be for you and your organisation and how simple and straightforward a strategic planning process can actually be.

Do you always seem to find yourself working reactively? Constantly feeling like you are putting out fires, solving problems, dealing with issue after issue and never being able to get ahead of yourself or having the time to do all the other things that you know are important? If the answer to that question is yes, always... or sometimes... or even just occasionally, then this document and the guidance contained within it, is for you.

Now, before we dive in, let me ask you another question. Why does your organisation exist? What's its purpose? I know this seems like an odd question – you're an animal welfare organisation, right? So, your organisation exists to help, care for, protect, save, rescue or rehome animals. But that could be said of every animal welfare organisation to some degree.

*Ultimately, what we want to do as an organisation is be able to make a difference. Whether that's in relation to addressing or resolving a problem or making a difference to the lives of individual animals. As organisations, when we're asked about our purpose we always talk about **what** we do and **how** we do it – we sterilise stray cats, we rescue and rehome unwanted dogs, we improve the welfare of working horses, we campaign for better legislation and enforcement.*

*But when you focus on what you do, it's that much easier to get caught up in that cycle of firefighting and working reactively because you don't have a clear enough direction. You've lost sight of your purpose. **Why** you're doing what you do.*

*Understanding **why** your organisation does what it does and how that influences your goals, your priorities and your decisions, is different for every organisation but we need to be clear on **why** we do what we do, before we can think more strategically about how we achieve our goals and what need to do in order to do so.*

Before we go any further, I should just make clear at this point that strategic planning (or this document) isn't a magical tool that will solve all your problems overnight, but it is, without a doubt, the best way for you to manage, develop and improve your situation and work toward achieving your goals.

This document has been designed as a practical workbook – a step-by-step guide through the strategic planning process. Each module is a step in the process and by the time you've finished, you will have a strategic plan for your organisation.

It may help to read briefly through the whole document first to give you an idea of the structure of the process, but if that seems a little daunting right now, don't worry. Just take each module one at a time. As you work through them, they will each build on the one before and once you've reached the end you'll have a clear understanding of the entire process.

When working through a module, be sure to read through each section before you complete the activities within that section. And don't feel that once you've written something down you can't revisit or adjust it later on. Making a strategic plan is an organic and adaptive process. If something new comes to light that affects something you've already written, then it's absolutely fine to revisit that and make any necessary changes.

Okay, let's get started... and don't worry, I'll be here to walk you through it every step of the way!

Harry Eckman
IFAW Community Animals Program,
Humane Community Development Team



“

A goal without a
plan is just a wish.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

”

Module 1: Overview to strategic planning

- What is strategic planning?
- Strategic planning for a non-profit animal welfare organisation
- The 7 steps to making a strategic plan
- Are you ready to make a strategic plan?

Summary

The first steps in developing a strategic plan are to understand exactly what a strategic plan is and what the process looks like. In this module, we'll explore the first steps you need to take in preparation for developing your plan.

What is strategic planning?

Put simply, strategic planning is a way of imagining your organisation's future, deciding what you want to achieve, and determining how to get there. But honestly, even that sounds a bit vague and abstract. So, let's start this process by thinking about strategic planning in a completely different way: we're going to plan a dinner party.

The Dinner Party Scenario

Imagine you're inviting a group of friends over for dinner. There are a number of things you'll need to decide:

- When are you hosting this dinner?
Are you making it tonight or next week?
- How many people are you going to invite?
That could depend on several factors. How many friends do you have? And how many people can you fit around your dinner table?
- What are you going to cook?
Is it a big three-course dinner or a small informal meal?
Does anyone have any specific dietary requirements?
- How good a cook are you? Will you need some help?

Having decided on when the dinner is, who to invite and what to cook, you can now plan the meal. Again, there are a number of considerations, including:

- What ingredients do you have?
What do you need to buy?
Can you afford everything you need?
- What time are you planning to serve dinner?
How long will it take to prepare everything? Are there some things that you will have to prepare in advance of others?

Even once you start cooking, you will want to pause to taste the food as you prepare it. You don't want to serve a meal and then realise you've left out the salt.

Going through this planning process doesn't guarantee that all of the guests will like your food, but it does mean that you have probably done the best job you can in planning and preparing the dinner.

If you hadn't gone through this process... well, let's just say you won't be hosting another dinner party anytime soon!



The steps described above for preparing for a successful dinner party represent all the main principles involved in creating a strategic plan. Strategic planning can be just as simple and straight forward as planning for a dinner party, as long as we keep the focus on what is practical and what makes sense in relation to what you're trying to achieve. You've almost certainly prepared dinner for friends or family before, so you've already been doing strategic planning without even realizing it!

Strategic planning for a non-profit animal welfare organisation

When people think about strategic planning, they tend to think about it from a business perspective. A business will develop a strategic plan to drive up profits, develop new products or outperform its competitors. This all makes perfect sense from a business perspective, but how does that translate to a non-profit animal welfare organisation? How do you compare the number of dogs you're going to vaccinate and animals you're going to save to number of products sold or amount of profit earned?

As an animal welfare organisation, you're obviously not profit driven, but mission driven - we are driven by our purpose, our reason why! That doesn't mean you don't need to make money, but the funds you generate are the means to a greater end. You raise funds to sustain your mission, rather than money being your ultimate goal or how you measure success.

So, if we want to plan strategically, but aren't talking about things like generating profit, then what **are** we talking about?

The key is to think about things a little differently and focus on where the needs are. When we talk about *needs* here, we're not talking about the animal welfare needs you are trying to address, we're talking about organisational needs – the things your organisation needs in order to do your animal welfare work.

Organisational needs can be categorised into three main areas of focus to grow, improve or develop:

1. **Capacity:** What does your organisation have the capacity to do? Is there enough time to do all the things you want to do? Do you have enough people (either staff or

volunteers) to do all the things that need to be done? "People" also refers to the skills and knowledge people have.

2. **Money:** Not just how much you raise but how stable and sustainable is your funding? Do you have enough to keep doing what you are doing? How much do you need to grow and do more?
3. **Reputation:** How well known are you? How well known is your work? Do you have good relationships with supporters, the community, with community leaders, with decision makers?

As we begin to develop a strategic plan, it's also important to recognize certain key realities that are specific to running a non-profit animal welfare organisation. As part of the strategic planning process you need to step back and take as realistic and impartial a perspective as possible on what your organisation is doing and able to do, and what it is not doing or able to do. For example:

- If you decide to care for a small number of animals in a shelter, then, even if you run the best shelter possible, you should recognize that you are unlikely to have a dramatic impact on the welfare of animals in the wider community.
- If you want to affect change and have impact across an entire community, then your focus may have to be at a higher level, such as lobbying for legislative change. However, working at the level of political change may mean you can't work hands-on to rescue every individual animal in need.



These are the realities of the compromises and sacrifices that you make with every decision. It is because of the difficult choices that we have to make, more than any other reason, that strategic planning for animal welfare organisations is so difficult.

Here's the good news: Improving animal welfare - even just a little - is still improving animal welfare, and every animal helped is an animal better off than it was before.

What we don't want to risk is doing things poorly for the sake of trying to do more than we realistically can. If we really want to have the greatest impact and help the greatest number of animals in the most effective way, we need a proper strategy to do it.

Strategic planning is also an effective way to build a team that recognises where the organisation is headed and why. However, there is a difference between the motivation and desire to help animals and the motivation and desire to help advance an organisation that helps animals.

As you embark on an organisation-focused process like strategic planning, you will likely meet some resistance from staff or volunteers who feel that everyone should be out there helping more animals instead of spending time writing plans.

From their perspective, the daily burden of work, fire fighting and constant problem solving is not going to disappear overnight just because you decided to write a strategic plan.

That's why it's so important that you communicate clearly and inclusively within your organisation about the importance of embarking on this process.

Leading your organisation through strategic planning in a way that helps everyone truly understand its value in improving the work you do will be one of the hardest—and also one of the most important —parts of this process.

TIP



It is important to understand the limitations as well as the possibilities of strategic planning.

A strategic plan is NOT a wish list, a report card or a marketing tool. It is certainly NOT a magic bullet or a quick cure for everything that ails an organisation — especially if the plan winds up on the shelf.

What a strategic plan can do is shed light on an organisation's unique strengths and relevant weaknesses, enabling it to pinpoint new opportunities or the causes of current or projected problems.

If your board and staff are committed to its implementation, a strategic plan can provide an invaluable blueprint for growth and revitalization, enabling an organisation to take stock of where it is, determine where it wants to go and chart a course to get there.

The 7 steps to making a strategic plan

Now let's take a look at the steps involved in making a strategic plan. Each step involves answering a key question in relation to your organisation and what you are trying to achieve:

1. Where do you want to be?
2. Where are you now?
3. What are your priorities?
4. What's getting in your way?
5. How will you get to where you want to go?
6. Who is going to be responsible?
7. How will you know if you are making progress?

Let's look at each of the seven steps in a little more detail.

1. Where do you want to be?

What are your goals? What are the things you want to accomplish? It may seem obvious, but unless you know where you want to be, you can't begin to actually plan how you're going to get there. As an animal welfare organisation, "where you want to be" is probably related to your ability to help animals. As we go through a planning process, we'll want to define what that aim of "helping animals" looks like in more detail so that we can clearly outline the steps towards achieving it.

2. Where are you now?

It's hard to figure out how to get somewhere if you don't know where you are starting from. Clearly establishing where you are now is that starting point. In order to properly understand

where you are now, we need to take a completely objective look at your organisation, your work and your environment. The crucial thing about this step is to be totally honest and objective. This isn't about how you intended things to be or how you would like them to be, or even how you want others to see you; it's about understanding how things really are.

3. What are your priorities?

What are the really important things that determine how you make decisions? What are the things that guide you and keep you focused? These could be your values – your sense of what is right and wrong – or the areas where you see the greatest animal welfare need. While "where you want to be" is about the things you want to accomplish, your priorities are what you base your decisions on as you try to get there.

With so many animal welfare issues to address, it's easy to lose focus and try to fix everything. Having clear priorities allows you to focus on where you want to take your organisation over time and be able to address the most important or most "fixable" problems. Priorities set the direction and act as the guide rails that will keep you on track.

4. What's getting in your way?

As with anything we do, there are always going to be obstacles. Whether they are already getting in the way or they're just things that could get in our way at some point, we have to be aware of them and try to navigate around them. Failure to consider obstacles and adapt our strategy to them usually creates even bigger problems down the line. Sometimes our ability to overcome obstacles can actually spark the creativity, innovation and ingenuity that helps us achieve even more than we had originally intended.



5. How will you get to where you want to be?

This is where we start to put together the previous four steps. We've established where you are and where you want to be, so now we focus on the gap between those two points. We look at all the things you have, all the things you need and all the things that are in your way. Without this information, any plan you make isn't strategic; it's just a plan based on what you hope or want rather than what you know. Having all this information allows us to create a clear and specific path that will take you to where you want to be.

6. Who is going to be responsible?

It always comes down to people. Whatever it is that needs to be done, planned, organized or managed; it's people that will have to do it. Determining who is accountable and responsible for each task, and whether they have the necessary skills and commitment to undertake a task, is hugely important. You can have the best plan in the world, but it's nothing unless you have someone to implement it. As an animal welfare organisation, it's common to be trying to accomplish too many things with too few people, most of whom may be volunteers. With limited human resources, it's essential to have the buy-in, commitment and belief of everyone involved to get to your goal.

7. How will you know if you are making progress?

Your goal is where you want to be and a strategic plan is how you're going to get there. However, no plan can ever predict the future, so we need to constantly monitor our strategy and tactics, making adjustments where necessary to keep us driving towards our goal. Things evolve and change and you need to be ready to adapt to them. It's important to note

here that just because we've spent time developing a plan doesn't mean we can't change it. A plan that needs to change isn't a failed plan. Maybe you want to take advantage of new opportunities that arise or perhaps your goals have been accomplished and you want to set more. Be sure about where you want to go, but flexible with your plan.

Are you ready to make a strategic plan?

The first step of a strategic planning process is to consider whether it's the right time to engage in this process. Is your organisation ready to go through this process right now?

Strategic planning can reveal that your house isn't in order. When an organisation pauses to plan, issues that have been buried or put on the back burner can come to the forefront and easily derail its planning efforts.

Are there any important issues that need to be addressed before you begin the strategic planning process? Is there something on the horizon that will have a major impact on your organisation and significantly change your situation? Are there some really urgent financial, operational, staffing or fire-fighting issues that you need to resolve?

Make sure your organisation is in order and no major conflicts or barriers exist before you embark on or continue with a strategic planning process. If you're not ready yet, then you're not ready yet.

However, don't simply use any issues as an excuse not to undertake the process at all. Just be realistic about knowing what needs to be in place or needs to be taken care of before you begin. You can have "being ready for planning" as an actual goal.

Here's some additional things to consider before you begin the strategic planning process:

- **What is your reason for doing this?**
Fundamentally, organisations don't have to have a strategic plan. Really, they don't. Yes, you'll run a better operation and, yes, a strategic plan is an outstanding management tool. But you and everyone on your team need to agree on why this effort is important. What's the burning reason that's causing you to invest in this effort now?
- **Strategic planning requires commitment.**
If the commitment of your team isn't there, then embarking on a strategic planning process will be a waste of everyone's time. And that, in turn, will make people more sceptical and dismissive of the process, should you ever want to attempt it again. If your organisation isn't ready for a full strategic planning process right now, then you can always introduce some strategic planning principles at an operational level. This will allow your team to see the real benefits of a strategic plan, which may encourage them to adopt the approach on an organisational level.
- **The process is only as long as it needs to be.**
Not every organisation needs to, or would benefit from going into a deeply involved process. The beauty of strategic planning is that you can select what you need and don't need as you go through the process. Nothing in strategic planning should be superfluous. If it is, then you shouldn't be doing it! Everything should have a point; a purpose and that purpose should be working towards achieving your goal. With that in mind, adapt your planning to fit what you know works for your organisational rhythm, culture, and your needs right now.

- **Be realistic about what this process will require.**
It takes time and effort to plan well. Some organisations want the results but aren't willing or able to make the investment. Be realistic about what you can invest. Find a way to plan that suits your available resources, which include your people, time, energy, and money.
- **Trust the process.**
Accepting that you need a strategic plan is not admitting to criticism of your work. It is a necessary and valuable process. It also doesn't prevent you from doing the work you are already doing but planning isn't magic and the process doesn't always reveal what we expect. The planning process includes research and assessment. Your assessment may give you results that tell you not to go in a certain direction. Don't ignore information just because you don't like it or weren't expecting it.
- **Use the process to build the right foundations.**
A plan is only as good as the information it's based on. Too often, organisations rely on untested assumptions or hunches, designing their plans on a shaky premise. Equally, don't just copy what other organisations are doing. Although employing best animal welfare practices is essential, the experiences of other organisations aren't necessarily relevant to your own. Each organisation is unique, complex, and diverse. You need to find your own path and create a strategy that's right for you.
- **Planning is planning, action is action.**
While you mustn't keep delaying or finding excuses not to make a start once you've decided to begin the strategic planning process, you also don't want to go to the other extreme and have planning turn into a substitute for action. Don't plan so much that you ignore the execution.



“
Give
me six hours to
chop down a tree and
I will spend the first four
sharpening the axe.

Abraham Lincoln
”

Module 2: Preparing to Plan

- Getting started
- Setting up for success
- Working as a team

Summary

In this module we'll begin the process of creating a strategic plan by looking at factors that need to be in place to get started and how we start to lay the groundwork for success.

Getting started

The question you are probably thinking now is: “How long is this going to take?” And the answer is... “It depends!”

You should tailor this process to ensure that it helps you achieve your goals in the most efficient and effective way possible. A number of factors can influence how deeply you get involved in this process and how long it takes, including:

1. The level of complexity and depth of questions that need to be answered: Are you doing a lot of things or a few things? Are you looking to focus or expand?
2. The amount of time and resources that are available or can be made available for planning: Can you devote a solid chunk of time and resources to this process all at once, or will you need to spread it out over weeks and months?
3. Familiarity and comfort with a planning process: Have you done anything like this before? Has someone else on your team?
4. The type of organisation that you are: Do you already think fairly strategically? Do you mostly make decisions with you head or your heart?
5. The size of the organisation: How big are you? How many different things do you do? Are you focused on one issue or many?
6. The level of commitment: Is everyone involved fully committed to the process? Do they understand what it will entail?
7. The amount of new information that needs to be gathered in order to make informed decisions: How much information do you already have? Is it any good? How much of it is really objective and based on fact and how much is based on assumptions or hunches?
8. The level of agreement on priorities: Does everyone understand why you’re going through this process and agree it is necessary? Are they committed to it for the same reasons?
9. The level of trust between stakeholders: Do the staff, board, managers, volunteers and stakeholders trust each other? Do some people feel that others may be pushing their own agendas? Are there personal issues between some people that will need to be resolved?
10. The involvement of all stakeholders: Is everyone that needs to be involved going to be involved? Are all the opinions and ideas that need to be heard represented?

It’s not possible to answer these questions for you, but what we do know is that the fewer questions that need to be considered, the quicker your process will be.

Even if you need to consider all of these, having clarity on what needs to be in place before getting started should make addressing and answering them a little more straightforward.

Setting up for success

Are you ready? ... Good, now let's begin... These first steps are the foundation to building your plan. These steps set the ground rules that will guide this process.

Step 1. Establish core planning team

The very first thing you need to do is pick your core team. Who are the people that will sit around a table with you and be an integral part of this process? While a wide range of stakeholders (everyone whose thoughts and input is valuable) will have the opportunity to feed into the process at various stages, your core team is the small group of about 3 to 6 people who will lead this process and develop the plan. This group should be:

- Representative of the organisation, including people from different levels, not just the top
- Committed to the process

TIP



You can, of course, go through this section on your own first, but for the strategic planning process to work, this and every section needs to be completed together with your core team. You and the team must also ensure that your organisation as a whole understands what you're doing and why.

Activity 2: Write down the 3 to 6 people who will comprise your core team.



Working as a team

Developing and implementing an effective strategic plan isn't something you can - or should - do on your own. As discussed at the beginning of this section, it is the collaborative efforts of your core team working together that will be central to the success of this process.

So what makes a good team?

There are many different personality types that tend to exist within any team:

- Are you the leader, the pragmatist, the dreamer, the one who focuses on the needs right now or the one who always reaches towards the long-term goal?
- Are you a details person or a visionary?
- Are you a planner or a doer?
- Are you the one that drives it forward or the one who plays devil's advocate?

In truth, we all switch between these roles depending on where we are and what we're doing. It's less about deciding who's who and more about recognising that all of these traits exist in us and achieving balance within and across a team.

At the heart of any good team there needs to be a shared vision. You all need to want to achieve the same goal. Now, you're probably thinking that you've got that one covered because the goal is shared: we all want to improve the welfare of animals.

Unfortunately, it's not quite that simple. Animal welfare is an emotional business. It's driven by the heart as much as by the head. It can be hard to make considered and pragmatic decisions when you are regularly faced with suffering, cruelty and neglect. When emotions play a part, it is sometimes hard to keep focus.

People work in animal welfare for a variety of reasons, and those reasons are likely to be very personal to them. If you care passionately about something, you're probably less willing to compromise.

As you go through this process, it's incredibly important to have these conversations and acknowledge and respect each person's motivations for working in this area. You need to allow the members of the team to discuss and consider why the organization does what it does, why decisions are made in the way that they are, and how that fits in with their individual motivations for working in animal welfare and specifically your organization. That's why this process is designed the way that it is: To help your team achieve something you all care deeply about, while at the same time ensuring that you can achieve it in the most effective and impactful way.

The strength of any team is in its balance. There are no right or wrong personality types. Every type has a strength and a weakness. Recognise your differences, but focus on your similarities. Respect each other's opinions, trust each other, support each other, understand each other's motivations, and work together towards what you all want to achieve.



Are few more tips as we plan to plan...

Allow enough time

People tend to try to squeeze strategic planning in between day-to-day tasks and putting out fires. But to create a strategic plan, your team needs time to think big. Do whatever you can to provide that time. Sometimes it also helps to go to another location when you are planning otherwise the pull of your normal daily tasks and the risk of distractions will always be present. However, more time doesn't always mean more value. Time is not the same thing as quality time, so make sure that what time you do spend is used effectively.

Consider how the plan will be executed

It doesn't matter how good your plan is if it just sits as a file on your computer or as a document on your bookshelf. This process is a tool to facilitate a way to achieve your goals and creating a plan for action, so don't forget that there will be **action**.

Use a facilitator if you can

Consider bringing in or hiring (if budget allows) a trained professional who has no emotional investment in the outcome of the plan. An impartial third party can concentrate on the process instead of the end result, and can ask the tough questions that you or others may be nervous to ask. Even if it's not possible for the entire process, it is worth trying to bring someone in at key stages in the process.

Don't write your plan in stone

A good strategic plan is fluid and flexible, not rigid and unbending. A good plan should always allow you to adapt to changes, so don't be afraid to change or adapt your plan as necessary.

Clearly articulate next steps after every session

Before finishing up each and every planning session, clearly explain what comes next and who's responsible for what. When you walk out of the room, everyone must fully understand what they are responsible for and when it's due.

Use the parking lot principle

Going through this process is going to bring up a wide range of issues and ideas for discussion. If any of these issues become sticking points or if you find the conversation is beginning to go in circles or get sidetracked, make a point of parking those issues with an understanding that you will revisit them later. You need to trust the process and trust that in many cases these issues will be addressed simply by going through the process itself.

Try to make strategy a habit

Going through a strategic planning process also helps us become familiar with the broader process of strategic thinking. Try to get in the habit of thinking strategically. It's an approach that can be used in every aspect of what we do and in every decision that we make.



“
The
purpose of
life is to contribute
in some way to making
things better.
”

Robert F Kennedy

Module 3: Vision, Mission, Aims and Values

- Vision statement
- Mission statement
- Organisational Aims
- Values statement

Summary

In this module we'll start to paint a picture of what success looks like and we'll clearly define who you are as an organisation, what drives you, why you do what you do and what you believe in.



Vision, Mission Aims and Values

Producing an organisation's vision, mission aims and values statement can sometimes be considered an abstract or pointless exercise, especially to people who are burning to move forward with real world projects. Imagining a vision and mission can appear a little frivolous when there are animals that need to be saved.

However, producing vision, mission, aims and values statements is one of the most fundamentally important things you will do for your organisation. It serves a crucial purpose that is probably more relevant to an animal welfare organisation than any other.

Your mission, values and beliefs are what drive you and your organisation. They articulate who you are. They guide you and set your direction. If you can't explain in clear statements why you do what you do, then nothing (or no one) else can really follow.

As with everything in this process, defining vision, mission, aims and values is not something to do alone. Your core team should be part of this and every process.

Vision statement

A vision is a guiding image for success. Think of the word itself, vision. It suggests being able to see something.

Whereas the mission statement answers the question about why your organisation exists, a vision statement answers the question what will success look like.

A vision statement is inspirational – it tells people what you want to become or the world you aspire to create. A vision should get people to say, "Yes, I want to be part of that".

As an animal welfare organisation you want to create a compelling picture of what success would look like. Your organisation's vision statement should challenge and inspire your organisation to stretch its capabilities and achieve its purpose, its mission.

Vision statements from other non-profit organisations

- IFAW: Our vision is a world where animals are respected and protected.
- Oxfam: A just world without poverty
- Oceana seeks to make our oceans as rich, healthy and abundant as they once were.
- ASPCA: That the United States is a humane community in which all animals are treated with respect and kindness.
- WWF: We seek to save a planet, a world of life. Reconciling the needs of human beings and the needs of others that share the Earth.
- Save the Children: Our vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.
- The Nature Conservancy: Our vision is to leave a sustainable world for future generations.
- Smithsonian: Shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world.

Activity 10: Writing Your Vision Statement

Using the following questions as a guide, work with your team to begin brainstorming a vision, step by step:

- What are the major issues or problems you have been working to address?
- What are the things that need to be changed?
- What would a world where that change has happened look like?
- What would success look like and what, specifically, would it look like for your organisation?
- Are you still present in this future? Is success for your organisation where you are no longer needed or that your presence is part of that success?
- What makes you different or what separates you from other organisations?

Step 1:

Working individually, write down the problems or issues that the organisation is trying to address. Avoid using any jargon or technical terms. Be descriptive, but keep it simple and concise.

Step 2:

Still working individually, write down an imagined future, perhaps 10 or 20 years time where you have achieved success and addressed or solved those problems or issues. Again, be descriptive, but try to keep it simple and concise.

Step 3:

Once everyone has something written, have each person share and explain what they wrote. Then, discuss all the ideas as a group. Look for common statements, problems and ideas. On a separate sheet of paper – or on something everyone can see - make a list of the most common themes and ideas. Discuss and refine them until you are happy that you have identified the shared ideas, including key problems and expressions of the ideal future.

Step 4:

Now, on another sheet of paper or on something everyone can see, it's time to focus on the words. Remember, this is not about what you, as an organisation *do*. This is a statement of your vision of success, not what you did or how you did it. Your vision statement should start with what you believe and *why* you do what you do. It should express your purpose or cause on a level higher than what your organisation does. Try starting your statement with the words "*We believe...*" or "*We envision a world...*" This can help focus and set the tone of your vision statement. You can always remove those opening words later.

Step 5:

Aim for no more than two sentences to describe your vision. If you feel like your vision statement is too long, have everyone take what you have produced and ask them to each edit it down to just 20 words. Then look at all the versions that the team has produced and put together a new vision statement based on the best refinements from each team member's version.



Mission statement

A mission statement expresses why you exist. It is your statement of purpose. Anyone coming into contact with your organisation who wants to know why you do what you do should be able to read your mission statement and have that question answered.

As an animal welfare organisation you exist to protect animals, improve their welfare and prevent their suffering... but so does every other animal organisation. The question isn't why does "an organisation like yours" exist – but why do YOU exist. What is YOUR reason why? Think about why you got involved in this organisation or work to begin with. What is your personal story that drives you, inspires you, makes you want to make a difference! Think about your story and how that links to the organisation. How those stories connect.

To be clear on your mission, it's important to step back from your day-to-day activities and start with the most important change you seek, the fundamental problem your organisation is trying to solve. You don't want it to be too broad, but you also don't want it to be too restrictive.

While it can be challenging to come to agreement on this, the experience of hashing out the fundamental purpose of an organisation - debating all the different assumptions and views held by your core team and agreeing on one basic mission - can be a powerful one. When it is done right, a mission statement can drive an entire organisation from top to bottom. It helps you decide what you should do and what you should perhaps stop doing.

Mission statements are similar to vision statements, in that they, too, look at the big picture. However, they're more concrete, and they are definitely more "action-oriented" than vision statements. Your vision statement should inspire people to dream; your mission statement should inspire them to action.

A mission statement tends to be made up of three elements.

1. Your **CAUSE**: Who do you serve? What matters? Who is important
2. An **ACTION**: What are you doing?
3. A **RESULT**: What change can you see?

These three elements unite the best mission statements, and typically, only these elements. Often, however, one or more element is only implied.

Mission statements from other non-profit organisations

- IFAW's mission is to rescue and protect animals around the world.
- HSUS: Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty.
- Elephant Sanctuary: A natural-habitat refuge where sick, old, and needy elephants can once again walk the Earth in peace and dignity.
- Best Friends Animal Society: A better world through kindness to animals.
- ASPCA: To provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States.
- Save the Children: To inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.
- Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières) works in nearly 70 countries providing medical aid to those most in need regardless of their race, religion, or political affiliation.

Activity 11: Writing Your Mission Statement

Step 1:

Have everyone consider the following questions and separately write down their answers. Be descriptive but avoid any jargon or technical terms. Keep it simple and concise.

- What type of entity or organisation are you? Charity, non-profit, volunteer run etc. (This may or may not be important but should be considered.)
- Why do you exist? What problem or issue are you here to address or confront?
- What is the broadest way to describe the work? The clearest and simplest way to describe what you do.
- For whom do you do this work? Who benefits from what you do?
- Where do you work? Are there any geographical boundaries?

Step 2:

Have each person read his or hers out and explain it. Then, as a group, start to match them and group them together. Once everyone has something written, have each person read his or hers out loud and explain it. Then, as a group, discuss the answers. On a separate sheet of paper, or on something everyone can see, make a list of the most mentioned or repeated things. Look for common themes, terms and thoughts that you all agree on. Discuss and refine them until you are happy that you have good answers to the questions, problems and ideas.

Step 3:

Using the three elements (your cause, an action and a result) try to structure your answers together into a single, coherent statement.

Some organisations feel compelled to make their mission statements complex, but the truth is complexity doesn't make something valuable. That's why these three elements are so useful: this is your organisation distilled to its essence. It's a little elevator pitch. It's not supposed to tell everything about your organisation. It's supposed to get people interested in hearing more.

Step 4:

You should be aiming for no more than two sentences to describe your mission. As with your vision statement, if you feel like it's too long, you can have everyone take what you have produced and ask them to each edit it down to 20 words. Then look at all the versions of what has been produced and use them to put together a new mission statement that picks out the best refinements from each version.

TIP

One of the fastest and most interesting ways to get to the heart of your organisation's mission is to use storytelling. So when writing down answers to the questions, consider them in relation to your own story and the reason why you got involved with your organisation and this kind of work.



Organisational Aims

If your mission is your reason why you're doing what you do, then your aims begin to suggest how you're going to achieve them.

So start to think about your mission and vision, and think about how you could go about achieving them. Aims are the actions you take because they will bring your vision and mission to life. They elaborate and expand on your mission. They begin to add detail and focus.

Everything you do as an organisation should be towards achieving your aims. And equally, every aim should be a guiding star for your work – your objectives and activities. Aims exist above objectives and activities. If saying, for example, “Helping create a safe and compassionate community where animals and people can live together”, is an aim - the detail of what work you will actually do in order to achieve that aim will be determined by your objectives and activities. Your Aims should also sit alongside your values, as your values will dictate the way in which you believe you should achieve your aims (but we'll talk more about values in the next section).

Let's look at some possible examples of organisational aims.

- Are you a shelter? Then an aim could be to ensure that all animals in the shelter have the best welfare possible while there, and will always try to find new, loving homes.

- Do you want to make a difference in the community? Then an aim might be to use education and communication to engage the local community to empower them to improve the welfare of their animals and all animals across the community.
- Do you run veterinary projects? Then an aim might be to ensure that all veterinary work is done to the highest standard and reaches as many animals in need as possible.
- Do you lobby for animal welfare improvements and change? Then perhaps an aim is to work with key stakeholders to ensure that animal welfare is always considered in local, regional and national decision making.

These example aims are all top level. They all suggest how you might go about achieving your mission. Underneath them, as you go further along this process, you'll begin to dig down and expand more on the detail, get more specific with objectives and use all of that to develop a strategy.

TIP



Remember, your organisation's aims are the things you should always be able to refer back to - to check that your decisions are always going in the right direction. If something you're doing doesn't sit under one of your aims then maybe you shouldn't be doing it... and if you want to be doing it, then why isn't it an aim?

Activity 12: Writing Your Organisational Aims

Consider the focus of your work

1. Who does it benefit – animals (obviously) but owned or stray? Domestic or wild?
2. Does it benefit the community? – owners, the general public, children?
3. Are there partners or groups that you collaborate whose involvement is integral to how you achieve your aims? And without their involvement you would struggle to achieve your aims – vets, municipalities, communities.
4. And when you think about these groups, these animals and people that you serve and the cause you are fighting for, what aims or goals are the most meaningful?

Step 1:

Working individually, and considering the 4 points above, write down what you believe are the key actions your organisation does and needs to do in order to achieve its mission. Ask the question “how will you achieve your mission”, rather than what specific activities you need to do in order to achieve it. Consider the different and unique areas of your organisation’s work.

Step 2:

Once everyone has something written, have each person share and explain what they wrote with the group. Then, discuss all the ideas together. Again, look for common statements, idea and themes – things that all of you or most of you have said.

Step 3:

On a separate sheet of paper – or on something everyone can see - make a list of the most common areas and ideas. Discuss them and refine and combine your ideas as specific and unique aims that when considered together, paint a complete picture of how you will go about achieving your mission.

Each aim should be a single sentence and you should ideally only have between three and six aims. Make sure each aim is specific to a key area of work, that the aims are unique and distinct from each other and that they embody how you will go about your work at the highest level.

Step 4:

As with your vision and mission statement, if you feel like your aims are too long, you can have everyone take what you have produced and ask them to each edit it down to 20 words. Then look at all the versions of what has been produced and use them to put together a more concise aim that picks out the best refinements from each version.

Try starting each aim with the words “We aim to” or, “Our aim is to” as this can help lead into the rest of the sentence. You can always remove those opening words later if a better way of expressing your aim is created.

Values statement

If your vision is the world you want to create, your mission is why you do what you do and your aims are how you will achieve your mission then your values are the way in which you will make decisions towards how you go about your work and achieving your aims. They are your core beliefs and they represent everything you stand for.

Values statements serve a dual purpose:

1. Value statements help unite people working or volunteering for an organisation with a shared set of values.
2. Value statements tell the rest of the world what kind of an organisation you are. A values statement helps people to understand why you do what you do and, hopefully, inspires them to believe in you because they perhaps share those values too.

As an animal welfare organisation, values are central to your identity. They are our guiding principles about how we believe the world should be. But organisational values can be tricky things. This is because you're transferring something that is very personal into a group or organisational setting.

Values are normally deeply held convictions, and moral and ethical principles that influence an individual's attitudes and behaviours. These personal motivations and beliefs are heavily intertwined with the reasons why people get involved in animal welfare.

Taking something with such individual importance and using those beliefs to define an organisation is not the easiest task.

Use the following activity to help develop a strong values statement that represents your organisation's core beliefs.

TIP

As with the vision, mission and aims, you don't want to over edit your words as that might dilute the feeling behind your beliefs.



Activity 12: Writing Your Values Statement

The main questions that a values statement needs to answer are:

1. What are the core values and beliefs of your organisation?
2. What are you committed to?

Step 1:

Have everyone write down a list of five to seven core values that relate to the above questions. As values are such personal things it is important that everyone also explains a little the thought behind each value they provide.

Step 2:

Go through the lists of values together, reviewing each one and on a separate sheet of paper or on something everyone can see, write down any values that appear more than once.

Step 3:

Next, discuss and comment on this full list and start to refine it. Ideally you want to have between five and seven organisational values. It can be less but shouldn't really be more.

Step 4:

Evaluate each value against this list of seven checks:

1. Does this core value represent what you stand for as an organisation rather than something you feel personally?
2. Do you apply this core value in your personal activities?

3. Will you continue to hold this value no matter what happens in the future?
4. If you were to start a new organisation, would this core value be part of its foundation?
5. Do you believe that staff or volunteers who do not share this value should continue to be part of the organisation?
6. Are you willing to stand by this value no matter what the cost – for example loss of support or income?
7. If you could do anything in the world, would you continue to apply this core value to your activities?

If the answer is “no” to more than three of the above questions, then the proposed value should probably be taken off your list.

Step 5:

Continue to refine the list until you have gotten it down to the five to seven values that you think best represents your organisation and what you stand for.

Step 6:

Refine the wording until you have a values statement that everyone agrees with but remember to keep it real. Aspirational wording is important, but so is the ability for people to see how your organisation's values relate to them. You want them to join you and believe in you.



“Nothing is more powerful for your future than being a gatherer of good ideas and information. That’s called doing your homework.”

Jim Rohn

Module 4: Gathering Information

- Stakeholders
- The wider world
- Your organisation

Summary

This module is about information gathering. Having the right information is the foundation of a good strategic plan so we’ll explore the different places we need to gather information from and how to get it.

Having the right information is critical to the strategic planning process. Yet, this can be a frustrating step for animal welfare people who can feel that time spent gathering information is time taken away from helping animals.

However, this is not a part of the process you can skip if you want to do it right. If you are committed to achieving your goals, to building your organisation's capacity and to truly making a difference to the welfare of animals, then you need to gather as much information as possible about the world in which you are operating.

There are three types of information gathering that provide key insights for your planning process and, ultimately, will help you help animals better:

1. Your stakeholders and their perception of you and your organisation
2. The external factors and forces that affect you and your organisation
3. Your organisation itself, including internal and external challenges and opportunities

Stakeholders

Quite simply, a stakeholder is any person, group of people or organisation that literally has 'a stake' in a particular issue – in this case, your organisation and the work you do. If someone is affected by or can have an impact on you or your work then they are a stakeholder. Simple as that!

When developing a strategic plan for your organisation, the reason you want to engage stakeholders is quite simple. You want to get their perspective on your organisation and your work.

Hearing your stakeholders' perspective is extremely important as we try to paint an accurate picture of the world in which you work and how you are seen as an organisation.

To get the broad range of information needed, you will want to engage a wide range of stakeholders. The list below is not exhaustive, but it gives you an indication of the range of people and groups you may want to consider as animal welfare organisation stakeholders:

- Partners – stakeholders you work with on a regular basis.
- Funders – stakeholders who fund your work.
- Board members
- Staff & Volunteers
- Municipal or government representatives.
- Vets – local vets, either private or municipal.
- Other animal welfare organisations - local groups who work in the same geographical area as you.
- Community leaders/authorities – influential members of the community who can speak on behalf of the local community and its interests.
- Local businesses
- Educators – Schoolteachers or community educators.
- Rescuers – individuals who rescue, rehome or help animals.
- Police or enforcement officers – officials with responsibility to enforce any animal protection legislation.
- Financial advisors – individuals who manage or oversee your organisation's accounts and finances.
- Lawyers or legal advisors – individuals who understand the legal framework and environment you're working in.
- Media contacts

Once you have identified the stakeholders you want to contact, you need to decide what to ask them. Below are some suggested questions that should provide you with the information you need, including stakeholder perspectives on your organisation and your work:

1. What has been your main experience in connection with this organisation?
2. What are the organisation's main strengths?
3. What are the organisation's main weaknesses?
4. What are the greatest challenges facing the organisation?
5. What area or priority do you think the organisation should focus on?
6. If the organisation were to expand, (if resources allowed) what should it do more of, less of, or differently to better serve the needs of the community?
7. What distinguishes this organisation from others doing similar work?
8. What can the organisation do to increase the awareness about its work?
9. Are there ways in which you think there could be more/better collaboration between this organisation and you?

It's very important to remember that the perceptions of different stakeholders are not necessarily the objective truth, but they are the truth from their perspective. How you perceive your organisation is going to be different from how other people perceive it.

During this activity you are engaging with internal and external stakeholders by asking for their perceptions of your organisation, so it's important to remind yourself that their perceptions are not judgments. They do, however, need to be respected and understood in the context of other information.

If someone views your organisation or work in a particular way, they are not wrong. It is their point of view and it's important for you to consider why they may have that view.

Activity 14: Engage Stakeholders

Step 1

Arrange to meet with or speak to each stakeholder that you've identified in the previous activity.

Step 2

Ask them the questions above. Write down their answers and gather as much information from them as possible.

Step 3

Once you have spoken to all stakeholders, compile all their answers together in one document. You will want to keep them handy so you can review and consider this information as we continue along this process.

The wider world

Your organisation doesn't work in isolation but is influenced by the world around you. There are a range of outside factors and forces that directly affect what you can and can't do and how you work. To better understand this external environment and how it affects your organisation both now and in the future, we need to do what is called an external scan.

This process involves answering questions related to six different types of external forces, which will help provide a clear understanding of their importance and relevance and how much of a factor they will play as you develop your strategic plan. The six categories of factors are: political, legal, economic, socio-cultural, technological and environmental.

- 1. Political** factors refer to the stability of the political environment and the attitudes of political parties or movements. It also refers to organisational politics or even international politics.
- 2. Legal** factors are often interlinked with political factors and include things like national and regional laws, regulations and restrictions. The difference between political and legal factors is that political refers more to the attitudes and approaches of the government and how easy they are to work with, whereas legal factors are the laws and regulations that government needs to enforce.
- 3. Economic** factors represent the wider local or national economy, including economic growth, levels of employment and unemployment, the costs of materials and resources, exchange rates and inflation rates. Economic factors could also include more specific things such as grants, funding and funding sources.
- 4. Socio-cultural** factors represent the culture of the local community. This might include age, level of education, distribution of wealth and social classes, religious beliefs, living conditions, lifestyle and social trends. It is also worth noting that the term "community" doesn't always mean a geographic community. It could be racial, religious, political or any other group that shares common interests. An important part of the socio-cultural factor is social ethics. These are the morals, principles and values that dictate the actions and decisions of the community. This is a particularly important area to consider in relation to animal welfare. The work you are doing to help animals may be ethical but might not be protected by law. And you may be confronted by cruel activities that are not ethical, but are also not illegal. It is also important to bear in mind that ethics vary across cultures, so what is ethically acceptable in one culture might be totally unacceptable in another. Culture is no excuse for cruelty but you need to understand the cultural environment you are operating in before forming your plan.
- 5. Technological** factors refer to the level or rate of new inventions and developments, changes in communication methods and the way information is disseminated. This not only includes information technology like social media and mobile phones, but also methods of manufacturing, distribution and logistics.
- 6. Environmental** factors can include natural resources, waste disposal and recycling procedures, as well as perhaps ecological, climate and weather based factors. This category also includes the working environment of your organisation and of animal welfare organisations in general.

Work with your core group to consider and try to answer the following questions.

Political

- How supportive or friendly is the government or municipality towards animal welfare?
- Is there a veterinary, environmental or agricultural department whose responsibility it is for animal related issues?
- Is animal welfare considered a priority at all?
- Are they likely to become more or less interested in this over time?
- Are there any political goals that can be aligned with animal welfare goals?
- How willing are they to work with you, other partners, organisations or activists on animal welfare issues?
- How bureaucratic or corrupt are they?
- Is there likely to be a change in government that could affect your work?
- Even if it's not seen as an important issue at a government or municipal level, are there individuals within the political landscape that are interested in the issue?

Legal

- What animal welfare laws or regulations (if any) are in place where you work?
- How are you affected or restricted by the current laws in regards to the work you do or want to do?
- Are the laws enforced and if not, why not?
- Are the opportunities for you to lobby to change or amend these laws or improve the enforcement of them?

Economic

- What is the level of wealth/poverty in the community where you work?
- Does a significant proportion of the community struggle to earn enough to provide adequately for animals in their care?
- Are you registered as a charitable organisation or legally able to raise money where you work?
- Does your organisation have any assets?
- What are your main sources of income? For example, what proportion of your organisation's income comes from government funding, public donation, grants from other NGO's, legacies, membership subscriptions, self-funded or overseas donations?
- How much money do you require each year to simply continue what you are doing in the way you are currently doing it?
- Do you raise money for the work you want to do or do you base your work on the money you have?
- Are there funds/subsidies available for the work you do from the municipality or government departments?
- Are there opportunities for gifts-in-kind (businesses or other partners who can provide resources to you that you would otherwise have to pay for)?

Technological

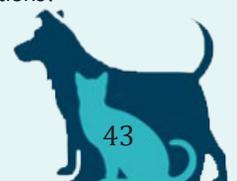
- What are the main channels of communication within the community? For example, newspapers, radio, social media, community groups etc.
- How easy is it to publicise your work through different communication channels?
- How easy is it to access information? For example, remote locations, unreliable power supply, government censorship etc.
- What are the main modes of transport?
- How easy is it to access or buy the kinds of supplies, materials and resources you need for your work?

Socio-cultural

- What is the average level of education in your community?
- What are the main kinds of occupation across the community?
- Are there different social classes within your community?
- What are the average living conditions for most families?
- What are the main religions or religious beliefs?
- How are animals generally viewed in your community? For example, culturally/historically/currently, are they seen as part of the scenery, pets, companions, as food?
- Are there differences in the attitudes of different generations in regards to animal welfare?
- How are animal welfare organisations and their work viewed in your community?
- How tolerant is the community of roaming animals?
- What is being done generally to manage or control the animal populations?
- Do a significant proportion of the community keep pets?
- Are there many veterinary professionals working in the community?
- Are there any responsible pet ownership measures in place and how well are they followed? For example, registration, compulsory vaccination etc.
- How do people view issues like sterilisation or euthanasia?

Environmental

- Are there seasonal climate issues that relate to animal welfare? For example, cold winters or hot summers.
- Are you in an area that is affected by any environmental concerns? For example, flooding, deforestation, earthquakes etc.
- How stable and reliable are public utilities? For example, electricity, water, waste disposal etc.
- Are there other animal welfare organisations working in the community?
- What is the relationship like between organisations?
- Is the general concept of animal welfare developing or advancing within the community?



Activity 15: Conduct an external scan

Step 1:

As a group, review all of the questions in each of the six categories (political, legal, economic, technological, socio-cultural, environmental) and answer as many of them as you can. Your answers should be based on factual information, not assumptions or opinions. If you don't know the answer to a question, skip it for now.

Step 2:

Identify those questions that can't be answered accurately from within the group and discuss how best to acquire the necessary information.

- Think about who can provide the necessary insights to answer these questions. For example, a lawyer is going to know the law; an accountant is going to know the economics. Seek the information where you're most likely to find the answers.
- Much of the information may also be public record or material that is readily accessible via internet research. However, answers relating to factors such as community attitudes may be a little harder to answer. In those cases, it might be necessary to use simple questionnaires to survey a cross-section of the community about their knowledge, attitudes, and practices in relation to key issues.

Step 3:

Once you have identified the best way to get the information needed to answer the remaining questions, divide up tasks within the group. Decide who will be responsible for contacting stakeholders who can provide information or conducting specific research.

Step 4:

Once you have the information needed to address all of the external scan questions, compile the answers together in one document. Keep it handy as you will be reviewing and referring to this information as we continue along in the strategic planning process.

The initial goal of this process of information gathering is to get as wide a view as possible, considering as many factors and issues as possible.

Eventually, however, you will want to focus on the most critical issues. The challenge is to discern those few issues that are, or may become, significant; those that your organisation needs to respond to or be prepared to respond to; and whether these are helpful issues or obstacles to overcome.

Before we start to analyse and assess all this external information, we still have to explore one more area for information: your organisation itself.

Your organisation

So far, we've focused on two areas of information gathering:

1. Your stakeholders and their perception of you and your organisation
2. The external factors and forces that affect you and your organisation

In addition to understanding how others perceive you and how the world outside affects you, there is a third area we need to examine - and that's your organisation itself.

To properly understand your organisation, we need to look at it in a number of different ways. For example, we need to examine it from both the inside and the outside:

- From the inside, we want to look at your strengths and weaknesses as an organisation - the things you do well and the things you could do better.
- From the outside we want to look at the opportunities and threats your organisation faces - the outside factors that can help you do things better and those factors that make things more difficult.

What we're talking about here is called a SWOT analysis and it's one of the most useful tools we can use to understand your organisation. SWOT stands for those words I mentioned above - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats - the four key areas we want to look at.

The four areas are all extremely important and closely interconnected and this graphic helpfully illustrates how they all fit together and, more importantly, how they actually relate to your organisational goals and objectives.

A SWOT analysis is something that your core group will again do together - each person bringing their own knowledge and experience of the organisation to the activity.

SWOT ANALYSIS



NOTE

You will notice that when we look at the opportunities and threats, we revisit some of the questions and answers from the previous section where we did an external scan. The difference is that the previous activity considered **what** things could affect your organisation, while this activity looks at **how** they affect you.

Step 2: Weaknesses

Continuing to think from an internal perspective, consider your organisation’s weaknesses – the things that are detrimental to your ability to achieve your goals. It’s important to be completely honest here. This is no time for embarrassment or ego. If you’re going to develop a strategy for your organisation, you need to be truthful about where its weaknesses are.

As a group, think of as many answers as you can to the following question: **What could we do better?** List any weaknesses that come to mind. Again, consider how you would measure improvement in these areas, and note them down as well.

Some examples of things that might be considered weaknesses:

- Funding problems
- Understaffed - either paid or voluntary
- Lack of, or weak organisational systems or policies
- Poor organisational structure
- Poor communication, coordination or monitoring and evaluation
- Weak management or management systems
- Constantly fire fighting
- Compromises in animal welfare standards
- Poor reputation or distrusted by the community
- Working in isolation

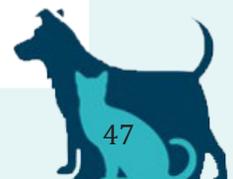
List weaknesses:





TIP

As you go through the process of answering these questions, make sure you don’t oversimplify the answers. For example, it is not enough to say “poor communication,” as a weakness. You need to be specific about which communication causes problems and why, so that solutions can be found.



Step 4: Threats

Lastly, think about the threats to your organisation – the unhelpful outside factors that could prevent you from doing better.

As a group, think of as many answers as you can to the following question and list them: **What are outside factors that could be harmful for your organisation?**

Again, list anything that comes to mind and review some of the answers you have from the external scan for threats.

Some examples of things that might be considered threats:

- Government restrictions and lack of political will
- Local/national security or safety problems
- Detrimental policies and laws that restrict your work or ability to work
- Lack of interest or attitude problems in the community
- Lack of access to where the animals are in greatest need
- Sustainability problems due to lack of funding
- Anti-NGO or animal welfare messaging by the media

LIST THREATS:



You should now have four lists with information that will help you determine where your organisation is strong and where it is weak, as well as what opportunities are available to you and what threats you may have to face.

From these, we have the beginnings of a strategic plan. A plan that will look to minimize your weaknesses, recognize your threats, take advantage of your opportunities, and build on your strengths.

As you look through your lists of answers, you need to distinguish between the things you have some control over and those you don't. Compile separately the ones you don't control. They're important things to be aware of as they're risks we may have to mitigate. However, for this part of the strategic planning process, we need to focus on the things we actually have the power to change.



“
Knowledge
is of no value unless
you put it into practice.
”

Anton Chekhov

Module 5: Putting the information to work

- Organizing & prioritizing information
- Looking through the other end of the telescope
- The obituary exercise

Summary

In this module we'll take all the information we've gathered and start to organise and prioritise it in a way that it will help us build our strategic plan.

Organizing & prioritizing information

This is the point in the process where we start to put things together. This probably feels a little daunting, right? There’s a lot of information there so how do you narrow it down? How do you decide what is more or less important? Over the past few activities we have accumulated a lot of information – from stakeholder perceptions, to the world outside, to your organisation itself - and before we can create a strategic plan we need to organize this information in a way that helps us make some decisions about the best way to move forward. This section is essentially a workbook of charts and tables to help you distil and prioritize all the information we have gathered and put it into some kind of order. In doing so we can start to create a picture of what direction your strategic plan should take.

Activity 17: Organize and prioritize stakeholder engagement information

Step 1:

From the stakeholder engagement activity, you now have an overview of your organisation from different stakeholders, a range of answers and perspectives of how others see you and your work. As a group, go through these answers and try to identify the key points.

Consider the information you have in regards to the following:

- Is there anything in this information that sticks out?
- Is there something you need to address?
- Are there patterns that you can see?
- Are several stakeholders noting the same thing (either positive or negative)?
- Are any of the points a validation or criticism of the work you are already doing?
- Are there suggestions that they’ve made or points they have raised that highlight something else you should or be doing, or not doing?

Step 2:

Now look at your newly made list of key points and try to divide them into three groups that reflect what you feel are their levels of importance in relation to your organisation and your work - High,

Medium and Low. For example, if community leaders and local vets are not clear on exactly what it is you are trying to do, then addressing how your work is better understood and perceived might be something to which you give high importance.

- High - the points that are very important
- Medium - the points that are quite important
- Low - the points that are less important

It’s helpful to use a simple table like this to organize the information.

High	Medium	Low
- key point	- key point	- key point
- key point	- key point	- key point
- key point	- key point	- key point

This isn’t an exact science and we’ll be refining the information more a little later, so don’t worry too much about this being perfect. For now just create three groups that you feel best reflect the importance of each point as you see it.



You can write your information in this table:



High	Medium	Low

Activity 18: Organize and prioritize external scan information

Step 1

From the external scan you now have answers to the six categories of questions (political, legal, economic, socio-cultural, technological and environmental) which comprise the external factors and forces that affect what you can and can't do and how you work. Again, as a group, go through these answers and try to identify the key points in each category. At this stage you still want to be looking at the categories separately and making a short list for each. We'll be combining the answers together later.

Consider the information you have in regards to the following:

- What things do you have some control over and what things are outside of your control?
- What things directly affect you and what things just influence the environment around you?
- What information is generally useful to know and what information has a more direct relevance to your work?
- Is there anything that obviously sticks out? Is there something you clearly need to address?
- Are there any patterns or connections you can see between different categories?

It's also a good idea to keep an eye out for any connected themes or recurring points and try to combine or summarize similar answers in a way that makes sense to you.

Step 2

You should now have six lists of key points – one for each category. As before we want to sort them into High, Medium and Low levels of importance but we're doing it a little differently this time. We want to consider how much impact each key point has in relation to your work but we also want to consider how much you can affect it, how much influence you have over it.

For example, a meteor strike is going to have a significant affect on your work but there's probably nothing you can do about it unless you're Bruce Willis, so it would have a high level of impact (literally) but low level influence.

For each category, it's helpful to create a chart like the one below to organize the information. *(Templates for you to fill in are on the next several pages.)*

Category (e.g. Political)		The level of impact this key point has		
		High	Medium	Low
The level of influence you have over this key point	High	- key point - key point	- key point - key point	- key point - key point
	Medium	- key point - key point	- key point - key point	- key point - key point
	Low	- key point - key point	- key point - key point	- key point - key point

Write each key point in the relevant square depending on how high a level of impact you think it has on your work or what level of influence you think you have over it.

As with the previous activity, this isn't an exact science and we'll be looking again at this information later, so don't worry about this being perfect. For now just place the key points in the squares that you feel best reflect their level of impact and influence as you see it.

POLITICAL: You can write your information in this table.



Political		The level of impact this key point has		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
The level of influence you have over this key point	High			
	Medium			
	Low			

LEGAL: You can write your information in this table.



Legal		The level of impact this key point has		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
The level of influence you have over this key point	High			
	Medium			
	Low			

ECONOMIC: You can write your information in this table.



Economic		The level of impact this key point has		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
The level of influence you have over this key point	High			
	Medium			
	Low			

SOCIO-CULTURAL: You can write your information in this table.



Socio-cultural		The level of impact this key point has		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
The level of influence you have over this key point	High			
	Medium			
	Low			

ENVIRONMENTAL: You can write your information in this table.

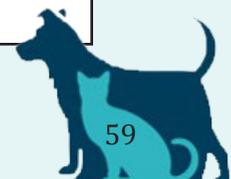


Environmental		The level of impact this key point has		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
The level of influence you have over this key point	High			
	Medium			
	Low			

TECHNOLOGICAL: You can write your information in this table.



Technological		The level of impact this key point has		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
The level of influence you have over this key point	High			
	Medium			
	Low			



Activity 19: Organize and prioritize SWOT analysis information

Step 1:

From the SWOT analysis you should now have four lists of points. These are the things that you have identified as the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation and the opportunities and threats that you face. As a group, work together to refine each list into key points.

Consider the lists in relation to the following:

- What significant opportunities are there?
- What are the threats you need to really be concerned about?
- What are the main strengths you have that you can build on?
- What weaknesses are there that you really need to address?
- Is there anything that obviously sticks out?
- Are there any patterns or connections you can see between different things?

As you go through this process, remember to think beyond animal welfare. Try to consider the information you have compiled in the context of your organisation, its advancement and what you need or need to do in order to grow and achieve your goals.

Step 2:

You should now have four refined lists with the key points relating to your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. As we've done with the other activities, we're going to prioritize these key points using the High, Medium and Low levels of importance. This time, however, we're looking at this information from the very specific perspective of your organisation. So, we want to try and prioritize by analyzing each key point in the following way:

- High: This is a critical issue - your organisation can't succeed unless this issue is addressed.
- Medium: This is an important issue - this could make a real difference to the strategy.
- Low: This would be nice but if we don't get to it we'll still be able to progress.

Category (e.g. Strengths)		
High	Medium	Low
- key point - key point - key point	- key point - key point - key point	- key point - key point - key point

Again, for each category (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) it's helpful to create a simple table like this to organize the information.

You can write your information in this table:



STRENGTHS		
High	Medium	Low

You can write your information in this table:



WEAKNESSES		
High	Medium	Low

You can write your information in this table:



OPPORTUNITIES		
High	Medium	Low

You can write your information in this table:



THREATS		
High	Medium	Low

Looking through the other end of the telescope

You've now got three sets of prioritized lists, one from each of the stakeholder engagement, external scan and SWOT activities. By narrowing down all the information and putting it into order, you are beginning to see what direction you need to take. However, before we pull all this information together and really nail down your priorities, let's step back to look at things from a slightly different perspective.

As you've gone through these last few activities, you've looked at the information you have through a microscope. Now, we are going to take a few moments to imagine you're on the other side of this process and that you're seeing the results of all this strategic planning work. Let's see what that might look like with the next activity.

Activity 19: The obituary exercise

It's three years in the future. You and the other key people in your organisation have been tragically killed by an unexpected meteor strike while in the United States collecting an Excellence in Animal Welfare Award. Firstly, congratulations on the award! And secondly, wow! That's some really unfortunate timing. While this is all terribly sad, it's also a great opportunity to write a brief obituary and look back on what you've achieved. So, imagine what your obituary should say in regards to the following three points:

1. What were your three key achievements over the past three years?
2. What three strategic projects have you started that remain to be completed?
3. Who should take your place and what skills should they have?

Each member of your core team should go through this activity, write down their answers, and then you can discuss and compare them. This is not be as detailed a process as what we've gone through previously with the other activities, but it does allow you to get a feeling for where you'd like your organisation to be after your strategic plan has been completed.

There's a reason why we've done this activity after the others. The three previous prioritization activities were based on factual information and so your prioritizing was done based on that real world information. This activity is more about your goals and the success you want to see following this process.

Undertaking this activity helps you filter these goals through the real-world information you've obtained through the stakeholder engagement, external scan and SWOT analysis. Your hopes for the future are now based on a real understanding of where you are now, so you have a much clearer starting point.



“
We cannot solve
our problems with the
same thinking we used when
we created them.
”

Albert Einstein

Module 6: Setting your course

- What's stopping you?
- Strategic decision-making
- Are you ready to make dinner?
- Building your plan

Summary

In this module, we'll combine all the information to create a series of goals and objectives that will form the framework of our strategic plan.

What's stopping you?

You might dream of the day when a wealthy philanthropist comes along, sees the incredible work you do, falls in love with your organisation, and funds you for ever after... but that's probably not going to happen.

You have challenges you need to overcome. Otherwise, you probably wouldn't be reading this document. Yet, every challenge, everything that is getting in your way, is simply a problem to which we need to find a solution - a roadblock we need a strategy to navigate around.

Before we start making strategy decisions, it's time to ask some frank questions because some of those decisions are going to be tough to make. Think of your vision, your mission, and your values.

- What must you do to remain true to those things?
- How do you structure your organisation and your work to make that vision a reality?
- Do you have to stop doing something now because it doesn't fit in with your vision and mission? You might have to make that choice and that's not necessarily an easy choice to make.
- If you changed something now, shifted gear, altered your direction or refocused your efforts, would that change have a positive impact? Would it create a better, situation, better environment than if you just carried on doing what you are

doing now? Or, are you happy to do what you're doing but just want to do it better, more efficiently, more sustainably?

- Do you want to look for ways that might, one day, make your work redundant?
- Do you want to treat the symptoms of the problems you're seeing or do you want to try and address the root causes?
- Where do you need to grow and where do you need to reduce? What do you need to build and what do you need to stop?

As I said, these are all decisions you have to make as an organisation. It's your choice, but you need to be brutally honest about your answers to these questions. You can't pretend you're doing one thing when you're actually doing the other.

It's also very important to recognize that deciding what you are *not* going to do is often just as important as what you *are* going to do.

Another tip: Don't be afraid of making the "wrong" choices. Don't fall into the trap of being scared to do anything because you can't do everything. You have to have the courage to make decisions; that's the whole reason you embarked on this process. The beauty of a strategy, if it's done properly, is that you can adapt and change it as you go along to revise what's not working.

Strategic decision-making

It's time to start making some strategic decisions. Let's look at those priorities and decide what direction you're going to head. As always, this is a process to be done with the core group.

Activity 20: Combining your information

Step 1: Select Key Points from SWOT Analysis

We'll start by going back to the SWOT analysis chart (Activity 19), which ended with four separate boxes that prioritized your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- Go through each of the four boxes (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) in the SWOT analysis chart and pick the top six to eight key points in each category (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). These are likely to be the ones you identified as high importance or high impact, but might also include a few from the medium sections of your chart.
- Using the chart at right as a model, list the selected SWOT analysis key points in each of the relevant boxes in the template on the next page.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key point 1 - Key point 2 - Key point 3 - Key point 4 - Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key point 1 - Key point 2 - Key point 3 - Key point 4 - Etc.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key point 1 - Key point 2 - Key point 3 - Key point 4 - Etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key point 1 - Key point 2 - Key point 3 - Key point 4 - Etc.

Use the grid below to list prioritized key items.



Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Step 2: Select Key Points from Stakeholder Engagement

- Revisit the results of your Stakeholder Engagement activity and pick the top six to eight key points. Again, these are likely to be the ones you identified as high importance or high impact, but may also include a few from the medium. Remember that the questions that you asked of your stakeholders included their perception of what you do well (your strengths), what you could do better (your weaknesses), what they think you should do (your opportunities) and what challenges they think you face (your threats). So the key Stakeholder Engagement points should also fall into the SWOT grid.
- Refer to your new SWOT grid and see how many of the key points you've just identified from the Stakeholder Engagement are the same or similar.
- If there are any that seem the same or similar, combine the answers. If there are new points, add them to the relevant section of the new SWOT grid.

Step 3: Select Key Points from External Scan

- Return to the result of the External Scan activity and pick the top six to eight key points. These will be a little different because the grid identified their importance based on their impact as well as your influence over them.
- The information in the top left square of the External Scan grid was rated the highest impact and influence, so these are likely the points you are looking for. There may also be a few that were high impact and medium influence, or high influence and medium impact. Of those, pick the ones that you feel are the most important until you have your eight or ten.
- Compare these key points with the new SWOT grid. Combine those points that are the same or similar; add new External Scan points to the relevant square on the grid.

Step 4: Select Key Points from Obituary Exercise

- Finally, let's review the answers you gave in the Obituary Exercise. The results of this exercise provide a way to balance or quality-check what you want to do versus what you should do based on the information from the other activities.
- First, review the three achievements you wanted to be remembered for. Are they identified in some way on the SWOT grid? Or, will the priorities on the SWOT grid help you achieve those goals? If the answer is yes, then that's great! We're seeing things really tie together. If they're not, then we'll talk about that in a moment.
- Next, look at the three strategic projects that still need to be completed. It's likely these are already reflected somewhere on the new SWOT grid. If so, great - that means you're matching what you want to achieve with what the information is saying you need to do.
- Finish by considering your answer to the question of who should take your place and what skills they should have. The position of this information in the new SWOT grid will vary: If the person or skills you've identified are already present in your organisation, then that's a strength. If there's a way to better take advantage of that person or those skills, then it's an opportunity. If you're missing those skills, then it's a weakness or could be a threat.

You've now got all the high priority key points from all the information-gathering activities on the new SWOT grid. Because the information is from different activities, you might want to take some time to play around with the wording to make the language consistent. That will make it easier to review in the next step.



Are you ready to make dinner?

Let's go back to that dinner party you're hosting. Having gone through the same process of gathering the necessary information we need, how does that affect your dinner party plans?

When you originally planned this dinner party maybe you had the idea to cook a spectacular beef lasagne. Great choice! Except you've now found out that three of your guests are vegetarian, one is allergic to cheese and one doesn't like Italian food. (Seriously, who doesn't like Italian food? You have weird friends.)

So your plan for a beef lasagne is suddenly not looking so great. It doesn't matter how much you wanted to make a beef lasagne, or how sure you initially were that beef lasagne was the perfect dish to make, it turns out that it's simply not going to work for this dinner party. All the information you have is telling you that you need to make something else.

You do have choices:

- You could look for a vegetarian alternative to meat and a non-dairy alternative for cheese. But then you're still stuck with Richard who doesn't like Italian food!
- You could un-invite all the people that are causing the problem and only invite the meat- and cheese-eating, Italian-loving friends, but then you'd probably have to have another dinner and cook something else for the ones who didn't come this time. That defeats the purpose of having the dinner party in the first place, which was for all of your friends to have dinner together.

Seriously, this was supposed to be a nice dinner. Why has it become so complicated? It's because you are still focusing on continuing with your original lasagne plans, in spite of the fact that all the information you have suggests that you should consider a completely different dinner menu.

Changing what you cook won't change your desired outcome; you're still going to make dinner for all your friends. They're still all going to come over and have a nice evening. It's just that your original menu wasn't actually the best fit for this group, so you need to come up with an alternative approach.

You can see where I'm going with this, right?

Your strategic planning list of priorities is based on all the information you have acquired. You've gone through a comprehensive process to ask the right questions, get the right answers and examine your situation from all angles. As long as you went through this process impartially and objectively, you can feel confident that you now have a clear understanding of your organisation and the environment in which you are working. Your list of priorities addresses the most pressing issues. You have your direction. You know where you need to go.

This is the point where you decide how to move forward. The work you did on your SWOT analysis can help with that decision. You've spent a lot of time gathering and analysing the information to inform your decision. Don't ignore the information – don't make the lasagne!

From information to strategies

In this next activity, we’re going to look at all your alternatives or choices based on the SWOT analysis information. This provides the analysis needed to begin building your plan.

Activity 21: Aligning internal and external factors

You’ll be completing the template on the next page using the grid below as a model:

		Internal	
		Strengths (S) List your strengths	Weaknesses (W) List your weaknesses
External	Opportunities (O) List your opportunities	SO Alternatives Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities	WO Alternatives Overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities
	Threats (T) List your threats	ST Alternatives Use strengths to avoid threats	WT Alternatives Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats

(However, if you identified a lot of strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the previous exercise, you don’t necessarily need to rewrite them in the grid, just work from the lists you already have.)

You will be matching up points from one section of the grid to another, which will help you identify the things you can actually do - your strategies - based on the information from the SWOT analysis. The goal is to match internal factors with external ones.

For example, you can identify organisational strengths that can help take advantage of external opportunities. It’s also important

to identify any gaps – places where the information in front of you doesn’t provide the answer or solution. By the end of this activity, the answer or solution may become clear.

Step 1:

In the box marked SO Alternatives (or on a list that represents that box), list ways you can use internal strengths to take advantage of external opportunities. List as many strategies as you can.

Step 2:

In the box marked WO Alternatives (or on a list that represents that box), list ways to overcome internal weaknesses by using external opportunities. Again, list all the strategies that you can.

Step 3:

In the box marked ST Alternatives (or on a list that represents that box), identify ways to use internal strengths to overcome external threats. List all that you can.

Step 4:

Lastly, in the box marked SO Alternatives (or on a list that represents that box), identify ways to minimize internal weaknesses and avoid external threats. List as many as possible.

Step 5:

Looking at all four of these lists, highlight the ideas that look the most promising. These are the ones that look the most realistic, or the ones that get you the most excited.

You can write your information in this grid.



		Internal	
		Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
External	Opportunities (O)	SO Alternatives	WO Alternatives
	Threats (T)	ST Alternatives	WT Alternatives

Step 6:

Before we go further, we are going to do a quick quality check. Refer back to the original list from the Stakeholder Engagement, External Scan and SWOT analysis activities. (I know you've already gone through them in the last activity, but we're checking to make sure nothing has been missed in our list of possible ideas.)

Also, review this new list against your obituary exercise. See whether your goals are aligned and if any of the things you said you wanted to do can be achieved through the ideas you've come up with.

Step 7:

Once you have highlighted and updated your lists as necessary from reviewing the previous activities, there may be more ideas listed than you can conceivably undertake all at once. If so, try making a "Someday List". They're all the things you'd really like to do, but are not as high a priority as others. Your "Someday" List isn't a cop out. It doesn't mean you are giving up on those ideas, it's just a way for you to put them aside until a time when your strategy has taken steps forward and circumstances allow you to proceed.

Step 8:

Finally, we are going to divide your list of most promising ideas based on your internal and external priorities, based on the descriptions below:

- Internal priorities are everything that comes from within your organisation. This includes everything related to the level of work you do on the ground (how many animals you help, how well you can help them), your internal processes and where they need improvements such as employees, volunteers, skills, training, better use of technology, more

efficient systems, better communication and anything else that deals with the internal control and running of your organisation.

- External priorities are everything that comes from outside your organisation. This includes anything related to generating and accessing funds, working in the local community, with government, with vets, with other organisations and with partners and anything else that deals with the external factors that contribute towards your work.

TIP

Everything you do, every decision you make should always link back to your vision, mission, aims and values.

Once you have these final, prioritized lists, check them against your vision, mission, aims and values.

If they help achieve your vision, are in line with your mission, fulfill your aims and uphold your values then you have all you need to make your plan.

If not, then you need to reexamine what you've come up with. If something doesn't fit in with your vision, mission, aims and values, you shouldn't be doing it.



“
It always seems
impossible until it's done.

Nelson Mandela
”

Module 7: Let's make a plan!

- Setting your course
- Building the plan
- Backwards planning

Summary

In this module we build our plan. We create a time line and clear path to get us to where we want to be.

Setting your course

Throughout this document we've been using the analogy of making dinner to illustrate the process required to develop a strategic plan. While that was useful for getting us to this point, we're going to try a different exercise to help us think about the steps involved in putting the plan together. Now, we're going to talk about coffee!

A Plan for Coffee

What would you do if I asked you to make me a cup of coffee? More specifically, what would you do if I asked you to describe how you were going to make me a cup of coffee? It would probably go something like this:

I'd go to the cupboard and fetch a cup. I'd go to the other cupboard and fetch the coffee. I'd fill the kettle (or coffee maker) with water. I'd let it boil or heat up. I'd add the coffee and pour it into the cup. I'd ask if you wanted milk or sugar. Depending on the answer I'd add milk or sugar if required. I'd give you the coffee.

That makes sense, doesn't it? Making coffee is a pretty simple task, so it's also a straightforward process. In the context of outlining a strategic plan, however, the process is much more complex and intricate.

Let's look again at the scenario: ***I want a cup of coffee.***

- What kind of coffee?
- Do you have coffee?
- Do you have a cup? If not, you need to get them.
- Is it the right kind of cup? Does it serve the purpose? There's no point in you offering me coffee in an espresso cup if I want a cappuccino.

- Do you have enough money to buy the coffee and the cup if you need to buy them?
- Where will you get them from? Are you near a coffee and cup shop? Is it two different shops that you need to go to?
- You need water. Do you have water? If not where would you get water from?
- How will you heat the water?
- Do you have a kettle? Do you have a coffee machine?
- Do you have electricity?

It's not just about outlining all the steps; the order is important too. There's no point in going out to buy coffee if you don't have a coffee machine. You need the machine first in order to put the coffee in it.

Are there things you can do at the same time to save time? You can boil the kettle at the same time as getting the cup, but you have to add the water to the machine before you add the coffee. Some things are dependent on others.

I bet you're wishing I'd never asked you to make me coffee!



Take a moment to think about all the steps involved in something as simple as making a cup of coffee. Many of them we automatically shortcut because there are things we can assume – like having water and a cup. Because we've made coffee a thousand times, we know the best order for each step and how long the process will take.

However, imagine writing down the process of making coffee for someone who had never done it before. You would need to create a path that outlines all the critical steps, in the right order, so that they can follow your path precisely and make that cup of coffee.

That's what this section is about: Mapping your path and building your strategic plan.

Building the plan

We're on the home stretch! We're going to take all your hard work, use all the information and all your finalized decisions, and we're going to turn them into a road map for your strategic plan.

To do this you need to be clear on your objectives. These are your short-term goals – things that get you from one point to the next.

Think about the steps involved in the process of making coffee we used just before. Each one of those is an objective – a clear step along the path to having made a cup of coffee.

Not only do these objectives need to be clear, they also need to state certain specific things so you can track your performance and progress - key things to ensure your strategy is going according to plan.

Each objective needs to be stated in a measurable way. To do this we can use another useful tool that helps keep our objectives SMART!

SMART stands for: **Specific, Measurable Achievable, Responsible person, Time specific.**

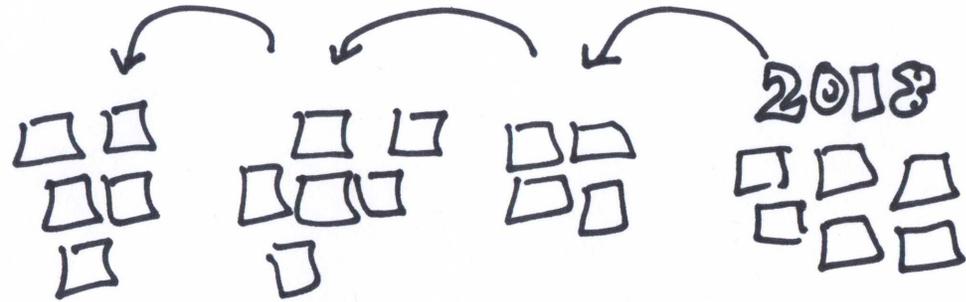
1. **Specific:** Your objectives need to be specific. For example, if we were talking about buying coffee you would want to know how much and what kind.
2. **Measurable:** Your objectives need to be stated in a way that allows you to evaluate their progress. You want your objectives to be measurable in terms tracking progress towards accomplishing them and also indicating when they've actually been accomplished. For example, if you want to make coffee, there are certain items you need – coffee, water and a cup. You can measure your progress against how many of them you have.
3. **Attainable:** The objectives need to be realistic. You are trying to break down this process into small, manageable chunks. If the chunks are too big, you're less likely to accomplish them. For example, if you want to make coffee for me now but you have to drive to the next town to actually get the bag of coffee grounds, that's not a particularly attainable objective in relation to your goal.
4. **Responsible person:** Objectives need to be assigned to a specific person or group of people to ensure that someone takes on the responsibility of making sure they're actually done. Coffee needs to be bought but unless someone has been given the specific task of buying it, it's probably going to remain in the shop.
5. **Time specific:** Objectives need to have a time line of when they are to be accomplished. If you're planning on making me that coffee then you probably need to have bought the coffee before I arrive.



Backwards planning

As I said earlier in this document, without knowing where you want to end up, you can't plan how you're going to get there. One effective way to plan how to reach our end goals is to start from the goals and work our way backwards.

This technique of "backwards planning" allows us to plot a clear path from there - where we want to be - back to here - where we are. It also helps us to clearly see how things along the way are dependent on each other. Identifying these dependencies helps us to prioritize our activities and objectives. It ensures that we complete first those activities and objectives required for the successful achievement of other activities and objectives.



TIP



The exercise of backwards planning requires some space to work, because we are literally creating a visual time line that will plot every important step towards achieving your goals. You can use a wall or the floor or a large table – whichever is best for you. You'll want large sheets of paper that you can create your time line along. You might want to stick several large sheets together so you have plenty of space along a single large area of paper. You'll also need a lot of post-it notes and some coloured pens to highlight key points.

Activity 22: Backwards planning

This, as always, is an activity that should be done by the core team together. It's a group activity and everyone should be involved.

Step 1: Consider goals and dependencies

- List each priority goal you agreed on at the end of the last activity on a separate sticky note and place them at the far right hand side of the paper.
- Before you go any further, consider if any of these goals are dependent on another? For example, is one priority to raise money in order to fund another priority? If you find some are dependent on others, then make sure to put them in the right order. You'll want to put the ultimate goals farthest to the right, with the goals they are dependent on placed in sequence to the left. Don't worry about time frames at this stage. For now we are simply focusing on the order and sequence.

Step 2: Articulate steps to goals

- Review each of the goals and discuss what you need to do in order to achieve it. Be specific and write each thing that you need to do – each step – on a separate sticky note. The idea is to work backwards to create a more complete path for your plan.
- There are a few simple phrases that can help you to identify the steps. Using the phrases *'for that we need...'*, *'but why?...*' and *'so that...'* will help clarify each step and work out the steps around it. Each phrase makes us think about the step in a slightly different way, allowing you to clarify the purpose of each step, what it's dependent on and what's dependent on it.
- For example, you want to make me a cup of coffee – that's the goal. *"For that we need..."* to have bought coffee, have access to water, have a suitable cup etc. Using that phrase helps us work backwards to think about all the things we need in order to make coffee. It's important to be as specific as possible. It's not good enough to just say you need coffee. You need to know whether you have any coffee in the cupboard. Then with each thing you've identified, you ask the same question. If you need to have bought coffee then *"for that we need..."* to have gone to a shop that sells coffee, *"for that we need..."* to have enough money to buy coffee etc. You follow this pattern until you have mapped out the steps.
- The *"for that we need"* phrase helps you work backwards. The *"but why?"* and *"so that"* phrases help you to check the steps moving in a forward direction. For example, once you have a series of steps by using the *"for that we need"* phrase, start at

the first one and ask *"but why?"* You need enough money to buy coffee, *"but why?..."* Because without money you won't be able to buy the coffee. Then using the other phrase you can add absolute clarity by saying, we need money *"So that..."* when we go to the shop we are able to buy the coffee.

- The idea is for the steps to make sense in both the backwards and forwards direction. This keeps you on track with planning, so every step has a clear purpose. Each step is related to the one before it and the one after it. You should continue going through the backward planning process until there are several steps identified.

Step 3: SMART objectives

- Next, consider each step in your pathways to your goals using the SMART principle. First, ensure each step or objective is **specific**. (For example, it's not just that you need coffee but it's what kind of coffee and how much.)
- Each step also needs to be **measurable** in some way. It's not only about measuring your success based on whether you've achieved an objective, you also need indicators that help you measure progress along the way. (For example, if you have to buy the coffee from the next town and you know that the town is 20 kilometres away, then an indicator to how close you are to achieving your objective could be as simple as calculating the distance you are from the town. If I check on your progress when you're ten kilometres away from the town that would indicate that you are fifty percent of the way to achieving your objective.)



- An objective also needs to be **attainable**. If it's not attainable then something about the objective is unrealistic. Perhaps it's too large or complex an objective in which case you might need to try and break it into smaller steps.
- We will focus on the last two SMART principles (responsible and timely) later in this mapping process.

Step 4: Step back and review

- Stop periodically to review where you are. Take a step back from the individual steps and look at the overall strategy map – the big picture. Make sure it makes sense and that you can see a clear path from where you are to where you want to be.
- Always refer back to all the information you have from the previous activities to make sure you have included all the key priorities. It's easy to get lost in this process and go off in different directions. All the work you've put in gathering information and identifying your priorities and goals was done so that you can approach this stage confidently and use all that information to keep you on track.

Step 5: Consider parallel paths

- As you go through this process you will begin to see parallel paths. These are different steps that need to happen at the same time. For example, while the kettle is boiling the water, you could be getting the cup out of the cupboard. Neither of these things affects the other and they are not dependent on each other. (For example, you can boil the water whether the cup is out of the cupboard or not. It is only when you want to pour the water into the cup that paths of these two activities intersect.)

- It is important to recognise where your activity paths remain parallel and where they join up. The intersections will either be when one thing becomes dependent on another or when you have reached a milestone – a point where something has been achieved. As you create your map, make sure to clearly highlight where all these dependencies and milestones are.

Step 6: Identify resource needs

- Once you have created something that maps out the strategy, highlights dependencies and milestones, and includes all the key points and priorities, you need to make sure you have considered the resources you will need to achieve these things. The “*for that we need...*” question should have highlighted most of these, but double check that it's clear what resources are required for each step.

Step 7: Establish time line

- The way we have approached creating your strategy is to create a map that illustrates a sequence of activities. You now need to attribute some scheduling and timings to the steps.
- Earlier in this document we discussed the time period over which your strategic plan would take place. If we say, for example, that you agreed on three years, put that date at the end – on the far right - above the final goal of the strategy.
- Now look at the milestones and objectives starting from the left hand side (where we are now) and set some time frames and deadlines for each one. Make them realistic - based on both what you have to do and are able to do.



- Remember that as you move along the map you will hit those highlighted dependencies – the things that are dependent on other things being completed first. You can't, for example, expect one of these things to be completed in two months if the thing it's dependent on will take three months. Make sure that the scheduling makes sense. This is the **Time** specific part of the SMART principle.

Step 9: Who's responsible?

- Now, consider who the **Responsible** person is for each step. Who is assigned the tasks necessary to achieving each objective? Some may already have become apparent during the mapping process, but if they haven't, then now is the time for them to be assigned.
- It is important to note, as you are attributing the time frames and scheduling, that you also need to consider the available human capacity factor. How long a task or objective takes to achieve may depend on how many other responsibilities each person has. You also need to factor in the skills of the responsible person and whether you need to set an objective to provide training so that they can achieve a later objective.
- Wherever possible, it is important that roles and responsibilities are not dictated. Instead, allow people to assign their own roles – to take responsibility and have ownership of that task. This may not always be possible as some things might just need to be done and no one is stepping forward to take it on. However, if people share your vision and are genuinely committed to this process, then they will be willing to take on the tasks necessary to achieve your goals.

Step 10: Plot critical path

- Once you have created a complete map, you want to plot a "critical path". If you drew a line from the beginning to the end, this path plots the most direct route from where you are to where you want to be, highlighting each dependency and milestone along the way.
- All the parallel paths will, of course, filter into this – like tributaries feeding into a river – but the critical path is your direction. It's your strategic plan!

TIP



The whole mapping process should be relatively fluid. It's going to require a fair amount of time and space for the group to work out the steps, milestones, dependencies and time scales along the way... and all of these will change and alter again and again as more things are thought of and the discussion evolves.

You don't need to get it right on the first attempt and you can always come back to review it and alter it at any time.

This is how it's intended to be used, as something that adapts as things change, not something that is set in stone.



“
One
of the great
mistakes is to judge
policies and programs
by their intentions
rather than their results.
”

Milton Friedman

Module 8: Using your plan successfully

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Avoiding the pitfalls
- Finishing your plan

Summary

In this final module we put the finishing touches to our plan to ensure it will realise our long term vision and can be easily communicated to everyone.

Monitoring and evaluation

How do you know if you're doing things well? How do you know if you're on schedule? It's one thing to have a strategic plan, but unless you're measuring and evaluating what you do against the objectives and goals you set, you'll never know if you're going in the right direction. And it's not simply about whether you're following the plan as you wrote it; it's also about knowing where you need to adapt your plan because something has changed. It might not necessarily be a negative change, where something has gone wrong, it could also be a positive change where a new opportunity presents itself. Either way, without a regular process of monitoring and evaluation, you will almost certainly fail to adapt or change direction when you need to and risk jeopardising your whole strategy as a result.

Monitoring and evaluating are essential to your success so let's look at the difference between the two.

- **Monitoring** is about keeping track of things. It's about making sure things are on time, on schedule and on budget. It's about making sure the people who are responsible for something are doing what they are supposed to be doing by the time agreed.
- **Evaluating** is about measuring your success. This is done in two ways, measuring against what you've done and measuring against the impact you've had. And the difference between these two things is very important.

Let's think about monitoring and evaluating in another way. We've already had dinner and coffee analogies. For monitoring and evaluating, we're going to consider taking a holiday!

Imagine you're planning a vacation...



You've decided on a place you want to visit based on things you want to do, see or experience. These are the things that you've decided are important if you're going to enjoy this vacation - for it to be a success.

You might want to go somewhere hot so you can sunbathe or somewhere cold so you can ski. You might prefer a 5-star hotel with a huge swimming pool or a small romantic hut on the beach overlooking the ocean. You might want somewhere you can cook your own food or you might prefer to be close to cafés and restaurants.

Whatever you choose, you've done so because you believe that these choices will provide you with the kind of vacation you want based on the best information you had at the time.

When you return home after your vacation and your friends ask you how it was, you'll probably tell them all the things you enjoyed and liked. You may also tell them about the things that weren't so great. You'll tell them stories about how you expected the weather to be hot, but it rained for the first two days. Or how you had been told that one particular beach was "unmissable", but when you got there it was dirty, crowded and not actually that pretty. In fact, the beach two miles down the coast was much nicer, but you only found that out once you got there.

If your friends wanted to visit the place you had just been and asked you for your suggestions, would you tell them to do all the things you had originally planned to do? Or would you alter your recommendations based on all the things you'd learned while you were there, based on your more current knowledge and experience?



The vacation scenario is all about monitoring and evaluation:

- Keeping track of all the things that happened on the vacation.
- Remembering when things went as planned or how you expected them to go, or where things altered and changed and what happened as a result of those changes – good or bad.
- Considering if you had to do it again, how would you use that knowledge? What would you keep the same because it was really good and what would you change because it didn't go so well or perhaps worked out better than you expected because you found out something new?

SMART Monitoring

As you've developed your strategic map and strategic plan you've done so using SMART objectives and it's these SMART objectives that will allow you to review your plan in a way where you can monitor your progress and evaluate your success.

So let's take a look at monitoring and evaluating your vacation with SMART objectives in mind.

1. **Specific:** Every objective needs to be specific. Where did you go?... specifically. What did you do?... specifically. What did you want to do?... specifically. The more specific these things are the easier it is to evaluate them in regards to how successful you were in achieving them.

- From an animal welfare perspective, the specifics could include what animals you plan to help (dogs, cats, etc.), how specifically you plan to help them (vaccinate, sterilise, rehome etc.), and what you intend to do (set up a small, local vet clinic, run a two-week vaccination campaign etc.)

2. **Measurable:** What are the indicators that show how near or far you are to meeting your objectives? The beach wasn't just a nice beach – nice isn't a measurement! How clear was the water? How crowded was the beach? How close was it to where you were staying? You can measure all of these things. The beach was nice but each one of these things is an indicator of how you measure that niceness.

- In animal welfare terms, you might want to measure how many animals you vaccinate, sterilise or rehome. You might want to know what percentage of the overall population that is and you might want to look at ways you can measure improvements in welfare or people's attitudes towards animals.

3. **Attainable:** If you want to replicate the success of the vacation, if you want to make sure you have a similar experience next time, then you need attainable objectives. If you want great weather you can't just go at any time of the year and expect the sun to be shining. Your objective of good weather needs to be based on a realistic understanding of the climate where you're going.

- What is an attainable objective for animal welfare? Is it realistic to expect all dogs to find homes or is it a more attainable objective to improve the welfare of the population in general by perhaps vaccinating and sterilising?

4. Responsible person:

A vacation doesn't just book itself. You're going to have to research where you're going and book the tickets before you go. You are responsible for achieving those objectives otherwise it looks like you're staying at home.

- For animal welfare, it's especially important that any person responsible has the right knowledge and experience to ensure the welfare of the animals you're helping is not compromised.

5. Time specific: When are you going on vacation? The summer, you say? You're going to need to be a little more specific than that because you can't book a room for "the summer". Your objective of a great vacation is going to be dependent on the time you spend there, so you need to know when you're arriving and when you're leaving.

- For example, time specific in animal welfare work might mean: If you want to vaccinate a thousand dogs, when do you plan to do that buy? When will you have vaccinated the first hundred? How many dogs can you vaccinate in a day?

TIP



For each objective and milestone you should create a simple SMART table like the one shown below so you can ensure you've got the SMART information you need to monitor and evaluate your progress and success on a regular basis.

SMART	Objective
Specific	<i>Specific details of the objective</i>
Measurable	<i>Indicators of progress and measure of success</i>
Attainable	<i>Ensure the objective is realistic</i>
Responsible person	<i>Who is responsible and what their tasks are</i>
Time specific	<i>When it needs to be accomplished</i>

Avoiding the pitfalls

How can we be confident that our planning will be successful? Even in the presence of a structured strategic planning process, there will always be plenty of opportunities to mess things up.

The following list summarizes the key points, already addressed elsewhere in this document, that are the most common pitfalls and the major reasons why strategic plans fail. Knowing them is the surest way of avoiding them!

- 1. A lack of ownership:** One of the most common reasons a plan fails is because there's a lack of ownership. If people don't have a stake and responsibility in the plan, then they're not going to have the commitment or motivation to see it through.
- 2. A lack of communication:** If the plan doesn't get communicated to everyone, then they won't understand what its purpose is or how they can contribute.
- 3. Getting caught up in the day-to-day:** Everyone is focusing on daily problems so they lose sight of the long-term goals.
- 4. It's out of the ordinary:** The plan is treated as something separate and removed from what the organisation is doing.
- 5. It's an overwhelming plan:** There are too many goals and actions in the strategic plan, because the core team didn't make the tough choices needed to reject the non-critical things.
- 6. It's a meaningless plan:** The vision, mission, and value statements are seen as frivolous and not supported by the strategic plan, or don't have buy-in.
- 7. It's a yearly event:** The strategy is only discussed once a year rather than becoming a regularly-referenced guide to how the organization is run.
- 8. Poor implementation:** The implementation isn't discussed in the strategic planning process and the planning document is seen as an end in itself.
- 9. There is no monitoring or evaluation:** There's no proper tracking of progress and, as a result, no one feels like anything is being achieved or moving forward.
- 10. There is no accountability:** If something goes wrong or questions need to be answered, it's considered "someone else's problem," rather than someone being explicitly accountable.
- 11. There is a lack of empowerment:** While being accountable is a good motivation for making sure things happen, it's also important that activities are implemented meaningfully, rather than just as a box ticking exercise.
- 12. There's no burning reason for the plan:** The organisation needs to agree on why the effort necessary to make a strategic plan is important and necessary.
- 13. Relying on bad information or no information:** The plan is built on false or bad information or untested assumptions and hunches. As a result, it is created on bad foundations.
- 14. Ignoring what the planning process reveals:** The planning process assessments and information indicate the organisation should go (or not go) in a certain direction, but the information is ignored.

15. **Being unrealistic about the ability to plan:** There is an unwillingness or inability to invest the time and effort necessary to undertake the planning process.
16. **Planning for planning's sake:** Planning becomes a substitute for actually doing something, so the whole process loses its purpose.
17. **Not having your house in order first:** The things that need to be done before the planning process begins are not properly addressed and end up derailing the process.
18. **Copying and pasting the plan:** The strategy is just a copy of other plans from other places, rather than based on an assessment of the individual and unique needs of the organisation itself.
19. **Ignoring the culture and readiness of the organisation:** Not fitting the strategic plan or the planning process into the culture, ethos and needs of the organisation.

Finishing your plan

What does your strategic plan look like? We've spent all this time developing it and creating it, but you will also need to share the plan with other people - so what should the final product look like?

A strategic plan should follow a pretty simple structure that does two things: 1. It should tell the story of the process, of how you reached your conclusions; and 2. It should answer all the questions that anyone would want answered.

Most of the content of what you need to write has already been generated; it's simply a case of fleshing it out into a readable structure – both for you and anyone else.

Tip



A variation of the following outline is a good way to present your plan.

1. Introduction
2. Summary of the plan
3. Vision, mission and values statements
4. Organisational history
5. Summary of the issues you need to address based on the information you gathered
6. Summary of your strategy, time line and activities
7. List of roles and responsibilities
8. Main objectives and milestones, along with how they will be measured and evaluated

If you were paying attention, you've probably realised that the outline we suggest for your strategic plan is very similar to the structure of this document. It's extremely important to use a clear structure and plain language when writing your plan so that anyone who reads it can easily understand what you're doing and why.

Think about how you can use words to create a visual map of where you are going and what you are doing step by step to get there. For example, if I needed to get to your house from my house, you could show me a map or, more likely, you'd give me a set of directions that describes the journey. You would describe all the steps along the way and all the things I need to take note of until I reached your house. Your instructions would say something like:

"Go down your street until you reach the first junction. Then turn left and then carry on until you see a café on the corner. Then you need to turn right and keep going until you reach the bridge. Now, you need to pay a toll charge on the bridge so you'll need to have some money with you..." You get the idea!

Articulate your strategic plan using in the same way, highlighting each key point – each objective you need to reach - along the journey.

Write your time line chronologically, month by month, highlighting any objectives and milestones for that month. Follow the critical path you noted in your mapping activity.

Note in particular any dependencies or milestones along the way, so you can evaluate how well you are doing as you go along.

For your milestones and evaluation, you will also need to include the sets of indicators you have created, along with the expected outcomes and who is responsible for each one.

Ultimately, writing your plan down serves four important purposes:

1. It allows everyone to understand how and why decisions were made.
2. It is something that you can, and should, refer back to for reality checks (and sanity checks!), for monitoring progress, and for adapting or revising when necessary.
3. It's a map you can follow to keep you focused as well as helping you deal with the inevitable distractions.
4. It can help you explain your work to others, including funders, the media, and supporters. If you are clear on what your goal is and how you plan to achieve it, it's much easier to get the support you need from others.

“
You can, you
should, and if you're
brave enough to start,
you will.

Stephen King
”

So, here we are. It's the last paragraph. If you've gotten this far and gone through the process, you should have a complete strategic plan for your organisation. Hopefully, you have achievable goals, a clear direction and you know exactly how you're going to get there...

All you have to do now is take that first step along your new path. All I can do now is say well done and wish you good luck!

