

THE ROLE OF STRATEGY IN AN ORGANISATION'S SUCCESS



WHY IS STRATEGY IMPORTANT?

Strategy is at the heart of an organisation's work. Without strategic thinking and a strategic framework, it is difficult for an organisation to know what it wants to achieve and how it will do so. A strategic process can allow an organisation to answer the following types of questions:

- Who are we as an organisation? What are our values?
- What problems are we trying to solve? What difference are we trying to make in society?
- Who else is working on these issues? What added value do we bring?
- Who are our main beneficiaries? How are we accountable to them?
- What do we want to achieve in the short and longer term? What kinds of activities will we carry out?
- How should we organise ourselves to achieve our goals in the most effective and efficient way?
- What resources do we have already? What else do we need in place to achieve our goals? How will we obtain the resources we need?

Documenting the outcomes of a strategic process can provide an important "roadmap" for an organisation and become a point of reference in guiding its choices, decisions and actions.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STRATEGIC PROCESS AND A STRATEGIC PLAN?

A strategic process helps an organisation to clarify, consolidate or establish its strategic framework through reflection, dialogue and consensus building. The vision, values and purpose of an organisation are anchored in the strategic framework; therefore, it is very important to ensure that, at the very least, all members (and other stakeholders, if possible) of an organisation participate in a strategic reflection process.

A strategic plan (in the form of a document) is formulated as the result of a strategic process. However, a strategic process does not always lead to the creation of a strategic plan.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS TO INTEGRATE INTO A STRATEGIC PROCESS?

- Doing a contextual analysis.
- Defining values.
- Agreeing on the organisational vision, mission and objectives.
- Identifying and analysing key stakeholders.
- Identifying unique skills and competencies.
- Taking stock of resources.

THE ROLE OF STRATEGY IN AN ORGANISATION'S SUCCESS



HOW CAN AN ORGANISATION ASSESS IF IT WOULD BENEFIT FROM A STRATEGIC PROCESS?

Below is a series of statements. The responses can help to determine whether an organisation would benefit from engaging in a strategic process or not. If most of an organisation's responses to the statements below are "no," then it would most likely benefit from engaging in a strategic process.

The organisation has defined the results it wants to achieve and there is consensus about this among staff and other key stakeholders.	Yes	No
The values of the organisation are often discussed and everyone agrees with and adheres to them.	Yes	No
The organisation's mission (mandate) clearly reflects the organisation's current objectives and activities, and the groups targeted, and indicates why this is important (purpose).	Yes	No
The organisation regularly reflects on its strengths and weaknesses and on the opportunities and challenges in relation to the broader context in which it works.	Yes	No
The organisation has articulated clear goals that outline what it aims to achieve and everyone knows what they are.	Yes	No
The organisation has clear indicators in place, by which it can measure the impact of its work.	Yes	No
The way that the organisation is structured internally makes sense in terms of efficiency and performance.	Yes	No
The different projects carried out by the organisation are coherent, and the activities related to each one are complementary and co-ordinated.	Yes	No
The external and internal environments in which the organisation operates are relatively stable, and there have been no major changes in these contexts over the past year.	Yes	No

NB. The information in this publication is based on Well Grounded's work of providing organisation development support to civil society groups in Central Africa, and on our learning from this work. Some elements are also adapted from a document authored by Janet Shapiro, published by CIVICUS in 2002: <http://www.civicus.org/view/media/Strategic%20Planning.pdf>