



Where are we going?

- Strategic/Business Planning (November 2018)

All of us can get so tied up with the 'day job' that we can very easily forget why and what we are supposed to be doing the day job for. We can also not look up and around enough and so miss the big picture and forget where we are supposed to be heading. As someone said you can sometimes get to the top of your ladder only to find out it's against the wrong wall! Those outside your organisation may also want to see that you have a clear road map, particularly if they are thinking about putting some funding in.

Therefore a Strategic Plan (or Business Plan) helps you think through all aspects of your organisation and plan for the future. It helps you get an overview of your organisation to help everyone in it (trustees, volunteers, staff) better understand what you are doing, why and how, as well as how you will develop over the next few years. It is also a useful tool for presenting yourself to funders and supporters. It can be a simple internal document or a more detailed and well laid out document for external audiences, or both or slightly different versions for different audiences (remember to keep your audience in mind when writing it so it meets their particular needs and/or potential queries).

A Strategic Plan may be for your whole organisation or for a particular project or part of your organisation (when it is sometimes called a Project Plan). Any plan needs to be a balance having enough detail so any reader can easily understand it against being too long so no one reads, and so understands, it. So it could be on two pages for a simple organisation or project but should be no longer than 25 or 30 pages (shorter is even better!).

Although any such plan will be signed off by the trustees or committee, the best plans are a joint effort, carried out in consultation with staff, volunteers, management and other interested parties. A plan will work best with the input and support of the people who will be expected to make it happen!

Before putting pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) you need to do some background work. Review what your organisation's ultimate purpose expressed as its **vision** (what the future should look like for your users) and **mission** (how you will help bring about the vision in a unique way). Since voluntary/community organisations are driven by values it is worth writing these down since they will affect the decisions you take and are what you stand for.

Then you need to build up a picture of your current situation. Two ideal tools for this are a **SWOT** analysis (identify your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and a **PESTLE** analysis (look at actual and potential changes in the outside

world and consider its impact on your organisation, these changes can be listed under political, economic, sociological, technological, legal and environmental).

What should be in a strategic plan?

Below are the common sections that are usually in a plan, add extra sections that you think are appropriate. Always make sure it is clearly written, that you discuss it with appropriate people and that any costs are based on real costs **and add up**. Once drafted show someone not involved in your organisation to test it makes sense to an outsider.

1: Summary

(Key Message: you can make a real difference to those in need)

At most a one page, 3 minute read, summing up the main points of the plan, clearly setting out the unmet need, the benefits of the project and why you are best placed to deliver it in an appealing way. You may find it's easier to write this last.

2: The Background/History of Your Organisation

(Key Message: your organisation can deliver)

Put details of your legal and charitable status, vision and mission, aims and objectives, and how you are managed. Briefly outline what services/activities you currently provide, who to and how they benefit. Talk about your track record and highlight achievements. Add experience and skills of committee members/senior staff.

3: The Needs for the Services Offered

(Key Message: there is a clear and vital unmet need)

You have to show how you are meeting a clear need, and that your activities are in demand. Include evidence - your own or any research or reports.

4: Strategic context

(Key Message: this work fits neatly into the aims and work of your organisation)

Show that meeting this need fits into your organisation's objects, vision, mission and strategy, and why you want to do it. Also set out why you are the best organisation to meet this need.

5: Aims and Objectives of the Project

(Key Message: you have clear idea of what difference the project will achieve)

This is the creative part, where you can think about what you would like to see happen in the next 3 years. This will depend on what you are set up to do, and the objects in your constitution, but goes into more detail.

Aims are statements detailing the purpose of your organisation or project. They can be seen as the changes you want to make, through your organisation or project. Don't have more than 6 aims. An example of an aim:

- To provide a variety of ways for people to understand the lives of disabled people through the mediums of art, drama, training and education.

Aims lead to outcomes - the benefits/changes that will be achieved. For the above aim an outcome might be:

- Local people will gain a greater insight into the lives of disabled people, which will lead to less discrimination against them.

Objectives are the tasks needed to achieve the aims. Each aim will have several objectives. An example of an objective for the above aim:

- Produce performances based on the lives of and experiences of disabled people.

Objectives will have targets (sometimes called outputs) - realistic numbers that you expect to achieve.

6: A Workplan

(Key Message: you have a logical, workable, appropriate and measurable plan)

The workplan gives details about each of the above tasks: when they will be done, and who will do them. The plan can include what changes must happen internally for you to deliver a successful project (restructuring, training, attract people with needed skills, new/updated policies, etc.). A plan can be used by the management committee and staff to monitor progress.

7: Resources Required

(Key Message: you have properly costed the project)

From the planning you have already done, you are now in a position to decide what resources you will need to carry out the work. Resources include:

Staff

How many staff hours will this work will need? What staff will you need to deliver this work? Fulltime or part-time? What skills do they need? On what wage? What extra costs will each worker have - recruitment, training etc.?

Work space and equipment

Think about where you will carry out all your activities. Do you need to buy a building or rent space? What equipment do you need to run an office and your activities? Is the space accessible to everyone?

Office costs

Bills like phone and mail costs, heating and lighting. Then costs of consumables like paper and envelopes.

8: Income

(Key Message: you can attract the money)

Identify where the income to cover the costs above may come from. What sources (individual giving, donations, grants, contracts, trading, etc.) and amounts are you aiming for? How, and when, will you be approaching funders? If you plan to use loans how will you pay this back with interest. Any in kind (including volunteer time) contributions?

9: Financial appraisal

(Key Message: your project is financially viable)

Set out any assumptions behind the plans set out in 7 and 8 (e.g. success rates, inflation, etc.) What would be the implications of costs increasing and/or of less income generated to the service and its outcomes? A budget can be created when you have got costs and quotes for the above. A 3 year budget is usual, with all predicted outgoings and income. This should also be combined with a Cash Flow Forecast, which looks at the timing of money flows in and out of the organisation to make sure you always have enough cash when needed. **Double** check that your figures add up. Any plan where figures do not add up will not instil confidence in those thinking of giving you money!

10: Promotion and Publicity Plan

(Key Message: you can get your message to those who need to know)

How will you advertise what you do to everyone who could use your services? How will you make sure no one is excluded? How will you target the kinds of people you most want to reach? How will you promote yourself to supporters, partners and potential funders?

11: Management

(Key Message: you can manage the work well)

It is always a good idea to draw out your staffing structure. Make sure people are clear what their roles are. Who will have responsibility for what? Who will people report to, and get supervision from? What is their individual track record?

12: Monitoring and Evaluation

(Key Message: you will know you are making a difference and learning to improve)

Have you got milestones to let you know your project plan is going to plan? How will you measure the success of the organisation or project? How will you involve those who are benefiting from your work in monitoring the project? How will you make sure you reach the targets you have set? How will you collect information about the work that you are doing? On paper, in a database? Who will do this and when? How will this information feed into improving the project? Who will analyse this information and act on it to make changes?

There are two types of information to collect: statistics about the quantity of work you do, and feedback to measure the effectiveness of your work.

13: Risk analysis

(Key Message: you can cope if things don't go to plan)

What could go wrong? Under or over use? Increased costs or decreased income? Lack of skills? Can you identify how likely these things are to go wrong and their impact? Can you identify ways to avoid, minimize or ameliorate their impact?

14: Supporting Information

(Key Message: if the reader wants more information look here)

Do you have any other information and/or documents that add evidence to your ability to carry out the project?

SOURCES/FURTHER INFORMATION

Business Balls. This free website has loads of free advice, templates and exercises including those relating to business planning. Although generally aimed at the private sector much can be adapted to ours.

www.businessballs.com/freebusinessplansandmarketingtemplates.htm

Business and Strategic Planning. Alan Lawrie, Directory of Social Change, 2014. One of the basic textbooks on planning in voluntary organisations with guides, templates and exercises. Find it on www.dsc.org.uk

Bournemouth CVS can help with advice and even help with putting together your business plan. Please contact us for more information.

This information sheet was produced by:

Bournemouth CVS

Boscombe Link, 3-5 Palmerston Road, Bournemouth BH1 4HN

01202 466130

contactus@bournemouthcvs.org.uk

www.bournemouthcvs.org.uk

Registered charity No. 1081381