



Overview of the Tool

The strategic planning process is not easy. This online version is comprised of 7 steps beginning with creating your planning committee to writing the final report. This process takes time, but does not have to take forever. Using online tools, you are in charge of how your organization works through the process and how much time you allocate to each step. Each step includes interactive worksheets.

Step 1: Establish a Planning Committee

Create a planning committee that represents the diverse interests in your community. Use the worksheets to focus on stakeholder interests and skills and to record potential committee members

Step 2: Define a Mission Statement

Create a sense of mission for your community organization. The 4 worksheets in this section help your committee to define the parameters of your mission - your purpose, values, the stakeholders you serve and the way you intend to conduct your business.

Step 3: Summarize the Results of Your Needs Assessment

The worksheets in this section provide a framework for you to summarize the most important findings of your needs assessment.

Step 4: Evaluate Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

The SWOT analysis allows you to objectively summarize your community's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that lie in the external environment, all representing forces that may greatly impact your organization.

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Step 5: Establish Goals

Develop goals to establish the direction you want to take for your community development initiatives. The worksheets in this section allow you to organize goals and determine the timeframe for each.

Step 6: Identify Objectives and Strategies

These next set of worksheets help to document the means of accomplishing the goals stated previously. For each goal, there is a worksheet to document objectives (the details behind the goal), strategies (the action steps), the resources you will need to fulfill the objective and a place to document whether those

resources exist locally. Also, this step includes a GANTT chart (timetable) to help you document responsibilities and deadlines.

Step 7: Prepare a Written Report

This final step, often the most difficult, is made easier using the online model. At this point all worksheets are reproduced and ready for editing in your final report. Select view to print the worksheets as they were entered, or select edit to fine-tune the report.



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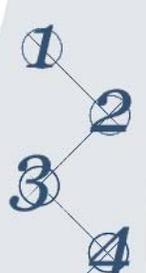
Step1:: Establish a Planning Committee

The planning efforts of your organization will depend on how well people with a stake in the community and organization are involved. The first step is to create a planning committee that represents the greater community and a broad spectrum of local interests and skills.

Create your planning committee now

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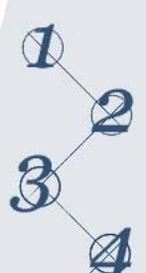
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Step2:: Define a mission Statement

The mission serves as the foundation for all major community development decisions. The mission statement should address four separate issues:

1. Who are the people (or stakeholders) your organization serves?
2. Why does your community organization exist?
3. How does your community organization intend to operate?
4. What are the principles and values which drive your organization?

An opportunity for brainstorming



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Step::3 Summarize the Results of Your Community Assessment



Community assessments can help your organization collect information from which to make better decisions about future directions. The assessment becomes a catalyst for an open discussion of how community development efforts could be focused.

Creating goals for your community needs to be based on realistic and robust assessments of your local opinions and an evaluation of community assets. Community assessments provide the data and the rationale for setting priorities for your community development efforts.

Community Assessments can be based on one or a combination of the following:

1. **The analysis of secondary data**
2. **A survey** (<http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/commsurvey/>)
3. **Focus Group discussions** (PDF file)
4. **Community Comparisons** (<http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/swap/welcome.html>)
5. **Illinois Mapping Program** (<http://www.iira.org/>)
6. **Telecommunications Readiness Index** (<http://www.communitydevelopment.uiuc.edu/tcii/>)

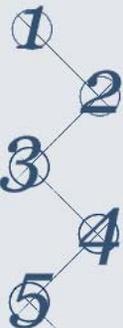
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Step::4 Evaluate Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats



Now that your community organization has identified your mission and completed a community assessment, it is important to focus on the critical issues that will most influence future direction of local development. SWOT analysis, explores the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to your community development objectives. This approach can be used to document the local community characteristics as well as the outside forces that will shape community development initiatives.

Another opportunity for brainstorming

Use the **SWOT Worksheet** to explore the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for your community

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Step 5: Establish Goals for Community Development

Develop goals to establish the direction you want to take for your community development initiatives. Goals express your aspirations for the future of your community. Goals need to focus on outcomes rather than activities.

Your goals should be based on how you defined your **community mission**, the results of your **community assessment** and of your **SWOT analysis**.

Distinguish between Long-term and Short-term goals. Long-term goals are those which describe your dreams and could be achieved within 5 to 10 years. Mid-term goals are those that can be achieved within 2 to 5 years, and short-term goals can be achieved within 2 years.

Define your goals for community development

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Step 6: Identify Objectives and Strategies

For each goal, identify a set of objectives and for each objective identify a set of strategies.

Objective and Strategy Worksheet

The objectives for each goal should address:

- Where will community development activities be directed?
- What community development actions will be taken?
- How will community development goals be achieved (including how resources will be allocated to achieve the objective)?
- Who is responsible for achieving this goal?
- When will community development goals be achieved?
- When will the objective be implemented?
- What is expected in the short term (1-2 years), mid term (3-5 years) and long term (6-10 years)?

Create objectives that are achievable. Objectives may present a difficult challenge to your organization; however, if they are far beyond your reach, your plan will fail. Each of your objectives must be measurable, otherwise, how will know when you have met your objective? Each needs to be flexible and adaptable to account for changing factors outside of your control. Finally, be certain that each objective is consistent with the overall plan.

Strategies define even more precisely the action steps needed to achieve your community objectives. Strategies are a set of actions that when completed, will help bring about the results described in an objective. Identify what resources you will need to complete each action step. Check whether those resources are currently available.

Strategies should answer the following questions:

- Where will community development actions take place?
- What actions will be taken to achieve this strategy?
- How will the community development strategy be achieved (including how resources will be allocated to achieve this strategy)?
- Who is responsible for completing the task outlined with this strategy?
- When will this strategy be completed?

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Step 7: Prepare a Written Report

Community Mission Statement

[view](#) [edit](#)

Community Assessment

[view](#) [edit](#)

SWOT Analysis Report

[view](#) [edit](#)

Goal/Objective/Strategy Worksheet

[view](#) [edit](#)

Gantt Chart

[view](#) [edit](#)

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