

# Strategic and Operational Planning for Sporting Organisations

Managing a sporting organisation or club can be a complex task. Day-to-day operations often involve a range of people, from paid employees to players and volunteers, and a range of tasks oriented towards achieving specific objectives. It is important to have strategic and operational plans in place to make sure the organisation has clearly defined objectives, with a common understanding among everyone involved of what is to be achieved and how.

## Why plan?

Plans help guide employees and volunteers to use their time and resources more effectively. Providing clear objectives and assigning tasks to be undertaken in line with these objectives leads to better outcomes and a more coordinated, productive organisation. Planning enables an organisation to:

- define its vision/mission, values and main objectives;
- have greater control over its direction;
- be proactive rather than reactive;
- build teamwork;
- improve financial performance;
- learn from and avoid past mistakes; and
- evaluate performance.

The strategic plan outlines what the organisation does, and what it wants to achieve (strategic priorities). The operational plan (often referred to as a business or action plan) covers the specific details of how the organisation will action and achieve its strategic priorities.

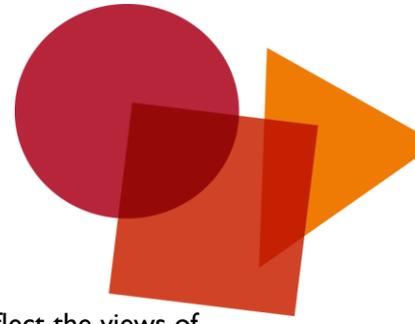
## The planning process

Think about what the planning process will look like. Who will be involved? Will you have one meeting together to plan or will you plan over multiple sessions with different people? How will you bring everyone involved together? How will you consolidate the organisation's strategic and operational plan?

### **Forming a planning committee**

It is helpful to form a planning committee to drive and oversee the planning process, including ensuring the plan is implemented and regularly reviewed. The planning committee typically includes a number of board members who are able to promote and engage members and other key people in the community (stakeholders) into the planning process. A project manager could also oversee the process.

Current as at August 2019



## **Information gathering**

Engaging with people during the planning process helps ensure the plans accurately reflect the views of everyone involved with the organisation. Consider conducting a pre-planning survey or SWOT analysis prior to the planning sessions to collect a range of information and data to assist in developing the plan. Visit the [Pre-planning](#) page on our website for more information.

## **Strategic and operational planning meetings**

It is important to involve a diverse range of people in this step, including board members, coaches, volunteers, employees, parents and/or players. This ensures the organisation's plan reflects the views of all key stakeholders. Engaging with people, both during pre-planning the planning process, is essential to ensure all those involved with the organisation develop ownership over the success of the final plan.

There are five basic questions an organisation needs to consider during the planning process. These are:

- Where is the organisation now?
- What does the organisation do?
- Where does the organisation want to be in the future?
- How will the organisation get there?
- How will the organisation know when they get there?

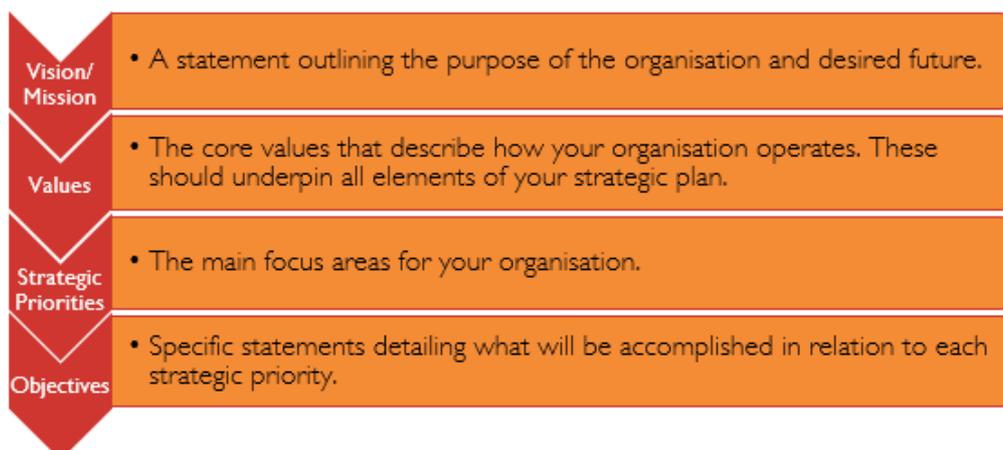
Engaging a good facilitator to run planning meetings is an important step. The facilitator will help guide the discussion, keep the group on task and manage any disagreements. It is important to appoint someone who is comfortable and well aware of the role of the facilitator. Visit the [Running a planning meeting](#) page on our website for meeting agenda templates and more information.

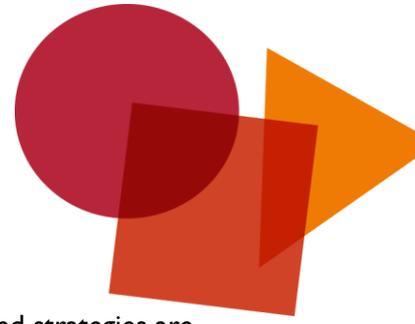
## **What to include in your plan**

There are some basic elements that should be in every plan. While the terminology may vary, the essential elements of a plan remain the same.

### **Strategic plan**

A strategic plan outlines the organisation's mission, vision for the future and the values that define how it does things. It provides a broad framework of priorities to be achieved in line with this and typically covers a three to five year period. A strategic plan identifies the areas that need particular attention during this time (strategic priorities) to ensure the organisation gets to where it wants to be. A number of objectives need to be identified that outline exactly how each strategic priority will be achieved.





See our [strategic plan template](#) to help develop a plan.

If the objectives identified in your strategic plan are to be achieved, it is essential related strategies are further mapped out in an operational plan that details specific actions to be undertaken.

### **Operational plan (or business plan)**

The operational plan details how the organisation will accomplish the strategic priorities and objectives outlined in the strategic plan. It applies to the life of the strategic plan, but should be reviewed on a regular basis (generally annually) to ensure sufficient progress is being made, and the priorities and objectives can be revised as necessary. An operational plan is usually aligned to the organisation's financial plan/year.

An operational plan includes specific objectives and actions to be undertaken in line with your strategic priorities. It outlines who is responsible for carrying out these actions, time frames, costs and key performance indicators in order to measure progress. The [operational planning grid template](#) is an efficient way of putting this information together.

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What exactly does your organisation want to achieve with respect to each strategic priority?</li></ul>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How will each objective be achieved? Provide a detailed description of the key actions to be undertaken.</li></ul>
Prioritise Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The importance of each particular action (low, medium or high). This indicates which actions should be completed earlier or later in the plan.</li></ul>
Timeframes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indicates the due date for completion of each action.</li></ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resource implications: financial, material and human resources.</li></ul>
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who is responsible for completing each action.</li></ul>
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indicators of what successful completion of each action looks like.</li></ul>
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess the potential for elements of your plan to be unsuccessful and plan to manage this.</li></ul>
Communication Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How you will communicate your plan to have maximum benefit.</li></ul>
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop annual systems to ensure your plan remains current and progress is monitored.</li></ul>



### ***Consult with your stakeholders***

A draft plan should be prepared and circulated to all stakeholders after the strategic planning meeting. It is important that everyone involved with the organisation has the opportunity to comment, as this will increase the likelihood of a sense of ownership and commitment towards the final plan.

### ***Implement the plan***

Once the plan has been finalised and approved by the board or committee executive, it's time to put words into action. It is important that the implementation of the strategic plan is promoted as widely and as often as possible. The more the plan is promoted, the more likely people will know about it and assist with its implementation.

### ***Evaluate progress***

Regularly review how the organisation is progressing in relation to the plan and whether it is on track to achieve the strategic priorities and objectives. This will enable the organisation to make any necessary changes to make sure the objectives are reached. The organisation may need to fine tune the details of the operational plan by changing time frames, allocation of resources etc along the way.

### ***Celebrate successes***

Recognise when strategic priorities and objectives have been achieved. Celebration of the organisation's successes will encourage staff and volunteers to continue working towards future strategic priorities, increase staff morale and lead to a greater sense of ownership of the strategic priorities and objectives.