

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Activity Sheet
January 2018

Creating a Strategic Plan for your Organization

(Part 2 – SWOT Analysis, Creating Objectives, Activities and Outputs)

Introduction

SWOT is an acronym that stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; a SWOT analysis is a structured planning method that assesses those four elements of an organization and its external environment. It is often used as part of the strategic planning process to identify where an organization has advantages, where there are areas that might need work, and what elements of the organization's external environment might help or hinder the organization's success.

SWOT analyses can help organizations develop “SMART” objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound), which are used to help focus goals into more specific language and guide the development of activities and outputs that will be generated by the strategic plan. Objectives provide measurable results (i.e., desired amount of change) that will benefit potential program recipients during a particular time-period.

Objectives of this Activity

- 1) To introduce the SWOT analysis and how it can be used as part of the strategic planning process.
- 2) To introduce SMART objectives, activities and outputs how they fit in the strategic planning process.
- 3) To provide references related to SWOT analysis, objectives and strategic planning.

Steps to conducting a SWOT Analysis and Creating Objectives

SWOT stands for:

S – Strengths – What are the organization's internal strengths? (e.g., skilled employees, strong board, etc.)

W – Weaknesses – What are the organization's internal weaknesses? (e.g., outdated IT, lack of grant-writing skills, etc.)

O – Opportunities – What external opportunities might move the organization forward? (e.g., networking opportunities, new policy direction, etc.)

T – Threats – What external threats might hold the organization back? (e.g., declining economy, increasing competition, etc.).

- 1) To conduct a SWOT analysis, place four empty flip chart papers on the wall, and on each one write a heading for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Ask stakeholders questions related to your organization around these areas and list responses on individual flip charts. For example, “What does our organization do that sets us apart from other organizations doing the same thing?” Capture the responses on the flip chart for strengths. Do the same for the other topics. The answers to these questions will help determine what activities the organization will pursue in the future.

- 2) Use the SWOT analysis to create specific goals and objectives that will assist the organization in moving forward and to address areas of weakness or threats.
 - Goals are higher-level areas of focus, for example “Improve child nutrition through animal agriculture.” They generally last longer than objectives (i.e., 3-5 years). The strategic plan should include no more than 3-5 goals.
 - Objectives are more specific than goals, and should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound). There should 2-3 objectives per goal. An example of an objective: “By 2020 (time frame) 30 families will receive 5 dairy cows each (specific and measurable) to improve family nutrition and increase income (achievable and relevant to context).”
- 3) Create activities for the objectives that will focus on how to achieve the objectives. Activities are very specific, and usually follow an order to achieve an objective. For example, to achieve the objective described above, you would need to:
 - a) Develop selection criteria and identify the families who will receive the cows by ____ (date)
 - b) Confirm that families have adequate facilities to house and feed the cows by ____
 - c) Select the best breed of cow and purchase the cows by ____
 - d) Distribute the cows to the families by ____
 - e) Create and administer a questionnaire to determine how the cows have improved family nutrition and income by ____
 - f) Write a report that summarizes findings from the questionnaire by ____
- 4) Create outputs that are aligned with the objectives. Outputs are tangible things that produce a desired outcome. Outputs include things such as a training manual or a new type of agricultural equipment. Outputs should be easy to measure—either the output was produced or it wasn’t. In the above example, an output could be a document that outlines criteria for family selection. Add a brief description of any challenges to achieving an output to help when reviewing and revising the strategic plan.
- 5) Objectives and activities are part of the planning framework or logic model that is used for organizational planning. An example of a planning framework can be found in [Part 3](#) of “Creating a Strategic Plan for your Organization.”

References

INGENAES “Organizational Capacity Building Workshops”: <http://ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/Organizational-Capacity-Building-Workshop-PowerPoint-Slides.pdf>. Kumaran, M., University of Florida, 2016.

INGENAES “Our Values, Mission and Vision”: http://ingenaes.illinois.edu/wp-content/uploads/ING-Activity-Sheet-2016_03-Our-Values-Mission-and-Vision-Henderson.pdf

“Seven Simple Steps in Strategic Planning”: Stover, R., 2018. <http://www.robertstover.com/steps-in-strategic-planning-process/>

SWOT Analysis: https://www.ryerson.ca/~kjensen/strategic_planning/swot.html

Creating SMART Objectives: https://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/resourcekit/evaluate/smart_objectives.html



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