

Planning – Why is Strategic Planning important?

Planning is the key to the long-term success of a Club/Association. Whether at a State or local level, your Club/Association needs to make long-term plans to progress and grow.

What does planning do?

- It looks at where your Club/Association has come from and where it is now, where it wants to go, and how it is going to get there.
- It identifies the main objectives of your Club/Association.
- It encourages members to get involved in the development of the Club/Association.
- It adjusts to take into account changes that have an impact on your Club/Association.
- It ensures that resources (human, physical and financial) are used properly.
- It evaluates your organisation, and brings order to the hectic business of running a sporting organisation.

What are strategic plans and operational plans?

A strategic plan is a document that contains the long-term (two to four year) objectives of the Club/Association. It lays out the overall mission and direction of the Club/Association and how objectives will be achieved. It also takes into account the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats, and outlines some strategies to address these. In general, a strategic plan incorporates the following items:

- Vision and/or mission statement
- Core business areas of your organisation
- Goals/objectives related to these business areas
- Strategies and/or tasks to achieve the goals/objectives
- Timelines for the completion of the strategies/tasks
- Resource implications, that is, what will it cost in people and financial terms?
- Performance indicators, that is, how will you know when the strategy/task is completed?
- Priorities for action - what should be undertaken in years one, two and three etc.?
- We have provided a sample strategic plan in the resources section.

All the tasks to be completed in the short term (within the next 12 months) are separated out of the strategic plan and placed into another document called an operational plan. The operational plan will guide your members or volunteers in their work during this period.

Preparing a strategic plan

There is no right or wrong way to prepare a strategic plan and they can vary from a few pages to a complex document with images, charts and diagrams. It should reflect the size and scope of your Club/Association. If you are new to preparing a strategic plan, we suggest that you keep it simple. The plan can grow and evolve over time as the Club/Association grows. There are some basic elements, however, that must be considered:

Does the plan provide a clear basis for the direction of the Club/Association?

If a new member picked it up, could they easily use it to find out where the Club/Association is going in the next few years?

Does the plan provide detail on how the objectives are going to be achieved, that is, does it prioritise the strategies and tasks, and include resource allocation and target setting?

If the National sports organisation (Netball Australia) or State sports organisation (Netball NSW) for the Club/Association has a strategic plan, does it refer to and reflect the priorities of the national plan or is it a separate document with no reference to the national plan?

What is a business plan?

A business plan is a detailed document that includes all of the information from your Club/Association's strategic plan, plus information about the Club/Association and what it will be doing in the coming years. Business plans are particularly helpful if you have commercial (money-earning) activities planned, such as opening a licensed bar. While the format for a business plan can vary considerably, in general terms it might contain the following.

Title page

This details the nature of the document, the name of the organisation, the period of time it relates to, and the date it was written.

List of contents

This lists the sections within the document and page references.

Executive summary

This is a broad statement about the background of the organisation, the purpose of the document, what is in it, how it was prepared, and what its intentions are.

Strategic plan

This details the organisation's mission statement and goals/objectives etc.

Marketing plan

This provides information and research related to market demographics, products and services, price structures, delivery of products or services, an analysis of the competition and promotional strategies.

Financial plan

This includes current and projected budgets, cash flows, and details of assets and liabilities.

Management plan

This explains the structure of the organisation such as the membership, board structure and staff employed. It may include an organisational chart and constitution or other relevant legal documents relating to ownership of premises etc.

Appendices

This contains other documents that may be referred to in the body of the business plan. Business plans are documents that require a significant amount of time, resources and expertise. They are often developed by the commercial sector and well-resourced non-commercial organisations.

Organisational charts

An organisational chart is simply a flow chart showing the lines of responsibility within the Club/Association – who is responsible to whom. It shows roles and reporting relationships and can include both paid and voluntary positions. An organisational chart is useful at all levels of the planning process.