**Strategic Planning**

A strategic plan clearly articulates **how** an organisation will achieve its purpose. It sets out a series of priorities and measurable objectives for the immediate future and the strategies by which these goals will be achieved and resourced.

Specifically, planning enables an organisation to:

* become proactive rather than reactive - to clarify organisation purpose and direction
* initiate and influence outcomes in favour of the organisation
* exert more control over its destiny - deciding where it wants to be in the future
* adopt a more systematic approach to change and reduce resistance to change
* improve financial performance and use resources effectively
* increase awareness of its operating environment (for example, competitors, government policy, threats)
* improve organisational control and coordination of activities
* develop teamwork off the field

Without adequate planning, the organisation frequently deals only with immediate problems and fails to consider future needs. Consequently, the organisation:

* tends to function on a random ad hoc basis
* will never seem to have time to anticipate tomorrow's problems
* does not create conditions to deal effectively with the future

**Elements of a good planning process**

**Establishment of a planning team:** Sporting clubs consist of many people who have diverse experiences and expectations of and from the organisation. It is beneficial to try and involve as many people in the planning process as possible as the more people consulted in the development of the plan, the more it will reflect the true direction of your club.

By being involved in the planning process, members will also feel that the plan belongs to them and they will be more comfortable in assisting with its implementation. Many members may have skills and experience in planning through their workplace or other clubs.

**Stakeholder identification**: Clubs have many stakeholders, internal and external, that have an interest in or impact upon the plan. Stakeholder buy-in requires involving these people and organisations in the decision-making process during planning to help gain consensus and commitment to the plan. It will also provide key insights into issues, challenges and opportunities that are not known or fully understood by the planning team. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

* committee members
* participants
* volunteers
* coaches
* officials
* sponsors
* State sporting organisation
* National sporting organisation
* Local Government
* State Government

**Stakeholder communication:** Planning processes are successful when stakeholders are notified that the process is going to be conducted and they are invited to contribute to the process (as determined by the impact/influence matrix). Stakeholders could contribute to the process through opportunities such as feedback surveys, forums and workshops.

**Alignment**: With many organisations governing and administering sport in Australia, it is vital that these organisations connect and pursue alignment opportunities. Club’s should consult with their state or national body on the sport’s broader plans. The involvement of affiliated organisations also enriches the plan because these groups bring a different and valuable perspective in the delivery of sporting opportunities.

**Evidence:** Whether assessing the current situation of a club, developing strategies or setting goals for the future; reliable evidence is required to support the opinions of those involved in the planning process. Decision making without evidence can lead to inefficient use of resources and ultimately decreases the overall performance of the organisation. The evidence base is typically drawn from sport-specific research as well as analysis of a clubs existing data (participant, financial, marketing / communications etc.) This sort of data is also vital for goal-setting and measuring and monitoring performance

**Development of an implementation, monitoring and review process:** The planning process should be a continual process rather than compiling documents that once finished, remain on the shelf untouched. Strategic documents should be referred to regularly and reviewed at least annually to ensure strategic priorities remain current, as well as to check if modifications are required as internal and external influences change and various objectives are achieved.

To ensure the whole planning process a valuable and worthwhile activity, it is important to:

* Assign responsibilities for implementation of strategies
* Develop practical timelines for implementation of action plans
* Annually undertake an evaluation and review of the plan
* Communicate the results of evaluations to all appropriate stakeholders

**Key planning terms**

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| **Purpose** | A purpose statement distils the fundamental reason(s) an organisation exists. It articulates **why** you matter and why you do what you do.  It is important for organisations to understand their purpose. Together with a defined set of values, a purpose statement will guide the direction, priorities and activities that it commits to over a period of time. |
| **Vision** | A strategic vision describes the route an organisation intends to take to develop and strengthen its business. It lays out the strategic course in preparing for the future. |
| **Objectives** | A set of clear statements of obtainable results or ends within a defined term. They are expressed as SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound, and are consistent with the organisation’s goals. |
| **Strategies** | Activities that are implemented towards the achievement of stated measurable objectives. They describe the actions to be taken by the club or association to achieve each objective. |
| **Key Performance Indicators** | Key performance indicators (KPIs) should enable an organisation to identify the criteria it will use to measure its performance against each strategic priority. KPIs will determine the extent to which the strategies have been achieved and are the measures by which evaluation and feedback on performance are based. They should be related to the strategies and could include quality, quantity and time components.  Examples of key performance indicators include:   * 5 per cent increase in registered members * 90 per cent member satisfaction with upgraded web-based communication systems |