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# PLANNING THE WORK

## AND WORKING WITH THE PLAN

by Judith B. Seltzer

ASCP ACTION PLAN

ACTIVITIES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	TIMELINES				
			DEC 2010	JAN 2011	FEB 2011	MAR 2011	APR 2011
ACTIVITY	SAPC (MR HASSAN) & Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy Committee Meetings</li> <li>Advocacy Tools</li> <li>Money for Logistics</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X
PERMITS REVISION	Alhaja UWANI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HCT Personnel</li> <li>Approvals</li> <li>Check List</li> <li>Money for logistics</li> </ul>	X	X	X		
MESSAGING NOTION	MRS ASABE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Mobilization Committee Meeting w/ Town Announcers</li> <li>Pamphlets</li> <li>Posters, Flyers</li> <li>Compass, etc</li> <li>Money for Printing Materials &amp; Logistics</li> </ul>	X		(1st meeting)		
IDENTIFYING (TRAINING OF PERSONNEL)	SAPC (MR HASSAN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants &amp; Facilitators</li> <li>Training Materials</li> <li>Training Venue</li> <li>Logistics</li> </ul>	X	X	X		
TESTS (Test kits assumed by agents & nurses etc)	SAPC (Mr Hassan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logistics</li> <li>Transport &amp; Logistics Personnel (2 of them)</li> <li>Funding for Consumables</li> </ul>	X			X	

*(Needs Assessment or Situation analysis use outcome to mobilize resources)*

*(Effectively Mobilize Resources)*

*(Conduct Training)*

*(Collect Supplies)*

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COVER PHOTO:

Origin: Nigeria, 2012.

Title: Woman pastes action plan developed during the Gombe LDP Held in Niger State.

Photo by MSH staff.

# PLANNING THE WORK AND WORKING WITH THE PLAN

CHAPTER 5 OF *HEALTH SYSTEMS IN ACTION*

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# Planning the Work and Working with the Plan

*Judith B. Seltzer*

1. Achieving Results by Strengthening Health Systems
2. Leading and Managing: Critical Competencies for Health Systems Strengthening
3. Governance of Health Systems and Health Organizations
4. Mainstreaming Gender Equality into Health Systems
5. Planning the Work and Working with the Plan
6. Managing Human Resources
7. Managing Finances and Related Systems
8. Managing Medicines and Health Products
9. Managing Information: Monitoring and Evaluation
10. Managing Health Service Delivery

This chapter attempts to simplify planning by introducing and defining a range of essential long- and short-term planning processes that managers of health programs or health services should implement. We focus on the primary organizational planning process: the development of a strategic plan and its conversion into an operational plan.

The chapter sets the stage with a discussion of strategic thinking and then covers each phase of the strategic planning process: analyzing the organization's internal and external environments, articulating or refining a mission, creating a vision, establishing strategic objectives, formulating strategies, and monitoring and evaluating results.

These phases are broken down into their fundamental steps, with definitions, instructions, and tools to help you and members of your planning team understand and apply each step. The chapter then addresses the critical link between strategic and operational planning and includes supplemental information about budgeting.

## Introduction

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The challenges faced by today's health organizations are complex and plentiful—gender inequality, reform processes, changing health needs of the population, lack of sufficient resources, new sources of funding, and new donor priorities, among others. To address these challenges and shape your organization's future, you and your team must do more than contemplate internal and external realities and manage and lead on a daily basis.

The new pressures require both public-sector and nongovernmental organizations to take on the challenge of designing their futures. As a manager of a health program or health services, you need to help your organization develop or re-examine its mission and vision and renew its commitment to that mission and vision. Once the mission and vision is shared by all, you can:

- establish strategic objectives that help achieve the mission;
- formulate strategies that allow your organization to take advantage of opportunities;
- use existing strengths to continuously adjust to the changing situations in the larger environment as well as at the community level.

These actions will help your organization fulfill its mission and turn its vision into reality.

Designing the future means making the right decisions *today* with a vision of tomorrow. To achieve this, an orderly process of reflection is important—this is the essence of what is known as planning. Planning is a tool that enhances the quality of decisions.

A plan functions like a blueprint: it defines the steps and decision points required to achieve a desired result or a larger goal. Although the goal might be, for example, an increase in the contraceptive prevalence rate or a reduction in infant deaths, if resources cannot be aligned with this goal, it may be necessary to find additional resources or adjust the goal to make it more attainable. Good plans, therefore, must be flexible.

Effective managers use plans as guidelines, rather than as rigid, unchangeable prescriptions. They adjust their plans according to changing circumstances and the results of monitoring.

### PLANNING WITH PURPOSE

We plan because the supply of material, financial, and human resources is limited. A carefully developed plan is the best way to guarantee that these limited resources are allocated, properly used, and accounted for during the prescribed time frame.

There are two contexts for planning. In the first, the quantity of resources available might be known with considerable accuracy, and the plan guides the maximum possible progress toward a goal using these available resources. Other times the availability of resources may be less clear, and the plan might be created to justify a request for resources to reach a stated goal. Whether the plan is developed before or after the allocation of resources, it



is intended to ensure the best return on investment, that is, the greatest possible achievement of results with the available resources.

Most important, we plan because planning is a cornerstone of managing and leading teams to achieve results.

## Linking planning to leading and managing for results

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How do good management and leadership contribute to strong plans? As [Figure 1](#) shows, planning is one of the four key management practices. It uses the organization's mission and vision as the bases for establishing its future direction and channeling its collective efforts in the chosen direction. Planning is a fundamental component of management.

Managers who lead effectively know that planning alone is not enough to achieve desired results: they use all the leading and managing practices listed in the framework. Applying these eight practices consistently leads to strong organizational capacity and health services, and, ultimately, lasting improvements in people's health.

Plans can and should be developed by groups and by individuals at different levels—central, provincial, district, facility, and community. Plans can also cover varying time periods: every three to five years, one year, a quarter, or a month. The appropriate type and timing of the plan depend on the organization's needs.

The process for strategic and operational planning can be viewed as a continuum made up of a series of whats and hows, as depicted in [Figure 2](#). The whats represent the steps in the strategic and operational planning continuum; the hows describe the actions needed to complete each step.

### WHY SOME PLANNING DOES NOT SUCCEED

We plan every day as individuals, managing our time and resources so we can achieve our goals. Still, when we plan at work, as part of an organization and a work team, we sometimes view planning as a meaningless ritual and a management burden—a process that consumes valuable time and resources and fails to move us toward the fulfillment of the mission and vision.

According to Lers Thisayakorn (2008), a consultant based in Thailand, it is not the practice or process of planning that fails. Rather it is the implementation of plans that fails. We have identified five factors that lead to this failure, some of which can be linked to the absence of sound management and leadership practices.

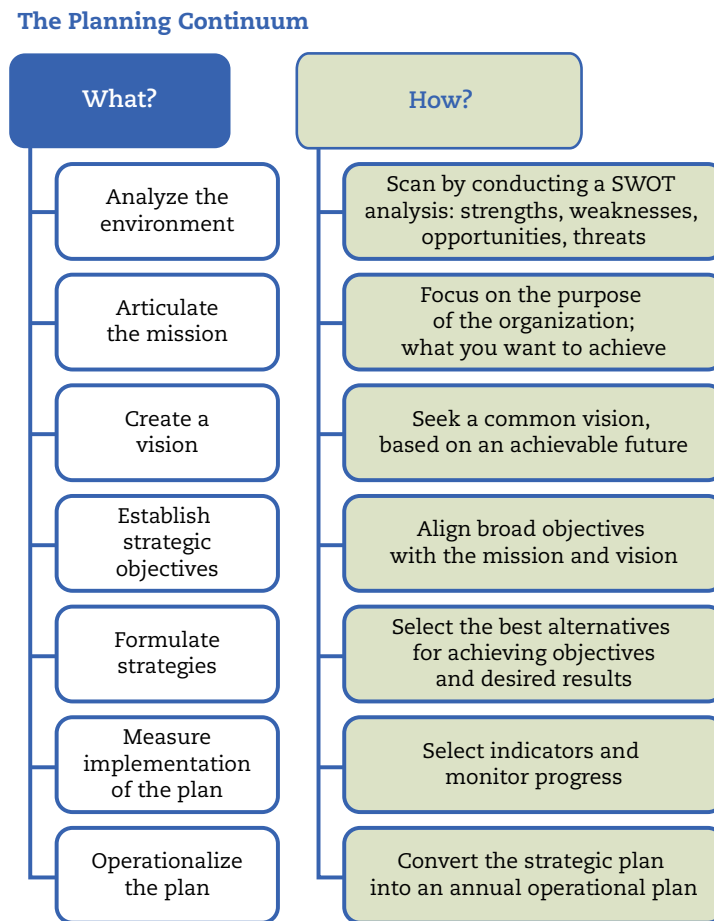
**Leaders fail to motivate staff.** Plans do not implement themselves; they need to be implemented by leaders at all levels of the organization. Implementing a plan requires aligning, motivating, and inspiring people, and assuring them that the results are important and worthy of their efforts.

FIGURE I. Leading and Managing Framework





FIGURE 2. Strategic and Operational Planning Continuum



**The planning process is static.** It is not uncommon for planning to become a routine process that starts with great energy and enthusiasm but evolves into a burden, resulting in a document that is viewed as an end in itself. This happens when planning is an occasion, unrelated to day-to-day responsibilities and forcing all other business aside. Once the plan is completed, normal activities resume and the plan becomes a static document, never to be implemented.

**Analysis is stale and myopic.** Shu Wei Wong, a prominent strategist and planner, asserts that planning is stale or shortsighted when managers focus too firmly on planning by numbers and correctly filling in templates (2007). Managers and their planning teams need to prepare to plan by **scanning** the current internal and external environments and using this information to project what these environments might look like in the future. In other words, they need to anchor the planning process in reliable data. Otherwise, even if the plan is implemented, chances are it will be ineffective.

**Leaders and managers are not aligned.** Great plans are those that are successfully implemented and make a major contribution to the fulfillment of an organization's mission and vision. This requires that leaders and managers **align** with the planning process.

If they are not aligned, the plan is usually relegated to the back burner, and implementation is rarely successful.

**There is a lack of connection between inputs and intended results.** As Stephen Covey (2004) contends, it is important to “start with the end in mind.” By understanding what results you want to produce and what future you want to create, you can plot the steps and actions required to arrive at that destination. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon to find plans in which inputs (resources used, such as personnel and equipment) are inadequate or inappropriate to the achievement of the desired results.

## Types of planning

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Planning is the process of mapping a route from point A to point B. There are several types of planning that can help you map the best way to reach your goal: strategic planning, operational planning, and business planning. These types are the most frequently used, and they are not mutually exclusive. In brief, the strategic plan establishes the general direction and broad goals of the organization over three to five years. The operational plan details the activities that will allow the organization to achieve its short-term goals. The business plan articulates new ideas or expansion efforts (which are often introduced in the strategic plan) and is used to secure funding for their development and launch.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is medium- to long-term planning that involves all the organization’s management areas and includes goals, strategic objectives, strategies, and measurable results. It focuses on broad and long-lasting issues related to the organization’s long-term effectiveness and survival. It asks and answers four questions:

1. Where are we now? (situational analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
2. Where do we want to go? (mission, vision, strategic objectives)
3. How will we get there? (strategies)
4. How will we know we are getting there? (measuring implementation, monitoring progress)

An organization’s board and management staff are usually responsible for strategic planning. However, the planning process should include input from all levels of the organization as well as stakeholders, for example major donors, relevant ministries and other government agencies, and beneficiaries of the organization’s services.

### OPERATIONAL PLANNING

The operational plan has a shorter time span—usually one year. It must be aligned with the strategic plan and define activities and objectives that will contribute in the near future to the strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan. The operational plan is more detailed than a strategic plan; it is often referred to as the annual work plan.

## BUSINESS PLANNING

Business planning is short- to mid-term planning. It is used to secure funding and make projections of the estimated financial and social return from the start-up of an organization, formation of a new business unit, or development and introduction of a new product or service offered by an established entity. A good business plan enables an organization to assess the viability of all its products and services and the resources required to launch new products and services.

## PLANNING FOR ALL OCCASIONS

This chapter emphasizes the link between strategic and operational plans. Because strategic plans define relatively ambitious goals, objectives, and strategies that are fundamental to the life and growth of an organization, they are often used to justify the allocation of resources. Strategic plans should be reviewed every year and operational plans aligned accordingly.

## Thinking strategically as a basis for planning

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Because planning is about making the desired future, or your organization's vision, a reality, the decisions you make as a manager or service provider will have an impact on the future of your organization and of the communities it serves. Making such decisions means that you and your planning team must think strategically about the interplay between what is occurring outside the organization and its effects on the internal workings of the organization. Together, you must scan to discern trends and future challenges, so you can best position your organization to respond effectively, and in a sustainable way, to a changing environment.

Strategic thinking promotes the generation of breakthrough ideas, creative concepts that are very different from those that have come before. It breaks through old or conventional ways of doing things, making it possible for you to serve your clients in dramatically new ways.

When embarking on any kind of a plan, strategic thinking will engender a fresh perspective on the issues that your organization is trying to address.

Strategic thinking compels you to ask the following questions before you start planning:

- What are the needs of the population our organization aims to serve?
- Is our organization currently meeting these needs?
- In what way could our organization meet needs that are not currently being met?

Asking and answering these questions may yield critical information about gaps in your organization's services; missed market opportunities; ways in which the organization can extend its reach with minimal incremental costs; and ways in which the organization can improve internally to be more efficient and effective.

## Embarking on the strategic planning process

### FORMING A BALANCED PLANNING TEAM

In his lectures, Edward B. Roberts of the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology describes a high-performing, innovative team as generally having members who possess specific characteristics, take on strategic roles, and carry out well-defined functions. The team often has a blend of characteristics, and individual members play different roles at different times. As the leader of a planning team, you should be aware that all these functions are needed for your team to be effective. It is important that you try to form a team whose members, as a group, possess all these characteristics, and to encourage them to play their roles, contributing in their own way to the team's work.

Note that although the core planning team will likely remain constant, the team will expand, as needed, to include board members and other key staff. [Table 1](#) describes the roles, characteristics, and functions of the members of a balanced team.

Even if you have had the opportunity to work on a balanced, innovative team, you know that a team requires a lot of encouragement to function well. Working as a team is not always easy. Box 1 provides approaches to dealing with the interpersonal issues that planning teams often encounter.

#### BOX 1. Addressing Team Tensions

It is possible for tensions to develop within a team due to the competing demands of planning for the future while implementing for today. Often some people are more committed than others, and they may well carry the entire burden of the work. These issues must be discussed openly among members of the planning team to avoid further tension or misgivings. The person in the role of manager needs to pay attention to the team's dynamics—communication, commitment, and engagement—and take action when the team is not performing as expected.

It is especially important for new teams to be aware of group dynamics, given that there is a tendency during the first stages of a team's formation to pay more attention to being inclusive and achieving group harmony than to acknowledging and appreciating the diversity of thought and experience represented on the team.

The planning team should not seek technical homogeneity. The team should instead embrace the distinct characteristics of team members and use them to stimulate new thinking, which is essential to drafting an effective and meaningful plan of any kind.

TABLE I. A Balanced Team: Roles, Characteristics, and Functions

Roles	Characteristics	Functions
<b>The Idea Generator</b>	This person has very keen technical skills and is considered an expert in his or her field. He or she likes to work on a conceptual level and deals well with abstractions. This person is considered highly innovative and tends to prefer working alone.	You can count on this person to solve problems, generate breakthrough ideas, and test the feasibility of these ideas.
<b>The Entrepreneur</b>	This person has strong application skills. He or she has a wide range of interests, is energetic and determined, and enjoys taking risks.	This person puts into action what others propose, sells the new idea to others in the organization, and secures resources.
<b>The Manager</b>	This person focuses on decision-making. He or she uses the organizational structure and systems to get things done. This person understands how all the functions of the organization fit together and respects procedures and processes. This is a manager who is capable of leading others.	This person provides the team with leadership and motivation. He or she organizes, coordinates, and supervises the team. This person sees that the planning process moves along efficiently and that administrative requirements and organizational needs are met.
<b>The Networker</b>	This person stays informed of what is happening inside and outside the organization. He or she knows what the competition is doing, what funders are looking for, and what clients want.	You can count on this person to gather intelligence and relay important news to others.
<b>The Champion</b>	This person represents the voice of experience. He or she is often more senior and offers objectivity and experience in developing new ideas.	This person provides access to the organization's power base, to get what the team needs from other parts of the organization and provide legitimacy and organizational confidence in the plan, ideas, and activities it contains. Furthermore, this person provides guidance to the team and helps members develop their skills and talents.

## Analyzing the external and internal environments

Where are we now?



The first stage of the strategic planning process asks: where are we now? The SWOT analysis enables you and your planning team to answer this question by carefully **scanning** the trends and conditions—internal and external, positive and negative—that can impact the ability of your organization to fulfill its mission and build a bright future. The SWOT analysis is a tool that helps you identify **opportunities and threats (OT)** in the external environment that are most relevant to your work and the **strengths and weaknesses (SW)** within the organization: the systems, structures, and cultural factors that can enhance or obstruct organizational effectiveness.

You can summarize your findings in the two columns of a SWOT matrix, as demonstrated in Table 2. The left-hand column describes the forces that negatively affect the organization as threats and those that positively affect it as opportunities. In the right-hand column, favorable factors are described as organizational strengths and those that negatively affect the organization are described as weaknesses. It is important to use concrete, current data and to agree on whether a situation is a positive or negative factor.

See [Appendix A](#) for templates for the SWOT matrix and the SWOT matrix with impact ratings.

Once you have classified all the trends and conditions in the external environment as opportunities or threats and those within the organization as strengths or weaknesses, you can rank each one according to its impact on the organization, as illustrated in [Table 3](#). The higher the number, the greater the impact.

TABLE 2. Example of a Completed SWOT Matrix

	External Environment		Internal Environment
Opportunities	USAID is focusing on repositioning family planning; therefore, Global Fund monies available for TB, AIDS, and malaria projects and HIV prevention are strongly tied to family planning and reproductive health.	Strengths	Coverage of our clients with modern methods of contraception increased by 17% over the last year.
Threats	Reductions in donor funding are outpacing efforts to ensure contraceptive security.	Weaknesses	It takes four weeks, on average, to restock modern methods of contraception at most service delivery points; supply is not keeping up with current or projected demand.



TABLE 3. SWOT Matrix with Impact Ratings

	External Environment	Impact		Internal Environment	Impact
Opportunities	USAID is focusing on repositioning family planning; therefore, Global Fund monies available for TB, AIDS, and malaria projects and HIV prevention are strongly tied to family planning and reproductive health.	4	Strengths	Coverage of our clients with modern methods of contraception increased by 17% over the last year.	3
Threats	Reductions in donor funding are outpacing efforts to ensure contraceptive security.	3	Weaknesses	It takes four weeks, on average, to restock modern methods of contraception at most service delivery points; supply is not keeping up with current or projected demand.	2

In addition to depicting your organization's current situation, the SWOT analysis helps you prepare for the next planning steps, articulating the mission and generating a vision of the future.

The results of the SWOT analysis allow you and your organization to gauge where you are relative to where you intend to be. They will help you to frame or revise your organization's mission and to create a vision of the future.

## Articulating the mission



The mission begins the answer to the second strategic planning question: where do we want to go? An organization's mission is its purpose, its reason for being. The mission statement describes clearly and concisely why the organization exists. The mission provides orientation, consistency, and meaning to the organization's decisions and activities at all levels.

Most organizations already have a mission statement, but these statements are often neglected or taken for granted by the staff. The statement of the mission is too important to be ignored or passed over. If there is no mission statement, one needs to be generated. If there is one, it should be re-examined periodically by current staff. For this reason, you and your team will benefit from devoting the early stages of the planning process to reviewing and, if necessary, revising your organization's mission statement.

## WHY DOES AN ORGANIZATION NEED A MISSION?

Consider the following anecdote:

A man walked by two workers who were cutting stones in scorching heat and asked them what they were doing. The first one was annoyed by the interruption: “As you can see,” he exclaimed, “I’m cutting stones.” The second one, in contrast, seemed to be excited by the question. “What I’m doing,” he explained, “is carving the foundation of a beautiful cathedral!”

Both workers were doing the same thing, under the same conditions. What was the reason for such a different response? The second worker was aware of the reason for doing the work, the ultimate purpose. Therefore, he was able to value his contribution to the construction of that beautiful dream. The first one was completely unaware of his contribution.

The mission is what allows members of an organization to clearly understand *why* they are doing the work. Only when health workers are aware of the organizational mission, or ultimate purpose, will they fully understand the meaning and the value of their efforts.

## CONSTRUCTING THE MISSION STATEMENT STEP-BY-STEP

To construct or revise a mission statement, the board of directors and managers and their teams must carefully scan the internal and external environments before answering four basic questions: (1) What do we do? (2) Whom do we serve? (3) How do we do it? and (4) Why do we do it? We discuss each question below and highlight the segment of a sample mission statement that answers that question.

**1. What do we do?** To start articulating or refining the mission, it is essential to describe the purpose of the organization: what it does or, if it is new, what it will do. To answer this question, the planning team must clearly identify and define the needs of the populations to be served and specify which of those needs the organization intends to address.

Our mission is to contribute to reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies [the what] by providing uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception, so that men and women of reproductive age can control the number and spacing of pregnancies.

**2. Whom do we serve?** The second step is to define the target population. It is important to recognize that no organization is large enough to meet the diverse needs of all possible users. Therefore, the mission statement should specify which groups within the target population are the organization’s priorities.

Our mission is to contribute to reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies by providing uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception, so that men and women of reproductive age [the who] can control the number and spacing of pregnancies.

**3. How do we do it?** The answer to this question describes the means, resources, or strategies by which the organization intends to reach its goals.

Our mission is to contribute to reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies by providing uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception [the how], so that men and women of reproductive age can control the number and spacing of pregnancies.

**4. Why do we do it?** The last question explores the basic reasons behind the organization's decision to do what it does. The answer generally describes a response to a broad social problem.

Our mission is to contribute to reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies by providing uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception, so that men and women of reproductive age can control the number and spacing of pregnancies [the why].

A well-framed mission will guide your organization's work over the long term and inspire your staff. You and your team will want to take the time to refine the language, asking for the opinions of staff who know the organization well. With their input, the mission will truly represent the what, whom, how, and why that your organization is about. Then you can finalize and disseminate the mission statement to staff and board members, those who are served by the organization, and the general public.

Box 2 provides two examples of compelling mission statements, one drafted by a local family planning organization and one from an international AIDS organization.

#### BOX 2. Examples of Mission Statements



**PROFAMILIA, Nicaragua:** Profamilia is a nongovernmental organization that contributes to improving the health of the Nicaraguan family, emphasizing sexual and reproductive health, through projects, programs, and educational research and integrated health care services with quality and warmth, and accessible prices.



**The International AIDS Alliance:** The Alliance strives to support communities to reduce the spread of HIV and to meet the challenges of AIDS. The Alliance works to prevent HIV infection; improve access to HIV treatment, care and support; and lessen the impact of HIV and AIDS worldwide, particularly among the most vulnerable and marginalized.

## Creating the vision



When the planning team is clear about current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and the fundamental purpose of your organization, you will continue by asking: where are we going? You are now ready to take on the challenge of constructing the desired future. It is the moment to dream, to decide what your organization wants to be in the future and how it wants to be viewed by the outside world.

The vision is like a guiding star. It fosters a shared commitment to the future you want to create and to the principles and values with which you expect to achieve them. It is a powerful picture of a desired state that provides a broad perspective and inspiration to keep working, overcome obstacles, and struggle to achieve results. The vision guides and focuses the organization's efforts and helps to align, inspire, motivate, and secure the commitment of each working group and individual within the organization.

### CREATING A SHARED VISION

Some people think that the vision must come from the organization's upper levels. Experience has shown, however, that a vision is more powerful when a larger number of people from various organizational levels develop it together. People commonly support what they help create, so a vision will be most effective if it is developed and owned by those whose work contributes to reaching it.

Depending on the level at which your planning team operates within the organization, you will want to include key actors from every work group in the process of developing the shared vision. Box 3 gives four examples of how people who study organizational planning describe visions.

#### BOX 3. What Experts Say about Vision

- According to Karl Albrecht (1994), the vision is the shared image of what we want our organization to be or to become.
- Burt Nanus (1986) says, "the vision is a realistic, believable, and attractive future for your organization.... such a motivating idea that it promotes the necessary skills, talents, and resources to make it happen and points out the way we intend to follow."
- For Jay Conger (2000), the vision is a mental image that represents a desirable future state, ideal, or dream with a vast scope.
- For Warren Blank (2001), it is similar to a wide-angle lens of awareness with a broad scope that allows people to investigate the future and encompass broad possibilities.

## CONSTRUCTING THE VISION STEP-BY-STEP

The development of the vision draws on the strategic thinking that brought new information and insights to the planning process. The vision refers to the needs of the target population and the commitment made to meet them, as described in the mission.

An effective vision for your organization will be tangible and descriptive—an image of the future that people can easily visualize. It will be compelling and inspiring—a powerful call to action. It should be challenging enough to demand the best efforts of everyone in the organization, but it must also be achievable so that people will work toward it.

In constructing the vision, you and your planning team should follow four steps:

**Step 1.** Keep the big picture in mind. Refer to your organization’s mission and the population you are supposed to serve so that the vision aligns with the mission.

**Step 2.** Answer the following questions:

- What will our organization look like in three to five years?
- What aspects of the mission will we have achieved and in what areas will we excel?
- What will make us most proud? (e.g., the health status of our beneficiaries, the quality of our services, the commitment and creativity of our staff, the financial stability of our organization).
- What values do we uphold, and how will they be reflected in our services and the way we run our organization?

Write down the answers to each of these questions and come to a consensus within your team.

**Step 3.** Look at your organization through the eyes of your target population, beneficiaries, donors, partners, collaborators, competitors, and society in general. For each of these groups, ask:

- How do we want these groups to see our organization in three to five years?
- What will they say about our services?
- What will they say about our staff?
- What will they say about our reputation in their communities?

Write down the answers to these questions and come to a consensus within your team.

**Step 4.** Translate these ideas into a few sentences that describe the desired future in a concrete manner, as seen in the example below:

We are widely recognized as the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception. Our services allow thousands of men and women of reproductive age to determine the number and spacing of their pregnancies.

Visions are often stated in the present tense, but the examples in [Box 4](#) show that this is not a hard and fast rule.

## BOX 4. Examples of Visions



**United Way International:** To be a global leader in intelligent and accountable philanthropy and have an impact in communities worldwide.



**Care International:** CARE International seeks a world of hope, tolerance, and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. CARE will be known everywhere for our unshakable commitment to the dignity of people.



**Stop TB Partnership:** Our vision is a TB-free world: the first children born this millennium will see TB eliminated in their lifetimes.

After you have completed Steps 1–4 and drafted the vision, invite a larger group of colleagues, in addition to the members of the planning team, to a visioning meeting. Gathering input from a group composed of people from different areas and levels will increase the likelihood of constructing a vision that is motivational to all. This larger group will benefit from reviewing examples from comparable organizations.

Once the organizational mission and vision are clear—that is, you know who you are, where you are, and where you want to go—you can celebrate the achievement and share it at all levels of the organization. The next step in the planning process is to contemplate how you are going to fulfill that destiny. This is where an organization's strategic objectives come into play.

## Establishing strategic objectives



The final answer to where are we going lies in the objectives—the desired results—that will help to transform your organization's mission and vision into actionable, measurable pursuits. Objectives set the course for management decisions and become the criteria against which it is possible to measure achievements.

If they are to serve their purpose, objectives must be SMART:

- S** = Specific
- M** = Measurable
- A** = Appropriate to the scope of activities
- R** = Realistic within the allotted time
- T** = Time bound, with a specific date for completion



Just as the types of planning differ in terms of scope, time period, and level of specificity, objectives can fall within a range. Some are broad and long term, the results of organizational strategies that involve the highest management levels. Others are somewhat shorter term and represent the link between the strategic plan and the corresponding operational plan. Their scope of action involves working teams or operational units. The shortest-term objectives are the desired results of a particular activity or task that falls within the scope of a small group or an individual.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Strategic objectives are the results the organization intends to achieve in the medium to long term. They derive from the organizational vision and are established by the organization's management, in consultation with the heads of various departments or units. They should be approved by the board of directors in the case of civil society organizations or by a senior management team in the case of a public-sector institution.

Strategic objectives are important because they:

- allow the organization's vision to become a reality;
- serve to direct organizational, departmental/unit, and individual plans;
- provide orientation on the use of the organization's resources;
- constitute the basis for supervising, monitoring, and evaluating results.

## DEVELOPING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES STEP-BY-STEP

Strategic objectives contain the following elements:

- **Action:** What must be done
- **Subject:** The topic or group the action addresses
- **Description:** The characteristics of the action
- **Where:** The location at which the action will take place
- **When:** By what date the action will be completed
- **Limits/conditions:** The scope or conditions under which the action will be implemented
- **Results:** The measurable effect of implementing the action

These elements are organized in the matrix shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Blank Matrix to Develop Strategic Objectives

Action	Subject	Description	Where	When	Limits/ Conditions	Measurable Desired Results

There are three steps to follow when developing strategic objectives, and they require time and focus. They are particularly important and useful if the number and scope of actions proposed exceed available funding and organizational capacity.

**Step 1.** Because the strategic objectives allow the vision to become a reality, the vision is your starting point. You and your planning team can identify and separate the main topics covered in the vision and transform them into SMART strategic objectives.

Look again at our sample vision:

We are widely recognized as the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception. Our services allow thousands of men and women of reproductive age to determine the number and spacing of their pregnancies.

The main topics in the vision are:

- **Topic 1:** Become positioned in the minds of our intended recipients and others as the “leading provider” and the best choice when accessing modern methods of contraception.
- **Topic 2:** Make access to modern methods of contraception “easy.”
- **Topic 3:** Make sure that access to modern methods of contraception is “uninterrupted.”
- **Topic 4:** Provide “high-quality, modern methods of contraception.”

**Step 2.** Complete the matrix in [Table 4](#) for these four topics. For each topic, fill in the information in all columns: the action to be carried out, its subject, description, location, implementation and dates, limits or conditions, and desired measurable result. See [Table 5](#) for an example of how an organization might spell out these details.

**Step 3.** Summarize the information you have entered for each topic as a strategic objective. Write these objectives clearly and check to see that they are SMART: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ppropriate, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime bound. For example:

By the end of 2013, the organization must:

- position itself in the minds of intended recipients and others as the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception;
- provide regular access to modern methods of contraception in facilities with the highest number of men and women of reproductive age in their catchment areas;
- have a supply chain that functions optimally to ensure an uninterrupted supply of modern methods of contraception;
- maintain client satisfaction levels above 95 percent at all organizational facilities, especially for clients who are new users of modern methods of contraception.

TABLE 5. Matrix to Develop Strategic Objectives: Completed Example

Action	Subject	Description	Where	When	Limits/Conditions	Desired Measurable Results
1	Secure a position	As the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception	In the entire country	By the end of 2013	Through easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception	By the end of 2013, client survey data will demonstrate that over 80% of respondents consider us the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception
2	Provide access	Regular access to modern methods of contraception	Throughout the entire organization	By the end of 2010	Prioritizing the facilities with the highest number of men and women of reproductive age	By the end of 2010, more than 75% of our clients will indicate that they have regular access to modern methods of contraception through our facilities
3	Ensure uninterrupted contraceptive supply	Supply chain functions optimally to ensure uninterrupted supply of methods	At the organization and facility levels	By the end of 2010	Offering the best working conditions and incentives in accordance with performance results and quality of care	By the end of 2010, our supply system will conform fully to international standards, ensuring an uninterrupted supply of modern methods of contraception
4	Maintain client satisfaction	Above 95% satisfaction	In all facilities	By the end of 2009	Special attention given to new users of modern methods of contraception	By the end of 2009, client satisfaction levels will be above 95% at all facilities, especially for those clients who are new users of modern methods of contraception

## Formulating strategies



Strategies are statements of what is to be done. By answering the question of how will we get there, they define the route by which an organization will achieve its strategic objectives in the medium and long terms.

There are almost always alternative routes toward the achievement of strategic objectives. To find the best strategies for your organization involves considering all possible strategies and then choosing one or more that will best contribute to the achievement of the corresponding strategic objectives. Desired measurable results are the “measurable outcomes” that will be produced when the strategies are implemented.

To determine which strategies are best suited to helping your organization achieve its strategic objectives, consider the questions in Box 5.

To stimulate your thinking about strategies, there is a list of key questions in the “Strategies” column of [Table 6](#).

Questions like these will help you and your planning team identify possible strategies for achieving your strategic objectives and desired results. You can then use the criteria in Box 5 to choose the best alternatives.

### BOX 5. Which Strategies Are Best?

- Will the strategy contribute to the achievement of your strategic objectives and desired measurable results?
- Does the strategy have the potential to make the greatest contribution while using the fewest resources?
- Can the strategy be implemented, given the resources and context within which you work?
- Is the strategy compatible with other strategies selected for the same and other strategic objectives?
- Will the strategy maximize external opportunities and internal strengths? Will it address internal weaknesses and external threats?

TABLE 6. Matrix to Formulate Strategies to Align with Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Desired Measurable Results	Strategies
1 Position the organization's image in the minds of our target population as the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception	By the end of 2013, client survey data will demonstrate that over 80% of respondents consider us the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception	What needs to be done to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ be a leading provider?</li> <li>■ offer uninterrupted access?</li> </ul>
2 Offer clients the easiest access to modern methods of contraception in the facilities with the highest number of men and women of reproductive age	By the end of 2010, more than 75% of our clients will indicate that they have regular access to modern methods of contraception through our facilities	What needs to be done to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ determine the facilities with the highest demand?</li> <li>■ facilitate access to our high-demand facilities?</li> </ul>
3 Have a supply chain that functions optimally to ensure uninterrupted supply of modern methods of contraception	By the end of 2010, our supply system will conform fully to international standards, ensuring an uninterrupted supply of modern methods of contraception	What needs to be done to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ improve the supply system?</li> <li>■ hire and retain the best staff to manage the system?</li> <li>■ meet international standards for a fully functional supply system?</li> </ul>
4 Maintain client satisfaction levels above 95% at all facilities, especially for those clients who are new users of modern methods of contraception	By the end of 2009, client satisfaction levels will be above 95% at all facilities, especially for those clients who are new users of modern methods of contraception	What needs to be done to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ increase the level of client satisfaction?</li> <li>■ attract and retain new users of modern methods of contraception?</li> </ul>

## Measuring the implementation of the plan



Your strategic plan sets a direction and strategies for achieving strategic objectives and desired measurable results. It is crucial for you as a manager of a health program or health services to monitor and measure whether and how well your organization is carrying out its strategies and the extent to which you are achieving your strategic objectives.

The backbone of measurement is results. These may be outputs (the immediate or direct product of activities) and outcomes (short-term changes in a beneficiary population as a result of activities). The achievement of those outputs and outcomes is determined by indicators—measurable markers of change in a condition, capability, quantity, or quality over time. The indicators you incorporate into your plan will allow you to regularly monitor progress toward your desired results and to evaluate the actual results achieved.

### SELECTING INDICATORS

When data on the indicator are collected, recorded, and analyzed, a good indicator makes complex concepts readily measurable. A good performance indicator has a number of desirable features (WHO 1994). It should be:

- **valid:** it measures the phenomenon it is intended to measure;
- **reliable:** it produces the same results when used more than once to measure the same thing;
- **precise:** it is defined with clear, specific terms;
- **discrete:** it captures a single component or aspect of a more complex result (it measures only one thing, not a set of things);
- **easily understood:** both experts and nonexperts can grasp its meaning;
- **comparable:** it avoids narrow or unique definitions whose values would be difficult to compare with other results;
- **feasible to use:** it is based on data that are easy and inexpensive to obtain.

Those who analyze data pertaining to results have to be very careful that those results can be attributed to the organization's products, services, or activities. If other factors have contributed to the results, it is important to note them in reports.

If you want to closely track progress toward desired measurable results, you can set milestones. Milestones are verifiable markers that confirm that the proper path is being followed to carry out the strategy and obtain results. For example, if your desired result is to provide modern methods of contraception to 75 percent of your clients, and one strategy is to provide up-to-date information to potential clients, a milestone might be the completion of an accurate determination of the number of women of reproductive age residing in your catchment area. Another strategy to achieve this result might be to provide family planning services at all facilities; milestones might be confirmation that all facilities have a system in place to maintain an adequate supply of high-demand family planning methods.



Although it is important for inputs (such as human resources) to be in place for processes to be carried out as planned and for the immediate outputs (such as the number of new family planning users) to be positive, the true value of an activity lies in the *outcome* (such as the contraceptive prevalence rate among the targeted population). If the intervention has a positive short- to medium-term outcome—a positive effect on the behavior of the target audience—it is likely that, in combination with other interventions, it will contribute to long-term improvements in health.

Although you might want to include some other types of indicators, you can concentrate on output and outcome indicators to monitor the progress and results of your planned interventions. Some examples of persuasive indicators follow.

If a strategic objective is to improve the health behaviors or health status of the target population, you might use outcome indicators to demonstrate:

- changes in health practices;
- changes in health beliefs or attitudes;
- an increase in the level of knowledge of selected health issues.

If a strategic objective is to improve the target population's access to health or social services, you might use output or outcome indicators to demonstrate:

- increases in the availability of health or social services;
- increases in the number of visits to health or social service establishments;
- decreases in the costs to the user to access health or social services.

If a strategic objective is to improve the quality of health or social services offered to the target population, you can use outcome indicators to demonstrate:

- increases in demand for the products or services offered;
- increases in client satisfaction with the products or services offered;
- closer adherence to commonly accepted standards of quality in providing these services or products.

TABLE 7. Blank Results Monitoring Chart

Strategic Objective 1:				
Desired Measurable Result:				
Strategy 1:				
Intermediate Result/Milestone	Date of Completion	Responsible Party	Indicator	Means of Verification

You will find more information about outputs, outcomes, and the selection and use of indicators in Chapter 9 of this handbook.

[Table 7](#) offers a format to help you organize and monitor output and outcome indicators against the strategic objectives, desired measurable results, and strategies in your plan. You and your planning team will want to agree on how often to monitor results and milestones in the strategic plan; many organizations find it useful to do so once or twice a year.

At this point, you and your team have completed the strategic planning process and are ready to produce the plan itself. This document should be simple, readable, and concrete, with a structure that reflects the process. We suggest a structure similar to that presented in Box 6.

The written document should be accompanied by a summary visual presentation in a table (see sample template in [Appendix B](#)).

#### BOX 6. Suggested Structure of the Strategic Plan

- **Introduction.** Briefly explain when and how the planning process took place, which concerns or circumstances the plan responds to, who participated, and how the plan will be used.
- **Analysis of the environment.** Summarize the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats that you identified through the SWOT analysis.
- **The mission, vision, and strategic objectives.** Present the well-written statements of these three critical elements and explain how the mission and vision led to the strategic objectives.
- **Strategies.** Present the strategies that you propose to use to achieve the results of each strategic objective. Write a brief explanation of why each strategy was chosen.
- **Measuring implementation.** Present the [Results Monitoring Chart](#), write a brief explanation of the choice of indicators, and describe the process and schedule for reviewing the plan.
- **Conclusion.** Add any final comments and point out that annual operational plans will be developed on the basis of the strategic plan.

## Converting the strategic plan into an operational plan



When you and your planning team have developed the strategic plan and it has been approved and circulated, your organization will be prepared to produce annual operational plans that will translate strategic objectives and strategies into comprehensive packages of activities. Operational plans refer to the strategic objectives, desired measurable results, and strategies from the strategic plan. You should list selected activities for each strategy, and then for each activity specify the elements shown in [Figure 3](#).

FIGURE 3. Components of an Operational Plan



You will find an operational planning template in [Appendix C](#).

### SELECTING ACTIVITIES

Activities are needed to implement the strategies and achieve the results you have outlined in your strategic plan. Activities should be expressed in clear, concrete terms and in chronological order, as seen in [Table 8](#).

Each activity listed in an operational plan should be specific enough to allow you to:

- assign a cost to it;
- cite deliverables to be produced;
- identify a result to be achieved;
- prepare a schedule for accomplishing it;
- define the quality (controlled through routine monitoring of activities);
- assign people to oversee implementation and monitoring of activities.

Brainstorming possible activities for each strategy can be one of the most exciting parts of planning. It allows you and your team to draw on all your experience and insights to propose creative approaches that will bring the strategies to life.

It is likely that there are many activities that could do the job, and it is equally likely that your organization cannot carry out all of them. If the number and scope of possible activities exceed available funding and organizational capacity, you can use the Feasibility Checklist in [Figure 4](#) and the Activity Selection Decision Tree (see sample in [Table 9](#)) to help you select the activities that have the greatest chance of being carried out successfully.

The Feasibility Checklist presents a series of internal and external conditions that are criteria for assessing an activity. After you and your team have made an exhaustive activity list for each strategy, you may find that you can immediately eliminate several activities because they obviously do not meet some of the criteria. This should leave you with a shorter list of promising activities.

When you have a list of promising activities, you can use the Activity Selection Decision Tree to discuss each activity and generate its score against the criteria. The activities with

TABLE 8. Sample Matrix to Identify Activities That Correspond to Strategies

Strategic Objectives	Desired Measurable Results	Strategies	Activities
1 Position the organization's image in the minds of our target population as the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception.	By the end of 2013, client survey data will demonstrate that over 80% of respondents consider us the leading provider of easy and uninterrupted access to high-quality, modern methods of contraception.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Determine the unmet needs, desires, and obstacles to access of potential family planning (FP) clients.</li> <li>■ Improve tools for supply chain management.</li> <li>■ Position organization as leading provider of modern methods of contraception.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conduct a survey of women of reproductive age to determine FP preferences and obstacles to access.</li> <li>■ Train clinic staff in approved method of stock control to keep contraceptives available.</li> <li>■ Produce illustrated flyer describing services and featuring quotes from satisfied clients.</li> </ul>

FIGURE 4. Feasibility Checklist

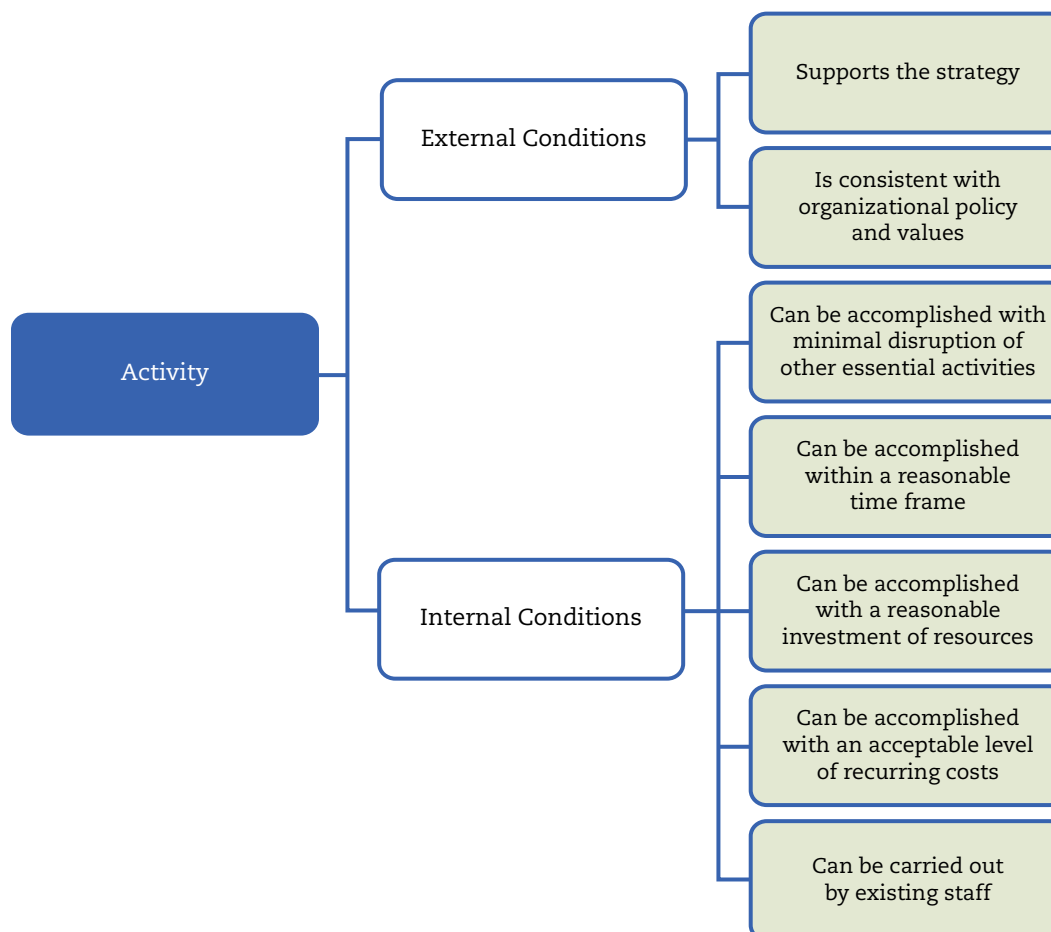


TABLE 9. Sample Activity Selection Decision Tree

Activity: Conduct a mixed media campaign informing clients about our array of modern family planning methods, prices, and the quality of our services.

Conditions and Criteria	Rating (scale of 1–3)	Weight (scale of 1–3)	Total Score (rating × weight)	Evidence
<b>External Conditions</b>				
Activity is socially acceptable	3	2	6	Using modern methods of family planning is a commonly accepted practice in our country.
Activity falls within acceptable policy framework	2	3	6	The country has a national strategy to reposition family planning and is currently developing corresponding policies to promote the procurement, sale, distribution, and use of modern methods of contraception.
<b>Internal Conditions</b>				
Activity supports strategic objectives	3	3	9	Activity strongly supports the strategic objectives of awareness, access, and quality of family planning services and supplies.
Time frame is reasonable	1	1	1	Yes.
Investment is reasonable	3	2	6	The investment is in line with multimedia campaigns for other health promotion activities.
Recurring costs are acceptable	2	3	6	Recurring costs will be acceptable; however, certain media may be used more sparingly due to their relative high cost.
Activity is administratively feasible	3	2	6	This activity is feasible because contracting mechanisms with media outlets are already in place from other similar activities.
Staff are available and qualified	2	3	6	The staff is available and experienced in doing such multimedia campaigns.
<b>Feasibility Rating</b>			46	<b>Comments:</b>
Range: 8–72			(sum of Total Score column)	The activity proposed here has a score of 46 and therefore is rated as “feasible.”
< 24 = not very feasible				
25–50 = feasible				
51–72 = highly feasible				

**Instructions:**

**Rating:** For the proposed activity described at the top of the form, there is a series of **Conditions and Criteria** in the first column that should be met. Assess the extent to which the condition is currently met, and assign a value according to the following scale:  
 1 = does not fit criterion  
 2 = partially fits criterion  
 3 = fully fits criterion

**Weight:** For each of the Conditions and Criteria assign a “weight” that indicates the relative importance of the specific condition or criterion to the execution of the activity, as follows:  
 1 = not relevant to success  
 2 = important for success  
 3 = essential for success

**Evidence:** In the column entitled “Evidence,” please describe the circumstances that support the rating you assigned to each specific Condition or Criterion.

the highest scores are the most likely to be successfully implemented. If several activities come up with the same or similar scores, the team can discuss and come to agreement on the ones that should be initiated first.

In [Appendix D](#), you will find a template for the decision tree. You may wish to change or add criteria to fit your organization's circumstances.

## MONITORING THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

Many organizations find it essential to monitor operational plans in quarterly reviews; some young organizations conduct these reviews every month to be sure that they stay on the path to their desired results. Frequent monitoring serves to identify the “triple threat” of variables: scheduling delays, budget reductions or overruns, or changes in the scope of activities.

When one of these three variables is threatened, another is impacted. As activities get pushed back, the completion of the scope of work is delayed. When the budget is reduced, the full scope of activities cannot be implemented. And when the scope is too great for the budget, the schedule will not be met until more funds are secured. This destructive interaction can be mitigated by tracking activities, budget, and deliverables and making adjustments to align the activities to the budget and the deliverables to the schedule.

Careful tracking often requires breaking each activity down into its discrete tasks. The smaller the task, the more closely you can follow your progress and make any necessary adjustments.

A simple monitoring and evaluation plan will enable you to monitor each indicator, as seen in [Table 10](#).

## COSTING AND BUDGETING ACTIVITIES

A budget projects the costs, and, in many cases, the revenues of an activity, project, or organization. It quantifies the organization's goal and objectives by guiding the allocation of financial and human resources. A budget can be used with periodic expenditure reports to review expected costs against actual spending, identify cost-effective programs, predict cash needs, determine where costs must be cut, and provide input into difficult decisions, such as which projects or activities to discontinue.

Costs or expenses are the financial outlays or resources used to deliver a product or service or to implement a project or activity. Such charges may be related to employing personnel, procuring supplies, and maintaining equipment.

Accurate and complete budgets that are monitored throughout the implementation of the operational plan are critical. Budgets are designed to meet two sets of needs. For operational purposes, budgets help an organization allocate available resources as effectively as possible and monitor and control costs. For management purposes, budgets help managers make decisions about the mix and scope of activities and projects to be undertaken during the year.



TABLE 10. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Indicator Status		Monitoring and Evaluation Activities	Persons Responsible	Schedule											
Indicator	Baseline	Projected		Month											
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Strategy 1: Determine unmet needs and desires of FP clients</b>															
Percent of women of reproductive age using modern methods of contraception	20%	40%	Conduct a 30-cluster survey in communities served by clinic	Health educator, nurse midwife											
<b>Strategy 2: Improve tools for supply chain management</b>															
Number of clinic staff trained in stock control methodology															
<b>Strategy 3: Position the organization as leading provider of modern methods of contraception</b>															
Number of flyers produced and distributed															

To prepare the budget for your operational plan, it is important to have the help of someone with solid experience in financial management and budgeting. Technical and program staff who work alongside the budgeter need to specify what is entailed in carrying out the planned activities and gather information about unit costs for key line items, including:

- salaries and wages;
- consultant costs;
- travel and transportation;
- facilities and supplies;
- other direct costs (costs associated solely with the execution of the activity, such as printing or reproduction, communications, postage and shipping, supplies and materials, and outside services);
- other indirect costs (costs that are not exclusively associated with the execution of the activity).

You can read more about budgets and financial management in Chapter 7 of this handbook.

### PLANNING FOR NEW INITIATIVES

At this point in the planning process, you will have developed a strategic plan and converted it into an operational or annual work plan. If your strategic plan indicates that the organization should design and introduce new products or services (such as female condoms or adolescent reproductive health services) or expand the target population in a major way (for example, reaching out to people living with HIV & AIDS as potential family planning clients), you can develop a business plan to gauge the feasibility and risk of these new endeavors. You would use the business plan to secure funding for these new ventures.

Please see [“Business Planning to Transform Your Organization”](#) (MSH 2003) for a detailed discussion of this topic.

Use Box 7 to help you assess the strength of your plan and make sure that you have not overlooked any important points.

#### BOX 7. Summary: The Elements of a Good Plan

Successful implementation starts with a good plan. There are elements that will make a plan more likely to be successfully implemented. Ask yourself the following questions to see if you have accounted for all these elements.

- Is the plan simple?
- Is it easy to understand and to act on?
- Does it communicate in a clear and practical way?
- Is the plan specific?
- Are its strategic objectives aligned with the mission and vision?
- Are the strategies in line with the strategic objectives?
- Will the strategies help the organization achieve its desired measurable results?
- Does the plan include specific activities, each with dates of completion, persons responsible, and budget requirements?
- Is the plan realistic?
- Are the measures and schedule for activity completion realistic?

## Proven practices

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- Although planning is one of the four key management practices, planning alone is not enough to achieve desired results. Supporting it with all the other leading and managing practices leads to strong organizational capacity, better services, and, ultimately, lasting improvements in people's health.
- Although strategic plans, operational plans, and business plans have different time spans and are developed and used at different levels, they are not mutually exclusive. In particular, operational or annual plans should be based on the content and strategic priorities outlined in the strategic plan.
- Strategic planning benefits from a well-balanced team composed of an interdisciplinary group of colleagues with distinct characteristics and functions.
- You and your planning team can use your organization's mission to create a future vision that guides the selection of the organization's strategic objectives. You can check the integrity of the strategic objectives by conducting a modified SWOT analysis and then formulate strategies that align with those objectives.
- To convert the strategic plan into an operational plan, you and your team can use the feasibility checklist and priority activity matrix to select the activities that will best fulfill the strategic objectives, define indicators of accomplishment, and assign costs to each activity. You may want to seek expert help in determining costs and preparing the budget.
- Frequent monitoring will help reduce scheduling delays, budget reductions or overruns, or changes in the scope of activities. If you incorporate output and outcome indicators in your operational plan, you can then develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to monitor progress toward your desired results and evaluate the actual results achieved.

## Glossary of planning terms

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**activities:** The specific tasks needed to implement the strategies and meet the strategic objectives outlined in your strategic plan. Activities should be expressed in clear, concrete terms, and in chronological order.

**business planning:** Short- to mid-term planning. A business plan is used to secure funding and make projections of the estimated financial and social return for starting up organization, establishing a new business unit, or—in the case of an ongoing entity—developing and introducing a new product or service. A good business plan enables an organization to assess the viability of all its products and services and the feasibility of new products and services.

**critical factor:** An essential element of the performance of a particular internal system, such as the restocking time of the supply chain system or the timeliness of reports from a financial system.

**indicator:** A measurable marker of change over time in a condition, capability, quantity, or quality. The indicators you incorporate into your plan will allow you to evaluate the actual results achieved by the execution of the activities programmed in your plan.

**measurable results:** The outcomes that will be produced when the strategies are implemented.

**mission:** The statement that describes in a clear and concise manner why the organization exists—its purpose. The mission provides orientation, uniformity, and meaning to the organization's decisions and activities at all levels. It is the core around which staff members focus their best efforts.

**operational objectives:** Short-term goals that represent the link between the strategic plan and a corresponding operational plan. The working teams or operational teams establish and carry out the objectives.

**operational planning:** Has a short-term scope, usually one year. Its focus is achieving objectives and executing activities in the near future. Operational planning is often referred to as the annual operational plan or the annual work plan, and it must be aligned with the strategic plan.

**outcome:** A short-term change in a beneficiary population as a result of an activity or set of activities.

**output:** The immediate or direct product of an activity.

**strategic objectives:** What the organization intends to achieve in the medium to long term. Strategic objectives are established by the organization's management, in consultation with various management units throughout the organization, and approved by the board of directors, in the case of civil society organizations.

**strategic planning:** Medium- to long-term planning that involves all of the organization's management areas. Its content is relatively general and includes goals, strategic objectives, strategies, and measurable results. It focuses on broad and long-lasting issues that will foster the organization's long-term effectiveness and survival.

**strategy:** A statement of what is to be done, that, when accomplished, will signify achievement of the organization's strategic objectives.

**SWOT analysis:** A tool that helps an organization identify opportunities and threats (OT) in the external environment that are most relevant to its work, and the strengths and weaknesses (SW) within the organization: the systems, structures, and cultural factors that can enhance or obstruct organizational effectiveness.

**vision:** The image of an organization's desired future state that a team, organization, project, or program can move toward by taking action.

## References and resources

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## Appendices

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**Appendix A.** SWOT Matrixes

**Appendix B.** Strategic Planning Template

**Appendix C.** Operational Planning Template

**Appendix D.** Activity Selection Decision Tree Template

## APPENDIX A. SWOT Matrixes

SWOT Matrix Template

	External Environment		Internal Environment
Opportunities		Strengths	
Threats		Weaknesses	

SWOT Matrix with Impact Ratings

	External Environment	Impact		Internal Environment	Impact
Opportunities			Strengths		
Threats			Weaknesses		



APPENDIX B. Strategic Planning Template

Mission	Vision	Strategic Objectives	Desired Measurable Results	Strategies



## APPENDIX D. Activity Selection Decision Tree Template

Activity:

Conditions and Criteria	Rating (scale of 1–3)	Weight (scale of 1–3)	Total Score (rating x weight)	Evidence
<b>External Conditions</b>				
Activity is socially acceptable				
Activity falls within acceptable policy framework				
<b>Internal Conditions</b>				
Activity supports strategic objectives				
Time frame is reasonable				
Investment is reasonable				
Recurring costs are acceptable				
Activity is administratively feasible				
Staff are available and qualified				

**Comments:**

**Feasibility Rating**

Range: 8–72 (sum of Total Score column)

< 24 = not very feasible

25–50 = feasible

51–72 = highly feasible

**Instructions:**

**Rating:** For the proposed activity described at the top of the form, there is a series of **Conditions and Criteria** in the first column that should be met. Assess the extent to which the condition is currently met, and assign a value according to the following scale:  
 1 = does not fit criterion  
 2 = partially fits criterion  
 3 = fully fits criterion

**Weight:** For each of the Conditions and Criteria assign a “weight” that indicates the relative importance of the specific condition or criterion to the execution of the activity, as follows:  
 1 = not relevant to success  
 2 = important for success  
 3 = essential for success

**Evidence:** In the column entitled “Evidence,” please describe the circumstances that support the rating you assigned to each specific Condition or Criterion.