

Neighbourhood House Strategic Planning Framework



What is a Strategic Plan?

As the name suggests, it is a document that outlines the organisation's goals and the strategy to achieve them. The plan is valuable not only to help you identify the steps to ensure you meet your goals, but it's an important document to help funders, staff, volunteers, participants and partners to see the "big picture" for your centre.

Why this Framework?

There are a myriad of strategic planning processes and frameworks available online, however many of them are tailored for large for-profit companies and their focus is on revenue and reach rather than accessibility and impact. Yes, financial stability is necessary in this context but making money is not the ultimate goal, so many of the online options will not be relevant.

Also, in the Neighbourhood House environment, there are a number of valuable resources at your fingertips that will help inform strategic priorities. You just need to know what they are, where they are and how to use them. This Framework provides guidance around this.

Whilst you are not expected to memorise all nine steps, they are intentionally simplified to make the process easier for Coordinators and committees.

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A Strategic Plan is informed by the following sources:

COMMUNITY NEED: What are the pressing issues, gaps, trends and current reform in the broader community and how does this translate into service delivery?

EXISTING DATA: Who are your current participants, what services are they receiving and who is missing out?

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: Who are your stakeholders, what do they want to see change, what do they want to see continue? Do you have the appropriate methods in place to engage their views in a meaningful way?

COMMITTEE DIRECTION: What do the committee see as the primary issues? Are there internal capacity building concerns, sustainability priorities or capital works that the committee have prioritised?

Each of these sources feed into the following planning cycle:

GATHER: Using the existing available resources and the tools provided, the first step is to gather the information you need to best understand your centre.

ANALYSE: The second step is the process of analysing the information you have gathered to determine specific gaps, strengths, areas of improvement and trends that are important for forward planning. This should include completing comprehensive SWOT analysis.

CONSULT: In addition to the data you have collected, you also need to talk to people. Seek the views of your valuable stakeholders – participants, the broader community, partners, the sector, staff and volunteers. Stakeholder consultation assists in validating the data and understanding the community need.

PRIORITISE: Now that you have collected all this information you need to consolidate and prioritise – you can't do everything for everyone, so narrow down your plan to a select few priorities.

SET GOALS: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable and Timely (SMART) goals significantly increases the likelihood of the successful implementation and achievement of your Strategic Plan.

FINALISE: This step refers to the process of reviewing, editing and getting the official sign off on your Strategic Plan. It can be a quick and easy step if there are no road blocks and everyone has been on board from the beginning.

PROMOTE: A Strategic Plan is a high level 'big picture' document designed to promote an organisation's priorities, approach and commitment to the community. It is no good sitting on the Coordinators shelf for its duration. Committees, staff and volunteer should be familiar with their Strategic Plan and live and breathe its content. Participants, partners and other stakeholders should be able to access it and understand it. There are a variety of ways in which you can bring your Strategic Plan to life.

MONITOR: Ensure there is a plan in place to monitor the achievement of the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan.

REVIEW: A mid cycle review is simply the process of reviewing the monitoring or tracking documentation to identify any concerns or trends in the achievement of the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. At the end of the cycle, a more comprehensive review must take place, following the steps in this Framework, to prepare for the following planning process.

Upon completion of the Strategic Plan, the following sub-plans can be developed:

COORDINATOR ANNUAL PLAN: This plan is underpinned by the Strategic Plan priorities and provides a detailed and specific breakdown of each activity required to achieve each SMART goal. It will include timeframes, required resources, measurable outcomes and allocated persons responsible. It should be reviewed and updated annually.

FINANCIAL PLAN / ANNUAL BUDGET: Each year there must be an annual budget devised which is closely monitored by the Committee. This budget must reflect the priorities in the Strategic Plan. An additional Financial Plan may be of value for centres experiencing financial instability, significant change in funding or additional services to ensure these changes are managed appropriately.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN: In some cases, a centre may prioritise increasing participant numbers, broadening their reach to include a new demographic, seeking new partnerships or just raising the profile of the centre. In these situations a Community Engagement Plan highlights the way in which the centre will deliver on those specific priorities.

CAPITAL PLAN: A Capital Plan outlines the centres goals in relation to the capital facilities for example identifying upgrades, renovations or relocation to new premises. The high level 'big picture' capital priorities should be captured in the Strategic Plan with the specific deliverables detailed in the Capital Plan.

There are a number of other plans that may or may not be of value to a centre, however they must align with the Strategic Plan and be informed by the relevant sources.