

Developing Strategic Partnership (New Partnership Model) in NGO

Strategic Implementation and Planning

by

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1. Background

Strategic planning can be very elusive and difficult to do well in many non-profit organisations (NGOs), this usually happens due to either strategic plans are not available or are available and just sitting around somewhere on the shelf and not a living document that helps to give clear directions to make both current and future decisions. Strategic planning should provide guiding principles for how to do it well and also identify the best tools and methods to use.

Strategy could mean different things to different people, but putting the right strategic plan in place offers some key opportunities to create buy-in. First to be able to see the big picture for the future, secondly to listen to and build better relationships across a wide range of stakeholders, thirdly, prioritise where to focus energies and resources in the future to maximise its potential for achieving its mission. And finally, to help bring coherence to different projects, parts of the organisation and to measure performance effectively.

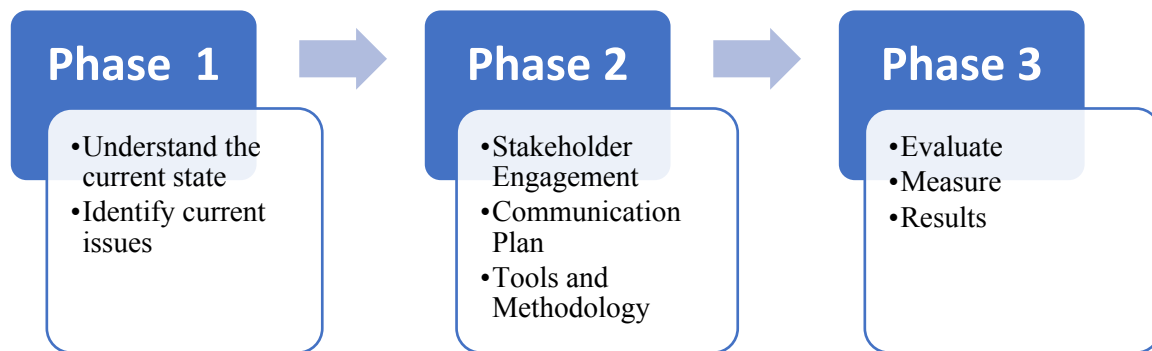
2. Aim and Objectives

To create a value creation process that benefits the organisation, the NGO is entering into a strategic sponsoring collaboration and connection with a Strategic Alliance, the NGO aims to change its Partners behaviour. To increase the scale of their cross- sector collaborations and thus enhance their sustainability. The fundamental aim is to develop a strategy that allows the NGO's improve the scale of their collaboration with the business sector to increase the numbers of business partners in their Portfolio. Working with this NGO has highlighted key components and essential approaches and showcasing practical experiences of doing strategic planning/implementation with NGOs.

3. Key Objectives

1. Develop a more successful strategy that aligns to their specific purpose and vision.
2. Investigate new opportunities to enhance their sustainability and get stakeholder agreement.
3. Adoption of new and business-like approaches to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Define new partnership contract – Merge activities and mission towards a more collective actions and organisation integration.

4. Key Phases



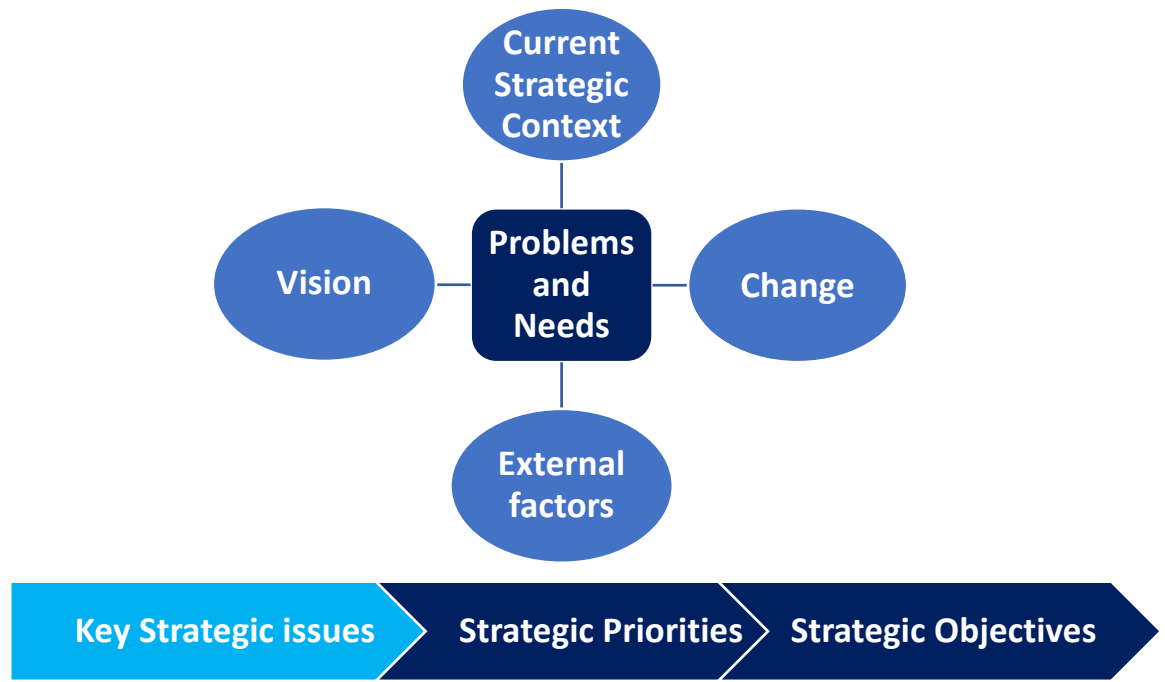
4.1. Strategic Context Current Analysis - The Current State

It is very important to understand the question of “**Where are we now?**”. This can be often missed or ignored because there is more focus on the future, especially when the existing strategy is not properly documented or not documented at all. “Only 51 percent of senior leaders can list their organizations top three strategies” – MIT, Senior stakeholders in organisations always assume that they understand and know the strategy so it doesn’t need to be documented or visibility of this is not needed for the future. A strategic plan is a plan that puts on paper both short and long term chosen direction, to plan the next step which is to improve their collaboration with the business sector and increase the numbers of business partners in their portfolio, an initial review of the strategic context current state is important to know to be able to plan the desired future. This also helps to visualise current collaboration, understand if there are any fundamental issues and key lessons learnt from past mistakes.

Strategy creates a path that take an organisation from where we are now to where we want to be. Eight questions to help identify the above are as follow:

1. What is the vision?
2. Do we have a clear documented existing strategy?
3. If yes, Is the current strategy fully understood by all key stakeholders (Partners, Trustees, Donors, Staff and Volunteers)?
4. How has the organisation managed strategy planning and implementation in the last 5 years?
5. Is there a live strategic framework that currently underpins the current organisation design including roles and responsibilities? If yes is there a communication strategy and plan aligned to this.

6. Are there any existing programmes or projects running already that is aligned to the future strategic thinking? If yes what are the lesson learnt and the measures in place.
7. What are the identified unique strengths and weakness of our organisation around the current strategy? (Current issues/lesson learnt etc)
8. What drives current resources? Is the current structure just donor driven?



4.2. Keys steps to understanding the problem (Table 1)

Phases	Activities	Engagement method
1 Understand the current state Identify the current issues <i>“Understanding the Strategic Model Change Pre-work”</i>	- Define a change approach and agree on a Strategic implementation approach (PO) - Understanding the current state of the existing Strategy (I) (FG) - Understand and evaluation of what needs to change. (PO) - Define what needs to change – Future Strategy (PO) (FG) - Identify what is available and what needs to change, identify the gaps, and incorporate what needs to be incorporated. (I) - Understand the business model strategic alignment going forward and how this will support the strategic planning and implementation process. (PO)	- One to one Interview with Senior Operation Managers – to get an individual understanding of what they understand about current strategy and their current engagements - PO (Participatory Observations) – Senior management teams discussions on the change management approach. - FG (Focus Groups) – Senior management teams discuss to analyse further and discuss the gaps within their current strategic capabilities and agree on key next steps. - FG (Focus Groups) - Engage all Senior Operational Managers and other key stakeholders to review business model components definitions.

4.3. Current Issues identified

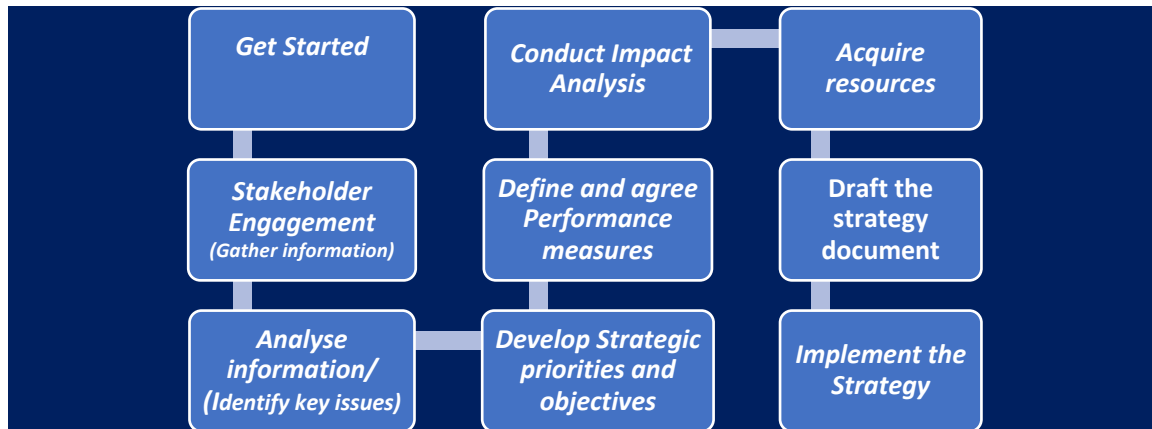
- Lack of clarity of stakeholders’ strategic intent and operational requirements deteriorates the implementability of strategy.
- Conflicting inter-organizational business processes deteriorate the implementability of Strategy.
- Conflicting processes refer to business processes, within and between stakeholders, which are redundant, inconsistent with, oppose or weaken other processes, causing value discrepancies
- Unilateral decision-making refers to a lack of consensus between managers on collective matters, including but not limited to contracts, scope, service level agreements and key performance indicators.
- Within most non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ***business model concepts are not used***. This means there is no way to organise organisational components, communicate organisation goals quickly with stakeholders, and create a system that could produce value for both customers and the organisation itself. Most NGO’s’ Business models are structured around their ability to pay team members in country programmes around the world, for delivering measurable, pre-agreed upon impact through programmes that have been designed and their donors (Funders) have agreed

to. It is not adequately structured to anticipate and adapt to a large-scale change in context”. (WEF, 2020)

- Difficulty in predicting the future, almost impossible to do especially with turbulent global environment.
- The need to always secure funding from donors, to fund projects or pay salaries and this can be risky to prioritise especially if the donors decide not to fund the NGO anymore.
- Lack of strategic thinking due to considerable pressure to meet needs and there might be strong vested interests and comfort levels in remaining in the status quo.

It is important to identify the key strategic issues to be able to define the strategic priorities and objectives.

5. Strategic development process lifecycle.



Source - Strategy Implementation Institute Body of Knowledge, First Edition 2021

The agreed strategic development process lifecycle can vary based on the type of organisation, size etc. In a small NGO the process evolves and moves around frequently due to constant change or lack of available stakeholders to be involved in the lifecycle process. This is due to the dynamic process of change of the NGO business models and it is important to identify the groups that will be involved focusing on the power to influence, frequency to contact or availability, subject matter experts and the change team. A stakeholder analysis is very useful at this stage in deciding who should be involved in the strategy development process.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

A strategic change incorporates a new corporate culture and necessitates behavioural changes, contingent on the business model's evolution concerning the organisation's future and the fulfilment of its vision and mission. All staff members, including the CEO, executive directors, operational managers, coordinators, administrative employees, and volunteer workers, must be involved in the strategic planning but in most NGO's, this is not the case - the top management for policy and decision making, and the field staff and volunteers for understanding the core details on the field. This may change based on the structure of the organisation. Aside from governance, management is supposed to do impact analysis (review) to verify that the organisation's vision is adhered to and ensure that the necessary resources and tools are in place to execute this.

Strategic planning provides an excellent opportunity to gather the views and understand the needs of NGO's beneficiaries, staff, managers, donors, other NGOs and other stakeholders of the organisation. By acknowledging the views and needs of different stakeholders during the process of strategy development, even if they are not accommodated, can lend some legitimacy to such an exercise.

Adopting a participatory approach to strategy development can also have significant impact such as team building, improved organisational communication, and can even signal a commitment to changing the organisational culture. Although this can also do the opposite when it fails. Participation creates a sense of ownership in the process of strategy development and ownership encourages commitment. These commitments help the strategic planning and implementation to be likely more successful.

6.1. Stakeholder Engagement - Current Issues

Furthermore, the CEO and other senior managers highlighted the challenge of employee resistance due to the lack of adequate management. To address the same, however, the management is ensuring that everyone on the ground in all the different offices across the different countries is aware of the new strategic model shift, that every employee understands what they are doing, has the correct information at the right time, the proper planning in place and resources in place. The management further acknowledges that managers take responsibility for ensuring that their teams are aware and committed to the shift.

From a managerial standpoint, if managers are unable to convey a clear understanding of the change across the areas that will be affected by their employees or and articulate the right actions, it may create a barrier. Hence, it is pertinent to ensure that people understand and are comfortable with the change. Some common issues below:

- **Lack of involvement** - Any strategy development process should involve the partners (or beneficiaries or clients) all staff members, including the CEO, executive directors, operational managers, coordinators, administrative employees, and volunteer workers, of the NGO in some way. This should be done top bottom and also bottom up. For the lower level staff all too often their voices are excluded when deciding what the NGO should focus on and how it should work. If this is the case, then development remains a top-down donor-driven initiative, where ‘we know best what you need’ prevails.
- **Weak Leadership** - There is also the question of the role of the board in developing strategy, it is important for ownership and governance that the board should be involved from the outset, but the degree of involvement should depend on the situation. In the end the board have to approve the strategy, but this does not mean they have to develop it themselves. There is a risk that a board, which is too distant from the realities on the ground, will develop something unrealistic and out of touch. Field staff probably have the best view of what would work, but may be too intimately involved to think outside of the box.

Clearly it is important in any strategic planning process to think through clearly who needs to be involved, when and how.

7. Communication

The right level of communication delivered at the right time is extremely important. A very good communication plan and strategy should be available to guide leaders on the engagement of staff and key stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation to enhance effort and promote collaboration and effective communication.

7.1. Communication planning activities (Table 2)

Aim	Key Activities
Defining the right communication method	1. Identify key stakeholders. 2. Create a stakeholder matrix – See template in appendix (7.18.2) 3. Define roles and responsibilities and identifying key stakeholders 4. Define engagement and preferred communication method. 5. Define and design a communication process

Aim	Key Activities
	6. Work with the Sponsor and lead Managers to approve the roles and responsibilities. 7. Agree and sign off communication plans
Key Stakeholders	Sponsor/Lead Manager/Senior Managers
Engagement method	Workshops, focus groups
Deliverables	Stakeholder identification and Matrix, Communication strategy and plans from implementation.

7.2. Communication tools and plans (Table 3)

Communication Process	Key Activities	Current Communication methods	Planned Future Communication Method
Vision	- Town Hall Model to communicate the change and the keys steps of planning and implementation - What it means for the organisation.?	- Zoom - Emails - FAQs - Newsletters	Face to face /focus groups meeting
What has been done?	- Program Kick off completed - Program team created, key stakeholders and impact areas identified - Stakeholder analysis completed - Key department engagement developed and approved senior stakeholders	- Emails - Newsletters	
What we are doing.	- Engagement with senior leaders - Current state analysis, gap analysis and future state definitions	- Emails - Newsletters	
What is on the Horizon?	- Target state designing - Implementation plans, Road Map and timelines	- Emails - Newsletters	

8. Key Tools and Methodology (Table 4)

No	Key areas	Tools /Methodology	Engagement method
1.	Strategic Context Current Analysis - The Current State	Change management (ADKAR), Project management, Lean, and SWOT	Focus groups meeting, interview.
2.	Get started and gathering information	Change Management Stakeholder analysis Communication plan	Focus groups meeting, interview.
3.	Analyse information/ identify key issues	Root causes, 5 whys, Fishbone	Workshops
4.	Define and agree Performance measures	Decision analysis Prioritisation exercise	Focus groups meeting, interview.
5.	Impact Analysis	Survey Evaluability assessment Impact analysis Matrix Team impact Matrix	Focus groups meeting, interview.

9. Measuring Success (Table 5)

Key areas	Activities	Evaluation method	Evaluation Results
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<i>Understanding the strategic planning process</i>	- Stakeholder engagement - Expanded the knowledge of senior managers across the organisation.	Survey	- 95% positive feedback
<i>Communication plans</i>	- Develop communication strategy and plans	Feedback analysis (Interviews – via Operational Managers through engagement of their individual team.	- All change requirements and plans communicated across all staff of the NGO. Using a survey (questionnaire) 5% didn't think the communication was very effective
<i>Training plans</i>	- Develop training strategy and plans		- 70% of staff current trained with a reactive training model.
<i>Stakeholder management</i>	- Develop stakeholder management strategy and plans to support the strategic planning, development and implementation.	Change Impact assessment	- Over 70% of senior managers could be effectively managed. - Over 25% reduction in stakeholder resistant for previous strategy planning and implementation.
<i>Overcoming barriers</i>	- Understand all existing implementation barriers aligned to the current business model reviewed.	Change Impact assessment Conducting workshops	- Addressed at least 75% barriers identified by Operational Managers. - Each of these identified barriers were addressed by individual operational and senior managers across their different teams .

10. Lesson Learnt/Feedback/Improvement – (Table 6)

No	Key areas	Issues/Blockers	Enablers/Mitigation
1.	Leadership/Governance	- Leaders don't articulate what people need to do differently. - At the initial phases, leaders are not driving the process. - Top bottom approach only	- Stakeholder engagement using top to bottom and bottom up approach. - Find the right Sponsor - Culture Evaluation - Leaders have to be fully one board as strategic planning usually involves organisational change. This can be a profoundly sensitive process, as an organisation's past strategies are often a reflection of what the leadership thinks is best. To bring authentic strategic change may require leaders to change their views; their priorities and even themselves.

2.	Staff Ownership	- Stakeholder resistant, not understanding value. - Lack of motivation	- Early wins/quick successes - Some people will see themselves as winning; others losing. Staff need to be encouraged to look to the interests of the whole organisation, not just their particular departments. - Use a balance score card. - Create successes and build momentum - Translate the strategy and make it personal - In the end, it is the staff who will ensure the new strategy is implemented (or not). They have to believe in its value, if they are to go through the pain of change. - Use staff that understand value to influence others.
3.	Communication strategy and plans	- Wrong communication methods - Ineffective communication plans	- All member of staff knows what they are doing, have the right information at the right time, and have the right planning in place:
4.	Planning	- Overcomplicated and ambiguous plans	- Keeping it simple – Less is more - SMART plans - Strategy in a simple diagram or even flow chart. What is important is that this image makes sense to the NGO and to those with whom it is trying to communicate. There is obviously no one right answer about length, though for most 10-15 pages should be enough to convey the essence of the direction.
5.	Tools and Methodology	- Poor strategic thinking strategic planning and implementation is another project that we have to manage.	- Education and training - Accessibility to the right tools - Aside from governance, management is supposed to do impact analysis (review) to verify that the organisation's vision is adhered to and ensure that the necessary resources and tools are in place to execute this.

11. Appendix 1 - Laughing Women Key Implementation Plans/activities and timelines – (Table 7)

Ref	Key activities	Activities Descriptions	Key Stakeholders	Strategy Implementation Roadmap alignment	Dates and Timelines	Engagement Method
AC01	Senior Change management planning meeting	- Understanding change and what has to change – (Burning Platform) - Stakeholder development Matrix - Understanding Roles and responsibilities - Current state Analysis - Define current barriers and challenges - Understanding current capabilities - Define change framework - Appoint a change manager	- CEO - Operational managers - Coordinators - Administrative staff	- Leadership Excellence - Stakeholder management - Employees Engagement	April 2022	Focus Group Technique – Brainstorming
AC02	Define Governance	- Future governance structure defined	- CEO - Operational managers - Administrative staff		April 2022	Interview Using Current Organisation capability maps
AC03	Define Strategic plans	- Transformation strategy development - Define goals that aligns to the NGO's mission.	- CEO - Operational managers - Administrative staff	- Leadership Excellence - Financial value	May 2022	Focus Groups
AC04	Business Model Impact Analysis	- Review current business model components - Define impact - Understanding Change	- Operational managers - Administrative staff - Team coordinator - Change Manager	- Business Model	May 2022	Focus group/Workshop
AC05	Review Partnership Processes	- Review current strategic partnership processes - Propose a new strategic partnership framework – Using existing NGO's as a Benchmark - Translate actions into tactical plans - Define new processes - Set targets - Define metrics (6 – 8)	- Operational managers - Administrative staff - Team coordinator - Change Manager - Volunteers. - Staff	- Business Model - Culture Evolution	May 2022	Focus group/Workshop

AC06	Review current capabilities and understand impact	- Review current programmes and ongoing projects - Culture and organisational behaviour impact analysis - Organisational redesign and workforce management assessment - Create future operational plans	- Operational managers - Administrative staff - Team coordinator - Change Manager - Volunteers. - Staff	- Business Model - Culture Evolution - Employee Engagement	May 2022	Focus group/Workshop
AC010	Track Performance	- Strategic Development Office - Weekly steering group - Monitor progress - Measure success	- CEO - Operational managers	Track Performance	June 2022	Focus group/Workshop
AC011	Sustainability	- Define Continuous Improvement strategies	- Operational Manager	Sustainability	June 2022	Focus group/Workshop
AC012	Complete implementation	- Business Readiness - Training - Roll out	- Senior Managers	Track Performance	In progress	Focus group/Workshop

12. Bibliography

Antonio – Nieto Rodriguez & Robin Speculand - Strategy Implementation Institute Body of Knowledge, First Edition 2021, version 2.0 Published by Strategy Implementation Institute Pte Ltd

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