Identifying Community Strengths & Weaknesses

A Capacity Building Workshop by OCRA & IHCDA

Presented by HPG Network
A SWOT is the first step in a typical planning process

Self-Assessment
What is a Plan?

• Sequence of steps
• Method of getting to your goal
• Recipe for action
• Image of the future as you hope it will unfold
• MORE THAN JUST TALK!
A goal without a plan is just a wish.
Why is Planning Important

- Clarify choices
- Let everyone know what happens next
- Avoid or anticipate difficulties
- Provide inspiration
Why is Planning Important

• **Clarify choices**
  • Let everyone know what happens next
  • Avoid or anticipate difficulties
  • Provide inspiration
Clarify Choices

- Know what paths you did NOT choose and why
- Consider various different ideas and solutions
- Build a foundation for commitment
Why is Planning Important

- Clarify choices
- **Let everyone know what happens next**
- Avoid or anticipate difficulties
- Provide inspiration
Let Everyone Know What Happens Next

• This keeps individuals plugging away
• Provides basis for teamwork
• Be sure to include timelines & guidelines for implementation
Why is Planning Important

• Clarify choices
• Let everyone know what happens next
• **Avoid or anticipate difficulties**
• Provide inspiration
Avoid or Anticipate Difficulties

- Shortages of money
- Uncooperative groups, officials, residents
- Planning helps to anticipate, avoid or work around identified issues
Why is Planning Important

• Clarify choices
• Let everyone know what happens next
• Avoid or anticipate difficulties
• Provide inspiration
Provide Inspiration

• Everyone knows the sequence of activities is leading toward a goal that is important to the group
• Plan becomes a source of inspiration
• Provides assurance that it’s all going somewhere
• Periodically calls for re-assessments that may be perfect opportunities for celebration
Planning Best Practice Tip

Include a schedule for future updates to the planning document in order to keep it fresh
Find your latest update to your community plan & decide when it should be revisited.
Overview of a Typical Planning Process
Typical Planning Cycle

- Preparation for SWOT Analysis
- SWOT Analysis
- Visioning
- Plan Creation
- Implementation
- Check-ins / Revisions to the Plan
Preparation for the SWOT

Define/Refresh Data Related to Existing Conditions That Are Affecting Your Community
Review Past Plans

• Important step
• Time saver
• Excellent baseline data to show where the community has been

Let Your Results Do the Talking
Economic Factors Affecting Communities

- Economic conditions
- Population characteristics
- Labor force characteristics
- Physical conditions
- Business climate
- Knowledge-based resources
- Quality of life
Economic Conditions

- Unemployment
- Types & sizes of firms/industries
- Wages
- Income
- New business starts
- Retail sales
- Housing prices
- Assessed valuation
- Types of imports/exports
- # of businesses closed
A Brief Note On Assessed Valuation
Population Characteristics

• Population size
• Population growth
• Age
• Education level
• Education attainment & k-12 public school enrollment
Population Analysis Tip

Break down population growth into categories to better understand which part is growing or declining.
Labor Force Characteristics

- Labor force participation
- Occupation
- Skills
- Commuter characteristics
- Productivity
- Per capita income
Physical Conditions

- Land use
- Zoning
- Land values
- Condition of buildings
- Vacancy rates
- Building activity
- Parking facilities
- Condition & capacity of infrastructure
- Air/water quality
Business Climate

• Community attitudes
• Labor relations
• Business taxes and regulations
• Level & quality of municipal services
• Workforce training
• Access to & cost of capital
• Public & private infrastructure
Knowledge-based Resources

- Federal labs
- Science & research parks
- Industry incubators
- Colleges & universities
- Technical training schools
Quality of Life

- Housing availability
- Public services
- Education system
- Crime rate
- Cultural & recreational activities
- Parks & other natural amenities
Make a list of other types of data and/or analysis you need for your data refresh.
Typical Planning Cycle

✓ Preparation for the SWOT
  • SWOT Analysis
  • Visioning
  • Plan Creation
  • Implementation
  • Check-ins / Revisions to the Plan
Engagement is Key

- Works best when you have established a regular communication process so that relationships & trust grow & strengthen over time.
Community Engagement Considerations

• What level of participation are we seeking?
• Who are my primary stakeholders?
• Communications / materials
• Resources
• Time limitations
• Timely feedback & next steps
• Methods
Tools for Community Engagement

- Surveys – photography, poetry, artwork
- Community Mapping
- Modeling
- Public Meetings, Charrettes
- Workshops & Focus Groups
- Forums
- Social Media / Web-based Engagement
- Outdoor displays / idea walls / graffiti walls
Get Input from Stakeholders

• Factors within & outside of the control of local government that impact & shape the local economy
• Identify strengths & opportunities
• Don’t forget about weaknesses & threats
Know Your Community

• See how it fits into the broader region
• Local economic success depends on regional economic success
Questions to Ponder

• What industries in your community & region are growing? Struggling?
• What are the skills of your workforce?
• Are they sufficient to meet the needs of businesses?
More Questions to Ponder

• What barriers & support services exist for local entrepreneurs & small businesses?

• Is the local & regional housing stock diverse enough to provide for a wide range of housing needs?

• If someone were to come to your community tomorrow, what would they find attractive? Unattractive?
Result of This Process?

• Stronger sense of your unique local assets
• What you can & should be doing to build on strengths & mitigate weaknesses
Make a list of stakeholders you would like to engage for your community planning processes.
KEEP CALM
IT'S BREAK TIME
How To Identify Your Community’s Strengths & Weaknesses

Think of a community problem that you believe needs to be resolved
Why Identify Strengths & Weaknesses?

• Develop a shared understanding of the problem(s) you’re trying to deal with
• Raise the level of awareness about root causes of identified problem(s)
• Identify root causes
DEVELOP YOUR ANALYSIS
Question-and-Answer Approach

• What is the main problem that concerns our community?
• Why is that a problem?
  – Repeat until root causes become apparent
• Who/what causes the problems? How?
Question-and-Answer Approach

• What would it take to really eliminate the problem?
  – Is this an individual/institutional problem or is it a systemic problem
Question-and-Answer Approach

• What are our “leverage points” of potential influence over these powerful groups/institutions?
• How can our community tie into this situation in a powerful way?
Write down your conclusions using this Q & A approach.
Exercise in Analytical Thinking

Let’s try looking at someone else’s problem
Analytical Thinking

• **Problem**: many people in our community live in sub-standard housing – perhaps as many as 15%
Possible Causes

• Residents are too poor to afford any better housing
• Local officials turn their backs on code violations
• Landlords more concerned about profit than building maintenance
• Banks have redlined certain neighborhoods so that improvement loans aren’t available
Analytical Thinking

• Possible causes focus on “Who should we go to get some leverage on the problem”
• Choose a possible cause and analyze how you might go about solving it
Possible Causes

• Residents are too poor to afford any better housing
• Local officials turn their backs on code violations
• Landlords more concerned about profit than building maintenance
• Banks have redlined certain neighborhoods so that improvement loans aren’t available
Things to Consider

• What are some possible explanations of the reasons for the problems?
• How do you choose among competing explanations?
• What factual information will be relevant?
Things to Consider (cont’d)

• What can you do when members of your community disagree about explanations?
• How could you raise these analysis questions during the meetings & day-to-day functioning of your planning group?
• Who can be a resource? Who would be a great partner?
How to Conduct a SWOT Analysis

SETTING UP YOUR SWOT
Disclaimer

• It’s really not a true analysis, it’s a brainstorming session
• Do not discuss each item that someone wants to add to the list
• Add each item to the list without evaluation
• The truth-telling session will begin later
Facilitator

- Experienced in running meetings
- Slightly knowledgeable about issues or willing to become so in preparation for the session
- Strong enough to keep the meeting from bogging down in discussion
- Stay away from anyone with a “dog in the fight”
- *Consider your OCRA community liaison*
Resources Needed

• Recorder (could also be facilitator)
• Big chart
• Easel or wall that can accept sticky paper
• Lots of paper
Conducting the SWOT

- Order steps with the acronym – S-W-O-T
- Allows you to begin with strengths
- Insist as many entries as people can think of for each category
- Be prepared for pauses
Facilitation Tips

• No strengths = categorically untrue
• No weaknesses = threat may be apathy or lack of watchfulness
• Get through the brainstorming as quickly as possible if some analysis can be done later
• Analysis = look for connections between items listed
Facilitation Tips

• Note connections between Strengths & Weaknesses
• Note connections between Opportunities & Threats
• Look at both internal & external factors
• Include items that can be controlled & factors that cannot be controlled
Facilitation Tips

• Think of your community as being in a competition just as a private business would do

• Relative success at economic development, housing, community organizing, safety & beautification will point to success overall
Following the SWOT

• If time is short, ask everyone to decide on most important single community S, W, O or T
• If time is more abundant, ask people what surprised them most about the SWOTs listed
• Ask group to discuss where research & fact-finding are needed
Following the SWOT

• Assign each SWOT point to a committee for further study or action
• Be sure to publish results or hold a follow up event for wider & additional discussion
Next Steps in the Planning Cycle

- Preparation for the SWOT
- SWOT Analysis
  - Visioning
  - Plan Creation
  - Implementation
  - Check-ins / Revisions to the Plan
KEEP CALM
I'm on my 10 Minute Break
## Internal and external factors of SWOT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>POSITIVE/HELPFUL to achieving the goal</th>
<th>NEGATIVE/HARMFUL to achieving the goal</th>
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<td>Weaknesses Things that are bad now - remedy, change or stop them.</td>
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**Internal Scan**

**SWOTs Can Also Be Conducted Internally**
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Internal Environmental Scan

Objectives

1. Gauge the current conditions in the organization that may impact success in achieving strategic goals

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2. Engage key internal stakeholders (YOU!) in the process of identifying organizational strengths and limitations.
Internal Environmental Scan

Objectives

3. Ultimately build a sense of urgency around change and improvement to meet our challenges
Eight Steps To Successful Change

- John Kotter

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create a guiding coalition
3. Communicate the vision
4. Develop a clear shared vision
5. Create short term wins
6. Consolidate & build on the gains
7. Institutionalise the change
Strategic Planning

- Values
  - Vision

- Mission
  - Strategic Priorities
    » SMART Goals
Anytown, IN
Core Values

• Integrity/Honesty
• Family
• Commitment
• Helpfulness
• Responsibility/Accountability
• Cooperation
Anytown Vision Statement:

“Commitment to Community”
Mission Statement

“The mission of Anytown is to exhibit integrity of service with a commitment to provide:

• Exemplary public safety
• Inviting parks and recreational opportunities
• Compassionate public assistance
• Responsible historic preservation of cemeteries and other Towns assets”
Environmental Scans

• Objectives
  – To gauge current conditions internally and externally of strengths/opportunities that will help us achieve our strategic plan, or weaknesses/threats that may impede us from achieving our strategic plan (establish a sense of urgency)
  – To engage internal and external stakeholders (create a guiding coalition)
  – In preparation to develop a realistic strategic plan (create a clear shared vision)
Strategic Planning

• Values
  – Vision

• Mission
  – Strategic Priorities
  » SMART Goals
ENVIRONMENTAL SCANS

SWOT ANALYSIS

- **Strength**: Helpful to achieving the objective (Internal)
- **Weakness**: Harmful to achieving the objective (Internal)
- **Opportunity**: Helpful to achieving the objective (External)
- **Threat**: Harmful to achieving the objective (External)
Environmental Scan Structure

• Use consensus to reach rating decisions
• Determine whether each factor is a strength or weakness
  – A strength is helpful in reaching our objectives
  – A weakness is harmful to reaching our objectives
Environmental Scan Structure

• Use definitions for each factor
• Determine how critical this factor is in achieving our objectives
Environmental Scan Scoring Categories

- Human Capital
- Organizational Capital
- Knowledge Capital
- Resources / Ability to Provide Excellent Services
- Work Processes
Human Capital

• Hiring (timely) qualified employees
• Training employees
Organizational Capital

- Structure
- Governance
- Teamwork
Resources

• Asset Management
Work Processes

- Efficiency
- Producing desired results
- Exceeding customer wants, needs, and values

| How good are we at....? Our current capabilities: (Intangible Assets) |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                  | CHOOSE ONLY ONE OR                  | CHOOSE ONE:                  |
|                  | Strength (+2) (+1) | Weakness (-1) (-2) | Critical to (+2) (+1) | Total Multiply |
How Critical Is The Function?

• Measure each element as to whether it’s a strength or weakness
• Measure how critical it is
• Result: Weighted metric on areas of excellence and those areas needing attention
Write down an internal weakness in your organization you would like to see resolved.
SWOT Best Practices

Highlighted Indiana Communities
Huntingburg, Indiana

• Identified Weakness: Lack of housing in DuBois County

• What They’re Doing About It: Used SIP to build on this and looked for ways to create new housing stock & improve quality of life to attract families
Town of North Liberty

• Identified Weakness:
Sees more than 200,000 visitors going to Potato Creek State Park each year, but not visiting downtown

• What They’re Doing About It:
Improving quality of life and physically connecting the two areas by creating a trail from the Park to the downtown
Write down at least 2 follow up tasks you would like to do based upon lessons learned today.
Q & A

Please use the right navigation bar to enter your questions
Need Help?

• OCRA staff have been trained in facilitation
• Contact your community liaison for assistance
Upcoming Courses

• Building Local Capacity – June 17, 2016
• Coalition Building – July 17, 2016
• Public Feedback – August 5, 2016
• Leveraging Public/Private Investment – September 6, 2016
• Fundamentals of Project Management – October 20, 2016
PLANNING IS NOT OPTIONAL