Mini Strategic Planning Process Toolkit

A Guide for Future Planning, Priority Setting and Gathering Resources for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Service Organizations



This toolkit was developed by Futures Without Violence in consultation with Amy Sánchez, as part of the SOS Institute Project. Developed in 2020 and updated in 2025.

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-23-GK-05115-MUMU and 2015-TA-AX-K047, awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

SOS INSTITUTE SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Table of Contents

Page

Goals of Toolkit …… **3**

Introduction…….... **4**

Part I: Current State Assessment …… **4-6**

Where we are today as an organization.

Part II: Future State Visioning …… **6**

Vision or results that organization would like to achieve.

Part III: Develop Organizational Goals and Priorities …… **7**

Areas of focus and strategies to reach goals.

Part IV: Create A Mini-Strategic Plan Outline …… **8-9**

Part V: Action Plan for Implementation ...…… **10**

Sample Spheres of Planning ……**11**

Planning Resources …… **12**

The **Supporting Organizational Sustainability to Address Violence Against Women Institute** (SOS Institute) offers resources, technical assistance support, and an interactive, multi-day training to help U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women grantees, partner organizations, and community-based organizations, enhance their programming organizational infrastructure and capacity.

For questions and additional information, please contact Futures Without Violence, at: learning@futureswithoutviolence.org.

MINI STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Goal of this toolkit:

Build a common vision for the future of the organization, reach consensus on responsibilities and direction for the organization, develop goals, and create an action plan for implementation.

Mission-based organizational development focuses an organization to build a common framework and understanding so that all involved will:

- See a clear path for the future based in the reality today, strengths, and environment.
- Implement strategic decision-making and selection of priorities.
- Engage fully as leaders, giving opportunity to new ideas and strategies.
- Feel ownership and commitment to good results.

Types of Strategic Plans, Focus*

- **Action Plan**: For initiating and getting things done in the right order.
- **Foundation Plan**: For stability for operations or transition
- **Bridge Plan**: For extending existing strategic plan, when there is uncertainty.
- **Transformational Plan**: For growth, programming or geography
- **Turnaround Plan**: For continuity when in decline, to align mission with financials.

*Note: adapted from Social Impact Architects

Before You Start

Prior to engaging in this process of prioritizing or building consensus on future goals, it is important to review the mission statement and core values for the organization. The mission statement and core values are the foundation that should guide the visioning and prioritization. This resource on Organizational Values and Mission Toolkit may be helpful.

Additionally, doing an organizational needs assessment and analysis for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) may also be helpful, to take these considerations when setting future goals.

Strengths	Where are we strongest as a group and as individuals? What are our resources and skills?
Weaknesses	Where are our weaknesses as a group and as individuals
Opportunities	What are the potential opportunities that can be capitalized on? How can we access them?
Challenges	External environment Where will the challenges to the group come from?

Introduction:

The purpose of this planning activity is to gather consensus and to move a team forward in the same direction for the future. This activity works best if everyone from the team or organization participates, in order to build consensus and ensure equal representation of varying opinions.

Positive results occur after doing this activity:

1. All participants are a part of setting a common direction for the organization. The activity ensures consensus throughout; therefore, the final plan has the buy-in of the entire group.
2. As a director, program coordinator, etc., one gets a very good idea about what the team thinks "today," as well as its vision for the future.
3. The facilitator leads the process so that the team understands where it is, where it is going, and the three to four priority areas (activities, goals) for the future.

Note: We want to look at *where we are today as an organization* and *where we will be in three years*. In order to celebrate our success in three years, (after we get where we want to go) we need to remember where we came from. Also, in order to be realistic about the future, we need to have a clear understanding where we are *today*.

Instructions:

This activity comes in three parts. The first and second part involves Post-It notes, about 30 per participant. For virtual participation, to gather ideas and hold virtual breakouts, the process can be adapted with the use of digital collaboration tools like Google Docs, Padlet, Zoom, or Google Hangouts. Advance preparation can be done by gathering feedback through polls or brief questionnaire.

Number of participants: This activity can be done with small (less than 10 people) and large groups. There is no limit to participant numbers and the process can easily be flexible to accommodate large groups. Later in the directions, two options will be given to ensure full participation of large groups.

Time: The number of participants will impact the time for the activity, step 1-2 can take about 90 minutes and step 3 may take 1-2 hours, depending on how in-depth the planning is done.

Part I: Current Organizational State Assessment

- Identify where we are today as an organization.

Step 1:

Assess your team or organization's current state.

a. With your Post-It notes in front of you, write down at least 10 bits of information about what is going on in your organization (1 on each Post It).
   - It can be anything about your organization today, staff, board, funders, or programming.
   - Make sure that what you write is something that is happening in your workplace today —good or bad. Do not write something that you wish for today, only something that is real.
   - Please be as specific as possible.
     - For example, if you write the word "funding," on the post-it, participants may not understand the current reality you are trying to describe because they don't know if that means that we have a lot of funding, or "no funding" or "need more funding for a new initiative."
       Specific example: "We are short of funding for key administrative staff."
     - Another example, if you write "programs" it is difficult for others to know what you are referring to. Do we have good programs, need more staff, or have wonderful evaluation data?
       Specific example: "Our court advocacy project reaches thousands of survivors each year."

b. Work on this for about 8 minutes.

c. Break-up the group into smaller groups. One option for a larger group is to do the following step 2-3 times. If there are more than 5 small groups of 5-6 members each (total number of participants 25-30) then it is recommended to do Step 2 more than once to facilitate decision making toward the end of the process.

Facilitator Note:
Pay attention to the dynamics in the room when you are breaking up participants into groups. Try to ensure good representation of the organization in the groups. For example, if the exercise is being done by the board and staff together, mix up the groups so that each are represented. If you only have staff, ensure that management and program staff are mixed together, etc.

Step 2:

Combine comments and build one sentence that represents your current state.

a. Compile your individual Post-it notes comments with the Post-it notes comments for other team members and begin to categorize all of the comments depending on similarities.

- For a group of more than 4 people, you can break this compilation and categorization up into two groups.
  - For example, *combine all of the comments that have to do with staff together in one pile, combine comments that have to do with programs in another, and so forth. Make sure that all of your colleagues read each person's ideas and participates in categorizing.*

b. Next, now that you have read, reviewed, and categorized the entire group's individual comments, **each person writes individually,** one sentence that summarizes the varied post-its written by their team.
   - There is one very important rule here, take the necessary time. This is an opportunity for everyone to create the best sentence possible.
   - Spend about ten minutes on this.

c. Share your individual summary sentence with your small group. Each member does the same. After you have all shared your summary sentence, then the group combines these sentences into one. This sentence needs to reflect the beliefs of the group and each member must agree on the final sentence.

d. If you have a large group, do the above process with all of the groups again by looking at all of the sentences from the teams, going back and working alone to write one sentence that summarizes what has been seen and then sharing in your small group.

e. For the next step, it is recommended to have groups choose a representative to leave the room with the sentence and work with other group leaders to summarize all the sentences into one. The important thing is that the group continues to combine sentences with manageable bits of information so that the ultimate goal would be to have one summary sentence that everyone agrees to.

f. Once a final sentence is agreed upon, participant leaders come back to the full group and read the sentence aloud.

***This sentence illustrates the current state of your organization.**

Facilitator Note:

While the final group is out of the room combining the final sentence, the facilitator can sit with other participants to debrief the process thus far:

- *What did you enjoy about this activity?*
- *What was difficult?*
- *Do you have observations from the Post-It's that surprised you?*
- *How was the group sharing?*

Part II: Future State Visioning

- Identify vision or results that organization would like to achieve

The second stage of the "Post-it" process is to follow the same steps in the current state but this time thinking realistically about where the organization will be in three years. Directions are given to "think big" yet "realistic."

☐ Step 1:

Generate ideas for an ideal and realistic future state of the organization.

a. Use the same process to talk about *where you will be as an organization three years from now*.
b. With your Post-it notes in front of you, write down at least 10 ideas or goals about what state you think the organization should be in the next three years (1 on each Post-it). Focus can be on programmatic growth, infrastructure, and technology needs.

c. Please write one complete thought on each Post-it.
   - It is crucial that you are realistic in this. Some examples:
     - "We have a full-time executive director."
     - "The organization has a children's support program."

   If you write "There is no more domestic violence in the world," unfortunately, we know that is not achievable in three years. The intention is to write visionary ideas that with time, direction and effort you believe can be accomplished in three years.

☐ Step 2:

Combine ideas and build one sentence that represents your future state.

a. Follow the same process outlined in Part 1 above.
b. Once you have this future sentence, write it on a big flipchart paper along with the first sentence. Read the two sentences out loud.

***These sentences illustrate your current state and your desired future state.**

After the current and future state statements are presented to all participants, the facilitator takes the opportunity to reiterate the consensus framework of the activity and to highlight the key factors in both the current and future states. These principal factors will be obvious to all and provides the framework for the last step in the process.

Part III: Develop Organizational Goals and Priorities

- Identify areas of focus and strategies to get from the current state to the desired future state of the organization.

The final piece is to have the groups work together to *construct* a plan for how to reach your future state. This will develop the three-year summary of goals.

Step 1: Set Goals

- Now that you have your *current state and your future state sentences*, work with your team to develop 3-4 organizational goals.
- Your sentences should help you decide on your goals.
  - Remember, everyone has to agree, so the process may move forward.
  - For larger groups, one way to reach consensus is to look at the current state and the future state statements and vote for the top five words—or priority areas represented in each state. This will produce the focus areas and help to set goals.

Notes:

- Goals are the long-term, overall changes you wish to cause or produce.
- It may be helpful to set separate goals for programs and for infrastructure.
- When developing goals, it's important to stay focused in the mission of the organization.

Step 2: Develop Objectives/Strategies

- With the goals for the next three years, you can begin to develop concrete objectives, strategies, to get you from where you are today to where you would like to be. For each goal you may develop several objectives.

  Goal #1:
  - Objective 1 (step):
  - Objective 2 (step):

Note: Objectives are specific (short-term), measurable steps/activities that can be taken to meet or reach the long-term goal. Objectives need to include the following S.M.A.R.T. characteristics:

- **Specific**, (strategic, simple, and significant)
- **Measurable**, (meaningful, standards to be met)
- **Achievable**, (attainable and also ambitious)
- **Realistic,** (results oriented and aligned to the mission)
- **Time-based,** (clear deadlines for completion).

- **Step 3: Action and Implementation Plan**

  Develop Actionable Activities
  - Each objective needs to include a strategy or key activities in order to achieve the goal. Ensure that strategies are described with clear action verbs.
  - As a next step, also add:
    - Strategies/activities
    - Implementers and supporters (responsible/owner of activity and role)
    - Timeline
    - Resources needed

- **Step 4: Summarize Actionable Priorities**

Part IV: Create a Mini-Strategic Plan Outline

➢ Develop a summary with the process and results into a document that includes:

a) Mission.

b) Core values (and description of core values).

c) Current state of the organization statement.

d) Future state statement (vision of the organization for the future).

e) Goals (several).

f) Objectives for each goal.

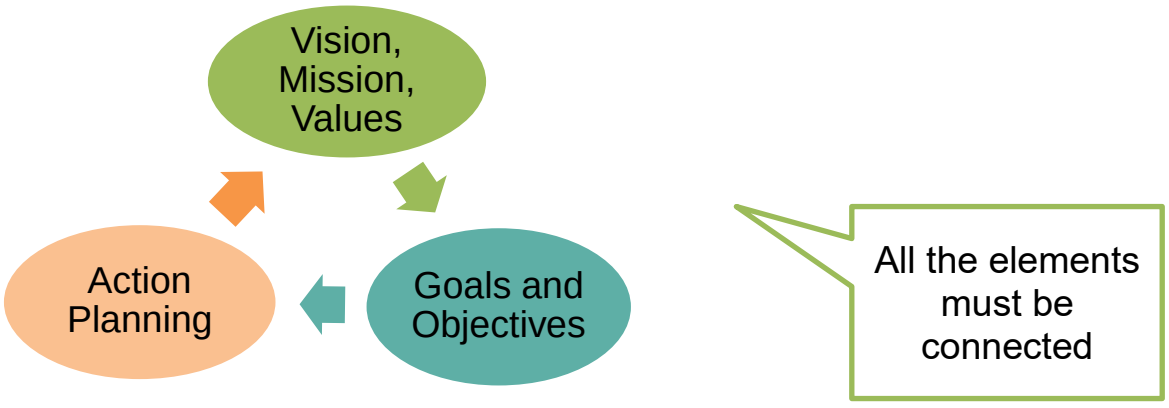
h) Strategies or activities (for each objective).

i) Implementers and supporters. (Champion/responsible owners).

j) Timeline.

k) Resources needed. Achievable financial plan for funding full costs.

Note: You may also include an overview of the process used to create the plan, who was involved, and the next steps.



Part V: Action Plan for Implementation

➢ Create a plan for implementation.

Below is a table designed to assist each "responsible implementer/champion" in outlining the tasks required to complete a strategic objective, this could be done individually or in a team. Develop a brief description of what needs to be done to accomplish the objective, and then outline each of the tasks involved, a timeline of when they need to be completed, and next steps. "Responsible implementer/champion" reports on progress, completion, and end result.

Tips for Implementation:

- ☐ Recruit partners to help implement the plan; divide responsibilities and clarify roles. Who are the managers, owners, consulted, approvers, and helpers? (MOCHA)
- ☐ Incorporate tasks/activities into individual "staff annual work plans."
- ☐ Allocate time to plan and implement activities.
- ☐ Assess resources needed, including funds, human resources, and other structures.
- ☐ Schedule regular follow-up assessment of progress and timelines to meet goals. Monitoring dashboard: ❑ on track, ❑ delayed (reason), ❑ not started
- ☐ Review staff work plans and help manage workloads, to ensure the goals are met.
- ☐ If applicable, provide regular updates on progress to the board of directors.
- ☐ Include incentives and discuss accountability and possible consequences.
- ☐ Celebrate accomplishments!

Action Plan Sample Template

Vision or outcome (state) you are seeking for the future _____

Goal 1: Long-range aspirational desired condition or change _____

Objective: Specific steps or approach to accomplish the goal. (SMART) _____

Strategies for each objective.	Responsible?	Timeline	Next Steps	Progress
Activities for each strategy				

What information/resources/support do we need to accomplish this?

_____

Impact and vision

What do your core values and mission look like, feel like, and sound like in your organization when goals are completed? Who is impacted and what has changed?

Sample Spheres of Organizational and Infrastructural Planning

- **Board**
  - Internal roles and responsibilities
  - Specific work plan
  - Orientation protocol for new members
  - Recruitment strategy
  - Membership representational goals
  - Interface with staff during transition
  - Internal shared leadership structure
  - Documentation of key components of board culture

- **Finance**
  - Spend-outs (with program staff)
  - Financial strategic plan (3, 5, 10 year)
  - Investments plan

- **Fund Development**
  - Specific activities
  - Annual goals
  - Measuring of new tool's efficacy
  - Diversification of financial resources

- **Grant Specific Program**
  - Timeline
  - Collaboration Plans
  - Process Indicators
  - Outcomes
  - Evaluation

- **Individual**
  - Weekly schedule
  - Individual Work Plan
  - Professional Development Plan
  - Personal Performance Plan
  - Exit plan
  - Training of new hire

- **Organizational Culture**
  - Changing a dynamic
  - Defining key components together
  - Making culture match protocols

- **Program Development or Growth**
  - Adding new program components (e.g. residential, legal, transitional, teens)
  - Theories of Change
  - Measuring efficacy
  - Building new collaborations

- **Infrastructure**
  - Adding, changing, combining positions
  - Leadership model
  - Staffing expansion/reduction
  - Volunteer, board, staff, etc. roles
  - Revision of by-laws, personnel policies, etc.
  - Program evaluation methods and staffing

- **Organizational Strategic Planning**
  - Strategic direction
  - Strategic implementation plan
  - Align long range (e.g. strategic) plan to day-to-day work via mid-range (e.g. annual) planning!

- **Personnel**
  - Leadership development (staff, board, volunteers)
  - Orientation and Training (staff, board, volunteers)
  - Succession Planning
  - Executive or Leadership Transition
  - Board Structural / Role Transition

This list was developed by Asian Women's Shelter For: Futures Without Violence, SOS Institute

Planning Resources

- Organizational Values and Mission Toolkit, Guide and resources, FUTURES
- Strategic Planning Toolkit, OVC Training Technical Assistance Center
- Strategic Planning Jumpstart for Nonprofits (1-year plan outline), NYC Service
- Strategic Planning - A Roadmap to Your Success, (Webinar) Dr. Booker-Drew
- Visualizing Your Business Model, Matrix Map & Mission Impact Model & Templates
- Logic Model Development Guide, Kellogg Foundation
- Logic Models, overview and strategies, FUTURES
- SWOT, (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) Analysis Tool
- SMART Goals Worksheet, The Management Center
- Project Planning Step by Step Template, The Management Center
- MOCHA, Tool and framework for assigning roles and responsibilities
- Gradients of Agreement, Group Decision Support Tool
- DARCI, tool to help clarify decision making, involvement, and accountability
- Using Fair Process to Make Better Decisions & Modes of Decision-Making
- Design Thinking, (process for developing ideas and solutions)
- Covey Time Management Tool for Individual planning
- Daily list, weekly list, delegation tools, The Management Center
- Manage your Time and Energy: A Path to Personal Sustainability (tool/workbook)
- Asana & Basecamp & Freedcamp (free), Task and project management tools.
- Project Management Resources, Compass Point
- ToP Strategic Planning / Technology of Participation: Tools and resources