

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Participant's Guide

GOVERNANCE FUNDAMENTALS:
A Skill-Building Series
For Mayors and Councillors

Nunavut Municipal Training Organization

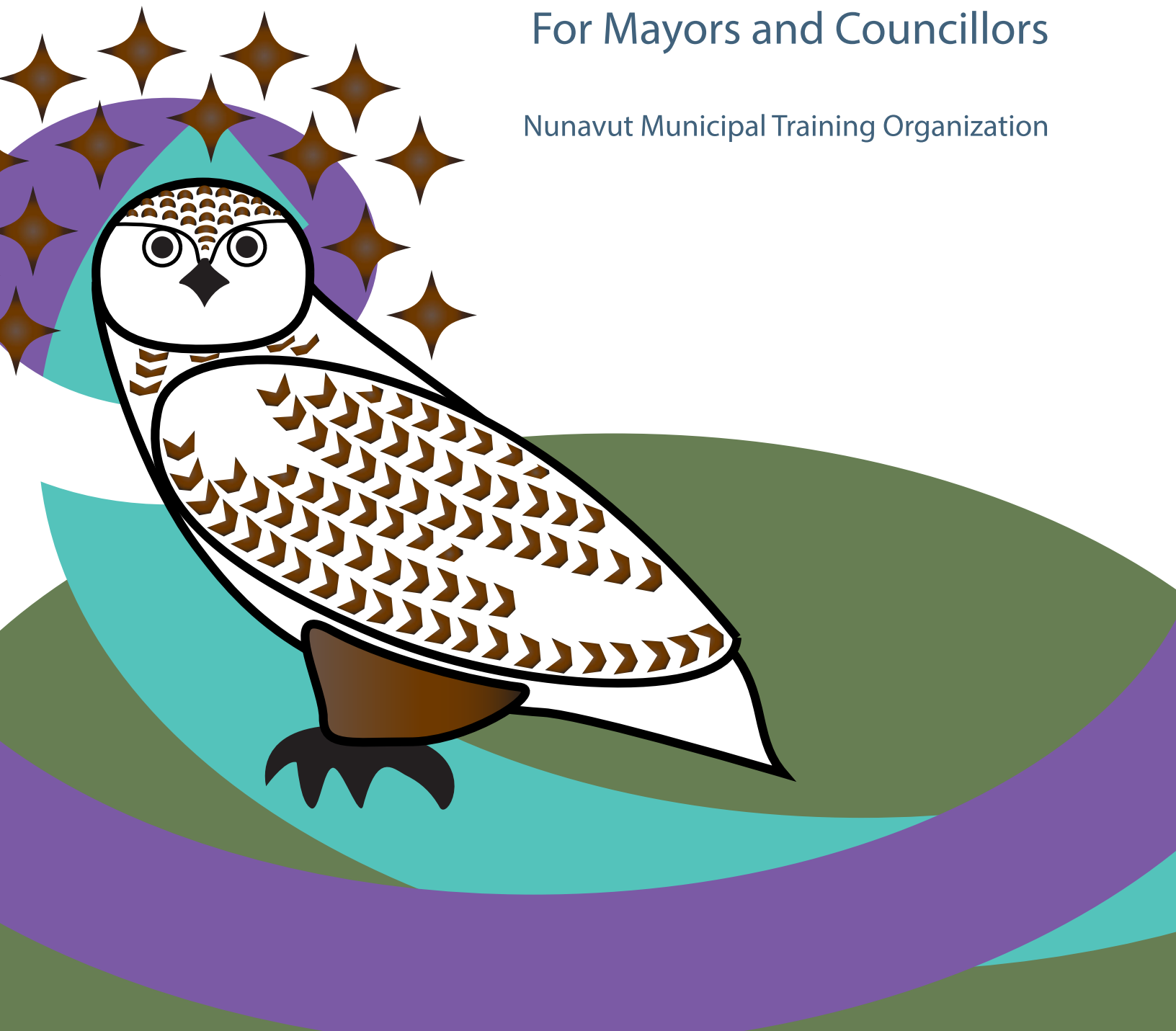


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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Governance Fundamentals is a series of courses developed by the Nunavut Municipal Training Organization (MTO) to help Nunavut Mayors and Councillors build their decision-making and oversight knowledge and skills.

This document, the *Strategic Planning Participant's Guide*, is one of several complementary learning resources on this important topic.

If you are learning in a group led by a facilitator, the learning resources include an instructional video, exercise handouts, and a list of on-line reference materials. The facilitator will provide you with the materials you need and will lead you through the course step-by-step.

If you are taking the course on your own, the main resources are the video, this guide, and supplementary online resources. If you have not already done so, the video, guide, and supplementary resources can be downloaded from the MTO website.

For self-paced learning, the video and Participant's Guide are meant to be used together:

1. **Begin with the video.** It is divided into several modules that parallel the organization of the Participant's Guide.

When a video module comes to an end, you will be prompted to pause the video and carry out some suggested tasks.

2. **Perform the assigned tasks.** The tasks at the end of each module may include:
 - Browsing a chapter in the Participant's Guide
 - Thinking about how to deal with situations you may face on Council
 - Going online to check out a resource that may be helpful to you in the future
3. **Resume the video.** Then, move on to the next video module. Continue the process described above until you have completed all of the modules.

If, after completing the course, you have unanswered questions, your fellow Councillors or municipal staff may have the answers you need – or know where to find them.

Of course, your knowledge of Council roles, responsibilities, and practices will continue to grow as you carry out your day-to-day duties as a Mayor or Councillor.

THANK YOU!

The MTO would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of the Northwest Territories Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, School of Community Government, in making the text of its *Planning: Directions for Success* Participant's Guide available as a resource for this publication.



INTRODUCTION

Creating a Strategic Plan for your municipality may seem, at first, to be a difficult task. However, you can take reassurance from others who have been there that it is both doable and rewarding.

Strategic planning is a step-by-step process that Council uses to chart its path forward, balancing the needs and wishes of various groups within the community with the realities of existing commitments and constrained resources. Strategic planning is aspirational – looking at exciting possibilities for the future – but also intensely practical in identifying what *needs* to be done, what *can* be done, and *when* it can be done. It is a vision of where a municipality wants to be in approximately five years, a set of high-level goals and objectives, strategies for achieving them, and specific actions that will drive the strategies forward.

This Guide is divided into two complimentary parts. *Part 1 – What is Strategic Planning?* provides an explanation of what strategic planning is, how it works, and how it fits with other, shorter-term plans that municipalities prepare (e.g., the Budget, Capital Plan, Operating Plan, etc.). *Part 2 – How to Develop a Strategic Plan* takes the theory and shows how to put it into practice.

In short, this Guide explains:

- Strategic planning concepts and key terms.
- Why strategic planning is beneficial.
- How to go about creating a Strategic Plan.
- Key components of a Strategic Plan
- Who should be involved – and when.
- How to measure and evaluate the Plan's implementation.

PART I – WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

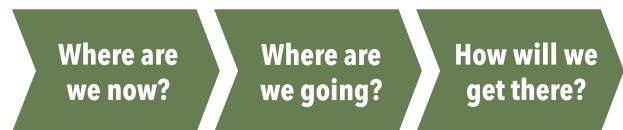
Strategic Planning Fundamentals

What is strategic planning?

A municipal Strategic Plan is the “big picture” plan that Council uses to identify what is important and where it wants to go. When it is time to make decisions and allocate resources, the Strategic Plan helps focus the community on its long-term goals.

Municipal governments are faced with making many decisions, and without a municipal Strategic Plan, Councillors can end up questioning priorities every time they are faced with a decision. When decisions are made without keeping long term goals in sight, it is easy to go off course.

A well-thought-out Strategic Plan answers three key questions.



Where are we now? To answer this question, you will need to review your current position and clarify your mission, vision, and values.

Where are we going? This question requires you to identify your advantages and establish your vision for the future.

How will we get there? This question challenges you to chart the road ahead, connecting where you are now with where you're going. To do this, you will need to set your strategic objectives, goals, and action items, and spell out how you'll execute your Plan.





KEY DEFINITIONS

Strategic Planning has a vocabulary all of its own. Here are some of the terms you will see in this document.

Environmental scan: an analysis of key external elements or forces that influence the conditions under which an organization functions.

Goal: results-oriented broad statements of policy or intention and representing particular aspects of the vision.

Mission: a statement outlining an organization's purpose. It describes what the organization strives to do and for whom it's done. It is the way you communicate to your customers (citizens to whom services are provided) and other stakeholders (those with a vested interest) why your local government exists, how they benefit or are impacted.

Organization: local government or functional part (department, program, unit) for which a strategic planning initiative is applicable.

Performance measures: a tool that assesses work performed and results achieved.

Stakeholders: organizations, groups or individuals that have a vested interest or expect certain levels of performance or compliance from the organization. Stakeholders do not necessarily use the products or receive the services of a program. Customers are one group of stakeholders.

Strategic planning: an on-going, systematic process that takes a forward-looking approach to an organization's goals and objectives.

Strategic plan: a results-oriented blueprint consisting of goals, objectives and strategies in order to achieve a desired vision.

Strategy: key steps (milestones) in achieving an objective.

SWOT Analysis: An acronym used to denote an organization's **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. It is part of the Internal/External Assessment an organization conducts to analyze and evaluate internal conditions (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external factors (Opportunities and Threats) that affect the organization.

Team: A group of people working together to achieve a common goal or objective. Teams operate under more specific conditions and have the following characteristics:

- Shared commitment to a common purpose.
- Specific mission, goals, and objectives.
- Operate under ground rules such as respect for others and their ideas.
- Willingness to offer and receive constructive criticism.
- Commitment to work together by using group processes and techniques.

Vision: a picture that you form today of what your municipality's future will look like.



In short, a Strategic Plan:

- Provides a map of what is important to Council and the community.
- Directs Councillors on where they are going, what they are doing, and why they are doing it.
- Helps Councillors unify behind a common purpose and speak with one voice.
- Communicates Council's long-term intentions to the public and prepares community members and organizations to play their roles.

Planning: A Definition

Deciding how you're going to use the resources of an organization, over time, to meet the goals of an organization.

Municipal Strategic Plans are implemented through action plans that will be achieved, in many cases, through the implementation of other plans. For this reason, the municipal Strategic Plan can be thought of as an *umbrella* plan.



CHECKLIST: WHY PLAN?

To achieve consensus about the way forward.

In any community, there are many different points of view about where the community should be headed. Planning is a process that draws all those points of view into the open and provides a way to agree on what Council should and shouldn't be doing.

To communicate the consensus.

A Plan – and the consensus-building process used to create it – helps the community, your funders, government agencies, and other organizations understand where you are headed.

To determine what's working and what isn't.

Without a Plan, you have no way to determine if you are achieving important objectives. With a plan, you can identify what worked, what didn't, and what to fix going forward.

To reduce your personal and organizational stress level

Without a clear direction to follow, you will be forced to react to each new issue and pressure without reference to established goals and priorities. It's much less stressful to know where you're going and why.

To anticipate upcoming problems

Planning means trying to anticipate trends and challenges before they happen and being prepared to deal with them.

To make the best possible use of your resources.

Planning enables you to make effective use of scarce resources – time, money, and people.

Four Levels of Planning

As mentioned earlier, a Strategic Plan provides context for other, more focused plans that your municipality must also prepare. However, the Strategic Plan itself is guided by even higher-level statements that capture the municipality's Vision, Mission, and Values.

So, municipal planning operates at four distinct "levels":

Statements of Vision, Mission, and Values provide overall guidance by:

- Painting a picture of the future the community would like to achieve.
- Stating the main purpose of Council's efforts and the manner in which it seeks to accomplish it.
- Capturing the enduring core beliefs meant to guide all of your efforts – now and in the future.

Strategic Planning is long-term planning that:

- Provides broad goals for the next five years.

- Is based on the best information you can find about your municipality's external and internal environment.
- Provides the basis for annual, operational planning.

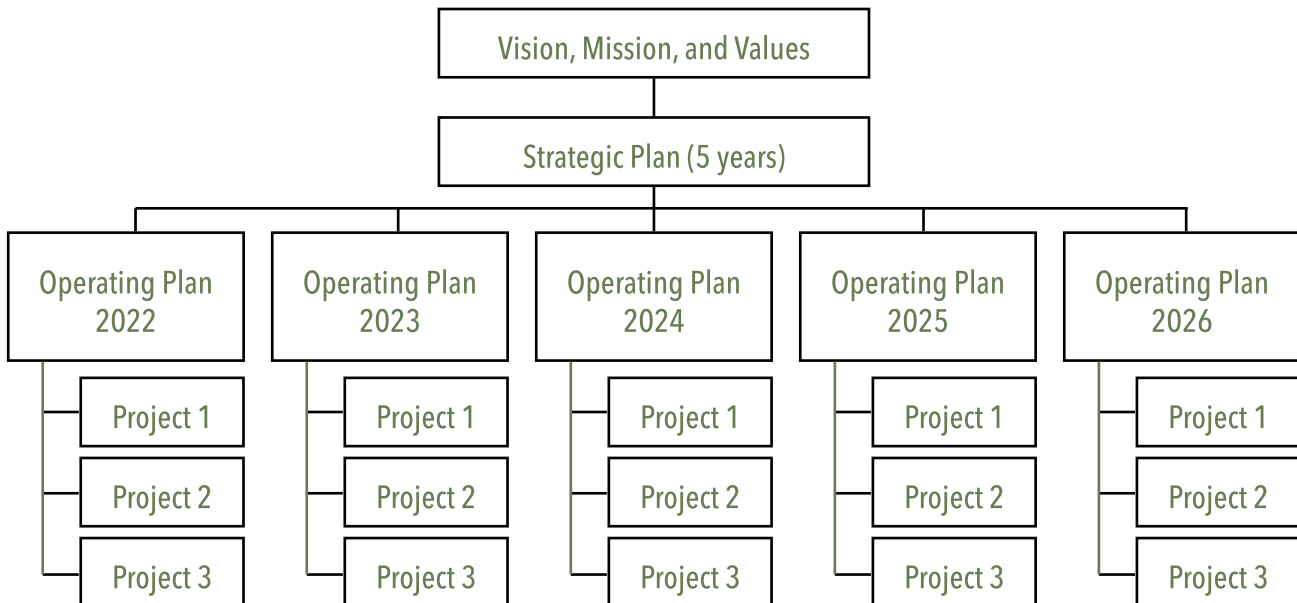
Operational Planning is annual planning that:

- Describes in specific and concrete terms how, in the coming year, your municipality will move toward the future described in its long-term plan.

Project Planning is planning to achieve a specific goal or to guide a particular project. It:

- Describes in specific and concrete terms how a project will be accomplished and measured for success.
- Can include projects that will take only a few months – or several years – to complete, depending on their size and complexity.

Here is how it all fits together.



Contributors to a Municipal Strategic Plan

A Strategic Planning Team is the human foundation of your planning effort. Members of this team generally include:

- **The Mayor:** usually the planning leader.
- **Councillors:** decision-makers and committee leads.
- **The SAO/CAO:** a key advisor, coordinator, and source of information.
- **The Chief Financial Officer:** the key advisor on all internal financial matters.
- **Department heads:** key advisors regarding their areas of responsibility.
- **A selection of key stakeholders:** people in the community who may be affected by the Strategic Plan.

Other municipal employees may also be asked to participate in aspects of the planning as members of focused “work groups”. For instance, employees in the Finance Department might be asked to detail the financial circumstances that must be referenced in the Strategic Plan.

Who is a Municipal Strategic Plan Stakeholder?

The concept of “stakeholder” is not always clearly understood.

A stakeholder can be a person, group, or organization whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by the goals, objectives, and tasks laid out in the Strategic Plan. They may also be influential citizens who represent points of view shared by others in the community. According to this broad definition, depending on the size of the community, stakeholders may include:

Small Communities:

- Citizens
- Directors of large industries in the municipality's vicinity
- Local entrepreneurs and business owners
- Representatives of local schools
- Representatives of medical or social care institutions
- Representatives of local churches
- Youth groups
- Local representatives of central/regional government offices
- Affected parties who do not work directly for the municipality, but are important to its operations (e.g., unions, contracted service providers)
- ... and others

Large Communities:

- Directors of public utilities
- Directors of local business associations
- Representatives of colleges or universities
- Representatives of advocacy/social initiative groups
- Bank managers
- Newspaper and other media representatives
- Representative of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- ... and others

Why is stakeholder participation a good idea?

The benefits of stakeholder participation in the development of a Strategic Plan include:

- Greater effectiveness in strategy development through providing diverse information, insights, and knowledge.



- Giving residents who participate a better understanding of what Council is trying to achieve.
- More effective project selection.
- Greater legitimacy and transparency in decisions and decision-making processes.
- Greater commitment and ownership of strategy outputs.
- Opportunities for reinforcing innovation and learning across organizational boundaries.
- Development of institutional capacity at the sector and territorial levels

Engaging Technical Assistance

While not essential, it is also a good idea to involve consultants in providing technical assistance during the creation of a Strategic Plan. Drawing on technical assistance has several advantages:

- An “outsider” with professional expertise can act as an honest broker – lending a perspective that isn’t influenced by prior connections within the community.
- Well-chosen consultants are able to provide experience and expertise that may be lacking in the municipality and build capacity in the process.
- Consultants ease the workload of preparing the strategy.

Technical consultants may assist with some or all of the following:

- Setting up the organizational structure of the Strategic Planning Team.
- Providing a methodological framework from beginning to end.
- Identifying the proper mix of people to be appointed to different working groups, based on needs of the municipality, their talents, and the groups they represent.

- Conducting an introductory session at the beginning of the process.
- Developing the information database for the situation analysis.
- Guiding local coordinators through the process.
- Moderating workshops.
- Writing the final version of the Strategic Plan.
- Identifying opportunities for positive media exposure, helping to plan public meetings, and encouraging maximum attendance and community awareness of what the planning process is about.
- Strategy implementation.

As useful as they are, technical consultants should not be given overall responsibility for the development of the Strategic Plan. The Mayor, Council, and municipal administration must retain ownership of the process. Consultants assist. The municipality leads.



QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN PLANNING

- ❑ What does our community expect from us?
- ❑ What do we expect from ourselves?
- ❑ What are we required to do?
- ❑ What do we want our future to look like?
- ❑ How can we get there?





STRATEGIC PLANNING FUNDAMENTALS: SELF-TEST

1. What three questions does a Strategic Plan Answer?
✓ To review, see [page 2](#).
2. A Strategic Plan is an example of an "umbrella plan." What does that mean?
✓ To review, see [page 4](#).
3. What role do Councillors play in strategic planning?
✓ To review, see [page 6](#).
4. What would be some examples of Strategic Plan *stakeholders*?
✓ To review, see [page 6](#).
5. What role, if any, can technical consultants play in developing a community Strategic Plan?
✓ To review, see [page 7](#).

PART II – HOW TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN

The process of developing a municipal Strategic Plan does not have to be complex. If the task is to update a previous Strategic Plan that has come due for renewal after the conclusion of its typical five-year timeframe, the process may take no more than a few weeks if all the participants understand and are committed to the process.

If you find yourself having to – or wanting to – build a new plan from the ground up, for instance when a new Council takes office following municipal elections, the process is still quite straightforward. It will just take a bit more time.

Councillors come with many skills needed for good strategic planning: they are interested in getting things done for the good of the community; they understand commitment and perseverance; and they are not afraid to get out

and speak their minds. The same qualities that help them run for Council help them to engage in municipal strategic planning.

Although most municipal Strategic Plans take the form of a multi-page written document, they don't necessarily have to take that form. If it would be easier to communicate the Plan's contents to the community as a PowerPoint presentation, a series of charts, a poster, or a combination of those methods, why not? The important thing is to communicate the Plan clearly in a way that will be understood by stakeholders.

Once a municipal Strategic Plan is adopted, its goals will typically not change until the Plan has been in place for most or all of its stated timeframe. However, modifications to individual strategies and workplan activities are expected. Annual or quarterly reporting on the success of initiatives arising from the Plan will help Council and staff to determine when modifications are required.



The Cyclical Strategic Planning Process

It is helpful to think of strategic planning as a cyclical process.

A Strategic Plan never truly “ends”. Rather, as time passes and circumstances change, it is revised in some of its details or undergoes a major update to bring it into line with evolving needs.

The recurring steps highlighted in this diagram are explained in the following pages.

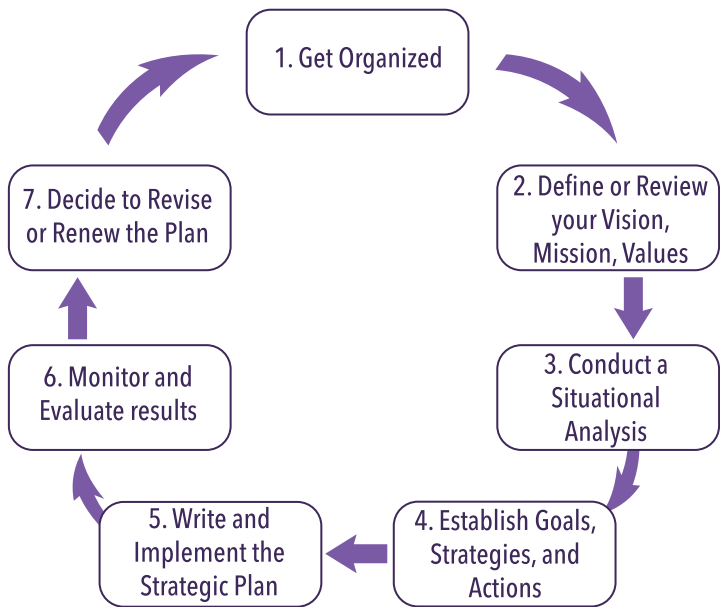
delivered by experienced Councillors, the SAO/CAO, Government of Nunavut representatives, consultants, or a combination of all of these. The sessions should help Councillors understand:

- The purpose of a municipal Strategic Plan.
- How a Strategic Plan is organized (i.e., its contents and the order of presentation)
- The differences between goals, strategies, and tasks/actions.
- The responsibilities of the Mayor, Council, SAO/CAO, municipal staff, and other players in the development of the Strategic Plan.

With basic understandings in place among Council members, the next step is to form a Strategic Planning Team. As the Mayor and Council are ultimately responsible for broad municipal planning, Council as a whole – or a designated Council Committee (e.g., a Strategic Planning Committee) – normally takes the lead.

The SAO/CAO and sometimes one or more technical consultants may participate in the Committee as advisors and to record its deliberations and decisions. Task groups, often lead by a Departmental head (e.g., Director of Finance, Director of Planning and Lands, Recreation Director, Communications Director, etc.), may then be formed to address specific issues or take on a significant task (e.g., SWOT analysis) and report back to the Strategic Planning Committee.

In larger communities where strategic planning tends to be more complex, it can be helpful to appoint a *strategy coordinator* to keep track of all the activities involved and ensure that they are progressing according to schedule.



Strategic Planning

Step 1: Get Organized

If Council has decided that a new Strategic Plan is needed and a significant number of Councillors are not familiar with the purpose of such a plan or with the planning process, an early priority should be to bring them up to speed. This can be accomplished by means of information sessions



THE STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM



Once formed, the Strategic Planning Committee's first order of business should be to agree on a process that will guide the entire team and project. For instance:

- Who will make decisions? The Mayor and Council? Task groups dealing with specific subjects? Participants in public meetings? Etc.
- How will decisions be made? By majority vote of Council? By consensus among Councillors? By community referendum? Etc.
- What level of involvement will various stakeholders have? On-going participation throughout the process? Presentations at set times in the process? Participation in face-to-face or online polls? Etc.
- How will the Strategic Planning Team communicate with stakeholders – and according to what schedule?

Question like these need to be decided early in the planning process.

Strategic Planning

Step 2: Define or Review Your Vision, Mission, Values

Before diving into the details of strategic planning, it's important to re-examine the foundations on which all of your activities should be based: the municipality's vision, mission, and values. It's a good idea to make this a collaborative activity involving Councillors, selected municipal employees, and community representatives. Several methods that can be used to capture and refine ideas for these important



GETTING ORGANIZED TASK LIST

- ❑ Form a planning team.
- ❑ Ensure political commitment and leadership.
- ❑ Appoint a Strategy Coordinator.
- ❑ Consider engaging technical consulting assistance.
- ❑ Set up the organizational structure.
- ❑ Agree on operational rules and a work plan.



statements are discussed below under the heading *Tools to Help You Plan*.

Vision Statement

This short, concise statement defines what citizens and their elected Council hope the community will look like in five-to-ten years.

A good Vision Statement is:

- Forward-thinking.
- Creative.
- Aspirational.
- Specific about what success looks like.
- Clear and easy to communicate.

A Vision Statement that incorporates these qualities will help to motivate and inspire elected officials, municipal employees, and citizens to rally around what you're trying to accomplish as a municipality.

Example of a (fictional) Municipal Vision Statement

ICEPICK's Vision for the Future

The Hamlet of Icepick is a welcoming community with a thriving economy, a pristine environment, well-appointed recreational and cultural facilities, and responsive social support programs where all people are safe, healthy, and have equitable opportunities for success and happiness.

Mission Statement

In contrast to the aspirational Vision Statement, a Mission Statement is a more concrete expression of the municipality's purpose. It is a declaration of why the municipality exists as an organization.

Taking time to craft a Mission Statement specific to your municipality is important because, even

more that your statements of Vision and Values, it will become your common reference point when choosing goals, strategies, and objectives – and when evaluating whether or not things are moving in the right direction.

In short, a Mission Statement reminds Council about its purpose, suggests what it should work towards, and provides a reference point when measuring success.

Example of a (fictional) Municipal Mission Statement

The Municipality of Icepick's Mission

Our Municipal Government supports residents in achieving a good quality of life through the delivery of efficient and effective municipal programs and services that adapt to evolving needs, respect culture, engage the public, and support local capacity.

Values Statement

Values statements – sometimes referred to a guiding principles – are enduring, passionate, and distinctive core beliefs. They help to define the municipality's organizational *culture* by expressing the values that are important to it. The core values/principles are meant to be enduring; they are part of your long-term strategic foundation.



Iqaluit's Statement of Core Values

OUR VALUES

Accountability

Municipal enforcement officers are responsible for behaving ethically and in keeping with the values and standards set out in the Code of Conduct Policy.

Integrity

Committed to providing quality service by consistently holding ourselves to the highest moral and ethical principles.

Professionalism

Committed to providing the community with exceptional law enforcement by developing our personnel through effective training and leadership.

Excellence

Committed to providing innovative solutions to issues by working in partnership with our community.

Teamwork

Committed to providing a quality work environment by promoting coordination, cooperation, and communication with our members.

Leadership

We can each be a model for others and, as such, be a leader. You are expected to demonstrate leadership by respecting the Code of Conduct Policy.

Strategic Planning

Step 3: Conduct a Situational Analysis

The objective of situational analysis is to review how things currently stand in the community and within the municipal corporation. Having



VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES TASK LIST

- ❑ Review your Vision, Mission, and Values before getting into the details of strategic planning.
- ❑ Engage the community in articulating its vision for the future.
- ❑ Ask: have we met the criteria for a good Vision Statement?
- ❑ Create a Mission Statement that captures the municipality's purpose and what it is working towards.
- ❑ Use the Values Statement to define the organizational culture the municipality wishes to have.

a realistic picture of the community's and municipality's current strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, threats, influences, and trends makes it clearer how things must change to meet community needs and aspirations.

Situational analysis begins with information gathering. You will need solid data regarding the sectors and themes that are important to citizens and to the municipal corporation. Look for the required information in:

- Statistical reports prepared by municipal departments and community agencies.
- Population data collected by Statistics Canada and Nunavut government departments.
- Tax records.
- Development applications.
- Program enrolment numbers.
- Business activity.
- The municipality's financial performance.
- ... and so on.



It may also be appropriate to gather information regarding citizen attitudes by means of:

- Facilitated community meetings.
- Online and in-person questionnaires and surveys.
- One-on-one and group interviews.

Ask yourself: where can we find the information we need?

With data in hand, the following types of analysis can be conducted:

- Institutional analysis: what organizations, public and private, are operating in the municipality, what are their roles and capacities, what are their trend lines (i.e., growing or declining in size, becoming more or less active, etc.), and how could their operations be enhanced to better serve the community?
- Demographic analysis: what is the current composition of residents, temporary workers, and visitors in your community? Has this mix been changing over time? Where do things seem to be headed?
- Spatial analysis: using the maps and planning documentation at your disposal, how much land is currently in use and for what purposes, how much is ready for use if needed, and how might municipal boundaries have to change? How much of the land within municipal boundaries belongs to the municipal corporation and how much to private owners?
- Financial analysis: based on historical records and future projections, this assessment helps plan and predict the municipality's financial performance.
- Analysis of the community's economic development status and potential.

- An assessment of the community's natural resources, environmental issues, and climate change vulnerability.
- An analysis of key social issues including such things as employment, poverty, population aging, crime, substance abuse, life satisfaction, and others.
- An appraisal of approaches to marginalized communities and individuals with special needs.
- An assessment of other locally chosen priority topics such as infrastructure, basic services, housing, health, education, safety, heritage, cultural assets, etc.).

Your local situation will determine what types of analysis to undertake. As some of these types of analysis require special knowledge and training, you may want to engage technical consultants or specialists from other levels of government to assist you.

To improve analysis outcomes and earn buy-in for the conclusions, it is often a good idea to organise events to invite input from a wide cross section of stakeholders and conduct analysis jointly. For instance, you could arrange an event in which participants are divided into thematic working groups, each group made up of different stakeholders. At the appointed time, the working groups come together to share their conclusions and discuss what they mean for the future direction of the community.

Strategic Context

Another important type of analysis not mentioned above is *strategic context*, which is used to better understand the internal and external factors that influence the municipality corporation and the community. In this case, the kinds of questions to ask are:

- Overall, what do we do very well as a municipality?



- Which municipal departments are doing particularly well in achieving their priorities?
- Which organizations in the community are strong contributors to local quality of life?
- Overall, what is the municipality doing poorly, and how can we improve?
- Which municipal departments are having trouble in achieving their priorities?
- Which organizations in the community are experiencing difficulties, and how can they be helped?
- What advantages do we have as a municipal corporation and as a community?
- What factors hinder us as a municipal corporation/community?
- What outside trends or influences could benefit our community?
- What outside trends or influences could be bad for the community?

Answers to questions like the ones above will help you to conduct a SWOT analysis, which is described in detail elsewhere in this document.

Strategic Planning

Step 4: Establish Goals, Strategies, and Actions

After completing the first three steps in the strategic planning process, you will have created an organizational framework, defined your Vision, Mission, and Values, and gathered and evaluated information about your municipality's current situation.

Now comes the crucial work of identifying the long-term goals, enabling strategies, and short-term actions that will move your municipal corporation and community towards the future it has envisioned.



SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS TASK LIST

- ☐ Review how things currently stand in the community and municipal corporation by gathering information.
- ☐ Conduct various types of analysis to make sense of the data you have collected. What conclusions can be drawn about the health of community institutions, demographic trends, land needs and availability, economic activity, environmental vulnerabilities, social issues, etc.
- ☐ Engage stakeholders in information gathering and analysis to improve outcomes and earn buy-in.
- ☐ Assess the community's strategic context.

Long-term goals

A long-term goal is a concise statement about what you want to achieve, consistent with your Vision, Mission, and Values and with what you found out in the situation analysis. Goals generally have the same five-year duration as your Strategic Plan.

A typical Strategic Plan has approximately five-to-seven long-term goals. This is a workable number that will enable you to focus on achieving what is most important for your community during the coming five years. With any more than seven goals, you may find yourself torn in many directions, unable to accomplish any of the goals satisfactorily.

Again, goals are concise, broad ranging, and long-term in nature. For example:



Icepick's strategic goals are to:

- Excel in municipal administration.
- Build sustainable infrastructure that protects the environment.
- Foster a strong, resilient economy.
- Provide exceptional social support services.
- Protect and celebrate Inuit culture and traditions.

Strategies

Strategies explain how you intend to achieve your strategic goals but are not yet specific enough to be actionable or measurable.

Returning to one of Icepick's strategic goals, here are a set of strategies to help achieve it:

Goal: Excel in municipal administration

Strategies:

- Focus on openness, transparency, and accountability in everything we do.
- Make it more convenient for citizens to access Hamlet information and services.
- Perform as effective stewards of the Hamlet's finances.
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of Hamlet services.
- Ensure a sound planning framework to guide the Hamlet forward.

Short-term actions

There is still a need to convert strategies into specific actions that can be achieved within a one-to-two-year time horizon. Importantly, they are:

- Concrete and measurable.
- Assigned to a specific person for action.
- Given a target completion date.

As they are meant to be accomplished in the short term, they can be replaced by other actions when the Strategic Plan undergoes periodic review. Making them concrete and measurable lets you know when they have been completed.

One of Icepick's strategies to excel in municipal administration is to *Make it more convenient for citizens to access Hamlet information and services.*

Specific, measurable action items could be as follows.

Strategy: Make it more convenient for citizens to access Hamlet information and services.

Actions:

Schedule one in-person or online public information meeting each month to update citizens on Council activities and answer questions.

Lead: Communications Director

Target completion: September 2022

Place the minutes of each Council meeting on the Hamlet's website within two days of adoption.

Lead: Web administrator

Target completion: Ongoing

Provide a single telephone number for citizens to call to access all Hamlet services and make it accessible from 6 AM to 10 PM, Monday through Saturday.

Lead: Municipal Clerk

Target completion: January 2023





GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND ACTIONS TASK LIST

- ❑ Establish long-term, broad goals for your Municipality, based on the issues and choices identified in the situation analysis.
- ❑ Establish strategies for each goal. Strategies are answers to the question “what approach are we going to take to achieve this goal?”
- ❑ For each strategy, identify specific, measurable actions to achieve it.

Strategic Planning

Step 5: Write and Implement the Strategic Plan

Up until now, you’ve developed and collected some great ideas based on solid research. But they have not yet been brought together in a single, well-organized document that can be shared with stakeholders. When the parts become whole, everyone can see clearly how you intend to reach your vision.

Preparing the Plan is usually assigned to one person with strong writing skills who has been closely associated with its development. Having one author helps to ensure that the entire document will have a consistent voice.

The initial draft should be reviewed in detail by Councillors, Committee members, the SAO/CAO, designated staff, and selected stakeholders to make sure that it fairly and completely represents the outcomes of the development process. More than one draft may be required before the final, approved version is reached.

Sample Outline for a Strategic Plan

There is no single “best way” to organize a Municipal Strategic Plan. However, most

Strategic Plans in Nunavut include some or all of these elements.

1. A Message from the Mayor and Council
 - Purpose of the Strategic Plan.
 - Upbeat words about what the future holds.
 - Thank you to contributors and participants.
2. Strategic Foundations
 - Vision, Mission, and Values.
3. Current Strategic Position
 - The Strategic Plan’s development process.
 - A summary of the current strategic context.
 - A high-level summary of the municipality’s financial situation.
4. Strategic Priorities (Goals)
 - A list of the municipality’s five-to-seven long-term strategic goals.
 - A brief (one sentence) explanation of each goal.
5. Strategies and Actions
 - Strategies identified to achieve each strategic goal.
 - Concrete and measurable actions linked to each strategy, together with the assignment of responsibilities and target delivery dates.
6. Monitoring and Measurement
 - How the success of the Strategic Plan will be tracked and measured.
 - How progress will be communicated with the public.
7. Appendices (examples)
 - Municipal organizational chart.
 - Summaries of research outcomes (e.g., a SWOT analysis diagram).



- Key elements of the Strategic Plan in chart format.
- Contact information for the Mayor, Councillors, and key staff members.

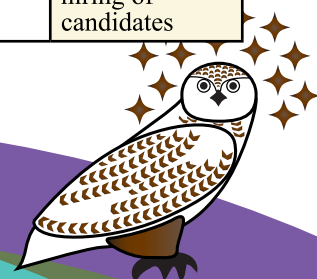
tasks, and measures of success and have captured them in a Strategic Plan, it is helpful to summarize them in a chart like the one shown below. The chart can be included in an Appendix to the Strategic Plan or created as a stand-alone document that can be used as a hand-out during public information sessions.

A Format for Summarizing Key Elements of Your Strategy

When you have finalized your goals, strategies,

	Goals	Strategies	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Measures of Success
Responsibility	Goal One There can be more than one goal associated with each area of responsibility	Strategy A There can be more than one strategy for every goal	Task one					A practical measure needs to be identified for each strategy
			Task two					
			Task three	Task may last one or more years				
		Strategy B						
	Goal Two There can be more than one goal associated with each area of responsibility	Strategy C	Multiple tasks can be associated with each strategy. Some tasks will be ongoing					

	Goals	Strategies	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Measures of Success
Human Resources	Provide effective administration of hamlet programs and services	Review and update the HR Plan		Revise job description				Job descriptions for most positions have been updated
		Hire a new SAO/CAO and have them develop an integration plan	Advertise for SAO/CAO					A new SAO/CAO has been hired
		Promote (locally) positions available at the Hamlet		Request information from municipal salary review	Consider changes			Information has been received from municipal salary review
				Reconsider factors that will help to attract and retain staff	Attend job fair at high school			Increased number of applications for jobs and successful hiring of candidates



Implementing the Plan

Once the Strategic Plan has been formally adopted by Council, the job of implementing it begins. There are several aspects to this.

The major players involved in developing the Strategic Plan also have important on-going roles to play in its implementation. These roles are highlighted in the following chart.

Strategic Plan Implement Roles	
Mayor & Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and communicate progress. • Communicate progress to the public and stakeholders. • Celebrate successes.
SAO/CAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a Work Plan to implement strategies and actions identified in the Strategic Plan. • Assigns tasks to staff. • Reports to Council on results. • Recommends changes and updates to the Strategic Plan, as required.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out assigned tasks. • Make the SAO/CAO aware of needed changes and updates to the Strategic Plan.
Committees / Task Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be established to guide the implementation of a particular goal or strategy, depending on its scope and timeframe.
Public / Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay informed. • Provide feedback to Council. • Celebrate successes.

In addition, some aspects of the Strategic Plan can only be implemented by developing more-detailed, topic-specific plans which, as you read earlier, exist under the “umbrella” of the Strategic Plan.

Common examples of these topic-specific plans include:

- Financial Plan
- Human Resource Plan
- Capital Plan
- Asset Management Plan
- Municipal Land Use Plan
- Emergency Response Plan
- Recreation Plan
- Energy Plan
- ... and others.

All such plans must be consistent with the goals and strategies set out in the Strategic Plan.

Communicating the Plan

Everyone affected by the Strategic Plan – Councillors, municipal staff, and outside stakeholders – needs to understand how they will be impacted and what they can do to support its success. In short, the Strategic Plan must be *communicated*.

Strategic Plan communications can involve some – or all – of the following approaches:

- Making the Strategic Plan itself available as widely and conveniently as possible (e.g., by distributing printed copies to households, posting it on the Hamlet’s website, and inviting stakeholder organizations to provide links to the Plan on *their* websites)
- Having elected officials and municipal staff present the Plan at public meetings, perhaps making a PowerPoint presentation, answering



questions, and providing participants with handouts such as the Plan itself or a summary of the Plan's key points.

- Celebrating the successful completion of actions identified in the Plan by posting updates to the municipal website or issuing press releases to news media.
- Making frequent reference during Council and Committee meetings to progress being made on the Plan.

To ensure that communications surrounding the Strategic Plan is comprehensive and well organized, it is a good idea to create a *Strategic Plan Communications Strategy*.

Strategic Planning

Step 6: Monitor and Evaluate Results

The Strategic Plan is an evolving document. While core values and goals remain constant, strategies and actions require routine oversight and fine-tuning to keep them fresh and relevant.

What Should be Evaluated and Measured?

As a basic rule, you should review your action items regularly. Look at whether the steps within your implementation plan are progressing according to schedule and if they are helping you achieve your goals and objectives. If they aren't, re-examine the actions/measures proposed in the Plan and consider whether another approach might achieve better results.

If your action plan seems to be in line with your goals and objectives, but your desired outcomes are not being achieved, you may want to review your goals and objectives. In some cases, the problem is not necessarily how to get there, but what you're trying to do to get to the right place. Ask whether or not the goals and strategies need revision.



WRITING AND IMPLEMENTATION TASK LIST

- ❑ Assign the job of writing to one person with strong writing skills.
- ❑ Check out examples of Strategic Plans prepared by other communities to make sure that no important topics have been missed.
- ❑ Councillors, Committee members, the SAO/CAO, designated staff, and selected stakeholders review successive drafts of the Strategic Plan until a final, approved version is reached.
- ❑ Summarize key aspects of your Plan in chart form to make it easy for stakeholders to understand the links between goals, strategies, actions, and measures of success.
- ❑ Take a systematic, on-going approach to implementing and communicating the Plan.
- ❑ Review your Strategic Plan at least once a year.

How often should you measure?

It is good practice to conduct an annual evaluation of your Strategic Plan. An annual strategic planning session provides an opportunity to review not only the status of strategies and actions in the Strategic Plan, but of all of the plans under its umbrella. The purpose and goals of each plan should be reviewed, and the relationships between them discussed. This will help Council understand if there are any planning gaps, and to determine if additional planning is needed to further the goals of the municipal Strategic Plan.



It may also be appropriate to conduct quarterly reviews of key aspects of the Strategic Plan – for instance, its financial planning elements – especially if rapidly changing circumstances may have big impacts over a short space of time.

It may also be appropriate to review performance in some areas more than four times a year, depending upon external circumstances affecting a particular program, or events such as elections or leadership changes. However, resist the urge to monitor too often. Excessive evaluation can easily turn into micromanagement and can have adverse effects on the people carrying out the work.

The SAO/CAO, supported by staff, is responsible for making sure that Councillors are provided with the information they need to conduct all of these kinds of review.

Who should measure?

It is best if a third party unconnected to the particular activity, task, or service being monitored measures its performance. A neutral monitor ensures honesty and a “fresh set of eyes” that may be able to offer constructive criticism and/or support. While you may also include people directly involved in the project, the initiative’s integrity is maintained by utilizing the services of a person who is not strongly tied to it. This person could be a municipal staffer from another department or could be recruited from outside the municipality altogether (e.g., a consultant, a person from another level of government, or a well-regarded community member).

Strategic Planning

Step 7: Decide to Revise or Renew the Plan

As mentioned, Strategic Plans normally have a “shelf life” of approximately five years. A lot of

things can change in that amount of time, so it makes sense to assume that a major overhaul will be needed at the end of its run. It is possible – even likely – that some of the goals and strategies you identified will remain relevant. If that is the case, you won’t be starting over from scratch. You will have a ready-made foundation on which to build your next Strategic Plan.

However, even if some elements of the existing Strategic Plan appear to be sound, it is important to repeat the cycle of planning activities that produced good results in the past.

As described in Strategic Planning Steps 1, 2, and 3: get organized to update the Plan; revisit your Vision, Mission, and Values statements; and conduct a thorough situational analysis. You may be surprised by how much things have changed – and by how many good ideas are proposed to make your future brighter than ever!

Tools to Help You Plan

For many years, strategic planning has been considered an essential activity for organizations of every kind. So, it should come as no surprise that a wide range of tools and techniques have been developed over the years to support the planning process. Here are a few that you may want to employ.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a process that allows every suggestion or idea to be heard and considered. A brainstorming session is often led by a skilled facilitator who uses a white board, flipchart, or large sheets of paper mounted to the wall to write down each idea as it is offered. When the participants have completed making their suggestions, the facilitator guides the group through a process in which the sort and prioritize the ideas. The prioritized ideas become the basis



for the goals and strategies that are central to strategic planning.

The key to a successful session is to create a safe and encouraging atmosphere, free of negativity, where every member has the opportunity to contribute. Brainstorming often generates creative and innovative ideas, while at the same time helping to unify the participants as they pursue a common goal.

Affinity Diagrams

An Affinity Diagram is an organizational tool that allows meeting participants to generate a wide variety of ideas and then summarize them into natural groupings. This tool takes brainstorming one step further and classifies them into like categories. The team is then able to consider the categories as they relate to each other and the objectives to be achieved. You will find a detail explanation of how to use affinity diagrams in [Appendix 1](#).

Environmental Scanning

Environmental scanning is the ongoing tracking of trends and occurrences in an organization's internal and external environment that are important to its success. Environmental scans usually go hand-in-hand with a SWOT analysis (described below).

An Internal Assessment helps you take inventory of your organization's present operations and mandates to help you form an accurate picture of what services your municipality currently provides and to whom they are provided. Who are our stakeholders? What are their needs? Has the municipality met them adequately in the past? If so, how can we build upon this? If not, how can we improve? What are their thoughts?

An External Assessment helps you to identify your stakeholders. What is important to each stakeholder? Is the municipality serving their

needs? How well has it delivered promised services? Which governmental mandates are we bound by? How can we serve our customers' needs and continue to stay within financial, legal, and governmental parameters?

An Environmental Scanning Worksheet is included in [Appendix 2](#).

SWOT Analysis

Another tool needed to implement the Strategic Plan is a SWOT analysis. In a SWOT analysis, you conduct internal and external assessments and look at your organization's **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**:

- Strengths are positive things about your municipality now that help achieve its Mission.
- Weaknesses are things that your municipality needs to improve in order to achieve its Mission.
- Opportunities are anticipated trends or events that your municipality may be able to take advantage of in the future to achieve its Mission.
- Threats are anticipated trends or events that may endanger your municipality's capacity to achieve its Mission.

Strengths and Weaknesses are *internal* to your municipality. Opportunities and Threats are *external* to your municipality.

You will find information on how to conduct a SWOT analysis in [Appendix 3](#).

Prioritization

You and your team need to be able to rank ideas based on importance, timeliness, and applicability to the objectives. The use of Ranking Criteria is a very common technique that helps participants



agree on which considerations are most important to achieving the objectives. By prioritizing using specific criteria (e.g., “most in line with our Vision and Mission”, “most cost-effective,” “best able to promote quality of life,” etc.) you enable everyone to see suggestions from a common perspective – which encourages consensus.

Internet References

For examples of municipal strategic plans that may help you in your planning efforts, check out these resources.

Iqaluit Strategic Plan 2017-2022

https://www.iqaluit.ca/sites/default/files/english_5year.pdf

City of Yellowknife Community Based Strategic Plan 2010

https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/resources/Reports/Economic_Development/City_of_Yellowknife_Community_Based_Strategic_Plan_2010.pdf

City of Yellowknife Goals and Objectives 2019-2022

https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/resources/City_Council_and_Mayor/Councils_Goals_Objectives/STRATEGIC-PRIORITIES-2019-2022-ACTION-PLAN.pdf

Town of Hay River, Northwest Territories, Strategic Plan 2019-2023

<https://hayriver.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Hay-River-Strategic-Plan-2019-2023.pdf>

Town of Inuvik, Northwest Territories, Strategic Plan 2016-2021

<https://www.inuvik.ca/en/town-hall/resources/Town-of-Inuvik-2016-2021-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

Town of Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, Strategic Plan 2018

<https://www.fortsmith.ca/sites/default/files/E.%20Fort%20Smith%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>



HOW TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN: SELF-TEST

1. What is the recommended first step in the Strategic Planning process?
✓ To review, see [page 9](#).
2. What is the main difference between a municipality's *Vision* and *Mission*?
✓ To review, see [page 11](#).
3. What is the purpose of *Situational Analysis*?
✓ To review, see [page 12](#).
4. Why is it so important to make Actions concrete and measurable?
✓ To review, see [page 19](#).
5. What are some methods that can be used to share your Strategic Plan with the community?
✓ To review, see [page 18-19](#).



CONCLUSION

The most important step in strategic planning is to *get started!* You don't have to be a master at strategic planning at the outset but, be assured, you will quickly gain knowledge and skills that will soon make *you* a valued strategic planning mentor and resource.

Increasingly, strategic planning is seen by citizens as an essential function of their municipal government that will deliver a better future for individual residents, their families, and the wider community. That is why so many people want to contribute to the process by explaining their situations, brainstorming for solutions, and helping to identify goals, strategies, and actions for positive change.

The ultimate goal in developing and implementing a Strategic Plan is to ensure that your community's needs and future visions are met in a way that is not only efficient, but also equitable. As circumstances change, the process allows for continuous renewal.

By investing planning time and resources, you, your fellow Councillors, and stakeholders in your community are ensuring that today's Vision will become tomorrow's reality.

A Few Final Things to Keep in Mind

Involve your stakeholders.

Being open and inclusive during the strategic planning process is vital to its success.

Be bold, but realistic.

Feel free to set aggressive goals – but keep a realistic mindset.

Seek out help when needed.

One of the great things about the municipal space is that most cities will share a lot of information. If you see a municipality with a really great Strategic Plan, don't be afraid to reach out to them and learn from what they're doing.

If you need to, make changes along the way.

Don't be afraid to make changes to your Strategic Plan when you need to. If something isn't working, adjust it, while sticking to your overall vision.

Don't let your Strategic Plan sit on a shelf.

Once you've created your Strategic Plan, don't leave it to gather dust. Make it a living document by communicating it to your stakeholders, reviewing progress regularly, and celebrating successes.



APPENDICES

1. Affinity Diagramming Steps

An Affinity Diagram is an organizational tool that allows participants in brainstorming sessions to generate a wide variety of ideas and then organize them into natural groupings.

To construct an Affinity Diagram, you will need Post-it notes and a wall or board to stick them to. The group leader (i.e., facilitator) presents a question or describes a situation in need of a solution and then invites the group to brainstorm. Participants are asked to write down their ideas, then transfer each idea using key words and phrases to a Post-it note. The rule is: one note per idea.

Then have participants – all of them at once – stick their notes on the wall. Invite them to interact with one another as they do so. Seeing what others have written and asking questions of each other often sparks additional ideas.

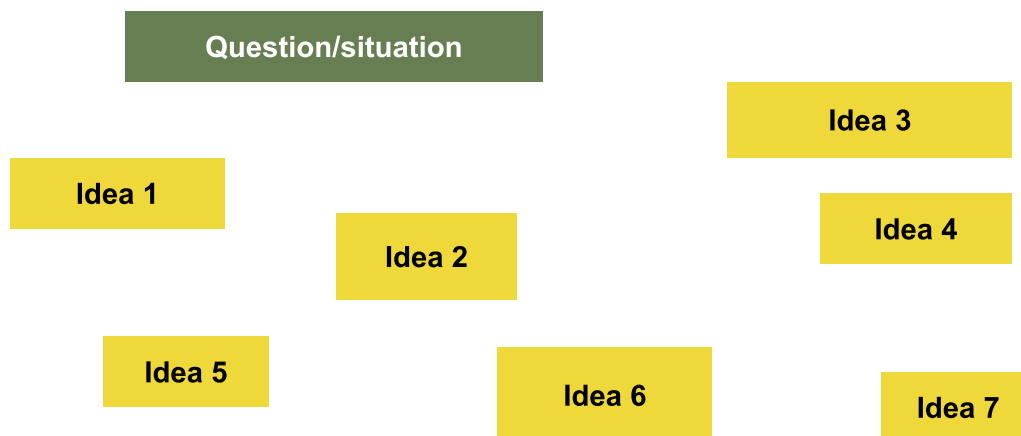
Then, ask the participants to review all of the ideas and begin sorting them into categories. For instance, if several of the ideas concern communications in some way, they would be grouped together. At the end of this process, you may find that you have 10 or more clusters.

Next, have the group discuss each cluster, give it a name, and create a short description of its characteristics.

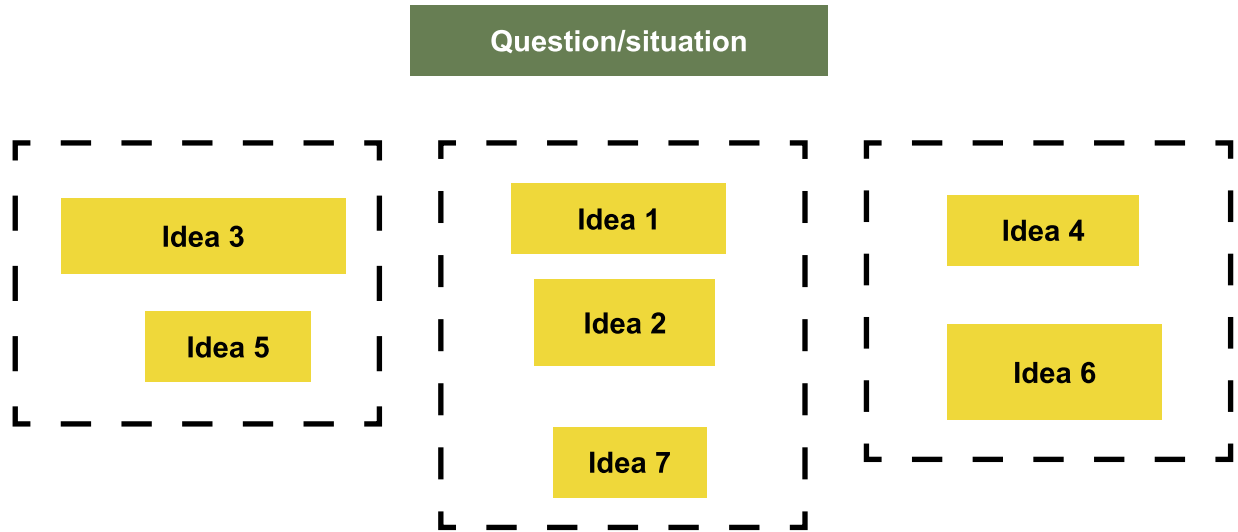
Finally, rank the clusters in order of importance. An easy way to create rankings is to give every participant five coloured stickers and ask everyone to place their stickers on the five clusters that they think are the most important (each participant can place only one sticker on each chosen cluster). At the end of the exercise, some clusters will have lots of stickers – indicating agreement on their importance – and some will have only a few.

The steps are further explained below.

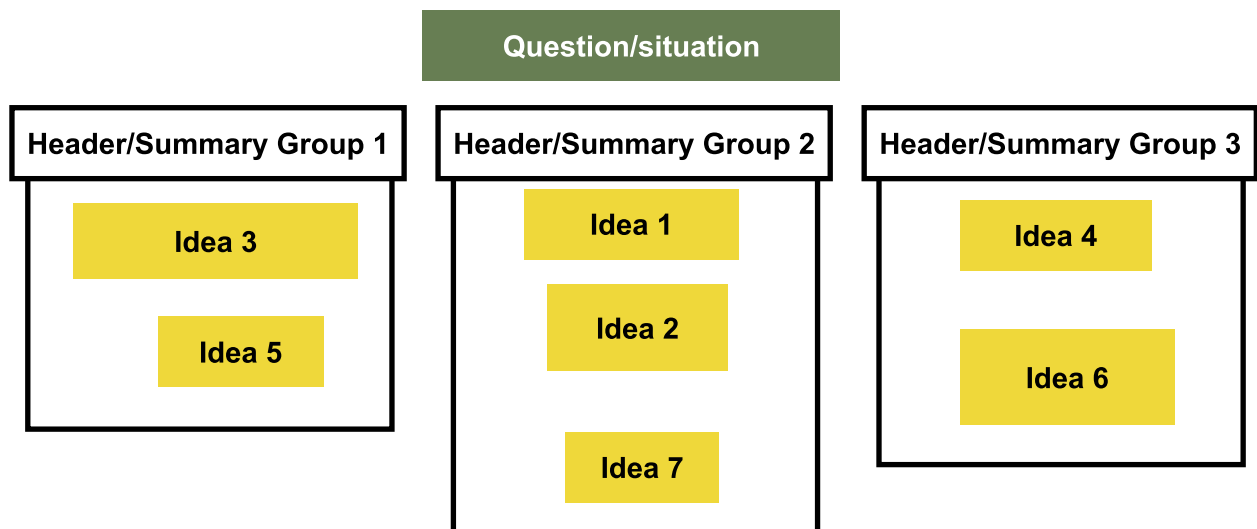
Step 1: Present a question or describe a situation and solicit ideas. Have group members write ideas using key words and phrases on Post-its and place them on the wall.



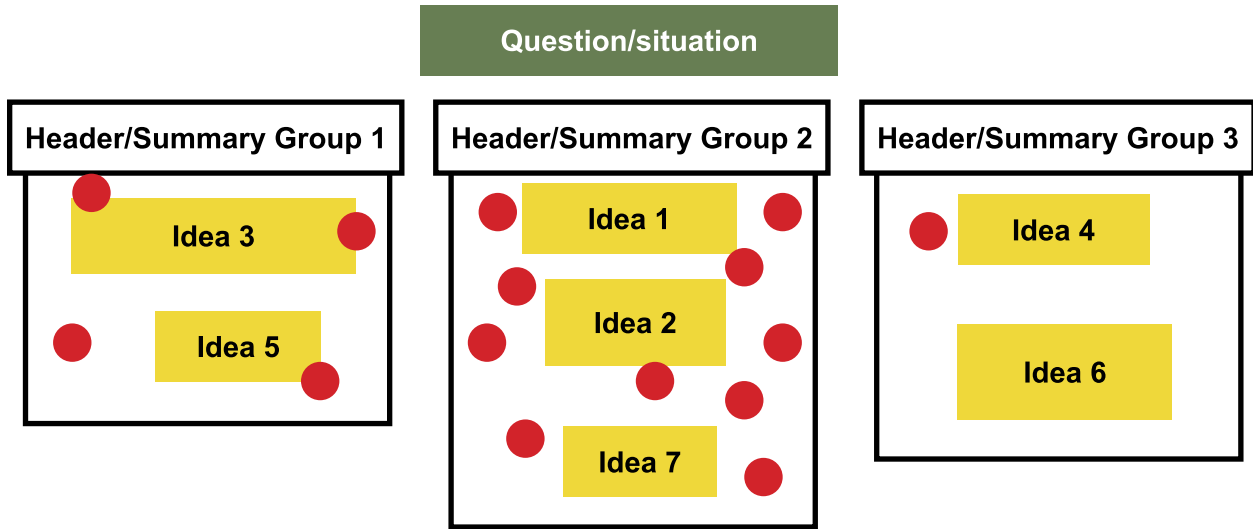
Step 2: *Sort ideas into similar categories.*



Step 3: *Reach consensus to determine a name and description for each grouping, making each column more precise. Then connect each grouping. The product should look like this:*



Step 4: Rank the clusters in order of importance by having participant place coloured stickers on the clusters that they think are the most important. The product should look like this:



Since each participant can see how their idea(s) contributed to the end result, the Affinity Diagram helps the group to focus, reach common ground, and build commitment for results.



2. Environmental Scanning Worksheets

Environmental Scan: Internal

Issues that are going on *within* your municipality.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Environmental Scan: Internal

Issues that are going on **outside** of the municipality.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



3. SWOT Analysis Worksheet

In a SWOT analysis, you conduct internal and external assessments and look at your organization's **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. A SWOT Analysis can offer valuable insights about the probable outcomes of certain actions and can also spark productive dialogue.

What are considered strengths and weaknesses?

Strengths are supplies or talents that can assist your locality in accomplishing your vision. For example, staff capabilities may be considered strengths.

Weaknesses are supply or talent deficiencies that impede you from achieving your vision, such as a flawed communication system.

What are opportunities and threats?

Opportunities are situations that can have a positive effect on your organization. Federal funding or support can be considered an opportunity.

Threats are the opposite of opportunities. They consist of factors that can have a negative impact on your local government.

The table below provides some guidance on the types of questions that stimulate a SWOT discussion.

Internal Factors	
<p>Questions regarding strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your city's advantages? • What does your city do well? • What relevant resources do you have in your city? • What do other people see as strengths of your city? 	<p>Questions regarding weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you do badly? • What could you improve? • What should you avoid?
External Factors	
<p>Questions regarding opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the good prospects in front of you? • What are the interesting trends you are aware of (changes in government policy, in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyles, economic development, etc.) 	<p>Questions regarding threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What obstacles do you face? • Are there threats to the resilience of the city from climate change? • What is happening around you, in other cities? • How is the economic situation changing? • Are major employers vulnerable? • How is the (inter)national policy environment or political situation changing? • How is demography changing?



4. Vision, Mission, and Values Worksheet

Vision (where do we want to be in the future?)

Mission (why we're here)

Values (what is important to us?)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____



5. Action Planning Worksheet

Action Plans: Getting from Here to There

When do we want to accomplish this? _____

Who should be involved? _____

What are the anticipated costs? _____

Are there any potential obstacles? If so, how do we deal with them? _____

Does this affect other departments, units or programs? If so, how? _____

How will this impact customers and stakeholders? _____

Do we have executive approval? _____

Does action plan meet legal standards? _____

Does this action item and plan support our mission and values? _____





