



South West Harbour Community Centre Strategic Discussion Worksheets¹

See page 6 for a guide to using this resource.

1. What are the broad aspirations for our organization and the concrete goals against which we can measure our success?

Aspirations:

Put an aspirational statement or two in here that corresponds to your organization's vision or mission

Concrete Goals: (outputs and outcomes)

Outcomes: Indicate here any outcomes you are already using as measures of mission success

Outputs: Identify here any outputs you are already using as measures of performance

¹ Questions are adapted from those developed by Roger Martin, Rotman School of Business, University of Toronto and published online as "Five Questions to Build Strategy" in the [HBR Review Blog Network](#), May 26, 2010

2. Across the field available to us, where will we choose to play and not play?

Our Field

Indicate the type of activity your organization is engaged in and its geographic reach

Where We Play

Be more specific here about what your organization does

Where We Do Not Play

3. In our chosen place to play, how will we distinguish ourselves in the community?

What Distinguishes Us?

Identify what currently distinguishes your organization to clients, funders, staff and community leaders? What distinguishing characteristics would you like to be known for (e.g. values, approach, impact, etc).

What it is that you feel distinguishes your organization from your competitors and/or from organizations doing similar work in other places. Attach a sheet describing two other organizations in your field or come up with a table comparing the features of your organization in relation to two others.

4. What capabilities are necessary for us to maintain what we have and/or develop further in order to meet our aspirations, goals and distinguishing characteristics?

This question is primarily one for the Executive Director to answer and one where the responses should flow from his/her initial answers to the previous two questions. It may be important in each section here to distinguish between capacity (resources) and capability (skill sets and talent).

Current organizational strengths to maintain (e.g. expertise, reputation, unique approach)

Risks and future challenges if we are to develop

5. What governance and management systems are necessary to maintain or build our capability so that we can realize our aspirations, achieve our goals and distinguish ourselves?

Management Systems

(Executive Director should contribute much of this response) Management (back office) systems refers to financial management, fundraising, human resource management and technology capabilities but may also include structures, internal communication, program evaluation or client feedback and marketing.

Governance Practices (Board responses only are ideal here)

What governance foundations are in place (e.g. meetings, policies, plans, recruitment practices, executive director evaluation, etc) and what aspects of the governance system needs to be further improved upon?

Suggestions on how to use these strategic discussion worksheets

1. *The purpose of this resource is to facilitate a **strategic governance discussion**, a group exercise that will require two to three hours. It is intended to strengthen a common understanding of organizational directions and priorities. It can be used to reframe an existing strategic plan with new and existing directors, or serve as a step towards a new plan.*
2. *Existing information from your organization should be added in the dotted line boxes indicated before it is distributed to board members for use around the board table. This can be done by the executive director or an ad hoc committee.* S
3. *Everyone who is to be part of the discussion should be given an opportunity to read and fill in some of the pieces before they share with others what they have written. Even if people have been given the worksheets before the meeting, at least 15 minutes should be provided at the outset of the session for quiet reflection and individual note making on the sheets.*
4. *In using the worksheets participants should be encouraged to move back and forth between the questions, especially 1, 2, and 3 with occasional engagement with questions 4 & 5 and back again to question 1. Responses to question 2 sometimes stimulates ideas relevant to question 1. This is Roger Martin's idea.*
5. *Answers to questions like "where do we not play (Question 2)" and "who are our competitors"(question 3) are not always easily answered. The facilitator or board chair may want to push on these ones.*
6. *We recommend that once individuals have completed the work sheets as well as they can, participants should each transcribe some of their ideas onto flip chart sheets posted around the room perhaps working in pairs at different posting stations. The sheets, prepared beforehand or during the reflective time, will have the questions on the top. Questions 1 & 2 are likely to each need 3x more posting space than questions 3 & 4. This activity will encourage additional reflection and understanding as well as some informal conversation.*
7. *Group discussion following this more individualized work should attempt to add details and examples where what's posted is general, identify common themes and explore differences and tensions. Participants should avoid trying to distill the information or craft strategic statements. Both agreements and tensions should however be underscored.*
8. *The results of the discussion –ideas and concepts from the flip chart pages and completed worksheets should be used to develop a strategic directions report intended for further refinement by the governance team (ie board and executive director).*

This resource was developed by Grant MacDonald of the Dalhousie University College of Continuing Education. Version 2-February 2013. Feedback on its use greatly appreciated. E-mail: grant.macdonald@dal.ca.