



Interaction  
international development  
toolkit

## What is a strategic plan?

*From Take Your Partners, Local Government International Bureau, 2006*

### **A strategic plan should consist of three sections:**

- **the aims & objectives of the partnership**, encompassing all aspects of the local organisation and community;
- **a methodology**, explaining how the aims and objectives will be achieved; and
- **a list of desired outcomes and benefits**, providing a starting point for the project's review and evaluation. This will enable partners to include a wide range of services and people.

### **What is a strategic plan?**

A strategic plan should be produced for all partnerships. Whilst a charter or written agreement is generally used to celebrate or announce a partnership and refers to more general aims of fostering friendship and understanding, a strategy document should provide clear parameters and inform everyone of what the partners want to achieve and how they plan to achieve it.

Both partners should draw up the strategic plan together. This is particularly important when the partnership concerns development activities, as the plan should reflect what the development partners really need, rather than any western perception. Good partnerships should always work on the basis of discussion and agreement, as well as respect for differing points of view.

The plan should be accompanied by a timetable with deadlines for activities to take place and for aims to be accomplished, as well as a list of the available and required resources. The strategy should be regarded as an operational plan to guide daily work programmes and should remain flexible, as it will inevitably have to respond to any unforeseen and individual circumstances.

In addition to making a project more efficient and effective, a strategic plan can contribute towards fundraising efforts for the activities the partners aim to pursue. Almost all institutional donors require clear evidence of strategic planning and many now require it in the form of a tabular *logical framework*. This framework should bring together everything about the project in one place in a clear, concise and accessible

way. The key thing about this approach is that its emphasis is not so much on the activities per se, but on their impact.

Finally, a strategic plan helps to inform others about the partnership, ensuring its activities are transparent and also providing a publicity vehicle to bring in new participants.

*An example, giving some brief suggestions for the format of a strategic plan:*

<b>Project summary</b>	<b>Measurable indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Important assumptions</b>
<b>GOAL:</b>  <b>Improvement in the lives and living conditions of poor households and communities in Malawi</b>	Communities have increased access to sustainable basic services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme evaluation</li> <li>- Observation analysis</li> <li>- Comparisons against against national country plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social and economic stability</li> <li>- Community residents see value in the project</li> <li>- Central government is receptive to the project goals</li> </ul>
<b>PURPOSE:</b>  <b>Households and community groups see a reduction in unmet needs through improved delivery of appropriate basic services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvement in the quantity and quality of basic services, falling under the responsibility of local government including: primary education, social welfare, public health, broader environmental health and housing compared to preprogramme levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme evaluation</li> <li>- Meeting minutes and reports</li> <li>- Discussion with other civil society groups</li> <li>- Local level assessment reports</li> <li>- Discussion with other local and central government representatives</li> <li>- Visit reports</li> <li>- Group discussions with community groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stability of staffing in the council</li> </ul>
<b>OUTPUTS:</b>  <b>(1) The local council is functioning effectively as a sustainable and relevant instrument of local government</b>  <b>(2) The local council has developed a clear system for community engagement and is demonstrating this</b>	<p>(1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The council has established plans in place</li> <li>- The council is working towards the delivery of strategic plans and is able to monitor performance against these plans</li> <li>- A reduction in unmet needs at the community level</li> </ul> <p>(2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community groups have full access to council officials who have mechanisms for consulting and responding to their input</li> </ul>	<p>(1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Written plans</li> <li>- Records of progress against plans with improving trends</li> </ul> <p>(2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews with community groups.</li> <li>- Minutes of meetings and activity records</li> </ul>	