

Book Platform  
Tbilisi, Georgia  
26 and 27 March 2012



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**WRITING THE FUTURE:  
STRATEGIC THINKING AND FUNDRAISING FOR LITERATURE  
AND PUBLISHING ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS**

*Through the Maze: a practical (and critical) guide  
to strategic planning for your organisation or association*

**Workbook 1: Strategic Thinking** is part of the toolkit used for the purposes of a training held in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 26-27 March 2012 within the Book Platform Project and can be used separately as a reference tool

**Purpose of sessions:**

- To explore strategic planning within the context of your work
- To consider the 'planning cycle'
- To conduct a strategic snapshot of your organisation and context
- To apply different stages of the 'planning cycle' (particularly objective setting) to your own organisation
- To consider ways of turning ideas and good intentions into action
- To think about how you will measure your success
- To signpost the process of developing a strategic plan

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# 1. Strategic planning and YOU



*Below and overleaf there are six statements about strategic planning. In your groups role a dice and select a statement (i-vi) to examine. Explore your responses to the statement and see if you can find:*

- Something that within your group you agree on easily (and consider why)
- Something that within your group you disagree on (and consider why)
- Something that emerges as an interesting point to share with the bigger group

*Then roll the dice again and repeat - for as long as time and energy remain!*

(i)

Strategy [in the sense of strategic planning] is a term that comes from the Greek *strategia*, meaning “generalship”. In the military, a strategy often refers to manoeuvring troops into position before the enemy is actually engaged. In this sense, strategy refers to the *deployment* of troops. Once the enemy has been engaged, attention shifts to tactics. Here, the *employment* of troops is central. Substitute “resources” for troops and the transfer of the concept to the business world begins to take form.

(ii)

Planning is more common than we might think; we do it all the time - shopping for food, sorting out childcare, making ends meet. Most of us know that having some sense of purpose and order, prioritising things and being prepared, can make our jobs easier to do successfully. Arts organisations do it all the time; if they didn't the work simply would not happen.

(iii)

Planning in the arts should be resisted because:

- You can't plan for creativity; it's got to be spontaneous.
- Our position is too insecure for us to plan. We don't know if we are still going to be here next year. It all depends on things outside our control, like the political climate or global economics.
- Planning – as a concept – is too closely associated with the state and is therefore suspect.
- Planning locks you in; it doesn't allow you to take advantage of unexpected opportunities or change your course of action.
- Planning takes time and we haven't any to spare.
- Strategic plans are just a requirement of funders; they're not much use to us.
- Planning is all about imposing a money-driven, private sector mentality on the arts when we are about something much more altruistic.

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(iv)

Planning is an opportunity to 'dream pragmatically'; a means of enabling people to turn that dream into reality. Planning can help you avoid being locked into old ways of thinking about things. It's about applying purpose, priorities and preparation to your work – about causing an agreed and desired future to happen. Ultimately planning can help organisations to be more able to control their own destiny.

(v)

Strategic planning is about being different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value; it's about competitive position, about differentiating yourself in the eyes of your customers or users, about adding value through a mix of activities different from those used by competitors.

(vi)

The word 'strategy' is used in several different ways:

- Strategy is a plan, a 'how', a means of getting from here to there
- Strategy is a pattern of actions over time; for example a publisher that produces very expensive publications is using a 'high end' strategy
- Strategy is a position; that is, it reflects decisions to offer particular products or services in particular markets
- Strategy is perspective, that is, vision and direction

Strategic planning is all of these – a complex web of thoughts, ideas, insights, experiences, goals, expertise, memories, perceptions and expectations that provides general guidance for specific actions in pursuit of particular ends.

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## 2. Why bother with strategic planning?



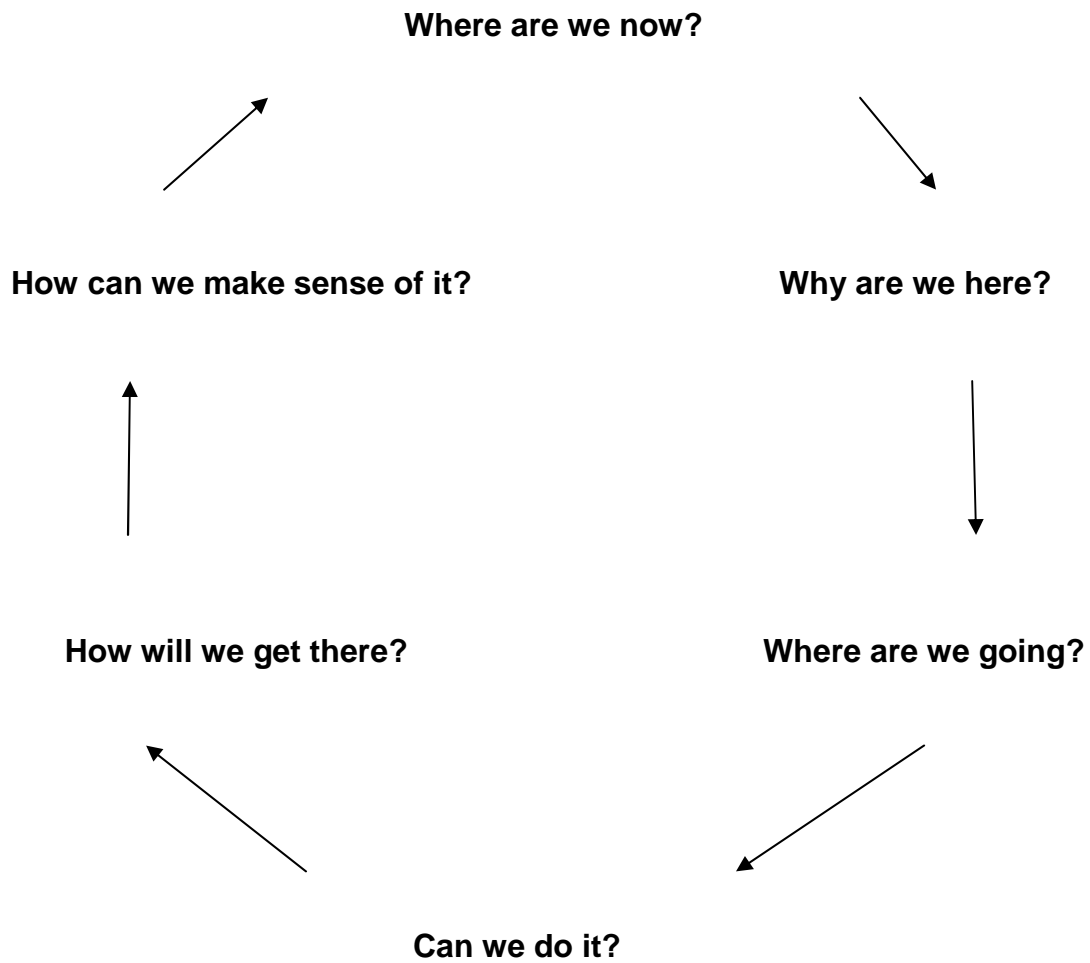
- Strategic planning is a deliberate and proactive state of mind and a set of activities which should put you and others in your organisation in charge. Used well, it can take you in the direction you want to go, helping to make the future as *you* decide...
- **Creative, collaborative and people-orientated process which helps define:**
  - ***What*** you and your organisation want to do and ***why***
  - ***When*** you want to do it
  - ***How*** you want to achieve it
- **Planning can thus help to:**
  - Ensure clarity of purpose
  - Form the basis of division of roles and responsibilities
  - Boost effective teamwork (planning is always best done *together*)
  - Reduce 'crisis management'
  - Break down larger projects and initiatives into smaller, more manageable chunks
  - Counteract 'management by astonishment' (of which more later)
  - Provide the basis for assessing and demonstrating success to yourselves and others
  - Establish a context within which new ideas can be introduced, changes made and courses altered

***Without planning***, you and your organisation are much more susceptible to 'drift'... being controlled by the short-term or the sway of other people's agendas.

***With planning***, you have a powerful means of harnessing the talents, skills, common sense, business acumen and funding required for success, however you define it.

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**3. The planning cycle comprises six questions/stages**



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### 3.1 Stage One: Where are we now?

**Taking stock** means having a look, to see how things are going.

- It's saying, 'If we're going to think seriously about our future, let's take an in-depth look at where we are now and where we've come from.'
- It's about identifying pressures, problems and weaknesses the organisation needs to deal with and the strengths, opportunities and successes it can build on.
- It also means looking beyond the organisation and analysing your position in relation to others, including organisations doing similar or related work.

*How is your boat doing?*

For some people, reviewing and taking stock is common sense – like the necessity of breathing in after breathing out. For others (and probably the majority of us!), the resistance can be enormous. The analogy of sailing along a river might be useful here:

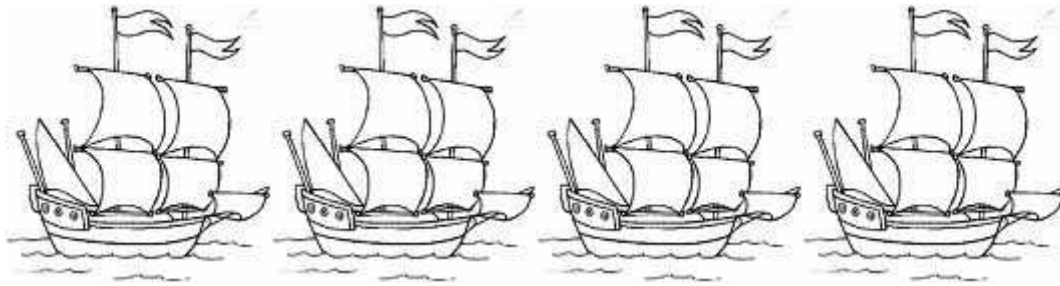
'...the work just keeps flowing, the load sometimes heavier, sometimes lighter but never drying up. New work joins in the flow almost unnoticed. Perhaps we are afraid that if we are not in there paddling, the flow of work will pass us by.

If we choose to pull over to one side and pause on the bank, we might ask ourselves questions such as:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is our boat leaking?</li><li>• Can we carry on or do we need to stop for major repairs?</li><li>• Is everyone paddling flat out or is there some 'slack' in our 'crew'?</li><li>• Is the river itself changing course – or drying up?</li><li>• Are there any obstacles ahead that we need to be aware of?</li></ul> |
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Is it possible that the prospect of having to ask these questions is itself a problem? Asking them may mean that you get answers you do not like or do not know what to do with. Most of us like to avoid that reality most of the time.'

(Adapted from Gawlinski and Graessle, 2002)



A widely used technique is a **SWOT** analysis. This means reviewing the following:

- **Strengths**
- **Weaknesses**
- **Opportunities**
- **Threats**

**Strengths and weaknesses** are generally *internal* to the organisation, and can include things like:

- Premises
- Facilities and equipment
- Access to your work by different (groups of) people
- Reputation
- Skills, knowledge and expertise of staff and board members (if relevant)
- Financial position
- Kinds of work undertaken

**Opportunities and threats** are generally *external* and can include things like:

- Political environment
- Social circumstances
- Cultural trends
- Economic conditions
- Legal and tax issues
- Technological developments

**Important factors to consider:**

- Speed
- Subjectivity
- Range of views
- 'Generation without judgment'

*Now, give it a go yourself...*

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## WORKSHEET 1

**Stage One:** Where are we now?

### **SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)**

*Remember, this is meant to be swift and subjective! Take a few minutes to jot down strengths and weaknesses (usually internal) and opportunities and threats (usually external) in your organisation.*

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>What are the best things about you? What do you know you're good at? What are your most recent achievements? What is it that you do that no-one else can do? What positive feedback have you received?</p>	<p>Consider what you're not so good at, what has not gone so well and where there have been disappointments e.g. rejected funding applications might suggest a weakness in developing a case for funding...</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>What is happening in the outside world which might be an opportunity for you e.g. in developing your range of activities, increasing funding, growing networks</p>	<p>List what is happening in the world which might be a threat e.g. legislative changes, government policy, economic circumstances</p>





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### 3.2 Stage Two: Why are we here?

All too often we assume everyone within an organisation has the same answers to this question – but is it clear and agreed?

There are **three related concepts** to think about here:

- **Vision**

Vision describes **where** you are going – the ‘promised land’. The vision is your organisation’s ‘dream’ of the future, a picture painted in words which is intended to inspire people by appealing to the heart as well as the head.

Pick a date in the future (maybe 20 years ahead) and visualise what the world – or your bit of it – will look like if your organisation is successful.

Remember that this is an idealistic view and it’s best to imagine a ‘perfect world scenario’ not hampered by any constraints that might exist in real life!

Some people prefer to start by drawing rather than writing their description...

The kinds of questions you might want to answer for this perfect world scenario are:

- What can you see?
- What can you hear?
- What is happening in the news?
- What is a typical day for your customers, beneficiaries, participants, users?

- **Mission**

Mission describes **what** you are going to do to achieve your Vision. A mission statement is simply a specific description of what the organisation actually does – its contribution to the world and society – so that your customers/beneficiaries/participants/users, colleagues, board members and stakeholders understand what your organisation needs to excel at.

The best mission statements are clear, straightforward, memorable, demanding but realistic and stable, so you don’t have to change them very often.

A mission states what your organisation does and why and for whom it exists.

(With thanks to Centre for Charity Effectiveness, 2009)

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## Some examples of Vision and Mission statements:

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals: <http://www.cilip.org.uk>

*Vision:*

A fair and economically prosperous society underpinned by literacy, access to information and the transfer of knowledge

*Mission:*

CILIP exists to:

- Promote and support the people who work to deliver this vision
- Be the leading voice for information, library and knowledge practitioners, working to advocate strongly, provide unity through shared values, and develop skills and excellence

Apples and Snakes: <http://www.applesandsnakes.org/>

*Vision:*

Our vision is a world where the spoken word is experienced and celebrated by all

*Mission*

Apples and Snakes stretches the boundaries of poetry in education and performance by inspiring participation and giving voice to a diverse range of dynamic spoken word artists

Arvon Foundation <http://www.arvonfoundation.org/1/Home>

*Vision:*

Everyone is able to benefit from the transformative power of writing

*Mission*

The Arvon Foundations offer life-changing creative experiences to anyone who writes, from beginners to established published writers, from school age upwards, from all backgrounds

Dedalus Books <http://www.dedalusbooks.com/>

*Mission:*

Our mission is to be unique; an exciting, innovative and distinctive alternative to commercial publishing, to find new talent and put British publishing at the heart of Europe

Peepal Tree Press <http://www.peepaltreepress.com>

*Mission:*

Peepal Tree Press is home to the best in Caribbean and Black British fiction, poetry, literary criticism, memoirs and historical studies.

Comma Press <http://www.commapress.co.uk/>

*Mission:*

Comma Press is a not-for-profit publishing initiative dedicated to promoting new fiction and poetry, with an emphasis on the short story.

British Centre for Literary Translation <http://www.bclt.org.uk/>

*Mission:*

To be Britain's leading centre for the development, promotion and support of literary translation.

English PEN <http://www.englishpen.org/>

*Mission:*

Through our campaigns and programmes English PEN promotes the freedom to write and the freedom to read.

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk>

*Mission:*

We are the world's leading charity in promoting the works, life and times of William Shakespeare and offer a unique Shakespeare centred experience with outstanding archive and library collections, inspiring educational and literary event programmes and five wonderful houses all directly relating to Shakespeare.

The Literary Consultancy <http://www.literaryconsultancy.co.uk>

*Mission:* To be the UK's leading manuscript assessment service and a resource hub for writers

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## Values

Values describe **how** you are going to conduct yourselves along the road to success.

Are any of these applicable to your organisation?

- Excellence, innovation, originality
- Being adaptable, approachable, challenging, caring, co-operative, considerate, friendly, fun, reliable, respectful, responsible, responsive, sincere, tolerant, trusting, trustworthy

Paying attention to your values means that *how* you accomplish your mission is as important as the mission itself.

### Some examples of values statements:

#### Apples and Snakes

Core values:

- Accessible
- High quality
- Inclusive
- Pioneering

Comma Press is committed to a spirit of risk-taking and challenging publishing, free of the commercial pressures on mainstream houses.

The Literary Consultancy has always operated with an ethos of honesty and spirit of independent thinking and believes that a constructive but firm response enables authors to get on, either with a re-write, a new writing project, or with other things in their lives.

### Remember to:

- Take **time** over your vision, mission and values
- **Involve** your colleagues, volunteers and board members in generating them
- Check that all three form a comfortable **alliance**
- Remind yourselves of them and **review** in the light of work undertaken

*Now find yourself a partner. Using the worksheet overleaf, have a go at drafting a vision statement, mission statement and core values for your organisation. After each stage or when you've finished, share what you have written with your partner and check for clarity and inspiration. Mission, vision and values should be understandable by and inspiring for people outside as well as inside your organisation!*

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## WORKSHEET 2

### Stage Two: Why are we here?

#### Statements of vision, mission and values

*Try drafting statements of vision, mission and key values for your organisation.*

##### Vision statement

Ideas/ key words

‘Our vision is a world where...’

First draft vision statement

Second draft

##### Mission statement

Ideas/ key words

‘We are dedicated to...’/‘We exist to...’

First draft mission statement

Second draft

##### Values

Ideas/ key words

‘Our philosophy of how we work is...’/ ‘In everything we do, we will uphold the following values...’/ ‘We believe that...’

First draft values

Second draft

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## Stage Three: Where are we going?

### Setting objectives

As the planning process develops, ideas and intentions become more concrete. Vision, mission and values belong to a stage of thinking that is longer term and more abstract. Objectives move on to the realm of the shorter term and the practical. They form an essential bridge between where you want to be and how you'll get there.

An **objective** is:

- A precise description of something you want to happen or an end you wish to achieve in the future. It is a mental picture of the future, in writing.

**Characteristics** of objectives:

- **SMARTA!**
  - **Specific.** Your objectives state exactly what will be achieved.
  - **Measurable.** You can measure what is different as a result of achieving these objectives.
  - **Achievable.** The objectives are achievable. Unachievable objectives are demotivating and can discourage people from taking any action at all.
  - **Relevant.** Your objectives are relevant to your vision, mission and values.
  - **Timed.** You have put a timescale on your objectives and know when you will have achieved them.
  - **Agreed.** Your objectives are agreed by everyone involved in delivering them.
- **Short, medium or long term.** Many people find it easier to start with short term e.g. three month objectives.
- **Clearly expressed**
- Should be **tested for 'sufficiency'** and prioritized according to their importance

**Where do objectives come from?**

- Vision, mission, values, themes arising from your SWOT analysis, new circumstances – and dream project ideas! These objectives then guide the work of your organisation.

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- Objectives cover all areas of the organisation and if you are writing a plan are usually set for about three years' duration.
  - Objectives can be developed under different headings like:
    - Arts work
    - Education work
    - People (customers/ visitors/ participants/ users)
    - Management and staffing
    - Building, facilities, equipment
    - Finance

*In your groups, refer back to the section entitled **Purpose of sessions** on page one of this workbook. Taking all those dot points together, please can you formulate **one SMARTA objective**, beginning with the phrase:*

'By the end of these sessions (27 March 2012), we will have...'

(With thanks to Centre for Charity Effectiveness, 2009)

...and how will we know if we've done it successfully?

### **Indicators of success**

How is it possible to measure objectives?

Indicators of success are:

- Agreed ways of showing that an objective has been successfully achieved

**Benefits** are:

- They make it easier to assess success with confidence on an individual and organisational basis
- They can encourage well-deserved praise and congratulations which we all need
- They provide the basis for constructive feedback from which we all benefit
- They can be observed and measured
- They fall in to the following categories:
  - **Quantity** – How many? How few? Publications, tickets or exhibits sold; people involved; number of workshops, events or readings?

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- **Quality** – How well? How good? According to writers/librarians/translators/publishers; assessors/ critics; audience/ readers/participants; promoters; community representatives?
  - **Time** – How long? By when/ deadlines?
  - **Attitudes** – Whose? Have they changed? How? Writers/librarians/translators/publishers; assessors/ critics; readers/participants; promoters; community representatives?
  - **Costs and resources** – How much did it cost? Was it within budget? What was the cost of staff time, board time, premises, and equipment?

Indicators of success **must be**:

- Custom-made
- Genuinely helpful to you
- Not too many!
- Practically possible (how might you gather feedback on an exhibition, workshop or book launch?)
- Agreed in advance – this helps counter ‘management by astonishment’ caused by lack of clear communication!

*So, go back to the objective you formulated for these sessions on strategic planning. Try and come up with one or two indicators of success and determine how you would measure their achievement.*

*Now, have a go at setting a three month objective for **yourself** and a three year objective for **your organisation**, using the worksheets on the next two pages. Then select one of those objectives and come up with at least one indicator of success using the next worksheet. When you’ve got as far as you can, share them with a partner and see if they pass the SMARTA test... Help each other as necessary.*



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## WORKSHEET 3

**Stage Three:** Where are we going ?

### **Setting objectives**

An objective is a precise statement of something you want to happen; an end you wish to achieve.

Remember the SMARTA test!

*Try setting one three month objective for **yourself**.*

*Use your vision, mission, values, SWOT analysis and current work/ concerns to generate ideas.*

First draft three month objective:

'By (date) I/ we will have....'

Second draft:

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## WORKSHEET 4

### Stage Three – Where are we going?

#### Setting objectives

It is often easier to set medium and long term objectives under headings e.g. artistic development, education, marketing and communications, management and staff development, buildings, facilities and equipment, and financial development.

*Pick a heading and try setting one three year objective for your organisation.*

*Use your vision, mission, values, SWOT analysis, a dream project and current and anticipated concerns to generate ideas.*

Heading

First draft objective ('By (date) I/ we will have...')

Heading

Second draft objective

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## WORKSHEET 5

### Stage Three – Where are we going?

#### Indicators of success

These are agreed ways of showing that an objective has been successfully achieved. They are set in advance and alongside objectives and they can be observed or measured. Categories to be considered are: quantity, quality, time attitudes, costs and resources.

*Select one of your objectives and try and work out appropriate indicators of success.*

Objective:

Ideas for indicators which could be usefully applied	How measured?
First draft indicators	How measured?

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### 3.3 Stage Four: Can we do it?

#### Take a strategic pause...

Once you get the hang of it, you may experience the planning process as something of a rollercoaster. This stage is therefore about putting the brakes on, taking a breath and deciding if it really is in the best interests of the organisation (and the people involved) to proceed with a particular development. This is where you check that the **resources** are in place, the **money** is available, **people** are willing and able to proceed and they have the **time** to do what is required of them. It's also where you might decide to delay or abandon certain objectives, or to consider other options.

There may be dissent within the organisation, or new or opposing factors which are worth examining before you decide to move on.

One useful technique is **Force Field Analysis** – see worksheet overleaf.

Organisations can take on a life of their own, but it is people who create organisations, make them work and manage change. Some management theorists suggest that as many as 95% of the 'problems' at work are people 'problems'.

Taking account of the **human dimension in planning** is therefore vital. It is important to ensure that:

- The planning process is an open and shared activity
- People feel their efforts and contributions are valued and respected
- Objectives and plans take account of people's workloads
- Professional development needs and working conditions are attended to
- There is enough time allowed to develop and implement objectives and plans
- There are meaningful opportunities for feedback on the process
- People are clear about their role within the organisation

The people factor is also about morale, motivation and the working 'ethic' of the organisation. Attend to it and your strategic planning stands a much greater chance of success.

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## WORKSHEET 6

### Stage Four: Can we do it?

#### Force Field Analysis

This is a useful way of helping to identify the reasons for moving forward to achieve an objective, and the restraining factors you think you might encounter.

*Select either your three month or three year objective. List some of the factors that support its achievement, and some of those that oppose or restrain it. These can be located in you, your team or your organisation, and/or in your social or political environment. Finally, make notes of the ways in which you might accentuate the positives and mitigate the negatives.*

The objective is:	
Forces supporting achievement of objective	Forces resisting or blocking achievement of objective

*Circle the strongest forces on each side.*

Ideas for strengthening the positives	Ideas for weakening the negatives

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### 3.4 Stage Five: How will we get there?

#### Tasks, targets and action

Objectives can still seem quite daunting, even if they cover only a short period of time such as three months. This is particularly true when you are busy. And if they stretch for several years, it can be difficult to know where to start. This approach to planning involves continually breaking things down into smaller and more manageable chunks.

So, objectives can be broken down in to **tasks**, which are:

- Pieces of work or activities which must be accomplished if the objective is to be realised. They map out the way and are usually assigned to a particular individual or group.

Tasks are accompanied by **targets**, which are:

- Signposts or signals which demonstrate that a task has been completed (such as an event, a date, or a report)

Task and targets are often **sequential**. Sometimes they are worked out backwards from the deadline of a particular objective.

The **benefits** of tasks and targets are:

- Clarity
- Communication
- Control
- Confidence

They help people to be clear about what they are doing, when they are going to do it, and most important, how they are going to do it. They are a way of opening up work (our own and other peoples) that is often invisible.

Finally there is **action** – a mini-task, such as a meeting, a phone call, an email which can unlock a task or keep the momentum going.

*So, one more time, select one of your objectives and see how far you get in plotting tasks, targets and action... then share with a partner.*

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## WORKSHEET 7

**Stage Five:** How will we get there?

### Tasks, targets and action

**Tasks** – pieces of work or activities to be accomplished in order to achieve an objective

**Targets** – signposts of signals which mark the completion of a task

**Who** – refers to the person or people responsible for ensuring that the tasks are completed and targets reached

**Action** – mini task (e.g. talking to someone); something that unlocks a task or keeps momentum going

*Selecting one of your objectives, work out appropriate tasks and targets, and identify one action point to get you started.*

Sample objective:

Tasks	Targets	Who	Action point

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### 3.5 Stage Six: How will we make sense of it?

#### **Monitoring and evaluation**

Measurement in the arts, heritage and culture has been the subject of much debate, and while it is not possible to go in to a detailed discussion here, one simple fact remains: whatever we are engaged in, we do seem to want to know how we are doing, and constructive feedback can be a significant motivator in our work. This is monitoring – keeping an eye on things.

**Monitoring** can be defined as:

- The activities which help check on progress

It's asking questions like:

- Are we on schedule?
- Are the tasks and targets still realistic?

Monitoring may prompt some fine tuning of tasks and targets.

Evaluation usually takes place after the completion of a project or as part of an annual review.

**Evaluation** can be defined as:

- The process of appraising what we have done against a set of pre-determined and agreed criteria.

It answers questions like:

- How did we do?
- Was a production, project, or exhibition successful?

Specific questions to ask might include:

- Did the objective reflect or strengthen our mission? If so, how, and if not, why not?
- Was the objective successfully achieved? How do we know?
- How well did we organise ourselves? How did people do with their workloads?
- What did people learn about themselves, individually and as a team?
- Did our structures and systems help or hinder us?

Clearly, the evaluation is guided by the indicators of success referred to earlier, and a SWOT exercise can also be used as part of the review phase.

The **purpose** of evaluation is to look back and look forward: it should generate ideas about what to do next.



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## WORKSHEET 8

**Stage Six:** How can we make sense of it?

### Evaluation

Evaluation is the process of appraising what we have done against pre-determined and agreed criteria. *Once you have applied the planning process to a particular project or area of activity, try and evaluate it.*

Heading (as appropriate)

Objective

Evaluation questions

Did the objective reflect or strengthen our mission? If so why? If not, why not?

Was the objective successfully achieved? (*Measure against indicators of success*)

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How well did we organise ourselves? Did we need to alter course? If so why and how? How did people get on with the tasks and targets they undertook?

What did we learn about ourselves individually and as a team?

Did our systems and structures help or impede our progress?

Summary

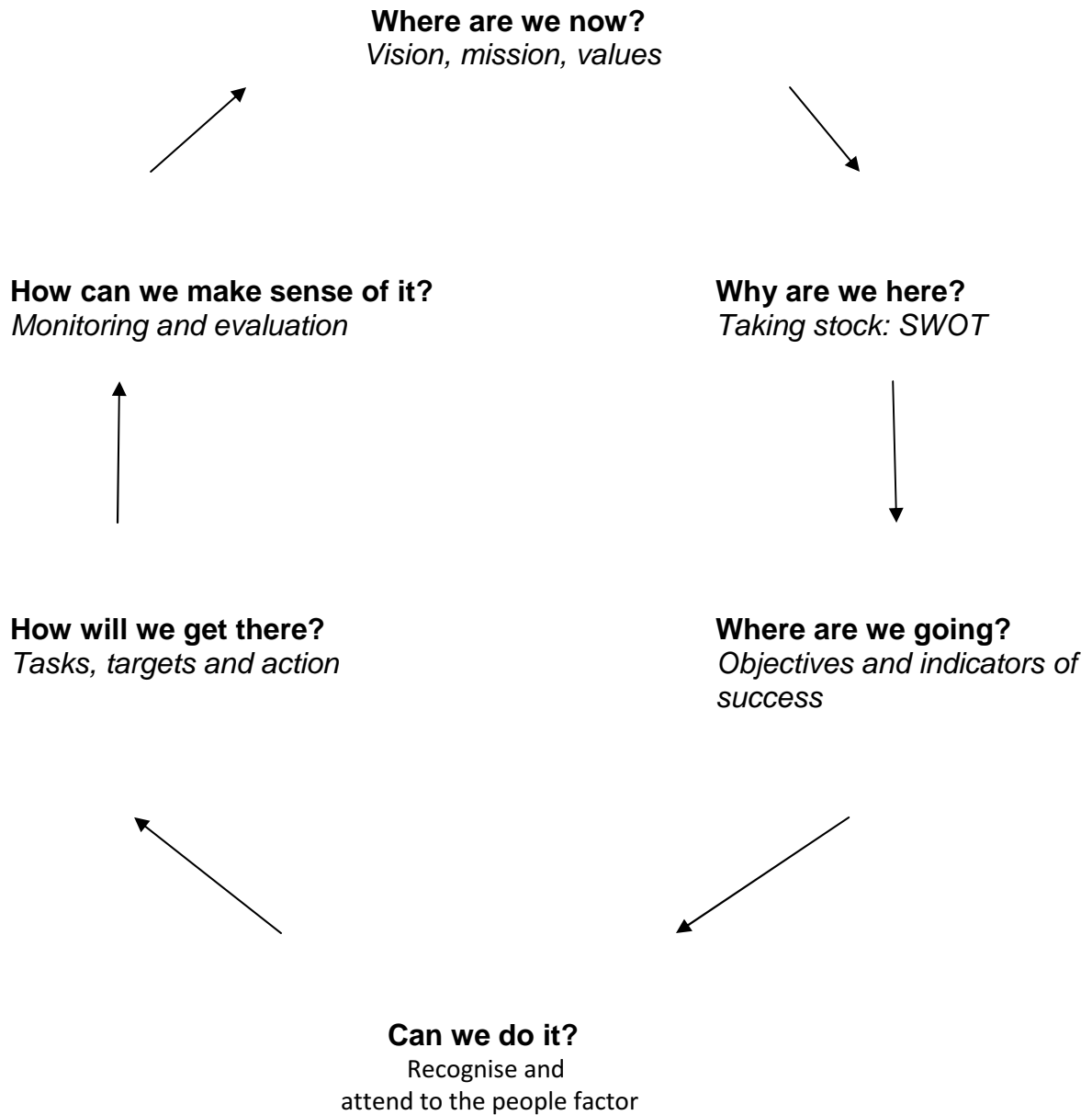
What next?

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And finally, when the planning cycle is complete...  
the process can begin again!!

Here's a reminder of how it all fits together...

A model of planning



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## 4. Formulating a plan

### 4.1 **Strategic planning is a way of thinking and working: a plan is a written document.**

A strategic plan usually covers a minimum of three years. Although such a document may be required by others (such as funders), its primary purpose should be to engage and guide those most closely connected with your organisation – staff, volunteers, users, board members. Ideally it should function as a statement of direction and dreams, set in the context of both the organisation's history and current reality.

There is no rigid format for a plan, but most include the following elements:

- An introductory section reiterating the **purpose of the organisation** (to include mission, vision, values)
- A section outlining **the history, growth and development** of the organisation, perhaps highlighting major **achievements** to date
- A section describing the **present position** (SWOT analysis)
- A section on your **broad future plans**, identifying **priority areas of work** and **major three year objectives** (artistic, marketing, people, financial, capital etc.), together with
- A section setting out in more detail **how your objectives will be met and measured** (tasks, targets and evaluation)
- A **timetable for implementation** of the plan
- A section explaining **how the plan's objectives will be paid for** (funding, fundraising and budgets)
- A section outlining what the major **risks** are and how you intend to mitigate them

The plan often has an **executive summary** at the beginning and a set of **appendices** containing additional information (e.g. legal documents, media coverage etc.) at the end.

In other words, your plan mirrors the planning cycle!

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## 4.2 Where does the creation of a written plan begin?

The preparation of a good, effective and useful plan takes time, thinking and discussion, all of which need to be accommodated within an already over-crowded schedule.

The first step must be to agree:

- it's important
- who is going to do what

Ideally, all those affected by it should have some sense of ownership of the process and the plan – staff, volunteers, and board members. This does not necessarily mean everyone sitting down to work out all the details, or sharing out all the tasks equally. It may be that some interested parties (e.g. users) are involved through consultation, making sure that people feel their opinions and ideas are being listened to and given consideration.

## 4.3 Who might be responsible for what?

- Senior staff coordinate and lead – making sure that everyone is familiar with the purpose, process and basic concepts, any division of responsibilities, and the timetable for formulating the plan
- Working groups can be set up to deal with specific sections of the plan (e.g. marketing)
- Often the board has a 'senior custodial role', which means giving guidance, support and approval. It is usual for the board to endorse and adopt the plan and undertake to review it periodically e.g. every year

## 4.4 What next?

The management team (any combination of staff and board) should meet to discuss and agree the outline, content, timetable and responsibilities for drafting the plan. Try and set aside a day for this, away from other demands. It is common in this first meeting to:

- (re-)visit your mission, vision, and values etc.
- Include a SWOT analysis exercise
- (re-)establish shared understandings of the planning process.

So, at the end of this meeting, you need to have agreed on:

- The need and outline content of the plan
- The responsibilities for completion of the plan
- The mission, vision and values of the organisation
- The broad direction and perhaps, the specific focus of future development
- Who is to be involved and how the contribution of all interested parties will be ensured
- The practicalities of the mechanics of preparation
- The provisional schedule for writing the plan
- How progress in writing the plan will be monitored and by whom

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#### 4.5 What then?

- Time for people to get on with preparing the draft
- Time to meet, ratify, adjust, elaborate
- Financial implications should be considered in detail and outline budgets drawn up. Your draft plan may well need modification.
- Maybe consider three scenarios i.e. best possible, worst possible and most likely (given prevailing financial circumstances)
- Make sure that your budget is planning-driven, rather than the other way round. You may have to modify or reduce your objectives, but at least you'll be doing it in a way that is truer to the purpose of your organisation...
- Expect the writing process to stall (because of unforeseen circumstances) and deal with it. Timetable with this in mind...

#### 4.6 And a few final points...

- Make time to check that the plan is coordinated and coherent – particularly if different people have prepared different sections of the plan
- When your plan is drawn up, debated and agreed, then **launch it** with a bit of a party! You will have put a lot of work into it, so congratulate yourselves.
- Ensure that your plan is implemented by everyone in the organisation
- Recognise that implementation will not always be easy and things will go awry: that's normal
- Remember that your plan should make you *more* able to manage crises, rather than falling victim to them
- If an aspect of your plan is not working and you know why, do not be afraid of negotiating change.
- Take time out at least once a year to review your plan...and to add another year on to the end of it.

#### 4.7 Above all, keep in mind:

- Planning is just a posh word for being organised. It's just about making informed, considered decisions – or certainly the best decisions you can make in light of the information to hand
- Watch out for overload. Good decisions and effective plans are hard to create and even harder to implement if you and others have too much stress. A high and unbroken level of stress is not a pre requisite for, or an acceptable condition for work in cultural organisations. Planning cannot resolve this, but it might help.
- Developing a planning orientation in your work is not a cure-all. It needs to be used where appropriate and in your own fashion. Beware a tendency to plan too much: it can become substitute for actually doing stuff!
- Planning is a deliberate and proactive state of mind and a set of activities which should put you and others in your organisation in charge. Used well, it can take you in the direction you want to go, helping to make the future as *you* decide...

**GOOD LUCK!!!!**

Sue Kay, March 2012

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...and Lidia Varbanova

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## *Notes*

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