

CONDUCTING A SWOT ANALYSIS

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Summary

This fact sheet explains the importance of monitoring the successes and challenges of your community in achieving their goals. This fact sheet will provide tools your community can use in assessing the effectiveness of your plans.

Keywords: community engagement, communication tools, collecting data, analyzing data

What Is a SWOT Analysis?

A SWOT analysis is an easy-to-use monitoring tool for understanding any problem, project or issue related to decision-making and planning in your community. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It can be used to monitor and assess the performance of many aspects of your community, such as internal policies, financial management, community projects and your community's representative structure.¹

A SWOT analysis can help you with the risk assessment of any project, as well as determine which plans are working well for your community, and which ones are not. A SWOT analysis is a good tool to use when your community needs to evaluate

and determine where possible changes need to be made, as well as where potential opportunities may be.

Why Should You Do a SWOT Analysis?

It is important to regularly conduct a SWOT analysis to make sure the plans for your community are on track and effective, and if they aren't, how they be adapted and changed to ensure your goal is reached. A SWOT analysis should first be used during the pre-planning stage, however, it can also be used during all other stages of planning.

Table 1 | Key terms and definitions.

	Definition
Strengths	Things your community does well and that set you apart. Examples include highly motivated and passionate staff, or access to natural resources.
Weaknesses	These are things your community could improve on and things your community should avoid. Examples include employment and resource barriers or lack of policy.
Opportunities	These may include things your community could use to their advantage, such as potential partnerships or seasonal opportunities.
Threats	These are factors that could negatively affect your community or projects you are working on.

There are many factors that will come up throughout the planning process that could make it hard to compete a project. A SWOT analysis will help you consider all the effects these factors may have, and help you formulate a plan to move forward. Performing a SWOT analysis as often as every 6 months will ensure that you're not caught off guard by any internal or external factors.

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Conducting a SWOT analysis can help your community develop a

framework for measuring the performance of the plans your community has implemented.

A SWOT Analysis Can:

- Focus on community goals;
- Monitor progress towards goals;
- Identify opportunities for making improvements; and,
- Report to First Nation members on the results achieved.

Internal Factors

Influences originating within your community that could impact your planning process, such as:

Community Capacity

Some communities have more resources than others. This could include available staff or volunteers or the tools necessary for completing a job, such as a computer and software systems.

Natural Resources

The success of a plan can be dependent on resources such as land. It is important to ensure the land you have in your community is usable for the intended project.

External Factors

Influences originating outside your community that could impact the progress of the project, such as:

Financial Resources

Available funding can control when a project can start.

Who Should Lead the SWOT Analysis?

A SWOT analysis is a planning tool that should include Chief and Council, all employees of the community who are working on any projects, as well as community members working towards the objectives. Having many employees and

members of the community participate in the SWOT analysis will ensure that multiple perspectives are included. With more people involved in the SWOT analysis, the chance of overlooking important factors that could potentially impact the success of the project is less likely.

One of the benefits of a SWOT is that it can be used to assess many important planning areas such as governance, lands and resources, health, social, culture economy and infrastructure and development.²

For more information on monitoring strategies, see the *Monitoring Your Progress* fact sheet.

How Do You Lead a SWOT Analysis?

The SWOT analysis is a starting point and should be used alongside other strategies in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the state of your community. One of the benefits of doing a SWOT analysis is that it requires few tools. You can perform a SWOT analysis with a large piece of paper (as shown in Figure 1), if that isn't available you can also use a chalk board, white board or individual index cards. You will also need pens and markers.



Figure 1 | Strategy workshop.

Source/Adapted from (Olimar. "Strategy workshop 2018." Digital image. Wikimedia Commons March 4, 2018. Accessed January 27, 2020. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SWOT-analysis_at_Wikimedia_Suomi_strategy_workshop_2018_08.jpg)

Draw out a grid with four quadrants on whatever you are using. If you are using index cards, use one index card for each letter of the SWOT analysis. If you are using a large piece of paper, a chalk board or a white board, strengths should be in the upper left corner, weaknesses in the upper right, opportunities in the bottom left and threats in the bottom right. Try to think of both internal factors and external factors that are affecting or may affect your community.

One way to approach a SWOT analysis is to conduct a workshop and have staff and community members brainstorm ideas to help build a list of goals you would like to see your community achieve. With this list, you can then determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each goal and start ranking which ones you feel are most important.

A helpful tip is to look at the weaknesses you've identified and see how these are related to the threats you've identified. This way, you can determine if any of them are caused by something that can be changed in the community or in the goals you've set out. Try to link the strengths you've identified to ways you can combat any threats to your community plans. Also, it is helpful to think about if there are any time

constraints that could impact your opportunities, such as seasonal constraints. If this is the case, perhaps those opportunities can take priority.

Final Thoughts

In summary, performing a SWOT analysis will help your community identify the areas of your project and plans that are strong, as well as which ones could use more work. Additionally, a SWOT analysis will help you identify opportunities that are unique to your community. A SWOT analysis is a handy tool for avoiding any disruptions to your plans, but it is most effective when used in partnership with other strategies.

Further Reading

Indigenous Governance Toolkit by The Australian Indigenous Governance Institute

This toolkit is a useful online resource which provides information and case studies on a variety of topics such as governance, rules and policies and management and staff.

<https://toolkit.aigi.com.au>

Moving Toward a Stronger Future: An Aboriginal Resource Guide for Community Development by Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

This guide provides information on topics related to community development, such as creating a community vision, engaging the community and team building/ working collaboratively.

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mvng-twrdr-strngr-ftr/mvng-twrdr-strngr-ftr-en.pdf>

Endnotes

- 1 Indigenous Governance Toolkit. Accessed November 15, 2019. <https://toolkit.aigi.com.au/>.
- 2 Indigenous & Northern Affairs Canada, "CCP Handbook: Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia, Third Edition," *Indigenous & Northern Affairs Canada*, 2016, Accessed November 17, 2019, https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-BC/STAGING/texte-text/ccphb2013_1378922610124_eng.pdf.