



**BUILD A SOLID BASE  
FOR YOUR NONPROFIT**

**STEP 3**

**Strategic  
Directions**

**WORKSHEET**



# Your Strategic Directions

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## Do it together

This worksheet consists of questions and tasks. Do the tasks with your team as indicated. Answer the questions individually first, then share with the team and discuss. Make sure you write everything down. Put it up in a place where you will see it daily. Check after a week to see if you all still agree. Then finalize.

## Context

Your work will take place in a certain environment, a context. This may be a location, or a social network or another level of reality of the community you serve. It is important to map this context before you start strategizing. What does it look like now? What might change in the coming (2 to 5) years?

## Needs & Causes

Your work aims to have impact in the real world, for real people, plants, or animals. To think of possible strategies for implementing your mission towards your vision, look at the pressing needs of the community you serve. What is causing these needs? How could you work on possible solution areas?

## Look inward

Your community may face a lot of needs with very different causes. Very likely not all of these are in line with your mission and vision. Check this! Do not strategize for work outside your scope. Check also whether you have the expertise, skills, knowledge, network needed to work on these issues?

## VALIDATE & WRITE UP & PLAN

After individual brainstorming and work and group discussions, make sure you write up your strategic directions. Look at examples from local organizations and from abroad ones. Validate your strategies with the people you intend to serve. Do they feel that the selected strategies are indeed the most urgent and important right now? What opportunities do they see? Are they ready to be involved in this? Finalize your texts and make a work plan.

# Context

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## What about the context?

Before you take decisions about which strategic directions to pursue in the coming two to three years, you must take stock of where you are now. What is the situation like now, what does the environment in which you will do your work look like now?

For your context analysis, look at political, economic, social and technological aspects of the environment concerned. What is the situation now? What are trends that are happening? What do you think might happen, change, in the next two to five years? What is likely? What is unlikely but could have a big impact?

### **YOUR TASK**

*Brainstorm with your team. Paint a picture of the political, economic, social, technological context (in words or images). Identify trends. Score the trends for likelihood of occurring and impact on the environment in which you will work. What do you see happening in the next 2 to 5 years? What will this context make possible or difficult? Write this down together. Look at it again after a few days to check if you still feel the same.*



# Strategic Directions Worksheet

What are pressing needs for the community you want to serve, right now? What do you expect to change in this, due to the trends you identified in your context analysis? What needs might emerge in the coming years?



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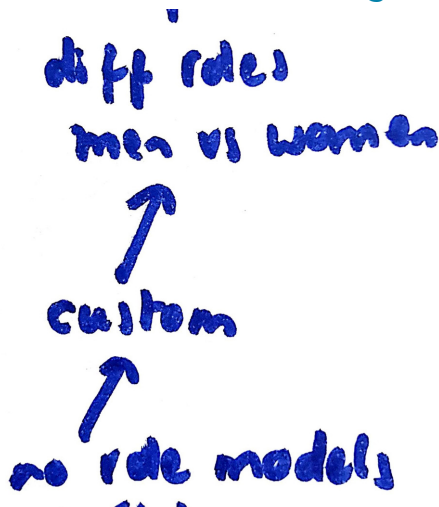
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What is causing these needs? And what is causing these causes? What is at the root of these issues? Again, what impact might the trends you identified have on this in the coming two to five years?

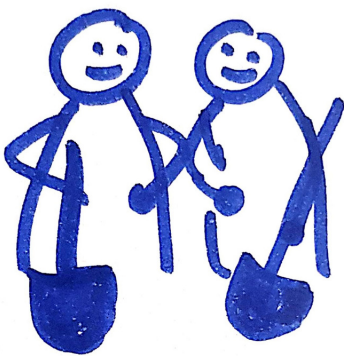


The first cause that comes to mind is often a very big one, that is out of your scope as a small nonprofit. If you dig deeper, you can always find a cause that suits your sphere of influence as nonprofit better. Once you found the root cause, you need to consider who is involved with that root cause. Who could you address about it? How come they are not fighting this? Do they have lack of knowledge or skills? Lack of understanding of the urgency or importance of the issue at stake? Are they not aware there is an issue? Do they lack tools, equipment, money? Can you impact on the root cause by changing their attitude, knowledge or skills? How?



# Strategic Directions Worksheet

Look at the most pressing needs (now and projected, based on your context analysis), and their causes (down to the root causes): what are possible solution areas? What could be developed or worked on to solve the issues?



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Formulate the solution areas as objectives, aims. Do this as one sentence per aim and make sure this is SMART! The scope should be two to three years.



**Specific** = is it clear what is meant? Is there common understanding?

**Measurable** = is it possible to measure success? Can something be observed, measured, counted, ... to show what has been achieved or changed?

**Achievable** = is it possible to be successful, given available resources and the time set?

**Relevant** = is there a clear relation between the objective and needs and causes you aim to address?

**Time bound** = is it clear when this should be achieved?



# Strategic Directions Worksheet

How are these strategic objectives connected to your vision and your mission? Would working on these issues fit within your mission? How? Would this contribute to your vision? How? Take out objectives that are not in line with your vision and mission from your list. They are not for you.



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Look at your team and organization. What can you realistically do in the next two to three years? What expertise, skills, knowledge, network do you have right now? Mark objectives that you feel are within your reach now.



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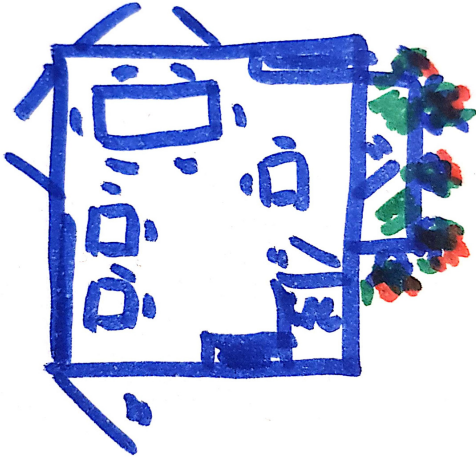
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# Strategic Directions Worksheet

One strategic direction or objective needs to focus on developing your organization itself. What do you want your organization to look like in two to three years from now? What must be in place then? Formulate this as a SMART objective.



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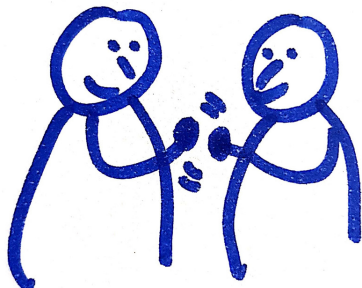
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Now select in total maximum three strategic objectives: one concerning your organization and one or two focusing on pressing needs, causes and solution areas that fit your mission and serve your vision.



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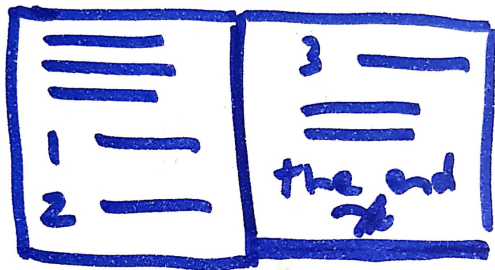
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# Strategic Directions Worksheet

Put together a small team to write up your strategic directions or objectives carefully. Add your context analysis as starter text. Keep it short and simple.



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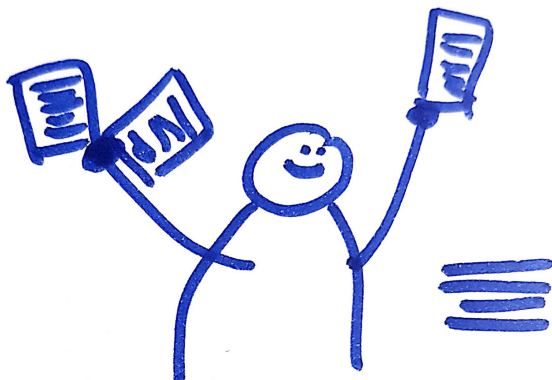
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Try to find examples of a strategic plan or multi-annual strategy of other organizations. What can you learn?



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# Examples

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## Learn from others

It is always useful to ask people around you to share good (or bad) examples with you. Or use Google.

Here are some examples of European nonprofits to give you some food for thought. They are not you. They have existed for a longer time, and are bigger than you are now. No matter. They can inspire you. And one day you will inspire them!

[Free Press Unlimited](#)

[Milieukontakt Albania](#)

[Cordaid](#)

[HIVOS](#)

[Picum](#)

[UN-IHE](#)

### **YOUR TASK**

*Collect at least five examples of strategic plans of other organizations, in your country or from abroad. Look at them. What strikes you? What can you learn from them? What do you like about them? Can you apply that, too?*

# Validation

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## Why validate?

Validation is seeking input, thoughts and feedback from the people you plan to serve, your community, to check if you are really addressing issues that are important and urgent to them. This is crucial because if you are off-track your work will not be relevant to the people you work for.

It is important to listen carefully and actively to your community. Do they feel that the selected strategies are indeed addressing what is most urgent and important right now? What opportunities do they see? Are they ready to be involved in this?

### **YOUR TASK**

*With your team, make a list of key people in your community you want to validate your strategic objectives with. Try to speak with, or rather: listen to, at least 10-15 people. Do this in pairs. Make sure you note (or record) their words as exactly as possible. Sit together with your team and see what needs adjusting in your strategies to be relevant to your community. Adjust. Then share again with your community to check you got it right. Adjust as needed.*



# Strategic Directions Worksheet

After validating, make a new version of your strategic plan and share it on your website and social media, if you have these.



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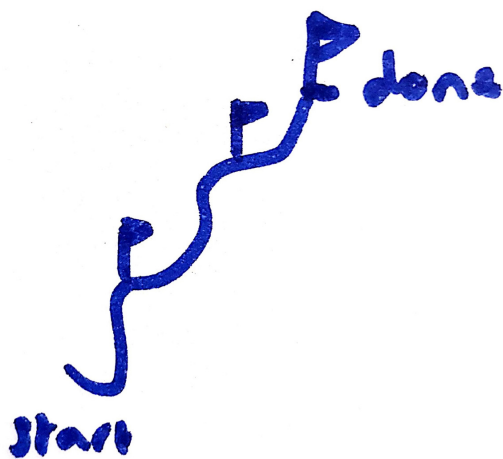
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For each strategic objective, look backwards: if this is achieved in three years, what must I see in two years? What in one year? What after 6 months? What after 3 months? Formulate clear, measurable milestones for each moment.



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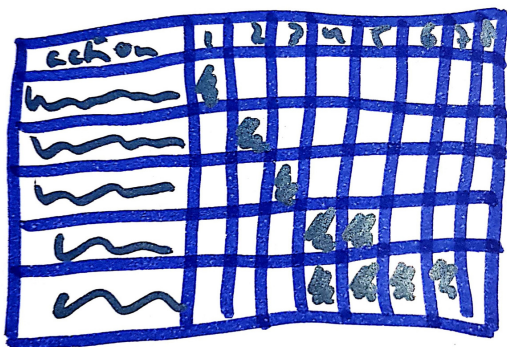
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# Strategic Directions Worksheet

Make a detailed work plan for the next three months. Include actions of the action plan you made in step 1 (video 1 - readiness assessment). Set deadlines and assign tasks. Is it realistic? Plan more roughly for the next 12 months. After month 2, update the three-month plan and the 12-month plan. Repeat.



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You now have your validated strategic plan and it is published! You have an outline of a work plan and know what you will be doing in the next 3 months. You are now ready to get going on the registration, developing your organization and on your work for your mission and vision! Don't forget to celebrate this milestone!



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# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

*checklist questions*

**DID YOU MAKE A  
CONTEXT ANALYSIS?**

**DID YOU LIST PRESSING  
NEEDS AND CAUSES?**

**DID YOU CHECK MISSION,  
VISION, CAPABILITIES?**

**DID YOU SET MILESTONES  
AND MAKE A WORK PLAN?**

**DID YOU VALIDATE  
YOUR STRATEGY?**