



# BRANCH PLANNING GUIDE

How To Plan – Four Steps

## ABSTRACT

This document aims to guide and assist branches to plan effectively in order to build organisational structures and develop the capacity of members to manage and monitor community projects and to advance the interests of mining affected communities. .

## MWAO

# How to Plan- Eight Planning Steps



What is in this guide:

Step 1: How to prepare to plan - analyse stakeholder involvement

Step 2: How to analyse situations and needs

Step 3: How to prioritise and select a goal and purpose

Step 4: How to develop clear objectives

This section is part of the planning guide which is broken into four sections.

**Section 1 is an introduction to planning.** This section provides more detailed guidelines on how to use each of the planning steps. Key terms and words are explained in that section and a guide to facilitators of planning workshops is provided in Section 4.

## Step 1: How to prepare to plan - analyse stakeholder involvement

### Involving stakeholders:

We know that participation is important for planning to be effective. You need to plan how to get this participation. This means you need to do more than just decide who will participate, you need to plan how you will enable them to participate effectively and how you will get their commitment to participate effectively.

Commitment to the planning process is key to effective participation and effective planning. This means it is important to involve people in the organisation in preparing for the planning. It is often useful in larger organisations to set up a planning committee to plan, facilitate and record the planning – giving as many people a role in the process as you can.

At this stage it is also important to begin to identify all your other stakeholders outside your organisation and analyse which ones it would be important to include in the process of planning, and how they should be included. There are often stakeholders whose views can make a key contribution and whose commitment to the decisions will be important. Inclusion promotes transparency and accountability. Planning to enable participation should also improve equity if the needs, interests and abilities of the different stakeholders are taken into account.

In preparing to plan, you need to look at all your stakeholders and analyse what stake each has in the decisions you will make during the planning. (Example women or Youth or elderly or disabled etc). You will find this analysis useful at each step in the planning process.

In the next step, on how to analyse the situation and needs, we provide guidelines on ensuring that the needs, interests and concerns of your main target group are prioritised. In this step, you should lay the basis for the situation and needs analysis by identifying and analysing all your stakeholders. Your stakeholder analysis at the preparation stage involves working out who your stakeholders are, what their stake in your decisions is, who should be

involved in the planning, and whose views, interests and concerns you will prioritise in the decision-making. Your stakeholder analysis at this step should lay the basis for ensuring that all your further planning decisions take your stakeholders into account.

Doing a stakeholder analysis can help you to:

- Identify who you believe should be encouraged and helped to participate.
- Identify who could gain, who could lose and who could contribute, those with rights, interests, resources, skills, and the ability to take part in or influence what you achieve.
- Ensure your planning is sensitive to the views of those affected about what their needs are.
- Reduce or hopefully remove negative impacts on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
- Identify useful alliances which can be built upon.
- Identify and reduce risks; for example, identifying areas of possible conflict of interest and expectation between stakeholders so that real conflict is avoided before it happens; or, for example, identifying stakeholders without whose co-operation or contribution your project cannot succeed so that you can plan to reduce the risks involved.
- Recognise the roles of women as well as men and avoid stereotyping them; and Encourage participation in the community development process.

#### **What to avoid in doing a stakeholder analysis?**

- Avoid overemphasising differences rather than common ground as this can negatively affect co-operation. This does not mean you should not acknowledge differences, only that you also recognise the common ground, as this is the basis of any potential future co-operation.

#### **Step 2: How to Analyse the Situation and Needs**

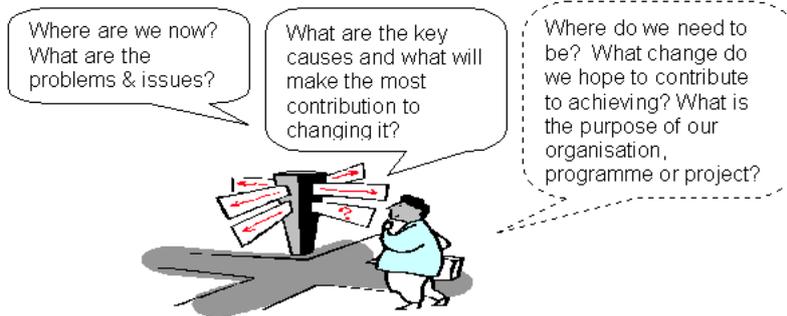
The analysis step is about understanding the situation, problem or issue you wish to impact on better. It is also about understanding the needs of your target community in the context of that situation, problem, or issue.

It is intended to make sure that the approach you decide on is relevant and appropriate to the situation and needs it is intended to address.

This analysis is important and should inform all the decisions you make in the rest of the planning process. It will help you in later steps to choose the most relevant and realistic goal, work out the most effective way of achieving your goal (objectives and strategies), plan to implement your decisions and plan what you will use to assess and evaluate your progress.

The purpose of this step is to build a common understanding about:

- *The current situation and how it affects your target group.*
- *The deeper causes of this situation; and*
- *Future situation you want to contribute to creating.*



### **Focus on your primary stakeholders needs and interests.**

Almost all non-profit organisations aim to make some kind of positive contribution to society. They often have a key target group whose needs and interests are prioritised. This is the community you hope will benefit from your work. A community can be any of the following:

- All people in a large geographical area such as everyone living in the KwaZulu Natal; or
- All people in a smaller geographical area such as everyone in Umlazi or those in an informal settlement in Alexandra Township; or
- A specific group of people in South Africa as a whole, such as ex-prisoners or abused children; or
- A specific group in a particular geographical area, such as all women in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape or women entitled to maintenance grants in a particular rural village; or
- Other organisations, such as all organisations set up to oppose violence against women.
- Target communities may be groups that have little power and influence because they have been marginalized through poverty, gender and race or they may be a more general group to which you are directing a particular service or message.

This step involves collecting and analysing the information you need to set goals that are:

- Relevant to your target community.
- Realistic in terms of what is possible and likely to make a difference; and also the most effective and appropriate contribution given the current situation.

The basic process of analysing needs is the same whether it is for an organisational strategy or for a project. The target community, however, is likely to be more specific in the case of a project than where organisational strategy as a whole is being developed.

The following are some ideas on the process of analysing needs.

## Collect relevant and reliable information

In order to start on this process, you will need reliable information on the present situation. You will need information on:

- The situation, problem or issue you wish to change – if the organisation already has an accepted strategy in place, the focus of this will be influenced by the goal, purpose and strategic objectives of your organisation.
- The perceived interests and concerns of different key stakeholders, but particularly those of your primary stakeholders.
- How much impact you have had so far (if the planning is part of ongoing work); how key stakeholders feel about what you have achieved; what has helped to ensure successes and what is limiting what you are achieving; and
- The existing situation in your organisation, its strengths and weaknesses, the knowledge, skills, information, finance and other resources available.

\*See the separate guidelines on doing needs assessment and research. These can help you collect the information you need.

You will need enough information to enable you to:

- Analyse the problem or issue by examining its causes and effects
- Analyse stakeholders to assess how the problem or issue affects them; how they perceive it; what their concerns or interests are in relation to the problem; whether there are key differences or conflicts of interest; what opportunities exist for gaining the support of influential people; which stakeholders could become barriers or risks;
- Analyse your experience so far to assess what seems to have worked well and what has not worked well and why this is the case; and
- Analyse the existing capacity of your organisation (what it is currently capable of).
- If possible, you should involve any primary stakeholders that you wish to establish a full partnership with in actually collecting and analysing the information, not just as sources of information. Other key stakeholders concerns, or interests should be identified through the research process but only in relation to the core issues facing your target community.

Once you have collected the information, you will then need to analyse it. This really just means examining what the information means.

Some ideas and questions that might help you do this are:

### Analyse the situation, problem or issue:

- Start by discussing what problems or issues identified are the most important ones.
- List them in order of priority and identify the most important. It is important to be as focused as possible, so try to narrow the issues down to one or a maximum of three key ones.
- For each issue that you believe needs to be understood better, you should discuss:

- ❖ What is the core problem or issue? – Try to identify it as clearly as possible. Problems or issues should not be seen as the absence of a solution but as an existing situation that is negative, for example, not "There are no shelters for abused women and children" but "In one out of three households a woman or child has suffered abuse".
- ❖ What effect is it having on the target community?
- ❖ What are the causes of this problem or issue? – Our planning should aim to address the causes as we see them, and so it is important that we agree what they are.

You could use a chart like the following to analyse the problems or issues.

- First agree the core problems,
- second write down what effects they have and then third
- discuss and agree what the causes of the problems are:

Causes	Problem / Issue	Effects
<i>For each one, write down what you think causes the problem or issue. This will tell you what must change if you are to have a significant impact on the problem or issue.</i>	<i>Write each problem as clearly as you can. These should be the core problems or issues you have identified.</i>	<i>For each one, write down the effects this problem or issue has on the community. This will tell you why that issue is so important.</i>

Check your thinking by asking whether the **things** you have written in the **first column cause the problem** or issue identified in the second column. **Does this problem or issue have the effects on the community identified in the third column?**

For example:

Causes	Problem / Issue	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many do not know about the grants or how to apply for them.</li> <li>• The transport to the nearest office where you can apply for a grant costs almost half as much as the grant is worth.</li> <li>• Women have not mobilised to act together. Individual women have approached the Local District Council to help and the Local Council does not take an interest in this problem.</li> </ul>	4 out of every 5 single mothers who qualify for maintenance grants are not getting them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households that desperately need the money don't get it.</li> <li>• Children are not getting sufficient nutritious food and are missing school too often.</li> <li>• Women do not have confidence in the local government structure and feel powerless about their situation. Only three women said they thought the Council should take up their problem. None think the Council would do anything.</li> </ul>

The information you have gathered can be used as a baseline, a marker telling you where you started from. You can then use this to assess progress later when you come to evaluate how effective your work has been.

In order to know what progress, you have made, you need to know what the situation was when you started your work. For example, if your research at this point shows that a woman or child is being abused in one out to three households in your target community, you can

go back later, after you have begun to work on this problem, to assess whether and by how much this situation has changed.

With complex problems or issues, **recognising that there is a problem is only the beginning.** You need to develop a deeper and shared understanding of what its causes and effects are.

In the overall cycle of planning, when you reflect on your experience and evaluate your effectiveness, you may well find you now have a deeper understanding of both causes and effects and that this will help you improve the effectiveness of your response.

If the target community develops a deeper understanding of the issues and problems that affect them, this is an important advance in creating the conditions for that community to act to produce sustainable change. The cycle of learning, the process of planning and evaluation itself should be empowering.

### **Analyse stakeholders.**

The following questions might be useful for deepening your understanding of the target community and of the other key stakeholders.

#### **Target community –**

- What are the key relevant characteristics of the target community?
- Who has influence in the community?
- Who has influence over the community?
- How does the community perceive the problem or issue?
- What experience has the community had in dealing with the problem or issue?
- What opportunities are available to the community and what relevant resources does it have?
- What are the existing barriers to the community dealing with the issue?
- What are the interests and concerns of the community in relation to the issue?
- What expectations does the community have in relation to the issue and what might they expect from our organisation?

#### **Other stakeholders –**

- Who are the other key stakeholders?
- What are their concerns and interests in relation to the issue?
- Would they benefit or be negatively affected by action our organisation might take?
- Who else is working on or impacting on the issue or problem?
- Are they potential partners or supporters who can assist or might they oppose us?
- How dependent is our organisation on these other stakeholders for the success of our work? (You might want to revisit your earlier analysis of the potential influence or importance of different stakeholders after this discussion.)

### **Analyse your organisation**

This is a very important area that is often forgotten. Organisations can get so involved in planning what needs to be done outside the organisation that they forget to analyse the internal needs of the organisation.

Plans fail when the organisation does not have the right people, skills, information, structures, systems, and processes to plan effectively, carry out the plan and monitor and evaluate what is being achieved so that plans can be reviewed and changed in the light of experience.

As with the stakeholder analysis, you should be asking questions about your organisation's capacity at every step of the planning process and planning to ensure you set goals, objectives and action plans around building and developing the capacity you need.

The following questions are related to the different steps in the planning process, but you should start thinking about these issues in this step:]

#### **At step 2, Analysing needs –**

- What are our key strengths and advantages in this situation (such as knowledge, skills, experience, influence, finances, reputation and proven record of success)?
- What are we good at?
- What are our likely weaknesses or disadvantages in this situation?
- Who else is working in this area?
- What particular value, if anything, do we contribute?
- What have we learned from our experience about strengths we should build on or weak areas we need to improve?

#### **At step 3, Prioritising and selecting goals –**

You should take what your organisation is capable of into account in selecting goals. Questions related to this have been included in the criteria you could use to evaluate alternatives in that section. Some questions to assist would be :

- What capacity is required to achieve the possible goals we identified?
- What capacity do we already have?
- Which goal would make the most effective use of our existing strengths and experience?
- What is the gap between what our organisation is capable of now and what it would have to be able to do?
- What would we need to do to develop our organisation to achieve what is required?
- Can we realistically develop the capacity required?
- Are there other organisations that could and would do it better?

#### **At step 4, Develop clear objectives –**

Use the same questions as those for step 3 but ask them for each objective. In this step you should remember to **include objectives related to your organisational needs**, identified through an analysis of what organisational capacity will be required to achieve the developmental objectives you have agreed (skills, information, knowledge, staffing, structures, processes and systems etc.). These are called **organisational objectives**. They

can make the difference between good plans that go nowhere and good plans that lead to real improvements in the lives of your target community.

**At step 5, Identify alternative strategies and select –**

In this step you will need to **use your analysis of your organisation's strengths and weaknesses to help you choose realistic and effective strategies.** Again, organisational issues have been included in the criteria you can use to select the best strategy to achieve your objectives.

Remember, if your strategy assumes that your organisation is able to do things it is not yet ready to do, this may either mean you need to find a new strategy, or it may mean you need to make a note of activities you must undertake to build your organisation's capacity.

**At step 6, Plan implementation –**

Your **analysis of the organisational issues at each step should have enabled you to identify what action must be taken to develop your organisation so that it is capable of achieving the development objectives effectively.** These activities should be included in your action plans for implementing your chosen strategies.

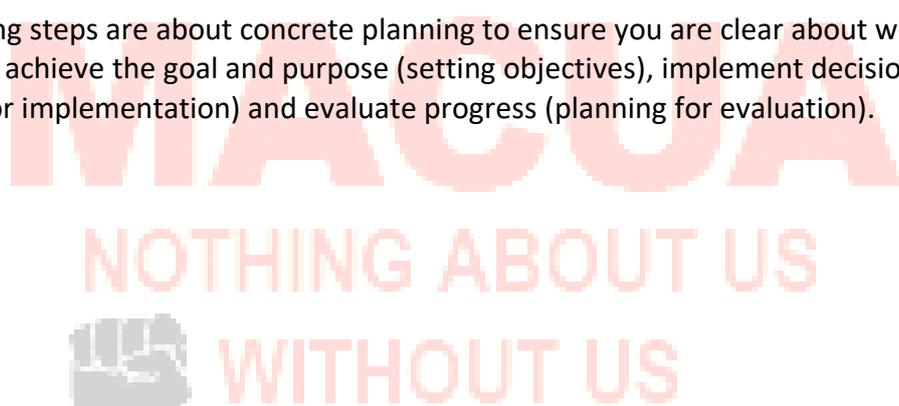
**At step 7, Plan for evaluation –**

In this step you will need to **identify what information you will need to collect,** from where you will get it, who should be part of collecting it and how you will store it.

**The systems and processes to do this will need to be built.** Plans to do this should be included in your action plans for implementing your strategies.

**The next step (prioritising and selecting a goal and purpose) is about prioritising – using your analysis to decide on a realistic goal and purpose to which all those who are essential to achieving them can commit themselves.** This avoids falling into the "wish list" trap.

The following steps are about concrete planning to ensure you are clear about what must be achieved to achieve the goal and purpose (setting objectives), implement decisions (planning for implementation) and evaluate progress (planning for evaluation).



**Step 3: How to Prioritise and Select the Goal and Purpose**

In this step you will use your analysis of the situation and needs to make decisions about what the broad aim will be; what change you aim to help bring about in the lives of your primary stakeholder community.

**A goal is a general statement of the situation you aim to contribute to bringing about.**

- Goals are the reason why you undertake any activity and are often fairly general and long-term. Often, the change that is needed to make a really meaningful improvement in the situation of your target community and in their lives is complex and would require many different efforts to achieve. **It is still important for you to state this goal. The goal helps keep you focused on the important long-term change** that is required, even though it is usually not possible for your organisation alone to bring about the change.
- It helps you work out what contribution you can and will make to bringing about that longer-term change.
- It also helps you identify the other organisations working toward that goal so that you can co-operate with them.
- It is your goal that explains the meaning of what you hope to achieve.
- Your analysis of needs will assist you to identify what change will make a significant difference to the situation, issues or problems identified.

**A purpose is the result your organisation commits itself to achieving in order to make a contribution to the achievement of the longer-term goal.** This should be something that your organisation can realistically achieve by itself. The purpose describes why your organisation, programme or project exists.

The goal and purpose must be realistic in terms of what your organisation is capable of either achieving (purpose) or making a significant contribution to achieving (goal). But they must also be relevant to the needs, interests and concerns of your key stakeholders who are the target community. Your discussion of what the most important problems and issues are and what you should aim to address will have to balance these two considerations.

**Suggestions on prioritising goals and exploring what your purpose should be:**

- Look at your list of problems and issues. You will probably find that your analysis of causes and effects has shown that some of the problems have similar causes. Group these together.
- You may also see that some of the problems have more important effects on the target community than others. Agree which ones these are and list the problems in that order – starting with the most important and ending with the least important.
- Some of the problems may be ones that your organisation cannot really help with. Identify these and explain why you are not equipped to assist with these issues.
- Sometime should be spent assisting the target community identify ways of dealing with these and providing contacts in other organisations that could help.
- Look at the priority problems and issues and their effects and identify what your organisation could make a contribution to assisting with and agree what you will focus on changing.
- Change the statement of the problem from describing a negative situation into a statement describing a positive situation – this is a possible goal, a future situation you believe you could contribute to bringing about.

- Look at the main causes of the problem or issue you have used to formulate your goal. If your purpose is going to make a significant difference to the problem, it needs to address a cause of that problem.
- List the possible purposes that would make a significant contribution to the goal.
- Identify what your organisation could realistically change and eliminate those you could not change.
- Choose the one that will both make the most significant contribution to the goal but also realistically be achieved by you.
- Reword this from being a description of a negative situation to describing a positive result that your organisation could achieve. This is your purpose.
- Use the information from your needs analysis to decide what you will use to assess progress along the way and whether you are making an impact on the goal. This process helps you clarify and agree what the goal means concretely and what you will use to evaluate.
- Use the information from your needs analysis and the goal you have decided on to decide what you will use to indicate that you have successfully achieved your purpose. This clarifies what the purpose means concretely and how you will know you have achieved this result effectively.
- Identify the external conditions that will need to exist for you to make a contribution to the goal and for you to achieve your purpose.
- Assess whether the purpose and goal are realistic in terms of how important these conditions will be to whether you are successful and whether these conditions are likely to exist.
- Work out if you can do anything to influence these conditions and note anything you will need to include in your activity plans.
- In selecting your purpose, you will need to identify what would be the most useful contribution to achieving the goal you can make. This must be something that will make a significant difference, but also that is realistically achievable by your organisation.

Choosing the best option is sometimes difficult. The following suggests a process to help you do this.

#### **Using criteria to help you select a goal or a purpose**

- If there are a number of different possible goals or purposes that all seem important you may want to develop criteria to help you select one. Criteria are agreed factors you can use to evaluate different choices. You can use them to prioritise issues, assess ideas, evaluate achievements or make decisions. In this case, you can use them to evaluate the goals or purposes you have prioritised and decide on the one that fits all your criteria best.

Example:

- What will make the most useful contribution to the development of the community but also makes the most effective use of our strengths as an organisation? What we can offer?
- What will build the greatest level of commitment among our primary stakeholders?

- Is it relevant and appropriate to the situation we have analysed and the goal we have chosen?
- Is it affordable – do we have the financial resources?
- Do we have the capabilities (knowledge, skills, experience, information and influence) or can we get the support of others who do?
- How long would it take? Is this realistic?
- Would we have sufficient support from key stakeholders? If not, is there anything we can do to get their support?
- Does it contribute to the longer-term development of the community?
- Does it fit with our understanding of what is required to promote effective development?
- Will it leave the community, and especially the more vulnerable sections of the community, more in control of their lives?
- Will it lead to sustainable change?

### How to write your goal and purpose

It is important to remember that **the goal and purpose are not actions you will take** (like building a clinic) **but the impact or result you want these actions to have** on improving the lives of people. The goal and purpose should be written to state the situation you want to see result in the actual lives of your target community. **This ensures that, when you implement and evaluate your plan, your attention is on what must change as a result of your work and not just on "doing things"**.

For example, the purpose agreed by an NGO and their target community was not "To open an advice office in Mqanduli". This is not a goal – it tells us what the NGO will do, it does not tell us what will change in the lives of the community.

The NGO's stated purpose is, *"The people living in Village X have access to reliable information and advice and a centre around which to organise, in order to access their rights as citizens and improve their social and economic situation, within two years"*.

They further agreed that they would know the advice office was successful if it met the following criteria:

- Provides accessible, relevant and reliable information on citizen's rights and responsibilities.
- Provides accessible, relevant and reliable information on resources and other initiatives that can assist the social and economic development of the community.
- Provides effective support to the community organisation's efforts to mobilise the community.

### Summary

The goal needs to be something the organisation, programme or project can make a realistic contribution to achieving and that will make a valuable impact on the problem or issue identified.

**The purpose statement** of an organisation, programme or project **should be:**

- Clear enough to indicate what change is to be brought about.
- Specific about who will benefit from the change.
- Relevant to the key problems and issues arising from the situation.
- A result that can realistically be achieved; and
- Recognised as important by those who must contribute to achieving it.

#### Step 4: How to Develop Clear, Specific Objectives

At this point in the planning process, you should know where you are now (analysis of needs arising from the present situation), what situation you want to contribute to bringing about (goal) and what concrete contribution you intend to make (your purpose).

**Now you need to develop clear and specific objectives** that describe the results you must achieve to achieve your purpose and make a significant contribution to your goal.

There are **three basic types of objectives**:

##### **Development objectives –**

These indicate the change you wish to make or contribute to making in the lives of your target community. Both what we have called the goal and purpose in Step 3 and the objectives that you will develop to achieve them in this step, Step 4, are development objectives. They describe the situation or result you want to create. They do not describe what you intend to do. Their purpose is to clarify the commitment you are making to the positive impact you work will have. They are, therefore, the basis for evaluating your progress and the effectiveness of your work.

##### **Organisational objectives –**

These describe what you will need to do to develop your organisation so that it is capable of achieving the development objectives.

##### **Activity objectives –**

These describe what you will do to achieve the development objectives. Activity objectives indicate the actions you intend to take to achieve the development and organisational objectives. These are the strategies you will use to achieve each objective. You will decide on these strategies in Step 5 and finalise them as activities in your implementation plan in Step 6.

General tips for setting useful specific objectives:

- **Specific objectives describe the things you will need to achieve** to reach your purpose. In sometimes, **they are called "outputs"**. They may be development objectives or organisational objectives.
- As with the goal, you **should state your objectives as the result you want to achieve**, not what you intend to do to achieve it. In our example, the NGO looked at their needs analysis, goal and purpose and the signs they would use to know whether they had been effectively achieved. They then used these to develop a

number of objectives. **One of their objectives was, "Four out of five women who currently qualify for maintenance grants have been able to access them effectively within one year". This is one result they believe they will need to achieve in order to achieve their purpose.** It will enable the community, and especially women, to use the service provided by the Advice Office to get their grants effectively. This result will also contribute to breaking the community's feeling of isolation and helplessness. It can provide a basis to strengthen the community's ability to organise and to pressure local government to take up their issues, especially opening a pay point closer to the community. Improved income for those that qualify for a grant will also make a direct contribution to improving the economic and social situation of those households. Finally, achieving this objective could mean that the community becomes more committed to supporting their organisations and maintaining the Advice Office. You can see from this example that **the community will be able to use this objective to evaluate what progress is being made and whether real benefits in the lives of people in the community have resulted.** This is better than an objective that says what you will do, for example "To provide advice and information to assist women who qualify for maintenance grant to access their grants". This does not tell us what real benefit must result, only what you will do.

- **Objectives should make it clear who will benefit.** In the example given above, it is clear that the intention is for "women who qualify for maintenance grants" to benefit.
- **Objectives should be as specific as possible** so that everyone who must contribute to achieving them understands them in the same way. This also allows you to evaluate how you are doing clearly. Specific objectives tell you who should benefit, how and by when. You can be even more specific about how people should benefit by giving targets about quantity (how many) and quality (how well). **The above example is specific about who should benefit (women who qualify), by when (within one year), and their target for how many (four out of five) and about how well (access the grants effectively).**
- Objectives may often not be something that the organisation, programme or project can guarantee to achieve alone. **Success may depend on what others do or do not do.** For each objective, it is important to use your needs analysis, and particularly the stakeholder analysis, to identify who else could affect whether you achieve your objective. **Next to each objective write down what assumptions you are making about what else needs to happen and by whom for your objective to be achieved.** You will need to analyse this when you come to looking at strategies for achieving each of your objectives in the next step. When you plan the action you will take to achieve your objectives, you will need to include plans to do as much as you can to ensure these things happen, even though they are generally out of your complete control.
- **Don't forget to set organisational objectives** that indicate how you need to develop your organisation's capacity to achieve the goal and development objectives. These could, for example, relate to finance, key skills you will need to build or further develop, staffing or the structures, processes and systems of your organisation. If there are too many, group them and include the detail in the action plans you will develop to implement the objectives.

If the best way to achieve your objective is not immediately clear to you, you will need to look at the variety of possible ways you could achieve each objective and **choose the most effective and relevant approach**.

If the approach to achieving an objective is already very clear to you, and you believe it will almost certainly lead to effective results, you can skip this step. But, it is often useful to test out these beliefs by briefly looking at what alternative ways there may be and discussing whether your assumptions about the best way of doing this are right. Again, **more participation can enable you to find new and improved ways of doing things**. We often get stuck in the way we think and need new ideas to challenge us to think in new ways.

**Our thinking about our approach usually depends on how well we have understood the problem.** If we have understood the problem as the absence of a solution, we have blocked our thinking about the problem by jumping to answers before we have really understood the problem. For example, when organisations are not achieving what they want to achieve, they often think that staff training is the obvious answer. They state the problem as "a lack of training" rather than identifying what is going wrong. The cause of the problem could be something different. For example, it might be that the organisation is not providing enough resources and information to the people doing the work, not that those people do not know how to do the work. The answer may be that we need to improve how we plan so that the required information and resources are identified and provided on time.

**It is very important to keep your problem analysis in mind when you look at alternative strategies and do not jump to conclusions about what should be done.** This is a strategic approach. How you understand the problem is very important because it is the basis for your decisions about what should be done and how. This step, therefore, involves using your problem analysis to look at different ways you could achieve the results you have made a commitment to achieving in your objectives.

**General guidelines on developing and selecting from alternative strategies:**

- Look at your analysis of the problem that relates to each objective you have decided on.
- Look at the causes you have identified.
- Each cause is expressed as a negative problem in your analysis. Turn each one round to a positive situation. For example, the NGO in our example, took their analysis of the problem that women who qualify for maintenance grants are not able to access them around in the following way. This suggested to them some of the elements of the strategy they could use to achieve the objective:

Causes	Objective	Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women who qualify have the information and knowledge they need to apply for the grants.</li> <li>• The civic and women's organisations mobilise a campaign to get a pay point opened in Mqanduli where all</li> </ul>	Women in Mqanduli who currently qualify for maintenance grants have been able to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households that desperately need the money available through grants are getting it.</li> <li>• 20% more children get sufficient nutritious food and are able to attend school regularly.</li> </ul>

<p>residents can receive their grants and pensions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resident's, and specifically women, are able to effectively and constructively engage the Council as their representatives to raise local problems and issues for resolution and insist on transparency and accountability.</li> </ul>	<p>access them effectively within one year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents, and specifically women, have confidence in the local government structure and feel they have ways of improving their situation.</li> </ul>
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Although using your analysis to start to explore possible strategies is useful, do not limit your thinking too much to this at first. **It is useful to allow a completely open discussion of all the possible ways you could use to achieve your objective.** Important new ideas can come up and everyone's ideas can be recognised and openly discussed. Give everyone a chance to think about the best approach and then write them all down without discussion, even if they do not seem relevant or realistic to others. Only after everyone's ideas are recorded should you discuss the benefits, disadvantages or relevance of the alternatives suggested.

Ask everyone to think of the criteria that should be used to assess the different strategies.

Criteria are agreed factors you use to evaluate. You can use them to prioritise issues, assess ideas or make decisions. In this case, you can use them to assess the alternative strategies suggested and make your decision. The benefit of this is that it makes the decision about what approach to use transparent and open.

Some useful criteria used to discuss each alternative strategy:

- Is it relevant to the objective?
- Is it an effective way to achieve the objective?
- Is it affordable – do we have the financial resources?
- Do we have the capabilities (knowledge, skills, experience, information and influence) or can we get the support of others who do?
- How long would it take? Is this realistic?
- Would we have sufficient support from key stakeholders? If not, is there anything we can do to get their support?
- Does it fit with our goal?
- Does it contribute to the longer-term development of the community?
- Does it fit with our understanding of what development requires?
- Will it leave the community, and especially the more vulnerable sections of the community, more in control?
- Will it lead to sustainable change?
- Is this the most efficient way of using our resources? – Could we get the same results using an approach that would use less of our resources?

Once you have had an open discussion of all the alternative strategies and have assessed each one in terms of your agreed criteria, you are ready to select the most appropriate one and to begin planning to implement your chosen strategies.

**Decide what criteria you will use to evaluate the successful achievement of each objective.** The criteria should at least include three factors if possible: **time (by when), quantity (how many) and quality (how well).** These criteria should be clear enough to enable you to assess progress or evaluate what was achieved.

**Don't forget the objectives related to developing your organisation's capacity.**  
**Don't forget to look at alternative strategies for achieving your organisational objectives.**  
**Don't jump to decisions** here either before looking at possible alternative ways of achieving these objectives.

The criteria for assessing these strategies can be adapted from those used to assess the strategies for the development objectives, but **the key one is whether each alternative will build the required capacity in the most cost effective and sustainable way.**

The process suggested above is time consuming and you may not need to do this for every objective. However, a systematic and careful process can save you wasting time, resources and energy later.

**MACUA**

**NOTHING ABOUT US**



**WITHOUT US**