



Club/Association Management Program

Club Planning

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Planning is a key management committee function and responsibility and is required for effective organisational governance (see the *Committee Management* module). As the old saying goes, ‘failing to plan means planning to fail’ and unfortunately this is why many sport and recreation organisations find themselves in difficulties. Although there is a great deal written about plans and the planning process, put simply, planning is like developing a road map for the organisation: it helps the organisation to see where it is going and how it is going to get there.

However, planning usually takes place in an environment of limited knowledge, in which facts and values are debatable. Under such circumstances, ‘correct’ decisions do not exist and it is this uncertainty that often makes planning such a difficult process for organisations.

Many management committees are hamstrung because they feel that they must come up with the perfect solution. However, the goal for management committees in sport and recreation organisations is to try and make sure that the choices made were the most reasonable of alternatives available at that time.

The purpose of this module is to:

- define planning
- discuss the advantages of planning and reasons why planning should be conducted
- indicate who has responsibility for planning in sport and recreation organisations
- outline the planning process
- outline the steps involved in conducting planning workshops

What is planning?

There are numerous definitions of planning. A simple approach is to suggest that planning is ‘a process of setting objectives and deciding how to accomplish them’.¹<<Schermerhorn, J (1996) *Management*, 5th edn. New York: John Wiley.>> While many definitions are more comprehensive than this, most tend to share a number of common elements which suggest that the planning process:

- is forward thinking
- involves decision making
- is goal oriented
- is systematic.

Planning is a primary function of management committees. Because plans set the basis for leadership, organisational structure and evaluation, it is important to establish a sound planning foundation. Such an approach depends on the organisation’s view of sport and recreation and its role in the community. This view or philosophy can often be ascertained by examining the overall goals and purpose of the organisation.

Planning also occurs at different levels in sport and recreation organisations. These are usually associated with strategic and development planning, and operational and action planning. These different types of plans vary in comprehensiveness and scope. Strategic plans focus on direction (‘are we doing the right things’) whereas operational plans focus on effectiveness (‘are we doing things right’). Action plans enable operational plans to be implemented.

Strategic planning is generally the responsibility of the management committee and sets out the broad directions of the organisation over a relatively long time frame (eg 3-5 years).

Operational plans, on the other hand, are usually concerned with shorter time frames (eg 1 year) and are also less comprehensive in scope than strategic plans. Responsibility for operational plans can be delegated to subgroups within the organisation.

The advantages of planning

- Planning is beneficial to sport and recreation organisations in many ways. In general terms, the main aim of planning is to maintain a positive relationship between the organisation and its environment. Specifically, planning enables an organisation to:
- become proactive rather than reactive – to clarify organisational purposes and direction
- initiate and influence outcomes in favour of the organisation
- exert more control over its destiny - deciding where it wants to be in the future
- adopt a more systematic approach to change and reduce resistance to change
- improve financial performance and use resources effectively
- increase awareness of its operating environment (eg competitors, government policy, threats)
- improve organisational control and coordination of activities
- develop teamwork off the field.

Without adequate planning, the management committee frequently deals only with immediate problems and fails to consider future needs. Consequently, the management committee

- tends to function on a random ad hoc basis
- will never seem to have time to anticipate tomorrow's problems
- does not create conditions to deal effectively with the future.

Therefore, to overcome these limitations, a plan is necessary.

Why planning is neglected

Despite a number of persuasive arguments in favour of planning, it is not often done or if it is, it is done with minimal effort and commitment. This may be for a number of reasons:

- People feel uncomfortable dealing with the future (eg because it is difficult to predict).
- Many decisions are made impatiently and enacted before thinking.
- Actual responsibility for planning in many sport and recreation organisations is unclear.
- Many committees attend to daily management pressures only and ignore their longer term governance responsibilities (see the *Committee Management* module).
- Some organisations may have a false sense of security (eg 'it won't happen to us').

Often at the heart of this issue is confusion about the roles of and the interaction between facts and intuition (or 'gut' feelings) in the planning process. Planning is not an exact science; judgment and intuition can play significant roles. They are particularly important in situations that involve a high level of uncertainty, little precedent and a number of equally plausible alternatives from which to choose. However, using gut feelings should be balanced against what is indicated by the facts and data. And using intuition should not become an excuse for 'management by ignorance'.²<<David, FR (1997) *Concepts of Strategic Management*, 6th edn. London: Prentice Hall.>>

There are also some myths about planning which may inhibit some organisations from getting involved. For example, many people feel that if the plan does not succeed then they have

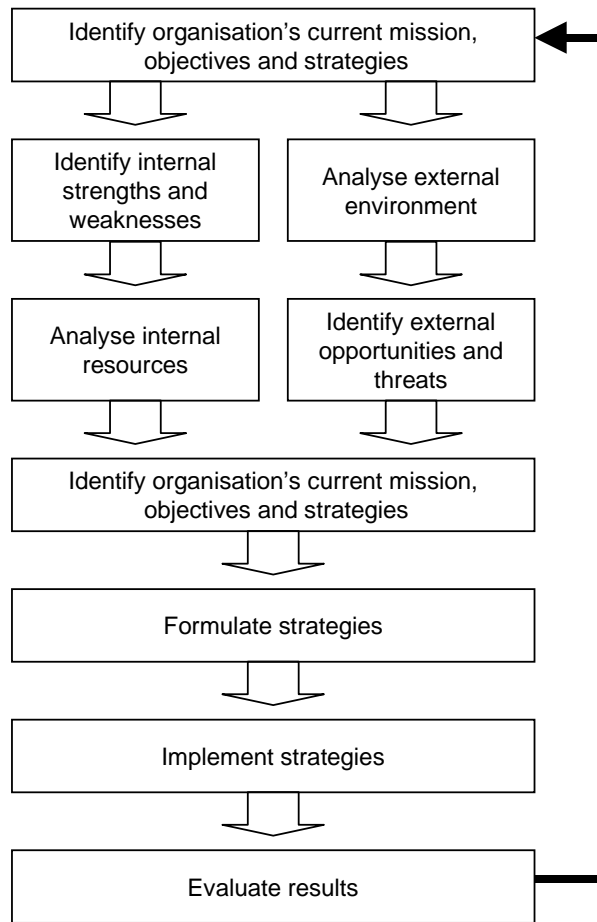
wasted their time. However, the actual process of plan development can help the organisation to understand its external environment and internal procedures better. This enhanced understanding is then likely to result in more effective decisions in the future. There is also a widespread perception that planning can eliminate change. This is of course impossible, but planning can help organisations to cope with change and understand how change is impacting on it.

Some sport and recreation organisations also worry that planning (and actually committing a plan to paper) reduces flexibility. However, the reverse is the case. The planning process should result in a number of alternative approaches and contingencies (ie 'Plan B') which organisations can use if circumstances change.

The planning process

Although there are numerous models of planning, the 'generic' steps involved in the planning process are quite common. The steps represented in Figure 1 are further elaborated in the planning workshop approach outlined in the following sections.

Although Figure 1 represents planning as a linear process, in practice it is more cyclical in nature. Planning is something that should be done regularly and each planning process should begin with evaluation results feeding back into the next cycle.

Figure 1 The planning process**Responsibility for planning**

While planning is ultimately the responsibility of the management committee, successful planning is often characterised by its collaborative nature. Involvement by all stakeholders (especially those affected by the plan, or responsible for implementing it) is vital for success. In other words, all members have some responsibility for planning. The planning process itself, especially involving stakeholders, is just as important as the actual plan that results from the process. Without being involved, members may not have a sense of ownership and commitment to the plan and could feel that something has been imposed on them. This type of situation makes successful implementation difficult.

Planning workshops

Because active member participation is such a critical factor in the success of plan development and implementation, using planning workshops can be a very effective means of facilitating the necessary involvement. Because the organisation was established to help the members, it seems appropriate to get them involved in deciding how it should develop in the future. Many sport and recreation organisations have used this method of planning and have found it very effective.

What is a planning workshop?

A planning workshop is an opportunity to involve a variety of people from the organisation in the planning process. By collaborating, members can find more effective ways to improve the organisation and plan for its development. To be most effective, the planning workshop should involve a broad cross-section of members and allow all participants to contribute on an equal basis.

How many people will be involved?

A planning workshop typically involves from 10 to 30 people although it is possible to develop a good plan with fewer or larger numbers.

Who should be involved?

Participants should represent all interests in the organisation.

For example

- players (juniors and seniors, elite and social)
- officials

- managers
- coaches
- committee members
- parents
- interested community members

All participants should be encouraged to stay for the whole workshop, rather than coming and going, as this can be very disruptive.

How long will the workshop take?

Organisers should allow eight hours for the workshop for a large organisation or four to five hours for a small sport and recreation organisation.

Who should conduct the workshop?

Ideally, two trained facilitators, who are independent from the organisation, should work as a team to manage the workshop. This allows all the members to participate fully in discussing and developing ideas. And by using independent facilitators, workshop discussions are more likely to be open and honest. Key members of the organisation (eg the management committee) should meet with the facilitators before the workshop, to clarify the aims and objectives of the workshop.

What will be needed to run the workshop?

A quiet room that is large enough for the whole group to talk together is the minimum space requirement. Space for the group to break up into smaller discussion groups should also be available.

The following equipment is also necessary:

- butchers paper
- marking pens
- masking tape, large clips, Blu-tack
- name tags
- tea/coffee etc
- if there is access to a computer, this can help to record and modify ideas presented in the workshop

About the room

- Choose a room that will be free from distractions.
- The room should be set up so everyone will be comfortable and can see each other — a horseshoe seating arrangement shape is best.
- Tables are not necessary and can be a barrier to communication.
- The facilitators should sit with the group.
- The butchers paper should be on a board at the front of the room so everyone can see it.
- Each sheet of paper should be numbered so organisers are able to keep track of them during the workshop.
- As each sheet is completed, it should be taped to the wall so the group can refer to it if necessary.
- Allow sufficient time for regular rest breaks.

What happens at the workshop?

At the workshop, the facilitators will lead the participants through some group discussions to answer questions and develop the plan. Two examples of agendas are outlined below.

In the workshop, participants will:

- look at changes that are happening in the community which will affect the organisation
(analyse external environment and identify opportunities and threats)
- look at how the organisation works currently (analyse internal resources and identify strengths and weaknesses)
- decide how they would like it to work in the future (formulate strategies)
- identify actions, responsibilities and resources that will be needed to make it work better
(identify processes for strategy implementation)
- outline how and when these actions will occur (strategy implementation)
- determine how to evaluate progress.

Planning workshop agenda for a large sport and recreation organisation

Topic	Format	Duration
Session 1 - Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce participants • Outline the format of the workshop 	Whole group	30 minutes
Session 2 - Changes in the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What changes are likely to occur in the community in the next five years? 	Whole group	30 minutes
Session 3 - Implications for the organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will these changes mean to the sport/recreation industry? • What implications will they have for the organisation? 	Small groups	1 hour
Session 4 - Where is the organisation now? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the organisation's history? • What are its strengths and weaknesses? • What are its current structure, operation and resources? 	Whole group	45 minutes
Session 5 - Where is the organisation going? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the mission over the next 2-5 years? 	Small groups	45 minutes
Session 6 - What are the priorities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main activities that should be focused on? • What are the objectives/priorities for the next 2-5 years? 	Small groups	2 hours
Session 7 - Down to action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What actions are needed to reach the objectives? • Who will be responsible for them? • What resources are needed? • What is the timetable? 	Small groups	2 hours

Session 8 - Where to now?

Whole group 30 minutes

- How does the organisation proceed from here?
- How will the organisation evaluate progress?

Total 8 hours

Planning workshop agenda for a small sport and recreation organisation

Topic	Duration
Session 1 - Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce participants • Outline the format of the workshop 	30 minutes
Session 2 - Changes in the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What major changes are happening in the community and sport/recreation industry? • What impact will these changes have on the organisation? 	30 minutes
Session 3 - Where is the organisation now? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the organisation doing well? • What difficulties does the organisation currently face? 	30 minutes
Session 4 - Where is the organisation going? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the major reasons for the organisation's existence? 	30 minutes
Session 5 - What are the priorities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the major objectives the organisation wants to achieve in the next few years? 	45 minutes
Session 6 - Down to action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What actions are needed to reach the objectives? • Who will be responsible for them? • What resources are needed? • What is the timetable? 	90 minutes
Session 7 - Where to now? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the organisation proceed from here? • How will the organisation evaluate progress? 	15 minutes

Total 4.5 hours

Remember

- The agenda is only a guide.
- Workshop times may vary.
- The format chosen for each session should encourage discussion.
- Sufficient time should be allowed for feedback to the whole group after small group work.

Workshop activities

Session 1 - Introductions

Session objectives:

- To introduce the facilitators and participants in the workshop.
- To outline the purpose and format of the workshop.

Workshop activity:

- Each participant will be asked to:
 - o introduce themselves
 - o explain their role in the organisation
 - o explain why the organisation is important to them
 - o explain what they hope to get out of the workshop.

As an alternative, participants can be given a few minutes to talk to a partner and then introduce the partner to the whole group.

Facilitators should explain:

- the aim of the workshop
- the agenda
- that participants should contribute as much as possible
- the role of the facilitators
- any housekeeping matters - meal times, location of toilets etc.

Special note:

- Facilitators should introduce themselves at the same time as the participants. Participants should stay seated during the introductions - it's more friendly.
- As this session will set the tone for the whole workshop, it is important that everyone has an opportunity to participate and that the mood remains relaxed and friendly and not one in which people use the chance to take the floor on sensitive issues.
- Facilitators should record key points (eg expectations of participants) on butchers paper and at the end of the session reflect on any common threads.

Session 2 - Changes in the community

Session objective:

- To identify important changes that are occurring in the community.

Workshop question:

- What are the major trends and changes that are affecting the community?
- What other changes can be expected in the future?

Workshop activity:

- Work as one large group in this session.
- This is a brainstorming session. Everyone should feel free to openly contribute his or her ideas.

- Try to think as broadly as possible in this session.
- The facilitators will write the responses on butchers paper under general headings, eg
 - o work
 - o sport
 - o family life.

Special note:

- Facilitators should write the headings on separate pieces of butchers paper.
- Facilitators should record everybody's responses.
- If participants disagree on something, it should still be recorded and then can be discussed again later if necessary.
- If participants have trouble responding, a number of strategies can be used to overcome the 'block', eg use examples, ask questions, or move on to one of the other headings.
- Participants should be encouraged to think as broadly as possible and to listen clearly to what others have to say.

Session 3 - Implications for the organisation

Session objective:

- To identify in general terms the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) that the organisation will face in the future.

Workshop question:

- What impact will the changes identified in session 2 have on the organisation?

Workshop activity:

- Work in small groups (3-8 per group) for this session.
- The facilitators will assign each group a heading (ie work, sport or family life) and provide the butchers paper from the previous session.

- The task is to discuss the implications of the most relevant issues listed on the butchers paper.
- Someone from the group should record the ideas and report back to the whole group at the end of the session.

Special note:

- The group should not be rushed into finding solutions at this stage. The purpose of this session is to identify in broad terms the implications for the organisation.
- For small organisations, this session may be incorporated into the previous session.
- Ensure that in reporting back to the whole group the nominated person reports only what the group discussed and not his/her own ideas.

Session 4 - Where is the organisation now?

Session objectives:

- To outline the background of the organisation.
- To look at the effectiveness of the organisation's current activities.

Workshop questions:

- Where has the organisation come from?
- What are its current strengths and weaknesses in relation to:
 - o administration
 - o coaching
 - o competitions
 - o athlete development
 - o officiating
 - o finance
 - o volunteers

- o social functions.

Workshop activity:

- This session will be conducted with the whole group participating.
- The facilitators will ask a key person (perhaps the President) to briefly outline the history of the organisation.
- Participants will then be asked to discuss the current situation of the organisation. This should be the main focus of this session.
- The facilitators will record all the ideas on butchers paper.

Special note:

- This session may be conducted as a brainstorming session, with everyone contributing, or the facilitators may ask some key people to report (eg Coaching Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator).
- Everyone should have the opportunity to give his or her opinion on the present position of the organisation.

Session 5 - Where is the organisation going?

Session objectives:

- To decide upon the mission of the organisation.
- To set some broad goals for the organisation over the next few years.

Workshop questions:

- Why does the organisation exist?
- What is it trying to achieve?

Workshop activity:

- Work in small workgroups for this session.

- Each group will need to appoint a scribe and someone to report back to the whole group at the end of the session.
- The task is to decide on a simple statement to describe the purpose of the organisation. This is the mission statement.

Special notes:

- Make sure there is enough time for the whole group to come together to report on their discussions and agree on the mission statement.
- If the participants are having difficulty agreeing on the mission statement, the facilitators may summarise the discussion and then, during a break, draft a version to be discussed after the break.
- It is not critical to write a final version of the mission statement. Often, people can end up arguing over words in this session. This can be avoided by getting general agreement on a draft statement and revisiting it again later if required.

Session 6 - What are the priorities?

Session objectives:

- To determine and prioritise the objectives for the organisation.

Workshop questions:

- What, specifically, does the organisation want to achieve by the end of the planning period?
- What is the priority of these objectives?

Workshop activity:

- Work in small workgroups for this session.

- Each group will need to appoint a scribe and someone to report back to the whole group at the end of the session (this role should be shared so that everyone has a turn).
- The group will be assigned one or two of the organisation's main activity areas.
- The task is to determine specific objectives for the activity areas that have been assigned.

The objectives must be 'SMART', ie have the following attributes:

- o specific
- o measurable
- o achievable
- o realistic
- o time bound

Special notes:

- Main activity areas will vary from organisation to organisation but may include: management and administration, marketing and promotion, participation, competitions, development, coaching, umpiring/officiating, facilities and equipment, volunteers and finance.
- It is important that participants write SMART objectives (ie they should meet at least three of the SMART attributes listed above). For example: 'To increase the number of registered junior players by 30% by the beginning of next season'.
- Each group should report on their discussions at the end of the session. That way, the whole group can agree on the objectives for the organisation and can decide which are the most important.
- Small organisations may not need to identify the main activity areas of their organisation. They may simply need to identify six or seven key objectives.
- The worksheet on the next page can be used to help the workgroups remain on track in this session.

Session 7 - Down to action*Session objectives:*

- To outline how the organisation will achieve the objectives.

Workshop questions:

- What needs to do be done to achieve the objectives?
- What resources will be required?
- Who will be responsible for each activity?
- What will be the time frame?
- How will the success of the plan be evaluated?

Workshop activity:

- Work in small workgroups for this session.
- Each group will need to appoint a scribe and someone to report back to the whole group at the end of the session.
- The task is to identify what actions need to be taken to achieve each objective that the group decided on in the previous session. Each group will also need to identify who will be responsible, what resources will be needed, and what the time line will be.

Special notes:

- The worksheet can be used to keep the workgroups on track in this session.
- It is important that participants pay particular attention to the resources that will be needed to carry out the actions. They must remember to set realistic tasks that the organisation can afford to implement.
- The whole group must revisit the total cost of their plan at the end of this session and decide which are the most important objectives. That way, if there are insufficient resources to implement the plans, they can easily be modified.

Worksheet for session 7

OBJECTIVE	ACTION (what)	RESPONSIBILI TY (who)	TIME FRAME (when)	RESOURCES (\\$)
<p>1. <i>For example: To increase by 15% the number of junior members by 2004</i></p>	<p>1. Produce promotional brochures for distribution to local schools. 2. Arrange meetings with PE teachers and Principals</p>	<p>Junior Development Committee</p>	<p>1. Distribute brochures by June 2001 2. Meetings completed by September 2001</p>	<p>\$1000</p>
<p>2.</p>				
<p>3.</p>				
<p>4.</p>				
<p>5.</p>				

Session 8 - Where to now?*Session objectives:*

- To outline what needs to be done to finish developing the plan before it can be implemented.
- To wrap up the workshop.

Workshop activity:

- The whole group will assign tasks to make sure the plan is documented and moved to the implementation phase.
- The facilitator will conclude the workshop by asking participants to give some feedback on what they thought about the workshop and thank participants for their input.

Special notes:

- An individual or a committee need to write a draft of the plan based on the notes that were made on the butchers paper or worksheets.
- The draft plan should then be circulated to the workshop participants and other key people in the organisation for comment.
- If any changes are necessary, these should be made and the final version of the plan adopted by the management committee.
- The plan should be publicised to members via newsletters, noticeboards etc. It is important that they know about the plan and what it will mean to them.
- Once the plan is finalised, it is important that it is regularly reviewed. The organisation should:
 - Establish performance indicators that will determine the extent to which the objectives have been achieved. (Performance indicators are measures that provide some feedback

on performance. They should be related to the objectives and could include quality, quantity and time components.)

- Check progress regularly in relation to what is set out in the plan. This should be included as a regular item on management committee meeting agendas.
- Modify the plan if it is not possible to achieve some of the goals that have been set.
- Establish a planning subcommittee to review the whole plan each year to check whether the organisation achieved goals for the year and to add another year to the plan. The organisation should be constantly planning 3-4 years ahead.

Summary

Planning is one of the key elements in the governance and management of sport and recreation organisations. Organisations that do not plan effectively tend to function in an ad hoc manner without a clear direction or focus. Such organisations are more likely to suffer from operational inefficiencies and an inability to cope with change. The process used to develop plans for sport and recreation organisations is critical and should involve as broad a spectrum of stakeholders as possible. This module has emphasised the importance and advantages of planning, outlined the planning process and presented, in detail, the planning workshop process.

Further information

Australian Sports Commission (1994) *Planning in Sport: A Guide for Sporting*

Organisations. Canberra: The Commission. (Available from the Australian Sports Commission, PO Box 176, Belconnen ACT 2616)

Robbins, SR, Bergman, R, Stagg, I and Coulter, M (2000) *Management*, 2nd edn. Sydney: Prentice Hall.

State departments of sport and recreation - contact the section responsible for organisation planning to see what resources and personnel they have.

Glossary

Ad hoc planning. This is not really planning but decision making on a random basis without any thought for the long term.

Intuition. This is an unconscious process of making decisions using experience and judgment.

Operational plans. Focus on effectiveness ('are we doing things right') and tend to be concerned with relatively short time frames (eg 1 year).

Opportunities. Positive external environmental factors.

Performance indicators. Measures that provide some feedback on performance. They should be related to objectives and could include quality, quantity and time components.

Planning process. A systematic approach to planning that sets out the generic steps involved in planning.

Planning workshops. A way of involving a broad cross-section of members from the organisation in a structured planning process. By collaborating, members can find more effective ways to improve the organisation and plan for its development.

SMART objectives. Organisational objectives which have the following attributes: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound.

Stakeholders. Those people or organisations that have an interest in the organisation and are likely to be affected by its actions.

Strategic plans. Focus on direction ('are we doing the right things') and set out the broad directions of the organisation over a relatively long time frame (eg 3-5 years).

SWOT analysis. Analysis of an organisation's strengths and weaknesses (internal) and its environmental opportunities and threats.

Strengths. Activities that the organisations does well or resources that it may have (eg committed volunteers).

Threats. Negative external environmental factors.

Weaknesses. Activities that the organisations does not do well or resources that it does not have.

Endnotes

¹ Schermerhorn, J. (1996), *Management* (5th Ed). New York: John Wiley & Sons

² David, F. R. (1997). *Concepts of Strategic Management* (6th Ed). London: Prentice Hall