

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT  
AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
FOR  
FIRST NATIONS**

*Best Practices to Consider*

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# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **PREFACE**

Strategic planning and accountability type activities have been around for a long time. Individuals and organizations constantly look for new and innovative ways to improve what they do in these areas. In reality, some are more active at planning and some are more sophisticated in their approach. Strategic management has been thrust into the spotlight in the last decade as individuals and organizations realize that organizational success is often linked to results from enhanced activities in this area. Despite the success of strategic management, some organizations have yet to invest in related education and training. Some think strategic management is nothing but strategic planning. Others think they have strategic plans and accountability is being met. Others don't realize it is part of their job. Understanding what strategic management is all about provides an opportunity to make improvements in planning and accountability activities.

The private sector has slowly latched on to strategic management. Many larger organizations such as IBM, 3M, Kodak and Xerox have been active in this area for some time. The not-for-profit sector, other than some health facilities, schools and municipalities, has not taken advantage of strategic management. Some claim they do not know much about it, have no time for another fad, or know about it but cannot get around to doing something.

This publication will inform those in First Nations leadership positions about strategic management and accountability, and highlight some practices that will assist in improving the quality of First Nations' activities in planning and accountability.

Information is presented in five sections. The first provides an introduction and addresses the current situation. The next looks at accountability and related issues. This is followed by information on strategic management. A section of examples and best practices are presented to allow the reader to measure against and consider potential improvements. The last section includes sources of information to provide additional knowledge for those wishing to examine topics further.

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# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Background**

The Assembly of First Nations and the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada developed a partnership that established an Accountability Project. The prime goal of the partnership was to raise the accounting skills and standards of First Nations, building essential foundations for the implementation of self-government. A Working Group of First Nation financial management and auditing practitioners from across Canada was formed to support the work of the project. This group examined accountability, especially financial accountability issues. It set two ambitious objectives:

- Develop an integrated and accessible network of financial management and accounting training programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal financial managers and officers; and
- Determine appropriate and acceptable accounting and reporting standards and financial reporting practices for First Nations to strengthen accountability to community members.

During examination of accountability issues and activities, Working Group members identified the need to expand strategic planning education and training if accountability in First Nations is to be improved. It was this need that generated the idea to develop an informative publication that would provide a learning tool to develop competency in understanding planning and accountability.

Like financial management, communications, member participation and leadership, strategic planning is one of several key factors linked to accountability. In fact, strategic planning is the first step in setting up a solid accountability framework. If the planning step is not dealt with first, accountability issues will likely arise. Issues are often tackled with band-aid solutions but, despite the band-aid, problems tend to continue to occur after a period of time. This is because the root problem or cause has not been addressed. Accountability problems or issues are effects which can often be traced back to the root cause, which is an ineffective planning process.

Strategic planning policy and process have the greatest influence on the level of accountability. That link is explored in this publication.

### **2. Learning Objectives**

By using the information in this publication, you will be able to:

- Gain a better understanding of accountability and how it benefits an organization.
- Develop an accountability program.
- Understand the relationship between accountability and strategic management.
- Gain a better understanding of strategic management and how it benefits an organization.

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- Assess strategic management activities in an organization.
- Review strategic management examples and best practices.
- Participate in strategic management activities.
- Gain access to other relevant sources of information.

## 3. Current Situation – Opportunities & Challenges

You have likely heard a lot of talk about accountability lately. Everyone, including the government and members of First Nations communities are demanding increased accountability from Chiefs and Councils.

Recent changes to funding arrangements and fiscal relations initiatives mean that Chiefs and Councils have more responsibility. With increased responsibility comes the need for increased accountability. In turn, accountability needs to be linked to specific direction and desired results as provided for in a strategic plan.

In 1996, a report from the Auditor General of Canada noted that almost one third of First Nations and tribal councils were in financial difficulty. Parliament appropriates more than \$4 billion annually to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to fund programs for First Nations communities. Programs include social assistance, education, capital facilities, housing and economic development for approximately 600 First Nations and other Aboriginal groups.

INAC reported that it had received over 300 allegations relating to 108 First Nations during the two-year period prior to the 1999 follow-up report. Allegations relate to such matters as social assistance issues, mismanagement of funds and other concerns. According to the government, this number is actually a conservative estimate. It is likely that some incidents are not reported.

Allegations can be reported for frivolous or politically motivated reasons, or they can be legitimate and have serious consequences for an entire departmental program, for First Nations members, and for living conditions on reserves. They may reflect criminal activity or simply managerial negligence without intent to deceive. Serious allegations that are proved could impair the relationship between First Nations and the government. Many allegations indicate the need to improve financial management capacity for First Nation organizations. This improved capacity includes the areas of planning and accountability.

Several initiatives are underway to improve financial management capacity. One key initiative is the establishment of the Aboriginal Financial Officers Organization (AFOA) of Canada and its affiliated chapters throughout Canada.

AFOA is a professional organization exclusively serving the needs of individuals working for, or aspiring to positions with First Nation organizations. It is responsible for providing training, certification and professional development opportunities in financial management, and is committed to excellence in expanding financial management

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capacity for aboriginal organizations. AFOA Canada and the chapters provide learning opportunities that assist individuals in strengthening knowledge and skills in financial management. AFOA offers a Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager program that leads to a professional designation, the Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager (CAFM). Strategy and Decision Making is one of the courses in the program and content addresses planning and accountability.

The financial function is changing to reflect the changing roles of First Nations. Financial managers will need to spend less time on transaction processing and control, and more time on decision support activities, learn to benchmark and keep learning to stay abreast of new financial and management developments.

Another key initiative involves the Government of Canada planning to improve accountability and other administrative activities through legislative means.

Currently, the government supports the idea of Aboriginal self-government, but there is a perception in the public's eye that most First Nations organizations are not ready for such responsibility. Industry Canada, specifically Aboriginal Business Canada, has reported a lack of apparent success with many of its programs. The media tends to focus on isolated incidents and this reflects poorly on everyone. Some media reports quote individuals as saying there is a need for more leadership accountability. It is rare to find a positive story on First Nations activity. The Aboriginal Financial Officers Association is potentially good press in that its members will play a key role in supporting self-government and business development initiatives and providing support to implement improvements in planning and accountability.

New fiscal arrangements, the push for self-government, and overcoming negative perceptions and realities are just some of the challenges facing First Nations. Accepting new responsibilities and dealing with challenges means things need to change. Change is required in accountability and planning activities to meet new responsibilities. The call for changes in accountability is consistent with needs of the people of the First Nations communities. They would like to see improvements in plans and accountability practices. *People want to know what direction Chiefs and Councils are heading in and what they hope to accomplish.* With this information they will be able to measure progress and satisfy some of their accountability needs. This publication will provide information on how to enhance accountability through direction setting and reporting.

## 4. The Link Between Accountability and Strategic Management

To meet the accountability needs of an organization, good management and strong planning knowledge and skills are necessary. This publication is about strategic management. Strategic management includes strategic planning and the link to accountability so you, as a Chief, Council or staff member, can provide the greatest benefit to your community. Accountability and strategic management are examined in more detail later, but first it is good to have an understanding of the relationship between the two.

## **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

Leadership may have developed the most ingenious strategy ever, but it means nothing if it doesn't get done. The better conceived your organization's strategy and the more competently it is executed with accountability and measurement, the more likely it will get done and please the community.

Strategic management and accountability are tools. You use them to make sure the right things get done. You use them to make sure that they are done properly. Accountability also helps to identify things that should not be done. Strategic management will ensure that programs are developed in everyone's best interests and within capabilities.

By holding yourselves and others accountable, you protect yourself and the community from financial risk. But if you really want your community to benefit, you need to look at how things are planned, managed and evaluated, and how you can better plan, manage and evaluate.

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## B. ACCOUNTABILITY

### 1. What is Accountability?

Accountability = Responsibility

Put simply, accountability is the same thing as responsibility – responsibility to a person or group of people. Accountability is used to make sure people do the things they should, and don't do the things they shouldn't.

Accountability is not a new idea but, unfortunately, it is often neglected through lack of attention to communication activities. The importance of accountability cannot be underestimated. Corruption, fraud, theft and apathy cannot be tolerated. By developing and maintaining an accountability policy and program, you will be taking important steps to ensure a positive future for you, your community and your organization. Accountability programs can be surprisingly easy to implement, and after a brief look at different types of accountability, we will examine some of the methods for introducing accountability policies and tie them to your organization's strategic objectives.

### 2. Types of Accountability

There are different types of accountability. Four types are specifically relevant to First Nations:

- **Political/Managerial**
- **Program or Administrative**
- **Fiscal**
- **Individual Stakeholder or Member**

The first three types will be dealt with. The accountability of a member or stakeholder in terms of their community or organizational responsibilities requires further debate and examination, and is not covered in this publication.

#### 2.1 Political and Managerial Accountability

Political accountability is the need for political leaders to work ethically, in the best interests of the citizens they represent. "Among the diverse traditions of First Nations, there are a variety of customs and practices for ensuring the political accountability of First Nations leaders to the community. Elections, traditional governing practices, and open community meetings are some examples<sup>1</sup>." Aboriginal

*"Traditionally, there were checks and balances that were functional and appropriate for the Anishnabek. The leaders were servants to the people and upheld the values that were inherent in the community. Accountability was not a goal or aim of the system; rather it was embedded in the very make-up of the system."*

***Union of Ontario Indians  
Brief to the Royal  
Commission on Aboriginal  
Peoples (1993)***



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governments and institutions should be fully accountable to their citizens for all decisions made and actions taken.

Likewise, managers must be ethical and accountable to their employees, customers, members and other stakeholders. Beyond political representation, managers are accountable for all aspects of running an organization. From managing spending to the overall success of the enterprise/program, managers must take responsibility for all aspects of their organizations.

## 2.2 Program or Administrative Accountability

As an organization undertakes its various projects and duties, some duties may go unaccomplished. To prevent project failure, or to ensure the efficient day-to-day operation of an organization, program and administrative accountability policies governing staff and volunteers should be developed and implemented. This can often be accomplished by having a strategic management model that uses performance measurement to accommodate accountability requirements.

## 2.3 Financial Accountability

The Aboriginal Financial Officers Organization of Canada is encouraging its members and many Aboriginal organizations through education and training to assess their accountability practices and develop fiscal by-laws, policies and systems based on the principles of transparency, disclosure and redress. These principles are consistent with other governments in Canada, and are appropriate to traditions. Strong financial accountability practices that stress community information-sharing and the rights and obligations of stakeholders are essential practices. Financial accountability ensures that funds are being directed to the appropriate projects and are used for the purposes intended.

## 3. Elements of Accountability

Any accountability program must contain the following three elements to be successful:

- **Transparency**—Decisions and the processes of making decisions are open and transparent;
- **Disclosure**—Information on administrative policies and standards is readily obtainable by stakeholders; and
- **Redress**—Procedures for review, including appeal mechanisms are in place.

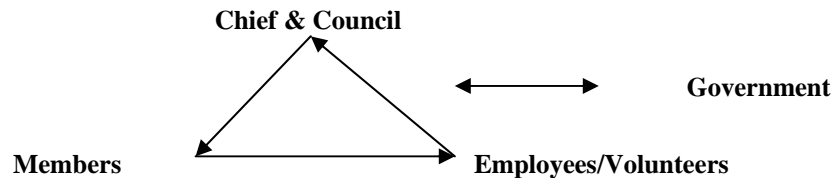
## 4. The Accountability Cycle

Everyone is responsible for accountability: governments, corporations, the Assembly of First Nations, First Nations, organizations, and individuals. There is an obligation to ensure the integrity and honesty of representatives and an obligation to ensure that they work with honesty and integrity for the people being represented.

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The issue of redress is especially important in organizations where the manager or Chief has considerable power. If the Chief or Council cannot be forced to comply with the wishes of the community through fiscal, political or managerial practices, such as audits, elections or termination of employment, redress cannot be taken. That is why it is essential to ensure that everyone in the organization is accountable to someone else.

## Accountability Relationships for First Nations



## 5. Three Major Components of an Accountability Program

In addition to the three elements of accountability and the accountability cycle, there are three major components to any effective accountability program:

- **Planning and Performance Reporting**
- **Policies and Procedures**
- **Roles and Responsibilities**

### 5.1 Planning and Performance Reporting

“How do you measure accountability?” It is a natural question to ask, but it is not so much accountability that is measured, but rather, were the results that were planned achieved? This is where planning and performance reporting comes in. Performance reporting starts with the strategy formulation component of a strategic management model. By measuring the performance of individuals/programs to the development and outcomes of strategies and supportive business plans, areas needing improvement will be identified.

Establishing strategic direction and supportive business plans represents a firm commitment to making change and achieving specific performance within a specific time frame. When strategic direction has been set, progress can be measured to the set strategies. Strategic direction may change as new issues arise, and measurement requirements may need to change. Throughout the implementation of any business/program plan, reporting on successes and failures should occur on a regular basis. These reports should be shared with all those concerned. This is important, because it allows all concerned to see where improvements can be made.

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The steps to effective performance reporting:

## 1. **Transparency**

- Develop an Annual Strategic Plan and Business Plan, include all programs and share the information with stakeholders.

## 2. **Disclosure**

- Provide occasional detailed program evaluation studies, or other reports that relate to strategy and business plans, reporting any successes or failures. Make these reports available to stakeholders.
- Prepare a Project Completion Report, an Annual Performance Report, regular Activity Plan Reports, or an Annual Financial Report. Make these reports available to anybody who is interested in them. These reports can also be used as guidelines when other people try similar projects.

## 3. **Redress**

- Hold consultations with stakeholders to see if the targeted performance indicators or project are meeting expectations.
- Be prepared to hear concerns. If people might not be comfortable voicing their concerns directly, give them an option where they can raise the concerns confidentially, not directly to the person in charge.

## 5.2 Policies and Procedures

Official policies regarding work procedures go a long way towards ensuring accountability. These policies and procedures should be developed with all affected stakeholders, improved if they are found lacking in certain areas, and posted so anyone can view or review them. It is important to provide an orientation to those being exposed to the policy and procedures for the first time or have not been involved for several years.

Again, the three components to any accountability program: transparency, disclosure, and redress, must be acknowledged for the following to work:

- Program Policies
- Administrative Appeal/Grievance Procedures
- Financial Administration Policies
- Access to Information Procedures
- Conflict of Interest Guidelines
- Code of Ethics
- Elections Code
- Community Consultation Procedures
- Contracts

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## 5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

What is the organization responsible for? **Organization strategic direction** should always be kept in mind. This involves a regular review of the strategy and business plans. If the business plans do not match the strategic direction of the organization, do not provide any recognizable benefit to the stakeholders, and detract in any way from the duties that the organization should be performing, the business plan should be adjusted and resources directed to activities consistent with the organization's strategic direction.

By developing an **organizational structure**, it is clear as to whom committees or employees report, and to whom they are accountable. Most important are the roles and responsibilities of the people involved with the organization. What is the Financial Officer responsible for? What duties should the project or department managers be performing to ensure the continued success of the organization? By developing **job descriptions** and making them accessible to employees, they can be sure they are doing the duties that are required of them, and managers can use the job descriptions as a reference when doing employee evaluations. Job descriptions should be reviewed at least annually with input from the person who has that particular job. For First Nations, **Chief and Council portfolio responsibilities** these should be clarified, documented and, just like the other Roles and Responsibilities devices, should be made readily accessible to all stakeholders.

“Listening to community members concerns and taking measures to correct the problem is the most important part of any accountability program.”

By developing a First Nation's strategic direction, organizational structure, job descriptions and Chief and Council portfolio responsibilities with community members, will help meet the **transparency** requirement. By communicating them to all

stakeholders and having them readily accessible for those who wish to review them, you meet the **disclosure** requirement. Stakeholders can then monitor the quality of work accomplished. It is desirable that a First Nation has a system for **redress**. This may be a formal appeals process, an ombudsman or regular community meetings. It is important that community members' concerns are addressed. Letting members have a say is important to any accountability program. Allowing members to see that leadership is listening to their concerns and are taking measures to correct the problem is the most important part of any accountability program. It gives members a sense of “ownership” over the progress and success of the First Nation, and will guarantee the First Nation's continued success.

## 6. Putting a Program in Place

Accountability programs should take as much work as necessary to ensure the success of the First Nation. They should not put an unreasonable burden or constraint on anyone unnecessarily. Instead, accountability should become an everyday part of life within the

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First Nation. Accountability programs should be no less stringent than those of other governments and institutions of comparable size.

For example, financial records and statements should comply with generally accepted accounting principles, although they need not be identical in all respects.

**“Developing & maintaining accountability programs is a team effort.”**

Aboriginal governments and organizations must develop rules with respect to conflict-of-interest for both elected and appointed officials. **Conflict-of-interest rules must ensure that services that provide an opportunity for financial gain operate at arm's length from elected and appointed**

**officials.** Regular audits from independent bodies are highly advisable for any accountability program. This may involve hiring a consultant for the operational aspects of a First Nation, or may involve hiring an auditor to review the fiscal operations.

Do not expect a new accountability program to be an immediate success. As with any new program, an accountability program will require continued attention and, as with any change to the operation of the organization, there will be opponents to the plan. When the program is in place, if people are not fulfilling the duties of their job, it may not be necessary to reprimand them. Perhaps they require more resources to get the job done. Perhaps they don't have the necessary knowledge and skills, or perhaps they need direction or the proper motivation. Help them take the necessary steps to get the job done. Don't leave them out in the cold.

Accountability happens when leaders make it happen. The sooner checks and balances are developed, the sooner leaders can reap the benefits of accountability. However, it takes more than one person saying to another, “You are now responsible for this and that.” Developing and maintaining accountability programs is a team effort on the part of staff and Council. Mechanisms to ensure political and managerial accountability must be developed, approved by a Council, reflected in plans, policy, procedures, and job descriptions, and openly shared with everyone connected to the organization. Mechanisms selected should be built into a strategic management model to ensure planning, implementation and evaluation activities are connected to the mechanisms. By sharing information on strategic direction and business/program plans and related accountability mechanisms, members of the community will let the leadership know when the First Nation is not fulfilling its objectives or recognize the leaderships achievements.

For further information on the accountability cycle as part of the planning process review the Accountability Cycle section of the “Fiscal Planning Handbook”. This publication is available from the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada or it can be downloaded directly from this website - [http://www.fnfp.ca/intro\\_bo.htm](http://www.fnfp.ca/intro_bo.htm)

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## C. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

### 1. What is Strategic Management?

How can you lead if you don't know where you are going?  
George Newman

***Strategic management can be defined as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives.***

Other definitions bring in different elements integral to a strategic management process. This definition, however, clearly describes the heart of strategic management. Strategic management focuses on integrating all organizational activity for the purpose of achieving organizational success. Strategic management can be viewed as a formal planning process that allows a First Nation to pursue proactive rather than reactive strategies.

Leaders may have an idea as to where their first Nation is going, but they might not know how the people they work with view the future. In addition, leaders may not always be able to get a clear picture of the environment in which the First Nation operates, and may not be able to assess the implications this environment holds for the future. Individuals may have other perspectives on the level of success for different initiatives. Leaders must provide direction in their daily activities. This points to a need for strategic management.

The concept of strategic management embodies a process that is intended to support or maintain a proactive organization. The process is often captured in a model supported by policy and procedures. An example of a policy and supportive procedures are provided in Section D. The strategic management process is often described as **dynamic and continuous**. There is no guarantee of success. However, if the model and processes are followed faithfully, better-than-average results occur. Some organizations believe they would not be in business today without strategic management.

Taking the time and resources to establish a strategic management model is considered a valuable investment given the benefits that are realized.

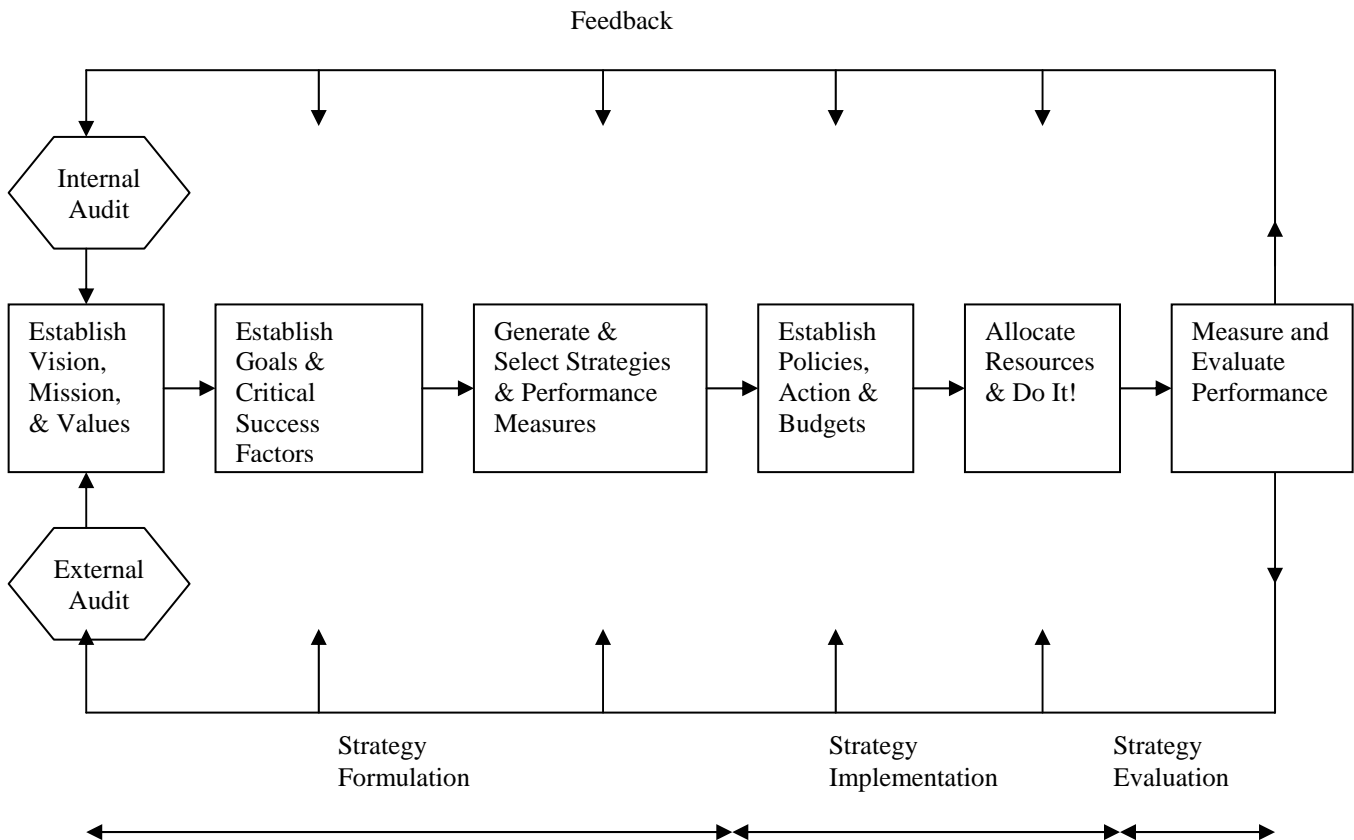
# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## 2. The Strategic Management Model

The strategic management model consists of three stages:

1. **Strategy formulation (Strategic Planning)**
2. **Strategy implementation (Business Plan)**
3. **Strategy evaluation**

Below is a more detailed view of the Strategic Management model. By following this model, a First Nation should be able to successfully facilitate its strategic management process. Note that feedback, in this case, is also a system for accountability.



# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## Benefits of Strategic Management

- Innovative and creative activity is encouraged
- The change process is made easier
- It helps align individual effort with the organization and improves communications
- Decision makers are better informed; better decisions are made and there is an effective use of resources
- A greater understanding, commitment and co-operative approach towards problems and opportunities are generated
- Threats and opportunities are clarified
- The structured approach helps make better strategies

## 2.1 Strategy Formulation (Strategic Planning)

Strategy formulation includes developing a vision and mission; understanding the values to be applied; determining internal strengths and weaknesses; identifying opportunities and threats; understanding issues and critical success factors (goals); establishing long-term objectives (willed future); generating possible strategies and selecting strategies to pursue. Strategy formulation requires an answer to the questions, "What is our purpose and what do we want to do?"

First Nations usually have limited resources and selecting the best possible strategies also requires an answer to the questions, "What could we do and what are we able to do?"

Most First Nation organizations engage in some form of planning, but not necessarily at the strategic level. Planning focus tends to be on programs and services and related budgets. It is necessary to step back and find out if the current programs and services are in fact, priorities. It is possible for a First Nation to spend a considerable amount of time and resources polishing a program that may be low priority in terms of community needs.

Among all the things the Chief, Council and staff do, nothing affects the First Nation's ultimate success more fundamentally than how well its leaders plan for the long-term, develop effective strategies and implement what needs to be done internally to produce results. Good strategy, good strategy execution, and good strategy evaluation are the key ingredients of good strategic management.

*Strategic planning* is "a continuous and systematic process where people make decisions about intended future outcomes, how these outcomes are to be accomplished, and how success is to be measured and evaluated<sup>ii</sup>."



# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

Work in strategy formulation is often referred to as strategic planning which leads to the development of a strategic plan. A strategic plan is a declaration outlining strategic direction statements, short-term and long-term performance targets, and the methods used to get there. Strategic planning offers a systematic means of analysing the prospects for a First Nation and helps in charting a long-term course of action.

The main objective of a strategic plan is to strengthen the decision-making process by addressing key **internal and external challenges** facing the First Nation. As a result, strategic planning improves organizational performance and serves as the foundation for future management actions. It is a way for a First Nation to adapt its services and activities to meet the changing needs of the community. Having identified and defined the proper strategies for key programs and services and the First Nation as a whole, it may be necessary to revisit or redefine the **mission and vision statements**.

## The Perils of Not Planning

In the absence of strategic management, these misfortunes often overtake organizations:

- **Lack of institutional memory.** Repeated turnover of leadership leads to constantly shifting priorities and agendas. Because the organization is constantly being reinvented, its mission remains vague and little agreement is found on vision, goals, and objectives.
- **Lack of organizational definition.** Confusion exists about the varied responsibilities of chief, council and staff, as well as their relationships to one another and to members.
- **Budget-driven decisions rather than needs driven.** When no clear vision or sense of direction prevails, leaders tend to base decisions on budgetary, rather than strategic considerations.
- **Crisis-driven management.** Many organizations tend to be reactive instead of proactive. They don't have an effective, formal strategy in place for anticipating and preventing crises or undesirable developments, or for coping with them once they occur.
- **Shifting priorities.** These are a natural consequence of the lack of vision, mission and purpose.
- **Membership restlessness or dissatisfaction.** If the First Nation has no common vision of the future and no clearly defined, generally understood mission, goals, and objectives, continual quarrelling will occur over what direction programming should take. Members may not know what to expect in return for the dollars invested.

# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **2.1 Strategy Formulation Process Considerations**

### **2.1.1 Developing a Vision Statement**

A shared vision of the future is required and needs to be clearly defined. The vision must be developed by and reflect the values of key stakeholders. The vision will influence the mission as it provides the focus for developing and revising products and services. The vision is based on current and anticipated needs of stakeholders, trends, and issues in the environment. It must be communicated on a regular basis, as it will drive the mission and the organization. The vision statement is often a single sentence or key words that are truly reflective of the First Nation's desired position.

Before selecting a vision statement, conduct an external environmental analysis to understand the current situation and trends and issues. Survey members. It helps to understand what they are thinking. A First Nation is then able to consider possible opportunities and threats in terms of the vision. An internal analysis will also assist by looking at the organization's capacity with regards to a possible vision statement. A picture has to be developed of what the future for the organization will be at a given point in time. If the picture is unacceptable, a desirable picture must be developed. This picture can be condensed to a vision statement. A draft of the desirable picture can be circulated to members for input prior to Council acceptance. While a Council is elected to provide leadership, the vision statement and the mission are significant factors. Membership should be given an opportunity to participate.

Some of the common mistakes in developing a vision are:

- Using few words which few people fully understand;
- Having a statement which no one can remember;
- Trying to meet the needs of all potential stakeholders in a complex statement which has no real meaning;
- Phrasing not effectively communicating what the organization stands for; and
- Confusing mission and vision. Vision is meant to inspire, be easy to remember, focus attention, and be "top of mind."

### **2.1.2 Developing a Mission Statement**

The mission provides direction to the First Nation and is the foundation for all planning to support the vision. It encourages consensus, provides a standard for allocating resources, and sets the stage to translate purpose into action. A mission must be broad enough to allow for creative growth, be widely understood, distinguish the First Nation from others, and serve as a basis for evaluation and aspiration. The mission usually defines the purpose of the First Nation, recognizes stakeholders, indicates their needs and the products and services offered, and implies the image the First Nation seeks to project.

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The mission is developed with key community stakeholders and is communicated to all stakeholders. It must be reviewed on a regular basis and revised as appropriate. Ensure all stakeholders involved in the development have relevant training and suitable reference material.

The mission is often associated with behaviour and the present, whereas the vision deals with what is possible and desirable. When a vision statement exists, mission statements grow longer. While mission statements vary, basic components for organizations have been who you serve, what you serve, and why you do it. Additional components, such as a focus on concern for public image, employees, sustainability and growth, markets and technology are being built into mission statements.

Missions need to be realistic. Council is responsible to ensure that resources are assigned and available to fulfill the mission.

## **Common mistakes:**

- A statement which no one can understand;
- A statement expressed in overly technical language;
- A statement that does not fully describe (simply) the First Nation's work;
- A statement with too many details; and
- A statement that does not reflect what others see being done in the First Nation.

## **2.1.3 Identification of Issues**

Key issues should be identified and narrowed down to a manageable number. This prevents spreading resources too thinly and allows a First Nation to direct its focus. To ensure issues are addressed in the planning process, review the organization's issues list against the strategies selected. Some First Nations take a short cut and base all their strategy on current hot issues. This can be dangerous. Other business/program areas can be neglected which could result in requiring reactive instead of proactive attention in the future.

## **2.1.4 Values**

A defined set of values will set the stage for establishing the organization's direction. The number and type of values are best established by key stakeholders. An organization's values usually relate to social or public responsibility and standards of service to members. Values should be developed collaboratively with and communicated to all stakeholders. Organizations try to engage staff and volunteers who are able to demonstrate the desired behaviour to support the values. They also develop policies on ethical conduct and conflict of interest to support the values.

# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **2.1.5 Understanding the Current Situation**

### **2.1.5.1 Identification of Opportunities and Threats**

First Nations need to be aware of opportunities and threats in the external environment. This task is often neglected. Opportunities may be missed. It is an advantage to have an external environmental analysis that lists trends and issues beyond the First Nation's direct control and allows an assessment of opportunities and threats.

The analysis focuses on changes in economics, demographics, cultural or sociological patterns, political climate, technology, and competition. There are various methods of analyzing opportunities and threats. One way is to look at the information in terms of impact on vision and mission, performance indicators, business areas and related programs and services.

An external analysis will reveal key opportunities and threats confronting an organization. First Nations can formulate strategies to take advantage of opportunities or avoid or reduce the impact of threats.

### **2.1.5.2 Identification of Weaknesses and Strengths**

A First Nation needs to be aware of strengths and weaknesses in all key business areas. Information on past and present performance is required. This information is obtained through research. Research is required in order to understand the needs of members and other stakeholders. Surveys or focus groups are the most used tools to obtain the necessary information. The gathering process must be frequent and simple. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses as perceived by stakeholders will allow the First Nation to identify problem areas for continuous improvement and build on the strengths. Research information required usually addresses service quality, pricing, value, delivery, requirements for new programs and services, or changes to existing ones. Some organizations use standards or internal-audit checklists in determining specific strengths and weaknesses for each key business/program area.

## **2.1.6 Goals and Critical Success Factors**

First Nations establish goals to support their mission statements and provide direction for the development of strategies. Goals are strategic and long-term and apply to the entire organization. Goals are often selected only after consideration of the strategic gap between the current situation and the willed future, and can be established on the basis of the organization's critical success factors and the willed future. Critical success factors are those elements that must take place for the organization to succeed and meet the performance expected by stakeholders.

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Examples of goals are statements of performance targets relating to stakeholders (e.g. a satisfaction level with the provision of timely and relevant municipal type services, and percentage of members not on a housing waiting list).

## Common mistakes:

- Establishing too many goals;
- Un-measurable goals; and
- Selecting goals that are too easy to achieve and not stretching beyond what is happening.

## 2.1.7 Developing and Selecting Strategies

Strategies include, but are not limited to, developing or abandoning programs and/or services, increasing housing, developing new jobs, resources and independence.

Strategy is normally developed to meet a First Nation's willed future for each of its business/program areas or its mission and goals. Strategy states what is to be achieved, and is usually measurable and understood by community members. The clearer the strategy, the better the focus, coordination and standards for performance. Strategies should always relate to the First Nation's critical success factors/goals. The target or performance level for strategies must be both practical and reflective of resource realities. This will ensure strategies are an objective and relevant motivational device. A time period should be part of a strategy statement and should be linked to rewards in order to improve motivational effect.

Identifying and developing strategy requires creativity and innovation. Most strategies require First Nations to make difficult choices. This means dealing with change and all the related effects. Making sure the right strategy is selected is important. Engaging in scenario planning can reduce the risk. Scenario planning involves taking several options, working them through assumptions, and measuring the impacts and results.

One approach to identifying strategy is to use the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities) information to establish specific strategy. This can be done by:

- Matching strengths with opportunities so the strengths can be used to take advantage of opportunities;
- Matching weaknesses with opportunities so weaknesses can be overcome by taking advantage of opportunities;
- Matching strengths with threats so strengths can be used to avoid threats; and
- Matching weaknesses with threats to minimize weaknesses and avoid threats.

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## Common mistakes:

- Becoming too detailed so only those proposing the strategy understand them;
- Tending to avoid difficult strategy questions such as structural or social changes;
- Trying to get 100 percent buy-in to strategy; and
- Failing to understand or face the fact that organizational structure follows strategy.

Some organizations tend to bog down in planning efforts while others excel. One of the differences has been the use of an outside facilitator. An outside facilitator brings impartiality, focus and the facilitation skills needed to balance differences of opinion.

Strategy formulation through strategic planning forces tough choices. A First Nation cannot do everything or serve everybody. A First Nation needs to focus on important areas and not go in too many directions at once. If a First Nation strengthens the key links between strategy and action, the value of its planning investment will increase and greater results will be achieved.

A single person should never attempt to do strategic planning. A team environment with input from all parts of the organization is essential, because many strategic issues cut across traditional functional and program, partly to tap into the ideas and problem-solving skills of people with different backgrounds, expertise and perspectives, and partly to give a greater number of people an ownership stake in the strategy that emerges and win their wholehearted commitment to implementation. By building a feeling of commitment towards the plan there is an improved chance of success.

Strategic management must be a dynamic process and a First Nation should revisit its strategic plan from time to time. Technological change, government regulation, community expectations, financial positioning and other business environment factors will be key elements in determining the frequency.

For further information on the planning cycle as part of the planning process, review the Planning Cycle section of the “Fiscal Planning Handbook”. This publication is available from the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada or download directly from this website - [http://www.fnfp.ca/intro\\_bo.htm](http://www.fnfp.ca/intro_bo.htm)

It is important not to adopt strategies without thought as to how they will actually be implemented.

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## 3. Implementing Strategic Management

### 3.1 The Business Plan

Strategy implementation requires policy support for the selected strategies, related tactics, objectives, and the necessary resources. First Nations are able to formulate strategy but run into implementation problems because of financial capacity, lack of supportive policy or employee/volunteer motivation problems. Strategy implementation usually requires a supportive culture, appropriate organizational structure, and readjustment of current activities. Strategy implementation is the action stage and is sometimes referred to as “Where the rubber hits the road.” Everyone needs to be committed and understand the role they play in the success of the organization. Commitment will be achieved more easily if everyone participates in developing and understanding the strategy, what they must do to implement the strategy and get the job done.

The best way to support implementation of strategy is to develop a business plan. The business plan is a consolidation of all programs and activities. The business plan can outline the strategies, related assumptions, and activity to support the strategies, performance indicators and financial information such as budgets. The plan also indicates who will do what and when.

For further information on the budgetary cycle as part of the planning process, review the Budgetary Cycle section of the “Fiscal Planning Handbook”. This publication is available from the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada or download it directly from this website - [http://www.fnfp.ca/intro\\_bo.htm](http://www.fnfp.ca/intro_bo.htm)

Business plans should be compatible with the mission, strategies and related performance targets. They are part of an accountability process. They are monitored and results are evaluated regularly. The philosophy applied to the development of business plans should consider quality and continuous improvement.

Business plans are supported by policy. Decision-making processes used to change policy should be linked to strategies and the business plan. Policies to assist with plan implementation should be put in place as soon as possible. The process for allocating human, financial, and other resources to the business plan should be based on strategic priorities. Ranking helps to prevent decisions that are based solely on politics and personalities. Establishing criteria to rank action is helpful and provides valuable direction. See the example in Section D.

Key elements in strategy implementation are *flexibility, training, continuous improvement, policy, decision making, and problem solving*. If your process is easy to follow, and not overly prescriptive, you can be *flexible*. It takes more time and effort to amend a 200-page business plan than one with 24 pages. Keeping it brief can be helpful. Size can impact perception. Some people would rather hold off on new innovative tactics than go through the tedious process of submitting a revision to a long document.

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If *training* requirements necessary to implement the plan have not yet been considered, now is the time to make an assessment and arrange for appropriate training action. Tackling a strategy or supportive action with updated knowledge and skills can increase the chances of the plan being implemented successfully. Implementation should subscribe to the concept of *continuous improvement*. This includes action and related processes to support the key question, “How can we do better?” All major organization decisions and processes should subscribe to this concept.

Innovation is an important key in the problem-solving and decision-making process. It should be encouraged and rewarded. Have you ever been in the situation where you have signed off your plan when an issue or opportunity pops up, and someone says, “We can’t do it, it’s not in the plan”? Problems or opportunities that are not covered in the plan sometimes arise. There is usually sufficient strategic direction in place to understand new situations and the priority they deserve. If a new strategy is required, amend your strategic plan. If it is an additional tactical action, put it through your decision-making process and, if approved, add it to the business plan.

Business plans are not meant to be totally prescriptive in nature. They should be directive. A lot of “how to” creativity and innovation is required and should be encouraged. Innovation should complement current and anticipated future requirements of the First Nation. In other words, anticipation is an important factor. Hold Council, committee and/or staff sessions in which scenarios are explored based on anticipated needs for a particular program or service that requires innovative solutions. For example, would strategic alliances in the area of tourism be a must in the future for First Nations? Any organization serious about successful implementation and innovation should have an expenditure account of at least one-half of one percent set aside for innovations, projects and rewards.

Encourage regular continuous improvement reviews to support quality and provide ongoing training and development of programs based on needs assessment. Training and orientation for key decision-makers should include the organization’s problem-solving and decision-making processes and practices.

## 3.2 Developing Policy to Support Strategy

Most strategy or changes in a First Nation’s strategic direction requires *policies* to be put in place, removed, or amended to make strategy work. The policies will help guide the implementation of strategy. Broadly defined, policy often refers to specific guidelines, methods or procedures, rules and practices which have been formally established to support and align work toward the desired strategy.

### Characteristics of Policy

- Acts as instruments for strategy implementation;
- Sets boundaries, constraints and limits on action;
- Rewards and sanctions behaviour;



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- Indicates expectations for staff;
- Serves as an element of control; and
- Reduces routine decisions and allows for a greater span of control or delegation.

Policies may relate to high-end strategic decisions, control and operating decisions. Organization decisions that may require policy are:

- Offering or abandoning product or service lines;
- Setting pricing levels and member fees;
- Providing program and services for the membership;
- Training and employee evaluation;
- Outsourcing activity or providing for in-house activity;
- Reimbursing Chief and Council expenditures;
- Setting a public policy position; and
- Determining behaviour expectations of Council and/or staff.

## 3.3 Developing Structure to Support Strategy

Changes in strategy will often require alterations in the way in which an organization is structured. For example, a First Nation with many members off reserve may need to have committees or representation in other locations to serve members. If a First Nation decides to add services in economic development, it may require a new committee and staff support to be established.

If a strategy shifts the allocation of resources, the structure will change based on the movement of resources. Often, resources are directed at new opportunities or problems having an impact on the First Nation's performance. For example, if youth enrolments in education courses are down, and if a high level of enrolment is a priority, more resources may go into increasing participation. This may require a shift in funding from some other program budget or new revenues may need to be generated to support the strategy to enhance marketing activities.

The search for an optimal structure to reflect an organization's unique strategy will occur. No structure is suggested. What may be appropriate for one First Nation may not be for others. As a First Nation grows and its strategy becomes complex, so will the structure.

When strategy alters structure, a First Nation can become ineffective unless a new structure becomes fully operational. The downtime in making structural changes needs to be minimized as change can divert focus and lower productivity and programs and service levels to members.

While strategy influences structure, structure influences strategy. Too many levels of management, too many meetings attended by too many people, and too much time being spent solving internal conflicts and achieving very little will result in strategy being developed to change structure. Structural change is difficult and some strategies are avoided because they may require significant changes.

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The type of organizational structure selected will vary based on specific organization strategy, resources and knowledge. As First Nations and their strategies become more focused on quality of services for members, this will also influence the choice of structure. A shift from centralized and divisional structures is occurring, with more organizations moving to process structures. The process structure reflects the way work is performed. Performance indicators are established to reflect accountability and give those responsible more opportunities to lead and manage their processes.

## 4. Strategy Evaluation

### 4.1 Evaluation Basics

Strategy evaluation is the stage of the strategic management process that is often neglected. This stage provides the opportunity to assess how well strategies are doing, and is important in terms of **supporting accountability**. Measuring performance to the goals that were set beforehand allows the assessment of progress. It also identifies areas where corrective action is necessary. Trends upon which the original strategies were developed change and, therefore, evaluations are required on a regular basis to assess impacts. There may be a need for abandonment, adjustment or new strategies.

First Nations need to undertake a formal process to evaluate strategy. Since strategic direction is usually long term, a bad strategy can seriously influence a First Nation's health and can be difficult to change. Therefore, timely and effective evaluations to identify problems or potential problems are critical.

Basic activities for strategy evaluation:

- Examine the underlying basis of a First Nation's strategy.
- Compare expected results with actual results.
- Take corrective actions to ensure that performance conforms to plans.

A framework for strategy evaluation can answer the following questions:

- Have major changes occurred in the First Nation's internal strategic position?
- Are internal strengths still strengths?
- Have we added new internal strengths? If so, what are they?
- Have identified internal weaknesses been dealt with?
- Do we now have other internal weaknesses? If so, what are they?
- Have major changes occurred in the First Nation's external strategic position?
- Are external opportunities still opportunities?
- Are there new external opportunities? If so, what are they?
- Are external threats still threats?
- Are there new external threats? If so, what are they?
- Has the First Nation progressed satisfactorily toward achieving its stated strategies or performance indicators?
- Is the strategy consistent internally and with the external environment?

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

- Is the strategy appropriate in view of available resources?
- Does the strategy have an appropriate time framework?
- Does the strategy involve an acceptable degree of risk?
- Is the strategy workable?

Based on the response to each question, a First Nation may either take corrective action or continue on its present strategic course.

Strategy evaluation is desirable, but it must be effective. The process must be economical and timely. Information cannot be too little or too much. The evaluation should focus and relate to strategy and performance indicators. Restricting excessive control through evaluation will generate more useful information that can be used by those that have the control and influence change. Keeping evaluation simple and useful is the best approach. Complex evaluation usually confuses people and accomplishes little.

Evaluation of the planning process itself is an important requirement. Some key questions to be asked in a planning process review should focus on commitment levels; consistency in decision making; provision of resources; communications; internal co-ordination; reward systems; complexity and formality of the planning process; problems with the planning process; identification of areas of improvement; information sources meeting requirements to make decisions; and training required to support process improvements.

## 4.2 Measurement

Evaluation requires measurement of results. In order to understand results, measurement is necessary. How do we know if we are achieving desired results? The reporting must be linked to strategy implementation and strategic statements.

Accountability in a First Nation requires a record of the organization's activities. Accountability has taken on a new meaning as members and Council seek more value for money. Traditionally, a First Nation produces an annual report that includes statutory financial statements and a general progress report. More reporting for results, however, is required to accommodate new demands of value for money management and accountability. Greater communication on key performance indicators is necessary to meet increased accountability requirements. Traditionally, most Councils focus on financial-related reports, but these alone are not enough to determine the results of a First Nation using a proactive planning process. First Nations are becoming more innovative and are producing other management reports. Most important strategies and business plan "*how to's*" can be measured. Targets must be established. They are usually referred to as key performance indicators that are tools that satisfy accountability and measurement requirements.

Key performance indicators are an important measurement tool and should be established. Greater measurement activity can then occur. Emphasis on indicators will focus more attention on the preparation of the strategic and business plan as First Nations

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

become more involved in measurement to meet community and business accountability needs.

It is important to have the framework for measuring results relate to stakeholder requirements. Different measures are required for each part, level and activities of a First Nation. Measurement attempts to confirm you have achieved what you set out to do. Measurement is based on what you control or are responsible for. Keep it simple or it may take longer to measure something than it actually takes to do it. The measurement must be readily understood, consistently developed and applied, and must be tied to the evaluation and reward system.

A First Nation's Council can be overwhelmed with information and measurement reports. If time is limited and the Council likes to address high-end decisions, a one-page key performance indicator report would meet needs.

When business/program plans and results are used as standards in the performance evaluation of management, a key performance indicator report and **activity plan report** which links to strategy and tactical action are necessary. Activity plans indicate who is doing what and when. They help curtail surprises in the performance evaluation process since expectations are known up front. More and more First Nation managers' performance evaluations are placing greater emphasis on results. While traditional knowledge and skills evaluation is still important, it now shares the spotlight with results. In the next few years, most First Nation managers will have an activity plan listing indicators and desired results as part of the performance evaluation process. When indicators are part of the evaluation process, behaviour is often changed. After all, "Tell me how you intend to measure me, and I will tell you how I intend to behave."

## 4.3. Implementing Strategic Management

If you are just beginning to implement a strategic management process and want to create a partnership environment for the stakeholders, a facilitator is recommended. A facilitator challenges a group, brings the planning team closer together, and strengthens individual commitment and ownership.

Training is also necessary to ensure participants involved in the process are prepared and able to contribute. Preparation needs will vary, but should include an understanding of your First Nation's history and strategic statements, internal and external operating environments, current issues, and how policy is developed. It is important that participants understand planning and the processes used. A First Nation that wishes to maximize its results will expose its key participants to training sessions in strategic thinking, teamwork, creativity, and innovation. Training sessions should take place before the planning process begins. Planning groups with this type of preparation are usually excited and have a greater contribution to the planning process. Rather than reinventing and possibly stumbling along, check out some of the best practices used by non-for-profit organizations in Section D.

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## 5. The Role of Leaders

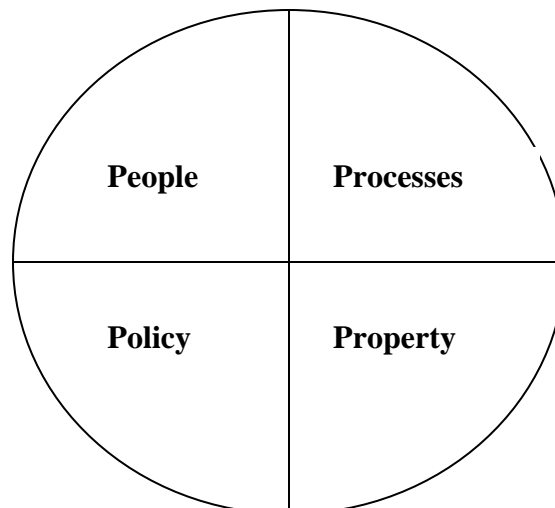
The responsibility for developing and approving strategic direction is that of the Chief and Council. In the case of other First Nations organizations it is the Board or group with governance responsibility. To fulfill this responsibility, Chief and Council are often assisted by staff. This role reverses for the implementation of strategy or development and implementation of a business plan. Staff prepares the plan to support the strategy and the Chief and Council approve the plan and monitor and evaluate progress.

The level of staff assistance provided and Chief and Council involvement in the development of the business plan may vary based on a variety of factors. Two factors are size of the organization and knowledge and skill levels. Staff plays a key supportive and facilitative role in ensuring the application of a strategic management policy and continuity of the direction-setting process. If strategic direction setting is to be proactive, the staff needs to take a leadership role. The senior staff member is best equipped to provide orientation about related planning policy and processes to new members of Council, staff or others with an interest.

## 6. Strategic Management and Accountability

As indicated in the information presented in this section, it can be seen that accountability cannot exist without strategic management. A strategic management model provides accountability. Focusing on accountability alone will not ensure improvements in accountability. If one believes in getting to the root cause of a situation the focus will first be on strategic management. In summary, accountability and strategic management activities are necessary in order to be successful. Activities also need to take into consideration the following key elements: People, Policy, Processes and Property. Strategic management and accountability activities that take into consideration the who, what, where, when and why of these key elements will be successful.

### Accountability & Strategic Management Key Elements for First Nations



# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## D. TOOLS, EXAMPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

The following examples and best practices will help you to compare current efforts and confirm those that are on the right track and provide insight into potential improvements.

### Listing of Tools, Examples and Best Practices

1. Strategic Management Questionnaire
2. Strategic Management Policy Example
3. Strategic Plan Example
4. Accountability Best Practices
5. Strategic Management Best Practices
6. Problem Solving and Decision Making Tool
7. Priority Setting Tool
8. Activity Plans

## 1. Strategic Management Questionnaire

### 1.1 Strategy Formulation

#### 1.1.1 Vision Statement

Has your First Nation articulated a vision for the organization? (10 -if YES 1 -if NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When was it last updated? (10 -if in the last year, 9 -if in the last 2 years, etc.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is the vision statement relevant to the organization's activities and mandate? (10 -for very relevant 1 -not relevant at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

#### 1.1.2 Mission Statement

Has your First Nation developed a mission statement? (10 -if YES 1 -if NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When was it last updated? (10 -if in the last year, 9 -if in the last 2 years, etc.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do you feel that your current mission statement is compatible with the activities being carried on by the organization? (10 -if YES 1 -if NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate participation in developing the mission statement by the:  
(10 -very involved 1 -not involved at all)

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Membership	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Council	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.1.3 Understanding Values

Has your First Nation defined a set of value statements?  
(10 -if YES 1 -if NO)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When were they last updated or discussed formally? (10 -  
if in the last year, 9 -if in the last 2 years, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate the understanding of the First  
Nation's value statements (or values if formal statements  
have not been developed) by the:

Membership	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Council	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.1.4 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SWOT)

Has your First Nation conducted a SWOT analysis? (10 -if  
YES 1 -if NO)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate the competencies of your First  
Nation to conduct a SWOT analysis?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate the priority that your First Nation  
places on the SWOT analysis process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate the importance of the SWOT analysis  
process to the effective operation of your First Nation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is a SWOT analysis employed when dealing with  
significant issues outside of strategic planning? (Score 10  
for regularly - 1 for never)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.1.5 Understanding Issues that Influence the First Nation

How would you rate the understanding of issues that  
influence the First Nation by the:

Membership	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Council	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Management Staff	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Relative to the decision-making process, how would you  
rate your First Nation's attention to issues that influence  
the organization?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.1.6 Establish Long Term Goals

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

Has your First Nation established long term goals? (10 -if YES 1 -if NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is it to establish long-term goals for your First Nation? (10 -very important 1 -not important at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.1.7 Generate Strategies

Rate your First Nation's success/practice of generating strategies to deal with issues. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is it to generate strategies to deal with issues for your First Nation? (10 -very important 1 -not important at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.1.8 Selecting Strategies to Pursue

Does your First Nation select strategies to address issues that confront the organization? (10 -if YES 1 -if NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the importance of selecting strategic solutions to address issues that confront your First Nation. (10 -very important 1 -not important at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.2 Strategy Implementation

### 1.2.1 Policy Support

Does your First Nation maintain a policy manual? (10 -if YES 1 -if NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Are organization policies updated on a regular basis? (10 -if in the last year, 9 -if in the last 2 years, etc.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the relevance of your First Nation's policies to current organization activities? (10 -very relevant 1 -not relevant at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the understanding and support to formal policy development and implementation by the:

Membership 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Council 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Management Staff 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### 1.2.2 Financial Capacity

Rate your First Nation's financial capacity to implement strategies. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the commitment to providing financial resources to support the implementation of strategic initiatives. (10 -very committed 1 -not committed at all) by the:



# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

Membership	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Council	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.2.3 Motivation and Ownership

Rate the motivation to maintain and support the implementation of strategic initiatives by the:

Council	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Management Staff	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the “ownership” taken to the implement strategic initiatives by the:

Membership	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Council	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Management Staff	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.2.4 Council Support

Rate your Council’s commitment and support to the implementation of strategic initiatives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the performance of your Council as it relates to the delivery of support to strategic initiatives. (as opposed to “talking the talk”)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.2.5 Organizational Structure

Rate how appropriate the current structure of your organization is to support the implementation of strategic initiatives. (10 -very appropriate 1 -not appropriate at all)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the effectiveness of your current governance model as it relates to the implementation of strategic initiatives. (10 -very effective model 1 -not effective at all)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.2.6 Open to Change

Rate your First Nation’s readiness for organizational change. (10 -very prepared 1 -not prepared at all)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the willingness to accept and implement change (10 -very open 1 -not open at all) by the:

Membership	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Council	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Management Staff	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## 1.2.7 Human Resources

Rate the human resource capability to manage and implement a change process or new strategic direction by the:

Membership 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Council 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the competencies of your organization staff to plan, manage and implement strategic initiatives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.3 Strategy Evaluation

### 1.3.1 Assessment

Rate your First Nation's current practices as they relate to the ongoing assessment of strategic initiatives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate your First Nation's performance in communicating assessment results to the:

Membership

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Council

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Auditors/Public/Others

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### 1.3.2 Measure Performance

Has your First Nation developed a set of key performance indicators or some other form of accountability to track the success of strategic initiatives? (10 -for defined key performance indicators 1 -no indicators defined)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate your First Nation's ongoing evaluation practices as it relates to strategic initiatives. (10 -doing a great job on a regular basis 1 -no evaluation occurs)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### 1.3.3 Identify Where Corrective Action is Necessary

Rate your First Nation's success at identifying corrective action when strategic initiatives are failing or could be improved.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate your First Nation's response time, after they acknowledge that a strategic initiative is failing.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

### 1.3.4 Assess Impact of Change/Participation

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

Rate your First Nation's effectiveness at evaluating the impact of changes subsequent to initial strategy formulation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the level of participation in strategy evaluation (10 -very involved 1 -not involved at all) by the:

Council

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Committees

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Senior Staff Person

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Management Staff

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

## 1.3.5 Moving Beyond Evaluation

Rate the attention paid to abandoning, adjusting or developing new strategies subsequent to evaluation of the initial strategies by the:

Council

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Committees

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Senior Staff Person

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Management Staff

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the relevance and suitability of the strategic management model to your organization.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate the commitment to Strategic Management as the model of choice for your organization by the:

Council

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Committees

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Senior Staff Person

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Management Staff

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

For those sections with average scores less than 7, consideration should be given to making corrective improvements.

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## 2. Strategic Management Policy Example

### 2.1 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCESS

#### 2.1.1 Policy Objective

To provide direction regarding establishment and maintenance of a proactive strategic management policy and supportive process.

#### 2.1.2 Policy Statement

The Council shall use a strategic management process to establish clear direction for all stakeholders, establish outcomes/ends, identify emerging issues, track situations, and respond in a timely manner, and measure progress and results.

#### 2.1.3 Policy Application

##### 2.1.3.1 Responsibilities

Overall strategic management is the responsibility of the Council. Specific responsibilities would be:

#### Strategy Formulation

##### *Members*

- Provide comments on draft vision, mission, values and goal statements
- Provide Council with information on external environment activity or issues that may affect the community
- Respond to surveys to determine member expectations

##### *Council*

- Develops a vision, mission, and values statements and approves statements after reviewing member input
- Gathers information on external opportunities and threats
- Determines internal strengths and weaknesses
- Understands success factors and sets goals
- Generates and chooses strategies to pursue and sets indicators of measurement
- Council advises members on strategies being pursued

##### *Staff*

- Assists Council in the strategy formulation process through information gathering and analysis

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## Strategy Implementation

### *Members*

- Members review information as to the progress in implementation of strategy.

### *Council*

- Review and provide input to the draft business plan that would include the linking of actions to the strategies
- Prioritizes and allocates resources to execute the formulated strategies through approving the annual business plan indicating who, when, what, how much and how strategies and actions will be measured
- Develops and approves new policy to support the selected strategies and related actions
- Selects the appropriate organizational structure and motivates volunteers and employees
- Monitors staff and volunteer implementation of the business plan
- Inform members of progress

### *Staff*

- Develops annual business plans indicating who, when, what, how much and how the strategies and actions will be measured
- Provides policy development support for the selected strategies and related tactics
- Identifies appropriate organizational structures and motivate employees and assists with motivating volunteers
- Applies resources to plans to execute the formulated strategies
- Alters administrative and operational practices and behaviour as required

## Strategy Evaluation

### *Members*

- Respond to requests for information about program and service effectiveness
- Members review information on how strategy turned out

### *Council*

- Assess how well strategies are doing
- Measures performance to key indicators
- Identifies areas where corrective action is necessary
- Assesses impact of change subsequent to initial strategy formulation, decide about abandonment, adjustment or development of new strategies
- Advises members on how strategy turned out

### *Staff*

- Records, reviews and report progress of strategies
- Measures and reports performance to key indicators
- Identifies areas where corrective action is necessary

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

- Makes recommendations regarding strategy about abandonment, adjustment or development of new strategies

The Chief and the senior staff member are responsible to ensure ongoing implementation of this policy.

## 2.1.3.2 Process Steps

### Strategy Formulation

- Review results from current strategy evaluation
- Gather information to assist with decision making (External Environmental Trends and Issues, Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, identify member expectations, and identify issues to deal with)
- Revisit vision, mission, values and goal statements and adjust if necessary.
- If necessary circulate revisions to membership for comment.
- Approve new statements or revisions if necessary
- For each key business area conduct a situational analysis
- Review prior period key operating indicators and results
- Identify the willed future for each area
- Identify strategies for each area to get to the willed future
- Prioritize the strategies if necessary and set indicators of measurement
- Match the strategies to the Critical Success Factors/goals for linkage
- Approve the strategic plan
- Advise membership on strategic direction for the coming year.

### Strategy Implementation

- For each area review strategies and develop "how to" activities and provide human and financial impact information
- Prepare a business plan based on existing and new activity.
- Develop operating indicators to assist in measuring the level of success for the actions supporting the strategies
- Approve business plan
- Prepare an activity plan summary for core groups and/or areas that assigns specific responsibility, timing and costs

### Strategy Evaluation

- Using activity plans and other reports measure performance to key indicators and assess how well strategies and business plan are doing
- Assess impact of change subsequent to initial strategy formulation
- Identify areas where corrective action is necessary
- Decide about abandonment, adjustment or development of new strategies for action now or during the next strategy formulation period

# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **2.1.3.3 Schedule Application**

- Review results from Strategy Evaluation NOVEMBER
- Develop next period strategic plan NOVEMBER
- Present next period strategic plan to council for approval DECEMBER
- Develop the business plan to support strategic direction JANUARY
- Present the business plan to the Council for approval FEBRUARY
- Advise the membership as to strategic intent and supportive plans APRIL

## **Supportive Reports and Forms**

- Member survey - strategy
- Member survey - evaluation
- External Environment Questionnaire
- SWOT Questionnaire
- Activity Plans (Individual/ Group)
- Strategy and Tactical Link
- Strategy Evaluation Form
- Key Performance Indicator Report
- Reports to Council
- Issues Identification and Progress Report

# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **3. Strategic Plan Example**

The following Draft Strategic Plan was developed by the Ucluelet First Nation's council and senior management staff. This group of leaders recognized that it was critical for Ucluelet First Nation to establish desired direction that would help provide focus to their efforts.

A facilitator worked with the planning team. Two key sessions were held in which most of the work was completed. An interval of two months between each of the sessions allowed participants to reflect on the progress and get input from others. An election was also held between the sessions. Reference to the plan was made during the election. After the election there were some changes on Council. The old Council supported the direction the Strategic Plan was going. Session two involved the new Council who also supported the direction and provided further elaboration on strategy and consensus on the attached plan was achieved.

The information in the plan is not information provided by one or two individuals it is based on the contribution of all members of the planning team. A strong level of commitment and participation prevailed during the sessions. The ownership of the plan currently lies with the planning team. They have been encouraged to share the final draft plan with the community and request input before final approval.

## **Ucluelet First Nation Strategic Plan**

### **A. Introduction**

The Chief, Council and senior staff have been engaged in enhancing the First Nation's strategic management activities. The expected outcomes of this effort are to:

- Establish clear direction with desired outcomes/ends and measure progress and results;
- Identify emerging issues, track situations and respond in a timely manner;
- Encourage innovative and creative activity;
- Make the change process easier;
- Align individual effort with the First Nation's effort and improve communications;
- Develop a greater understanding and commitment so that a co-operative approach is generated when dealing with problems and opportunities; and
- Ensure decision-makers are better informed, make better decisions and use resources effectively.



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*The planning team has met on two occasions to engage in strategy formulation sessions. During the sessions an information gathering process was undertaken. A professional facilitator was used to assist with the information gathering. Information was gathered through:*

- An External Environmental Scan that looked at political, social, economic, information/technology, First Nation trends and issues;
- A listing of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats;
- A listing of Member Expectations; and
- A listing of Key Issues.

*Key elements of this information are listed in Appendix A. This information was used to identify a Vision for Ucluelet First Nation in 2010. The Vision paints a picture of what Ucluelet First Nation will look like once strategies have been successfully implemented and it has achieved full potential. This Vision reflects the aspirations and values of members. It provides direction for the future. This Strategic Plan supports the future Vision.*

## **B. Strategic Statements**

Ucluelet First Nation has a Vision for its community and members and the following statement captures its Vision.

### *VISION STATEMENT*

***Ucluelet First Nation will, with the active participation of our members, strengthen our spirit of community and improve the quality of life and opportunities for our members.***

The Vision Statement captured in a short form could be expressed as:  
“Active Members Strengthen Our Community”

Given this Vision Statement the following Mission Statement to support the Vision was developed.

### *MISSION STATEMENT*

***Ucluelet First Nation strives to provide its members with responsible and relevant quality government, administration, health, education, recreation, cultural, economic development and municipal facilities and services to support members in their quest for a quality life style within a community that takes pride in its traditions and explores future opportunities.***

In order to achieve the vision and mission, the following goals were identified as critical if Ucluelet First Nation is to achieve its vision and mission. These are the things that must go right if we are to succeed. Other goals need to be pursued; the following are to be given top priority.

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## GOALS

1. *Have a strategic, business and community plan in place to deal with direction and all infrastructure, business, and land management issues.*
2. *Arrange for funding to support implementation of the plans.*
3. *Understand education needs and support access opportunities to meet local needs to allow development to occur in accordance with the plans (construction, maintenance, administration, and economic development).*
4. *Establish a destination resort that would provide employment opportunities for members and generate income for community services.*
5. *Encourage increased activity to provide education on traditions and cultural values with elders and youth.*
6. *Encourage members to be self-sufficient and get away from a dependence mentality.*
7. *Develop facilities for elders, recreation, culture, daycare, education and administration.*

In pursuing the vision, mission and goals, Council and Staff would apply the following values:

## VALUES

- *Responsibility for self, family and community*
- *Honesty, trust and integrity*
- *Pride in our land and traditions*
- *Reliability and efficiency*
- *Respect, dignity, empathy*
- *Loyalty and commitment*
- *Elders and the future of our youth*
- *Knowledge and communications*
- *Accountability*

## C. Strategies

The following strategies have been developed to close the gap between the current situation and the vision to ensure the goals are achieved.

1. Have a strategic, business and community plan in place to deal with direction and all infrastructure, business and land management issues.
  - 1.1 *Develop a strategic plan, obtain community input and formally approve the plan.*
  - 1.2 *Update community plan to reflect new strategic initiatives.*
  - 1.3 *Develop a business plan to support the strategic plan.*

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2. Arrange for funding to support implementation of the plans.

*2.1 Identify relevant funding sources, obtain expertise to pursue sources with creativity.*

3. Understand education needs and support access opportunities to meet local needs to allow development to occur in accordance with the plans (construction, maintenance, administration, and economic development).

*3.1 Obtain information on training and development needs based on the strategic plan. Match requirements to potential learning sources and encourage member participation.*

4. Establish a destination resort that would provide employment opportunities for members and generate income for community services.

*4.1 Authorize the Board to acquire the necessary project management expertise to update the feasibility study, set development and operating terms and conditions and seek joint venture partners for funding and management.*

5. Encourage increased activity to provide education on traditions and cultural values with elders and youth.

*5.1 Identify and promote culture and traditions and establish a community-based initiative to use with elders to bridge the gap with youth.*

6. Encourage members to be self-sufficient and get away from a dependence mentality.

*6.1 Identify practices used by other First Nations to develop support networks that have been successful and adapt to Ucluelet First Nation.*

7. Develop facilities for elders, recreation, culture, daycare, education and administration.

*7.1 In conjunction with the development of the community plan, look at what facilities are needed and could be developed.*

## D. Conclusion

The Ucluelet First Nation has opportunities to further develop and meet the needs of its members. This strategic plan identifies priorities for the years 2000-2003. The opportunities in the plan will require changes as the strategic statements and strategies suggest.

The success of the strategic plan will depend on the management and sequencing of the implementation process, and the ongoing evaluation strategy. Progress towards the vision

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has already been made. Continued efforts and commitment of members, Chief and Council and staff will guide the community through the changes necessary for the Ucluelet First Nation to fulfill its vision and mission.

## Appendix A - Key Information from the Sessions

*The first step was to look at the external and internal environment for Ucluelet First Nation.*

### External Environment

A review of the trends and issues in the areas of political, social, economic and technology identified the following opportunities and threats.

#### Opportunities

- Business opportunities are available in the tourism sector.
- Increase education and employment of members.
- Treaty settlement will allow for a reinvestment in the Ucluelet First Nation.
- Reduce government involvement.
- Improve communications through local radio.
- Rehabilitate the local environment.
- Acquire land for housing and facilities to serve members.
- Technological improvements will allow for greater education involvement.
- Retraining for older workers is available.

#### Threats

- People are living longer and an adequate supply of appropriate housing is not available.
- Health education and services are not increasing at a rate necessary to meet the demands of an ageing population.
- People have more time available for recreation and time is spent with technology toys instead of traditional family or outdoor activities.
- There is uncertainty with government funding and intervention.
- The community is behind in the use of technology.
- The media seems to report only problems, not the good things that are happening. The First Nation's perspective is not represented.
- Governments are moving to a user pay society and are being pressured to have taxation apply to First Nations.
- There is some uncertainty in treaty negotiations.

### Internal Environment

A review of the key activities the Council is responsible for or is involved in (housing, health, recreation, education, business and economic development, employment,

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environment, services – water, security, governance and administration and spiritual and cultural) resulted in the identification of the following strengths and weaknesses.

## Strengths

- The community provides good services such as fire, ambulance, water and septic system.
- The community is situated in an area that is surrounded by natural beauty.
- Proposals for funding are often approved.
- Activities to strengthen education activity are increasing.
- Opportunities to strengthen economic development are being sought.
- There is creative utilization of lands for housing.
- Activities to strengthen health education and services are increasing.
- Recreation and cultural activities are available.

## Weaknesses

- Culture is not being promoted and embraced. Language skills are being lost. Teachings and spiritual practices are not adequately being passed on to youth.
- There is a lack of land and money to meet housing needs.
- There is a lack of training and investment to take advantage of economic opportunities.
- There is limited participation in area economic growth.
- There is a lack of facilities for recreation and cultural activity.
- There is a lack of good paying jobs for training members in the community.
- Members are not paying their debts to the Ucluelet First Nation.
- There is a lack of a strategic and community plan and supportive policies.
- There is a lack of infrastructure such as a store, post office, gas station, restaurant and ferry service to Ucluelet.
- There is a dependency by some members on the system/others.
- Financial management knowledge is weak.
- Communications are not always clear.
- There is some lack of respect among members for each other resulting in factions.
- Funding levels are not adequate to move the community ahead as fast as it would like.

Issues that exist in the community were identified.

## Issues

- Are we out of touch with members?
- How can we improve communications?
- How can we improve accountability?
- What is needed to have a caring attitude for everyone in the community, not just the family?
- How can we reduce the use of alcohol and drugs?
- What needs to be done to increase commitment and motivation?

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- How can member resentment and jealousy towards Council and Staff be addressed?
- Will longer terms on council improve continuity and decision making?
- How can we stop neglecting the environment and clean up the village and beaches?
- How can we develop support for staff and leadership?
- What do we have to do to apply the traditional values of elders?
- How do we get meaningful paying jobs?
- How do we get a multi-facility?
- How do we get housing to meet our real needs?
- How do we develop the skills to get the job done?

Possible expectations of members were identified.

## Member Expectations

- Leadership
- Employment opportunities
- Housing
- Education and health services
- Cultural activities
- Basic municipal services
- Understand what is going on

Given the External and Internal Environment, Issues and Member Expectations, the next step was to identify a Vision for Ucluelet First Nation in 2010. The vision paints a picture of what Ucluelet First Nation will look like once strategies have been successfully implemented and we have achieved full potential. This vision reflects the aspirations and values of members. It provides direction for the future.

## Description of the Vision

- Ucluelet is a healthy, drug and alcohol free community with some health services delivered in the community.
- People take responsibility for themselves and for their children.
- There is a resurgence of our language, culture and traditions. This is becoming the foundation of our success, as there is more sharing, elder involvement and transfer of culture to the next generations.
- There is pride in education and endless possibilities for education. Individuals are achieving higher levels of education. Education is supported by more leader/parent support and recognition for educational endeavours.
- A multi-purpose facility brings the community together as it provides a variety of services such as a day care, elders and cultural centre, education centre, First Nation administration offices and recreation.
- A well trained council and staff maintains a good relationship with members and other stakeholders through effective communications.

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- Housing availability and styles are adequate to meet the needs for urban and on-reserve members.
- Profitable member operated/owned businesses are increasing and providing meaningful employment opportunities. Jobs are available and meet community needs.
- Local services are available to meet community needs (post office, store and gas station).
- A strategic and community plan is in place. Members understand the plans and are committed to their fulfilment.
- FN people provide policing and other municipal type services meet quality standards.

Based on the above description, the following Vision Statement has been developed for discussion.

**Ucluelet First Nation will, with the active participation of our members, strengthen our spirit of community and improve the quality of life and opportunities for our members.**

# Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations

## 4. Accountability Best Practices

### 4.1 Accountability to Members

Pass a By-Law or resolution that would require the Council to maintain a system of accountability to its Members. The system should provide for:

- a) Transparency and openness in the Council's decision making process including drafting and maintaining at all times a written conflict of interest policy available to Members which will, at a minimum, provide that:
  - a. An elected official or employee of the Council will not benefit from that position, beyond the agreed upon compensation, as a result of the position they hold; and
  - b. Where and elected official or employee of the Council has a personal interest in the outcome of any decision to be made by the Council, and that interest gives rise to a conflict of interest, that conflict and the extend of the interest will be disclosed to the council and the Council will determine whether that individual will take part in that decision.
  
- b) Disclosure of the Council's administrative procedures and policies by making the following documents readily available to all Members upon request and at no charge beyond the reasonable cost of reproducing the documents:
  - a. This Agreement, including, any Schedule, any Notice of Budget Adjustment or Amending Agreement;
  - b. The Fiscal Plan, the Management Development Plan, if any, and any amendments to such plans;
  - c. The Audit, including the auditor's report;
  - d. Completed evaluations of the /core Funded Services and Non-Core Programs, if any, funded, in whole or in part, pursuant to this Agreement;
  - e. Written standards and any other policies or procedures of the Council relating to the provision of any Core Funded Services and Non-Core Programs to its Members; and
  - f. An annual report of the activities of the Council during each Fiscal Year;
  
- c) Redress for Members by ensuring that policies and procedures are in place to address disputes related to Core Funded Services and Non-Core Programs, which policies and procedures shall, at a minimum, provide for:
  - a. Clearly defined and impartial dispute resolution mechanisms for initiating, presenting and resolving disputes including an opportunity for all parties to be heard and represented;
  - b. Reasonable time frames within which disputes must be initiated and resolved;
  - c. An appeal process; and
  - d. Appropriate remedies based upon the outcome of the dispute resolutions



# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **4.2 Structure and Responsibility**

The organizational components and structure of the First Nation should be documented and such documentation should include the use of an organizational chart. The chart should show the lines of authority for the structure. Other information should indicate authorities, meeting requirements, financial information flow, and other related operational specifications.

## **4.3 Notification of Meetings**

A schedule of standing committee meetings is prepared and circulated to members as soon as possible. The schedule indicates what group is meeting, when, and what purpose the group serves. Notice of regular meetings of Council are also to be posted along with the agenda. This provides members of the community with information on which group is responsible for addressing what issue and when.

## **4.4 Minutes**

Minutes of Council and standing committee meetings are made available in the Band Office for members to review. The minutes can also be used to develop content for a community newsletter or reports.

## **4.5 Roles and Responsibilities**

In order to clarify roles and responsibilities, job descriptions are developed for the Chief, Councillors and staff. Terms of reference for standing committees are also developed. Individuals and groups are able to review their roles and responsibilities which specify their authority and accountability.

## **4.6 Orientation**

Understanding the organization, related roles and responsibilities and issues is necessary to contribute to effective decision making. An orientation session is provided for new staff, committee members and elected councillors. Individuals that have similar levels of knowledge are able to improve the focus of discussion and decisions being made.

## **4.7 Performance Evaluations**

Each employee receives a performance evaluation at least once per year. The evaluation includes a review and discussion of planned activity and actual activity. Based on specified roles and responsibilities, a review of potential improvements to support improved performance occurs. The evaluation allows individuals to be accountable for performance and identify opportunities for improvement.

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## **4.8 Codes of Conduct**

Codes of conduct set boundaries and expectations for ethical practices. Codes can be used for committees and staff. Codes often provide for an in-depth section on conflict of interest and list specific rules. A signature is often required from individuals indicating they subscribe to the code. An orientation of all codes is required for individuals affected by the codes. Codes place individuals in an accountable position and support the need to carry out roles and responsibilities with integrity, competence and due diligence.

## **4.9 Accounting Policy and Procedures**

To support accountability and effective and efficient processing, policies and procedures are developed for the following areas:

- Deposits
- Cheque signing
- Accounts payable and cheque processing
- Bank reconciliations
- Purchasing
- Tendering and quotations
- Advances
- Over expenditures
- Investments
- Insurance

## **4.10 Budgets**

Budgets covering all operations are prepared at least four months prior to the end of the fiscal year. Individuals or groups provide sufficient budget back up to justify planned activity and demonstrate a link to the strategic plan. Individuals or groups responsible for budgets take ownership for what is being proposed and follow up to measure actual results, note variances and, where necessary, take corrective actions.

## **4.11 Financial Reporting**

A policy is used to indicate what financial reports are developed and distributed to whom and when. The policy can also indicate what is done with the financial reports. Individuals or groups receiving the financial reports review results for which they are accountable and are informed as to progress.

## **4.12 Audits and Reports**

Audits are conducted and results reviewed by key stakeholders. Audited statements are posted in the office and presented to the community along with an annual report from the leadership describing what was planned and what happened. The audited financial statements on their own present only part of the story. The annual report presents the

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other half of the story. These reports provide the community with information from those accountable to the community.

## 4.13 Meeting Council Accountability Responsibilities

Council bears the responsibility for public trust and accountability. This is no easy task. It requires vigilance, not only to avoid calamities but also to achieve greater effectiveness. Ten ways Council can carry out its responsibility for accountability are:

1. By clearly determining the vision, mission and strategies for their mandate.
2. By carefully selecting the Chief Staff Officer. This is one of the most important tasks and requires significant attention.
3. By ensuring effective goal setting, strategic planning, budgets and program monitoring. This requires policy and supportive processes.
4. By ensuring effective feed back and evaluation regarding programs and services. Using performance indicators will allow the Council to hold itself and the CSO and program managers accountable.
5. By regularly reviewing the performance and compensation of the Chief Staff Officer. A formal policy and process should be in place.
6. By overseeing the effective use of the resources of the First Nation. This requires financial and other reporting policy and a professional audit.
7. By serving as a court of last resort for member's complaints. This requires policy and a supportive process.
8. By insisting on the transparency of the organization and having a communication plan to relevant stakeholders.
9. By organizing governance activities to be efficient and effective.
10. By establishing a Council and organizational culture of openness and candour. This requires self-assessment. Issues are discussed, differences expressed and solutions sought. Policy on terms, performance and other accountability factors are also discussed.

# **Strategic Management and Accountability for First Nations**

## **5. Strategic Management Best Practices**

### **5.1 Selecting the Issues**

A First Nation is often faced with a multitude of issues demanding the attention of decision-makers. The issues may represent threats or opportunities. Understanding what should be considered priority is important. An organization that becomes too aggressive and tries to tackle many issues ends up spreading resources too thinly. Results can sometimes be disappointing. Many successful leaders believe it is better to do a few things well.

Deciding what to do can be a difficult process. However it doesn't have to be that way. Certainly having an External Environmental Analysis and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) report can make it easier to narrow down issues. Yet it is often necessary to narrow the issues down to 5 or 10.

One democratic way to select key issues is to have all issues identified by the decision-makers listed on flip charts. The list may include anywhere from 10 to 30 issues. Provide each decision-maker with five sticky coloured dots and have them place their dots (votes) beside the issues they think are important and should be considered a priority by the organization. The top five issues to pursue are those with the most dot votes.

This method allows all issues to be listed and addressed. It helps individuals understand that others may or not be seeing the importance of the issues in the same way.

### **5.2 Using the Mission**

Effective governance requires an effective mission. In turbulent times a council without a clear sense of an organization's purpose is likely to focus on short-term issues and overreact to events rather than examining and altering the processes that led to the events, and contributed to organizational drift and disarray. An effective council demonstrates a relentless, laser-like focus on the mission, which in turn focuses the First Nation on action. An effective council defines specific strategies necessary to attain crucial goals relevant to the mission.

Unfortunately, mission statements can be vague and intentionally ambiguous so as to be useless because they provide no foundation for direction.

A simple exercise can demonstrate the extent to which your council is mission-focused. During a retreat or at the beginning of a council meeting, request, without prior notice, that each council member write the First Nation's mission in his or her own words on a blank sheet of paper. Collect and review the responses to see if all the Council members are saying the same thing. If so, it's consistent with the formal mission. If the responses are consistent there are no problems. If they are not, then the differences have to be reconciled.

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## **5.3 Linking Operations to Strategy**

The process of linking operational initiatives to an organization's strategy is key to the success of any First Nation. By establishing clear links, the council and chief staff officer can help to ensure the success of the First Nation.

The council serves to provide strategic direction and initiative to the organization. The responsibility for developing the operational support for the strategy falls, in most cases, to the chief staff officer.

In developing a business/program plan, managers should look to link each operational initiative with one or more elements of the strategic plan. Any operational function that cannot be clearly tied to a strategic goal should be carefully reviewed and modified – or abandoned – as necessary.

By establishing – and maintaining – these linkages, the First Nation is more likely to see success in achieving its stated goals. When council and staff understand how their individual involvement supports a larger purpose overall performance increases. The link is often provided by the use of performance indicators.

## **5.4 External Environmental Analysis**

It is critical that First Nations understand the environment in which they operate. Knowing the trends and issues will assist in the decision making process. Each year, prior to the planning session, collect relevant information and prepare an External Environmental Analysis (EEA) report. Some First Nations do not do this because they assume everyone knows the issues and trends. This is generally not the case as individuals have different interests and retention capabilities.

In collecting data, break the information down into key influence areas such as:

- Economy
- Social
- Political
- Technology
- Others

For each area it is possible to develop and ask several key questions. A technology example question is – “What technologies will impact on the way we relate to our members?” The intent is to look at current and future impacts, real and imagined.

Having this information will make conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) exercise easier. A trend may present an opportunity or reveal other possibilities. Having the External Environmental Analysis and a SWOT enables a

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more integrative approach. This enhances the quality of information for the decision making process.

## **5.5 Quality EEA Input**

A broad reach in collecting data for an EEA will improve the quality of information. It is necessary to assign responsibility for data gathering to a staff or council member, depending on the governance and organization arrangements.

The individual (councillor or staff) develops a draft EEA based on research. The draft is then circulated to at least 30 members, depending on the size of the First Nations. The members selected should represent different youth, elders, etc.

The members then review the draft to see if it is consistent with their understanding of the situation. Welcome their input. Members feel good about being asked to be part of a team preparing strategic information that will contribute to decision making for their First Nation. This work is not time consuming and is considered a high-end activity which builds community involvement and ownership.

The input will result in a more comprehensive report and clearer understanding of the external environment for the First Nation.

## **5.6 Sharing EEA Reports With Members**

Information gathered for the First Nation in many cases is also relevant for the member. Share the final report with the membership. Members that review the report will gain a greater appreciation for the challenges and opportunities council and staff must deal with. Having this information may result in a member contributing an innovative solution.

## **5.7 SWOT Questionnaire**

In every First Nation there is a variety of opinions on the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. One way to see how your thinking compares to the council and staff is to have them complete a SWOT Organization Questionnaire. For each of the four areas (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), identify 10 core questions. For each question provide a rating such as:

- 1= disagree strongly
- 2= disagree moderately
- 3= undecided
- 4= agree moderately
- 5= agree strongly

In one column the individual provides his/her rating. The total of the individual ratings is used to determine the group rating. Individuals can see how their thinking compares to

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others and can discuss the differences. It is not unusual to find major variances in thinking. This exercise will help build on common understanding and resolve differences.

Some of the statements/questions that can be used in the Strengths area are:

- The organization financial resources are adequate.
- Members regard us well.
- The administrative and program units operate effectively.

## 5.8 SWOT Matrix

Most organizations undertake a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) exercise. The frequency of the exercise usually varies and relates to the organizations planning cycle. While SWOT results are helpful in the decision making process many organizations do not effectively link SWOT results to strategic decisions, and neglect to consider all implications.

In order to ensure all aspects are being considered, take the SWOT exercise beyond a straight listing and start matching to see what new strategies are possible. The tool used to do the matching is a TOWS Matrix. The matrix is composed of nine cells with the upper left cell always left blank. The steps involved in constructing the matrix are:

- List the organization's key external opportunities and external threats in cells on the left, internal strengths, internal weaknesses in cells on the upper cells.
- Match internal strengths with external opportunities and record the resultant SO strategies in the appropriate cell of the matrix.
- Match internal weaknesses with external opportunities and record the resultant WO strategies.
- Match internal strengths with external threats and record the resultant ST strategies.
- Match internal weaknesses with external threats and record the resultant WT strategies.

The purpose of the matching is to generate feasible alternative strategies, not to select or determine which strategies are best. Not all strategies will be selected for implementation.

## 5.9 Keeping the Strategic Plan Current

Strategic plans that are reviewed every three or five years will not support a First Nation's in its bid to stay relevant and meet its members' needs. External and internal factors are constantly changing and impacting the way we need to do business. Strategic plans must be frequently updated at least annually. This proactive approach to planning will allow an organization to be more responsive.

An External Environment Analysis, SWOT and issues short list will feed the plan so it can roll on an annual basis. The strategic plan review should begin at least six months before the business or tactical plan approval takes place. The strategic plan should focus

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on direction and strategic thinking. The strategy to feed the business/program plan should be decided on at least three months prior to business plan approval. A major hard-core vision and mission exercise should occur every three years to renew leadership commitment, confirm direction and seek member input.

A policy to engage in strategic planning and timing should be in place, along with supportive procedures. Council and their agendas should ensure the policy is up front and centre at all times.

## **5.10 Off-the-Shelf Strategic Plans**

Considerable time and effort goes into developing a strategic plan document. While participants build commitment to direction and their ownership, it can quickly be destroyed. Lack of action and feedback on the strategic plan work can result in destroying organization momentum.

The strategic plan and its implementation are critical. Strategies should be linked to action such as business/program plans, budgets, committee or staff activity plans. Strategies also need to be linked to performance expectations such as performance indicators and to a process for accountability and reporting.

One good way to do this is to use a linkage chart or mapping process. This requires a listing of strategies in one column. In other columns, list all the action plan items or reference numbers, budgets, people responsible and performance indicators. This information should be the organization's road map and a regular feature on the board and staff agendas.

An analysis of the chart or map may reveal a strategy with no specific action, an area of the First Nation's business with no strategy, or a strategy consuming most of the First Nation's resources.

Organizations tend to develop strategy around hot issues. This can result in some business/program areas being neglected. This type of situation will be revealed on the chart or map. Noting exceptions can allow for corrective action to occur.

## **5.11 Keeping Track of Progress**

The development of an effective strategic plan is an important step for any First Nation, the challenge facing the First Nation's council and staff is to implement monitoring and control mechanisms to ensure that the plan's overall goals are attained.

One of the key features of an effective monitoring and control process is the inclusion of measurable goals and milestones – each relating to the strategic plan – in the operational structure of the organization.



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The use of measurable and objective goals can – and should – be incorporated into the full range of operational areas. Wherever possible, meeting these goals should be included as part of the responsibility of each program area within the organization.

By providing clear measurement targets – with specific timelines – council and managers can respond quickly to challenges that may arise. The absence of such measurement tools places managers and council very much in the dark.

The measurement tools are often referred to as performance indicators. A monthly or quarterly staff report to the Council should list the status of the key indicators. The use of this one page list of performance indicators will prove to be valuable in monitoring and control.

## 5.12 Evaluating Strategy

Organizations should undertake a formal process to evaluate strategy. Since strategic direction is usually long term, a bad strategy can seriously influence a First Nation's health and can be difficult to change. Therefore, timely and effective evaluations to identify problems or potential problems are critical.

A framework for strategy evaluation can answer the following questions:

- Have major changes occurred in the organization's internal strategic position?
- Are internal strengths still strengths?
- Have we added new internal strengths? If so, what are they?
- Have identified internal weaknesses been dealt with?
- Do we now have other internal weaknesses? If so, what are they?
- Have major changes occurred in the organization's external strategic position?
- Are our external opportunities still opportunities?
- Are there new external opportunities? If so, what are they?
- Are our external threats still threats?
- Are there new external threats? If so, what are they?
- Has the organization progressed satisfactorily towards achieving its stated strategies or performance indicators?
- Is the strategy consistent internally and with the external environment?
- Is the strategy appropriate in view of available resources?
- Does the strategy have an appropriate time framework?
- Does the strategy involve an acceptable degree of risk?
- Is the strategy workable?

Based on the response to each question, an organization may either take corrective action or continue on its present strategic course.

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## 5.13 Strategy and Performance Indicators

Performance indicators are measures that relate to the process of establishing and implementing strategic direction. Indicators relate to results. Linking strategy to performance indicators provides for a high level of accountability. Indicators are also monitored to identify opportunities for improvement. Performance indicators can be developed and categorized based on a First Nation's programs and business activity or strategic priorities.

When developing or implementing an indicator it is critical to ensure it is relevant. One way to do that is to ask these questions:

- Is this performance a critical indicator of success from a stakeholder point of view?
- Can it be measured without the need to establish complex and costly measuring systems?
- Does it speak to the value-added contribution of the organization?
- Is it a reliable way of measuring something?
- Do others in the same business recognize the measurement as valid?

By asking these questions, a First Nation can be prevented from using a wrong indicator and ensure what is being measured is of value to those most affected by work the measurement represents. This also prevents the use of too many indicators or the use of indicators that are too complex or lend themselves to accountability.

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## 6. Problem Solving and Decision Making Tool

### 1. Define the problem

Ask yourself and others, the following questions:

- a. What can you *see* that causes you to think there's a problem?
- b. Where is it happening?
- c. How is it happening?
- d. When is it happening?
- e. With whom is it happening?
- f. Why is it happening?
- g. Write down a five-sentence description of the problem in terms of "The following should be happening, but isn't ..." or "The following is happening and should be: ..." As much as possible, be specific in your description, including what is happening, where, how, with whom and why.

*Defining complex problems:*

- a. If the problem still seems overwhelming, break it down by repeating steps a-f until you have descriptions of several related problems.

*Verifying your understanding of the problems:*

- a. It helps a great deal to verify your problem analysis for conferring with a peer or someone else.

*Prioritize the problems:*

- a. If you discover that you are looking at several related problems, then prioritize which ones you should address first.
- b. Note the difference between "important" and "urgent" problems. Often, what we consider to be important problems to consider are really just urgent problems. Important problems deserve more attention. For example, if you're continually answering "urgent" phone calls, then you've probably got a more "important" problem and that's to design a system that screens and prioritizes your phone calls.

*Understand your role in the problem:*

- a. Your role in the problem can greatly influence how you perceive the role of others. For example, if you're very stressed out, it'll probably look like others are, too, or, you may resort too quickly to blaming and reprimanding others.

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Or, you are feeling very guilty about your role in the problem, you may ignore the accountabilities of others.

## 2. Look at potential causes for the problem

- a. It's amazing how much you don't know about what you don't know. Therefore, in this phase, it's critical to get input from other people who notice the problem and who are affected by it.
- b. It's often useful to collect input from other individuals one at a time (at least at first). Otherwise, people tend to be inhibited about offering their impressions of the real causes of problems.
- c. Write down what your opinions and what you've heard from others.
- d. Regarding what you think might be performance problems associated with an employee, it's often useful to seek advice from a peer or your supervisor in order to verify your impression of the problem.
- e. Write down a description of the cause of the problem and in terms of what is happening, where, when, how, with whom and why.

## 3. Identify alternatives for approaches to resolve the problem

- a. At this point, it's useful to keep others involved (unless you're facing a personal and/or employee performance problem). Brainstorm for solutions to the problem. Very simply put, brainstorming is collecting as many ideas as possible, and then screening them to find the best idea. It's critical when collecting the ideas to not pass any judgment on the ideas -- just write them down as you hear them.

## 4. Select an approach to resolve the problem

When selecting the best approach, consider:

- a. Which approach is the most likely to solve the problem for the long term?
- b. Which approach is the most realistic to accomplish for now? Do you have the resources? Are they affordable? Do you have enough time to implement the approach?
- c. What is the extent of risk associated with each alternative?

## 5. Plan the implementation of the best alternative (this is your action plan)

- a. Carefully consider "What will the situation look like when the problem is solved?"
- b. What steps should be taken to implement the best alternative to solving the problem? What systems or processes should be changed in your organization,

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for example, a new policy or procedure? Don't resort to solutions where someone is "just going to try harder".

- c. How will you know if the steps are being followed or not? (these are your indicators of the success of your plan)
- d. What resources will you need in terms of people, money and facilities?
- e. How much time will you need to implement the solution? Write a schedule that includes the start and stop times, and when you expect to see certain indicators of success.
- f. Who will primarily be responsible for ensuring implementation of the plan?
- g. Write down the answers to the above questions and consider this as your action plan.
- h. Communicate the plan to those who will be involved in implementing it and, at least, to your immediate supervisor.

## 6. Monitor implementation of the plan

Monitor the indicators of success:

- a. Are you seeing what you would expect from the indicators?
- b. Will the plan be done according to schedule?
- c. If the plan is not being followed as expected, then consider: Was the plan realistic? Are there sufficient resources to accomplish the plan on schedule? Should more priority be placed on various aspects of the plan? Should the plan be changed?

## 7. Verify if the problem has been resolved or not

One of the best ways to verify if a problem has been solved or not is to resume normal operations in the organization. Still, you should consider:

- a. What changes should be made to avoid this type of problem in the future? Consider changes to policies and procedures, training, etc.
- b. Lastly, consider "What did you learn from this problem solving?" Consider new knowledge, understanding and/or skills.
- c. Consider writing a brief memo that highlights the success of the problem solving effort, and what you learned as a result. Share it with your supervisor, peers and subordinates.

Adapted from the "Basic Guidelines to Problem Solving and Decision Making" provided by Carter McNamara on the Free Management Library Website.

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## 7. Priority Setting Tool

Sometimes an organization is faced with several options and limited resources. A tough decision must be made as to what is implemented, cancelled or put off to another time period. You can use this **priority setting tool** to categorize criteria as "high", "medium", or "low".

<b>Criteria Priority</b>		
<b>Low Priority (1 - 2 points)</b>	<b>Medium Priority (3 - 4 points)</b>	<b>High Priority (5 - 6 points)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not a critical support to member service.</li> <li>• It benefits only a limited number of staff or members.</li> <li>• It is primarily promotional in nature.</li> <li>• Demand has, or will, decline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is required to ensure general management and control of resources and services.</li> <li>• It will reduce costs in future years.</li> <li>• It is required to inform as a result of accountability.</li> <li>• It is required to assist with planning, coordination or modification of programs and services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is required by legislation / action for government / a contractual obligation.</li> <li>• It will result in a net revenue contribution or cost reduction and is consistent with organizational direction.</li> <li>• It is identified by survey as a priority and will increase staff or member satisfaction.</li> <li>• It is required for safety and protection of people and property.</li> </ul>

For example, you could use the above questions as criteria in a **decision-making chart** such as this. **Rank** each of the criteria as:

- high (i.e., assign 5 or 6 points)
- medium (i.e., assign 3 or 4 points)
- low (i.e., assign 1 or 2 points)

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Solution #1</b>	<b>Solution #2</b>	<b>Solution #3</b>
Organizational / financial strategies			
Member perceived satisfaction / value			
Net revenue increase			
Long-term gain			
Short-term implementation			
Feasibility (time, staff, money)			
Risk			
<b>Total Points</b>			

The **highest score** may represent the best solution. With this kind of information in hand, you are in a better position to choose the solution that appears to benefit the First Nation the most.

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## 8. Activity Plans

Activity plans are linked to strategic and business plans and used by individuals and groups to identify intent and monitor progress towards designated performance targets. The use of activity plans support strategic management and accountability. Basic content includes:

Name of the Report Name of the Organization Reporting Period Dates  Name of Group or Individual Responsible					
Activity Description	Coordinate With	Planned Start Date	Planned Finish Date	Performance Measure	Comments
<u>New Strategic Initiatives</u> Strategies - details Supportive Action - details					
<u>Ongoing Strategic Initiatives</u> Strategies - details Supportive Action - details					

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<sup>i</sup> Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), Restructuring the Relationship, Volume 2, Part 1,  
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