

Identifying Community Needs and Resources

As you start to design a program or project, it is important to determine the resources and assets that exist in your community and for your organization. A SWOT Analysis is an effective framework for identifying your **strengths** and **weaknesses**, and examining your **opportunities** and **threats**. The SWOT Analysis will help you focus your activities into areas where you are strong and where the greatest opportunities lie.

This tool should help you focus on your strengths, minimize weaknesses, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available.

Process Worksheet 2.1 – SWOT Analysis Grid

Strengths:

Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Don't be modest - be realistic. If you have difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!

Weaknesses:

Consider these from an internal and external basis - do other people seem to perceive weaknesses that you do not see? Are other organizations having more success than you? It is best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

Opportunities:

Useful opportunities can come from such things as:

- Changes in technology on both a broad and narrow scale
- Changes in government policy related to your field
- Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc.
- Local Events

A useful approach to thinking about opportunities is to look at your strengths and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at your weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating them.

Threats:

These are outside forces that could serve to challenge your work. Challenges that you may need to work around.

Identify Unmet Needs in the Community:

Take an inventory of your community. What groups of people exist within the area you are hoping to serve? Think about demographic information (income levels, age, education levels), people who are civically active, children, people who are already

engaged in arts and cultural programming, etc. Then, brainstorm their needs that are not being met by other organizations. Ultimately, you will probably have to do some type of survey to confirm your beliefs, but this exercise will get you moving toward serving the community.

Process Worksheet 2.2 – Identifying Unmet Community Needs