**Purpose**

This tool is intended to help NGOs, community leadership, and implementation partners identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to programs. When completed collaboratively with a planning committee, this tool can help implementers recognize valuable partnerships while strengthening relationships between the NGO and the community. The completed worksheet may be shared externally and should be reviewed annually.

**How to use this tool**
A SWOT[[1]](#footnote-1) analysis can be completed together as a large group or in small breakout groups. Since this activity is done jointly with a planning committee, it is often helpful to assign a facilitator who can frame the exercise around the committee’s previously defined common goals. A SWOT analysis may be best completed with flipcharts or on a large whiteboard so that all participants can visualize the results of the exercise. If conducted in breakout groups first, a worksheet with quadrants can be provided to each group.

Generally, a SWOT analysis is split into two sessions: internal strengths and weaknesses followed by external threats and opportunities. While the internal factors demonstrate the capacity or lack thereof among the implementing partners, the external factors represent conditions outside the NGO’s or community’s control.

**Session I: Strengths and weaknesses** (*internal factors within an organization*):

* Human resources: staff, volunteers, board members, target population
* Physical resources: your location, building, vehicles, equipment
* Finances: grants, funding agencies, other sources of income
* Activities and processes: programs you run, systems you employ
* Past experiences: building blocks for learning and success, your reputation in the community

*(continued next page)*

The facilitator should begin with strengths, allowing for participants to highlight their work in a positive way. The facilitator may ask what ecological, social, political, and economic assets exist within the individuals or subgroups participating in implementation. The planning committee then discusses which subgroups are best equipped to handle certain situations or activities.

Next, the facilitator can lead the discussion about weaknesses, asking what ecological, social, political, and economic capacities are lacking in the group that would limit goal achievement. Identifying weaknesses allows participants to be self-reflective and recognize gaps in their capacities. This creates deeper bonds between participants and can be a positive experience as it leads to a discussion of potential partnerships to fill these gaps.

**Session II: Opportunities and threats** (*external factors stemming from community or societal forces*):

* Future trends in your field or the culture
* The economy: local, national, or international
* Funding sources: foundations, donors, legislatures
* Demographics: changes in the age, race, gender, and culture of those you serve or in your area
* Physical environment: Is your building in a growing part of town? Is your climate changing?
* Other actors: partner organizations, competing interests
* Legislation: Do new federal requirements make your job harder or easier?
* Local, national, or international events such as elections or natural disasters
* Local culture, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs

The facilitator may choose to begin this session with threats so that the entire exercise ends with the inspirational opportunities piece. To assess threats, the facilitator may ask what external ecological, social, political, and economic challenges may threaten programming. It is helpful to remind participants in this session that these threats are outside the control of the community and should not be demoralizing.

*(continued next page)*

Lastly, the facilitator can lead the discussion about opportunities by asking what external ecological, social, political, and economic factors can be used to enhance programming and foster new developments. This section of a SWOT analysis should spark innovation and enable participants to begin preliminary activity planning.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Helpful** to achieving the objective | **Harmful** to achieving the objective |
|  | **STRENGTHS** | **WEAKNESSES** |
| **Internal Origin** *(Attributes of the organization)* |  |  |
|  | **OPPORTUNITIES** | **THREATS** |
| **External Origin***(Attributes of the environment)* |  |  |

1. SWOT—which stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats—is a widely used tool for businesses and NGOs. While this tool has been modified to fit the conservation NGO context, the material
and graphic are adapted from University of Kansas. Center for Community Health and Development. Community tool box.
<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/swot-analysis/main>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)