

Beyond Corporate Planning: Organisational Development in Non-Government Community Services¹

Introduction

Over past years, non-government community services in Australia have been increasingly encouraged to adopt corporate/strategic planning models, as the basis of their organisational development and accountability.

Should models designed for the corporate sector be uncritically applied to the non-government² community sector?

- Will the anticipated outcomes of these models be the same in both sectors?
- How efficient and effective are these models for planning in community services?
- Do such models provide a viable basis for accountability in the community services?
- Could alternative approaches better aid the efficient and effective functioning of community services?

This paper seeks to document some concerns about the uncritical application of corporate planning models to the community services industry. It proposes an alternative planning and development model for non-government community organisations. The proposed model is driven by **values analysis**, rather than the **profit analysis** common to the corporate sector.

The proposed model does **not** aim to prescribe **which** particular values an organisation should hold – only to ensure that values-related questions are addressed, and that the key components of a values-driven organisation are included during the process of development.

Comparing the Sectors

In order to unquestioningly transfer any model from one situation to another and expect similar outcomes, two situations must be demonstratively similar. Thus, from the outset, it is important to explore the common ground and differences between the community and corporate sectors.

¹ © Copyright Suzi Quixley 1993, 1995, 1997 & 2010. Particular thanks to participants in the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland *Values Trainer Training* program, 8 – 12 November 2010. The group generated ideas for improving the model, which led to the development of a separate *Structure* side to the pyramid and more formal recognition of the importance of organisational context in developing a community relevant vision.

² Throughout this handout, the terms *community sector* and *community services* are used to denote **non-government** community services.

Few would question the importance of sound planning, good practice and appropriate accountability to both sectors. Each frequently use the money of others to achieve their goals. Therefore revenue sources (shareholders or funding bodies) have the right to demand that organisations can demonstrate that they spent this income to achieve the agreed outcomes. Further, community organisations owe some level of accountability to many other stakeholders.

Both sectors, too, require non-productive infrastructure. This infrastructure is concerned with maintaining the life of the organisation itself, and ensuring its efficiency and effectiveness. Functions such as administration, people management and provision of a public face for the organisation, stand apart from the productive outcomes of organisations in both the corporate and community sectors.

Here, the central similarities between the two sectors end.

Singularity of Purpose

Ultimately, the corporate sector is concerned with a single goal - making money. Whilst a variety of strategies might be employed toward this end, all key stakeholders have an ultimate interest in the profitability of the enterprise. Thus, exploration of values is unlikely to be a relevant, or efficient, priority in the planning/development process. Any values exploration that does occur is most likely to be focused on clarifying or promoting this overall purpose. (Often, this can best be achieved through development of simple, catchy statements, such as *Mission Statements*, designed to inspire workers and management to commit to a common outcome and market the corporation.)

The community sector does not have a singular goal - nor even a group of commonly-agreed goals. Key stakeholders such as funding bodies, service users, workers, management and *the community*, generally have varying ideas about the purpose of the sector and/or individual services. Many cannot clearly articulate their notion of the ultimate purpose of the sector. As in the corporate sector, many possible strategic approaches toward achieving purpose exist. This adds further complexity to the sector. Individual stakeholders, too, frequently change their view of the purpose of the sector. A prime example is government, a key stakeholder, which has substantially changed its view on the role of the sector over time. Individuals (such as workers or community members) often change their priorities as a result of experience and a developing analysis of the place of the sector in society.

This ongoing change may not be a negative attribute of the sector. Arguably, the community sector is in a constant process of growth, with an increasing capacity to contribute to the development of society as a whole. However, this prognosis does not assist with the problem at hand - that a pre-existing clarity of purpose does not exist within the sector, to provide a focus for the planning process.

Consumer Power

The power of the service user in the corporate and community sectors is very different. The consumer *makes or breaks* a corporate enterprise. If an enterprise

fails to provide goods or services which meet the demands of consumers, it fails. Generally, more than one enterprise will seek to market a popular product, leading to competition. The profit motive ensures that a high priority is placed on consumer satisfaction.

Statutory requirements and funding constraints generally result in minimal choice of service for consumers in the community sector. The sector largely deals with those who are most vulnerable in society and/or those at a vulnerable point in their life. Thus, the power dynamic is reversed in the community sector - services have the power to *make or break* the people with whom they work. Demand for services is not a means of monitoring organisational effectiveness in the community services.

Infrastructural Resourcing

The corporate sector has clearly identified the importance of non-productive infrastructure to long term success. Personnel involved in establishing and maintaining organisational efficiency and effectiveness of enterprises are highly valued. Managers and Board members are highly paid. Enterprises dedicate ongoing resources to undertake long term planning, monitor the organisation, identify gaps and respond to needs. Many have the capacity to *buy in* specialist resources when needed. Even where this is not possible, a wealth of government and industry funded resources exist to support private business.

How different from most services in the community sector. Even where senior management exists, and managers are adequately paid, a great deal of infrastructural responsibility is generally placed on unpaid personnel, such as Boards or Management Committees. The levels of competency of these unpaid *managers* relies on a range of factors - not least, finding people willing to take on management responsibility and the associated legal liabilities! Funding is generally short term and guidelines vary constantly. Increasingly, funds are limited to outcome-defined projects, thus potentially increasing the role of unpaid *managers*. These factors rule out the comprehensive long term planning which is generally an option in the corporate sector.

Given the range of stakeholders, and changing external expectations, lines of responsibility, power, ownership and accountability are constantly under review in the community sector. When circumstances change, there is no guarantee that those with the expertise to modify plans will be available to undertake this (often ongoing and time-consuming) task. Very few resources of direct relevance to the sector exist to support community services development. The sector, therefore, is generally required to deal with gaps or crises, using existing expertise. Many agencies are left to *sink or swim*.

Social Power

The ideological driving force within western cultures is economic rationalism. The corporate sector is seen as the fundamental *building block* of society. As such, it is able to establish its plans within a relatively stable context, with a sense of an assured future. This allows comprehensive, long term planning.

The community sector, as a whole, is very much more vulnerable. Its future is far from assured. The parameters on its development are constantly under review. Plans are therefore developed in a short term, highly unstable, context. Far from being viewed as a social *building block*, it is often treated as a *necessary evil*, leading to a low level of predictability as to its long term purpose, or outcome expectations (even in the short term).

In recent years, governments have increasingly funded large, mega-NGO's at the expense of smaller community-based organisations. The rationale has been that big organisations can provide outcomes more efficiently than small organisations³. Peter Shergold (former head of the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet; now from the Centre for Social Impact) commented on the relative social power of small NGO's, compared with small business:

It's ironic that what is generally portrayed as a weakness in the nonprofit arena is routinely presented as a strength in the private sector. In fact there are more than 2 million businesses in Australia of which 84% employ less than 5 staff and 25% have turnover of less than \$50,000 annually. This world of micro-business and small enterprise is extolled by governments of all political persuasions as the entrepreneurial lifeblood of the nation⁴.

Expectations of Workers

The majority of workers in the corporate sector operate within clearly defined parameters. These are generally defined in terms of technical competence, or *skills*. Most are, at least in terms of the formal definitions of their duties, expected to exercise a minimal level and range of judgment-related competencies. (This is not to ignore the reality that many workers, particularly those in jobs traditionally filled by women, exercise a range of human skills, which have been largely taken for granted and generally not economically rewarded. Nor is it to discount the reality that lack of valuing of *judgment skills* has been to the detriment of the corporate sector, particularly at a management level.)

Every moment of the day, every worker in the community sector is required to make judgments with the potential to have a major impact upon service users. Every worker is constantly working in a manner which is profoundly influenced by their own conscious or unconscious beliefs and values. Having a framework in which to locate these judgments, including a sound knowledge base and articulated and resolved values, is extremely important. The capacity to draw on clear personal and organisational values is central to being a competent worker. Without this starting point, NGO's are doomed to constantly changing, and often incongruous, goals and practices.

³ For some alternate arguments see: Quixley, Suzi (2010) *What is the Strength that Sets Us Apart?:* Presentation notes from the SACOSS Conference focused on the value of small NGO's at <http://www.sacoss.org.au/events/conference2010/presentations/SuziQ.pdf>.

⁴ Shergold P (2010) *Opinion Piece - Bigger not always better in non-profit world*, The Centre for Social Impact, at <http://www.csi.edu.au/latest-csi-news/opinion-piece-bigger-not-always-better-in-non-profit-world/>

In summary, whilst both the community and corporate sectors have a common responsibility to be accountable to their stakeholders, and a common need for non-productive infrastructure to ensure that accountability, there are enormous differences between the sectors. The imperative for organisations in the community sector to articulate their values, is central to organisational efficiency and effectiveness, and the ethical viability of the sector.

Clearly, planning and development models designed for the corporate sector cannot be uncritically applied to the community sector.

Contextual Requirements of Corporate/Strategic Planning

In the corporate sector, *strategic planning* is not an isolated activity. The central purpose of any enterprise is generally to generate profit. Whilst stakeholders might operate from different motivations, all are required to contribute to the profitability of the business. Tensions between different motivations are managed through mechanisms which have been progressively developed and refined throughout the history of capitalism. Because of the limited level of judgment required of the majority of workers in the corporate sector, most do not need a comprehensive knowledge of organisational values, in order to be able to play *their role* effectively.

In a corporate context, strategic planning depends on the pre-existence of complex mechanisms and procedures. New enterprises can readily access support in development of their internal processes through the many transferable models and approaches they can choose from, and well-resourced forums for discussion and development (e.g. research facilities, business councils and employers associations). Medium to large businesses generally have the means to purchase expert input (e.g. consultants or accountants) where necessary.

Strategic planning in the private sector is predicated on the assumption that a shared vision and sophisticated processes already exist within the organisation. More recent models of corporate development (particularly those emerging from Harvard) are increasingly recognising the importance of including cultural/ethical development in strategic planning and related processes. This is not yet a feature of corporate planning within Australian industry, nor of the models being promoted within the community sector.

Strategic planning, as largely implemented in business in Australia, is **one small part of an ongoing, highly-resourced, interdependent process** of organisational development. It cannot therefore be implemented at an annual planning day in an under-resourced NGO, and be expected to provide a viable basis for organisational development.

A Model for Community Services Development

What do community sector organisations need in order to be able to function effectively and efficiently?

This paper proposes that **mutual, organisation-wide understanding** is required of the following:

- **Vision** - the long term purpose/direction of the service.
- **Values** - the motivation for this direction.
- **Ethics** - the principles of practice resulting from these values.
- **Structure** - the management approach congruent with this vision.
- **Policy** - mechanisms enabling work toward this vision.
- **Plans** - the steps needed to achieve this vision.

This paper argues that having a mutually understood and accepted Values & Vision is a fundamental prerequisite for undertaking any of the remaining functions in an efficient and effective manner. Further, the usefulness of these Values & Vision relies on the extent to which they are informed by the organisation's context.

Step 1 – Articulating Organisational Values

Without common, or compatible, motivations amongst key stakeholders, organisations within the corporate sector could not function. This applies even in a setting where the workers are required to exercise limited judgment. **The need for a mutual understanding of the *why?* questions is even more critical in the community sector**, for at least 2 key reasons:

1. The personal motivation of active participants in the organisation (particularly workers and management) is central to organisational functioning. Financial rewards are non-existent (in the case of Board members and other volunteers), or lower than they would be for similar functions in the corporate sector (in the case of staff). Limited income, career path, job security and working conditions characterise employment in the non-government community sector. Therefore, personal values and beliefs are a key motivating force for (paid and unpaid) workers and management.
2. The impact of these active participants' personal motivations has a constant effect on service users. This applies at all levels, from policy to planning to practice. Workers are required to exercise judgment from moment to moment in their work. The decisions of management have a profound impact on these judgments.

Much of the conflict within community organisations ultimately derives from the lack of mutually understood and accepted values. If active participants are to make judgments constantly, and if these judgments are to have some level of consistency, then a *culture of understanding* must be developed within an agency. Without sufficient articulated common ground across all workers and management, agencies in the community sector are at serious risk of ongoing lack of direction and conflict.

Each person acts out of hundreds or thousands of beliefs and values every day. These are dynamic, with some changing frequently; some changing more gradually over time. How then, could a group of people find and order stable, working, common ground? Developing an articulated organisational values base (or, even better, an *ideology* - i.e. an ordered package of congruent values) offers one solution to this dilemma.

The process of developing organisational values could involve staff and management looking at:

- Values about human nature. *Do we perceive people as fundamentally 'good' or 'bad'? Do humans have fundamental rights and responsibilities? (... and do these vary according to age or other factors?) What are the implications of our answers for ... our model of service? the parameters we place on service users? how we work together?*
- Values about the relationship between individual humans and wider groups in society. *What should be the role of the family? of community? of government? How well does society work for those using agency services? What is the source of the problems faced by service users?*
- Values about their picture of a better society. *What sort of systems or processes would be needed for this society to function more effectively? How could we contribute at an agency level toward achieving this social vision?*
- Values about legitimate strategies to use in achieving this social vision. *Which social change approaches are compatible with our values? Do we see a role for individual change in this process? How can these be integrated into our purpose as an agency?*

Undergoing this type of thinking can assist in identifying the motivations of active participants in the organisation ... the people who will be acting on their individual values constantly. It should aid in identifying common ground and differences across key players. Is there sufficient common ground for these people to work together? Is the common ground sufficiently clear to enable articulation of coherent organisational values?

Development of an organisational values base could be represented as the foundation of a pyramid:

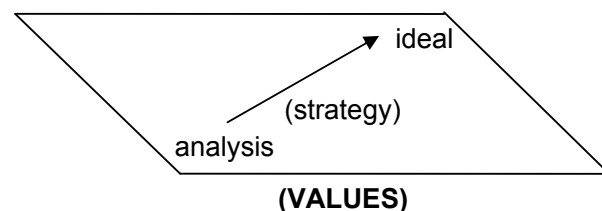


Diagram 1: Components of Organisational Values Base

Once clear organisational values are in place, it becomes much easier to:

- Develop structures, plans, policies, procedures and practices, which are compatible with these values.
- Make quick judgments, particularly at a daily practice level, because there is a reference point for staff decisions.

Step 2 – Articulating an Organisational Vision

Development of a statement of Vision (i.e. purpose and direction) is critical to further organisational development. *Unless you know where you're going, it's unlikely you'll get there!* **Generally, an organisational Vision Statement looks at determining viable outcomes over the relatively long term e.g. 10 - 20 years.** It provides an ongoing focus for organisational activities. In light of the unstable nature of funding in the community sector, a wider vision beyond current service provision can help keep the agency *on track* and provide parameters for organisational funding decisions. This is important to ensuring that the agency achieves its **own** purpose, rather than effectively becoming an arm of government and providing government services *on the cheap*.

Strategic planning models frequently promote *mission statements* (or equivalent short statements) as the means to clarify organisational vision. Short statements are inadequate to meet the needs of the community sector. The relationship between services and the context in which they are located, cannot be summarised in a manner that is useful and clear, in a couple of sentences⁵. Insufficient recognition of the social and individual complexity impacting on service provision can lead to a meaningless statement – so generalised that it provides little directional guidance. (This does not preclude the development of short statements **in addition to** the full vision for practical purposes such as inclusion in the constitution, on a website/pamphlet, or to meet stakeholder demands.)

In addition, in community services agencies, the **means** (values) by which the vision is achieved is often as central to the purpose of organisations as the **end** (vision).

The Vision of an organisation then, derives directly from its Values. It is at the apex of the pyramid. It is the point toward which all future development is targeted:

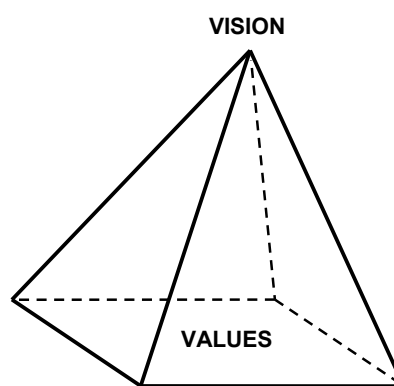


Diagram 2: Organisational Vision

The relevance and usefulness of these Values & Vision is measured by the extent to which this is informed by the organisational context – culture, service users, family and community. The organisation's *community* may be defined by geography, or a *community of interest* (e.g. its target group).

⁵ A particular danger, here, is the use of jargon ... where everyone thinks they share a common vision because they are using the same words, but they each interpret these key words in different ways.

It is important that an organisation's Vision is, in fact, *visionary*! The process of Vision development invariably involves some tension between *pragmatism* and *fantasy*. Whilst it should reflect an ideal, it should not be ridiculous! Taking realistic account of the organisation's context can play a key role in ensuring that the Vision finds a balance between *pragmatism* and *fantasy*, and focuses on those areas which are most important to the perceived usefulness of the service. (Looking to the next 10 years, rather than the undefined future, is also useful in creating a manageable Vision Statement.)

A organisation which is informed and mediated by its context, is most likely to be perceived as useful and relevant:

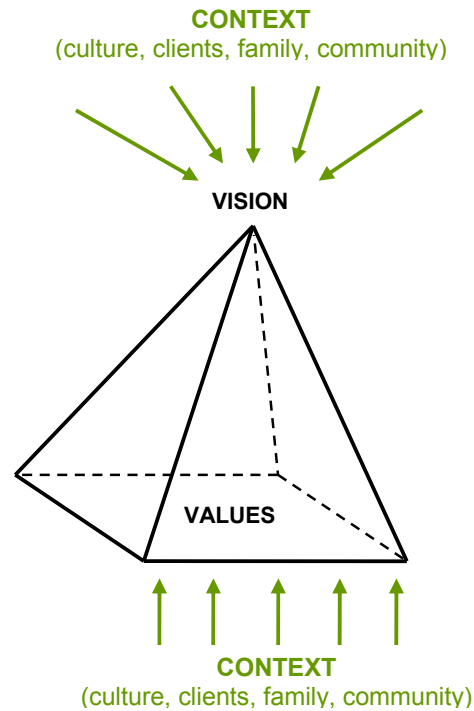


Diagram 3: A Locally-Relevant Organisational Framework

Involvement by community stakeholders and responsiveness to local culture (in the widest sense) is also critical if the organisation holds values about working alongside stakeholders or being responsive to stakeholder rights, needs and/or preferences. Further, it can play a central role in building a base of community support for the organisation – an important investment in your future.

Assessing the Need for Documented Ethics

The role of values development in generating a *culture of understanding* within an organisation cannot be underestimated. Developing clear Values usually includes testing the application of possible values to practical situations. (Typical questions asked might be - *Would this behaviour be compatible with our Values & Vision? What are the strategies that could be applied here which are consistent with our Values? Are they equally acceptable? If not, how can we further clarify our Values?*) **Ethics and standards drive organisational culture.**

Development of documented **ethics** (principles guiding behaviour) can clarify application of organisational Values & Vision for everyone involved. Ethical statements which outline service model, service approaches and/or reasonable expectations of the agency can be of valuable for services users and staff alike. They can contribute to development of a culture of mutual responsibility, reflective practice and ongoing learning.

On the other hand, development of **standards** (e.g. determining acceptable and unacceptable behaviours) is accompanied by risk. A *rules and regulations* approach can contribute to development of an *adult/child* culture within an organisation. (This could apply equally to *rules* for workers or service users.) Further, the existence of an excessive written documentation can result in loss of focus on the central/guiding tenets of the organisation (the Values & Vision), leading to symptomatic, rather than causal, discussions. An alternative to documentation about specific behaviours, is to focus on how stakeholders like to be treated themselves. A charter of this kind can contribute to generating a responsible, inclusive, organisational culture.

The overriding questions which need to be asked in the process of deciding how far to go in articulating organisational ethics and standards are:

1. *Is any (pre)existing ethics/standards documentation consistent with our Values & Vision?* (Formally discard any incongruent documentation ... immediately!)
2. *Do our values, vision and consistent existing documentation provide sufficient guidance to acceptable behaviour within the service?*

It may very well be the case that the answer to the latter question is *yes*. In this case, the development of further documentation might be counterproductive. A more constructive approach might be to commit to a process of ongoing ethical exploration and development. Alternately, a regular process of engaging with the organisation's Values & Vision often fulfils this function in a more focused way.

The ethics/standards side of the pyramid could be represented thus:

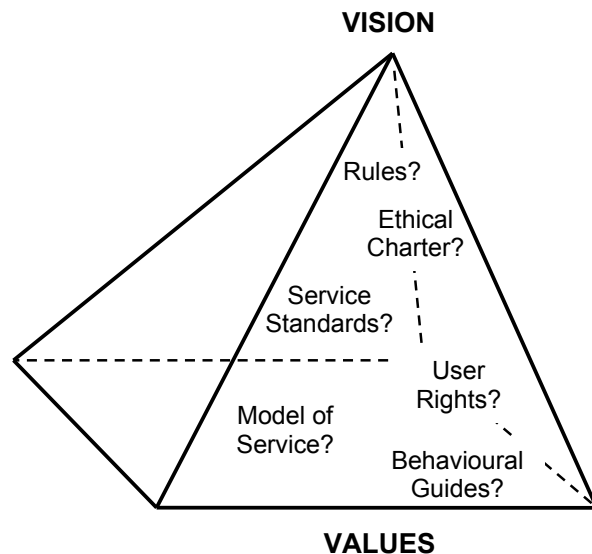


Diagram 4: The Ethical Face of the Model

This diagram could also have included *Participation Principles*, *Practice Model* and *Practice Framework*. It may be useful to avoid the term *Code of Ethics*, given its association with professional self interest and social perceptions that such codes do not affect worker behaviour.

Developing a Structural Framework

This stage of development is concerned with establishing an organisational structure which is congruent with its Values & Vision. This is not a mutually-exclusive activity – the organisation's structure particularly impinges on 2 other sides of the pyramid - organisational culture/ethics and policies/procedures.

Key questions when establishing this side of the pyramid are:

- **Participation & Power** - *How much power should service users, families, community and staff have in the running of the organisation? If directly participating in management structures, how will the organisation avoid tokenistic involvement? What other tools will be used to enable stakeholders to influence the organisation?*
- **Management Style** - *Should the management style be directive? supportive? collaborative? collective? What is the relative importance of 'leading' and 'supporting' for Management Committee/Board and manager(s)?*
- **Constitution** - *Is the organisation's constitution consistent with its declared Values & Vision? Are the decision-making processes proposed consistent with the organisation's strategy for social maintenance/change? Are the requirements of the Act consistent with the organisation's Values & Vision? If there is tension, how can the organisation both meet the Act's requirements and its own priorities?*
- **Lines of Responsibility** - *Is the organisation's structure clear? Is it compatible with the Values & Vision? Is the division of labour clearly articulated? How is decision making authority divided between Management Committee/Board and manager(s)?*

The structure/management side of the pyramid could be represented thus:

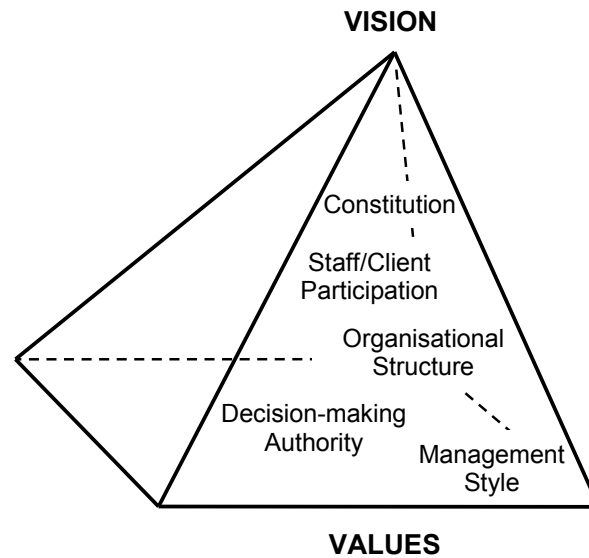


Diagram 5: The Structural Face of the Model

Developing a Policy Framework

This stage of development is concerned with ensuring adequate policies and procedures compatible with the Values & Vision. Often, development of such processes is necessary to meet legal requirements (e.g. Incorporation Act, industrial agreements). Beyond these, it is important to make decisions about priorities, given the limited infrastructural resources of many NGO's. It may be that sufficient guidance exists, and limited policies and procedures are required, particularly for small community-based organisations.

Some of the procedural areas which might need to be clarified are:

- **Policies** - *Are areas requiring policy development indicated by the organisation's Values & Vision? What gaps exist? Are current policies consistent with the Values & Vision? What about policies related to industrial entitlements? or social justice priorities?*
- **Staffing** - *What competencies are required of staff? What is the place of values in employment policies and procedures? Do existing employment-related policies and procedures fit with the organisation's Values & Vision? Do Duty Statements reflect these? What about staff training? supervision? support?*
- **Financial and Administrative Systems** - *Again, are they consistent? adequate? Do they meet legal requirements? Are risk mitigation policies consistent with the Values & Vision?*
- **Quality** – *How do we measure the efficiency and effectiveness of our services? Is there value in seeking external quality assurance? Is this a priority, compared with other ways we could allocate our limited resources?*

Development of a procedural framework is an important prerequisite to effective planning. Without this *backdrop*, spontaneous and often inconsistent

decisions can be made about respective rights and responsibilities of key players, during the planning process.

Here's one way to represent the policy/procedures stage of organisational development:

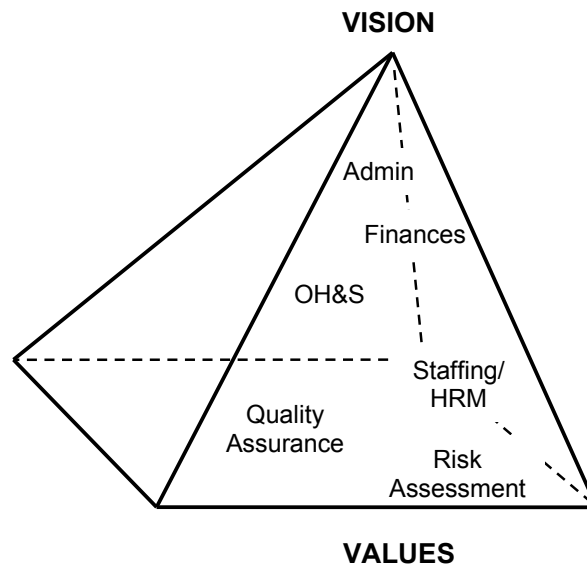


Diagram 6: The Policy Face of the Model

These are the support systems for starting to move toward achieving the organisation's Vision. Critical to effective work in this phase of development, is the constant appraisal of assumptions - *Is the way we've always done it consistent with our Values & Vision? What is the relationship between organisational conclusions and the systems embodied in law and tradition in the corporate sector (often the source of assumptions about 'good practice')? Are further mechanisms needed to meet our organisational priorities?*

Undertaking Organisational Planning

A number of key differences between the corporate and community sectors were identified earlier in this paper. Factors such as an inability to reliably undertake long/medium term concrete planning, limited access to infrastructural/flexible funding, frequently unpaid/paying management, and changing stakeholders/interests, means that the process of planning requires different foci in the community sector. This is why the term *strategic planning* has not been used in this section.

Given the enormous uncertainty and vulnerability of the community sector ...

- ... to undertake planning in the absence of clear Values & Vision (i.e. clear parameters) is neither efficient nor effective.
- ... to undertake detailed planning, beyond the period for which funding guidelines/guarantees exist, is generally not efficient or effective.
- ... to be committed to a comprehensive strategic plan, beyond the *predictable funding future*, may even be damaging or counterproductive.

The continual focus during this phase should be on planning with an eye on *the big picture* - that is, the Values & Vision of the organisation. Essentially, the process concentrates on two phases:

Phase 1: Making the Vision more concrete and explicable.

Phase 2: Planning direction in the context of the *predictable funding future*.

Becoming involved with concrete planning beyond these limits is liable to be demoralising for participants, and make the organisation vulnerable when external priorities (or, even, jargon!) change. Making plans that absorb the majority of staff time in an organisation, fails to acknowledge the time taken in infrastructural tasks (particularly, where paid management doesn't exist), and does not allow for unexpected demands (where these are frequently an organisational feature).

Step 1: Develop Aims

Aims⁶ are simply a restatement of the organisation's Vision. Reframing of a Vision Statement into explicit Aims is a useful way to *double check* the viability of the Vision. Aims ensure that the Vision is expressed in concrete terms. They can make the Vision more definable and manageable. Framing the Vision in this format provides a version of the same data in a style suited to funding submissions, constitutions or other formal documents.

Generally, it is viable for community organisations to have between 3 and 10 Aims. Any more are liable to be cumbersome. The lower the number of Aims, the easier to use them as a constant reference point (*the big picture*) throughout all processes of planning and review, both formal and informal; macro and *day to day*. On the other hand, it is important to ensure that the Aims adequately and comprehensively encompass the full breadth of the organisation's Vision.

Aims are the parameters within which all activities (planned or otherwise) of the organisation should fall. Activities undertaken which do not fit under one or more Aims, should be immediately reviewed, and checked against the organisation's values. This is particularly relevant where new funding options emerge ... it is very easy to get *carried away* with new possibilities which may not be congruent with the values and purpose of the organisation. If this occurs, you run a risk of being *pseudo government on the cheap*, rather than a community organisation with its own identity, meaning and purpose.

⁶ Different people use the language of *Aims*, *Objectives* and *Goals* in different ways. There is no *right* and *wrong* about this! If you use the term *Goals* to describe the *big picture*, then insert this word here. Similarly, you might prefer the word *Objectives* to describe the *big picture* and *Aims* to describe short term plans. This is fine! Throughout this article, I've used the word:

- *Aims* to describe the big picture (e.g. 10 to 20 years)
- *Objectives* to describe the predictable funding future (e.g. 6 months - 3 years)
- *Goals* to describe immediate/day-to-day planning (e.g. a week or a month or a quarter)

The first step in developing the planning side of the pyramid could be represented like this:

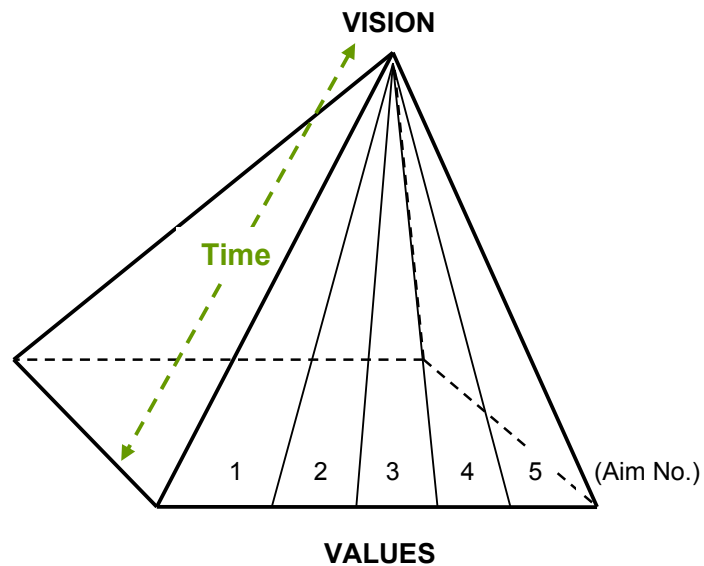


Diagram 7: The Planning Face of the Model – Step 1

Step 2: Plan Objectives/Goals

The nature and extent of organisational *Objectives* will vary enormously from agency to agency. **Objectives define the specific, singular, realistic and measurable achievements sought by the organisation within a specified period of time.** The period of time covered by the Objectives should be determined by the availability of funding guarantees, and/or the period over which guidelines are expected to remain constant. Typically, this is between 6 months and 3 years in the non-government community sector.

It is easy to get excited about the possibilities and set a large number of Objectives. This can be politically dangerous and organisationally demoralising, if they are not achieved. It also places staff in the position to formally or *ad-hocly* determine organisational priorities within the resources (time and money) available. Planning viable Objectives includes taking account of the amount of time that staff need to spend in infrastructural functions (e.g. attending/supporting Management Committee, participating in staff meetings/supervision, liaising with other agencies, meeting accountability requirements, responding to crisis situations, answering the phone or *off the street* enquiries, etc. etc.⁷) It is most useful to set a smaller number of viable goals consistent with the working hours available, and ensure their achievement.

How are you going to fit in the extra work? **Assuming that staff are already working to capacity, it is critical that each Objective specifically replaces an existing function.** It is at least as important to clearly identify the function to be replaced, as to identify the new one to be added. This will ensure both workload clarity and the viability of the organisation's plans.

⁷ Details of possible infrastructural tasks (which can legitimately absorb over 50% of staff time) are outlined in a handout entitled *Distinguishing project and non-project tasks in non-government community services*. (Contact Suzi Quixley through www.suziqconsulting.com.au for further details.)

Provided Objectives are defined in specific, singular, realistic and measurable terms, they should be able to be readily adapted to a range of demands and purposes. For example, it is much easier to identify Goals or *Performance Indicators* for such an Objective, than for a vaguely stated *dream*. Clear definition ensures that organisations can clearly state, without debate, whether each Objective has been achieved by the end of the period it covers.

Provided the organisation is constantly making reference to their *big picture*, it might be quite appropriate to work within a limited range of organisational Aims for a period of time. This means that an agency can respond to emerging funding opportunities **provided they are consistent with the organisation's Values & Vision**, as they become available.

The number of Objectives that can viably be achieved by a non-government community organisation will vary significantly. Some organisations are suited to planning - particularly those with limited, structured services. Those more liable to being affected by crises, will generally have more restricted scope for advance planning of specific projects. Organisations with paid infrastructure are more likely to be able to monitor their plan (e.g. adding functions, taking on new projects, or responding to changes in user patterns/demand), than those where the infrastructure is (at least theoretically) provided by unpaid workers.

Step 2 is to identify Objectives which can currently be addressed within each Aim. Step 2 of the planning side of the pyramid looks like this:

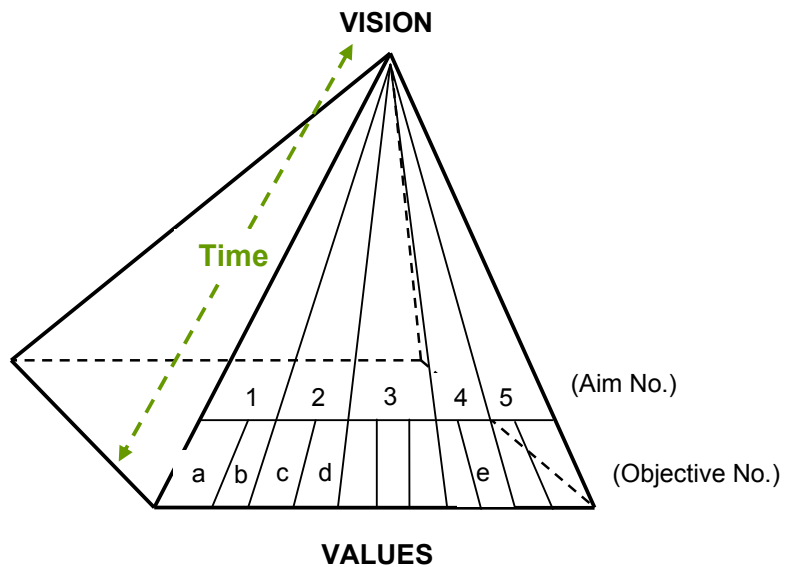


Diagram 8: The Planning Face of the Model – Step 2

Objectives can be broken down into smaller components (e.g. goals, strategies) for more comprehensive planning. (This would generally be undertaken by staff, rather than management.)

The Overall Model

Ultimately, a model of planning and development suited to the community sector looks like this:

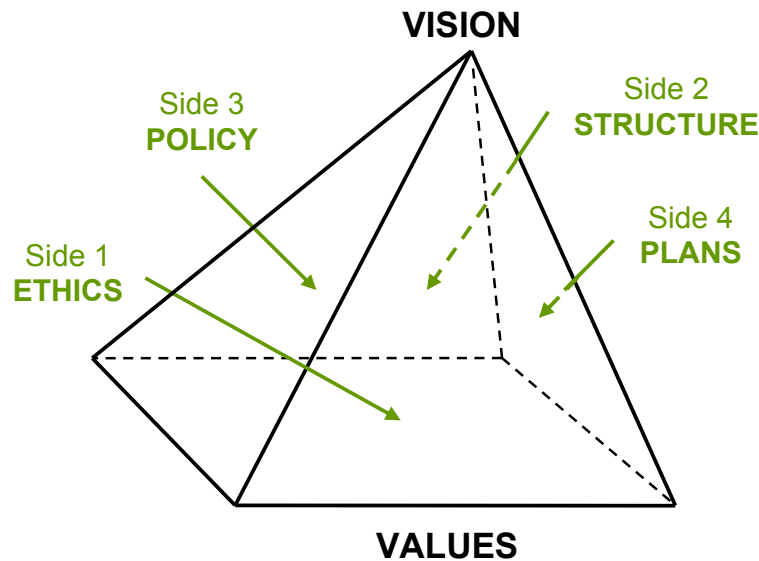


Diagram 9: Overview of Organisational Development Model

This is a strong, balanced, grounded structure. It has a clear focus. All sides work interdependently to ensure the viability, focus and consistency of the whole.

The Common Ground: Ensuring Accountability

At the beginning of this paper, it was suggested that there are two elements of common ground across the community and corporate sectors. These were:

1. The responsibility to be accountable to stakeholders.
2. The need for a non-productive infrastructure to enable that accountability.

Questions of infrastructure and accountability are inextricably linked. Ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of an organisation is a task requiring time and competence. Establishment of accountability processes, maintenance of these systems, and documentation of their outcomes are key functions which fall outside achieving the service delivery goals of the organisation.

The task of ensuring accountability is made more complex by the range of stakeholders, each demanding that their interests be met. Funding bodies can't have it both ways! They cannot justly demand high levels of accountability at all levels within the organisation, without providing the sorts of means available to the corporate sector to achieve this end. So, how can community organisations find

balanced and realistic means of demonstrating accountability to the range of stakeholders?

One possibility is to involve representatives/members of all key stakeholder groups in the management of the organisation, **as an alternative** to other accountability mechanisms (e.g. written reporting). This ensures a balance of rights and responsibilities within the process. It demands that those with an interest contribute to the developing process, as well as simply *taking* from it. Clearly, this approach has both positive and negative consequences, and would need to be explored critically.

Another, is to break accountability into its elements and define the forms of accountability due to each stakeholder group⁸. One possible breakdown is:

- **Meaning accountability** - to stakeholders directly affected by the **overall** purposes of the organisation. This would involve enabling their participation in determining the Values & Vision of the organisation, and demonstrating that the functions of the organisation were consistent with its purpose.
- **Ethical accountability** - to those contributing **constantly** to fulfilling the **overall** purposes of the organisation. This would involve interpreting organisational Values & Vision into practice through areas such as developing the model of service and ensuring that principles/standards of practice are consistent with these.
- **Legal accountability** - to the relevant legal authority in each area of functioning. For example, public organisational functioning/finances would be accountable, ultimately, to authorities responsible for overseeing the Incorporation Act (or similar); industrial practice would be accountable, ultimately, to the Industrial Court; operation consistent with the Equal Opportunity Act (or similar) would be to the Equal Opportunity Commission (or similar) ...
- **Functional accountability** - to whoever provided the money for a **particular** function. This would involve demonstrating that the **particular** money they gave was spend as previously agreed and the agreed functions were achieved.

Conclusion

The quest to find viable approaches to development and accountability in the community sector continues. Given the short life of many organisations, the changing demands being placed on the sector, and the limited resources available to community services, it is hardly surprising that sector-specific models are scarce.

In the long term, however, the community sector will only become and remain a force to be contended with, if it continues on the quest.

⁸ This question is further explored in: *Questions of Accountability in Non-Government Community Services* at www.suziqconsulting.com.au/free_articles.htm