

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis is an excellent tool to assess your community and develop your engagement strategy.

- Strengths: internal characteristics of your community or organization; areas in which you excel or hold a competitive advantage over others
- Weaknesses: internal characteristics of your community or organization; areas in which you could improve or where others hold a competitive advantage over you
- Opportunities: external factors that could impact your community or organization positively; areas that you can pursue
- Threats: external factors that could negatively impact your community or organization; risks that need management

A SWOT analysis can be captioned in many formats, though the most important factor is that the results are documented. It can be performed by an individual, by a committee group or by a larger group of stakeholders. Caution should be exercised when performing a SWOT analysis by too few people however; it is vitally important that it considers perspectives from different stakeholders. Therefore, we recommend that a SWOT be performed by a group of no less than five people who can adequately represent the perspectives of your community's stakeholders.

You could conduct a SWOT analysis by:

- Hosting a brainstorming session with a facilitator/recorder who records the analysis on flip chart paper. Remember that during brainstorming there are no wrong answers and no judgment. Discussion of answers can be facilitated once brainstorming is complete and while answers are being compiled.
- Have members of your group submit answers individually and have a recorder who compiles the answers and sends them to the group. It is still advisable to have a meeting to review the SWOT results after they have been compiled. Don't be surprised if more ideas come up as a result of building on other answers.
- At a group meeting, give every member of the team sticky notes and have them write their answers on a sticky note. Place the notes on flip chart sheets or bulletin boards under each heading. Compile the answers and review with the group. This is a lot like brainstorming, but allows an opportunity for quieter or more reserved group members to contribute without the need to be vocal.

However you perform your SWOT analysis, remember that a group review of the results is key.

Look for the areas where your strengths align with your opportunities and utilize those areas in your engagement strategy, while avoiding areas where your weaknesses align with threats. An alternative way to think of SWOT is:

- Strengths *defend against* Threats
- Threats *expose* Weaknesses

- Weaknesses *turn into* Opportunities

- Opportunities *can be capitalized on, to become* Strengths

Plan your engagement strategy around your organization's strengths and the opportunities available to you.

	Internal Factors	External factors
Positive	STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
Negative	WEAKNESSES	THREATS