

SWOT Analysis Overview and Activity

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis can be used to identify and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of your agency's environment, organization, program(s) or strategic plan, as well as the opportunities and threats revealed by the information gathered.



Strengths refer to internal attributes that are helpful to achieving your desired objective(s).



Weaknesses are internal attributes that are harmful/detrimental to achieving your desired objective(s).



Opportunities are external attributes that are helpful to achieving your desired objective(s).



Threats are external attributes that are harmful/detrimental to achieving your desired objective(s).

Example Scenario: *Your agency is creating a Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) strategic plan. Here is a quick example of what a potential SWOT analysis could look like.*

S: You have strong access to criminal justice system data and an engaged public safety planning board that oversees your Byrne JAG grant program and strategic planning process.

W: Your staff is completely new, and no one is familiar with the process of strategic planning. Some staff are not super familiar with Byrne JAG.

O: External partners have reached out to your agency with quarterly data reports, and organizations and agencies have reached out to you because they are interested in being a part of the priority setting stage of the strategic planning process.

T: The Byrne JAG federal application is due in two months (and so is your strategic plan) and you have not yet started the process!

What are some other examples of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for a State Administering Agency (SAA)?

- **Strengths:** stable budget, professional staffing, name recognition, influence.
- **Weaknesses:** access to data, staff turnover, workload, pending retirements.
- **Opportunities:** new federal funding available, access to many stakeholders.
- **Threats:** state policy restrictions, public perception of crime, reductions in federal dollars.



SWOT Analysis: Questions to Ask Yourself

STRENGTHS

- What does our agency do well?
- What initiatives have we been successful in accomplishing?
- What does our agency do better than other agencies?
- What unique or valuable skills does our team have?
- Where are we mission-driven and maximally effective?
- Where is our leadership structure strong?
- Where is our support infrastructure well aligned with our agency's goals?
- What partnerships can we draw on for support?
- What technology, tools, resources or other assets differentiate us from other agencies?

WEAKNESSES

- What are we doing poorly/what needs improvement?
- What initiatives have we been unsuccessful in accomplishing? Why?
- Where is our agency not mission-driven?
- Where is our leadership structure weak?
- What parts of our administrative or support infrastructure keep us from being as effective as possible?
- What gaps do we have on our team or as an agency? Knowledge, skills, etc.?
- What areas within our agency need further development?
- What technology, tools, resources or other assets do we lack?

OPPORTUNITIES

- How can we capitalize on future trends to better deliver our mission?
- How can we leverage partnerships and stakeholder relationships to do more of what we do well?
- What future trends will help us gain additional resources?
- What future trends will have a positive impact on our physical or administrative infrastructure?
- What trends will improve our leadership structure?
- How can we entice new and diverse stakeholders to participate in our agencywide initiatives and efforts?
- Are there new sources of federal or state funding available?

THREATS

- Are there other agencies that do what we do?
- What future trends might make our current ways of doing business obsolete?
- What future trends will decrease our resources?
- What future trends will increase our workload?
- What future trends will negatively impact our talent pool?
- How does the public perceive our agency and our impact on crime reduction? What about other stakeholder groups?

A Note on Conducting a SWOT Analysis with Your Public Safety Planning Board



Keep in mind that you can do this SWOT activity either as an agency team or with your public safety planning board. If you plan to do this activity with your board, make sure they are aware of the activity and what it entails prior to the meeting so they can prepare. A suggested way to go about this activity with your board is to utilize a white board or flip chart and record all the responses for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on the white board or flip chart, searching for areas of commonality or consensus. This activity can be a great first step for a strategic planning process or even for understanding how your public safety board sees itself (SWOT analysis of the board itself). Once your agency and/or your board completes a SWOT analysis, you can play more effectively for the future as a collaborative unit.

Complete Your Own SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

This document was created with the support of Grant No. 2019-YA-BX-K002 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.