

Framework for Sustainable Communities



Action

	Ecology <i>How does it influence the Natural Environment?</i>	Economy <i>How does it directly influence the local economy and at what short and long term costs?</i>	Empowerment <i>How does it influence relationships, effective government, and social justice?</i>	Efficiency <i>How does it influence the delivery of infrastructure we provide?</i>	Health <i>How does it influence the well-being of people?</i>
Strengths					
Weaknesses					
Opportunities					
Threats					

Solution

The Framework

Five Needs: Satisfy five distinct healthy community needs to assure a balanced/sustainable outcome: Ecology, Economy, Empowerment, Efficiency, and Health.

S.W.O.T.: For any given action there are Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.



Traffic Signal: Red, Yellow, Green: This dimension provides an indicator for how well a particular action satisfies a healthy community need. If green, the

action provides value, or contributes in a positive way. If yellow, there are manageable risks. If red, there may be fatal flaws that need attention.

Steps For Using The Form

Step 1: Identifying

Clearly identify the action.

Identify a clear topic, action, policy, program or issue you would like to evaluate. Be specific, because this will help focus your discussion on the action most important to you.

Write the action on the top of the form as a statement (e.g. "Building a three-lane roadway cross-section on Main Street," or "Removing glass from the recycling stream").

Step 2: Brainstorming

Complete the framework on the form (get as many ideas as possible).

Brainstorm Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in each of the Five Needs categories. Start by asking the question, "So how does what we are proposing influence the economy?" Remember, influence can be good or bad.

Strengths and Weaknesses are things internal to your organization that you have direct control over.

Opportunities and Threats are things outside your control, and you must respond to proactively.

Encourage the flow of ideas. Sometimes there will be overlap. Start in one category that may lead to factors in other categories. Discuss those factors together and put them on the map at the same time so the team can begin to see the relationships and competing factors.

Step 3: Distilling

Refine your brainstorming list to key issues.

After brainstorming all the ideas, begin selecting what you believe to be the most important Strengths and Opportunities and the most concerning Weaknesses and Threats. For any issue, there should not be more than a few for each of the Five Needs categories.

Step 4: Evaluating

Determine how balanced your solution is.

Step back and look it over your prioritized list. What is it telling you? If a Need category has many Strengths and Opportunities, it is likely a green light. If it has some Strengths, but also some Weaknesses

and Threats you feel you can overcome, it is likely a yellow light. If there are some significant Weaknesses or Threats that you have not figured out a way to overcome, it is likely a red light. One significant Weakness by itself may warrant a red light.

Step 5: Problem Solving

Find a balanced solution (all Need categories have a green or yellow rating).

Focus the group's attention to the key issues that create red lights. Ask the question, "What can we do differently to turn this red light into a yellow or green light?" Some of those answers may take time to formulate. Create an assignment list for more research and agree to get back together to discuss the solutions.

Step 6: Move Forward

Confirm or assign someone to be responsible for carrying the action forward.

Once all your research is completed and you have a balanced solution, get commitments. Decide who must do what, by when to move the item forward. Pay attention to the specific actions necessary to overcome risks in the yellow lights and innovative actions that turns red lights into yellow/green lights.