**Assess the Situation**

**Internal Review: Performance Review**

**Steps**

###### Determine what is to be learned from the performance review. Think about:

* + How will it be used?
  + What is to be reviewed – programs and services, financial performance, human resources, governance and/or operations?
  + What is the review period and will it create a reliable picture?
  + Should qualitative (e.g. numbers) and/or quantitative information (perceptions) or both be collected?
  + Should it look at effectiveness and if so, how is that defined?

1. **Determine how the information will be gathered.** There may be information available from existing data sources (e.g. satisfaction surveys; financial reports; program reviews) or it may need to be collected. Also consider how the information will be compiled.
2. **Review the data to be sure that it is clear.** Check the accuracy of the information and, if necessary, make adjustments.
3. **Bring together key stakeholders and ask them to analyze what the data tells them.** (see *What to Look For*) Identify trends, relationships, patterns and significant changes. Ensure that all observations are made before going to the next step. Don’t allow participants to leap to conclusions or solutions.

###### 5. Identify areas of strength and core competencies. Also identify weaknesses and articulate why they are a weakness.

6. **Develop conclusions about the performance of the agency.** Ensure all the conclusions are based on evidence.

**Assess the Situation**

**Internal Review: Performance Review**

**What to Look For**

Here are some key areas to look at when reviewing the performance information:

* Is the organization and its clients better or worse off? Why?
* What improved or worsened?
* Are the numbers increasing, decreasing or the same? Why?
* Have the ratios changed (e.g. revenues to expenses)? Why or why not?
* Has the quality improved? At what cost and for what benefit?
* Are we consistently meeting program objectives and annual plans? If not, why?
* Are we having the impact that we set out to have? If not, why?
* Are the strategies working? If not, why?
* Do the perceptions of our performance differ from what the quantitative data tells us? If so, why?
* Do the benefits received exceed the direct and indirect costs? If not, why?

**Assess the Situation**

**Internal Review: Organizational Review**

**Steps**

###### (Same as the steps for a performance review)

**Key Areas of Consideration**

The organizational review should identify areas of strength and weakness. The following success factors should be present in your agency. Determine if the organization has:

* A clear and compelling direction based on well articulated, comprehensive and manageable plans
* An ongoing and rigorous performance management process that generates reliable information and is used to improve performance
* Strong Board stewardship based on an effective governance structure, clear roles and responsibilities, good decision-making processes and a nomination process that ensures the right people with the right skills are in the right positions
* Well managed human resources (staff and volunteers) based on a realistic and detailed human resource plan, clear job descriptions, effective policies and a productive and positive work environment
* The appropriate resources to achieve the intended results using a realistic revenue generation plan, proper allocation of human and financial resources to achieve the plan and the appropriate support systems and policies to allow for effective and efficient resource generation and allocation
* Positive relationships with external and internal stakeholders, based on a culture of collaboration
* Innovative and responsive approaches that result from a creative internal environment that encourages measured risk taking
* Clear and useful policies and procedures that help the organization to be more effective, streamlined and protected
* Effective use of technology and space that is properly utilized to help deliver quality programs and services

**Assess the Situation Internal Review: Historical Synopsis**

**Steps**

The following steps can be taken to compile an historical synopsis.

1. **Determine the parameters of the review.** Think about:
   * How will it be used?
   * What is to be reviewed – leadership, finances, funding, programming, service delivery, organizational environment or culture?
2. **Decide how the information will be generated.** Consider who can provide a comprehensive perspective of the agency’s history e.g. founders, previous staff and Board members. Also look in existing records of the history, such as annual reports, media coverage, and minutes.
3. **Organize the information.** Agree upon a format for presenting the information. For example, should it be organized chronologically or by topic area? Determine the most critical factors. Isolate the key decisions, events, milestones and changes that had a significant impact on shaping the agency. Also identify who was positively or adversely affected by them.
4. **Identify the key learnings**. Look at the factors that contributed to growth/decline or improvements or loss of quality, and describe what affect they had and what cold be learned from it. Find patterns that surface over time and identify what they tell you. Draw conclusions about what they say about future directions.

**Assess the Situation**

**Internal Review: Needs Assessment and Satisfaction Surveys**

**Steps**

###### Identify what you want to achieve by doing a needs assessment or satisfaction survey. Think about:

* + What you want to learn?
  + Who do you want to learn about – consumers, staff, Board members, volunteers, donors, funders and/or community partners?
  + How will the information be used?
  + How accurate does it need to be?

1. **Determine how the information will be gathered.** Keep in mind that a confidential, face-to-face process will generate more genuine and reliable responses. However, it may also limit the number of responses that can be collected. Also consider where the information might already exist, such as in performance reviews or Board evaluations. Approaches for gathering information may include:
   * surveys
   * interviews (face to face or telephone)
   * observation (observe people participating in programs)
   * focus groups (small groups led by an objective facilitator)
   * questionnaires
2. **Develop an action plan** with timelines and assignments of responsibility.
3. **Develop a series of questions.** Consider whether you want to collect qualitative information (about how people feel or what they think) or quantitative information (based on ‘hard’ data such as attendance figures). Watch for questions that are judgmental, biased or not targeted to the audience. Test the questions with potential respondents to make sure they generate information that is relevant to the strategic planning process.

###### Design a process for compiling, tallying and analyzing the information.

Consider what resources will be required, who will do it and how it will get done.

1. **Collect the data and analyze it.** Be sure to summarize the findings in a way that allows people to see patterns and trends. However, be careful not to present the information in a way that presumes conclusions.

###### 7. Identify the key learning from the data.

**What to Look For**

The following provides some ideas of what to look for in the findings from the needs assessment or satisfaction survey.

* What are the societal forces that may have influenced the findings?
* How do our clients describe their needs or perceptions; is it different than what other studies or surveys tell us?
* What are the root causes of the needs/concerns?
* How have the needs or perceptions changed; what’s causing them to change?
* What impacts do our programs and services have on addressing the needs/interests/concerns?