



## **BGA CLUB MANAGEMENT GUIDES**

### **Strategic Planning**

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

If a club is to thrive, it is important to have a clear sense of direction and purpose. This can be formalised in a Strategic Plan which clearly sets out the Club's aims and objectives. The means of achieving those objectives needs to be the subject of a Business Plan, both for the short-term and for the long-term (or for at least the next five years). To complement and support the Business Plan, it is sometimes necessary or helpful (especially when applying for external financial funding) to have a Sports Development Plan which will set out and monitor specific targets for sporting achievement.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to produce an approved and agreed framework within which the Club can operate its business. It is usual for it to cover a time span of 4 to 5 years, with annual reviews to ensure it remains relevant.

### **Simple Rules of strategic planning**

- Think long term and avoid getting bogged down in detail.
- Be seen to be leading from the front .... don't let the tail wag the dog!
- Get all members involved to ensure that they see it as their strategy.
- Ensure routine decisions align with the Strategic Plan

### **Strategic Plan**

The contents of a Strategic Plan normally include:

- A brief summary of the Club's background and history
- Internal Strengths & Weaknesses, external Opportunities & Threats, and Constraints (SWOT/C) recognised and listed
- An analysis of the possible implications of the SWOT/C, and the actions that may be indicated by some of the factors identified
- The Club's aims and objectives
- Principal activities planned to achieve the aims and objectives in the medium term

### **Business Plan**

Either within the Strategic Plan, or as a separate Business Plan, set out:

- Closer analysis of the competitors and threats to the club and some plans for coping with them
- More detail of the activities planned
- Financial plans required to achieve the activities. A broad plan of income and expenditure should be prepared for a period of at least 5 years with the detailed components subject to review each year
- Underlying administrative and support structure to enable the plans to be implemented

### **Sports Development Plan**

A Sports Development Plan may be required by funding agencies, especially the sport-based ones. Even if not required by external agencies, it can help you to focus on what you and your members want to achieve in sporting terms. This will break down into greater detail the type of activities to be undertaken in order to enable your members and others to

participate, develop and excel. The Sports Development Plan can be constructed by answering some straightforward questions under each general heading of the club's activities:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in four/five years' time?
- How do we propose to achieve the stated targets?
- What resources are required (financial and other)?

A sample Sports Development Plan is included in the Club Policies and Guidelines Pack on the BGA website.

### **When to prepare Plans**

The time that you realise that you need a Strategic or Business Plan is often when you have an opportunity to apply for some funding or other support, or when you need to develop a new relationship with an outside organisation. Time is often short then and this is not the best way to develop your plans.

Instead, aim to develop a plan during the quietest time of year (usually the winter) when you can give time to the process and do it without pressure other than your own self-imposed deadlines.

### **Process of creating Plans and who should be involved**

If there are already some Plans, your task may be simply one of updating them. But always keep an open mind and consider carefully whether the old Plan still reflects the Club's activities, or whether you would do better to start from scratch.

In either case, the process will depend on your circumstances and the dynamic within the club, but will probably include some of these elements:

- Establish a small working group to lead the process. The Chairman should normally be a member of the group. Instinctively and rightly you will ask experienced members to be involved in the project. Consider also involving newer members, as they will bring fresh ideas.
- Set realistic deadlines for interim stages and the final result.
- Survey the members to seek out opinions, ideas, comments and offers of relevant knowledge or help. This may be done by questionnaire and/or meetings. Try to find someone with some knowledge of market research to help you devise a well-structured questionnaire, which invites the members to give their opinions and ideas without channelling them into the ideas that you are already considering.
- Debate the main aims and objectives of the Club in the full Committee.
- The Working Group should draw up outline Plans based on the findings of the preliminary survey and discussions.
- Delegate the initial drafting of different sections of the plans to members of the working group and/or brainstorm some of them. For example the SWOT/C is often best started with an open discussion.
- Ask other members to draft the detailed specialist sections at the appropriate time – e.g. the Treasurer should write the financial sections and the CFI or Club's coach should write the Sports Development Plan. If they are not on the Working Group, involve those specialists in some of your meetings and discussions so that they can

present their suggestions for an open debate.

- Delegate one member of the Working Group to draft the complete document from the drafts prepared by all the contributors. This results in a document that reads coherently and has a single style. Get someone who has not been involved in the project to proof-read it.
- Provide the full Committee with regular briefings on progress and consult them on points that are controversial before you become completely committed to them. This avoids surprises and minimises the chances of the Committee rejecting the ideas. Be prepared for disagreements and don't take it personally.
- Likewise, keep the club members in touch with progress and development of the ideas, and create a mechanism for them to comment without letting them take over the leadership.
- Present the draft documents to the full Committee for a proper debate and comments before the final revision. At the same time, let the members see the drafts and let them comment. If you have kept people in touch with progress throughout the project, there shouldn't be any surprises or major disagreements at this stage.
- Redraft the final version taking all the comments into account.
- Publish the Plans and present them to your members and to your key stakeholders. Have copies of the Plans available for members to read and consider putting them on your website. If parts are confidential (e.g. the financial sections or the parts describing how you are going to challenge your competitors) keep them hidden, but aim to publish the headlines that anyone can read. In keeping some parts confidential, don't forget that most club memberships are as leaky as a sieve!
- Keep the Plans available for the Committee to refer to during their work and make sure that you refer back to them when planning your various activities. Monitor and evaluate your progress periodically to see whether the Plan is being achieved. Be prepared to adjust the Plans if things are not working out.
- In 4 – 5 years' time, start again!