

Short Guide for Organizational Assessment

Conducting a Quick Assessment

This guide is intended to provide a framework for rapid organizational assessment (OA) during brief (one to two day) visits to an organization. For in-depth assessments, more comprehensive instruments are available.

This guide provides some key concepts for you to reflect on as you analyze the organization's enabling environment, motivation, capacity and performance. Use these concepts in writing your organizational assessment report.



Data Sources

Think about your data needs as your visit progresses. In the assessment process, attempt to:

- Meet a suitable spectrum of people and record their names:
 - staff, managers, project officers
 - board members
 - beneficiaries, stakeholders
 - government officials, donors, other agencies
- Obtain available key documents:
 - charter
 - mission statement, project loan documents
 - annual reports, financial reports
 - services descriptions

- Observe relevant facilities:
 - buildings/grounds
 - regional offices
 - program or project sites
- Observe the dynamics among people:
 - nature of meetings with you; who attends; who presides
 - decision-making processes
 - nature of dealings with organization's clients
 - how the work is conducted; dominant paradigm

Organizational Performance

Every organization should attempt to meet its goals with an acceptable outlay of resources while ensuring sustainability over the long term. "Good performance" means the work is done effectively, efficiently and remains relevant to the stakeholders. Characterize organizational performance by answering the following questions:

- How effective is the organization in moving toward the fulfillment of its mission?
 - organizational performance (major achievements, general level of organizational productivity defined according to the organization's mission and values, utilization of results)
 - staff performance (clients served, quality of services/products)
 - service performance (support to research community, transfer technology)
- How efficient is the organization in moving toward the fulfillment of its mission?
 - rates, costs/services
 - staff productivity (turnover, absenteeism, outputs)
 - administrative system efficiency
- Has the organization kept its relevance over time?
 - adaptation of mission
 - meeting stakeholder needs
 - adaptation to environment

- How financially viable is the organization?
 - diversification of sources of funding
 - ability to be profitable over time (for profit organizations)
 - ability to have surplus over time (not-for-profit organizations)

Enabling Environment

Organizations do not exist in a vacuum. Each organization is set in a particular environment, which provides multiple contexts that affect the organization and its performance. Characterize the organization's enabling environment using the following guidelines.

- Describe and assess the **administrative/legal** environment within which the organization operates:
 - policy
 - legislation
 - regulations
- Describe and assess the **social/cultural** environment within which the organization operates:
 - norms, values
 - beliefs
 - attitudes in society
 - literacy
- Describe and assess the **external political** environment within which the organization operates:
 - form of government
 - distribution of power
 - access to government resources
 - allocation decisions
 - political will
- Describe and assess the **economic** environment within the organization operates:
 - GDP, inflation, growth, debt
 - IMF conditionality
 - wage/price structure
 - community economics
 - hard currency access
 - government funding distribution
- Describe the **technological and ecological** environments within which the organization operates:
 - infrastructure, utilities
 - geography
 - technological literacy
 - information technology
 - climate

- Describe and assess the major **stakeholders** of the organization:
 - clients
 - donors
 - beneficiaries
 - government bodies
 - other institutions

What is the impact of these environmental forces on the mission, performance and capacity of the organization?

Organizational Motivation

No two organizations are alike. Each has a distinct history, vision/mission, culture and incentive/reward system. Characterize the level of organizational motivation as determined by the following components.

- Analyze the organization's history:
 - date and process of founding
 - major awards/achievements
 - major struggles
 - changes in size, program, leadership
 - other projects and loans through IFIs or funding agencies
 - Understand the organization's mission:
 - evolution of mission statement
 - organizational goals
 - role of mission in shaping the organization, giving it purpose and direction
 - articulating research/research products that are valued
 - Understand the organization's culture:
 - attitudes about working
 - attitudes about colleagues, clients or stakeholders
 - values, beliefs
 - underlying organizational norms that guide the organization
 - Understand the organization's incentive/reward system:
 - key factors, values, motivations to promote productivity
 - intellectual freedom, stimulation, autonomy
 - remuneration, grant access, opportunity for advancement
 - peer recognition, prestige
- How does motivation affect organizational performance? In what ways do the history, mission, culture and incentive system positively and negatively influence the organization?

Organizational Capacity

Organizational capacity underlies an organization's performance. Capacity is understood as the eight interrelated areas detailed below. Characterize the organizational capacity using the following conceptual guidelines.

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of strategic leadership in the organization:
 - leadership (managing culture, setting direction, supporting resource development, ensuring tasks are done)
 - strategic planning (scanning environment, developing tactics to attain objectives, goals, mission)
 - niche management (area of expertise, uniqueness, recognition of uniqueness)
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of financial management:
 - financial planning (operating expenses, forecast future monetary needs and requirements)
 - financial accountability (rules for member use of financial resources, transparent/verified system)
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the organizational structure within the organization:
 - governance (legal framework, decision-making process, methods for setting direction, external links)
 - operational (roles and responsibilities, coordination of labour, coordinating systems)

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the organizational infrastructure:
 - facilities management (adequate lighting, clean water, electricity)
 - technology management (equipment, information systems, hardware/software, library)
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the following systems, processes or dimensions of human resources:
 - planning (recruiting, selecting, staffing, orienting)
 - developing (performance management, monitoring, evaluation)
 - career management (career development, training)
 - maintenance (health/safety issues, gender issues, quality of working life)

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