

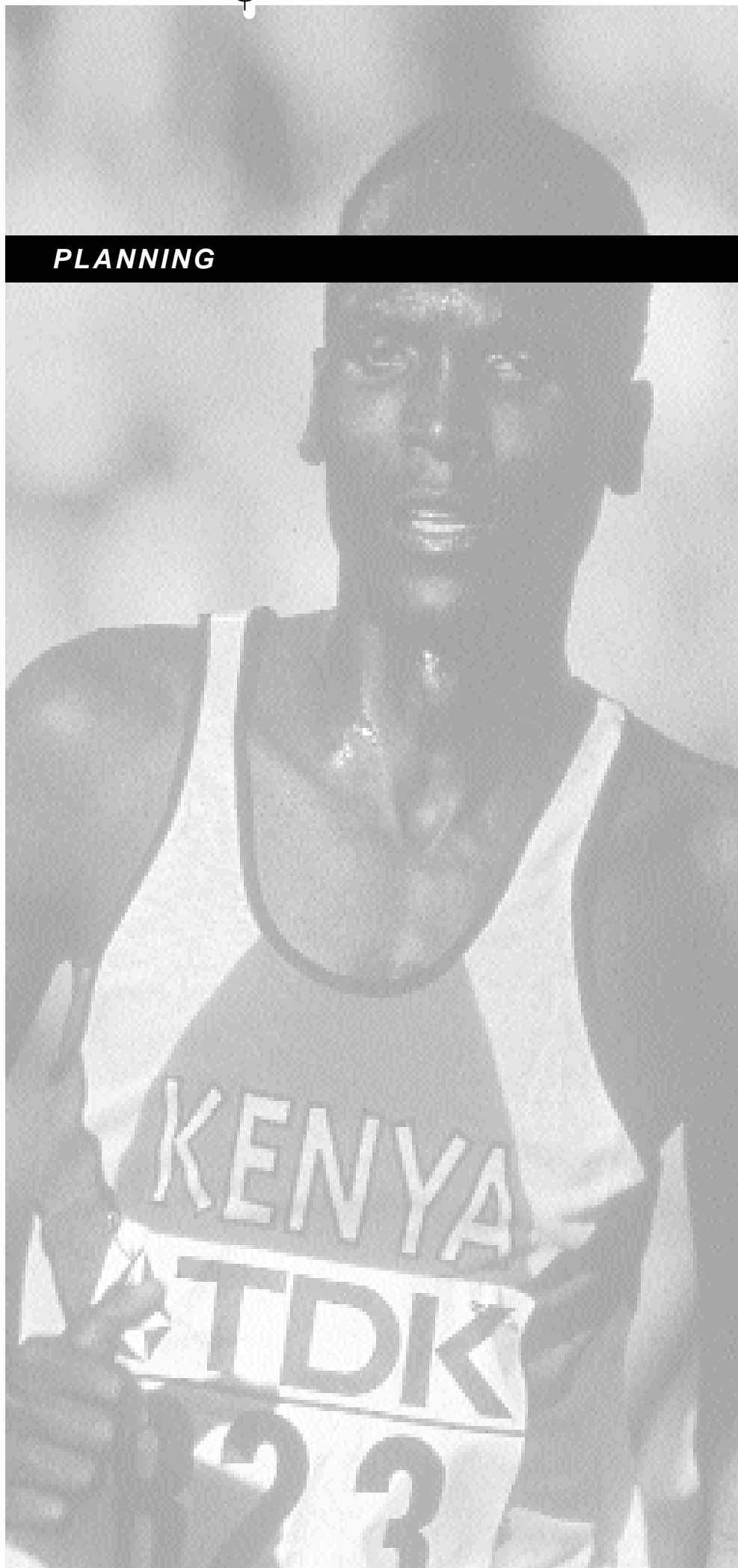
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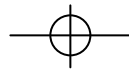
CHAPTER

PLANNING

PART ONE
*PROJECT
PLANNING*

PART TWO
*PLANNING FOR
DEVELOPMENT*





- The Elements of a Plan
- The Project Planning Process
- Tips on the Planning Process
- Monitoring and Evaluation

PART ONE PROJECT PLANNING

The most important part of any endeavour is the time spent planning the activity. Good planning can save time, effort and resources. If, as in the case of most national athletic federations, these are in limited supply, the ability to plan effectively would seem to be an essential management skill. Yet, when asked, many experienced athletics leaders will admit that planning is a major weakness in their organisation and that their skills are not developed. Perhaps this is because most people would rather be doing something than talking or thinking about it. In some cases it may be because the planning process is not well understood or a normal part of the operational routine.

As a leader in a federation, however, it is your duty to ensure your organisation makes the best use of its resources. Good planning can help. As with all skills, your ability to plan effectively can be developed. By analysing the planning process you can increase your understanding; through regular practice you can improve your proficiency.

"Those who fail to plan are planning to fail."

Anonymous

A

The Elements Of A Plan

Just as projects and activities vary, plans can take different forms. Generally speaking, the more resources involved or complex the project the more detailed the plan should be. However, most plans address the following key elements:

- **Goals/Objectives** – What is the project or activity trying to accomplish? What would be considered success?
- **Steps and Tasks** – What are the operational steps and the tasks involved in achieving them? Which are the critical tasks which must be completed before others can proceed?
- **Resources** – What will be required to complete the planned project or activity? (Be sure to consider the human, material and financial resources.) At what stages will these resources be needed? How will the resource requirements be met?
- **Organisation** – Who is involved? Who has overall responsibility? Who is responsible for ensuring the various steps and tasks are completed correctly?
- **Timeline** – When are things supposed to start and finish?

B

The Project Planning Process

There is no single way to plan. Planning does not have to be a linear, step-by-step task even though that is how a finished plan might look. Very often, plans are created through a process which involves having initial ideas, then considering new information, adding, taking away, refining. It is only at the end of the process that a plan we would recognise "comes together".



With that said, there are certain common elements of the planning process which can be utilised to plan a project (such as an AGM, a competition, a coaching course, or a fund- raising drive) or an on-going activity (such as the running of the federation office, a development programme or a member services programme). The elements listed below provide a relatively simple guide for the process:

1 *The project leader*

Whatever the project or activity, there is a need for someone to be responsible for the outcome and to lead the project group. This person must be closely involved in the planning and then be able to lead the group through the completion of its task. You should be satisfied that the person chosen for this role is prepared for the responsibility and committed to the success of the project.

Note: See Chapter 5 for further discussion of the role of a leader.

2 *The planning group*

While planning involves quiet thinking and analysis, it normally benefits from a group or team input. By involving a number of people from the start of a project or activity you can build team commitment and ownership of the ideas which emerge.

Careful thought should be given to the composition and size of a planning group. Enthusiasm, commitment, reliability, experience, knowledge or contacts related to the activity, and ability to work with others are all factors which should be considered. The group should not be too big, as this will affect its ability to work efficiently, but it should be large enough to have credibility with volunteers and other groups who must support the plan in some way.

3 *Brainstorming*

Many planning groups do not function as well as they should because the ideas and talents of those involved are not fully utilised. People can be intimidated by a challenging task, by working in a

group situation or by individual members of the group. Involving all the group's members in a brainstorming session before the planning process becomes too formal or structured is one way to increase input and build a team feeling.

Brainstorming is a meeting designed to generate as many ideas as possible in an allotted amount of time. A small group of people focus on an issue, problem or project and make suggestions. Originality and creativity should be encouraged while criticism and comment on ideas should be discouraged.

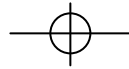
One way to conduct a brainstorming session is as follows:

- A brief description of the background of the project or activity is made by the Project Leader.
- All members of the planning group are given a sheet of paper to write down all the factors they think are needed to make the project successful. The time limit should be fairly short – 5 to 10 minutes.
- The ideas are then amalgamated on to a master sheet – a flip chart, marker board or chalk board can be very useful here – and discussed by the whole group.
- At this point additional questions should arise. These should be encouraged and noted.

In the amalgamation, the participants will see that some will have overlooked different items or taken a different approach, but together most things will have been covered. More importantly, each person can see their own ideas being included in the total framework and this will help them feel more involved and be more committed to the success of the project.

4 *Considering the elements of a plan*

In the next stage each of the key elements of a plan outlined above must be discussed and reference made to the list of ideas produced in the brainstorming session. This process will give focus and structure to the ideas. Each element should be carefully considered from the point of view of its relevance to the project and the detail involved. Input from the entire group should be sought and



notes should be taken – again, a flip chart, marker board or chalk board can be very useful.

Special emphasis should be given to the tasks and steps. A list containing the following information should be constructed :

- Tasks.
- Tasks which depend on the completion of other tasks or activities.
- Time required for each task.
- When each task must be complete.
- Resources needed for the task.
- Who will do each task.

Often, a decision on one element will necessitate changes to the ideas already expressed regarding the other elements. If the project is important or involves a lot of resources it is essential that this process is not rushed.

Another reason for making sure there is enough time for the planning process is the fact that it may be necessary to carry out some research to answer questions which have come up in this step or during the brainstorming session. In this case, someone should be assigned to get the information and report back to the group, meaning this step could be prolonged

5 Getting it down on paper

Once the group is satisfied that all the elements of the plan have been properly addressed, the final plan can be written out.

The detail and wording of the final plan should be considered from the point of view of who will need to see it – nobody wants to read volumes about a simple task, yet it should not be assumed that because the planning group discussed a matter everyone else will understand it.

A tool which can be effective for presenting the plan of

a large or complex project is called a *flow chart*. The flow chart is a graphic presentation showing the tasks, how they relate to each other and to the timeline of the project (*See the box on next page*).

Once the written plan is completed, the project should be under way. Depending on the size and nature of the project, the entire planning process may take an hour or it may take several days spread over a period of time.

Remember, time taken at the planning stage is an investment in the success of the project.

Tips on the Planning Process

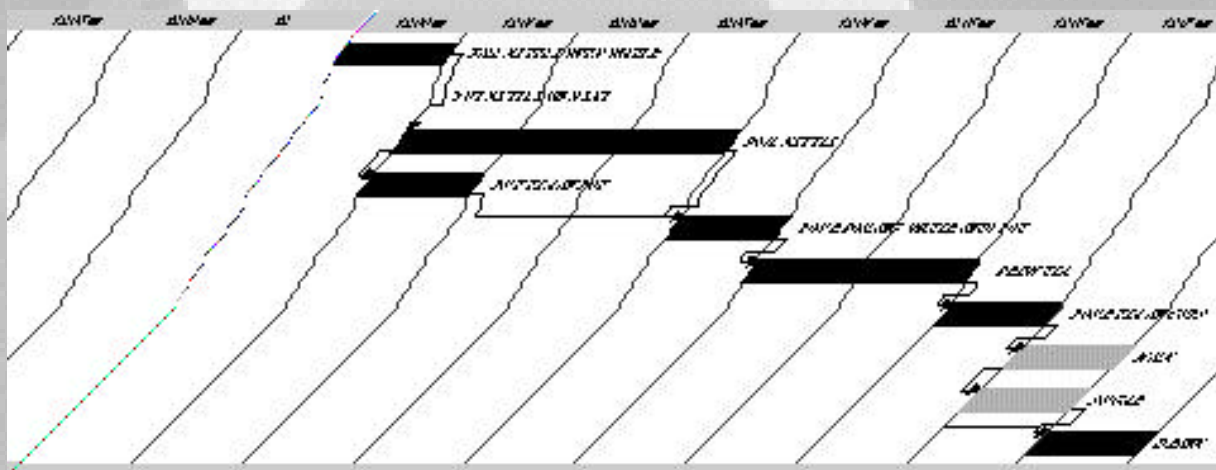
When developing a plan it may be helpful to keep the following in mind:

- Plan far enough in advance, do not leave it to the last minute and do a rush job.
- Prepare the plan in close co-operation with those affected by its implementation.
- Check if the plan is realistic, i.e., can the activities actually be accomplished as the plan describes?
- Make sure tasks are manageable.
- When assigning responsibilities, be careful not to overload one individual or group within the organisation.
- Individuals assigned tasks must be able to answer questions such as:
 - 'What am I being asked to do?'
 - 'What is the expected outcome?'
 - 'When is it due?'
 - 'How much time will it take?'
 - 'What resources and support do I have to complete this task?'
- Be sure to agree to deadlines for critical tasks and write them into the plan.
- Spread time-lines over the full period of the plan; most people have a tendency to plan everything for the first or last quarter of the time available.

Monitoring and Evaluation

FLOW CHART FOR MAKING A CUP OF TEA

The diagram below is a simple flow chart illustrating the "project" of making a cup of tea. The project steps are set out in sequence and a timeline shows the time each step will take and the total time (10 minutes) for the project.



Each arrowhead indicates a point where a task or tasks must be completed before the next can be started eg. the kettle must be filled with water before it can be put on the heat. Note that while the kettle is boiling, another task, putting the tea in the pot, can take place simultaneously and that both are completed before the next task starts. This is often the case in larger, more complex projects. Note also that putting milk and sugar in the cups are shown lightly shaded as these are optional steps.

By adjusting the list of tasks and the timescale, a flow chart can be created for almost any project. It can be studied to identify problems, such as the timing of critical tasks, the over-commitment of human and material resources, or the omission of important tasks.

D

Monitoring progress and developments during the course of a project and evaluation at completion or at an agreed point are important elements of the planning process. They actually begin when the goals and objectives for the project are set.

Monitoring includes:

- Measurement of the progress of the overall plan by comparing "what is" to "what ought to be".
- Identification of any changes needed in the overall plan (additions or deletions), based on the success (or lack thereof) of the tasks and the changing environment.

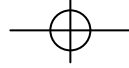
Evaluation of the project or activity, and of the planning process itself, after completion will improve your planning skills. Ideally, the original planning group

should meet one more time for an honest and frank appraisal of all aspects of the project.

Questions to ask in the evaluation of a project include:

- 'Did we accomplish what we wanted to?'
- 'Were the goals realistic?'
- 'How well did things go?'
- 'How might things be done better?'
- 'Did people get the information, resources, time, support, etc., they needed to complete the task they were asked to do?'
- 'Were people properly motivated and committed to the plan and project?'

At this time, points on the master sheet produced in the brainstorm session can be checked to find out if factors emerged during the project which were not envisaged originally. Based on this discussion,

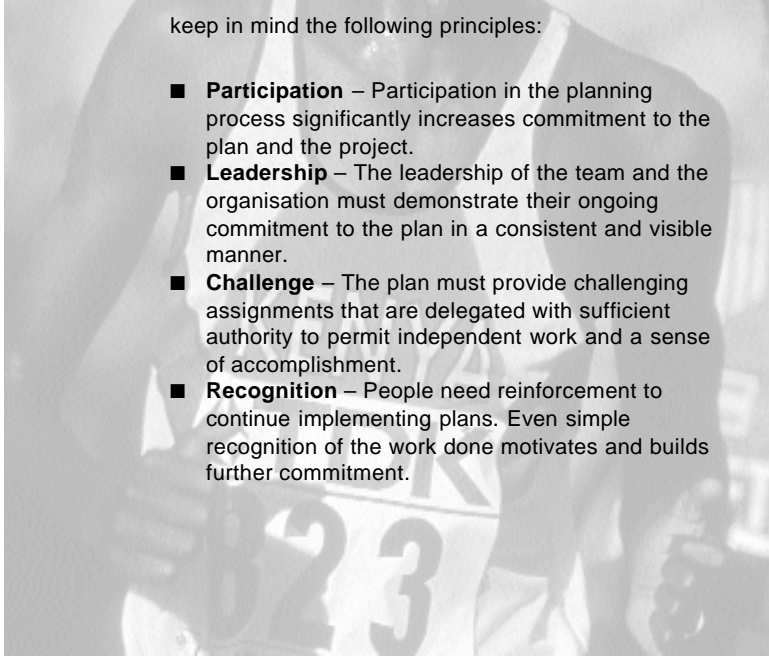


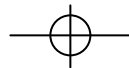
adaptations for planning of future projects can be made.

SUSTAINING COMMITMENT TO A PLAN

To sustain commitment by the project team you should keep in mind the following principles:

- **Participation** – Participation in the planning process significantly increases commitment to the plan and the project.
- **Leadership** – The leadership of the team and the organisation must demonstrate their ongoing commitment to the plan in a consistent and visible manner.
- **Challenge** – The plan must provide challenging assignments that are delegated with sufficient authority to permit independent work and a sense of accomplishment.
- **Recognition** – People need reinforcement to continue implementing plans. Even simple recognition of the work done motivates and builds further commitment.





- What is Development Planning?
- 5 Key Steps for Creating a Development Plan
- Monitoring and Refining a Development Plan

PART TWO PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

In the past it may have been possible for many national athletic federations to do more or less the same thing year after year and remain successful. There was no real reason to plan for development and the planning that was done was focused on individual projects and short-term issues. These days the situation is very different. Development is no longer a luxury, something that just happens as a result of things working out well. Development is a necessity to attract and retain athletes, volunteers and resources. Federations must plan to develop. They must ensure that their services and structures meet the needs of the customers of tomorrow – otherwise they will be marginalised and possibly cease to exist. Development planning, therefore, is a management skill which has become essential for the leaders of a federation.

A

What is Development Planning?

"If you don't know where you want to go, you might end up some place you don't want to be."

Anonymous

Development planning, often called strategic planning, is the process of determining where an organisation is going – in other words, what it wants to be in the future – and how it intends to get there. It involves looking carefully at the organisation and the environment it must work in, setting worthwhile but realistic goals and putting together a co-ordinated plan of action for reaching those goals.

A well-prepared development plan can help a federation in many ways including:

- Saving time, misunderstandings and duplicated effort by getting everyone in the federation working in the same direction towards the same goals.
- Providing a frame of reference for decisions on human and financial resource allocation.
- Creating a basis for measuring performance.

Having a development plan is like having a road map for a journey; it is not a guarantee that the destination will be reached but it is a very valuable tool. With a development plan a federation can be in control of its destiny in a changing environment and in a position to capitalise on unforeseen advantages. Even if it must react to negative events or changes it can do so in a more controlled way than if it had no plan.

Moreover, creating a development plan is a demonstration of a serious and professional approach on the part of the federation which can provide value by:

- Developing credibility with government, sponsors and other sources of support.
- Developing a positive image for the federation and the sport.

5 Key Steps for Creating a Development

B Plan

1 Building readiness

Development planning is, by its nature, planning for change. The creation of a development plan will probably alter current ways of doing things within the federation and could lead to resistance on the part of some of those involved. Therefore, it needs to be introduced in a logical and carefully thought-out manner.

The most important test of any plan is in its implementation; without commitment and support from those who must be involved in the implementation even the best plans will fail. The following suggestions may assist in minimising resistance and building commitment and enthusiasm for implementing a development plan:

- Build dissatisfaction with the status quo, promote the need for new direction and planned change.
- Educate people about development planning; make sure they know about how a development plan can help the federation and the process involved.
- Make the desired outcomes of the planning process clear.
- Involve people in the decision making process around the planning process through formal and informal consultation.
- Keep people informed by sharing information about the process and the outcome.

"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things, because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and luke-warm defenders in those who may do well under the new."

Niccolò Machiavelli (1446-1507): The Prince

Many organisations use a significant date or milestone as a motivation for creating a development plan. The coming of a new decade, the turn of the century, the 75th anniversary of foundation, the hosting of a major competition are the type of events which people

recognise and agree signal the time is right for a change.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING?

Development planning is as much a political exercise as a logical, rational process. Though the process can be managed by a co-ordinator or small group, it should not be simply delegated to a planner.

All elements of the sport, and as many individuals as possible, should have some input and involvement in the planning process. This will contribute to wide ownership of the plan and support for its implementation.

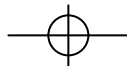
It is particularly important that the views of the *athletes* are well represented in the process. Throughout the planning process the visible and whole-hearted involvement of the leadership and other key personnel of the federation are essential.

2 Situation analysis

It is important to take stock of the current state of the federation and its environment. The insights gained will provide a basis for deciding what the federation can accomplish and where it should be going. Simple questions are often used as a way of gathering information in the situation analysis:

- 'What is the federation doing well?'
- 'Is the federation meeting the needs of its members and other customers?'
- 'What does the federation need to improve?'
- 'What is blocking the federation from being more effective?'
- 'Is the federation's structure and organisation helping or hindering activities?'
- 'Who is the federation's competition and what are they doing?'

Make sure that all aspects of the sport are considered carefully, look at both the grass roots and elite sides. The more people in the federation who can contribute to the situation analysis the better. This will ensure a wide spectrum of opinions and perceptions – and gathering the information will be a chance to educate people about the planning process and gain their support. If only selected people are consulted, the range of responses will be more limited. For clarity, the results of a situation analysis can be presented in the form which looks at:



- Strengths.
- Weaknesses.
- Opportunities.
- Threats.

3 *Strategic framework*

The strategic framework is the part of the development plan which tells where the federation wants to go and what it has to do to get there. It starts with the creation of a picture of what people would like the federation to be like in the future. The expression of this vision describes a federation that is better than that which exists now. It sets out the future expectations of the federation, and how it will be perceived by its customers and the public at large.

Remember that the needs and interests of the athletes must be at the heart of the vision.

Once it is possible to articulate, the vision must become an integral part of the federation and kept at the forefront of its activity at all times. No major decision should be made, no programme or activity designed or evaluated, without reference to the vision. The question must be constantly asked: 'Does what we are doing contribute to achieving our vision?' The spark for the process of creating a vision should come from the federation's leaders, but in the end, the vision must be widely shared and the more people who can be involved in talking, debating and writing about the vision, the better. Again, wide participation will promote wide ownership. When a federation has a vision of where it wants to be, it is time to compare it carefully to the situation

analysis. Gaps or areas to be worked on will appear between the present reality and the desired future. These gaps are where work must be done to achieve the vision and the main gaps are often called *Areas of Emphasis*. Common examples of areas of emphasis include:

- Structure and organisational effectiveness.
- Marketing, and communications.
- Officiating.
- Events.
- Coaching.
- Athlete development.
- Facilities.
- Sponsorship and fund raising.

Most development plans contain five or six areas of emphasis. This number is a good guideline for maintaining a realistic and manageable plan.

Within each area of emphasis two or three *goals* should be set. These should be carefully considered as they are what it will take to close the gap between the present reality and the vision. They are also the outline of the federation's working programme for reaching the vision. Goals do not have to bring the federation to the vision in one jump. In fact, it is better if they relate to a specific period of time and are updated later when they have been accomplished.

4 *Operational plan*

The operational plan turns the development framework (what) into a working programme (how). In the operational plan each of the areas of emphasis becomes a project with its own project plan.

SAMPLE PLANNING ANALYSIS

Strengths:

- A strong individual athlete
- Good administration
- Quality coaching

Opportunities:

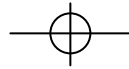
- Potential sponsor
- School/club link evening
- District Youth Development meetings

Weaknesses:

- No top class women athletes
- Few young players coming through
- Poor facilities

Threats:

- Increased costs
- Volunteers going to other sports
- Kids prefer TV to physical activity



Project leaders and groups should be appointed.

If the process up to this point has included participation and ownership, there should be a number of individuals and groups willing to take on assignments. Sometimes planning a project is best assigned to an existing committee or sub-committee and sometimes it is better if a completely new group is formed.

The task of each group will be to start with the goals set in the development framework and produce plans for activities which include:

- Steps and tasks needed to accomplish the goals.
- Resources required.
- Organisation – the people involved and responsible.
- Timeline.

It is recommended that the project groups follow the project planning procedure outlined in the first part of this chapter.

5 Implementation

Implementation is action. Without implementation going through an elaborate planning process is a waste of time and resources. Too often a great amount of effort is given the situation analysis and production of plan but less is given to the implementation. Ideally, however, the greatest amount of effort should be in the implementation phase.

It is vital that implementation of the plan and the core operation of the federation become one and the same thing. Regular communication from the leadership is a key factor. Everyone involved – volunteers, staff, athletes and even those outside the organisation – must be shown, over and over again, how every activity is related and contributes to the implementation of the plan.

If the development plan is not seen as central to all that the federation does, the plan will fail, expectations that have been raised will be dashed, and the internal

and external credibility of the organisation will be damaged.

Monitoring and Refining a Development Plan

C

Development planning and implementation of a development plan must become a continual process. A regular evaluation of the working programme will allow the federation to think about how things have been going, whether the right things have been attempted and whether there are other things which should be done.

A monitoring process should be added to the federation's meeting schedule. Using the areas of emphasis as agenda items, the project leaders can report on progress and difficulties, set new goals when the original goals are reached and, if necessary, suggest any changes which need to be made. Regular discussion will help to ensure that the plan stays at the forefront of the federation's ongoing operations.

In the end, a development plan cannot remain completely static. The situation and environment will be different at some point in the future – the competition faced by the federation, the expectations of the membership, the political and economic climate are all subject to change. While it is essential to keep sight of the vision the federation has set for itself, flexibility, modification and adaptation are also very important.