



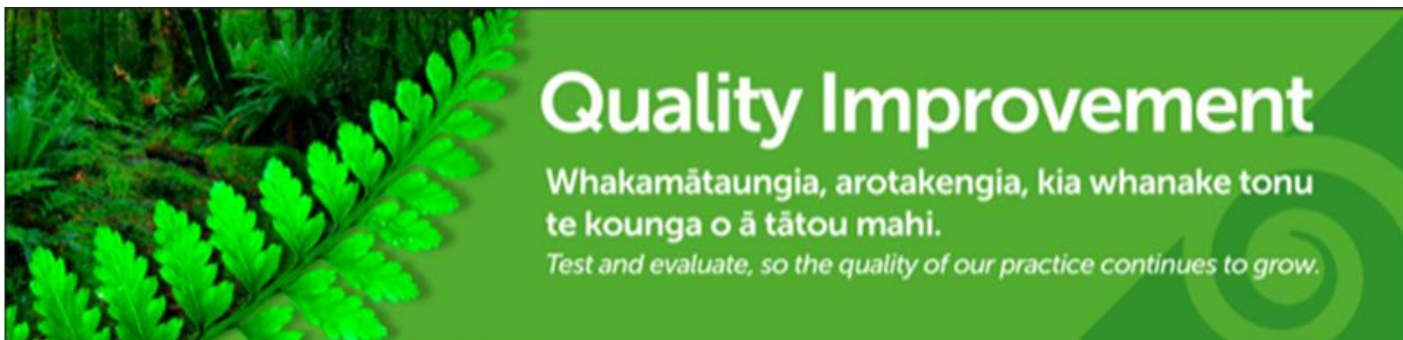
Guideline for conducting a SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis (or SWOT matrix) helps an organisation, service or project identify the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieving its objectives. The name SWOT is an acronym for the four parameters the tool examines: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are generally considered internal factors, while opportunities and threats commonly focus on the external environment

	Positive	Negative
Internal Environment	<p>Strengths</p> <p>Positive attributes internal to the organisation/team/project that are within its control.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Internal factors within an organisation/team/project's control that may reduce its ability to meet objectives</p>
External Environment	<p>Opportunities</p> <p>External factors that the organisation/team or project should (or could) develop.</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>External factors beyond the organisation/team's control that could place the project or organisation at risk.</p>

When can we use a SWOT analysis

- Before implementing change - at the start of a QI project to identify, analyse and evaluate the influences that work for or against the objectives of an organisation or project.
- During the course of a QI project to assess whether environments have changed, make adjustments when needed and maintain project focus.
- Strategic planning - when trying to work out where efforts are best placed to bring about the strongest benefits for the community and workforce.
- When considering alternatives to service provision such as new models of care or outsourcing.



Why do we use a SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis helps teams to focus on their strengths, minimise threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available to achieve strategic objectives.

By using a SWOT analysis teams/organisations can work out what they are doing well, where they can improve, and where they sit in relation to other teams/organisations.

How do we use a SWOT analysis?

1. Decide on the objective of your SWOT analysis

To get the most out of your SWOT analysis, it's useful to have a question or objective to work from. For example, a SWOT analysis could help determine whether to introduce a new staff training, or change a service process or approach.

2. Research

Before starting the SWOT analysis do some research to understand the objective and current environment. Get a range of perspectives from people within and outside the organisation. Consider for example community health needs, health workforce needs, resources, IT capability, funding sources

3. Brainstorm

Then in a team or group workshop start to brainstorm the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relevant to the organisation's strategy or QI project.

4. List the strengths

Identify and list the strengths of the project, team or wider organisation. **Think about** capabilities and resources that positively favour the team/organisation or project. **Ask** whether these strengths are being fully utilised. Strengths could include:

- cultural connections
- established relationships
- special expertise and/or experience
- capabilities
- reputation
- location
- an innovation



5. List the weaknesses

When listing weaknesses **think about** what puts the organisation/team or project at a disadvantage, needs improvement or should be avoided. **Ask** what would remove or overcome this weakness? Weaknesses could include:

- Inadequate facilities
- gaps in capabilities or service areas
- Poor IT infrastructure
- Management or staff problems
- Barriers to access
- damaged reputation

Make sure weaknesses raised are addressed. The list of weaknesses can indicate changes or improvements over time. When reviewing the SWOT analysis after a year, initial weaknesses may have been resolved thus demonstrating improvement.

6. List potential opportunities

Think about the possible external opportunities for the organisation/team or project. **Ask** how can we benefit from them? These are not the same as your internal strengths, and are not necessarily definite.

To work out if something is an internal or external factor, ask whether it would exist even if the organisation did not. If it would, then it's an external factor

Opportunities might include:

- changes in population needs
- changes in workforce
- availability of new technology
- availability of new funding
- new partnerships
- training programmes



7. List potential threats

List external factors that could be a threat or cause a problem for the organisation /team or project. **Think about** anything that might stand in the way of a positive outcome **Ask:** What can be done to mitigate each threat? Can a threat become an opportunity? Threats could include:

- increased workforce shortages
- adverse changes in national requirements/regulations
- absence of community partnerships
- loss of key staff
- increases in service demand

8. Establish priorities from the SWOT

Once you have completed the steps above, you will have four separate lists you can ideally arrange in quadrants to give you an overall picture of the current situation and the issues that need to be addressed. Work out what issues are the most important and what can be dealt with later (i.e. develop 4 prioritised lists). A priority matrix can be a helpful tool if prioritising becomes difficult.

9. Develop a strategy to address issues in the SWOT

Review your 4 quadrants or lists by asking:

- How can we use our strengths to take advantage of the opportunities identified?
- How can we use these strengths to overcome the threats identified?
- What do we need to do to overcome the identified weaknesses in order to take advantage of the opportunities?
- What can we do about our weaknesses to make the threats less likely?

Once you have answered these questions and finalised your lists, you can now use the SWOT analysis to develop strategies for achieving your goals.



The 7 simple rules for successful SWOT analysis

Be Specific: Avoid vague descriptions or fuzzy definitions.

Be Objective: Ask for input from well-informed and objective sources

Be Realistic: Be realistic about strengths and weaknesses, be practical in judging sections.

Apply Context: Distinguish between where the organisation or project actually is today, and where it could be in the future.

Contrast and Compare: Relate strengths and weaknesses to critical success factors.

Short and Simple: Avoid needless complexity and over-analysis. Keep it brief — never more than a page

Update plans and goals: Once the key issues are identified, define the action steps to achieve change