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College Development Network

INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGY, MISSION AND VALUES



This self-directed module leads you to explore your college's strategies, mission and values in greater depth.

A selection of activities are provided so that you can pick those most relevant to your learning journey.

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1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A participant will be able to:

- Reflect on the mission, vision and values of the organisation and contribute to the development of these; and
- Act as a guardian of the college's mission by ensuring that all decisions and actions are aligned with and, as relevant, are underpinned by the college's mission, vision and values.
- Understand the strategic planning process and explain how its components contribute to the development and delivery of the college strategic plan
- Understand the difference between the board's governance and management and leadership by senior managers

2. HOW TO USE THIS PACK

Before you start reading this pack, sit down with your Board Secretary/governance professional and look through the exercises, which are indicated by this icon:



There are a number of exercises; it is up to you how many you work through. Look at the different topics covered and decide which you will complete. You should then read through all the materials, in readiness for your chosen exercises.

This module does not have an assessment. Instead, you should keep a list alongside the exercises you complete which details any further information you need to gather about your college or the FE sector, actions you will take over the next year as a result of your learning from this module, and reminders that will help your own practice. You should then use these notes to form an action plan, as you will see from Exercise 5.2.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT OF A COLLEGE?

Typically, the purpose of a mission statement is to communicate an organisation's purpose and direction to its employees, customers (in this case students) and other stakeholders. A mission statement also creates a sense of identity for its employees.

Further research suggests that organisations summarise their goals and objectives in mission and vision statements. While a **mission statement** describes what an organisation wants to do now, a **vision statement** outlines what an organisation wants to be in the future.

The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (2016) states

Vision and Strategy

- A.4 The board is responsible for determining their institution's vision, strategic direction, educational character, values and ethos. Regional strategic bodies must also determine the regional strategy for colleges assigned to them. The board of an assigned college must have regard to the strategy determined by the regional strategic body. Board members have a collective leadership role in fostering an environment that enables the body to fulfil its mission and meet Scottish Government priorities, for the benefit of students and the community it serves.
- A.5 The board must develop and articulate a clear vision for the region or college. This should be a formally agreed statement of its aims and desired outcomes which should be used as the basis for its overall strategy and planning processes.

4. CONSIDERATIONS IN DEFINING A COLLEGE'S PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

Colleges are autonomous institutions which respond directly to the education and training needs of young people and adults, employers, communities and the local/national economy.

A college's purpose and priorities should therefore be defined in the context of its local community and of serving employers' needs. There is a clear recognition among board members that in providing high quality education and training, they also have a role in promoting inclusion, social mobility, enterprise and community cohesion.

The examples below are taken from the websites of different colleges – they are real examples from the sector rather than suggestions of best practice. They show the missions ultimately agreed by their respective governing bodies. Some of them also prioritise their college's role in preparing their students for their future careers and enabling them to achieve their potential.

➤ Example 1

Mission: To provide excellent education, training opportunities and services for students and customers.

Vision: Collective Ambition, Pride and Passion: A Vibrant and Dynamic College Providing excellent education and training opportunities and services for our students, customers and communities.

➤ Example 2

Our purpose: To shape and nurture the most highly prized students in the job market.

Our vision: Prized students shaping their futures and our communities.

➤ Example 3

Mission: To provide excellent learning opportunities which enable students of all ages and backgrounds to fulfil their potential.

➤ Example 4

Our mission: outstanding technical and professional learning, which raises aspirations, develops skills and changes lives.

Remember: There are no perfect mission or vision statements and not all colleges publish both a mission and a vision. Colleges may also use different terminology (for example, objectives, goals, ethos, aims, etc.)

However, it is important that the governing body establishes and is clear about the college's purpose and its values. It is also essential that all levels of the organisation are aware of them and actively engaged in delivering them (even if this is indirectly through the day to day process of teaching and learning).



EXERCISE 1

Exploring your college's mission and vision

- 1** Have a look for your college's mission (and vision, if relevant) on your college website. Were they easy to find? If not, ask your Board Secretary for a copy.
- 2** What does the mission statement tell you about the purpose of your college? Do you feel that it fully summarises the overall aims of the college? In what way?
- 3** If you consider that the mission does not fully reflect the aims of the college, in what way do you think it may be too narrow?
- 5** If your college does have a vision statement, how does it set down the board's aspiration for the college's future?
- 6** Discuss with your Board Secretary how often the mission (and vision) for your college are reviewed and when they were last updated. What are the arrangements for reviewing the college's mission? Which stakeholders are normally involved?
- 7** What points would you raise as a board member when reviewing your college's mission (and vision) statements?



5. IDENTIFYING A COLLEGE'S VALUES

This section of the module focuses on the agreed values for the college as a whole. These values should go hand-in-hand with the mission and vision for the college. The values underpin the focus and approach taken to achieve the mission and the vision. They also identify a college's ethos.

A college's values support the vision and shape the culture. They should form the essence of the college's identity – the principles, beliefs or philosophy of values. By publishing its core values on its website, a college informs its current and future students and stakeholders about what the college is about and it clarifies the identity of the college.

As one college states in its strategic plan:

“Our core values underpin our strategies, policies, objectives and procedures by providing a basis and a reference point for everything that we do. These values and beliefs will guide our conduct and that of our students.”

A college's core values therefore need to be personal to the college. Typically, a college's values may include concepts such as: excellence and ambition, cooperation and communication, equality, recognition and integrity.

As with the mission and vision of a college, governing bodies need to agree the values that identify the culture of the college and are appropriate to underpin the mission. Rightly, the wording and approach are individual to each college, as seen in the examples below.

➤ Example 1

Our values are:

- Achievement: We will strive to achieve our full potential and will help others to do the same

- Excellence: We will deliver outstanding experiences for everyone
- Partnership: We will work in partnership with others to achieve our vision and share greater benefits.
- Positivity: We will approach everything with a creative, can-do attitude
- Purposeful: We are focused, effective and accountable
- Respect: We will respect others and our environment

➤ Example 2

- Our learners and customers are paramount
- We strive to provide excellence in all that we do
- Working together with mutual respect
- Acting with integrity at all times

➤ Example 3

The College seeks to enhance the social, economic and physical wellbeing of the community it serves.

Socially, the College promotes inclusion and opposes discrimination. By developing positive action strategies and policies, it enables equal access for all local residents to the College facilities and activities.

The College values every educational aim of every student equally and seeks to raise the aspirations of its students and staff so that each may make the maximum contribution to the community.

Economically, the College supports local businesses and provides a broad range of learning to maximise the skills and knowledge of students. It engages with local employers to meet the needs of businesses and non-commercial partners.

The College understands its environmental responsibilities, actively promotes a sustainable approach to its activities and encourages community use of its facilities.



EXERCISE 2

Exploring your college's values statements

- 1 Have a look for your college's values (or equivalent statement) on your college website. Were they easy to find? If not, ask your Board Secretary where board members can find the college's values.
- 2 Does your college have similar values to the examples above? Consider how they may be different. How well do you think your college's values underpin the college's mission or purpose?

The values of a college are observable in the culture of the organisation; these are in turn the factors that distinguish one institution from another. For example, where a college has the value of 'respect for others and the environment' that could mean very different things to colleges that then translate to:

College A	College B
Handshakes as the only appropriate greeting between student and staff	No shouting (except in limited appropriate settings)
Recycling bins strategically placed with visible reminders	Environmental protection awareness embedded in the curriculum
Board members require a brief annual update on environmental impact of the college	Environmental competition in the community for students and staff

6. THE BOARD MEMBERS' ROLE

It is the responsibility of board members to agree and act as guardians for the vision, mission, and values of the organisation. There are a range of duties associated with this key responsibility.

These include:

- Establishing formal processes to understand the extent to which the college is fulfilling its mission (for example, organisational KPIs should be related to the mission and vision). Board away days can provide a useful forum for this process
- Publishing the mission, vision and values and refreshing them periodically. There should also be a regular cycle of review created involving key stakeholders (such as students, staff and local employers) to ensure that the college is responsive to its local and national context
- Directly and indirectly ensuring that the values are widely known, deeply embedded and reflected at all levels of the organisation
- This list is a good example of the fact that a governing body has a strategic leadership role – not a management one



7. UNDERSTANDING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

One of the board's roles in governing and leading the college is to formally approve the strategic plan. This plan should cover all aspects of the college's work including partnerships, subcontracted provision and any subsidiary companies. The board should ensure that the plan is realistic and underpinned by an affordable financial strategy. There should also be key performance indicators (KPIs) so that the board can monitor the implementation of the plan

This section of the module covers the overview of the strategic planning process. The educational character of a college is explored further in module P3; curriculum design and development are covered in modules C6a and C6b

A college's strategic plan should provide the objectives and planned action designed to meet its mission and vision. It should therefore also be underpinned by the college's values

It is important that all board members understand the underpinning rationale for the strategic objectives and how they are based on an assessment of need. A strategic plan will typically cover three to five years, with a more detailed implementation plan for the current and following years. The process will therefore also need to involve horizon scanning so that the plan is linked to potential local, regional and national developments.

Typical structure and processes for strategic planning for a college

This section of the module explores the different processes for strategic planning in a college. The examples are taken from a range of published college strategic plans to illustrate these processes:



EXERCISE 3

Exploring your college's strategic plan

- 1** For this exercise, you will need a copy of your college's latest strategic plan. It may be on the website; otherwise, ask your Board Secretary for a copy.
- 2** As you go through this section of the module, use your college's strategic plan to explore the questions. You may like to arrange a meeting with the Board Secretary to help you relate the processes discussed to your college's local context.

1. Identifying the time scale, such as 2017 – 2020; 2016 – 2021; 2018/19

The timescale may simply follow on from the previous strategic plan or it may be linked to changes in the college structure, such as a merger.

A governing body may decide to revise its college's strategy because of a major change to educational policy, such as the introduction of the levy for apprenticeships.



EXERCISE 3.1

What is the timescale for your college's strategic plan? Is there a specific reason for this? If it covers more than one year, is there also a yearly or bi-yearly implementation plan?

2. Agreeing the college's overarching strategic objectives

As already explored in this module, a college's mission, vision and values should provide the underpinning focus for the college's strategic priorities. Most strategic plans set the scene by including the mission and vision statements and listing the college's core values.

They may also include a joint statement from the Principal/Chief Executive and the Chair of the College celebrating previous achievements, outlining the strategic priorities for the college and commending the plan to all the college's stakeholders.

An important process in strategic planning is agreeing the college's overarching strategic priorities. Examples of a few colleges' overarching strategic objectives:

Example 1

- Create purposeful pathways to success
- Develop highly skilled, creative and adaptable individuals
- Innovate and grow through partnership

Example 2

- To drive up performance and the standard of provision through a 'high expectation, high achievement' culture
- To achieve year-on-year growth through the development and delivery of relevant, responsive and innovative education and training
- To drive skills development and be a vital educational, social, cultural and economic asset for the region

Example 3

Secure best outcomes for our learners:

- Develop the technical skills, competencies and qualifications employers need
- Maximise progression and positive employment outcomes
- Prepare learners for life in a diverse society
- Provide an inclusive, well-resourced and aspirational learning environment

High standards delivered within a culture of challenge, innovation and aspiration:

- Embed a culture of continuous improvement
- Invest in and develop exceptional people who are passionate about improving lives
- Enable all staff to innovate, improve, and be enterprising
- Optimise technology to add value, and to transform learning and business processes

To be financially sustainable:

- Grow and diversify our income
- To make efficient and effective use of resources
- Devolve financial accountability.

These objectives are individual to each college. They may seem fairly generic, but this is because they are the overall objectives for a three- to five-year period.

Example 1 focuses on progression for the college's learners through clear pathways, the development of highly skilled individuals and partnership working.

The objectives in example 2 are equally broad, and stress ambition for learners' achievement, growth through responsive education and training, and the college's ambition to be a vital asset for the region.

Example 3 has similarly broad objectives and provides further detail on its ambitions for learners, the business community and the college. It is also clear that technological advancement is a high strategic priority for this college.



EXERCISE 3.2

What are the overarching strategic priorities for your college? How well are they underpinned by the college's mission, vision and values? Do they have a specific focus that is individual to your college and its community? Are they suitably realistic and challenging? Are they relevant to the college's context and its mission?

3. Setting the scene for more detailed strategic objectives.

A college's purpose and priorities should be defined in the context of its local community, including social and business needs. Consideration should also be given to the relevant national and local policy priorities for further education (FE) and skills.

The next stage in the strategic planning process is to unpack the overall strategic priorities into more detailed objectives. These could provide more detail about:

- The priority target groups of learners
- Target communities and business developments
- The planned priorities for the curriculum
- Partnership working
- Planning for growth and financial stability

As every college is part of a community and works in specific economic and social contexts, it is important that the strategic plan is based on a good understanding of these contexts.

The lists below provide examples of the type of data available that could be used for strategic planning. These are in three categories of data for the purposes of this module.

It is important to note that board members are not expected to conduct labour market research, know in depth about national policy developments on skills or have student performance information beyond their own college. Their role is to:

- Understand and scrutinise the information and assumptions that inform the strategy in these three categories
- Bring their local and if relevant national knowledge and expertise to bear on the decision-making process
- Ensure, by asking the right questions, that there is effective challenge, and risks are carefully considered and mitigated
- Ensure that the strategy and plans are in line with the mission, vision and values of the organisation

➤ Category 1

Labour market research and local population data

Responding to the skills needs of the region and the needs of the local economy normally involves considering labour market and local population data. This is available from many sources including: Skills and Enterprise bodies, local authorities or the Office for National Statistics.

Typical areas of exploration could include:

- Information on local business priorities and identified skills shortages
- Data on the age and ethnicity profile of the local population in the college's key catchment areas
- Data from the Indices for Multiple Deprivation
- Information on school leaving qualifications and vocational qualification levels of the local population
- Employment data and trends; youth employment/unemployment
- Data on registered businesses according to number of employees and vocational sectors

The use of these data gives an overview of the background information, including employment status and education attainment of the population of the college's key catchment areas

This overview should lead to identifying the main strategic priority groups for students; vocational priorities; and educational ambitions.

➤ Category 2

Information on Scottish Government policy on education and skills

The Ministerial Letter of Guidance sets out key priorities for the following year, available on the Scottish Funding Council website. See [SFC](#). Examples include:

- Increasing the number of apprenticeships and traineeships
- Supporting provision for learners with special educational needs and disabilities
- Providing technical and professional skills relevant to the workplace
- Delivering English and Maths qualifications
- Reforming the adult education budget

Your Board Secretary should be able to provide further information on these and more recent national skills funding priorities. There will also be local issues and priorities that should be considered.

This information is usually used to understand changes that should be made to the college's strategic priorities to keep in line with national priorities and corresponding changes to government funding.

➤ Category 3

College performance data

College performance data provide information on:

- Recruitment of students onto government funded courses, including subcontracted provision
- Retention of students – i.e. those who leave a course early and those who complete the course
- Pass rates for qualifications, including the proportion of students who gain high grades, distinctions etc
- Achievement rates for students on non-accredited courses – towards their personal goals

- Progression rates for students to higher level FE courses, within the college
- Students' destinations on leaving the college – i.e. to higher level FE courses; to HE courses and to university, to apprenticeships or employment (including their industry/sectors)
- Information on income-generating
- Feedback from students and employers on their satisfaction with the service the college provides

These data may also be presented according to the different types of provision, such as: for young people aged 16 – 19; adult learning; and apprenticeships. They may also be analysed according to subject sectors or college faculties (schools or departments).

This final piece of the information jigsaw is normally used to identify where the stronger and weaker performing areas of the college are to help agree the strategic priorities for growth and development.



EXERCISE 3.3

How does your college's strategic plan express its more detailed strategic objectives? To what extent does the current strategic plan show how the overarching objectives will be achieved?

Choose one or two of the aspects of strategic planning below:

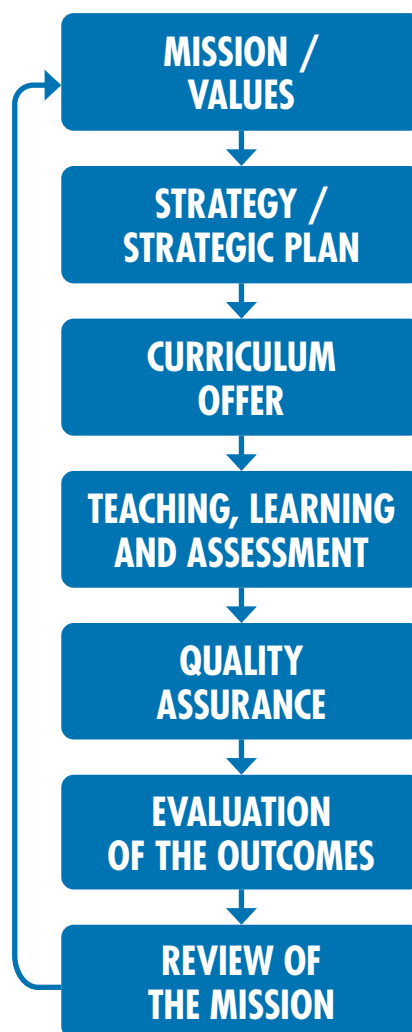
- The priority target groups of learners
- Target communities and business developments
- The planned priorities for the curriculum
- Partnership working
- Planning for growth and financial stability

Consider how these aspects were agreed as strategic priorities. What background information and data were used?

4. Embedding the strategy into the curriculum

A college's mission and strategic plan should be the drivers for its curriculum offer. The board should therefore be clear about how the strategic objectives are achieved through the curriculum.

This flowchart demonstrates how a college's mission and vision should inform the strategic priorities and the implementation plan. Board members should then have confidence that these priorities shape the curriculum. They should also satisfy themselves that the teaching and learning deliver the curriculum appropriately to bring the expected outcomes for learners. By evaluating the outcomes for learners, board members should know whether they are aligned to the college's mission.



In the same way, board members should consider how well the college has embedded its strategy by asking:

Intent – What are we trying to achieve through our curriculum? Who is it for? What are the intended benefits? Are these aligned to our mission, and strategic priorities and national policy objectives?

Implementation – How is our curriculum being delivered? What is the content of our courses? How do they achieve our objectives? Are they adequately resourced?

Impact – What difference is our curriculum making? What is the potential impact of our curriculum objectives on our learners and our local communities?

How well do our courses and learning opportunities prepare all our learners for their next step in their careers and/or working/everyday lives?

When considering how well your strategic priorities are embedded into your curriculum, it is important to remember the distinction between governance and management. When considering the questions above, you need to ensure that your focus is the overview of the curriculum for the college as a whole and not for individual curriculum areas or subjects – that is the role of managers.

5. Setting key measures of success

In order to ensure successful implementation of the strategic plan, the board should be clear how performance of the strategy will be measured.

It should identify and adopt a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that would normally cover teaching, training and learning; learners' experience and outcomes; staff performance; stakeholders' opinions; and growth and financial health.

Again, it is important to remember that the board needs to maintain an overview of the college's performance in relation to the strategic plan. Board members should not have to plough through reams of detailed data on each of the above aspects of the college's provision. That is the role of managers. Managers should use the detailed data to provide board members with a summary of the college's performance against the agreed KPIs.

However, more detailed data should be available to board members, should they require more information to clarify a specific point. They should also have the confidence that the summary data is based on accurate underpinning detailed data.

The list below of sample KPIs have been taken from a range of published college strategic plans. They show different approaches to identifying KPIs for board members and senior leaders. (The actual figures have not been included.)

Teaching, training and learning:

- Increase the investment in teaching, learning and assessment by x%

Students' experience and outcomes:

- Demonstrate achievement rates in line with other colleges
- Achieve overall success rates of x% on students' main qualifications
- Improve internal progression rates by x%
- Achieve a positive destination rate of x%

Staff performance and well-being:

- Achieve an increase in staff satisfaction by x% each year
- Achieve 100% completion of staff appraisals; set with SMART targets which are supportive of our strategic objectives
- Reduce staff turnover to x%

Stakeholders' opinions:

- Demonstrate student satisfaction levels above the sector benchmarks
- Achieve a stakeholder satisfaction rate of at least x%, including from employers

Future growth and curriculum:

- Achieve x% growth in the volume of Level 4 and Level 5 provision
- Develop technical education programmes at both L3 and L4, in at least four specialisms
- Implement a Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy across the College
- Improve market share of school leavers by x%
- Increase the number of Higher Education enrolments by x%.

It is important that board members review the KPIs on two levels.

1. They should have the confidence that the performance indicators are the right ones. They need to be aligned to the college's strategic priorities so that board members will be able to evaluate how well those priorities are being met
2. Board members will then need to review the college's actual performance against those indicators

In setting similar success measures for each strategic objective, the board should make clear the division of responsibilities between strategic governance and leadership by the board and the operational management and leadership by the provider's senior management team led by the principal or chief executive.



EXERCISE 3.4

How clear and specific are the success measures for your college's strategic objectives?

Consider the arrangements for informing board members of the progress towards each of the college's strategic objectives. Is it clear to you how this links to what is discussed in the boardroom?

8. SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Following completion of this module, board members should be able to understand:

- That a college's mission defines its purpose and is the driver for its strategic priorities, and that the mission is defined in the context of the college's local community and in serving the needs of the local economy
 - That a college's vision statement outlines what an organisation wants to be in the future
 - How a college's values shape its culture, and forms the essence of the college's identity for staff, students and all stakeholders
 - The governing body's role in the main processes for strategic planning are to: agree the overarching objectives; ensure that the more detailed objectives are realistic and relevant to the college's context and its mission; and agree the success measures for the strategy as a whole and for each objective
- That strategy away days for the board provide a useful forum for board members to review the college's mission, vision, values and strategic priorities
 - The range of data and information that could be used to develop the strategic objectives, relating to local social and economic priorities; national and local policy relevant to FE and skills; and the college's prior performance
 - How the college's strategy should be embedded in the curriculum by linking the intent of the curriculum, how it is implemented and the overall impact it has on learners and the community to the college's strategic priorities or objectives
 - The division of responsibilities between governance and leadership by the board, and the operational management and leadership by the senior management team



**EXERCISE 4****Contributing to discussions on your college's mission, vision, values and strategic plan at board meetings**

- 1 Consider your learning points against each of the summary points above. Consider the opportunities for contributing to the review and development of your college's mission, vision, values and strategic plan and how well the strategic priorities are embedded in the curriculum. What further reflection or preparation do you need to enable you to contribute to these discussions?
- 2 You should now have enough material to form your action plan. You may find it easier to develop a table. You could list your planned actions under the subject headings used for the exercises below. You should plan when you intend to complete each action and note down how each action will help you carry out your role.

Topic	e.g. The college's mission and vision
Planned action	e.g. Explore the mission statement of other similar colleges
Intended impact	e.g. To help me have a better perspective of the appropriateness of our college's mission
Timescale	By the end of next month
Use of learning	To take to the strategy day in reviewing the intent of the college's curriculum.

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