

Filters for Prioritization of Activities that Fit Within the Mission of An Organization

Once you have a list of possible activities and opportunities that all fit within your mission statement, the filters below can be used to select, eliminate, and prioritize them as you narrow the list to a reasonable number. The filters can be used to evaluate possible new activities and opportunities, and/or to evaluate current activities.

1. Is there a need?

- Is that need particularly critical for the people we serve?
- Is having this need unmet impacting our programs (making it hard for the people we serve to access our programs, making it challenging for them to succeed in our programs, etc.)?

2. Is there a market?

- Do the people who have this need have the ability/willingness to pay for it, or are there funders who recognize this critical need and will pay us to meet it?

3. Is it doable?

- Is it possible to meet this need?
- Do we think we can do it well?

4. Is it sustainable?

- Can we fund it over the long haul (rather than just get it started with pilot-level funding and then be left with a funding gap to fill)?

5. Are we the best organization to meet all or part of that need?

- Are there already other organizations filling this need? Could we refer the people we serve to them instead of providing the service ourselves and would that meet the need?
- Could we establish a collaboration with organizations already filling this need to ensure that the people we are concerned with get more of their needs met? Would this be more effective than trying to meet the need ourselves?
- Are we uniquely suited in some way to fill all or part of this need?

6. Would undertaking this activity strengthen our organization?

- Is it financially viable?
 - Can it pay for itself (covering both direct and indirect costs)?
 - Can it actually help support other activities?
 - Does it give us access to new funding sources?
 - Are those sources reliable?

- Would it build on existing strengths in the organization or help us develop strengths we want to develop? Would it add new capacities to the organization that would help us in other ways (add staff with skills we can use for other things, distribute administrative costs more cost effectively, give us new equipment/technology that will also help us in other ways, etc.)?
- Will it bring us new visibility that will help build the reputation of the organization with decision-makers, funders, possible clients, etc.?

7. Are there ways in which undertaking this activity could weaken the organization or put it at risk in new ways?

- By increasing dependency on a single funder or unreliable funding sources?
- By over-taxing staff?
- By making us vulnerable to political attack?
- By draining reserves? etc.

8. What would we be giving up to undertake this new activity, in the short and long term?

- What are the “opportunity costs” – what else could we be doing with the time, energy and resources it would take to do this?
- Does taking this on directly preclude us from doing anything else?
- What will the short-term costs to staff and board be in trying to ramp up to do this?

9. Who is going to make it happen? Do they have the capacity?

- Roles of Staff? Board? Volunteers? Subcommittee? Consultants? Partners? – existing or new?
- Who has ultimate responsibility for implementation?
- Do they have time to do it well? Are there things they would have to stop doing to take this on?
- What would a realistic timeline be?

Translated into Headings for a Prioritization Matrix:

Is there a need?	Will it strengthen the organization?
Is there a market?	Could it weaken the organization?
Is it doable?	What would we give up to do it?
Is it sustainable?	Who will do it? Can they do it?
Are we the best organization to do it?	