

SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses/Areas for improvement, Opportunities, Threats) analysis often is used in strategic planning. The analysis focuses on the four elements included in the acronym, allowing organizations to identify the forces influencing a strategy, action, or initiative. Knowing these positive and negative elements can help groups to more effectively identify strengths and improvement needs, and assess their environment.

The results of the SWOT analysis are typically recorded in a two-by-two table that shows the four dimensions side-by-side for comparison, as shown in one of the sample SWOT analyses that follows. Alternatively, the four cells can be presented below each other, as is done in the other example.

Internal Factors

The first two letters in the acronym, S (strengths) and W (weaknesses), refer to internal factors. These are more about the people and team.

- Financial resources (institutional support, department support, added resources from grants, other sources)
- Physical resources (location, facilities, equipment, technology)
- Human resources (faculty, community, voluntary faculty, coordinators, other program staff)
- Other resources (reputation, graduate network)
- Current processes (curriculum, rotations and experiences, simulation, didactic program)

External Factors

External forces influence and affect every organization and individual. Whether these factors are connected directly or indirectly to an opportunity or threat, it is important to take note of and document each one.

- Specialty selection and workforce trends (desirability of the specialty, shifts in patient needs, resident/fellow interest and demand, career opportunities in the specialty)
- Institutional and local priorities (opportunities for expansion, need for program contraction, relationships with other programs, opportunities for collaboration with other entities and organizations)
- Economic trends (local, regional, and national financial trends)
- Funding (institutional support, state, and other possible sources)
- Local and regional competition
- Political, economic, and social environment

Using the Data from the SWOT Analysis

Once the SWOT analysis is completed, the program can decide on high value areas for improvement, or strategies to maintain and sustain current areas with good performance. Ideally, strategies should focus on leveraging strengths; addressing critical “weaknesses” (areas for improvement); taking advantage of desirable opportunities; and mitigating threats.

