

## **Chapter 2: Strategic Planning**

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## Chapter 2

# Strategic Planning

This chapter deals with strategic planning as it applies to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). Strategic planning and implementation is central to the important work of the NCSE. This chapter describes how the Council, Council members, and executive can best participate in this activity. It outlines government and legislative requirements for the preparation and publication of a strategic plan and offers pointers for its implementation. The material is presented under the following headings:

- 1 What is strategic planning?
- 2 Legislative framework and government policy
- 3 Strategic planning and the NCSE
- 4 The process of planning
- 5 Publication of the strategic plan
- 6 Implementation
- 7 The role of the Council in strategic planning.
- 8 The role of Council members
- 9 The role of the Executive

### 1 What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is concerned with the determination of the nature and scope of an organisation's activities, and the evaluation of the success of these activities. In order for a strategic plan to be successful, it should consist of:

- clear statement of long-term goals and priorities
- an understanding of the organisational environment
- an appraisal of resources necessary to deliver the goals and priorities
- arrangements for effective implementation and monitoring of performance

### 2 Legislative Framework and Government Policy

- See the *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004*. The strategic plan will set out the strategic priorities for NCSE.
- See Section 2.13 of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies which provides that the commercial state bodies should, within the first six months of each year, produce annual rolling five-year business and financial plans encompassing strategy, planned investment and appropriate financial targets. In the case of non-commercial bodies the strategy adopted may have a 3-5 year time horizon supported by an annual planning and budget cycle as outlined in section 2.14.

- The Public Sector Agreement and Civil Service Reform Programme incorporating a significant change agenda have an impact on all aspects of the operation of the NCSE.

### **3 Strategic Planning and the NCSE**

The Council of the National Council for Special Education is tasked with the role of leading the organisation. Several elements are linked to this role:

- Developing a Mission statement covering a multi annual period.
- Having regard to the organisational external and internal operating environment
- Deciding the strategic objectives needed to carry out the mission.
- Clarifying the strategies required to achieve those objectives.
- Outlining the planned outputs and outcomes from the implementation of the strategies.
- Ensuring that the organisation progresses satisfactorily in line with its Strategy.

### **4 The Process of Planning**

- NCSE Council has developed and agreed the NCSE Statement of Strategy 2012-16 (**Appendix 15**). The Statement of Strategy which is the NCSE Strategic Plan, was developed in line with the procedures under and sets out the Strategic Priorities of the NCSE for the period.
- A new NCSE Statement of Strategy will require to be put in place from January 2017.
- The draft Statement of Strategy is prepared by the executive with inputs by Council in the development phase and submitted for consideration and agreement by the Council.
- The Statement of Strategy is informed by the statutory functions of the Council and the policy framework established by the Department of Education and Skills.
- The Statement of Strategy is informed by consultation with stakeholders, by the environmental context and by the relevant legislation.
- As part of the strategic planning process, the draft strategy is forwarded to the Minister.

In approving the strategy, the NCSE Council will have regard to the views of the Minister as well as any public interest considerations and the input of stakeholders.

- The Statement of Strategy provides the basis upon which the work of the Council is to proceed.
- Annual Work Plans (**Appendix 16**) are prepared by the executive and agreed by the Council for the delivery of the strategic priorities set out in the Statement of Strategy. Progress is reviewed by Council and regular reports are made by the executive to the Council on the implementation of the agreed annual NCSE Work Plans.
- Annual Work Plans have regard to the NCSE Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) with the Department of Education and Skills (**Appendix 4**), with approved NCSE budget and staffing limits, with significant identified risk areas and with the implementation of public service reform..
- Business/work plans are used in determining the annual goals of individual staff under the Performance Management Development System.

## **5 Approval & Publication of the current NCSE Statement of Strategy**

- The NCSE Statement of Strategy 2012-16 was approved by the Council at its 66<sup>th</sup> Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011
- The NCSE Statement of Strategy is published on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

## **6 Implementation**

- The Council has an on-going role in overseeing its implementation of its Statement of Strategy and, to this end, the strategic plan and its implementation should be a prominent agenda item at Council meetings.
- The Council will receive written reports and verbal updates on the progress with implementation.
- As significant challenges, constraints or problems arise, the Chief Executive will inform the Council members and the Chairperson will invite discussion on possible solutions or remedial actions.

## **7 The Role of Council Chairperson**

- The Chairperson must ensure that the Council fulfils its obligations in relation to both the adoption of the strategic plan and the oversight of implementation.

- He/she directs meetings at which the draft material is discussed by Council members and executive.
- As part of the Council's agenda, the Chairperson will ensure strategy and its implementation is regularly discussed at Council meetings.

## **8 The Role of Council Members**

- It is very important to re-iterate that members should always act fairly, in good faith and with due care, prudence and diligence to meet the strategic objectives of the NCSE.
- When participating in the development and monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan, members will remember that they have been appointed to bring their specialist knowledge, skill and insight to the work of the NCSE. In the deliberations on the plan, maintaining confidentiality and safeguarding the collective role and responsibility of the Council is of paramount importance.
- In this context, the responsibility of members is to take a corporate view of how the NCSE will fulfil its functions over the period of the plan, rather than representing or promoting the interests of the organisation or group with which they are associated.
- In order to make the best contribution to strategic development, members should endeavour to read the documentation circulated before meetings. In reading the materials, they should reflect on the impact of the strategy for the sector as a whole, in light of their own background.
- Members should make a note of any points of detail they wish to clarify and discuss them with the Chairperson and/or Chief Executive before the meeting. This should ensure that the meeting will run most efficiently by focussing on significant issues.
- As part of the process, members should feel comfortable to input on areas that concern them most or areas where they have particular insights and experience as this will contribute positively to the final plan.

## **9 The Role of the Chief Executive**

In addition to the leadership and management of the organisation, as part of the strategic planning and implementation process the Chief Executive will:

- Liaise with relevant stakeholders prior to the initial drafting of the strategic plan/Statement of Strategy.
- Ensure the production of background and discussion papers on key areas of the plan and provide advice, where appropriate.
- Revise the draft documents following discussion with Council members.

- Ensure final copy is prepared for adoption and ensure copy is provided to the Minister.
- Following adoption of the Statement of Strategy, advise Council members regarding the timetable and detailed work plans for its implementation.
- Provide progress reports to Council members regarding implementation.

