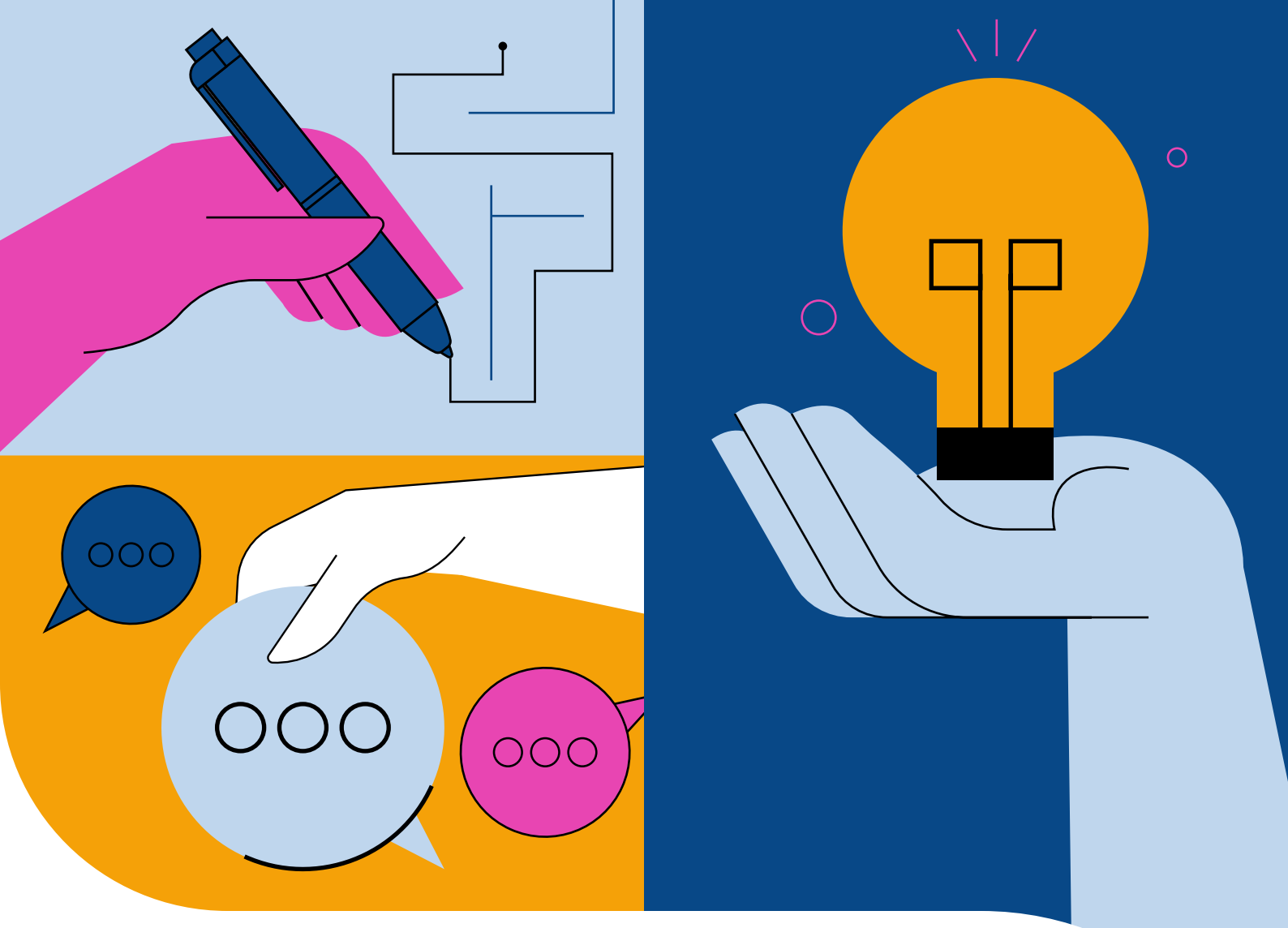

# Guidelines on Parliamentary Strategic Planning

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# Foreword

Parliaments are among the oldest and most consequential institutions of democracy. They make laws, hold governments to account, represent citizens, and provide the institutional architecture through which democratic governance is exercised. Yet for too long, the administrative and institutional development of parliaments has received insufficient systematic attention. These guidelines seek to address that gap.

Strategic planning is one of the most effective tools available to parliamentary administrations for managing institutional change, improving service delivery, and building long-term organisational resilience. By setting clear visions, defining measurable objectives, and establishing robust frameworks for governance, monitoring, and learning, strategic plans help parliaments chart a course through complex and shifting environments – to move beyond the reactive and the routine, and toward the purposeful and the sustainable. In short, they allow parliaments to shape their own future, and to better support the future of the societies they serve.

These guidelines have been shaped by direct international parliamentary cooperation and by the lived experience of practitioners. The Parliamentary Strategic Planning High-level Workshop, convened by Inter Pares in partnership with the National Assembly of Zambia, brought together parliamentary delegations from three continents to share candid reflections on what works, what does not, and why. Their exchanges have been distilled into the pages that follow. These guidelines are grounded in practice, informed by diverse parliamentary contexts, and designed for use by parliaments across the world.

Parliaments differ profoundly in their political contexts, institutional histories, resource endowments and levels of planning maturity, and these guidelines offer a flexible, evidence-informed framework from which parliaments can draw according to their own needs and circumstances. Nonetheless, two core insights are clear. First, administrative leadership is essential: without a Secretary General or Clerk who champions the strategic planning process, even well-developed plans may stall. Second, political ownership is equally indispensable: without endorsement and ongoing support from the Speaker or political governing body, strategic plans will struggle to secure the resources and legitimacy needed to succeed.

We are grateful to the parliamentary delegations that contributed so openly and helpfully to the Lusaka Workshop, and to the National Assembly of Zambia for hosting the event with generosity and professionalism. I hope that these guidelines will serve as a practical and enduring resource for the parliamentary community – thus strengthening strategic planning, parliamentary institutions, and democracy itself.

**Dr Kevin Casas-Zamora**
Secretary-General
International IDEA
30 March 2026

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The Parliamentary Strategic Planning Guidelines Project was developed by Derek Dignam, who served over 23 years in the Irish Parliament as Head of Corporate Services, as Head of Communications and International Relations and as a member of the Management Board, Dr. Jonathan Murphy, Head of Programme at Inter Pares, and Isabella Brozinga Zandonadi, Programme Consultant at Inter Pares with the input of the Inter Pares team.

These guidelines are informed by a range of international approaches and lessons learned from the Inter-Parliamentary Strategic Planning Workshop in Zambia, hosted by the National Assembly of Zambia in partnership with Inter Pares. The workshop gathered eleven parliaments across Africa, Europe, and North America – Botswana, Canada, Denmark, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa Sweden, and Zambia.

The Inter Pares team is very grateful to the team of parliamentary staff who participated in the workshop, particularly those who later shared their knowledge and expertise as part of this project as a reviewing group from the Canadian House of Commons, Parliament of Denmark (Folketing), Parliament of Ghana, Parliament of Ireland, Parliament of Kenya, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, Parliament of Sierra Leone, and Parliament of Sweden (Riksdag).



International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN

Tel: +46 8 698 37 00
Email: info@idea.int
Website: www.idea.int

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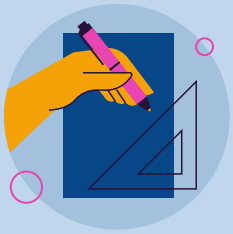


# Introduction

Strategic planning has emerged over the past two decades as a valued approach for many parliaments across the globe to enhance their effectiveness, service delivery and accountability. It brings a tighter focus to achieving future goals. Strategic planning is used in diverse parliamentary contexts worldwide, identifying innovations, best practices and common challenges. Long-term planning techniques were once seen primarily in the executive branch and private sector. They are now recognised as vital for legislative institutions in navigating complex governance challenges and rapidly changing public expectations. Parliaments are now being called upon to modernise, become more transparent and engage citizens more proactively, while upholding their core mandates of law-making, oversight and representation.

Recognising the growing importance of strategic planning in parliaments and the value of harnessing experiences and learning from one another, Inter Pares, in partnership with the National Assembly of Zambia (NAZ), convened the Parliamentary Strategic Planning High-level Workshop in September 2025. The NAZ hosted the workshop in Lusaka, bringing together senior officials from seven African parliaments, three European parliaments and the Canadian House of Commons. The workshop fostered rich peer-to-peer exchanges and practical insights on strategic planning in parliaments that have been distilled into this publication.

## Purpose of these guidelines

These guidelines promote the development and further usage of strategic planning in parliaments that wish to start or strengthen their planning processes. They offer resources for seasoned planners and for those with limited planning experience. They are applicable to parliaments starting their strategic planning journey as well as those with more mature processes.

These guidelines are informed by a range of international approaches and lessons learned from the workshop in Lusaka and background research conducted in preparation for the workshop. They are designed to help everyone involved in the international parliamentary community (members, parliamentary staff and development practitioners) to understand how strategic planning enhances parliamentary effectiveness.

## Why strategic planning matters

Parliament is the national institution for democratic debate and decision-making. Strategic planning guides the institution to enable and enhance these core democratic processes and to make them more efficient and effective. It provides a road map for institutional development and enables a parliament to set a clear vision (often over a three-to-five- or even ten-year period), to define strategic objectives and to coordinate reforms and resources towards achieving those objectives. Unlike other public sector planning, which is focused on delivering a specific government policy, a parliamentary strategic plan is organisation centric. It addresses how the parliamentary institution itself improves its effectiveness, internal governance and services to members, the public and other stakeholders.

Global initiatives and research underscore the importance of strategic planning in parliaments. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) actively encourages parliaments to adopt strategic planning as a tool to manage change and strengthen autonomy.

The IPU's *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* notes that strategic planning is 'the main tool a parliament has for managing rational and sustainable change'[1] by building consensus on long-term objectives and guiding annual operational plans. Similarly, the recent IPU-led parliamentary indicators initiative found that 'parliaments increasingly engage in strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation'[2] as part of broader reform and modernisation efforts. Many parliaments, from emerging democracies to established legislatures, view a strategic plan as essential for ensuring continuity beyond electoral cycles, prioritising institutional needs' and communicating goals to stakeholders.

Evidence from multiple countries shows that a well-crafted parliamentary strategy strengthens legislative, oversight, budget and representative functions while institutionalising transparency and performance monitoring. The process is not without obstacles. High political turnover, resource constraints, party politics and the need for coordination between elected members and administrative staff all add complexity to strategy development and implementation.

## Parliament as an institution

The specific nature of parliaments impacts the strategic planning exercise. Parliaments are unique because they are simultaneously political, symbolic and administrative institutions. As institutions, they must balance their dual nature as political arenas and administrative organisations, bridging political priorities and administrative continuity. Other factors also impact the process:

1. Parliaments must balance their relationship with the Executive, which often provides funding while being held to account by parliament as part of its work. The party/parties that form the Executive typically hold the most seats in the House. Bicameral parliaments add complexity to this dynamic.
2. Parliaments are reconstituted with every electoral cycle. This environment favours short-term thinking and makes long-term planning more difficult.
3. Parliamentary strategic planning requires buy-in from many actors. Achieving collective cross-party agreement on strategic objectives is difficult, even with a functioning corporate body leading it.
4. Parliaments are repositories of rules and procedures, often focusing less on long-term goals, so introducing change can be particularly challenging.

These aspects make strategic planning a delicate operation. Plans must navigate consensus in politics, democratic legitimacy and institutional resilience in ways that governments or companies rarely need to. However, like all organisations, parliaments must effectively and efficiently produce the benefits and solutions needed by the citizens they represent to preserve their unique position in society.

## How to use these guidelines

Strategic planning is a future-looking process that identifies issues and solutions for the parliament. It understands the needs of key stakeholders, identifies the challenges and opportunities facing the parliament and aligns organisational resources effectively and efficiently to ensure accountability and follow-through on its agreed vision. It is a disciplined effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide:

- what an organisation is
- who it serves
- what it does
- why it does it, with a focus on the future

Effective strategic planning articulates where an organisation is going, the actions needed to make progress and how it will know if it is successful.

[1] IPU (2014), *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments*.
[2] IPU (2023), *Indicators for Democratic Parliaments*.

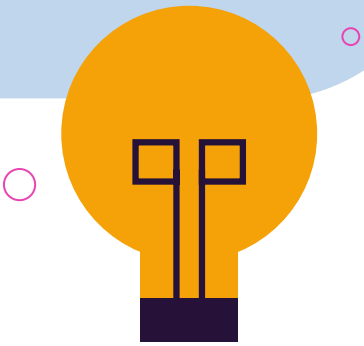
There is no one-size-fits-all model of strategic planning for parliaments. All parliaments are different, and each faces distinct choices, contexts and uncertainties that shape its approach. Individual parliaments have different skill sets, capabilities, internal cultures, political dynamics and levels of autonomy. They also have individual budget constraints and different levels of experience with strategic planning. However, there are key stages in strategic planning that can help to develop a model for any parliament. In these guidelines, we follow a model that sets out nine recognisable steps that frame a complete strategic planning process.

This set of guidelines should be seen as a way of provoking deeper conversations within parliamentary administrations around the role of strategic planning and its meaningful implementation according to the unique context of every parliament. They should be treated as a menu of options, from which parliaments can draw, to support the development of their strategic planning function according to their needs.

It is also important to recognise that, firstly, the conceptual stages of any strategic planning process are not strictly or necessarily sequential. Planning is an iterative process with intermediate states and with learning and adaptation cycles that respond to a changing environment. Secondly, we are not suggesting that every plan has a sequential nine step presentation. Some parliaments may decide to present a strategic plan in a high-level way and to append the detailed analyses.

## Five key insights proved especially relevant in developing these guidelines:

1. The need for institutional management to lead the cultural and ambitious change required to drive the strategic planning process.
2. The central role of political ownership in strengthening the plan's legitimacy and success during the process.
3. The necessity for solid, transparent governance frameworks to ensure accountability.
4. The challenge of adequately measuring the often qualitative work of a parliament.
5. The imperative for parliaments to become adaptive, communicative institutions that maintain their relevance in a rapidly changing world.



Together, these insights highlight that parliamentary strategic planning is not a purely technical or linear process. It is an evolving exercise of leadership, dialogue and institutional learning. The nine-step model presented in this publication provides a practical framework for reflection and action. It helps parliaments at different stages of maturity to adapt the process to their own contexts. Used as a flexible reference and source of inspiration, these guidelines aim to support parliaments in translating a strategic vision into action and strengthening their capacity to plan, deliver and sustain democratic governance.

# Definitions

There are many variations of definitions for the key terms used in the strategic planning process. The following are the most common.

**Evaluation**
The periodic assessment of data or evidence to inform necessary adjustments towards achieving objectives.

**Goal**
Broader long-term aims that define the mission and give the organisation direction. An organisation must reach its goals to achieve its vision.

**Impacts**
The long-term effects or changes that result from the project.

**Inputs**
The resources used in a project, such as money, personnel and equipment.

**Mission**
Sets out how the plan will be achieved; it is what the institution exists to do.

**Monitoring**
The continuous, routine tracking of progress to check whether activities are being implemented as planned.

**Outcomes**
The meaningful changes that occur as a result of outputs.

**Outputs**
The immediate results of activities.

**Values**
The beliefs, principles and desired behaviours the institution will follow or promote in implementing the plan.

**Vision**
Sets out the longer-term aspirations of the parliament; it is where the institution needs to go.

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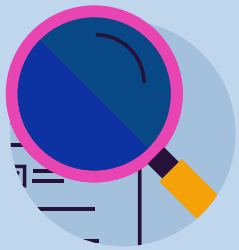


# Chapter One:
## Baseline Analysis/ Review of Previous Strategic Plan

A new strategic plan begins with a look back and around. Parliaments must understand what worked in the past, where gaps remain and the context in which they are operating. The baseline analysis reviews the previous plan's failures or successes and diagnoses institutional health, maps resources and anticipates risks. Strategies without this foundation risk being too ambitious or disconnected from reality, setting up a framework that will inevitably fail. This step provides essential continuity between planning cycles, ensures that lessons from past successes and failures are carried forward, and anchors the new strategy in the reality of the institution's capacities, budgets and political dynamics. A thorough baseline analysis is a non-negotiable prerequisite for developing an informed and credible strategic approach to current and future needs. In normal circumstances, the baseline analysis is undertaken by parliamentary staff from a combination of the secretary general's office, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team and the strategic planning unit (if it exists), and would consider reflections from other services, external evaluators and other stakeholders as necessary.

All parliaments must ask some basic questions to frame the initial discussions on strategy formulation and orient their efforts.

## Why baseline analysis matters

- It provides continuity between cycles, ensuring that lessons from past successes and failures inform the next plan.
- It is a first opportunity to examine the organisation's culture and to review risks, risk appetite and risk management strategies.
- It anchors the new strategy in real capacities, budgets and political dynamics. This helps select appropriate activities and avoid wish-lists that cannot be delivered.
- It strengthens credibility with members, staff, citizens, donors and partners by showing that priorities are evidence-based, not externally imposed and inclusive of parliament's different stakeholders.
- It provides realistic data for highlighting areas or functions to prioritise or reform over the life of the plan. Parliaments can then focus scarce resources on what matters most and this helps avoid spreading resources too thin.
- A new parliament formed after an election has an opportunity to assess government plans that impact parliament and the delivery of parliamentary services. For example, in some systems, a new governing majority may seek to increase the number of parliamentary committees, or increase the throughput of legislation that will directly impact the resources and work priorities of a parliament.

## Focus: strategic stretch or operational?

A common tension is whether a strategic plan should remain a high-level vision document with limited stretch targets, or frame strategy at the operational level, where most staff recognise their actual roles. Some parliaments prefer broad goals, leaving the operational details to annual work plans. Others write very detailed plans that present the operational as essentially strategic. A strong baseline analysis helps determine where ambition is appropriate and where pragmatism is necessary. Parliaments with a more developed strategic planning process often have higher-level strategic objectives supported by detailed operational plans. It is often reasonable for parliaments starting the strategic planning journey to write strategic plans with more operational goals as this brings all stakeholders along in the process.

## Who is the plan for and who will deliver it?

One key question revolves around for whom or for what the plan is being written. Is it for the parliament as an institution, the parliamentary service or administration or the benefit of the administration, the institution and a wider group of stakeholders? This is a fundamental question that shapes the focus, content and implementation of the plan.

In practice, most contemporary plans are written primarily for parliamentary administrations in the service of parliament. This recognises that the administration is the primary point of delivery for services that support the parliament, its members, the public and other stakeholders. While the administration implements the plan, the beneficiaries vary and include some or all of the following: members, members' staff, parliamentary staff, citizens, ministers, government staff, civil society organisations (CSOs), the education and legal sectors, and the media.

Identifying target audiences ensures the plan's objectives, priorities and initiatives align with the needs of those who will benefit from and interact with parliamentary services. A well-defined audience framework helps prioritise resources, design appropriate interventions and measure impact effectively.

## Developing a strategic culture

Developing and implementing a strategic plan inevitably involves preparing for changes to the internal culture of an organisation. Change challenges the existing culture. Promoting a strategic culture involves a change in mindset driven by senior leaders. These leaders must continually seek improvement, effective implementation, efficiency drives, monitor achievement and hold staff accountable for implementation. They must also keep the political leadership team and the members well-briefed. Staff in the organisation must also be informed on what is happening, otherwise changes will be met with uncertainty and caution.

A phrase, often attributed to Peter Drucker states: 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast.' This indicates that deep integration of strategic planning into administrative processes requires significant work on changing the organisation's culture to accept new processes. Change must be led by the leadership team on both the administrative and political sides. Preparation techniques for cultural changes include staff town halls, political level briefings, internal communication messaging, on-boarding information packages, regular positive messages of reinforcement and staff incentives for successful achievements.

# Methodologies

The primary step for analysis is collecting the right data from appropriate sources, which underpins decision-making. A data collection plan helps planners decide what core data to prioritise and select from what activities across the organisation. This streamlines data requests or suggests new data that should be collected for future performance monitoring.

Baseline reviews use structured situational tools, such as a **SWOT** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) or **PESTLE** (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental) analysis or shorter PEST exercises. Staff and service delivery audits or stakeholder consultations are also used. Choosing the correct framework is important. A **SWOT** analysis may suit smaller organisations searching for a quick assessment of their internal and external environment. A **PESTLE** or PEST framework may be better for parliaments seeking a comprehensive understanding of their external environment.

Similarly, the depth of a baseline analysis is not one-size-fits-all. Its scope and nature reflect a parliament's strategic planning maturity. For established institutions where a planning culture and consensus already exist, the primary goal is refinement. Here, light-touch use of a **SWOT** and/or **PESTLE** analysis is appropriate. For institutions where the planning culture is nascent, the baseline analysis must first build legitimacy and political buy-in. This necessitates a wider, more consultative approach that engages internal and external stakeholders and deeper use of the tools mentioned above.

These exercises provide an evidence-based map of institutional strengths and weaknesses, as well as of external opportunities and threats. Many parliaments use both frameworks. Skipping this step often leads to repeating the same shortcomings across planning cycles.

Some parliaments find high value in **consulting** members and their staff on the success of the previous strategic plan. The South African Parliament, for example, makes a significant effort to take members' views into account when formulating plans. Involving members requires careful curation, as they may tend to reflect political considerations rather than administrative or implementation issues.

Using external evaluators, or a combination of internal and external resources, to undertake **mid-term or end-of-term reviews**, or to facilitate discussions, can be a useful input to a baseline analysis. This can drive credibility, bring new and independent thinking into the process, and help avoid conscious and unconscious biases in baseline assumptions. While using external resources is a choice for parliaments to consider, it is also important that parliamentary officials are leading and directing the process.

Similarly, a comparative analysis can help set realistic, baseline assumptions. Parliaments frequently seek out comparators. Given the availability of information on the web, as well as strong inter-parliamentary networks in many regions, this can be a relatively simple and economical exercise. However, any such data collected needs to be considered in the context of the political dynamics, autonomy levels and budgetary constraints in the comparator parliament. A discussion with peers in the comparator parliament should supplement online information.

## Risk management

Risk assessment is an important part of the baseline analysis. Unanticipated risks, rather than poor vision, often derail plans. These risks include political turnover, fiscal shocks, capacity gaps or crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. A good baseline process surfaces vulnerabilities early, helps frame assumptions and identifies mitigation strategies.

Risk management is the systematic process of understanding, evaluating and addressing risks to maximise the chances of achieving strategic objectives. An accounting officer typically puts a risk management strategy in place to provide appropriate assurance about the regularity, propriety and efficiency of the administration's operations. Many countries have national risk management plans on which a parliament's administration can draw. Having a risk management process ensures that conversations occur early on about what is of concern and what could impact the implementation of a strategy.

Appropriate risk management supports better decision-making by providing greater insight into risks and their potential impacts. It also identifies appropriate mitigation strategies. Well-developed risk management governance frameworks include an appointed chief risk officer to report to the accounting officer, analysis by the internal audit team and oversight by the internal audit committee, executive board (EB) and governing board. In some systems, this extends to auditing by the comptroller and auditor general of parliamentary spending and risk management procedures. Creating a risk register that lists risks identified by staff can help to assign responsibility for managing risks. Deploying mitigation strategies is agreed upon at a high level. It is common to have many low-to-intermediate-level risks; however, most accounting officers and senior management focus on a handful of serious strategic risks.

The strategic plan of the Parliament of Ghana illustrates this with its assumptions and mitigation matrix. This makes risks explicit and links them to M&E. Developing a risk management process allows parliaments to create strategies that are both ambitious and credible, while providing a stronger basis for their monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks.

## Examples of good practice

### Botswana

Before drafting its latest plan, the parliament conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis across departments. This revealed institutional strengths but also persistent weaknesses in research services and outreach. These findings directly shaped the plan's objectives, ensuring they were realistic, evidence-based and aligned to identified gaps.

### Zambia

The National Assembly has embedded self-assessment into its planning culture, using both internal reviews and external tools, like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) framework. It also commissioned a mid-term review (MTR) of the current plan, which led to recalibrated indicators and clarified priorities, making the strategy a living, adaptive document.

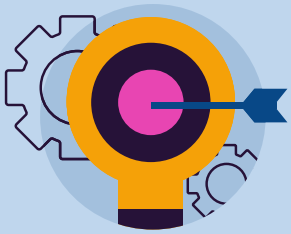
## Summary

A deep baseline analysis clarifies definitions, establishes good evidence of what worked, underlines feasibility for future plans and grounds the plan in reality. It confirms the starting point for future measurability, identifies risks and appropriate risk management strategies and corrects inaccurate assumptions. Stakeholder surveys (of members, staff, media and civil society) gauge what worked well from individual perspectives. A formal evaluation with external evaluators assists credibility and avoids biases.

A comparative analysis to peers is useful for setting realistic baselines. A true and realistic evaluation of available resources frames an achievable vision, noting that lessons from the past inform but do not limit the future. The plan should be cognisant of any cultural issues which would impact on the roll out of the strategy. This comprehensive approach ensures parliamentary strategic planning is evidence-based, contextually grounded and positioned to deliver meaningful outcomes.

## Potential questions for planners

- Have we focused on broad, visionary goals, or included detailed operational steps? Have we found the right balance?
- Have we taken all appropriate lessons, positive and negative, from the previous plan and can we see how they are being carried forward?
- Have we carried out the appropriate risk assessment and made our strategic plan more realistic and easier to monitor?
- What situational factors (political, institutional or external) most shape our parliament's ability to deliver on a plan?
- Are staff prepared for the deep internal cultural changes that strategic planning brings?
- Can we start the process as early as possible and communicate the timelines?



# Chapter Two:
## Establishing the Vision, Mission and Values

Vision, mission and values statements are key elements of any strategic plan. They must be bold yet also realistic. The vision sets out long-term goals. The mission outlines how those goals will be achieved. The values describe the priorities, beliefs, desired behaviours and principles to be followed in decisions taken during the plan's implementation.

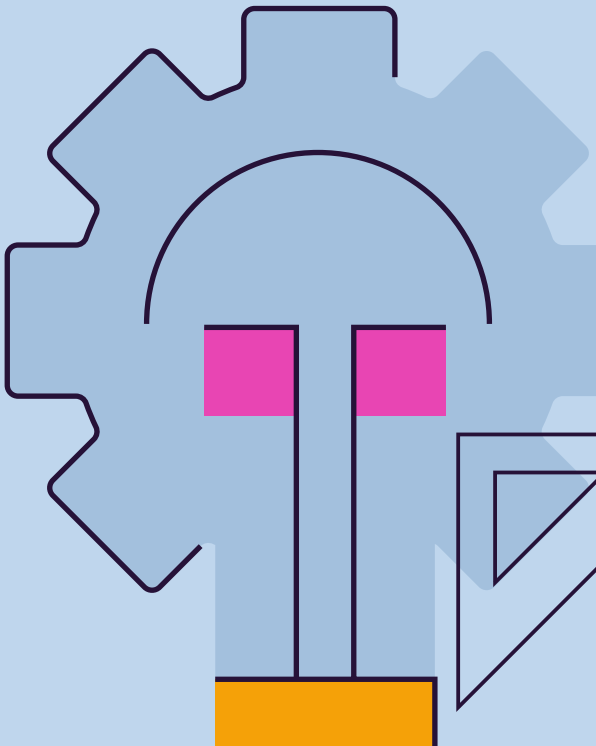
The role of the vision, mission and values statements together is the 'guiding compass' of a strategic plan. Together they set the strategic direction. It is important to examine how these statements are crafted and embedded in a meaningful way into the life of an institution.

These guiding concepts remain unchanged for some parliaments, or are only tweaked, between strategic planning cycles. This often reflects an enduring constitutional role, a limited mandate or a simple wish to avoid stakeholder confusion. However, it is worth evaluating these statements for every planning cycle.

Vision, mission and values statements tend to evolve gently between planning cycles. Each cycle gives the parliament a chance to check its relevance and adjust priorities. For example, protection from cyber interference, embracing artificial intelligence (AI) and investing in new technologies are more important objectives for parliaments now than they would have been five years ago. Regular review ensures the institution's guiding principles remain aligned with current challenges and future ambitions.

Terms like 'world class parliament' or 'model parliament' appear occasionally in vision or mission statements. In a parliamentary context, these phrases appear generic and vague. As there is no accepted definition of such terms and no way to measure their achievement, we advise against their use.

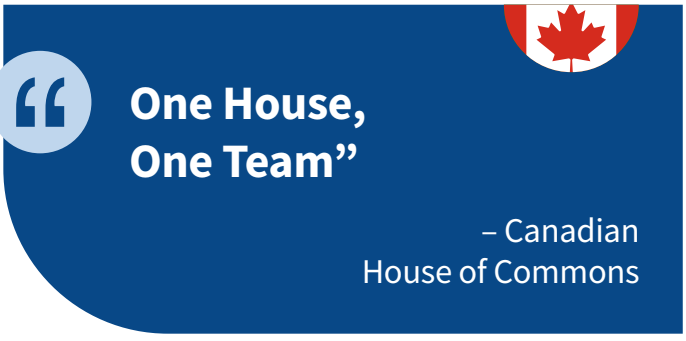
An important consideration is who formulates, shapes and decides the vision, mission and values statements, and how they are embedded. We deal with this below when discussing how to internalise these statements through training, leadership example and formal programmes. The aim is that they become more than just words so that all participants carry a shared sense of purpose and ethos as the plan is being implemented.



## Vision statement

A vision statement sets out the organisation's long-term goals, its ideals, its aspirations for the future, the impacts it wishes to have and the outcomes it seeks. It is future-looking, ambitious and strategic. It helps create the organisation's identity.






Vision statements are difficult to write. Often, as an initial step, an experienced lead person or senior manager, who is familiar with the political, administrative and cultural environment, will set down a draft for the wider senior management team to consider. This gives the team something of value to react to and develop further. Most parliaments choose a vision that is forward-looking, people-centred and firmly rooted in a constitutional mandate to legislate, oversee and represent. A vision must transcend partisan interests to reflect the will of the people and the principles of good governance.

Strategic plans typically focus on a three-to-five-year horizon and select a small number of key objectives relevant to current challenges. Some parliaments additionally create ten-year vision statements comprising strategic themes that look further into the future. The purpose of such long-term statements is to allow for the setting of objectives that will drive more than one planning cycle.

For example, climate change and sustainability objectives are typically experienced and dealt with over a ten-to-fifteen-year period. Similarly, a building project for new accommodation can take five to seven years from concept to fruition. Creating a ten-year vision statement allows planners to develop strategic themes that guide planning in the medium to longer term.

A well-crafted vision becomes a powerful internal brand. This reiterates the need for a vision to be clear, relevant, simple and ultimately, measurable.

## Mission statement

A mission statement is a concise explanation of an organisation's general purpose and objectives. It should be memorable and written with multiple audiences in mind – including customers, shareholders, the public and (primarily) employees.[3] It is about what the organisation does, how it does it and why it does it. It is written in the present. It gives specifics on how the organisation is choosing to pursue its vision.

A 1998 research article[4] found 'a significant and positive correlation' between organisational performance and mission statements when managers were satisfied with those statements. It also found a correlation between performance and the process used to develop statements. Simply having a mission statement was a non-factor; one created with real buy-in was effective.

> **"Making government work for the people, by giving a voice to the voiceless through lawmaking transparency, accountability and equitable distribution of resources."**
>
> – Parliament of Sierra Leone

> **"We work for representative democracy in Denmark."**
>
> – Danish Folketing

> **"Together – where everyone has a voice – we innovate, anticipate and respond to the needs of the House and its members in support of parliamentary democracy."**
>
> – Canadian House of Commons

The mission statement functions as an explicit reference point that supports decision-making, change management and budget choices. It helps managers to prioritise activities, set measurable indicators of success and judge whether initiatives strengthen the parliament's constitutional role, public accountability and service to citizens. In short, the mission turns aspiration into a practical filter for decisions and resource allocation.

[3] R. Velazquez (2025), '99 Mission Statement Examples That Define Companies and Inspire Customers'.
[4] Bart Baetz, C.K.M.C. (1998), 'The Relationship Between Mission Statements and Firm Performance: An Exploratory Study'. *Journal of Management Studies*, 35: 823–-853.

## Values statements

A value statement is a declaration describing the priorities, beliefs, principles, desired behaviours and core values that guide an organisation in its decision-making, in implementing its strategic plan and in its interactions with stakeholders.

**Openness, Responsiveness, Accountability, Teamwork, Professionalism and Integrity"**

– Parliament of South Africa

**Responsiveness, Integrity, Impartiality, Confidentiality, Accountability and Transparency, Professionalism and Equity"**

– National Assembly of Zambia

**Patriotism, Accountability, Integrity, Inclusivity and Teamwork"**

– Namibian Assembly

Values are sometimes categorised as core, aspirational or evolving. Most parliaments have a core value of impartiality. Some have aspirational values, such as diversity or sustainability, which they wish to move towards. Others have values that evolved over time, such as innovation.

Many organisations look to or follow the **Nolan Principles**. These seven principles of public life apply to people who serve the public in any way. These principles were first set out by Michael Nolan, the first chairman of the UK's Committee on Standards in Public Life in May 1995. These are:

1. **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.
2. **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in their official duties.
3. **Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
4. **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to appropriate scrutiny.
5. **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take.
6. **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to resolve any conflicts in a way that protects the public interest.
7. **Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

This is not an exhaustive list. The key is to carefully choose values that:

- support the vision and objectives of the overall plan
- the parliamentary administration is comfortable with
- staff can action in a meaningful, effective and reliable way

Organisations generally choose, at most, five or six such values. These values may change or evolve with each planning cycle depending on the needs of the parliament.

A key issue is how to embed values internally. In Sweden, after identifying values, the parliament launched a 'values programme'. It comprised training workshops where staff discussed scenarios related to those values (like an ethical dilemma to discuss integrity as a value). It also involved integrating values into performance appraisal forms and leadership development. Leadership buy-in at the administrative and political levels is critical for values to stick. Embedding values is an ongoing process requiring consistent reinforcement. Values must be spoken about and exemplified continuously, not just during the planning process.

## Vision, mission and values

The vision and mission exercises when considered together have a deeper function. The 'stickiness' of a concept like Canada's 'One House, One Team' offers a potent antidote to the 'silo mentality' – the tendency for departments to work in isolation. This mentality is a significant barrier to effective implementation. A simple, memorable vision, when consistently communicated, creates a shared identity and a common language. This unites disparate service areas around a collective goal and reinforces the mission statement.

The vision/mission/values exercise moves from being a high-level formality to a critical change management tool. It provides the cultural anchor necessary to foster cross-functional collaboration, which is essential for translating strategy into action.

There is the practical challenge of making these high-level statements meaningful for staff at all levels. Known effective strategies for embedding include:

- Extensive employee engagement during development of both the vision and mission statement through focus groups and workshops.
- Consistent reinforcement of the vision and values in leadership communications.
- Theming internal events like leadership retreats around a core value to facilitate deeper discussion.
- Reinforcement from the political level, such as statements from the Speaker, which give wider profile to the vision and mission.

## Methodologies

Vision, mission and values statements are crafted in many ways. These include:

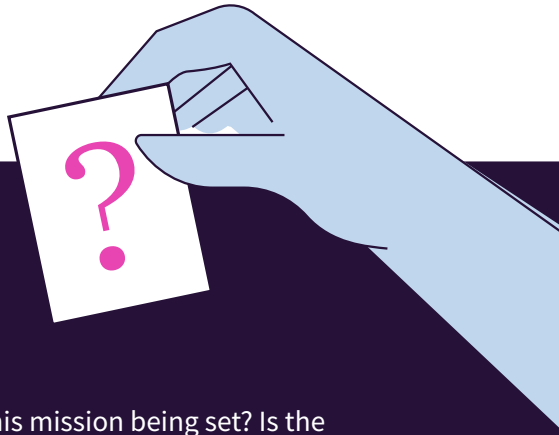
- When senior leaders and/or managers draft initial statements for others to guide discussions at management and staff levels.
- Brainstorming meetings with staff in small discussion groups or town halls.
- Consultation with senior management and political leadership.
- Online surveys with parliamentary web users.
- Anonymous online or written staff surveys.
- Consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs) and donor organisations.
- Organising workshops on draft statements for comment by all stakeholders.
- Leadership retreats.
- Use of impartial facilitators to guide discussions.

The purpose of these techniques is to enable critical thinking from within and without the organisation and from multiple perspectives.

## Summary

Developing good vision, mission and values statements is key to good strategy formulation. They must be bold but realistic and must work together as a whole. The vision sets out long-term goals. The mission anchors an organisation in its purpose. The values describe the priorities, beliefs, principles and desired behaviours followed in decisions taken during the plan's implementation.

Each of these statements can evolve between strategic plan cycles depending on the needs of parliament. It is essential to develop statements that are based in reality, have a sound underpinning methodology and can be delivered upon by the administration.



## Potential questions for planners

### Vision

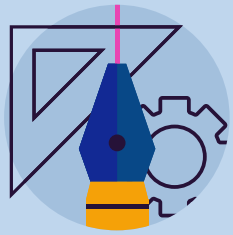
- For whom or what is this vision being set? Is the plan for the institution or the parliamentary service? How are these two streams reconciled?
- Have we answered the basic questions: What are our hopes? What problems are we solving? Who and what are we inspiring to change?
- How do you create and develop a vision statement in your parliament?
- Does or should the vision statement vary from plan to plan?
- Is the vision statement realistic and feasible?
- How will we implement this vision (regular discussion, on-boarding, reward, feedback)?
- How will we embed this vision in our day-to-day work?

### Mission

- For whom or what is this mission being set? Is the plan for the institution or the parliamentary service? How are these two streams reconciled?
- Will this mission statement inspire staff, politicians or the public?
- Will the mission statement effectively guide our decision-making and focus our resource use?
- Will this mission statement help brand, define or differentiate our parliament's role?
- Have we adequately explained who we are, what we do, who we serve and how?

### Values

- Have we chosen too many values, causing confusion?
- Are these values aligned with and supporting our vision?
- How do we check that our values are being embedded and followed?
- Do the chosen values explicitly reflect the democratic principles underpinning our parliament?



# Chapter Three:
## Formulation of Strategy

This chapter focuses on the importance of clarity of language. Across existing parliamentary strategic plans, terms such as 'pillars', 'goals', 'outcomes' and 'objectives' are often used interchangeably. We also see the use of terms such as 'sub-objectives', 'tasks' or 'initiatives'. This use of language reflects different levels of a plan or a hierarchy from high to low. Using terms interchangeably increases the difficulty in reaching a common understanding. This is not a criticism of the terms parliaments use, but it can create confusion for both the plan creator and the reader.

For clarity, these guidelines use the following terms:

- **Strategy formulation** is the combined process of strategic analysis and choices made to set the future direction of the organisation.
- **Strategic goals** are the broader long-term aims that define the mission and give the organisation direction. An organisation must reach its goals to achieve its vision.
- **Strategic objectives** are specific, quantifiable, realistic targets that measure how well a goal has been achieved over a specified period.

## Context is important

Strategic goals and objectives in the private sector are led by the desire to increase corporate growth and improve financial outcomes. Those in the public sector are led mainly by the desire to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and range of public services in support of public needs. Within the public sector, there is also a distinction between the Executive and the parliament and how they both plan. Executive plans focus on service delivery and policy development and implementation. Parliaments tend to formulate objectives that strengthen the processes of lawmaking, oversight, representation and democratic oversight and governance, and which, in some cases, are aligned with National Development Plans (NDPs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other regional frameworks. While efficiency and effectiveness are just as important for parliamentary administrations as any other private or public organisation, these need to be balanced with the need for parliament to maintain its core constitutional functions.

Strategic plans by their nature usually have a shelf life of three to five years, or as determined by legislative requirements. This is because:

- The parliamentary electoral cycle changes membership and priorities.
- Major issues are resolved, and the administration must focus elsewhere.
- New issues arise continuously that must be prioritised (e.g., cyber interference).
- Funding is exhausted, or planned interventions become outdated.

## Formulating goals and objectives

One central challenge is deciding how concrete or aspirational the goals and objectives should be. How much will they portray high-level stretch targets versus operational focus? It is the difference between a strategic objective stating the parliament will become paperless by a certain date and one asserting excellent procedural advice will always be provided to the Speaker. The lived experience across a range of currently published strategic plans suggests the most effective balance is to set a limited number of clear strategic goals, underpinned by realistic operational objectives that can be monitored. It is normally better to focus on a small number of goals– four or five at most. A similar number of objectives should be set to deliver on each goal. This implies at most 20 to 25 strategic objectives over the plan's three-to-five-year span.

## Approval of goals and objectives

The key developers for a plan should be the senior leadership team supported by the strategic planning unit (if such exists), with appropriate input and oversight from the political leadership or members. Approval of plans varies among parliaments. Some are referred briefly to members with a formal sign-off by political leadership. Others actively seek political input from the start. The drivers for the plan are normally the administration's staff, again with oversight from the political leadership through the overall governance framework. Mechanisms to seek the views of political leadership include surveys, head-to-head meetings, presentations at the governing board level, formal subcommittee and plenary approval, workshops and online surveys. Each parliament decides its own procedures to validate its own planning process, including how it will prioritise among competing goals and objectives. Prioritisation will naturally consider the financial capacity, staff capabilities, political demands and needs, and delivery time available. The essential point is to create as much buy-in as possible for the plan among all stakeholders.

## General conditions for setting goals

The following conditions should be considered for goal setting:

- Good environmental analysis has been done through accepted techniques.
- There is a keen focus on three to five critical areas.
- There are good risk assessment and monitoring procedures in place.
- There is high internal and external stakeholder demand for action.
- Goals are well-defined and focussed on outcomes.
- There is good cross-departmental unity, and cross-functional analysis is agreed upon, ensuring a balance of goals across the organisation's needs.

## General conditions for setting objectives

Strategic objectives are the building blocks of strategy implementation. A strategic goal is typically broken down into several strategic objectives. The SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-referenced) model for objective setting is well-proven and a good place to start.

Each objective should have at least one key performance indicator (KPI) written in terms of the outcome or result, rather than the process. We deal with performance measurement in Chapter Four. Phrasing objectives in a way that is easy to grasp is beneficial; bureaucratic jargon should be avoided. For example, Canada, for its three strategic priorities chose terms such as 'Our People', 'Our Workplace' and 'Our Service Delivery'. These phrases resonate better internally, and the meaning and metrics flows more easily. Simplified language is also easier to communicate across the organisation.

## Key questions for managing goals and objectives

Some key questions frame the context for setting strategic goals/objectives. These overlap with and are important for the downstream implementation of the plan and include:

1. For whom or what are the goals/objectives being set? Is the plan for the institution or the parliamentary service? How are these two streams reconciled?
2. Do we have mechanisms for reconciling competing needs, particularly where objectives affect how members work and for prioritising activities so that the most critical initiatives move forward?
3. Having identified our challenges, how do we move from the place of these challenges to where we want to go? What minor and broad steps should be taken?
4. How are the objectives tied to the organisation's principal risks, and does this alignment help communicate clearly why the chosen priorities are necessary?
5. Who will be involved in setting objectives (the political level, a cross-functional group, etc)?
6. What will be the process for setting objectives (top-down, bottom-up, external consultants, etc)?
7. Who will have ownership of the objectives (senior management, business units or the political body)?
8. Are the objectives written in a results or outcome-oriented way and can therefore be measured?
9. How will political support be obtained and maintained?
10. What will be the responsibility and accountability mechanisms?
11. Will the organisation's culture support the objectives, or can it be used to support them?
12. Are there adequate funding and staff resources? Is there a will to reallocate funding to new strategic priorities?
13. Is there adequate staff capacity and capability?
14. Are there clear milestones, targets and timelines and are there good data collection and performance indicators?
15. Who will lead tracking, review, evaluation and changes to plans?
16. How will communications to staff and stakeholders be mediated?
17. How will success be reported?

# Examples of goals and objectives

## Example 1: Parliament of Sierra Leone

Goal:
**strengthen institutional capacity**

Strategic objectives:

1. Maintain independence of the parliamentary service commission
2. Hire the Clerk to parliament and ensure the office's independence
3. Provide strong institutional and administrative frameworks
4. Strengthen and enhance information and communications technologies (ICT) infrastructure
5. Revise standing orders
6. Mainstream gender in parliamentary administration

## Example 2: National Assembly of Namibia

Pillar 2:
**enhance service delivery**

Strategic objectives:
Improve the organisation, management of procedures and functioning of the National Assembly.

KPI:
Progress (%) in establishing a parliamentary service commission. Number of operational policies reviewed and developed.

## Cross-cutting themes

Many parliaments address cross-cutting issues in their planning. Mainstreaming is a common way to do this. Issues such as gender, equality, disability, HIV/AIDS and sustainability are commonly mainstreamed, meaning all staff at all levels address them. This approach elevates the issue in staff and political consciousness, which has undoubted value. However, sometimes making an issue 'cross-cutting' risks diffusing responsibility, as no single officer is accountable, and achieving consensus is problematic. It can also disperse data collection and can make setting KPIs more difficult. Parliaments that choose to mainstream such issues must prepare appropriately for these difficulties, or they risk undermining their own good intentions.

## Linking strategic plans to SDGs and NDPs

Strategic plans in parliaments should flow from core constitutional values and be appropriately linked to wider development frameworks such as the UN SDGs, Africa Agenda 2063 and the country's NDP. This alignment strengthens institutional relevance, credibility and accountability. By mapping objectives and indicators to national priorities and/or the SDGs, parliaments translate global commitments into concrete national action through law-making, oversight, budget approval and representation, ensuring internal priorities (for example, gender equality, transparency and sustainability) feed directly into broader development agendas and promote coherence across institutions.

Embedding the SDGs converts abstract ambitions into actionable targets, while alignment with the NDP focuses parliamentary effort on the country's long-term vision; as the Danish Folketing notes, the SDGs have become guiding beacons and form part of that parliament's obligation to contribute to national and global development.

> **"At the Administration of the Danish Parliament, we are in the throes of identifying relevant SDGs and transforming them into targets and initiatives."**
>
> – Danish Folketing

# Strategy mapping

A strategy map is a graphic presentation of all central elements in a strategic plan. It captures all these elements in one place, which is useful. A visual representation is more easily understood by some people, making the plan more accessible. A sample strategy map based on part of the strategic plan of the National Assembly of Zambia is set out in Image 1.

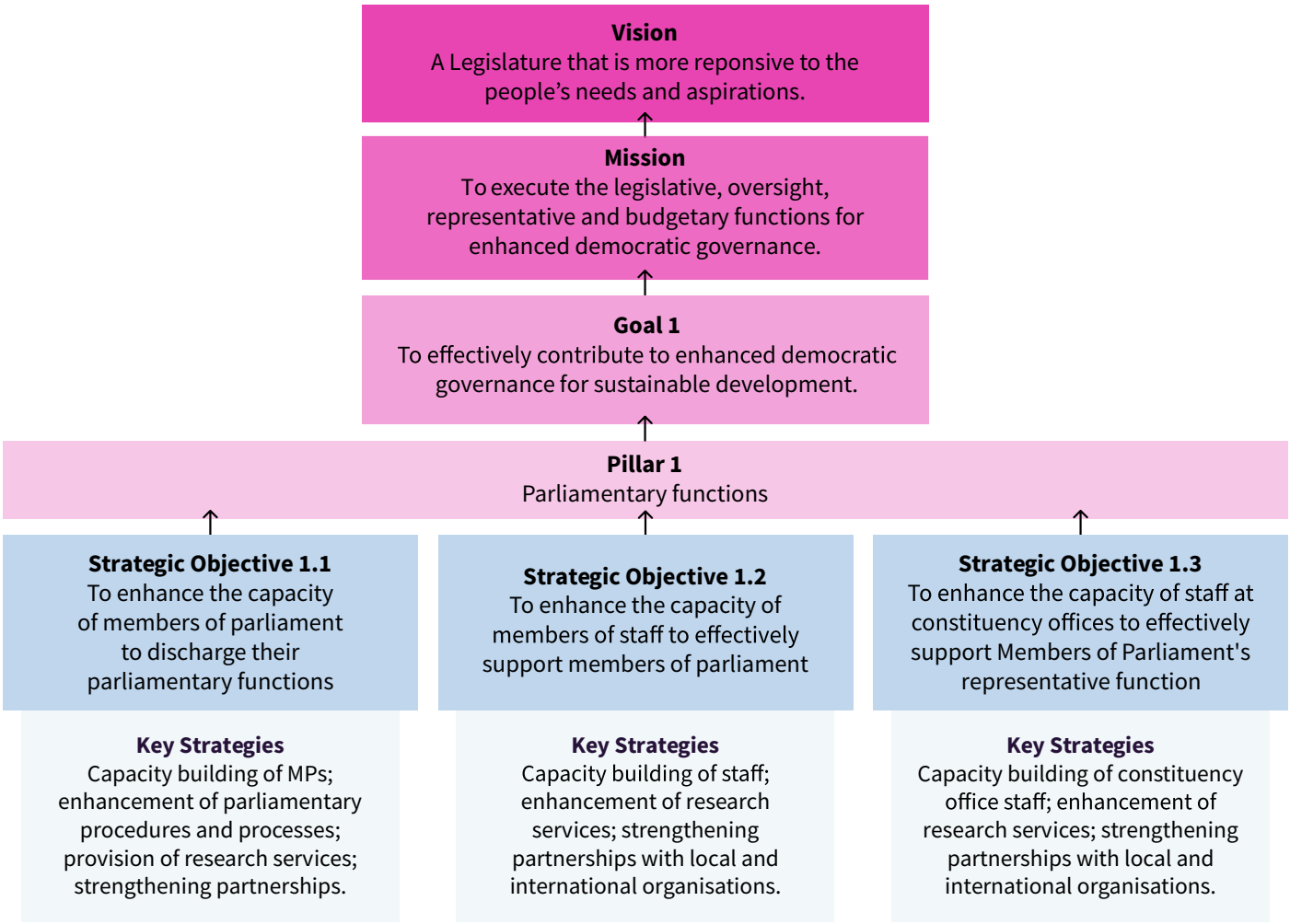



**Image 1:** Strategy Map of the National Assembly of Zambia, showing values, vision, mission, Goal 1, Pillar 1 and three strategic objectives with their key strategies.

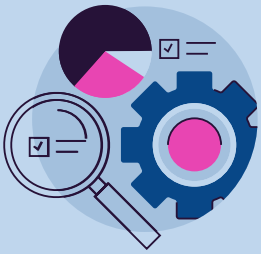
## Summary

When formulating strategic objectives, the focus should be on what is truly strategic – priorities for change or improvement, not just routine duties. The number of goals and objectives should be kept at a manageable level, ensuring that each has measurable targets. The use of clear language that conveys the intended outcome is vital. It is also important to align objectives with the broader vision and baseline findings, addressing major gaps or opportunities.

This way, the strategic objectives serve as a strong bridge between the high-level vision and the concrete initiatives to be undertaken. Strategy mapping is a useful and highly visual way to present a plan. The inclusion of cross-cutting themes and external developments, such as SDGs and NDPs, needs to be carefully managed to ensure they are appropriately reflected in the plan.

## Potential questions for planners

- Should our strategic plans set stretch targets that inspire long-term change, or should they focus on operational goals that can be clearly delivered? What is the right balance?
- Is our plan clear to insiders and understandable to external stakeholders?
- Who should own strategic objectives (members), senior management, staff or cross-functional groups)? How does ownership affect implementation and legitimacy?
- Will resource limitations (funding, staff capacity, political will) affect the type of objectives we realistically set? Should our objectives always be ambitious within capacity, or can setting ambitious goals stretch capacity? Has the parliament decided how we will prioritise among competing goals and objectives?
- How important is it to integrate risk assessments when formulating objectives? Can strong situational analysis and clear risk mapping make objectives more realistic?



# Chapter Four: Implementation Planning

Many organisations are good at formulating strategic plans. The real challenge, however, begins with implementation. A well-crafted plan is only as effective as its execution. Simply having a strategic plan does not guarantee the delivery of all suggested benefits and outcomes. Successful outcomes rely on good, consistent implementation and subsequent audit and monitoring. For parliaments, translating strategic objectives into measurable actions requires consistent leadership, coordination across departments and mechanisms to track progress and accountability. Without disciplined follow-through, even the most carefully designed plan risks becoming a paper exercise.

Essentially, implementation is about moving from plan to action with discipline and transparency; it is the bridge between vision and results. Implementing a parliamentary strategic plan is where ambition meets operational reality. This is why strategic goals must reflect both ambition and feasibility. In this context, governance frameworks are the scaffolding that holds up a strategic plan. These frameworks provide the structures, systems and accountability mechanisms that sustain implementation, ensure transparency and help the institution build towards its envisioned future. We deal with governance frameworks in detail in Chapter Six.

## Reasons for failure of implementation

Even the most detailed plans sometimes fail on contact with reality. Research shows that many plans falter due to common challenges. These underscore the importance of incorporating a thorough risk assessment and building resilient implementation structures from the outset. Common causes of implementation failure include:

- Lack of leadership.
- Limited capacity or funding.
- Lack of alignment between strategic and business plans, and consequently, a lack of ownership.
- Staff who are already too occupied with day-to-day operational issues.
- A plan that takes on too much, especially if the weight of daily operations is not factored in sufficiently.
- Choosing the wrong or wrongly specified objectives.
- Lack of agility in strategy implementation.
- Inability to reallocate underused funding to high-performing areas.
- Misjudging the amount of change required in organisational culture.
- Fear of failure.
- Lack of monitored responsibility.
- Potential for delay due to political considerations.
- Failure to address underperformance effectively.
- Failure to achieve political agreement on the adoption of the plan.
- Failure to establish or create a dedicated body/ directorate or unit that reports directly to the Secretary-General SG/Clerk, or to have adequate governance structures.

# Designing implementation and action plans

A strategic plan describes the 'what' and the 'why'. Implementation is undertaken through a variety of means variously known as corporate business plans, operational or action plans and they explain the 'how' of implementation. They convert strategic objectives into accountable work that can be budgeted, scheduled, monitored and adapted. No single template exists, because parliaments vary widely in capacity, governance and political context. Instead, parliaments combine a small number of complementary instruments to translate strategy into daily operations, and which later can become the basis for performance analysis.

Parliaments will typically use a set of documents to link strategic ambition to operational reality:

- **Strategic implementation plan (high-level):**
  A separate document or table that translates the strategic plan into a structured set of initiatives, outputs, indicators, timelines and support strategies or actions. It provides the operational bridge between strategy, budgeting and performance monitoring. Sometimes also referred to as corporate business plans (CBPs).
- **Annual action plans (operational level):**
  Breaks each objective into department level activities, owners, milestones, cost estimates and quarterly timelines. These are the primary management tools for delivery. Annual plans are underpinned by divisional, section and individual business and performance plans. Annual plans can be further broken down into section, business unit or individual level plans in some institutions.
- **Project charters (project level):**
  For larger reforms (for example, new information and communications technology (ICT) systems), a project charter sets scope, deliverables, budget, risks and governance.

These levels ensure the plan is visible at the political/strategic level and implemented downstream with clearly aligned responsibilities, capacities and budgets.

Parliaments use proven governance models to have clear decision processes and oversight. A common approach is to establish a strategic plan implementation committee (SPIC) or steering committee. This is a cross-departmental body that includes representatives from across some, if not all, directorates. It meets regularly to review progress, address challenges and to recommend resource reallocations. Political oversight is equally important. Parliaments often conduct annual or biannual reviews led by the Speaker or a governing body to reaffirm political ownership and resolve high-level obstacles.

Many institutions appoint implementation focal points or a central secretariat, usually housed within the SG/Clerk's office, who are responsible for managing the calendar, consolidating reports and maintaining the risk register. For larger funded initiatives, project boards are established to provide technical and financial oversight. These mechanisms vary by context. Smaller parliaments often consolidate roles within a single committee, while larger ones may separate strategic governance from day-to-day coordination.

Linking budgets to plans is essential to ensure that commitments can be delivered on and monitored effectively. Some parliaments, therefore, develop a costed action plan alongside the strategy, which guides funding requests and supports accountability during implementation. Where multi-annual budgets exist, aligning them with strategic objectives helps maintain continuity across political cycles. In constrained financial environments, parliaments tend to sequence activities in phases or focus on low-cost 'quick wins' to demonstrate progress. The key is to make financial planning flexible and transparent, allowing leaders to adjust funding as priorities evolve.

In terms of assigning staff responsibilities, it is useful to map strategic activities to directorates and to named roles, so staff know what to deliver and what skills are required. High-level tasks should also be translated into annual performance objectives for directors/executives. This identifies capacity gaps early and allows budgeting for targeted training or support. Embedding strategic tasks into job descriptions and appraisal systems highlights the importance of the plan and may reduce the 'extra work' perception.

An implementation plan must be fully integrated into the parliament's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. The plan should contain management indicators (progress, budget spent, shortfalls in implementation and mitigation actions) for quarterly or bi-annual monitoring and outcome indicators for annual reporting. Parliaments can schedule formal mid-term reviews (MTR) and light external reviews to re-align priorities. Reviewing a risk register attached to the implementation plan is also important. This linkage makes monitoring actionable; M&E provides the information to adapt sequencing, reallocate funds and change tactics.

When designing implementation plans, parliaments should prioritise:

- **Clarity** – naming owners, milestones, costs and indicators.
- **Realism** – prioritising what is feasible.
- **Linkages** – connecting it to budgets, human resources (HR) and M&E.
- **Governance structures** – creating a central coordinating body and securing political engagement.

# Interconnected factors for successful implementations

Implementation is the delivery phase of a strategic plan and the preparatory phase for monitoring and evaluation. The performance measures developed for implementation will be used for the next three to five years for tracking objectives, allocating resources, assigning ownership, and eventually, judging the plan's success.

Implementing a plan requires a process combining some or all of the following:

- **Clear leadership buy-in at administrative and political levels:** Leaders share their understanding of the plan and their commitment to it. This lays the groundwork for common understandings. Buy-in is typically created first between the SG/Clerk and the executive board (EB), and then between the SG/Clerk/EB and the Speaker/governing board.
- **Selecting appropriate initiatives that contribute to a strategic objective:** A strategic plan aims at stretching the organisation's achievement. This requires selecting measurable, specific initiatives aligned with a strategic objective, and ensuring the initiatives are not just loosely linked to an outcome.
- **An effective governance framework with clear reporting arrangements:** Mechanisms like regular meetings, leadership on or off-site meetings, cross-functional oversight committees and M&E systems are needed.
- **Good HR mapping of objectives to staff and clear assignment of roles:** This is eased when staff are involved in formulating the objectives. A common barrier is the perception of 'extra work'. Tighter integration of strategic activities with performance management systems is one solution.
- **Staff with the capacity and capability** to implement training, upskilling and buying in skill sets are established methods to carry a plan forward.
- **The ability to manage across silos**, including managing tensions and territoriality. Some parliaments convene inter-departmental working groups; others create thematic working groups aligned to each objective, with members from different departments. This requires extra meetings but helps break silos.
- **Very good internal and external communications.** Good communication lies at the heart of successful implementation.
- **Clear alignment between strategic and business plans** so the strategy becomes day-to-day work: parliaments with well-developed processes (e.g., Zambia, Ireland) move beyond a simple matrix to develop separate, granular documents. This requires dedicated governance. Zambia, for instance, uses SPIC with representation from every department.
- **The ability to handle changes to organisational culture.** Cultural change is complex. The first step is to determine if the existing culture supports the strategic intentions. A positive culture is reinforced by visible leadership, a clear vision, engaging staff, taking feedback, clear ownership and excellent communications.
- **A clear performance measurement framework**, with realistic targets and KPIs for which data can be collected. This includes indicators, realistic targets, a visual system (like traffic lights), annual reports and a formal MTR.
- **The ability to make adjustments** based on timely data and clear M&E plans. Evaluation is an opportunity to review targets and processes, find solutions, reallocate resources and drive better future decision-making.

## Performance analysis and management

The capability to analyse and manage performance is a key aspect of strategic planning. It answers the essential question: 'How far along the path are we to achieving what we set out to do?'. The important issue is to select performance measures appropriate to parliaments. Performance management frameworks integrate data collection, analysis and reporting into everyday operations. Clear indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, help track progress, identify obstacles and support evidence-based decisions.

A robust performance management approach relies on regular monitoring, internal reflection and open communication. Periodic reviews allow for necessary adjustments to plans, budgets and timelines. Many parliaments link performance analysis to broader accountability systems, such as annual performance contracts or oversight by an implementation committee. In this way, performance management becomes a continuous learning process that reinforces accountability and ensures strategic planning remains a living process.

## Examples of good practice

### Ghana

Cascades strategic priorities into departmental and individual performance contracts. Directors sign annual performance contracts tied to elements of the strategic plan, creating clear accountability.

### South Africa

The South African Parliament links its multi-year strategic plan to annual performance plans (APPs), which translate strategy into owned actions, headline indicators and quarterly milestones. These APPs feed the national Treasury cycle and the institution's quarterly and annual reporting, creating a tight operational loop between strategy, budgeting and performance monitoring.

### Sweden

The Swedish Riksdag provides communication support to all managers through power-point presentations with main messages they can use when presenting the outcome of the planning. The same messages and presentations are used within the organisation to promote ownership for common goals.

## Performance indicators respect parliamentary contexts

Performance indicators may be known variously as KPIs, performance measurements, indicators or metrics. We use the generic term KPIs here. Developing good KPIs begins early in the strategic planning process. The key first step is to frame the objectives in terms of the results required rather than activities. Activities, of course, generate results but the actual focus of measurement should be on the results being achieved. This requires a proper description of what success looks like for achieving that objective. There is a lot of literature on how to create KPIs, but, in general, the following principles seem to widely apply.

KPIs need to be:

- measurable and capable of being monitored with consistent data flows
- linked and contributing to an objective
- time bound
- understandable by all stakeholders
- able to support continuous improvement and adaptation
- balanced across the organisation

There is obviously also a place for activity indicators in some instances, but the focus should be on the higher-level KPIs.

Designing the correct KPIs in a political environment is important. Measuring parliamentary performance raises political and ethical sensitivities, especially where metrics may touch the behaviours of members. The solution is to focus on institutional and committee performance, not individual member scoring. Most parliaments avoid publicly ranking individual members. Instead, they measure committee outputs or outcomes, institutional processes and the extent to which parliament's instruments (for example, committee reports) produce government responses.

Some parliaments have chosen to co-design indicators with stakeholders. When performance indicators are developed with members and staff, they are more likely to be accepted. Namibia and Zambia use inclusive development of performance frameworks to build internal ownership. Indicators should help answer the question: 'What can parliament actually influence?' For instance, measuring the percentage of executive responses to committee resolutions reveals how oversight mechanisms work.

## Practical checklist: from objectives to action

When drafting an implementation plan, the following checklist for each objective should be considered:

- ☐ Restate the strategic objective in plain language.
- ☐ Define two to four priority outcomes/ outputs that signal achievement.
- ☐ List concrete activities required to produce each output (who does what).
- ☐ Assign an owner (unit plus named role) for each activity.
- ☐ Set time bound milestones (quarterly or semi-annually), not just end dates.
- ☐ Provide cost estimates and funding source (even indicative ranges).
- ☐ Identify appropriate indicators (qualitative or quantitative) and data sources.
- ☐ Note key risks and mitigation actions.
- ☐ Link the activity to relevant HR needs and training.
- ☐ Capture dependencies (other units, external partners, legal approval).

This checklist produces action plans that are simple, assignable, costed and more easily monitored.

## Summary

Successful implementation depends on may interconnected factors and we have outlined these and the reasons why some plans often fail. It also relies on a dual structure. A high-level strategic plan provides the overarching vision (the 'why'). This must be complemented by a cascade of granular, operational tools (variously know as corporate business plans, implementation plans, action plans, performance contracts) to detail the execution (the 'how'). This framework translates abstract goals into concrete, day-to-day tasks.

Effective implementation is where strategy meets reality. Parliaments that succeed establish clear governance, costed action plans and performance frameworks that link objectives to daily operations. Strong coordination, regular review and adaptive management allow parliaments to navigate challenges while maintaining momentum. Designing appropriate KPIs that reflect the outcomes of the plan while respecting the political sensitivities with parliament is an important function of planning.

## Potential questions for planners

- How can parliaments ensure both political leaders and administrative staff feel real ownership of the plan?
- In what practical ways can we align strategic objectives with staff day-to-day responsibilities, so implementation doesn't feel like 'extra work'?
- How can parliaments deal with limited budgets or rigid funding allocations? Should mechanisms exist to reallocate underused resources?
- How can parliaments embed feedback loops and evidence-based adjustments?
- What governance mechanisms are needed to overcome a silo mentality?
- How can parliaments realistically address cultural resistance to change?
- Should every objective have a named responsible officer, and how can accountability be enforced without creating fear of failure?

# Chapter Five:
## Costing, Funding and Engaging Stakeholders

This chapter addresses four interlinked issues: the funding of parliament itself, funding the strategic plan, costing the strategic plan and donor funding.

## Funding parliament

Parliaments, like all public institutions, are funded in various ways. Funding sources and strategies make a clear statement about the parliament's financial independence, autonomy and public perception. Aligning funding with parliament's strategic plan makes a definitive statement on the institution's strategic direction. How the institution manages expenditure and accountability is an important part of its credibility. Parliaments that align budget bids with strategic plans strengthen both their negotiating position and institutional legitimacy. A well-prepared, costed strategy signals professionalism and accountability.

All parliaments are majorly funded from the national treasury, negotiated with or approved by the Executive. For example, the Irish parliament is funded on a multi-annual basis from the Central Fund Non-voted Account to the amount set out in legislation, which must be passed every three years. Within this three-year envelope, the parliament is free to allocate resources to its chosen objectives. Such arrangements limit flexibility in times of fiscal uncertainty, but they also bring predictability, ensuring long-term development efforts are not derailed by short-term funding cycles.

Where there is a funding shortfall, some parliaments may engage internal mechanisms like the parliamentary budget committee to champion the parliament's needs. In a politically driven environment, political support is crucial to avoid or reverse budget reductions. In some countries, finance ministries may be tempted to cut funding if they believe donors might cover the shortfall.

## Funding the strategic plan

A strategic plan is only as effective as the resources available to carry it forward. Sound implementation requires sound finances. Translating ambition into reality demands clear priorities, capable staff, and credible, predictable and sustainable funding. Parliamentary budgets often depend on external negotiations and political approval. Resource mobilisation (commonly understood as externally sourced funding) is, therefore, both a technical and a relationship building process, one that calls for strategy, foresight and resilience.

## Costing

Accurate costing of a strategic plan goes to the essence of how well it will be delivered. Without adequate funding, strategic objectives are unlikely to be achieved. Costing allows the accurate assignment of budgets and responsibility. It makes tracking spending on objectives easier and more reliable, and it offers the possibility to remediate or reallocate spending. Most strategic plans do not show a transparent budget line for individual items. The strategic plan is instead underpinned by detailed and costed business plans at the appropriate level. For example, a major software license upgrade (often cited as a key deliverable) will be found in a detailed, costed business plan for the information and communication technology (ICT) unit. This appears to be the preferred costing approach.

## Resource mobilisation and partnerships

Some parliaments face deep resource constraints and will need to seek additional funding for specific purposes. For example, gender equality, HIV/AIDS or youth engagement programmes are commonly funded by external means in many countries. These specific purposes can then be integrated into the strategic planning process to ensure coherence between institutional priorities and available support.

It is crucial that external stakeholders, including international donors, do not drive a parliament's strategic agenda. Not only does this detract from parliamentary and national sovereignty, but donor domination can also undermine internal commitment to institutional development. The Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU's) *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* provide good guidance on this issue. These are set out below.

Donor round tables are useful to see who can fund various aspects of a strategic plan. Development partners appreciate a clearly costed plan identifying where support is needed. It allows partners to align programme funding to the identified strategic needs. For example, the plan's objectives could be: 'Introduce an e-petition system at a specific cost via external support.' Then partners can take that objective to their headquarters for a decision on funding. However, it should be borne in mind that any request to donors should derive from the parliament's own strategic priorities.

There is also a transparency issue. Costing activities ensures priorities are realistic. An activity may be resized if its cost is disproportionate to likely partner funds. Scaling an activity to what is financially achievable is both strategic and logical. Core parliamentary functions should be funded by the National Treasury (to ensure ownership and sustainability), while some capacity-building or innovation pilots may be more appropriate for donor funding. Getting the mix right is important.

The South African experience provides an example of how to follow a path to ensure ownership of planning even with donor funding. Initially, the parliament's planning was heavily influenced by donors. As it built its own capacity, it moved to a more equal partnership, successfully negotiating for donor funds to be integrated into its budget process. Achieving this maturity requires professional financial management and a strong institutional identity.

In a different context, the Parliament of Botswana, facing an economic downturn and ineligibility for traditional donor cooperation, embarked on an ambitious resource mobilisation effort. The parliament now explores public-private partnerships. They made sure that recurring costs (like new staff) were funded from the executive funded budget. They use donor funds mostly for one-off investments (like new ICT systems or training).

In Botswana, the Executive is lobbied to ensure funding for core long-term programmes. For example, in establishing a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), initial expert support came from donors to design the office, but staffing it was fully Treasury-funded because it is a permanent feature. Their rule of thumb is: 'Donors for seed money, the Executive for operations.'

Beyond donor funding, some parliaments are exploring innovative ways to diversify resources, such as souvenir shops, museums or partnerships with the private sector. These initiatives generate modest income while enhancing civic engagement. Such efforts must remain transparent, ethically sound and compliant with financial regulations. Where revenues must flow into central accounts, parliaments negotiate mechanisms to retain part of the funds for institutional development.

Sustainable financing involves the capacity to plan within constraints, prioritise effectively and adapt. Ultimately, resource mobilisation is not only about obtaining funds but about demonstrating value. When parliaments show how resources are used efficiently to strengthen democracy, they build trust.

## IPU *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments*

The IPU's *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* is a key document for understanding how donors, the support community and recipient parliaments should interact on funding. In a nutshell, parliaments underpin democracy, and support for them must meet their essential needs. How these principles are reflected in strategic planning is critical.

Effective parliaments are essential to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and development. The IPU nominates the following as specific principles for support:

**Principle 1:** Parliamentary support partners are guided by the needs of parliament.

**Principle 2:** Parliamentary support partners are attentive to the multiple contexts in which parliaments operate.

**Principle 3:** Parliamentary support aims for sustainable outcomes.

**Principle 4:** Parliamentary support is inclusive of all political tendencies.

**Principle 5:** Parliamentary support is grounded in emerging international democratic parliamentary standards.

**Principle 6:** Parliamentary support addresses the needs and potential of women and men equally.

**Principle 7:** Parliamentary support utilises local and regional expertise.

**Principle 8:** Parliamentary support partners and parliaments commit to effective coordination and communication.

**Principle 9:** Parliamentary support partners act in an ethical and responsible manner.

## Good practice examples

The following are two good practice examples on managing strategic plan funding and donor engagement.

### Sierra Leone

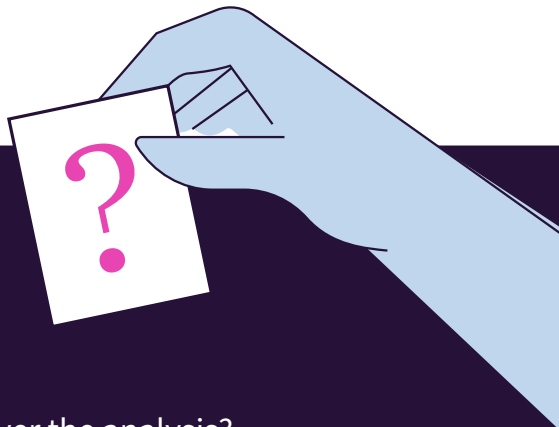
The strategic plan is accompanied by an implementation matrix with costs attributed (activities, timelines, responsible units, indicators) overseen by planning/monitoring and evaluation (M&E) units. This is paired with donor/partner mapping so external support is steered to plan priorities.

### Ireland

Its multi-annual funding model (appropriation outside the annual 'voted' cycle) offers predictability for multi-year reforms (for example, ICT upgrades). This is paired with strong governance and public reporting and is useful when discussing financial independence and credibility.

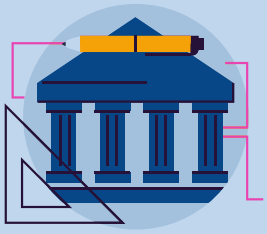
## Summary

The comparative experiences reveal that the funding of parliaments globally and the funding strategies they have adopted reflect their institutional power and autonomy. A parliament with robust constitutional oversight and independent analytical capacity actively engages and challenges the Executive on budgetary matters, giving it leverages in its own funding negotiations. Conversely, a parliament in a structurally weaker position must adopt more external-facing and creative strategies. The process of funding a parliament is far more than an accounting exercise; it is a political litmus test of the parliament's standing, its credibility and its institutional autonomy. Donor funding and stakeholder engagement must be continuously managed and the IPU's Common Principles for Support to Parliaments offer key guidance in this regard.



## Potential questions for planners

- How accurately has the plan been costed? Can we stand over the analysis?
- How quickly can remedial action be taken if objectives are not met? Can funding be reallocated, or is it locked in a silo?
- Does the Executive have a role in how funds are spent?
- How important is donor funding generally?
- Will donor funding inform, excessively influence or distract from the main strategic objective setting?



# Chapter Six:
## Governance Frameworks

Parliaments operate where political and administrative needs meet and sometimes collide. Effective parliamentary governance structures must remain responsive to both dimensions. Governance refers to the systems and processes through which an organisation is directed, controlled and held to account.

Effective governance frameworks identify who makes decisions, who has the authority to act, and who is accountable for how an organisation and its people perform. They encompass accountability, transparency, adherence to the rule of law, participation, efficiency and effectiveness. Such frameworks also create the institutional accountability architecture that turns strategic aspiration into routine organisational behaviour.

Many different models exist, revealing distinct philosophies of parliamentary governance and how they balance political interests and administrative independence. For example:

- The **Kenyan Parliamentary Service Commission**, composed almost entirely of parliamentarians and public representatives, exemplifies a model of self-governance that prioritises cross-party consensus and experts who have served in the public sector.
- The **Zambian Standing Orders Committee**, which includes senior executive members, represents a model that prioritises alignment with the national government's agenda, which facilitates resource allocation but tempers institutional autonomy.
- The **Irish Parliament** is led by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, a cross-party group of members chaired by the Speaker that consists of 11 members, including the Secretary-General (SG), who is also the chief executive of the commission and its accounting officer. Under the commission sits the SG/management board and five strategic sub-committees of cross-divisional officials. A finance committee, comprising members, and the audit committee, made up of members and external experts and some key staff, both report to the commission and internal audit reports to the SG (see governance chart in Image 2 on page 40).

These different approaches to governance shape the content, priorities and direction of their respective strategic plans. No single mechanism is universally right. The chosen mechanism must be right for the parliament in a way that preserves its autonomy, credibility and legitimacy. Although context determines the exact form, the functions that need to be fulfilled are constant: political endorsement, administrative sponsorship, financial regulation, cross-departmental coordination, performance oversight and public accountability.

In strategic planning, a good governance framework establishes clear structures for decision-making, oversight and accountability. It ensures a strategic plan is implemented effectively and retains its legitimacy. It also ensures that the plan and its objectives are subject to rigorous and fair examination during all phases, which builds confidence towards fair outcomes.

Three features deserve emphasis:

1. **Political endorsement matters.**
   When the Speaker or a governing committee visibly owns a plan, it strengthens the administration's hand in negotiations.
2. **Managerial ownership is crucial.**
   An SG/Clerk who champions the plan ensures someone is pressing for delivery.
3. **Representation matters.**
   Implementation committees must include the units that deliver services (finance, human resources (HR), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), information and communications technology (ICT) so plans reflect operational realities and enable problem-solving.

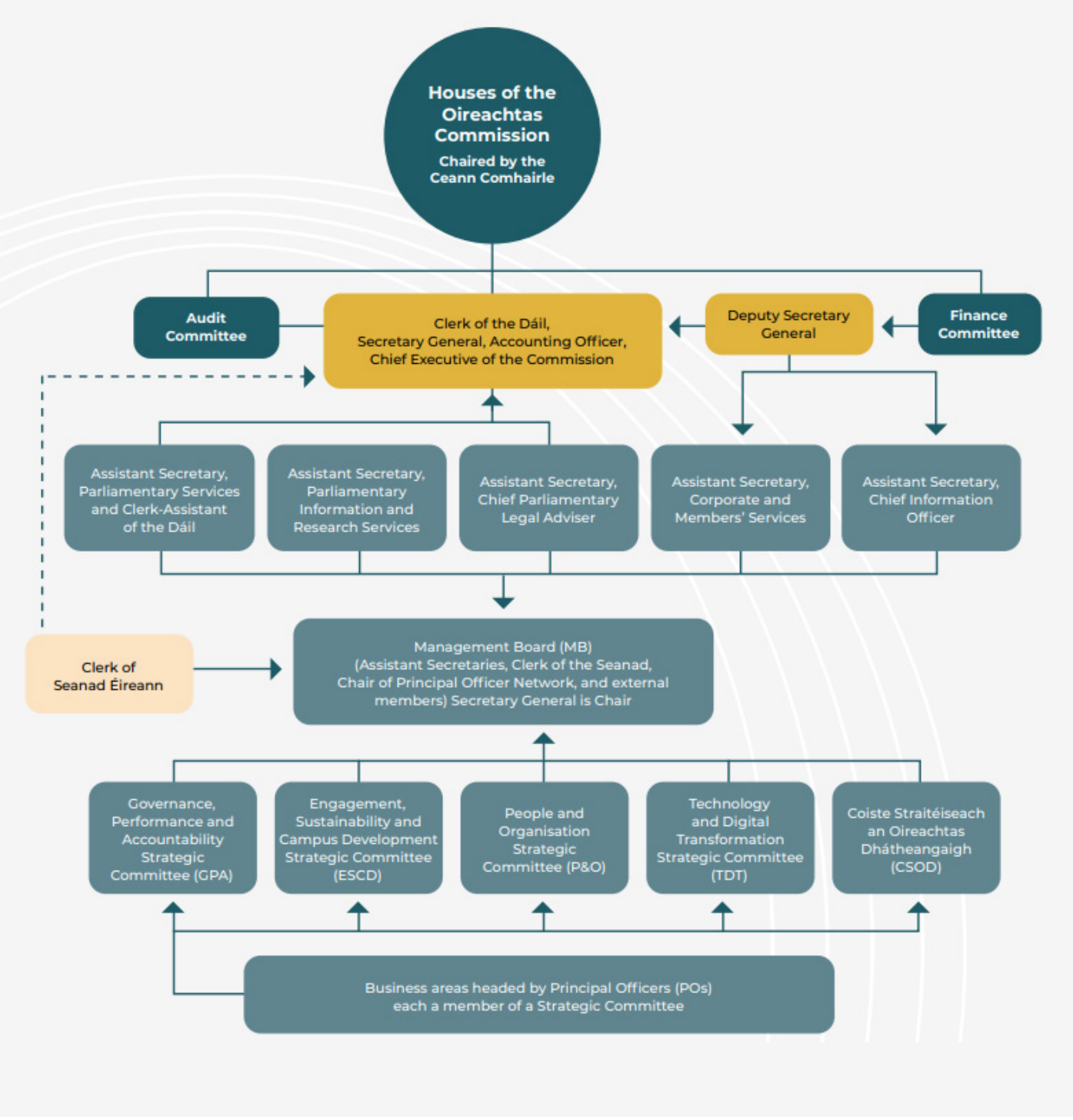



**Image 2:** Governance Chart of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) Commission, showing the flow of authority from the Commission down to various committees and business areas.

## Why good governance matters

The importance of good governance cannot be overstated. In a strategic planning context, the absence of governance means the plan may not be properly developed with the institution's best interests in mind.

Good governance arrangements:

- reduce bias in decision-making
- improve transparency or oversight
- reduce corruption in public spending
- strengthen public procurement processes
- support proper audit procedures and accountability
- increase credibility and legitimacy

## Performance, learning and accountability

Within a parliamentary governance framework, performance analysis, monitoring and risk management are essential. M&E systems allow parliaments to move beyond activity tracking towards institutional learning, using evidence to inform adaptation. Regular reporting, realistic indicators and mid-term reviews (MTRs) help identify whether implementation is on course. When M&E is linked to a risk register and budget cycle, governance bodies make informed adjustments – reallocating funds, re-sequencing priorities or revising targets based on reliable data.

Strong governance frameworks also close the accountability loop. Internal audit mechanisms, independent audit committees and oversight by parliamentary bodies (like public accounts committees) ensure resources are used transparently and management decisions remain credible. This alignment between M&E, audit and risk management creates a culture of evidence-based governance, where performance information not only demonstrates results but also builds trust.

## What good governance looks like

Good governance in a parliamentary context indicates that the parliament:

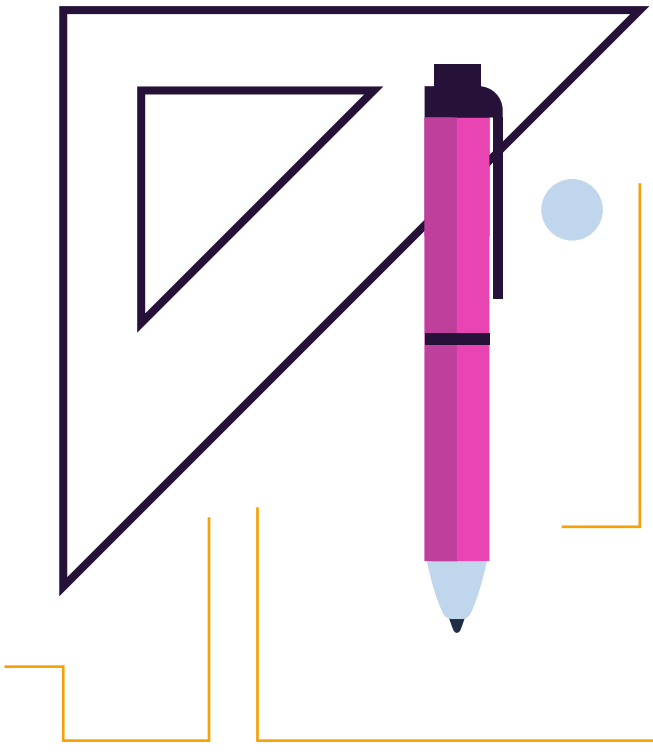
- Has a published corporate governance framework.
- Is well managed.
- Has political oversight through an independent commission or corporate authority that approves policy, reviews implementation and is accountable to the house.
- Uses public funds efficiently and effectively.
- Has appropriate management structures, including an executive body advising the SG/clerk.
- Has full accountability mechanisms for all decisions and spending.
- Actively considers risk management.
- Has full and accurate audits with an independent audit board.
- Ensures that members and staff follow applicable laws.

# Stakeholder engagement

Engaging actively with stakeholders is important. Most parliaments have a management board chaired by the SG/Clerk and reporting to a political-level corporate body, often chaired by the Speaker, involved in governance and financing of parliament and its strategic plans. Key stakeholders include members, staff, government departments, citizens, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media; they are either providers or recipients of services. In some scenarios, CSOs contribute to resource mobilisation and are also important stakeholders. This complex web requires careful management.

Stakeholder engagement is broader than donors; CSOs, the media and the public are important actors. This has led some parliaments to conduct consultations with CSOs and issue public calls for submissions on what citizens expect from parliament. The responses are insightful, so it is important to plan for periodic stakeholder forums to present progress and get feedback. This ensures the plan is not just an internal document but a public contract. The aim is to foster shared ownership with external partners.

By communicating transparently and involving these actors in planning and monitoring, broader support and expertise are mobilised, and greater accountability is generated. Annual or semi-annual meetings with major governance CSOs to discuss implementation or advise on activities enrich the process and help parliament stay connected to citizen and other stakeholder needs.



## Summary

Parliamentary governance provides the framework that ensures strategic planning is credible, accountable and effectively implemented. Because parliaments operate at the intersection of political leadership and administrative management, their structures must balance political legitimacy with institutional autonomy. Effective frameworks clearly define who makes decisions, who is accountable and how performance is monitored. While models vary, the essential functions remain constant: political endorsement, managerial ownership, coordination, performance oversight and public accountability.

Meaningful stakeholder engagement is equally important; by systematically involving stakeholders in planning and review processes, parliaments strengthen transparency, legitimacy and collective ownership of reforms. Good governance reduces bias, strengthens transparency, prevents corruption and improves institutional credibility. A sound governance framework ensures parliaments use public resources responsibly, uphold democratic principles and deliver on strategic priorities.

## Potential questions for planners

- Is the governance framework adequate to the task and comprehensive?
- Will the strategic planning process be supported by the current governance framework?
- Does the governance framework balance political oversight with administrative independence?
- Is our governance both politically legitimate and administratively stable?
- Are risk management and audit correctly inserted into the governance framework?

# Chapter Seven:
## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

Strategic planning sets a parliament's medium- to long-term direction. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) is the ongoing review of the plan's direction, its actions and the need for adaptation. For legislative institutions, where political cycles, autonomy and public scrutiny converge, MEL is the mechanism that turns strategy into credible accountability, institutional memory and continuous improvement.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) must be systematic and ongoing, giving continuous data on progress (for example, through dashboards).

Learning must be intentional, through reflection sessions and adaptive adjustments. Strategic plan implementation is not a rigid track to follow blindly. It is a journey where the map is checked periodically, and the route sometimes changes to reach the destination more effectively.

Embracing a culture of learning and adaptive management ensures that the plan isn't just implemented, but the way it is implemented is improved, optimising success and leaving the institution stronger.

## Why MEL matters

- It keeps a strategic plan 'alive' and helps administrators understand which interventions change performance. The data turns strategy into management; reporting turns learning into improvement. Parliaments that embed clear monitoring and regular reviews avoid static plans.
- As the impact of parliaments is often qualitative, MEL provides credible proxies and transparent narratives that sustain trust and guide resource allocation.
- It provides the tools to understand, communicate and act on achievements or failures.
- It strengthens financial control and reinforces the governance framework.
- It helps break down silos by creating a shared evidence base, ensuring all departments work from the same data.
- It reassures partners and donors by providing transparent reporting, strengthening alignment with external support.
- It provides accountability, enabling a parliament to demonstrate to members and stakeholders that reforms are being delivered. It creates clear data to communicate achievements and failures, improving trust.

# Parliamentary MEL best practices

Good MEL practice has some or all of the following features:

- **A clear results hierarchy (outputs-outcomes-impacts):** Administrative outputs (e.g., training delivered) are distinguished from institutional outcomes (e.g., improved committee responsiveness) and higher-order impacts (e.g., improved service delivery).
- **A results framework per objective:** Two or three well-chosen indicators that balance outputs (e.g., number of oversight reports) and outcomes (e.g., percentage of executive responses to committee recommendations) are used. Indicators should prioritise institutional relevance.
- **Regular reporting rhythm:** Many parliaments have systems where the Secretary-General (SG)/Clerk meets with divisional heads semi-annually. This builds on quarterly internal dashboards and ladders up to an annual 'Strategic Plan Performance Report'.
- **Data quality and validation processes:** Line managers, M&E units, audit committees and internal audits are all involved in assuring the data collection system. MEL systems need credible, provable and transparent data.
- **Mid-Term Reviews (MTRs) and end-of-plan reviews:** These help triangulate internal perspectives. An MTR allows parliament to assess what has been achieved, which objectives are lagging and whether assumptions are still valid. Based on that, targets are revised. This keeps the plan realistic. An independent evaluator improves credibility.
- **Clear structures with defined roles:** A structure consisting of a steering committee at the senior level and an implementation/M&E committee of directors, departmental focal points and an M&E officer/unit coordinates and assures quality.
- **Clear accountability for delivery:** A strong MEL framework assigns each objective and indicator a responsible body or officer. This makes ownership visible and transparent.
- **Utilising internal feedback:** Member and service user feedback (e.g., the Scottish Parliament's annual member survey) is useful to analyse performance from internal perceptions.
- **Deploying external feedback:** Using reference frameworks (e.g., Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) indicators for democratic parliaments) enriches self-assessment. Involving partners, civil society organisations (CSOs) or academia is also helpful.
- **Learning and capacity mechanisms:** MEL outputs must link to staff training, peer learning and institutional reforms (e.g., updating procedures or budgets) to close the loop from evidence to action.

The MEL frameworks that emerge are often a carefully constructed compromise. They focus on institutional processes and administrative actions (for example, the percentage of committee resolutions responded to by the executive). These are measurable and serve as credible proxies for broader parliamentary effectiveness.

Common pitfalls include measuring what is easiest rather than what is meaningful, or focusing on activity counts instead of results or outcomes. Because parliaments are complex, performance analysis may at times go beyond numbers to include proxy indicators and explanatory narratives.

Data capacity gaps also present obstacles, but these are mitigated by designating M&E officers, training focal points and standardising tools.

A final challenge involves avoiding the politicisation of findings. This risk may be reduced by anchoring M&E within the administration, ensuring reports are validated by multiparty bodies and publishing methods. For the sake of clarity, MEL measures the administration's performance and strategy implementation. Data such as, for example, plenary attendance, which is commonly published by parliaments, is not relevant to strategic plans. It should always be remembered that ultimately a member's performance is judged by the electorate.

## How often to monitor and evaluate

The frequency of monitoring should be determined by senior management and the needs of the plan. The commonly used reporting periods are set out below.

- **Quarterly:** Operational reviews on key performance indicators (KPI's) and milestones (by senior management), with corrective actions proposed.
- **Bi-annually:** Meetings between the SG/Clerk and heads of division bring personal focus and accountability.
- **Annually:** A public-facing performance report on the strategic plan (or embedded in the annual report), showing targets, status (met/partially/not met) and explanations.
- **Mid-term:** A structured evaluation to validate assumptions and re-prioritise.
- **End of plan:** Reviews to analyse successes and failures that inform subsequent planning. 'Pause and reflect sessions' can happen at any point if needed, where senior management analyses the data and makes changes.

## The learning process as a pause to reflect

MEL is fundamentally about learning. Parliament have highlighted practical enablers, such as institutional training programmes. In Zambia, the National Assembly established an Institute of Parliamentary Studies. In South Africa, there is continuous capacity building for line managers to improve data quality.

Another approach is to integrate MEL into staff performance and human resources (HR) systems. Linking strategic tasks to departmental work plans reduces the perception that implementation is 'extra work'. In Ghana, the parliament uses performance contracts to tie responsibilities to objectives.

Monitoring and evaluating is not just for ticking boxes; it should feed learning. Monitoring reports should be treated as learning tools. This creates an intentional space for reflection, generating learning moments that inform strategy adjustments. Annually or bi-annually, key teams gather not just to report progress, but to discuss why certain things are or are not working.

### Botswana

In one example from Botswana, a consortium of CSOs started a 'Parliamentary Scorecard' evaluating progress on strategic plan commitments. It is a research tool that analyses the performance of parliament as an institution and individual members annually, fostering citizen-driven advocacy for legislative reforms that address pressing societal issues.[6] Initially, the parliament was defensive. It eventually realised the scorecard could be embraced as a motivational tool. Stakeholder engagement brings scrutiny. Ideally, that leads to better performance.

[6] INTER PARES (2025), 'Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations: Partners in Parliamentary Strengthening'.

## Institutional models and governance

No single institutional model exists; parliaments adopt designs that fit their size and culture. Several pragmatic models have emerged:

- **Dedicated M&E department plus implementation committees:**
  The National Assembly of Zambia created an M&E department and uses a two-tier structure: a high-level Speakers' round table (for political guidance) and a multi-department implementation team (for management oversight).
- **Central M&E unit under the SG/Clerk:**
  The South African Parliament illustrates a centralised approach. An M&E office function sits under the accounting officer and acts as a second line of assurance. The five-year plan is translated into annual performance plans with measurable targets. Quarterly reviews identify gaps and the published annual report details performance.
- **M&E linked to budget performance:**
  In Ghana, parliament includes statements on strategic plan progress with its quarterly financial reports. This allows the Ministry of Finance to assess outcomes for funds voted. It strengthens the case during subsequent budget negotiations.
- **National-system integration:**
  The Parliament of Namibia aligned parliamentary reporting with the national M&E architecture. Parliaments that plug into a national platform gain standardisation but must manage the risk of inappropriate templates.
- **Combined assurance ecosystem:**
  Effective parliaments describe MEL as an ecosystem. Line management collects evidence, the central M&E office validates, internal audit tests controls and parliamentary oversight bodies close the governance loop.

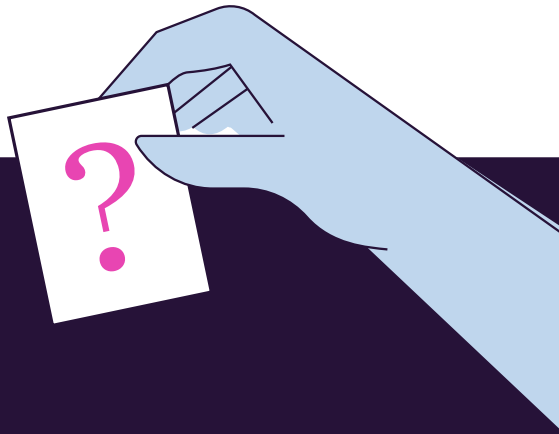
Choosing the appropriate model depends on context, governance requirements and scale.

## Practical checklist for parliaments

- [ ] Secure visible political endorsement (Speaker, governing board) for the MEL approach.
- [ ] Design a lean indicator set: eight to twelve management indicators plus three to six outcome indicators.
- [ ] Create or strengthen a central M&E function under the SG/Clerk.
- [ ] Institutionalise a governance rhythm: quarterly reporting, annual public report and a formal MTR.
- [ ] Set up data quality assurance protocols and invest in line-management capacity.
- [ ] Plan for independent evaluation (MTR or external review) to enhance credibility.
- [ ] Use MEL outputs to drive learning: link recommendations to training, budgets and performance management.
- [ ] Protect sensitive processes: use in-camera committee consideration for delicate findings.

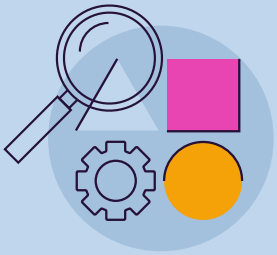
## Summary

MEL is not a bureaucratic exercise but an essential tool for demonstrating progress, fostering learning and enabling informed decisions. MEL instruments make parliamentary strategic plans more resilient. Experience demonstrates that MEL is most effective when it is institutionally embedded, politically endorsed, operationally practical and offers opportunities for learning. It is built on reliable data collection, proper analysis, responsive management, clear structures and regular reporting. The investments in people, systems and good governance frameworks pay off by transforming strategy from a static text into an accountable, adaptive and evidence-driven journey.



## Potential questions for planners

- Is the current indicator set functional? Are there too many, too few, the right ones?
- Is data collection and quality fully owned and understood?
- Is there an ‘M&E officer’ function?
- Do MEL findings inform next year’s budget bids and work plans?
- Do we have review moments that are impactful for MEL work?
- How is learning actually being embedded in the MEL process?



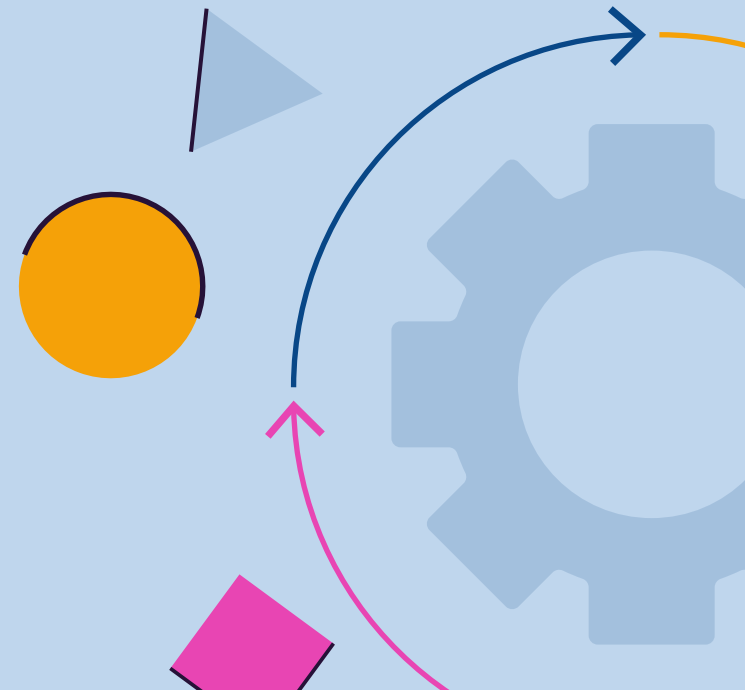
# Chapter Eight:
## Adaptation and Continuous Improvement

Adaptive monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems recognise that no strategic plan survives unchanged in the face of political shifts, evolving priorities, fiscal constraints or crises. Instead of enforcing blind adherence in the face of the evidence, MEL processes help parliaments adjust course while preserving long-term goals. This chapter reflects on building systems that measure performance realistically, deepen learning, bridge political and administrative divides, and reinforce accountability.

Strategic plans are road maps that must evolve. Embedding adaptation and continuous improvement into the planning cycle ensures the strategy remains relevant, achievable and aligned with the parliament's vision. As we have shown in previous chapters, this means building in formal review points, establishing mechanisms for timely course-correction and creating a culture that values learning.

This chapter is about ensuring the strategic plan is not static. It explores how to continuously refine processes and adapt to new challenges over its lifespan. This requires a culture shift to accept adaptation as a positive thing. Leadership at the political and administrative levels must endorse and champion the need for adaptation if an objective is not being achieved. It also requires courage to make necessary improvements or seek alternatives. For transparency, adaptation should have formal approval and a well-documented rationale. Managed change is not a failure; it is simply a recognition of the need to adapt. If it builds on consultation and is communicated properly, it shows responsiveness, not a lack of effort.

Continuous improvement is a mindset as much as a process. That mindset needs nurturing, as people often fear that acknowledging the need for improvement means admitting fault. There is a need to remove that stigma and normalise striving for improvement. Some parliaments explore 'Kaizen' (continuous improvement), involving small, routine, incremental changes. For example, each unit might have a quarterly 'Kaizen' *goal* – one small fix to their workflow. Over several years, these adaptations accumulate significantly.



## Why adaptation matters

Parliaments face shifting political priorities, leadership changes and unforeseen events like snap elections or economic crises. Embedding adaptation mechanisms like mid-term reviews (MTRs), clear decision-making authority and continuous learning ensures that the plan remains relevant and realistic. Without these feedback loops, even the best strategies risk becoming outdated.

Adaptive capacity acknowledges that parliaments operate in complex systems. They navigate electoral cycles, leadership changes, legislative pressures, donor conditions, staffing shortages and crises. Strategic implementation is not a mechanical exercise, but a governance discipline rooted in learning, flexibility and continuity. The challenge is to build systems that enable adaptation without undermining strategic focus or accountability.

Adaptation is not an ad-hoc reaction but a planned, institutionalised process of continuous improvement. A culture of adaptation is needed to keep institutions evolving. That means encouraging innovation, remaining agile, routinely reflecting on processes and learning from experience. A strategic plan is a framework within which better ways to achieve the mission are continuously sought. By the end of a plan, the intention is to improve how the parliament functions and to make it more efficient, responsive and innovative.

## Enabling adaptation and change management

Leadership plays a defining role. Leadership that embraces disciplined adaptation sets clear guardrails: the strategic direction remains stable, while annual work plans change as realities evolve. The distinction between strategic continuity and operational flexibility is essential. Strategic objectives endure; activities, timelines and even indicators change to reflect new conditions. Clarity of purpose combined with flexibility in execution defines adaptive governance.

Mid-level management is frequently the driver of adaptation. While high-level shifts originate with the Speaker or Secretary-General (SG)/Clerk, department heads and implementation committees translate adaptation into operational decisions. Their proximity to implementation allows them to identify when plans are slipping or budgets are misaligned. When authorised, mid-level managers propose adaptations grounded in practical reality.

Institutional learning makes adaptation intelligent rather than reactive. Performance reviews that look only at compliance do not promote learning. Reviews should also ask 'why' results were or were not achieved and what assumptions proved wrong. Learning also happens horizontally. Parliaments that create spaces for cross-unit dialogue and peer review build internal problem-solving networks. Adaptation is not just a technical feature but a cultural one.

The challenge for adaptation is to balance caution with innovation. Parliamentary administrations are traditionally risk-averse, but excessive caution hinders innovation. Strategic plans may commit to digital transformation or gender main streaming, but implementation can stall because innovation may require experimentation. Adaptive frameworks mitigate this by promoting pilot initiatives, phased rollouts and learning loops that allow institutions to test new systems without destabilising core services. Innovation becomes manageable when it is incremental and evidence based.

Stakeholder engagement supports adaptation by widening perspective. Strategic plans affect members, staff, citizens, media, civil society organisations (CSOs) and donors. Adaptive parliaments build structured mechanisms for stakeholder feedback (consultations, surveys, advisory forums) into implementation. This strengthens adaptation by grounding in relevant data.

## What 'good' adaptation looks like

Parliaments use elements of monitoring and change mechanisms to track and review new actions. Proven good practices include:

- Planned review points such as performing formal MTRs within a four-to-five-year cycle and end-of-term evaluations.
- Applying feedback loops, for example, having quarterly management decisions on flagged risks, fed also by member/staff feedback (e.g., Parliament of Scotland).
- Periodic learning forums where units present results (a European Parliament practice).
- Good communication with staff throughout the change process. Changes to plans create defensiveness, so this must be managed.
- Developing mechanisms to overcome the silo mentality.
- Ensuring continuous improvement is linked to the performance measurement system.
- Creating an enabling environment for continuous improvement by allocating time and resources for training, experimentation and review. This means establishing a continuous improvement unit or designating champions. It also means recognising and rewarding innovation.
- Enlisting member support to drive innovation. Bringing a cross-party group of members together to listen to their ideas drives adaptation that staff alone cannot.
- Using international research to look at comparator parliaments and learn from their processes.

> **"If you can't measure it, you can't improve it."**
>
> – Peter Drucker

## When to reassess and change

Adaptation thrives when governance frameworks include structured review mechanisms. Without them, adjustment risks becoming arbitrary.

- MTRs for major contextual shifts (e.g., post-inquiry oversight priorities), persistent under-performance or new technologies (e.g., COVID-19-era digital transitions).
- Political change: It is not unusual to review the strategic plan when the new house is convened after elections, or when a new Speaker is appointed.
- Ad-hoc adjustments approved by governance bodies when quarterly reviews surface material deviations (funding gaps, skills gaps, sequencing issues).
- Emergency issues such as cyber-attacks and climate emergencies.

### How to conduct an MTR (simple sequence)

**1. Questions:**
What's on/off track? What assumptions failed? Which objectives to scale back/up?

**2. Evidence collection:**
on key performance indicators (KPIs), budget execution, user feedback, emerging risks.

**3. Deliberation:**
Ideally by a multiparty steering body. Discuss re-prioritising initiatives, refining indicators or adjusting the delivery model.

**4. Documentation:**
Update the plan's results framework and annual performance plans. Communicate changes internally and in public summaries.

**5. Learning capture:**
List between three and five lessons to carry into the next cycle.

# Case studies analysis

A significant issue is managing change and overcoming resistance within institutions steeped in tradition. Internal departments often operate as independent fiefdoms (the 'silo mentality'), making cross-functional collaboration difficult. The following case studies are informative.

## Kenya

The current strategic plan's MTRs led to a re-prioritisation. The parliament shifted the emphasis to accelerating the development of a training centre and to create a monitoring unit to sustain adaptive practice.

## Ghana

The parliament has a comprehensive strategy for driving reform. This includes securing top leadership commitment, developing a clear communication plan, investing in capacity building, co-creating reforms through consultation and instituting excellence awards to reward those who embrace new ways of working.

## Sweden

A distinguishing feature in the Riksdag plan is the combination of rigorous performance tracking (surveys, internal evaluations), targeted workforce development and deliberate choices about resource allocation. This creates a feedback loop; data informs what staff skills and investments are needed, which, in turn, are resourced and evaluated. Coupling regular assessments of strategic initiatives with a workforce/competence plan and explicit, costed prioritisation turn strategy from a static document into an iterative, evidence-based programme of improvement.

## Scotland and Wales

They use routine performance reviews with member feedback as data to justify necessary changes. In Wales, a planned end-of-term evaluation informs the next commission strategy, showing continuity by design.

## Summary

Continuous improvement in a parliamentary context is less about radical transformation and more about building a resilient institutional culture that can recognise the need for change and is able to absorb change incrementally. Parliaments are not agile tech start-ups; their adherence to tradition is a source of stability. The most successful adaptation strategies work within this culture.

Mechanisms like regular feedback forums, advisory groups and formal MTRs are tools for gradual, evidence-based adjustment. They create predictable moments for reflection, ensuring the strategic plan remains a living document, not a rigid blueprint. The goal is not to force the parliament to become something it is not, but to enhance its institutional capacity for learning and managing change effectively.

## Potential questions for planners

- Are the planned changes based on evidence? What was the trigger and what changed?
- Is our governance framework flexible enough to allow adaptations at appropriate times?
- Do we have learning mechanisms built in (e.g., innovation days, member surveys)?
- Do we have indicators that trigger adaptation procedures?
- Do we have forums for engaging with citizens, civil society organisations (CSOs), media and donors to get timely feedback?

# Chapter Nine: Communicating Strategic Objective Results

Communication is an integral part of the strategic planning cycle. Good communication enables participation, alignment and shared ownership when used from the earliest stages of design and consultation. A well-communicated plan helps ensure that parliamentary members and staff understand the direction, priorities and rationale behind decisions. Externally, communicating about the plan's purpose, progress and results builds legitimacy and signals openness to feedback. When communication is embedded from the outset, it transforms the plan from a technical document into a shared roadmap that guides daily action and reinforces collective accountability.

Communication serves three interlocking purposes.

1. It promotes accountability to internal and external stakeholders, in particular, the public and staff; it explains what public resources were used for and why.
2. It preserves institutional memory; it ties annual activities back to strategy, allowing leaders and staff to track progress.
3. It is a mobilisation tool; clear reporting creates the conditions for resource prioritisation, cultural adjustment and operational adjustments.

To serve these purposes, communication must be timely enough to guide decision-making, accurate enough to withstand scrutiny and accessible enough to reach different audiences. Communication should be regular and predictable. Often results and progress are communicated through annual or multi-annual results reports. Some parliaments complement these with quarterly or six-monthly reviews.

## Why communicating achievements matters

- **Members and members' staff:** Members, as primary internal service recipients, see that objectives are being achieved and know what needs further improvement.
- **Administration staff:** Sharing results internally provides feedback, reinforces skills, promotes a results-oriented culture and creates room for coherent implementation. This is a necessary part of good internal communications.
- **Operational alignment:** Strategic goals link to everyday planning and resource use, enabling corrective action.
- **Accountability and transparency:** Public reporting shows citizens that promises are tracked and performance is visible.
- **Trust and engagement:** Citizens, civil society organisations (CSOs), members and media stay informed, enabling oversight and potential participation.
- **Strengthening independence:** Transparent reporting demonstrates institutional maturity, reduces political interference and helps assert parliament's autonomy.
- **Wider engagement:** Clear reporting strengthens partnerships with development partners and international networks, helping secure support.

## External vs internal communications

Communication must distinguish between:

- **External communication:** External communication about the strategic plan and its implementation is aimed at stakeholders outside the administration including: citizens, CSOs, media, donors and partner institutions. Its goals are transparency and accountability, demonstrating delivery and explaining adjustments or delays. External communication raises the parliament's public profile, fosters stakeholder engagement and dialogue, and can mobilise political or financial support.
- **Internal communication:** Members, parliamentary leadership and administrative staff use information to refine operations and allocate resources. Internal communication is focused on breaking down silos and building organisational buy-in. It ensures that departments coordinate, that individual work plans and performance discussions trace back to the strategy, and that staff recognise and celebrate progress. Good internal communication creates unity, shared responsibility and internal accountability – turning strategic objectives into everyday practice.

Both strands need alignment: internal coherence builds to credible external messages and external feedback helps refine internal implementation.

## How parliaments can do it

Parliaments use a variety of methods to communicate strategic plan results, internally and externally. These include:

- **Open-data dashboards** with real-time tracking of legislative outputs, budget utilisation and performance metrics. Open data allows 'citizen developers' to create applications that further inform the public.
- **Dedicated communication units** with multi-channel outreach (web, social media, traditional media) translate technical results into accessible formats.
- **Citizen participation mechanisms:** Online consultations, text-based feedback and public hearings with visible feedback loops.
- **Results-focused annual reports** combine quantitative indicators with qualitative case studies to illustrate impact.
- **Internal newsletters:** staff town halls, speeches and social media messaging by political leadership referring to strategic achievements.

## Challenges to communication

Certain challenges may hamper effective communications, these include:

- The absence of a legal mandate to publish results regularly.
- The ongoing confusion as to the difference between parliament and government and the way these two separate institutions operate together.
- The level of misinformation and disinformation that circulates on the role of parliament and its members in a modern democracy.
- Not understanding audience-centric communication. Formal, lengthy reports may be necessary for compliance but are not widely read by the public. Many institutions now produce shorter, accessible executive summaries. It is necessary to establish the target audience to communicate data properly.
- Actual engagement is an issue. The format, language (including sign language), length and use of technology are deep challenges, particularly for countries with many languages. Recognition of these issues is critical.
- Use of technical language isolates a strategic plan. Some parliaments embed the plan's language into public engagement activities. It takes effort to ensure formal reports speak to all audiences. In Canada, for example, the parliament makes a huge effort to produce its annual reports in plain language.
- Lack of linkage between communications and the strategic plan itself. Every communication product should explicitly connect activities to strategic pillars. Staff planning and performance contracts must trace back to the strategy.
- A need to explore more innovative communication strategies to reach diverse demographics, particularly young people. Parliaments should consider packaging information in engaging formats, such as animations, as traditional reports target a professional audience.

## Embedding communication as culture

Reporting works best when it is part of everyday practice, as distinct from a discrete annual or biannual chore. Practical steps include:

- **Operational linkage:**
  Making the strategic plan the reference for recruitment ads, induction material and individual work plans so staff encounter strategic language regularly.
- **Leadership modelling:**
  Senior leaders must champion visibility and accuracy. Where leadership communicates regularly (e.g., weekly messages, town halls), strategy language becomes normalised.
- **Staff engagement events:**
  Town halls and staff days are effective ways to translate high-level goals into operational commitments.
- **Training and induction:**
  Including strategy orientation in induction courses means that new hires and members quickly grasp the institution's priorities.

# Examples of good practice

## Uganda

The parliament explicitly included citizen-facing outputs in its plan. It sets targets for 'feedback mechanisms between parliament and the public' and mandates an annual performance report.

## Ireland

There is a statutory requirement for parliament to produce an annual implementation report, which must be laid before the parliament by 30th June. That timeline provides a mechanism to structure implementation. This is supported by a well-developed communications structure. For example, the website has open data about legislative progress, parliamentary questions and member contributions.

## South Africa

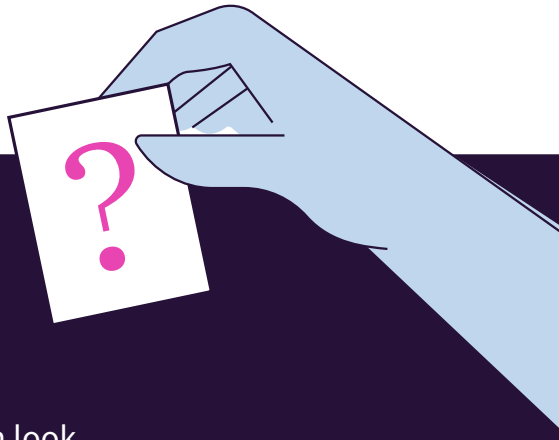
Uses the standard Treasury cycle: a multi-year strategic plan, annual performance plans that translate it into key performance indicators (KPIs), quarterly performance reports and a public annual report. This structure makes plan achievement communication into a routine.

## Summary

There is a clear evolution in how parliaments view communicating their strategic results internally and externally. The process is shifting from a passive act of 'reporting' (fulfilling a legal obligation) to a proactive strategy of 'engagement'.

There is growing recognition that the traditional publication of an annual report, while important, is insufficient for building broad public trust.

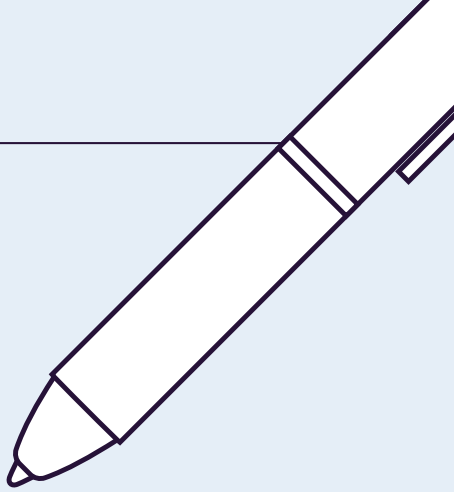
In response, parliaments are developing multi-channel, multi-format toolkits to provide reliable and authentic information on their role and their plans. This includes accessible reports, websites, social media, media briefings and outreach events. This strategic shift reframes communication not as the final step, but as an ongoing, iterative process designed to foster a continuous, meaningful dialogue with citizens and other stakeholders.



## Potential questions for planners

- What does communicating the results of our strategic plan look like and can it be improved?
- Who is the main audience for communicating progress: citizens, staff, members or international partners? How do we reach them?
- Can we share a tool or format that informs stakeholders (e.g., dashboards, annual reports, open data)?
- Have we fully met the challenge of 'transparency' in practice?
- Have our communications made strategic planning part of the parliament's culture and daily work?

# Checklist for Strategic Planning in Parliamentary Contexts



## Introduction

- ☐ Has the parliament clearly recognised why strategic planning matters at this point in time?
- ☐ Is administrative leadership visibly driving and supporting the strategic planning process and subsequent change?
- ☐ Have the constraints imposed by this unique and complex environment (parliament) been recognised in the process?

## Baseline Analysis/Review of Previous Plans

- ☐ Has a diligent 'reality check' at the administrative and political levels been conducted?
- ☐ Has the appropriate level of ambition and focus for this plan been determined?
- ☐ Has the parliament clearly defined who the plan is for (the institution, the parliamentary service or both)?
- ☐ Have situational analyses (e.g., SWOT, PESTLE) been carried out to inform planning decisions?
- ☐ Have the appropriate risk management strategies been identified and integrated into the planning process?

## Establishing the Vision, Mission and Values

- ☐ Has the parliament engaged all relevant stakeholders in crafting the vision, mission and values? Do members and staff see themselves in these?
- ☐ Does the vision clearly describe the long-term goal (three-to-five-year horizon)?
- ☐ Does the mission clearly state how these goals will be achieved?
- ☐ Has the parliament defined values that reflect its priorities, beliefs and desired behaviours during the planning period?
- ☐ Do the vision, mission and values function together as anchors for collaboration?

## Formulation of Strategy

- ☐ Is the language used for goals and objectives clear and unambiguous?
- ☐ Have the senior management team developed well-defined three to five goals?
- ☐ Does each objective have at least one clear key performance indicator (KPI)?
- ☐ Has the parliament sought and incorporated political input where appropriate?
- ☐ Has the parliament considered cross-cutting themes, such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Development Plans (NDPs)?

## Implementation Planning

- [ ] Has the strategic plan been translated into disciplined, actionable steps?
- [ ] Has the parliament reflected on known reasons for failure to implement and for success? Have they informed the mitigating actions?
- [ ] Does the implementation plan clearly link responsibilities, feasibility, budgets, staff and governance arrangements?
- [ ] Have realistic and measurable KPIs been developed according to context and need?
- [ ] Is the plan's focus on achievement of outcomes rather than merely listing activities?

## Costing, Funding and Engaging Stakeholders

- [ ] Does the parliament have, or is it actively seeking, sufficient financial autonomy to implement the strategic plan?
- [ ] Has the strategic plan been accurately costed to ensure good delivery and transparency?
- [ ] Does the parliament receive donor funding? If yes, does it support rather than overwhelm or distort the planning priorities?
- [ ] Is the approach aligned with the IPU's *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments where relevant?*

## Implementation Planning

- [ ] Does the parliament's governance framework support good decision-making, accountability and performance?
- [ ] Is there political endorsement, managerial ownership and inclusive staff representation on the implementation committees?
- [ ] Does the governance framework drive learning processes within the institution?
- [ ] Has deep stakeholder engagement been embedded as a core part of governance?

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

- [ ] Does the parliament have effective systems for data collection and management?
- [ ] Does the MEL framework demonstrate continuous progress in the strategic plan?
- [ ] Has an appropriate frequency for reporting been established?
- [ ] Have mid-term reviews (MTRs) and end-of-plan reviews been planned for?
- [ ] Does the parliament actively use learning to inform strategy adjustments? Is this planned for?

## Adaptation and Continuous Improvements

- [ ] Has adaptation been institutionalised as a planned process of continuous improvement?
- [ ] Is the parliament nurturing a culture that views continuous improvement as a mindset?
- [ ] Are leaders actively guiding adaptation, providing feedback and communicating clearly?
- [ ] Are adjustments made in a timely manner when needed?

## Communicating Strategic Objective Results

- [ ] Does the parliament's communication approach promote accountability, preserve institutional memory and mobilise resources?
- [ ] Do all stakeholders receive timely information and updates?
- [ ] Has equal attention been given to both internal and external communication?
- [ ] Have the challenges of effective communication been acknowledged and addressed in the plan and during its assessment?
- [ ] Is reporting embedded as part of everyday practice rather than a one-off exercise?

# About INTER PARES and WYDE

## About International IDEA

The WYDE | INTER PARES, funded by the European Union and implemented by International IDEA, is an innovative global project aiming to strengthen the capacity of parliaments by enhancing their legislative, oversight, representative, budgetary and administrative functions, through peer-to-peer exchanges between selected Parliaments from partner countries and Parliaments from European Union Member States, promotion of sustainable inter-parliamentary cooperation and production of comparative research and knowledge on parliamentary support approaches. It focuses both on elected Members of Parliament (MPs), particularly in their capacity as members of parliamentary committees and on the staff of parliaments' secretariats.

In 2024, the EU launched the three-year project The WYDE | Women's Leadership Initiative to promote the full and effective participation in decision-making of diverse women, especially those most often left behind, by leveraging collective action, partnerships, coordination, knowledge, and resources globally. The EU's continued support for INTER PARES now falls within this umbrella initiative. WYDE aims to strengthen the empowerment and participation of women and youth in public and political life, while promoting political pluralism and inclusion democratic processes.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

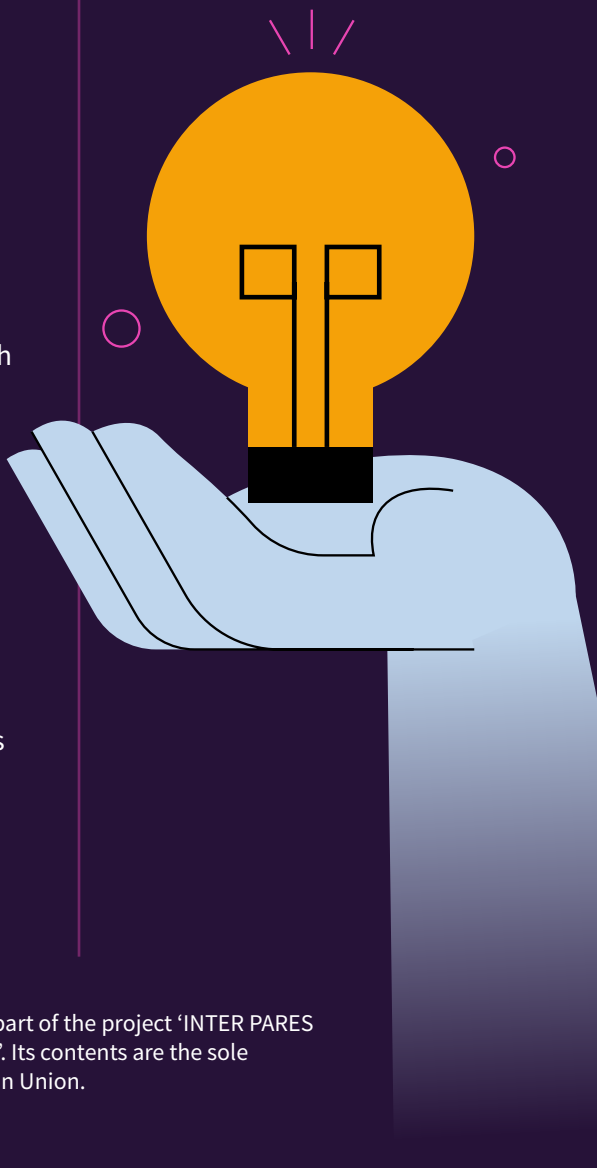
We provide capacity development and expert advice to democratic actors including governments, parliaments, election officials and civil society. We develop tools and publish databases, books and primers in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to gender quotas.

We bring states and non-state actors together for dialogues and lesson sharing. We stand up and speak out to promote and protect democracy worldwide.

Our headquarters is in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa and West Asia, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

INTER PARES |
Parliaments in Partnership
EU Global Project to
Strengthen the Capacity
of Parliaments Office of
International IDEA to the EU
Avenue des Arts 19AD, 1000
Brussels
Belgium
Email: interpares@idea.int
Website: www.inter-pares.eu

International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
Sweden
Telephone: +46 8 698 37 00
Email: info@idea.int
Website: www.idea.int



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