

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

TOOLKIT - A

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Approach

1. The SWOT tool
2. The Goals tool
3. The Triggers RAG

APPROACH

These tools are designed to support you as Chairs of Governors to lead a set of suggested steps to help define your school's position in the changing world and how you can take your school forward.

These activities can be undertaken in a range of ways – either at a whole GB session or by a smaller working group and then shared with the GB. The sessions can involve school staff or be just the GB members. You can complete each stage of the tool kit separately in stages or the whole process in one go. You can use external facilitation to support you. It's about what works best in your school's situation. The tools are designed to help you secure the evaluation and determine a forward plan.

Whatever option is used to undertake the evaluation the final outputs and any forward plan would need to be approved as a school position through your school's delegations – remembering that structural change is required to be a Full Governing Body Decision and cannot be delegated.

The toolkit is made up of three stages

- A. This stage focuses on the analysing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing a school, the goals the school wants to achieve and sets up a set of triggers for monitoring and communication to stakeholders
- B. The second stage addresses how partnership can benefit the school by exploring what a school has to offer a partner and what it can gain from being in a partnership
- C. And the final steps look at drawing the information together and developing a set of partnership criteria and evaluating partnering options

The key things to remember when following these steps are:

- The needs of the children **MUST** be paramount
- Only you as Governors and School Leaders really know your school
- If you are going to build the right long term solution – you must be honest in drawing together this information – if you need to create a partnership, choosing the right partner will help you achieve, but the wrong partner will be as problematic as no partner
- When and how to involve your stakeholders:
 - If you have a foundation trust or are a VC/VA school – what role can your trust / the Diocese play in supporting you through this
 - What role can partners and the LA play in supporting you through this
 - At what point do you communicate your thinking and plans with your community – especially parents and staff, but also children and the wider community (village / town / neighbouring schools). You will need to consider this alongside the steps and your relationship with your stakeholder community will guide your decision here.
 - Also – when do you communicate vs when do you consult

Toolkit A - Complete each of the steps in the following order as the outputs from each become the inputs to the next:

- 1) The S-W-O-T tool
- 2) The Goals Tool
- 3) The Triggers RAG tool

STEP 1 - S-W-O-T ANALYSIS TOOL

This focuses on exploring your views of the core **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** of the school as it is today, and what **Opportunities** and **Threats** that it is likely to face both now and in the future. It is important that you think at a strategic or even transformational level rather than detailed day-to-day operational.

This activity will be key to supporting the school in considering any structural change and will also help the Governing Body to apply the top down view to future School Development Plans.

Consider the following : -

Internal factors

- The core **Strengths** of the school
- The key areas of **Weakness** of the school (typically the areas of development)

The inputs to this will be the school's own self evaluation and your teams knowledge of the school and its current position

INTERNAL FACTORS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES

- External pressures and possible change impacts
 - What **Opportunities** are out there that the school could take advantage of
 - What **Threats** are out there that the school needs to gear up for

The inputs to this will be your knowledge of what's happening in education nationally and locally, use the Landscape slides provided at previous meetings / events.

EXTERNAL FACTORS	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Complete the tables above listing as many as you can think of. Please be as concise in your points as possible but you must be honest – ie, if you consider that the quality of the teaching staff is a school Strength then put **Quality of teaching staff** in the Strengths box, or if you think that it's OK now but has the potential to be a problem in the future then put **Risk of losing high quality staff due to X**, in the Threats box.

STEP 2 - DEFINING THE SCHOOL'S GOALS

For this you need to list what are the goals your school wants to achieve.

You need to use what you have learnt from the SWOT above, but also what your community and stakeholders expect and want.

You need to think in terms of both immediate/short term, as well as longer term.

Make sure you are looking at it from the perspective of the impact on the children.

So taking the teaching example on to this level, if you had identified teaching as risk – you may state a goal as being – ‘sustain good teaching throughout the school’ or ‘create an environment that ensures the forward recruitment of strong teaching staff’ in the medium to long term box. And if say your Head has resigned you may want to put ‘recruit a substantive head’ or maybe ‘secure Exec headship’ in the immediate term box.

LIST YOUR SCHOOL'S GOALS / WHAT YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE

Immediate / Short term

Medium / Long term

STEP 3 - TRIGGERS RAG

This is a simple tool that uses the traffic light system to flag the schools situation against a range of triggers. The triggers can be school specific but will generally fall under these 8 headings in some way shape or form:

TYPICAL TRIGGERS	
Performance	Scale / NOR pattern
Staffing	Budget / Finances
HT/leadership	Governance
Buildings/Facilities	Cluster / Locality

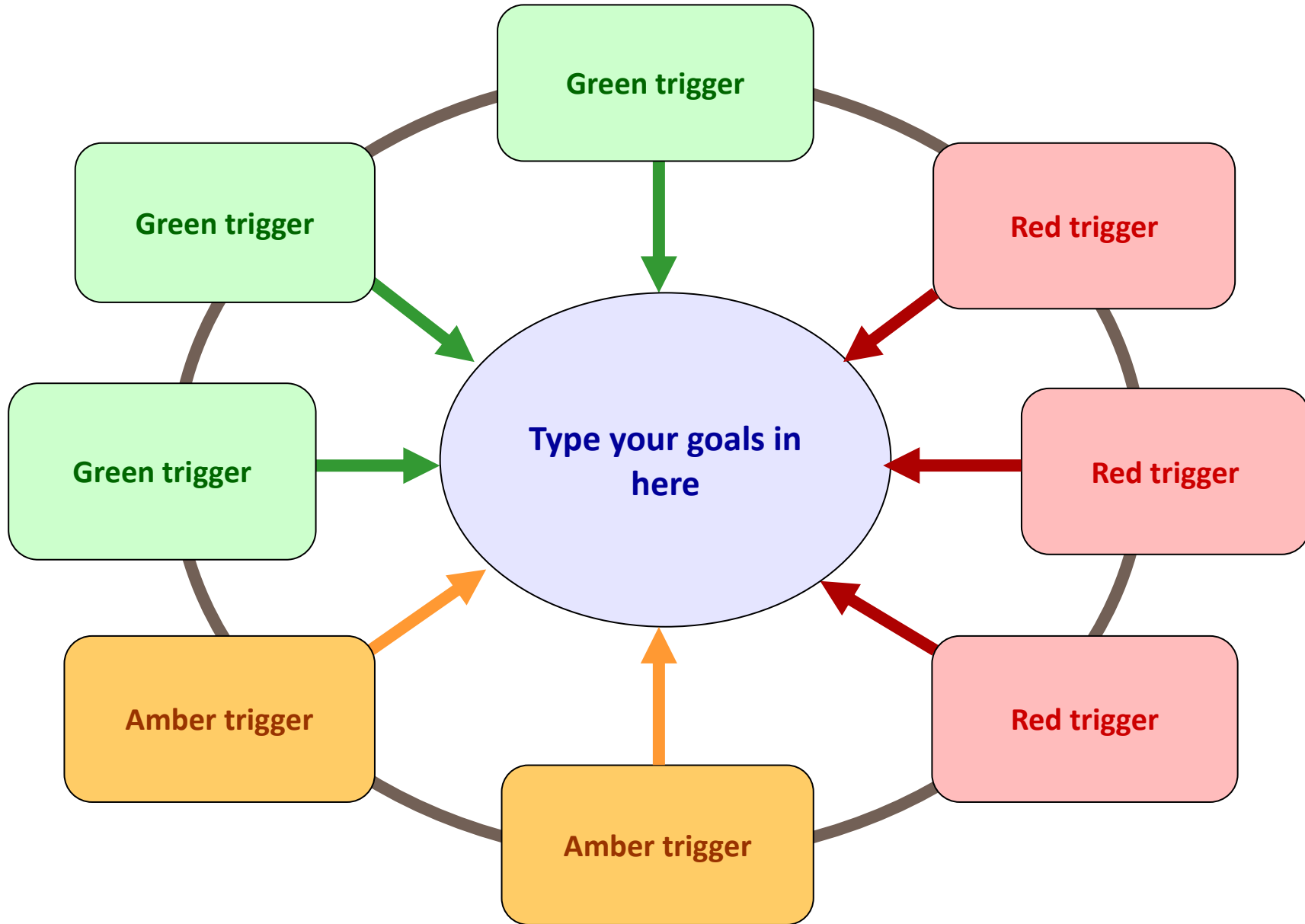
EXAMPLE



The approach is to use –

- Use the centre (Blue) to position your key school goal / vision
- Then establish what your core triggers are from the SWOT / GOALS tools
- Then categorise them
 - **RED** where the information is telling you that there are current issues – and this would signify that this trigger needs immediate attention
 - **AMBER** where there is a threat and a plan to consider the options to address the threat needs to be developed – the closer that threat is on the horizon the swifter that plan should be set out
 - **GREEN** are those triggers that do not present the school with any issues but that should be periodically checked and revisited

The template overleaf can be used to capture your triggers



STRATEGIC PLANNING AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

TOOLKIT - B

HOW CAN STRUCTURAL CHANGE / WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP HELP?

CONTENTS

4. The Benefits tool
5. Needs and Offers tool

This is the second stage of the toolkit. Toolkit A is required as input to this stage.

STEP 4 - CONSIDERING THE BENEFITS

For this you need to list how you believe structural change and/or partnership with another school could help you achieve your goals. – ie, how would a different structure model help you address the weaknesses and threats and realise the opportunities to achieve your goals.

This activity should effectively result in a list of the benefits / outcomes you are looking for from partnership or structural change.

Make sure you are looking at it from the perspective of the impact on the children.

LIST HERE THE BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUR SCHOOL OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE / WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

If at the end of this there are no benefits to structural change or partnership working then the school must be a good strong school with strong performance and leadership, requiring no support and with nothing to gain. In which case no further action needs to happen other than to ensure what it has learnt from the above steps is fed into the school development plan, and that the triggers you have identified are regularly monitored by your Governing Body so that you can take action should any trip over from green.

STEP 5 - WHAT DO WE NEED AND WHAT CAN WE OFFER A PARTNER SCHOOL

This step is about what you want a partner to bring to your school that can help you address issues and achieve goals but also what you can offer potential partners – what makes you an attractive partner. It should be drawn from the previous steps and assessment.

Make sure you are looking at it from the perspective of the impact on the children.

<u>WHAT DO WE WANT / NEED FROM STRUCTURAL CHANGE / A PARTNER?</u>	<u>WHAT CAN WE OFFER OTHER SCHOOLS/PROVIDERS TO INTEREST THEM IN PARTNERING WITH US?</u>

After completing this step you now have all the components to create your Structural Change / Partnering Criteria.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

TOOLKIT - C

HOW CAN STRUCTURAL CHANGE / WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP HELP?

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6. Collating structural change and partnering criteria
7. Partnering Statement

This is the third stage of the toolkit. Toolkit A and B are required as input to this stage.

STEP 6 - STRUCTURAL CHANGE / PARTNERING CRITERIA

For this step you need to consider what types of structures / partnership models / partners best fit your situation. This should be formed from the outputs from all the previous steps. What this step does is help you to explore, using the information provided on the different structural models, which options best meet your requirements.

- Stage 1 – The Goals (Toolkit A) / Benefits, Needs, Offers (Toolkit B) should effectively provide you with a list of what will become your Structure change or Partnering Criteria. Using the template overleaf capture each of the Goals / Benefits / Needs / Offers in the tables provided.

This step can then be used in two ways.

- Firstly as a means to evaluate which structural models best fit your school's situation and requirements and
- Secondly once you have determined your Partnership Plan (after Step 7), to evaluate the strength of particular partners in shared goals and benefits

A - For evaluating Structural Change options:

- Stage 2 – is a simple review of your RAG and S-W-O-T to determine a shortlist of suitable/appropriate structure options from the available set (refer to table of structure options and partnership spectrum). Once you've agreed what your shortlist is these can be listed in the table replacing the blue text to represent your A / B / C selection. There are no hard and fast rules for this it's basically a judgement call against the suitability of each of the options against your school evaluation.

Also – if at this stage there is a clear single structural solution then this evaluation exercise is more of a validation of how well the solution meets your needs.

- Stage 3 – is then a more detailed review of how the shortlisted options each help you to meet the criteria you have listed in the table. By using the scoring values consider each of the criteria against the structural options to score how well they meet your needs. This step may well take some time as you will probably want to research the options in more detail – lots of information available on the web about Federations and Academies.

B - For evaluating potential partners:

- Stage 4 – using the partnering criteria drawn up in stage 1 above and after Step 7 (below) - determine a shortlist of suitable/appropriate partners. Once you've agreed what your shortlist is these can be listed in the table replacing the blue text to represent your A / B / C selection. Selecting partner options will be driven by information you know of locally and from research, but can also be supported by facilitated brokerage of partner introductions.

School Name:

Evaluation Scoring:	0. = no fit or value 1. = only meets a small part of our requirements 2. = at least 50% good fit / value or stronger 3. = really strong fit / meets all of our requirements	Structural Options Shortlisted:	A. = 1 st option here B. = 2 nd option here C. = 3 rd option here
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<u>STRUCTURAL CHANGE / PARTNERING CRITERIA</u>	Structural Options Shortlist		
School Goals – what we are trying to achieve	A	B	C
Sub Total			
Benefits we can achieve	A	B	C
Sub Total			

What we need from structural change / a partner	A	B	C
Sub Total			
What we can offer a partner	A	B	C
Sub Total			

Once this stage is completed you have a clear view of the options that will best meet your needs. From here the way forward is about how this fits your Strategic Plan – feeding your SDP for school improvement areas but also creating a Partnership Plan.



STEP 7 - PARTNERSHIP/STRUCTURAL CHANGE PLAN

This step of the process will be completely unique to each school – what it needs from partnership, what model it wants to explore and who it wants to explore it with.

The first step in the process is to draw all the information together from the Toolkit outputs into a simple 2-3 page document that can be signed up to by all in the school and shared with prospective partner schools to find the right partner /solution.

This will also form the basis of future communications with your stakeholders.

The structure of the document would include the following sections:

- Background / Context
 - A summary of the school and its situation
- School Characteristics
 - A summary of the S-W-O-T in terms of the culture / ethos and its strengths and value, as well as its challenges
- What your school is looking to achieve going forward
 - A statement / set of points about your goals and needs
 - What you are looking for in a partner
 - What you can offer a partner
 - Types of partnerships you are interested – (if you are able to be clear on these at this stage, as sometimes the structure needs to come later)

You are now ready to open conversations with prospective partners.

It may be that you can arrange a cluster discussion to share what each school has discovered and to explore the potential for shared goals and partnership solutions. The criteria evaluation table in Step 6 can now be used to evaluate potential partners.

Alternatively a structure model and logical/obvious partner may have emerged and therefore you now need to explore whether they too are interested to partner. When looking to open conversations with potential partners we would advise you to contact your DBE, the Local authority or an independent advisor for guidance and support as brokering partnerships can be very sensitive.