

SWOT Self-Assessment Worksheet for Cultural Trust IFS Applicants

Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats

A SWOT analysis is one way to brainstorm project ideas for the Cultural Trust's Institutional & Financial Stabilization grant programs. An IFS project should address a single, specific, significant challenge to your organization's stability or capacity. A self-assessment, such as a SWOT analysis, can help you identify the challenge that is most significant or for which a Cultural Trust grant could have the most impact.

The Cultural Trust believes that reflection and self-assessment are important for all organizations; however, this process should reflect your organization's values, priorities, and circumstances, and it will look different for every organization. There is no one "right" way to operate a cultural organization. This worksheet is intended for use specifically in the context of the Cultural Trust's IFS grant programs, in combination with the recorded self-assessment technical assistance webinar on the [Cultural Trust's website](#). Together, these resources can help you understand what areas might be working well at your organization and what areas might benefit most from a Cultural Trust investment. It is intended to be a starting point for reflection and discussion, not as a diagnosis or recommendation.

The worksheet includes 8 categories for self-assessment. The categories are broad and may not align perfectly with your organization's structure, practices, and/or purpose. The following questions can serve as a starting point for evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in each category for your organization. These questions align with common areas of Cultural Trust funding, but they are not exhaustive. Be sure to think about your organization's specific circumstances and goals within each of the categories, and use the empty rows at the end of the worksheet to address categories and questions not included here that are specific to your organization.

Completing a self-assessment is optional and is not required in order to apply for a Cultural Trust grant. However, applicants to the IFS grant program will note that in the grant narrative, they are asked to explain any self-assessment used to identify their organization's major challenge. Applications that are fully able to explain the reflection involved in identifying their major challenge tend to be more successful in the panel review process.

If you are interested in learning more about best practices or conducting a more in-depth organizational assessment process, there are a number of assessments and standards programs available. We encourage you to reach out to either the New Jersey Historical Commission or the New Jersey State Council on the Arts for more information.

1. Mission/Vision:

- Is your organization's mission clear?
- How well does it align with your organization's major programs and activities?
- How well does it align with your organization's budget priorities?
- How well does it align with your organization's internal processes?
- Are the board members and management aligned in their understanding of the mission?
- Is there an established, regular review process for your organization's mission, and does it function well?

2. Strategy:

- Is your organization's current strategic plan providing sufficient guidance for decision-making, both in questions of routine operations and organizational direction?
- How accurately does your organization's strategic plan reflect the organization's overall goals and priorities?
- To what extent and how effectively are money, time, and resources allocated to the activities of highest strategic priority at your organization?
- Are board and staff familiar with the strategic plan? Is it regularly referred to in the course of organizational activities?

3. Programs and Services:

- To what extent do programs connect to and advance the organization's overall mission and strategy?
- How are programs and services developed and planned for?
- How are programs and services delivered?
- What is the quality and impact of the programs and services? What systems are in place to assess this?
- How cost-effective are your programs and services?
- Who are the current audiences for your programs and services? Potential audiences?

4. Community:

- How aware is the community of your organization? What is your organization's reputation in the community?
- How do audiences find out about your organization and programs?
- What marketing channels are you using to reach your audience? What other channels could you be using?
- What is the quality of the relationships your organization has with other organizations and with specific communities?
- How does your organization gauge community needs and demand?
- How is the community represented within your organization and programs?
- What do your organization's partnerships bring to your organization, and what do you bring to other organizations through your partnerships? What are the potential benefits of new partnerships?

5. Human Resources:

- To what extent do staff and volunteers have the knowledge and skills to successfully perform in their roles?
- To what extent do staff and volunteers have access to the necessary professional development and training to excel in their roles?
- How does the organization evaluate volunteer and professional staff performance?
- How does the organization address staff/volunteer recruitment and retention?
- How is the organization's overall workload distributed across staff and volunteers?
- How does the organization plan and prepare for the departure of key employees and volunteers?
- Are the organization's organizational chart, job descriptions, and personnel policies up to date and known among staff and volunteers?

6. Governance

- How well does the composition of the board represent the organization and the communities it serves?

- Do board members come from a variety of fields and expertise?
- To what extent do board members have sufficient knowledge, skills, interest, and commitment to perform their duties?
- How are board members recruited?
- Are board members active and engaged?
- Does the board provide adequate financial oversight of the organization?
- Do board members clearly understand their fiduciary roles and responsibilities?
- Does the board's meeting schedule and committee structure facilitate effective board action?
- What is the quality of the working relationship between the board and organization leadership?
- Are the organization's bylaws and other core documents up to date and accessible, and are board members familiar with them?

7. Systems and Infrastructure:

- Is the organization's space well-maintained and meeting the organization's needs?
- Does the organization have the resources to maintain its facility and address any unexpected repairs?
- Is the organization's equipment well-maintained and meeting the organization's needs?
- How well does the organization's website function? Is it easy to navigate and up to date? If it has ticketing or donation functions, are they easy to use and reliable?
- Is the organization's software right-sized to the organization? Is it complex and powerful enough to meet the organization's needs?
- Are the organization's databases well-maintained and meeting the organization's needs?

8. Financial Management:

- Does your organization have a standard and effective annual budgeting process?
- Does your organization regularly prepare and distribute internal financial reports to staff and board, including performance against budget?
- Does your organization have enough working capital to effectively manage cyclical variations in revenue and expenses?
- Does your organization have sufficient reserves or cash savings to effectively navigate an emergency or a budget shortfall?
- Does your organization generally have a balanced budget?
- How does your organization approach and manage debt?
- Does your organization have effective fundraising plans, strategies, and skills among board and staff?
- Does your organization have a strong case for support to use in fundraising activities?
- Does your organization have sources of funding that are diverse, predictable, and sustainable?

| | Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Threats | Questions |
|---|-----------|------------|---------------|---------|-----------|
| 1. Mission/Vision | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity - Alignment with programs - Alignment with budget - Alignment with internal practices - Review process | | | | | |
| 2. Strategy | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic planning process - Alignment with organizational goals and priorities - Resource allocation - Familiarity and use among staff and board | | | | | |

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| 3. Programs and Services | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mission relevance - Planning and development - Delivery - Quality and impact - Evaluation - Cost effectiveness - Audiences | | | | | |
| 4. Community | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reputation/ awareness - Relationships - Representation - Partnerships - Marketing - Demand | | | | | |

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| 5. Human Resources | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff and volunteer knowledge, skills, and performance - Professional development and training - Evaluation - Recruitment and retention - Organizational structure and policies - Work load - Succession planning | | | | | |
| 6. Governance | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board composition and representation - Board member knowledge and skills - Board member recruitment - Board member engagement - By-laws and other core documents - Board committee structure - Financial oversight by board - Relationship between board and organization leadership | | | | | |

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|---|-----------|------------|---------------|---------|-----------|
| 7. Systems and Infrastructure | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Space/facilities - Equipment - Technology - Emergency preparedness | | | | | |
| 8. Financial management | | | | | |
| Potential areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual budgeting process - Internal financial reporting - Cash flow and reserves - Revenues/expenses - Debt - Fundraising - Funding sustainability | | | | | |
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| Other: | | | | | |
| Other: | | | | | |
| Other: | | | | | |