

Building and Growing Your State Association: Self-Assessment

The checklists on the following pages are intended to help evaluate your state association's unique roles, functions, and strengths within your state. Provide a general ranking of each statement, followed by offering specific written thoughts and comments on your organization's assets, liabilities, and opportunities.

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Checklist #1:

State Association Governance

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our state association maintains fresh vision and mission statements with specific policies and strategies to achieve them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association has modified our culture over the years to continue serving regional councils, yet also broadened our partnerships and relationships with private, nonprofit, philanthropic, and academic institutions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state associations has a board of directors representative of out membership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association has a full time, paid, executive director.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association does not have a full time executive director: we rely on volunteers from our board or membership to fill that role.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist #2: State Association Process

Yes **No** **Not Sure**

Our state association has established priorities.

Our state association has established formal goals and objectives.

Our state association has a formal mission statement.

Our state association has developed strategic objectives, including a statewide vision, comprehensive strategic action plan, conflict resolution process to facilitate local collaboration, and pursuit of priority issues.

Our state association organizational focus is attuned to results and outcomes, rather than organizational structures, control, and credit.

Comments and Notes:

Checklist #3:

State Association Collaboration

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our organization focuses on regional collaboration through voluntary agreements of equals, rather than the traditional hierarchical model of local government control and ownership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization places emphasis on various players bringing resources, expertise, and knowledge to the table as distinct yet more equal parts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization only tends to participate in activities where we are the lead player or the controlling interest.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is comfortable collaborating with other statewide, regional, and local entities and leaders, allowing each of us to bring a unique perspective, expertise, and resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our local government policy board members encourage our management and staff to pursue partnerships with private and nonprofit sector entities to advance our region's economic competitiveness and quality of life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Private sector organizations and leaders are interested in working with our organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is an active participant and associate of business, industry, and educational associations and alliances within our region.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is an active partner of community-based organizations and philanthropic entities within our region.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist# 4: State Association Trust

Yes **No** **Not Sure**

Our organization focuses on processes and procedures that are often inflexible and rigid, making it difficult for us to participate in new regional partnerships and alliances.

Our organization is focused on building trust and credibility with new partners, including private, nonprofit, and philanthropic organizations and leaders.

Our organization is fearful of new regional players and actors.

Our organization plays a specific role and function within our region, allowing us to more comfortably partner with new and existing regional and local entities.

Comments and Notes:

Checklist # 5:

State Association SWOT Analysis

This section will walk the state association through an analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Known as a SWOT Analysis, the information gleaned through the process will help state association leadership better establish the organization's goals and objectives, as well as develop a meaningful, relevant, and useful strategic plan.

The four key quadrants of the SWOT analysis will help you identify:

- > **Internal characteristics** and factors that, once identified and understood, are advantageous to the state association's long-term success (Strengths and Weaknesses).
- > **External circumstances** that might present themselves in the future that need to be addressed in the present (Opportunities and Threats).
- > Consider the following questions and enter your responses into the appropriate quadrant of the box:
- > What are the top three major strengths of the state association?
- > What are the top three major weaknesses of the state association?
- > What are the top three major threats facing the state association?
- > What are the top three major opportunities facing the state association?

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Checklist # 6:

Building Relationships with Federal and State Officials

The following section is designed to help you and your state association assess your commitment and success in forging strong professional ties with key federal and state policy makers and program administrators. Please provide specific responses and comments for each question and statement.

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our state association spends considerable time and energy to build relationships with:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> governor and key gubernatorial staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> state legislators and key legislative staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> state agency directors and senior program staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> members of Congress and their staff in Washington and in the region	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> federal agency leaders, both political and career staff, at HQ and field offices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
While much of our state association's operations and program budget comes from federal and state sources, our organization does not feel it is important to engage in federal and state advocacy efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association often serves as the voice with federal and state policy makers for our member regional councils.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association collaborates with our federal and state officials to develop a strategic vision and action plan for the region, including regular participation in our board meetings and committee activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association secures contracts and projects with our federal and state funding partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association has a clear strategy for building credibility, trust, and awareness with our federal and state agencies and partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our federal and state policymakers (including staff) rely on our organization to learn about and keep track of key regional and local issues and projects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization participates in national and state trade and membership associations to advance and keep track of important policy, programmatic, and funding issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our federal and state elected leaders know and respect our organization and call on us for feedback on policy issues, background on projects, and assistance with priority issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist # 7:

Knowledge of Federally Elected Officials

List the name and rate your relationships with each of the following federal officials. Try to complete it for as many Members of Congress as possible, paying close attention to those that actually promote your members, and support them by advocating for them in the annual federal budget.

DC Staff Directors for U.S. Senators

	Not so Much			Definite	
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Key DC Legislative Aides for U.S. Senators

Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Chief of Staff for U.S. House Members

Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Legislative Director for U.S. House Members

Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Schedulers for U.S. House Members

Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Key DC Contacts for Federal Funding Agencies

Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Now, think about which Members of Congress your organization does not have a relationship with to determine the value of initiating one.

Checklist # 8:

Engagement of Federally Elected Officials

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our state association:			
> Invites federal elected officials to attend and participate in our regular board meetings, special events, and program rollouts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Meets with federal elected officials at least once each year in Washington, D.C., or at least once a year when they are in the state during recess.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Conducts on-site tours with our federal elected officials as a follow-up to ribbon-cutting ceremonies to show policymakers the long-term impact of their support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Implements a clearly defined and updated strategy for expressing our appreciation and support for federal legislators and other key federal leaders.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Offers to hold informal brainstorming or strategy sessions to help federal elected officials address their top policy priorities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist # 9:

Knowledge of State Elected Officials

List the name and rate your relationships with each of the following state officials:

Chief of Staff for Governor	Not so Much			Definite	
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Scheduler or Gatekeeper for Governor	Not so Much			Definite	
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Relationship with State Senators	Not so Much			Definite	
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Relationship with State House Members	Not so Much			Definite	
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Key Contacts with State Legislative Branch Committee and Leadership Staff	Not so Much			Definite	
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Key Contacts with State Agencies	Not so Much			Definite	
Name/Agency: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name/Agency: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name/Agency: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Name/Agency: _____	1	2	3	4	5

Checklist # 10:

Engagement of State Elected Officials

Yes No Not Sure

Our state association:

- > Invites state elected officials to attend and participate in our regular board meetings, special events, and program rollouts.
- > Meets with state elected officials at least once each year each legislative session.
- > Conducts on-site tours with our state elected officials as a follow-up to ribbon-cutting ceremonies to show policy makers the long-term impact of their support.
- > Implements a clearly defined and updated strategy for expressing our appreciation and support for state legislators and other key state leaders.
- > Offers to hold informal brainstorming or strategy sessions to help state elected officials address their top policy priorities.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Now, think about which state elected officials you might consider developing a better working relationship with and develop a contact list for future reference.

Checklist # 11:

Building Collaboration among Regional Councils

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our state association is proactive in providing leadership and a vision for the regional councils in our state.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As a state association, our organization is focused on providing the leadership and vision necessary for the region to remain competitive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association provides a forum for regional leaders to develop a blueprint for the region's future community and economic competitiveness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization fosters regional collaboration between our members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization fosters regional collaboration between local officials and private, philanthropic, and nonprofit sector leaders within our state.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is aggressive in tapping into any available resource to advance the region, including public, private, and philanthropic resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization has earned a reputation as a leader and consensus builder throughout the state.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist # 12:

Public Relations and Image

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our state association places a high priority on building a solid public relations image and appearance. This includes our website, annual report, grant applications, newsletters, regional plans, and other electronic and print materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization has the internal capacity to develop first-class publications, reports and websites, including graphic and web designers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization invests and contracts with professional marketing and design specialists to help us create and portray a professional, quality image.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association reports, publications, and other communications no longer place such a heavy emphasis on reporting progress on “process” such as amount of money secured and leveraged, number of applications submitted, and volume of grants administered. Instead we now stress the “real world” outcomes and results of our members activities, such as how they directly impact people through improved environmental quality, better pay and benefits, improved public safety, or improved quality of place and life within our region.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization studies and evaluates the public perceptions that key stakeholders may have towards our organization, and our member organizations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our organization is taking steps to:			
> Make a successful first impression, including through a professionally-designed website, and print materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Present a professional image in newsletters, grant applications, annual reports, and other print and online materials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Participate in statewide, regional and local coalitions, alliances and organizations, including public, private, and nonprofit organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Exhibit a willingness to staff and support special initiatives or incubate new organizations and programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Establish a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and calculated risk-management with new ideas, programs, and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
> Serve as a valued thought leader for our members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association has a specific strategy and action plan for building the reputation, capacity, willingness, leadership, and culture of being a regional leader among our membership.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist # 13:

Successful Meetings

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our state association conducts regular pro-active meetings with key federal, state, and local policy officials and staff, partners, funders, and constituents about common interests, opportunities, and program results.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association conducts quality control of statewide regional council programs, including developing templates for regional plans and programs, making sure assigned tasks were implemented, and ensuring each regional council is providing a consistent and quality product to funders.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association develops and implements a pro-active outreach and relationship building strategy across the state, including internal problem solving and monitoring to ensure credibility, strategic planning to implement a focused action plan, and a process for exchanging information and intelligence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist # 14:

State Associations Activities

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Our state association conducts outreach and relationship building with federal elected officials and agencies, state elected officials and agencies, state associations of counties and municipalities, peer statewide associations, foundations and nonprofits, universities and colleges, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association conducts program development including regular statewide association meetings with federal and state partners to explore new opportunities and ideas that focus on statewide accountability, consistency, and quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We constantly focus on adding value to federal, state, and local programs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association provides quality control, consistency, and performance across the state; state associations and their member organizations are viewed by the external world as one service delivery system so it is important to focus on quality, consistency, and performance across the state.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association provides peer accountability, mentoring, and professional development to build upon the specific skills and expertise of each regional council. Each regional council tends to have certain strengths, which can benefit other regional councils within the state.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association provides professional development training for our member's executive directors, board, and professional staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association conducts marketing through statewide impact reports, newsletters focused on program outcomes, quarterly issue forums, training sessions, and an annual awards program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our state association administers an annual awards program for legislators, volunteers, innovation projects, state and federal agency officials, local policy officials, and regional council staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments and Notes:

Checklist # 15:

Organizational Documents

Our state association has developed the following documents:

Annual Report

- > Alaska
- > Michigan

Articles of Incorporation

- > Arkansas
- > Oregon
- > Virginia

Brochure

- > Alabama

Budget

- > Florida
- > Iowa
- > Kentucky
- > Michigan
- > Mississippi
- > Missouri
- > New Hampshire
- > Oregon
- > Oregon Treasure Report
- > South Carolina
- > Virginia

Bylaws

- > Arkansas
- > Colorado
- > Florida
- > Indiana
- > Iowa
- > Kansas

- > Kentucky KADD
- > Kentucky KCADD
- > Mississippi
- > Missouri
- > Montana
- > New Hampshire
- > North Carolina
- > Ohio
- > Oklahoma
- > Oregon
- > Pennsylvania
- > Texas
- > Vermont
- > Virginia
- > West Virginia

Chart of Services

- > Colorado Economic Development Services
- > Colorado Program Services
- > North Carolina

Conference Program

- > Texas

Conflict of Interest Policy

- > Montana

Contracts (Including Staff Contracts)

- > Indiana
- > Iowa Contract A
- > Iowa Contract B
- > Montana

Dues Structures

- > Iowa
- > Michigan

Ethics Codes and Best Practices

- > Florida
- > Iowa
- > Montana
- > North Carolina
- > Oregon

Executive Director Job Description

- > Kentucky

Grant Information

- > Iowa
- > Texas
- > Vermont

Graphic References (Business Card, Chart, Map)

- > Connecticut
- > Montana
- > Nebraska

Inter-Regional Cooperative Agreement

- > North Carolina

Legislative Priorities

- > Florida
- > Kentucky
- > Montana
- > New Hampshire

- > Texas

Marketing Strategy

- > Colorado

Minimum Standards and Criteria for Operations

- > Missouri

Mission Statement

- > North Carolina

Organizational Analyze Report

- > Connecticut

Project Report

- > Montana

Proposed Merger

- > Maine

State Association Explanation

- > Vermont

State Funding Allocation to RDOs

- > Texas

Strategic Plan

- > Colorado

Whistleblower Policy

- > Montana