

SPNA Student Guide:

Preparing an Agency Profile (systems outline)

Developing a public or nonprofit agency profile provides the opportunity to associate theory with real-life application. This guide provides assistance in preparing an agency profile using a systems outline. Your instructor will provide information regarding required length and style. The profile should use appropriate citations, including interview contacts and program documents, etc.

You may choose any government or nonprofit agency. You may choose a local agency. (The agency need not be a legally autonomous organization, but may be a local chapter or office of a larger organization.) In this case, you will likely need to rely on primary sources like personal interviews, e-mail correspondence, and board minutes. Alternatively, you may choose a national organization such as the US Census Bureau or the American Medical Association. In this case, you will probably rely heavily on secondary sources like books and magazine articles.

SOURCES AND FORMS

As succinctly as possible, describe the history of your agency and its official bureaucratic structure. Describe the legal framework, applicable to your organization (e.g.: enabling legislation; statutory requirements). What is the agency's official "mission."

ENVIRONMENT

General environment. Address three questions: (1) What need of society does the agency address? (2) What cultural value(s) does the agency reflect? (3) In what constitutional / legal framework does the agency operate?

Socioeconomic forces. Describe important demographic, economic, cultural and technological trends that affect the agency. These factors may cause a change in demand for services, in available resources, or in cost of operations. Examples include: new information technologies; the aging population; trends in donations

External political forces. Describe those institutions that have no formal bureaucratic link to the agency, but whose political power can influence the agency. These may include public opinion, the media, special interest/lobbying groups, ideological factions, and public or private "competitors." How have "reinventing government" ideas affected the agency.

Institutional forces. Describe those institutions which directly influence the agency. These may be elected officials, legislative bodies, commissions, agencies or foundations with formal

regulatory or supervisory functions. They may be other offices, agencies, bureaus and departments that compete for resources or provide complementary services within a larger bureaucratic framework. For public agencies, describe the relationship with state, county and federal government. How have “new federalism” and “privatization” affected the agency? How have changes in Michigan under Governor Engler affected the agency?

INPUTS

Revenue. Describe the sources of agency revenue. Have the revenues amounts or sources of revenue changed over the past decade? What is the agency’s budget cycle?

Mandates. Describe the major tasks (products and services) that law, contract or moral obligation requires the agency to perform.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS

Describe the make-up of the agency’s personnel. For public agencies, explain the role and characteristics of (a) political appointees; (b) professional careerists; (c) civil service personnel; (d) unionized workers; and (e) contractual employees. For nonprofit organizations, explain the role and characteristics of (a) the board, (b) the managers and (c) the staff. How do the different parts / levels of the organization relate to one another, both formally and informally. How are new agency personnel oriented to their new jobs? What is the organizational reward structure that facilitates or holds back the full potential of the agency’s employees? Does the agency personnel represent the diversity of the community? Are there provisions for dealing with unethical behavior?

OUTPUTS

Expenditures. Describe how the agency spent its funds? What is the total payroll? What accounting practices are used?

Products and Services. Describe what the agency has accomplished in terms of its products and services. Does the agency do any more or any less than is legally or contractually required?

FEEDBACK

Describe formal and informal measures the agency uses to gage its performance. How do citizens or clients provide feedback to the agency? Has the agency employed strategic management or program evaluation exercises?

CONCLUSION

What aspects of the agency that you find the most positive? Most negative? If you could make changes, what would those changes be and why?