

How-to note



Organisational capacity assessment

Introduction

An organisational capacity assessment (OCA) is often used by organisations to conduct a review of their systems and processes. [Click here](#) to access RSH OCA package consisting of the assessment template and action plan template in English and Arabic.

RSH uses the OCA tool as part of the mentorship programme and the demand for this note came from mentors who support organisations to conduct the self-assessment. The note aims to support with preparing for the self-assessment as well as scoring and prioritisation of organisational gaps.

This guide accompanies the OCA tool and longer guidance, which can be found in the RSH library.

Planning and preparing for the assessment

1.1 Engaging leadership: It is important to gain and maintain leadership commitment to safeguard against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH) to ensure policies are implemented effectively and with the correct resource allocation. Engaging leadership in the planning and preparation for the OCA assessment is essential for maintaining that commitment throughout the process. The safeguarding focal person should meet with a member of the management team to ensure understanding and commitment to the process of OCA self-assessment. The engagement would look to clarify the following:

- The purpose of the OCA, which is for capacity building for the organisation to deliver programmes safely. The tool is not solely used for donor requirements but may support due diligence processes in the long term.
- The process of using the tool and familiarisation with the sections. Ensuring the right people are part of the assessment and that they invest their time in the process is essential.
- On average, the assessment takes 1 full day or may be split into 2 half days. A large organisation of more than 50 staff may require more time commitment as more staff would be represented to reflect diversity.
- Budget requirements should be considered such as venue, writing materials, printing costs, refreshment or lunch and the cost of a consultant (if needed).

- Accountability to the Board or reporting upwards to ensure safeguarding is a commitment at the highest level.

1.2 Identifying the representative(s): The organisation should consider whether someone internal will be responsible for the assessment and follow-up actions, or if an external consultant should be brought in to support.¹ In addition to having a point of contact within senior management, other staff who would be part of the assessment should be notified ahead of time, with an agreed amount of time to engage in discussions. Other staff may be from departments such as leadership/management, programmes, Human Resources, Monitoring Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) etc. It is important to consider diversity such as gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity and seniority within the organisation.

1.3 Planning for the OCA workshop: The external or internal lead person should agree on a budget and format for the workshop, such as holding the workshop virtually or in person. It is mandatory for those participating to commit the time, thus the date and timing for the workshop should be sent out as early as possible. Where the workshop is held in person, logistics should be arranged based on the number of people participating in the OCA workshop.

1.4 Facilitating the capacity assessment: It is expected that the external or internal point person would facilitate the workshop but may call upon others to support in facilitating some sessions. It should be agreed as early as possible with those who are facilitating to allow time for preparation. The lead person should introduce the session and explain the purpose of the OCA, the scoring and how to record scores. Where the lead person is external to the organisation, the internal safeguarding focal point should be prepped in advance to make sure they are aware of the discussions and are able to take notes. This will increase ownership and a way of building the capacity of the safeguarding focal person in identifying the safeguarding needs of the organisation and what to focus on in their role as safeguarding focal person.

Conducting the OCA assessment

Conducting the OCA should be considered a team exercise and should not be done by an individual. It is essential to have representatives from various units of the organisation. The actual number of participants depends on the size of the organisation.

RSH OCA tool is split into 3 sections with a further breakdown of 16 indicators. The aim of the workshop is to go through all 3 of the areas below and identify which areas the

¹ RSH offers a range of national and regional experts who have experience in this process. [Click here](#) to see the RSH database of consultants.

organisation already has in place and is doing well, and where the organisation should consider additional measures to safeguard against SEAH.

- Diagnosis: Understanding risks; Safeguarding standards, strategy and policies
- What is needed: Training and communication on policies and procedures; Culture and leadership; Governance and accountability; Human Resources; Learning and development (staff and volunteer capacity building); Safe programmes; Media and communications; Fundraising
- Mechanisms in place: Reporting mechanisms; Partnerships (for organisations that subgrant to community-based organisations and other organisations); Information and Communication Technology (ICT); Survivor-centred response; Case management; Investigations

2.1 Introduction and setting the scene: The facilitator should start by creating a relaxed atmosphere irrespective of the workshop being delivered face-to-face or virtual. It is recommended that the facilitator leads with an icebreaker activity to encourage the participants to feel comfortable around each other. Ground rules may be set as part of the workshop before starting, and participants should be clear on the purpose of the OCA, which is to allow the organisation to assess themselves and identify the areas of safeguarding they have in place and those which they need to improve on. The facilitator should emphasise that the assessment is for purposes of capacity building. This is essential to allow the organisation to be honest and transparent in their assessment and scoring.

2.2 Discussion and scoring: In approaching the 3 sections of the OCA, it is recommended that the facilitator reads out each indicator and the description of scoring against each indicators to allow time for participants to reflect. As a group, the participants should assign scores between 1 and 4 based on the current performance of the organisation in relation to the statement. It is essential that participants are asked to consider the evidence and justification before agreeing on a score. Where there are differences in the rating suggested, a discussion should take place, and a consideration for the reason behind the score they propose, the evidence should be carefully considered to ensure that the best score that suits the organisation's situation with evidence recorded in the OCA scoring template. The participants should agree on a score that would assist them in achieving the purpose of the OCA, which is to identify areas where the organisation needs improvement on.

The facilitator should identify one of the participants to be responsible for recording the scores. Delegating this task throughout the workshop will encourage participants to remain engaged throughout the session.

The facilitator should ensure that the workshop is a safe and empowering space and that all voices have an input to the scoring, allowing those who are less dominant to

input. This includes those in more junior positions who may be less likely to speak up where there are members of senior management who are present. The facilitator should use this as a space to explore staff knowledge on safeguarding in the organisation and gaps that would need to be addressed. For example, staff may not be aware of the processes available in the organisation, this should be seen as a gap to be addressed.

2.3 Prioritising action areas: Following the discussion and completion of scoring each of the sections, the group should agree on the 3 or 4 most important indicators for the organisation to take forward to strengthen the organisation's capacity. These areas form the basis for the capacity-building action plan. It is important to keep the priorities at no more than 4 to allow adequate time to work on the priorities within the allocated timeframe of 6 months. The organisation may wish to regroup and prioritise after the initial 6 months to continue their safeguarding journey.

Consideration for prioritisation

It is often challenging for a group to conclude on the priority areas to be taken forward. It may be that departments are pushing for or against additional work as part of this action plan.

To help this discussion, the facilitator may consider the following aspects:

- Which indicators received the lowest score? These represent the weakest areas and should be prioritised.
- Organisations may see a number of low scores across the indicators. In this case, the facilitator should consider which indicators would have the most impact on the organisation's aims and objectives. It may be easiest to deprioritise those which are not directly related to their vision and mission.
- Which indicators are the highest risk, and are most urgent to address? Indicators which pose a high risk if not in place should be prioritised. This can be in relation to the organisation's target population.
- Which indicators when prioritised would contribute to the achievement of another indicator? For an example, where there is no policy, it is essential to prioritise developing a policy as that would impact other areas. Sequencing of indicators is important as some will need to be done first before another.
- The timeframe to achieving an indicator and the commitment required from staff. Where organisations are working within a 6-month timeframe, priority should be given to indicators that can be achieved within the space of time factoring in other tasks and responsibilities the organisation has.

Implementation of the OCA action plan

1. **Develop a capacity-strengthening action plan:** A capacity-strengthening action plan should be developed to address the prioritised areas. This should include the task/activity (what you need to do), success criteria (how would you know you have improved capacity), time frame (by when the task should be completed), who (persons responsible for the task).
2. **Implementation of the action plan:** The external or internal focal point supports the organisation to implement tasks/activities in the action plan to improve the organisational safeguarding systems and practices. It is recommended that the organisation creates a space to keep staff updated on the action plan. For example, this may be a general staff meeting. Department representatives may also update teams during other meetings such as management, programmes, monitoring and evaluation, Human Resources, making sure that everyone knows their role with regards to safeguarding responsibilities.