



## Getting Started—Cancer Program Strategic Assessment

### Introduction

The primary purpose of a strategic business plan is to provide direction and guidance for cancer program growth in a competitive environment that exhibits change and uncertainty. To be successful, the plan must be based on a quantitative and verifiable set of data and information about the market, program capabilities, and key trends. These data and information are used to formulate a *strategic assessment* of the cancer program's current capabilities, capacities, and position in the market and to identify and key strategic planning issues and opportunities.

This assessment includes a review of data and information about the cancer program's capabilities, capacities, technology position, market data (including current and future market size, competition, and market share), and its ability to respond to key and changing trends in fundamental areas such as technology, physician practice reimbursement, physician-hospital business relationships, cost position, and standards of care.

The strategic assessment is a planning tool (Figures 1 and 2) that can be used as a stand-alone tool to assess a program's strategic position on an annual basis, or it can be used in the first phase of a cancer program strategic business plan to assess the program's position and to identify growth opportunities. The findings from the strategic assessment allow cancer program leadership to identify key strategic issues and establish priorities. The strategic assessment evaluates the alignment (or lack thereof) of the key structural components that comprise a cancer program.

To achieve the stated vision and viability for any cancer program, the requirement for strategic alignment must be met. The 3 essential cancer program components include:

- Services and operations (capacities, cost, and quality management)
- Organization (administrative, business, and relationship with physicians)
- Market (approach to the market and marketing)

On the basis of the key findings from the strategic assessment and review of a cancer program's current scope of services, growth opportunities can be identified and the future strategic direction for a cancer program can be formulated.

### Cancer Program Strategic Assessment

The specific elements of the strategic assessment include the following questions, analyses, and actions:

- I. Services and operations
  - A. Capacities and facilities
    1. Annual capacity analyses
    2. Analysis of current facilities
      - (a) Are there adequate amounts of space, functional relationships, patients, and workflow?
      - (b) Does the facility design contribute to operational efficiencies and program differentiation?
      - (c) Is the program in compliance with all state and federal regulatory requirements?
  - B. Care management
    1. Have the cost and quality positions and cost-quality relationship been recently evaluated?
    2. Are treatment plans and provided care routinely assessed regarding their appropriateness and comparison with contemporary standards of care?
    3. Are interdisciplinary teams used for selected cancers, and are the discussions of these teams prospective?
    4. Are patient satisfaction surveys taken routinely, are the data analyzed, and are action plans prepared?
    5. Is long-term functional status tracked for patient groups?
    6. Are care processes assessed to determine where improvements can be made, what unnecessary

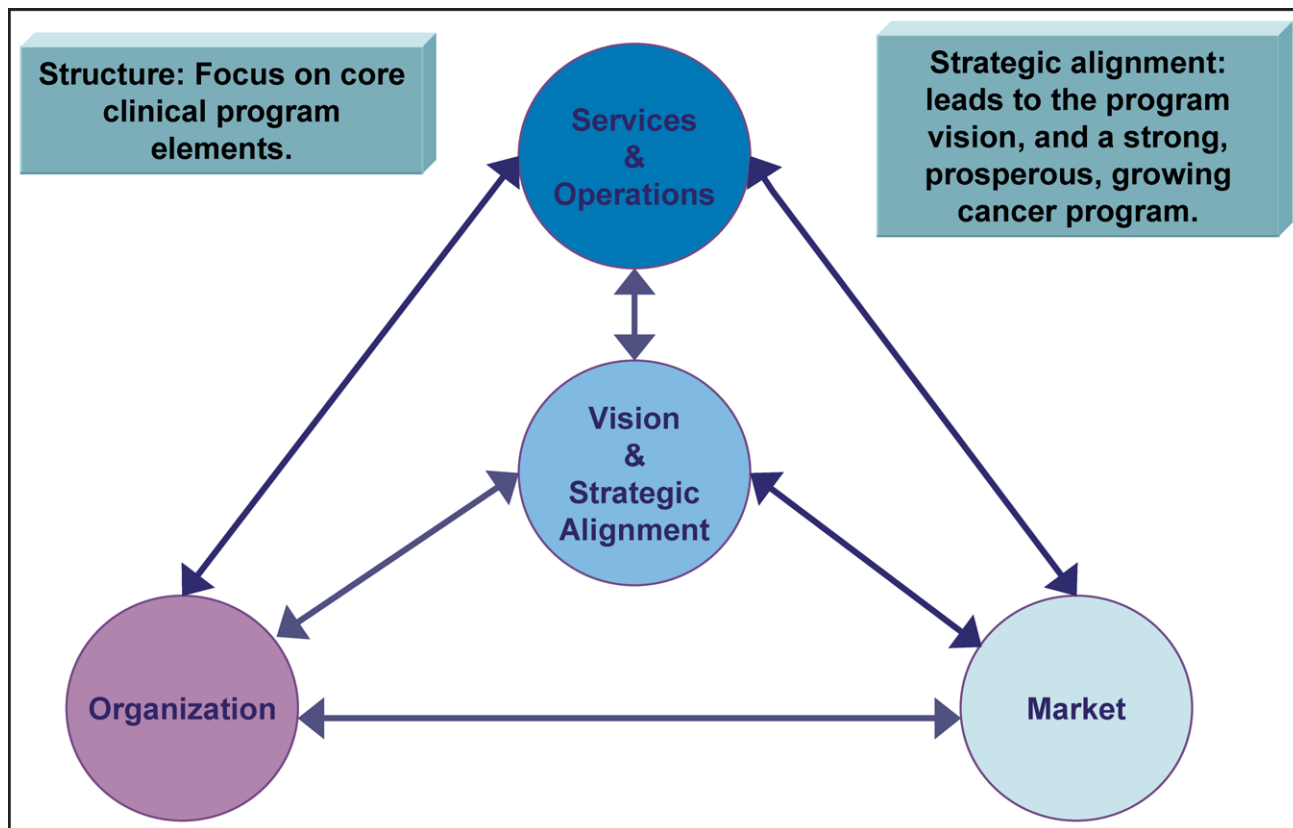


Figure 1. Figure Caption?

tests can be eliminated, and where can costs be reduced?

C. Access and convenience

1. Is access easy-in, easy-out, and at the right location?
2. For on-site access, is the patient drop-off convenient, is parking proximate to the entrance, can patients easily find their way, and are entrances convenient to services?

D. Clinical research

1. Are there an adequate number of patients (at least 2% of new cancer cases annually) referred to or participating in clinical trials?
2. Does clinical research involve participation in cooperative group trials?
3. Does the program serve as a beta site for equipment or device evaluations?
4. Is there an adequate clinical research infrastructure to support physician clinical research activities, interests, and goals?

II. Market

A. Referral relationships

1. Are the key referring physicians, groups, and

contractors known, and are their positions monitored annually?

2. Are strategies agreed upon to build and expand relationships?

B. Coverage

1. Are current or planned service locations in growing and strategically attractive communities?
2. Are service locations and access points regionally oriented?

C. Regional affiliations and outreach

1. Does the program sponsor or participate in a regional network?
2. Does the program sponsor or provide community screening, education, and physician practice outreach?

III. Organization

A. Relationship of hospital to specialist

1. Is there an adequate level of discussion and understanding of respective business goals?
2. Are "potential points of partnership" identified and discussed?

B. Market, marketing, and differentiation

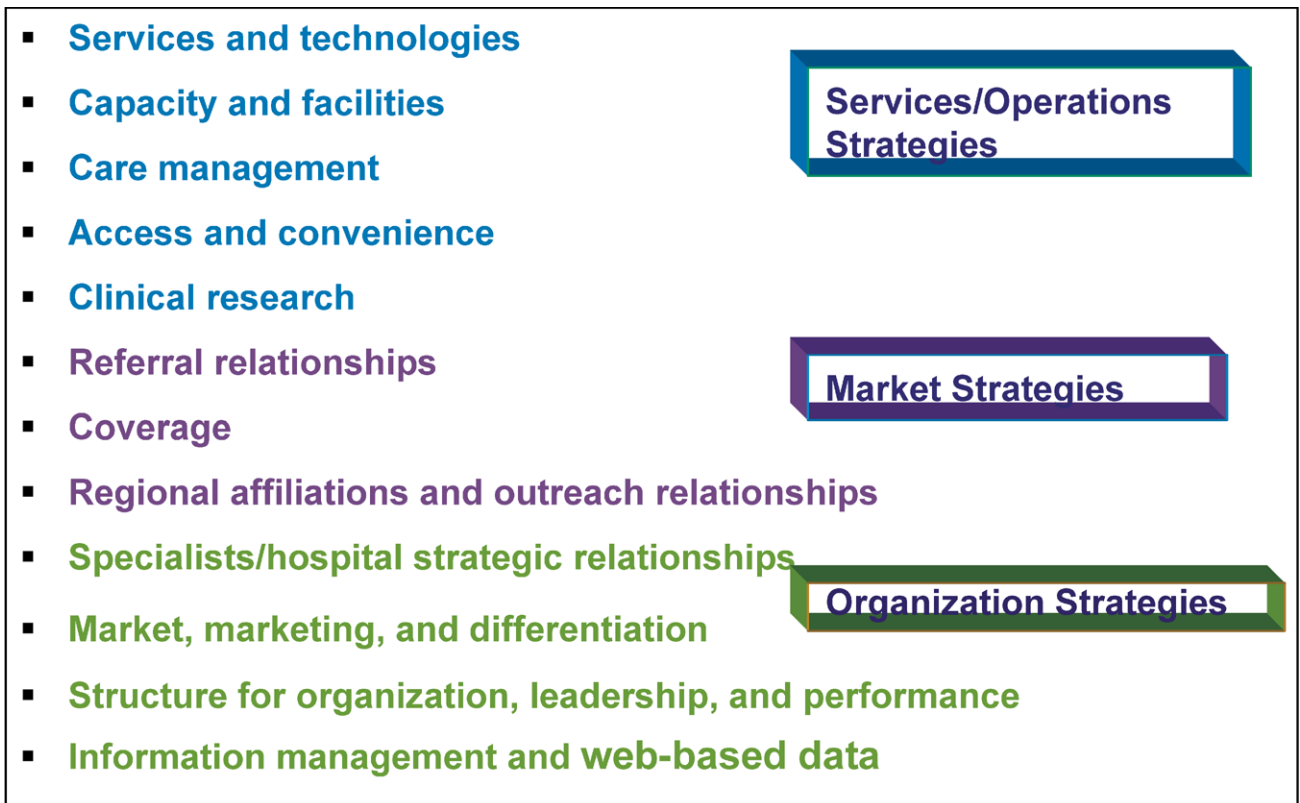


Figure 2. Figure Caption?

1. Is there a marketing plan to support the cancer program and differentiate it from competitor programs?
  2. Is the program visible in the community and does it enjoy a strong image?
  3. Does the program maintain a strong position in the market?
- C. Structure for organizational leadership and performance
1. Is the program organized as a service line with an advisory board and a clinical management team?
  2. Are capable physician leaders and medical directors identified and involved in program direction and growth?
  3. Is there an active strategy and program-planning process, and is a policy agenda in place?
- D. Information management system and Web-based data

1. Is there an adequate and extensive results-reporting system?
2. Are there adequate information linkages in place to provide ease of practice for physicians?
3. Is the World Wide Web used to optimize portal access for information sharing and clinical data and information storage?

Collecting and analyzing data to answer these fundamental questions is essential in assessing the strategic position of any cancer program. Completing this assessment will provide cancer program leadership to critical program-planning issues and establish a solid foundation for strategy formulation.

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