

Work in progress
Streams of Knowledge Coalition

The Streams of Knowledge Toolbox

Work in progress

Streams of Knowledge Coalition /

IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre

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In a complex and challenging world people need access to a collective information and knowledge base that can help them to find the best way forward, and prevent them from making the same mistakes that others have made.

Sharing knowledge about experiences from the past makes it easier to devise strategies for the future. It also helps stakeholders to play their roles more effectively and to create the collective commitment to face the challenges of the coming decades. The mission of the global coalition of resource centres in the water and sanitation sector is to help to close the gap on unmet needs by:

- organising **Streams of Knowledge**,
- achieving equitable access to information,
- focusing knowledge where it can help to build capacity, and
- promoting action learning, whereby people benefit from their own experiences.

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Preface

This set of tools forms the draft Toolbox on Streams of Knowledge (SoK). It is a work in progress. Its use results in learning among partners in the SoK coalition that work together to strengthen resource centres' contributions to improved water and sanitation delivery.

The learning process emerged from the project Study into Resources and Management (STREAM) of drinking water supply and sanitation centres in four continents, which with funding from DGIS will finish at the end of the year 2001. This brought together IRC's long standing partners and new ones in a joint learning process of what makes effective resource centres.

Some of these tools have been tested already by one or more of the SoK partners (see box below). Others are in the process of being tested and/or used in the field by different partners.

Name of the Tool		Made by	Tested	Used
1.	Diagnostic study	IRC	Yes	Yes
2.	Understanding the resource centre concept	IRC	NCWSTI	CFPAS
3.	Assessing the potential of a resource centre	IRC	No	CFPAS
4.	Gender scan guideline	IRC	Yes	
5.	Consolidating resource centres	IRC		
6.	Electronic information services	IRC	Yes	
7.	Evaluating effectiveness of resource centres and their partners	IRC	No	
8.	Self-assessment guide	CINARA	Yes	
9.	Improving management & control functions	IRC/ Frank Little	Yes	
10.	Quality assurance	SKAT	Yes at SKAT	
11.	Impact Assessment	NETWAS	Yes at NETWAS Uganda	

Another tools on "Joint Planning with network partners for fund raising", will follow shortly.

The abilities, experiences and skills of the SoK members are reflected in the tools they developed. The tools maintain their individuality and the creativity of the authors. After testing, this learning process is scheduled to result in a consolidated SoK Toolbox that will however continue to be a 'living toolbox'. This means that it will continue to be improved as SoK members use it in their efforts to strengthen upcoming resource centres.

In September 2001 the SoK Global Coalition management board members met and discussed the planning process in general, the added value of SoK as seen by the partners and other network representatives and the coalition business plan in particular.

Organisations interested to join the SoK process have to learn what it is about and come to grips with the concept of a resource centre. Committing to do the diagnostic study is an important initial step. Please contact the secretariat for more information on the further development of the toolbox and the SoK Foundation.

List of most used abbreviations

BSC	Balanced Score Card
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
Cinara	Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo en Agua Potable, Saneamiento Básico y Conservación del Recurso Hídrico
DWSS	Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ESAs	External Support Agencies
HTML	Hyper Text Mark up Language. Language for pages on the Web
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IOM	Integrated Organisation Model
IRC	International Water and Sanitation Centre
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
IWSD	Institute of Water and Sanitation Development
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MANAGE – Dissemination	A project to facilitate access to and exchange of any information and experiences on community management
MDF	Management for Development Foundation
NCWSTI	National Community Water and Sanitation Training Institute
NETWAS	Network for Water and Sanitation International
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
O & M	Operation and Maintenance
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Programme
OP	Occasional Paper
PCs	Personal Computers
PfA	Platform for action
pS-Eau	Programme Solidarité Eau
PSP	Private Sector Participation
PWSC	Philippine Center for Water and Sanitation
R & D	Research and Development
RC	Resource Centre
RRASCA	Red Regional de Agua y Saneamiento para Centro America, RRAS-CA
RTF	Rich Text Format, formatted text
RTF2HTML	short for RTF to HTML, conversion programme to convert right text to web pages.
SBG	Sounding Board Group
SKAT	Swiss Centre for Development Cooperation in Technology and

	Management
SoK	Streams of Knowledge Coalition
SSA	Strategic Sector Analysis
SSIPs	Small scale independent providers
STREAM	Study on Resources and Management
SWOT	Strengthens weaknesses, opportunities, threats
UR	Underrated
WSS	Water Supply and Sanitation
WUAs	Water User Association
ZOPP	Objectives-Oriented Project Planning

The **STREAMS**  *Toolbox*
OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

Introduction

What is the Streams of Knowledge Toolbox

The Streams of Knowledge Toolbox comprises presently a set of tools meant for use by water and sanitation resource centres willing to participate in a process of further improving their performance and their partnerships. The tools are named after the purposes they serve:

1. Diagnostic study
2. Understanding the resource centre concept
3. Assessing the potential of a resource centre
4. Gender scan guideline
5. Consolidating resource centres
6. Electronic information services
7. Evaluating effectiveness of resource centres and their partners
8. Self-assessment guide
9. Improving management and control functions
10. Quality assurance
11. Impact assessment

Each one of the tools is presented in the Toolbox according to a standard format: a brief presentation, its target, when and how to use it, how the tool was developed, its conceptual framework and the reference used as a basis for its preparation. A brief description of each tool is given below. The guiding principle is that the tools are helpful instruments, which do not require extensive budgets for their application and, most important, which result in a learning process.

1. Diagnostic study

The diagnostic study is the first step an organisation takes to engage itself in the Streams of Knowledge strengthening process. The study describes the organisation and its specific features. It serves to indicate whether the centre already has some of the features that are common to resource centres active in the water and sanitation sector. The study follows a standard outline to allow comparisons and facilitate formulation of a common information base. The preparation of the diagnostic study by the centres also serves as an important means to better understand their main characteristics and to start reflecting on their potentialities and weaknesses. It is a good starting point for a process of organisational strengthening. The resulting organisation profile is meant firstly to be used to evaluate a center's readiness to enter the coalition at a targeted membership level, and secondly to be used as a basis for planning the next strengthening steps offered by other tools in the toolbox.

2. Understanding the resource centre concept

Understanding the resource centre concept is a general introductory module that will help those who go through the exercise of discovering the concept of resource centre, to understand the added value of a network and the general framework guiding the Streams of Knowledge coalition and the regional alliances. It describes the need for knowledge sharing as an integral part of capacity building. It outlines the requirements to become a resource centre in the regional alliances of the Streams of Knowledge coalition. It provides an understanding of Vision 21 and the need for community-oriented approaches whilst operating

a gradual shift towards integrated water resources management. Through workshops and plenary discussions the tool highlights other key characteristics of a centre and includes an identification of the type of resource centre the organisation is or could become, and areas for improvement and organisational strengthening referring to the criteria for a Streams of Knowledge resource centre. Applying the tool should result in a favourable internal environment for change. Its main outcome is that management and staff understand the concepts promoted by the Streams of Knowledge coalition.

3. Assessing the potential of a resource centre

The assessment stage through interviews and interactive workshops is designed to assess issues, which are normally difficult to assess concerning the potential performance and changes to be effected within organisations before they are incorporated into the regional alliances of the Streams of Knowledge coalition. The tool can be applied once the staff of the organisation concerned has understood the concept of a resource centre, and when first steps have been taken towards applying resource centre principles within their organisations. The assessment may result in a decision about progress made in this direction and lead to a step-wise strategy for a process of strengthening the organisation. The outcome will provide an insight into the potential partner needs to become an effective member of the coalition.

4. Gender scan guideline

The Gender Scan guideline was developed as a tool for resource centres to better understand themselves and to address their strategic issues to improve their performance on gender sensitive practice. It seeks to raise questions and put issues on the organisational agenda for discussion to enhance the transformation of the rhetoric on gender to practice in reality. This is based on the premise that the extent to which any organisation is willing and able to promote a gender sensitive approach in the context of its work, is to a considerable extent dependent on gender sensitive practices within the organisation itself. It can set off a process of internal change with regard to gender mainstreaming that means ensuring that gender sensitive practice becomes routine in all aspects of the organisation's work rather than confined to the work of particular staff or to small and specific project interventions. This will help to improve the quality of its activities, services and products. The techniques used are questionnaire surveys and interviews with staff of the resource centre.

5. Consolidating resource centres

The tool Consolidating Resource Centres deals with identifying and improving the internal factors that affect the functioning of resource centres. It contains the following objectives to be met: be perceived as a centre of excellence; function within the WSS sector as a memory-bank or knowledge-base and have financial and administrative autonomy. This tool can be used to assist resource centres to formulate detailed action plans in areas where weakness have been identified.

6. Electronic information services

The guidelines on Electronic Information Services may serve the development of electronic information services for individual resource centres. However, their value will increase if they are being used in a workshop in which several resource centres participate. Such a workshop demands three main capacities of the facilitator(s): knowledge and experience in the strategic development of (electronic) information services, knowledge and experience with basic

Internet tools, didactic skills and experience with the facilitation of workshops. The workshop design is a mix of training to use ICT and development of strategies to use them for a clear purpose. It includes development of a profile of the organisation, defining a communication policy, establishing the potential of the electronic media, internet use in the organisation, management of electronic information, criteria for good web sites, web site design, use of other electronic media and action planning.

7. Evaluating effectiveness of resource centres and their partners

In Evaluating Effectiveness of Resource Centres and their Partners the focus is placed on the external factors and actors that affect the ability of resource centres in securing and increasing their foothold and impact on water supply and sanitation and integrated water resource management. It is meant for resource centres wishing to scan their environment to measure demand for their services, and to establish effective strategic partnerships. It is about developing better partnerships and stronger networks to increase the effectiveness of resource centres in their efforts to build capacities in the sector. For maximum effectiveness the tool is used with mixed groups of participants, where a few potential resource centres staff are present with a few of their partners with whom they wish to work more effectively. It incorporates processes for evaluating markets and resource centre environments such as strategic sector analysis, niche management, impact assessment, and partnership development. This is the only tool in the toolbox where other stakeholders and actors besides the (potential) resource centres participate, as the methodology is based on the premise that resource centres will invite various actual and possible (partner) organisations or clients to the workshop.

8. Self-assessment guide

The Self-assessment Guide is applicable to resource centres in the water and sanitation sector and to the original member organisations themselves. Its aim is to provide an indication of the extent to which organisations function like a resource centre. It gives examples of indicators concerning four perspectives of a resource centre's performance: financial, clients, key processes, learning and growth, and administration. The tool introduces a methodology for self-evaluation of resource centres that allows them to determine their current level and on the basis of this analysis propose further improvements in order to respond efficiently and effectively to sector needs. A step-wise multi-criteria analysis based on a framework for self-assessment is included. However, this tool can be useful only to resource centres which have all the basic systems in place and have a well organised management cycle, meaning that they have already gone through a number of improvement steps and are already operating successfully as resource centres. For those still not operating at their best, the use of the Management and Control Functions tool is recommended.

9. Improving management and control functions

This tool is designed for potential resource centres that have identified issues and potentials for strengthening their management control functions. The tool will provide them with the means for improving the quality of their services, and increasing their ability to contribute to the effectiveness of the knowledge sharing and capacity building network. It starts by presenting the characteristics of sustainable systems or organisations, using the classical models of management cycles. It then introduces to the participants, some other creative ways of looking at the organisation structure such as the "holographic organisation" with double loop learning cycles, which are more specifically applicable to resource centres and links up

to earlier tools in the toolbox. The outcome is an action programme for management development and quality improvement.

10. Quality assurance

The quality assurance guidelines help organisations to regularly improve their ability to deliver quality services and products, assuring that they meet the clients – partners, stakeholders – needs and requirements. The tool proposes to apply principles of continual organisational improvement (ISO 9000) and gives examples of how to tailor quality management guidelines to the specific situations of resource centres. It presents examples of process diagrams and accompanying formats to be used to monitor the steps in service delivery.

11. Impact assessment

The impact assessment guide is meant for resource centres that are reasonably well established and deliver a number of products and services. Training, research, advisory, documentation and other products and services are examined in the light of their direct or indirect influence on changes occurring at policy, organisation and community levels. The tool is complementary to the quality assurance tool in the sense that it verifies if the service is delivered as defined, and if this has the required effect (i.e. is the information used). At the other end, the results of impact assessment (or effects of products and service delivery) can provide useful input to taking quality assurance measures, and provide information for self-assessment.

When to use the tools

The tools can be used independently, meaning that resource centres may choose from a menu according to their specific needs. However, in the case of potential Streams of Knowledge resource centres and for the sake of coherence and higher levels of effectiveness, it is recommended that the sequence found in the toolbox be followed for the initial steps in the process of organisational strengthening.

How to use the tools

Most of the tools are to be used in participatory workshops, focus group discussion or meetings, interspersed by interviews. A main facilitator, linked to the Streams of Knowledge regional alliances, will guide the activities assisted by a member of the organisation itself. Of all the tools, only the diagnostic study will follow a different approach: the organisation will describe and analyse itself according to a standard format. Each tool describes the method to be followed in its implementation.

An important requirement is that the facilitator is familiar with the different participatory techniques involved in training courses and knowledge transfer that will give him/her the opportunity to generate a common way of thinking amongst the participants and consequently a change towards more strategic resource centre planning.

Depending on the number of participants and the need to discuss at a conceptual level, it is recommended that the facilitator be accompanied by a resource person from the coalition familiar with the concepts outlined. This person does not lead the workshop but instead

discusses both with the participants and the facilitator, and in general contributes to the smooth running of the workshops. The resource person is also expected to be able to help the participants understand and grasp the concepts shared.

For whom it is meant

The target groups of the toolbox are sector organisations that are resource centres at some stage of development, and centres that have the potential to become members and are willing to do so along the lines conceptualised in the context of Streams of Knowledge and its regional alliances. Each resource centre depending on their stage or level of development can enter the process of strengthening at whatever level they desire and pick up whichever tool they require. The choice is entirely theirs.

Elements of the toolbox, if not its entire contents, will also provide useful pointers to other sector organisations who wish to strengthen their capacities.

How was the Toolbox developed

The idea of developing such tools for strengthening resource centres management performance and functioning was first discussed as early as 1998, when the initial steps were taken to implement the STREAM Project. Since then, different partners in Streams of Knowledge, at different moments, accepted to take the lead in the development of some relevant tools. The first areas identified for which tools would be necessary were self-assessment; managerial, organisational and institutional strengthening; impact assessment; quality assurance and electronic information services.

It was agreed that Streams of Knowledge Sounding Board Group members would concentrate not only on the objectives and the methodology but also would take steps towards testing the tools within resource centres willing to participate in the process. The task was distributed among some of the STREAM Sounding Board Group members: CINARA, IRC, IWSD, NETWAS and SKAT.

In April 2001, when the tools were completed and tested, IRC organised and co-ordinated a toolbox workshop. The purpose of the Toolbox workshop was to arrive at a coherent set of tools and a strategy to market them widely among water and sanitation resource centres in the various regions. Participants who comprised mainly those persons who had actually been involved in developing the tools had the opportunity to discuss the tools in groups and in plenary sessions. They were also able to have first hand information from those who had tested one or several tools and could provide recommendations for improvement. A link between the tools and the strategy for their implementation was established and the set of tools was reorganised as a toolbox in a coherent sequence, where assessment modules are interspersed with strengthening modules.

Tools are now better known and appreciated by Streams of Knowledge network partners and an effective information package for their marketing will be prepared and translated into Spanish and French. The Streams of Knowledge members are now in a better position to facilitate the use of all the tools developed. The final result is the set as presented in this Toolbox. A few flow charts were prepared to illustrate strengthening processes resource centres may embark upon (see examples 1, 2 and 3 on page 7 - 9).

The Toolbox conceptual framework

Different conceptual and analytical frameworks serve as a basis for analysis in the different tools. These frameworks touch management styles, organisational procedures, institutional performance, quality monitoring, as well as simple guidelines for interviews with staff and for focus group discussions with community members. Each tool describes the framework used.

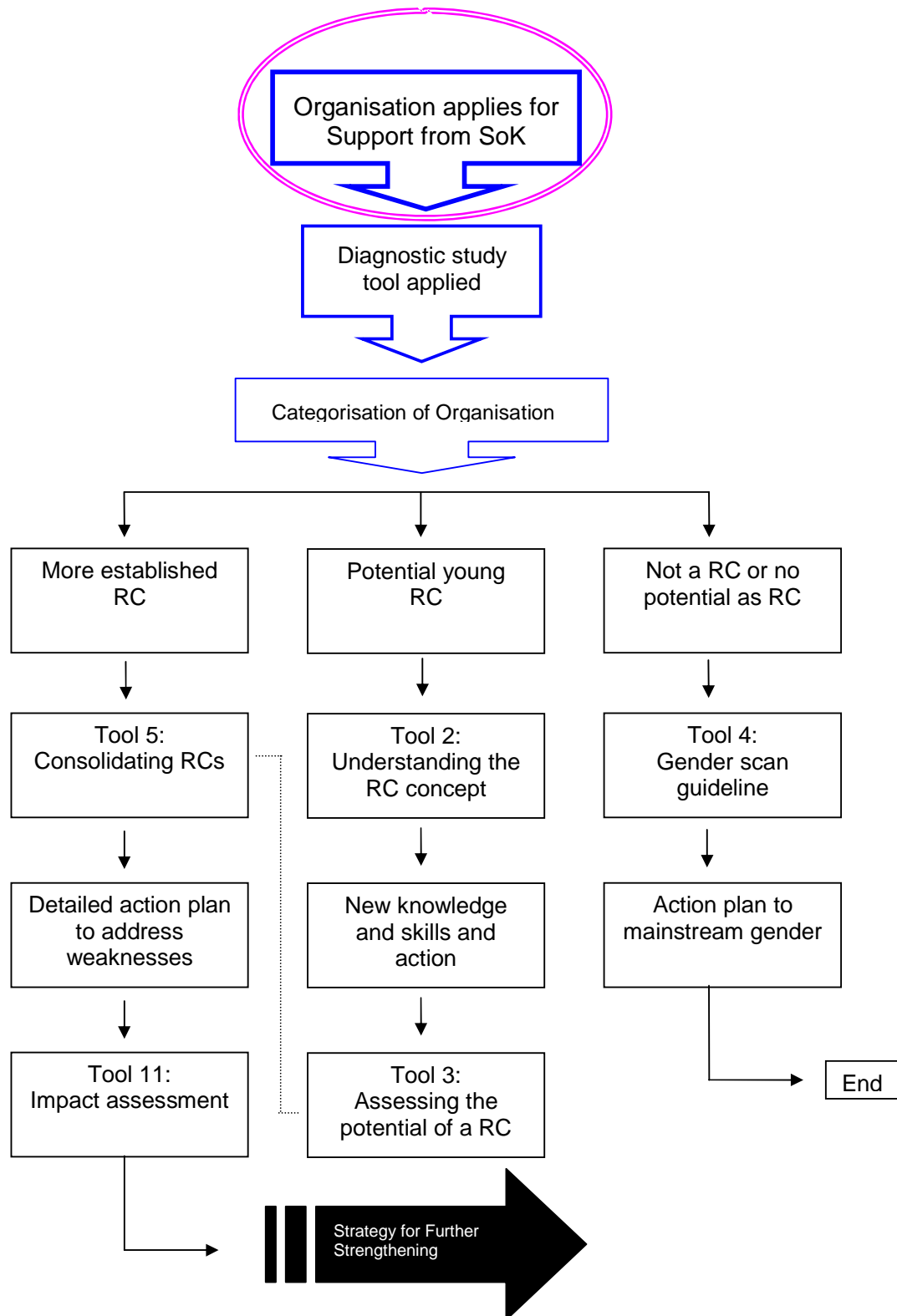
Reference base

References used for the development of the tools are listed in each one. However, the knowledge produced by the STREAM project and Streams of Knowledge has been the most important basis for their development. Documents already produced in the context of Streams of Knowledge covering topics on the concept of resource centres and their code of conduct, partnership building and networking, institutional development, organisational performance and capacity building, the case studies prepared by STREAM core members and the initial literature review undertaken on resource centres generated new knowledge which formed the basis for tool development.

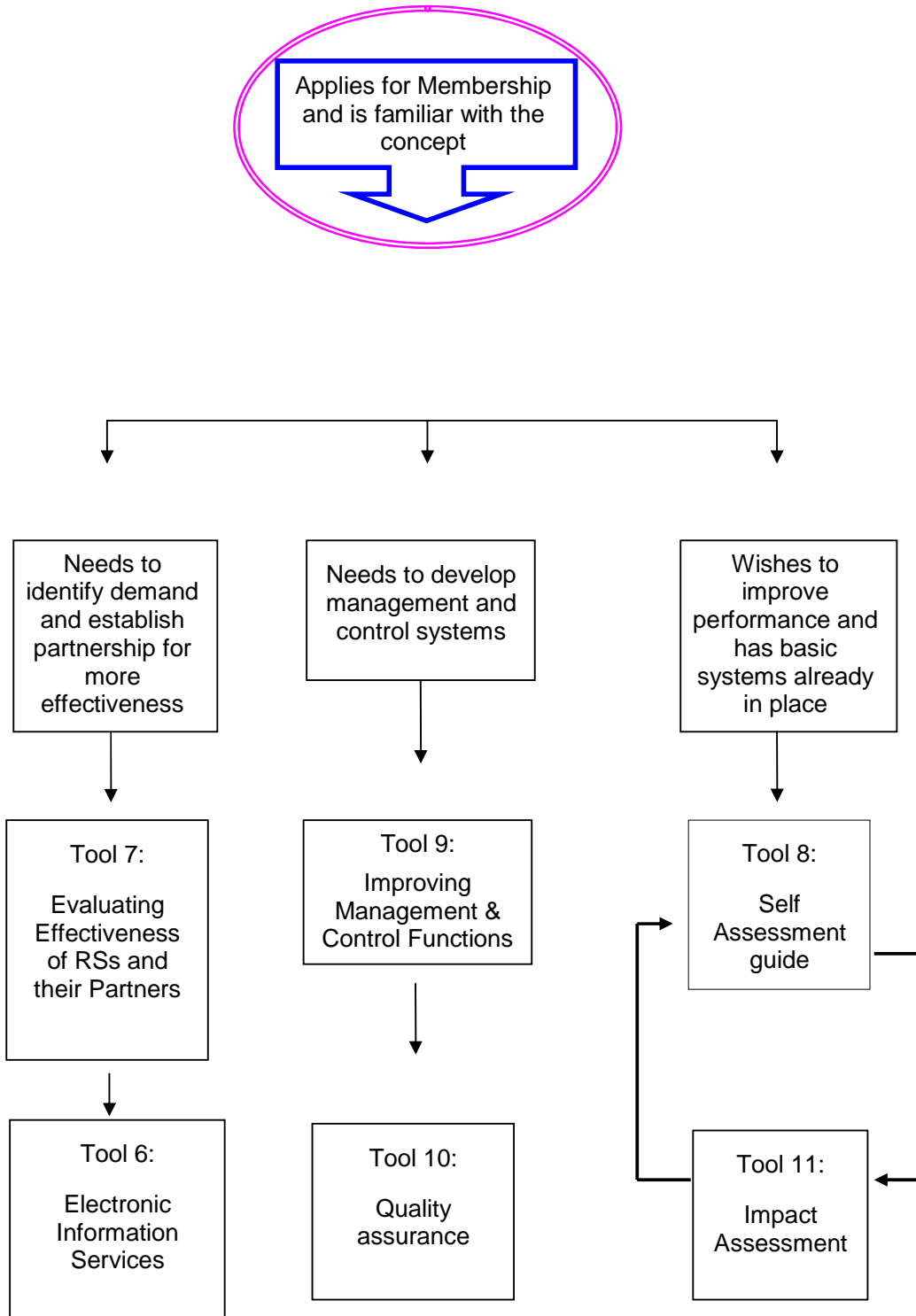
Strengthening steps

All tools in the toolbox are considered as steps to further improve performance and pave the way to the organisation's transformation into stronger resource centres. The tools could be seen as building blocks of a flow pattern leading from one stage in the strengthening process to the other.

Example 1: Needs vary according to organization profile



Example 2: Needs varying with demand or organizations



Example 3: Regional networks working together

