

Strategic Management Practices and Performance of State-Owned Corporations: A Study in National Housing Corporation, Kenya

¹Josiah Mulei Kasamu
MBA Candidate,
Zetech University, Kenya

²Dr. Njoki Catherine Chege, PhD
Lecturer,
Zetech University, Kenya

³Prof. Peter B. Kibas, PhD
Lecturer,
Zetech University, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the effect of strategic management practices on the performance of state-owned housing corporations, with a focus on the National Housing Corporation (NHC) in Kenya. The research sought to understand how various strategic management practices influenced the operational performance and overall effectiveness of the NHC. The study was anchored on the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques. A correlational research design was used to assess the relationships between strategic management practices and performance outcomes. The target population consisted of 630 individuals within the NHC, and a sample size of 245 participants was determined using Yamane's formula. A questionnaire was used to collect data which was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that strategic management practices (strategic financial planning, land governance, building technology and house ownership process) had not been effectively embraced in the state-housing corporation. This was found to significantly affect performance of the corporation, thus concluding that as a result of ineffective embrace of strategic management practices, the national housing corporation failed to effectively meet its mandates. It was therefore recommended that there is need for the management of the corporation to steadily embrace strategic management practices through effective strategic financial planning, embrace of modern building technologies and streamlining the house ownership process as a way of strengthening performance of the corporation.

Keywords: Strategic management practices, Organizational Performance, state-owned housing corporations, National Housing Corporation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Strategic management has emerged as a vital tool for enhancing the performance of organizations globally. From multinational corporations to government-owned entities, the adoption of strategic management practices enables organizations to navigate dynamic environments, respond to market changes, and achieve long-term objectives. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) across the world, including housing corporations, face the dual pressure of fulfilling public mandates while maintaining financial sustainability. Strategic management practices, which encompass setting goals, resource allocation, and performance evaluation, are crucial for these corporations to thrive in competitive and complex environments. This study examines the effect of strategic management practices on the performance of state-owned housing corporations, focusing on the National Housing Corporation (NHC) in Kenya, with a review of global, regional, and local perceptions.

Globally, the housing sector plays a key role in economic and social development. Governments worldwide have established state-owned housing corporations to address housing shortages, promote urbanization, and ensure affordable housing for their citizens. In developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, strategic management in public housing agencies has led to significant improvements in performance, enabling these corporations to adapt to market forces, demographic changes, and government policies. Strategic practices such as long-term planning, performance monitoring, and effective resource management have been instrumental in ensuring sustainable growth and the provision of quality housing. Globally, there is a growing recognition of the need for housing corporations to embrace innovation, technological integration, and stakeholder engagement as part of their strategic approach to improve performance.

However, many state-owned housing corporations in developing countries struggle with inefficiency, corruption, and financial instability, often attributed to poor strategic management practices. This has raised concerns about the effectiveness of these organizations in fulfilling their mandates. Globally, there is a push for housing corporations in developing regions to adopt global best practices in strategic management to enhance their efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

In Africa, the housing deficit is a persistent challenge, with many countries grappling with rapid urbanization, population growth, and inadequate infrastructure. Across the continent, state-owned housing corporations have been established to bridge the housing gap, yet their performance has been inconsistent. Strategic mismanagement, lack of political support, and insufficient funding have undermined the effectiveness of these corporations. For instance, in countries like South Africa and Nigeria, state-owned housing corporations have faced criticism for poor planning, delayed projects, and failure to meet housing targets. The African Union's Agenda 2063 recognizes the importance of addressing housing shortages, emphasizing the role of strategic leadership in ensuring affordable housing across the continent.

Regionally, East African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, share similar challenges in their housing sectors. Governments have made significant investments in public housing projects, yet the results have not matched expectations. Strategic management practices, such as stakeholder involvement, performance measurement, and adaptive planning, are seen as critical to improving the performance of housing corporations in the region. Strategic partnerships with private sector players and international donors are increasingly being recognized as avenues to enhance the capacity and performance of these corporations.

In Kenya, the housing sector remains a key pillar of the government's development agenda, especially under the "Big Four" initiative, which prioritizes affordable housing. The National Housing Corporation (NHC) plays a central role in addressing the country's housing needs. Established in 1953, NHC is mandated to facilitate the construction of houses and promote homeownership across the country. Despite its long-standing presence in the housing sector, the NHC has faced several challenges, including inefficiency, poor project implementation, bureaucratic delays, and financial constraints. These issues have hampered its ability to meet the growing demand for affordable housing.

Locally, there is a perception that NHC's performance is hindered by weak strategic management practices. Criticism has been leveled at the corporation's inability to effectively plan, implement, and monitor housing projects, leading to project delays and unmet targets. Additionally, political interference and corruption are perceived to exacerbate inefficiencies within the organization. The local housing market is also influenced by fluctuating economic conditions, regulatory changes, and rising construction costs, all of which require robust strategic management to navigate.

To address these issues, there has been a growing call for NHC to adopt more effective strategic management practices. This includes formulating clear long-term strategies, improving resource allocation, engaging with key stakeholders, and integrating modern technologies to enhance operational efficiency. The success of NHC in delivering on its mandate is seen as critical to achieving Kenya's affordable housing goals and improving the overall performance of the state-owned housing sector. Despite its ambitious goals, the Kenyan government encounters significant hurdles in realizing its affordable housing targets. Key challenges include limited financing, complexities in land governance, insufficient adoption of advanced building technologies, and inadequate housing policies (Bikketi & Mhina, 2019). These issues hinder the effective implementation of housing projects, making it increasingly difficult to meet the growing demand for affordable housing across the country. The lack of adequate financial resources is particularly critical, as it restricts both the government and private developers from initiating and completing housing projects.

Moreover, addressing land governance complexities is essential for facilitating access to suitable land for housing development. Streamlining land acquisition processes and ensuring transparent governance can alleviate some of the bottlenecks currently faced in the housing sector. Effective land management will not only expedite the development of new housing projects but also build trust among investors and potential homeowners, promoting a more favorable environment for housing initiatives. Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for the Kenyan government to leverage. Increasing public-private partnerships can attract investment and innovation in housing development, bringing in new resources and expertise. Additionally, the government can tap into advancements in technology, such as modular construction and sustainable building practices, which can enhance efficiency and reduce construction costs.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Strategic management practices are important in shaping the performance and long-term viability of organizations across various industries (Porter, 1980; Mintzberg et al., 2009). However, despite their recognized importance, there exists a notable gap in understanding the precise impact of these strategies within the context of State-Owned Housing Corporations (SOHCs), particularly the National Housing Corporation (NHC) in Kenya.

The deficiency in comprehensive empirical studies evaluating the correlation between strategic management practices and the actual performance metrics of NHC poses a significant challenge.

Without a clear understanding of how strategic management initiatives translate into tangible outcomes, stakeholders within the housing sector are limited in their ability to identify key factors contributing to the success or limitations of NHC. This lack of insight not only hampers the ability to accurately assess the effectiveness of existing strategies but also impedes the development of informed interventions to address performance gaps and enhance organizational efficiency. The absence of empirical evidence hinders the formulation of evidence-based policies and practices that could drive positive change within the National Housing Corporation (NHC) and similar state-owned entities in the housing sector. As a result, detailed research into the implications of strategic management strategies on NHC's performance becomes essential. By elucidating the causal relationship between these practices and the organization's overall effectiveness, such research endeavors have the potential to yield valuable insights that can inform decision-making processes and drive targeted interventions aimed at improving the performance of state-owned housing corporations (SOHCs) in Kenya.

Furthermore, given the crucial role housing plays in socioeconomic growth and the provision of essential services to residents, improving NHC's performance carries far-reaching implications beyond organizational success. A more efficient and effective NHC could significantly improve housing affordability, accessibility, and quality. This, in turn, would contribute to broader national development goals and enhance the quality of life for Kenyan citizens, aligning with the country's long-term aspirations for sustainable development and improved living conditions for its population.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To examine the extent to which strategic management practices had been embraced at the National Housing Corporation
2. To evaluate the relationship between strategic management practices and performance of National Housing Corporation

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) emphasizes the significance of possessing and strategically leveraging both tangible and intangible resources to generate a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). According to Edwards (2014), having access to strategic resources—especially those that are rare, valuable, and difficult to acquire—equips organizations with the necessary capacity to achieve their goals and objectives. Moreover, the RBV stresses the importance of focusing on the organization as a whole rather than merely its individual components (Edwards, 2014). This holistic perspective suggests that for an organization to perform optimally, all its various parts must work effectively and synergistically.

Within the context of this study, the RBV serves as the dominant theoretical framework to analyze how the National Housing Corporation (NHC) utilizes its internal resources—financial, human, physical, and intangible—to shape its strategic initiatives and influence performance outcomes. The analysis focuses on specific aspects of RBV that guide the evaluation of NHC's strategic management practices.

First, the RBV provides a framework for understanding the heterogeneity and immobility of resources. This involves examining how NHC's unique strengths, such as specialized construction expertise and access to government-related resources, contribute to its strategic options and overall performance. Conversely, potential resource constraints—like a limited skilled labor pool or insufficient technological capabilities—could hinder the organization's ability to execute its strategies effectively.

Second, the RBV highlights the centrality of the VRIO framework, which includes value, rarity, inimitability, and organization, in determining organizational competitive advantage. Identifying resources that are essential to NHC's success and exploring whether its existing strategic management practices fully exploit these resources were crucial components of this research. By evaluating the VRIO attributes of NHC's resources, the study sought to determine how well the corporation is positioned to sustain its competitive edge.

Lastly, the concept of dynamic capabilities plays a vital role in assessing an organization's adaptability, particularly in changing business environments. This aspect of the RBV focuses on whether NHC possesses agile management capabilities that allow it to adjust its resource base as the housing landscape evolves. By maintaining a sustained competitive advantage through flexibility and responsiveness, NHC can enhance its effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery.

2.1.2 Balanced Scorecard Model

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) framework provides a comprehensive approach to measuring and managing organizational performance across multiple dimensions. By incorporating financial, customer satisfaction, internal processes, and learning and growth perspectives, the BSC offers a holistic view of how strategic management practices impact various aspects of an organization's performance (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). This model facilitates the alignment of strategic objectives with performance measures, enabling NHC to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and drive strategic decision-making towards achieving its goals.

Kaplan and Norton's (1992) Balanced Scorecard (BSC) framework offers a multi-dimensional approach to performance measurement. It can aid in evaluating the efficacy of strategic management practices across various aspects critical to NHC's success, primarily financial performance, customer satisfaction, internal processes, and learning and growth: Financial performance focuses on monitoring how strategic initiatives and financial resource management contribute to profitability, revenue growth, and financial sustainability. On customer satisfaction, the research investigated if management practices enable NHC to meet the needs of its beneficiaries (housing recipients) in terms of affordability, quality, and service responsiveness. Another element, internal processes, allowed the researcher to investigate how efficient resource allocation or streamlined construction practices directly relate to cost control, completion timelines, and process optimization. Lastly, the learning and growth examination helped determine if NHC fosters employee development, skills acquisition, and knowledge management systems, all supporting organizational growth and long-term performance.

2.2 Strategic Management Practices

2.2.1 Strategic Financial Planning

Numerous studies conducted by researchers such as McNamara et al. (1995), Thomsen (2013), and Stone (2009) affirmed that financial constraints represented a significant barrier to the development

of affordable housing in many nations, particularly in developing countries where resources were scarce. While it had commonly been perceived that poorer countries lacked the financial resources necessary for low-income housing initiatives, recent studies challenged this long-held notion. For instance, research indicated that individuals in low-income brackets often possessed substantial savings, with their cumulative wealth surpassing that of foreign aid and various forms of investment (Gluck, Kaufmann, & Walleck, 2017). However, a substantial portion of this wealth remained tied up in informal, undocumented assets, such as untitled real estate. These "dead capital" holdings, while valuable to individuals, often lacked exchange value in formal markets and failed to contribute significantly to economic growth at a national level (Gluck, Kaufmann, & Walleck, 2017). Consequently, despite the apparent wealth accumulation among the poor, their housing conditions often remained substandard, with limited market value. This disparity underscored the necessity for effective financial planning and resource allocation strategies that could tap into these hidden wealth sources, converting them into valuable assets that could be leveraged for housing development.

2.2.2 Land Governance

Land governance played a crucial role in shaping national housing policies and directly influenced the availability of affordable housing options. In many countries, various land tenure systems—including private, customary, and formal tenure—significantly impacted housing development and access to land (Kameri, 2017). Challenges such as outdated land registries, the lack of computerized land titles, and complex land agreements often hindered efforts to provide affordable housing solutions (Deininger et al., 2014). Efforts to improve land governance and streamline land registration processes had been underway for several years. For example, initiatives such as the National Land Information Management System aimed to digitize land records to enhance efficiency in service delivery (Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Physical Planning, 2021). However, tenure insecurity persisted, particularly among marginalized groups and in regions experiencing high levels of land speculation and corruption. These issues complicated the provision of affordable housing and highlighted the urgent need for more robust governance frameworks that could effectively manage land resources, ensuring equitable access and security for all stakeholders involved.

2.2.3 Building Technology Adoption

Effective building technology proved crucial for the development of high-quality housing that met the needs of communities. However, inadequate expertise and reliance on outdated construction methods often led to structural issues in housing projects (National Housing Corporation, 2023). As a result, the industry increasingly looked toward innovative solutions such as prefabricated housing as a viable answer to address housing shortages. With ongoing initiatives aimed at streamlining building regulations and promoting more modern construction methods, stakeholders were hopeful for significant improvements in housing quality and affordability (National Housing Corporation, 2023). Moreover, partnerships between government agencies, private developers, and financial institutions played a significant role in tackling these housing challenges. Equity partnership agreements allowed landowners to collaborate with housing corporations, facilitating the development of affordable housing projects that were not only financially viable but also met community needs (National Housing Corporation, 2023). The evolution of building technologies and collaborative approaches offered promising avenues for enhancing the overall effectiveness of housing development initiatives.

2.2.4 House Ownership Process

Research indicated that low-income households frequently aspired to homeownership but encountered significant barriers due to the high costs associated with housing (Omelaja, 2018; Thomsen, 2013; Stone, 2009). The incremental housing construction approach, wherein families gradually built their homes over time, emerged as a common strategy among low-income households. This method reflected their limited financial resources and often resulted in strong emotional ties to their homes as they invested time and effort into their development. However, this process also posed challenges, as families may have been hesitant to leverage their homes for loans, fearing the potential loss of their primary asset. The lengthy and often arduous path toward homeownership illustrated the complexities involved in achieving stable and secure housing. It underscored the need for strategic management practices that addressed not only the financial barriers to housing but also the emotional and psychological factors influencing decision-making among low-income families.

2.3 Conceptual framework

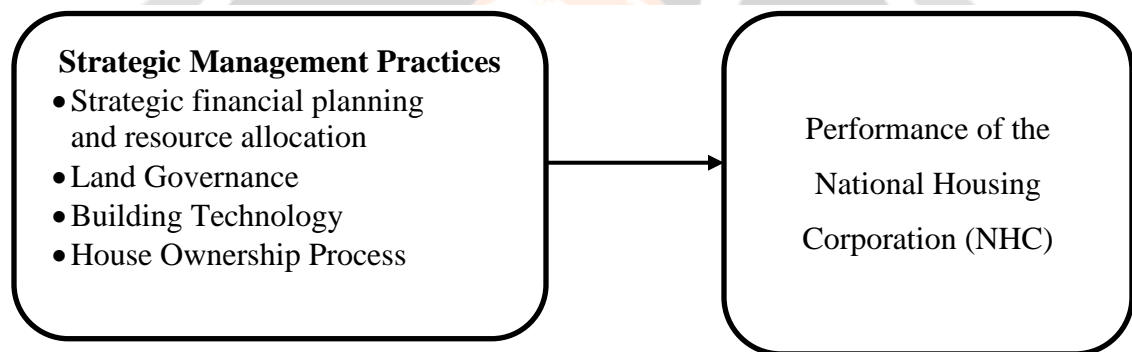


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the complex relationship between strategic management practices and performance outcomes within state-owned housing corporations (SHCs), with a particular focus on the National Housing Corporation (NHC) (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Recognizing the limitations of relying solely on quantitative or qualitative data, this approach aimed to provide a more holistic view of the research problem by integrating both data types. The quantitative component utilized a correlational methodology to examine the connections between strategic management strategies and performance outcomes. In this study, the target population consisted of all executives, managers, and staff members working within the National Housing Corporation (NHC) of Kenya. This population totaled approximately 630 individuals, representing a diverse range of roles and responsibilities within the organization. To determine a suitable sample size from the target population, the researcher employed Yamane's (1967) formula to ensure that the sample was representative of the broader group.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Whereby:

n = Sample Size.

N = Population Size (630), which is everyone in the National Housing Corporation.

e = Margin of Error [0.05].

$$n = \frac{630}{1 + 630(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 245$$

From a population of 630, the sample size was 245 respondents.

The study employed a self-administered questionnaire to collect primary data. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents, designed to capture measurable aspects of strategic management practices and performance. These questionnaires contained both close-ended and open-ended questions, enabling the collection of structured responses as well as additional qualitative insights. The collected data was analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used as the data analysis tool. Descriptive statistics included mean scores and standard deviations, while inferential statistics included Beta coefficients and P-values obtained from a regression model.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The data collection phase generated a total of 153 completed questionnaires out of the 180 distributed to individuals within the National Housing Corporation (NHC). This translated to an impressive response rate of 85%, which significantly bolstered the reliability and validity of the research findings. The high response rate was a testament to the willingness of the respondents to contribute their unique perspectives and experiences regarding the strategic management practices at NHC. Given that participants were drawn from various levels and departments within the organization, the diverse viewpoints captured reflected a comprehensive cross-section of the NHC's workforce.

4.2 Strategic Management Practices in State Housing Corporations

The study sought to establish the extent to which key strategic management practices had been embraced in state housing corporations. The results as shown in Table 1 revealed that most of the strategic management practices had not been effectively embraced in the national housing corporations. The mean scores for the four critical strategic management areas—strategic financial planning, land governance, building technology adoption, and the house ownership process—ranged between 2.8 and 3.2 on a 5-point Likert scale. This suggested that while these practices were implemented to some degree, there was considerable room for improvement, particularly in areas such as building technology adoption. Strategic financial planning had a mean score of 3.21, reflecting the perception that financial planning was moderately executed. While employees

acknowledged its presence, there was room for better alignment between financial planning and the corporation's overarching strategic goals. Improved financial planning could have enhanced resource allocation and budgeting efficiency, leading to better overall performance. Land governance had a mean score of 3.14, implying that although land governance practices were generally seen as somewhat effective, there were perceived gaps in their implementation. Addressing these gaps could have led to more efficient land management processes and reduced administrative bottlenecks in land acquisition and allocation.

Building technology adoption had the lowest mean score of 2.81, and indication that there is an urgent need to enhance the integration of modern building technologies within the organization. Employees expressed concerns over the slow pace of technological advancement in construction practices, which could have affected the corporation's ability to meet housing demands efficiently and cost-effectively. House ownership process received a mean score of 3.06. Although the house ownership process was perceived as moderately efficient, improvements were needed to streamline operations, reduce delays, and enhance customer satisfaction. Addressing these issues could have significantly improved the corporation's reputation and operational performance.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Strategic Management Practices

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Strategic Financial Planning	3.21	0.96
Land Governance	3.14	1.07
Building Technology Adoption	2.81	1.29
House Ownership Process	3.06	0.83
Overall NHC Performance	3.42	1.16

4.3 Relationship Between Strategic Management Practices and Performance of State Housing Corporations

The study sought to establish the relationship between strategic management practices and performance of state housing corporations. This was undertaken using a regression analysis. As the results on Table 2 portray, the regression coefficients revealed that when combined, the four aspects of strategic management (strategic financial planning, land governance, building technology adoption, and house ownership process) significantly influenced the performance of state-owned housing corporations. Strategic financial planning had the strongest influence on performance of state-owned housing corporations as evidenced by a Beta coefficient (β) of 0.249. This was followed by housing ownership process which had a Beta coefficient (β) of 0.228. Building technology adoption came third with a Beta coefficient of 0.213 and lastly was land governance ($\beta = 0.207$). All the four variables had P-values of less than the standard p-value of 0.05, implying that strategic financial planning, land governance, building technology adoption, and house ownership process significantly influenced performance of national housing corporations in Kenya.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients on Strategic management Practices and Performance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.116	.124		.934	.351
Strategic Financial Planning	.249	.053	.256	4.661	.000
Land Governance	.207	.046	.247	4.530	.000
Building Technology Adoption	.213	.054	.225	3.981	.000
House Ownership Process	.228	.051	.254	4.445	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of National Housing Corporations

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that strategic financial planning had a significant impact on performance of the national housing corporation. The results had it that the level of strategic financial planning and resource allocation within the NHC was meagre, and this affected the effectiveness of financial planning thus limiting the corporation's performance. Further, although land governance is widely acknowledged as a critical factor in the success of housing projects, the study found that the effectiveness of land governance policies and practices within the National Housing Corporation (NHC) was not embraced and this affected the overall performance of the corporation. The nature of land-related issues in Kenya is notably complex, characterized by overlapping legal frameworks, land tenure disputes, and regulatory challenges. Such complexity makes it difficult for organizations like the NHC to fully capitalize on efficient land governance to improve performance. Additionally, the influence of external stakeholders—including government agencies, local communities, and private sector interests—often complicates the NHC's ability to implement streamlined land management practices.

Similarly, the study found that the level of building technology adoption within the NHC was not effectively embraced and this has a significant impact on performance of the corporation. Modern building technologies typically offer the potential to enhance efficiency, reduce construction costs, and improve the quality of housing units, all of which are key performance indicators for a housing corporation. Due to financial constraints, which could limit the NHC's ability to invest in cutting-edge technologies or fully integrate them into their building processes, as well as shortage of skilled labor, as implementing advanced construction technologies often requires specialized training and expertise that may not be readily available within the organization, have affected NHC's ability to integrate effective modern building technology. The efficiency of the NHC-facilitated house ownership process was found to be ineffective and this was significantly associated with declining performance of the Corporation. This finding suggests that, although a well-structured and customer-focused home ownership process is beneficial, failure to uphold this aspect derails continued performance.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study revealed that while key strategic management practices, namely strategic financial planning, land governance, building technology adoption, and house ownership process, were present in state housing corporations, they were not fully optimized, leaving significant room for improvement. There was moderate alignment with the corporation's goals but reveals potential for enhanced resource allocation and budget efficiency to improve performance outcomes.

The land governance aspect was found to have some effectiveness but also clear gaps in implementation. Streamlining land governance processes could help address administrative bottlenecks and accelerate land acquisition and allocation, potentially improving overall efficiency.

Building technology adoption had not been effectively integrated, suggesting that slow technological advancement may impair the corporation's capacity to meet housing demands efficiently. Enhancing technology adoption would be critical for addressing current and future housing needs and improving cost-effectiveness in construction. The house ownership process was seen as moderately efficient. However, procedural improvements, particularly around streamlining and reducing delays, could enhance customer satisfaction, thus bolstering the corporation's reputation and operational efficiency.

5.2 Recommendations

The Kenyan government should consider developing comprehensive policies aimed at fostering a more enabling environment for the NHC to implement effective strategic management practices. These policies should comprehensively address key issues such as land acquisition, financing mechanisms, and technology adoption. By creating a supportive regulatory framework, the government can facilitate better strategic alignment and enhance the operational capacity of the NHC.

The NHC should prioritize investments in building its internal capacity for strategic management. This could involve the implementation of targeted training programs for staff to improve their strategic planning and execution skills. Additionally, establishing a dedicated strategic planning unit could enhance the organization's ability to develop and implement strategic initiatives effectively. The adoption of performance measurement systems that track progress toward strategic goals is also essential for ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

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