

FAST TRACK PLANNING

A “*how to guide*” for strategic and
operational planning in higher
education

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PLANNING COMPONENTS

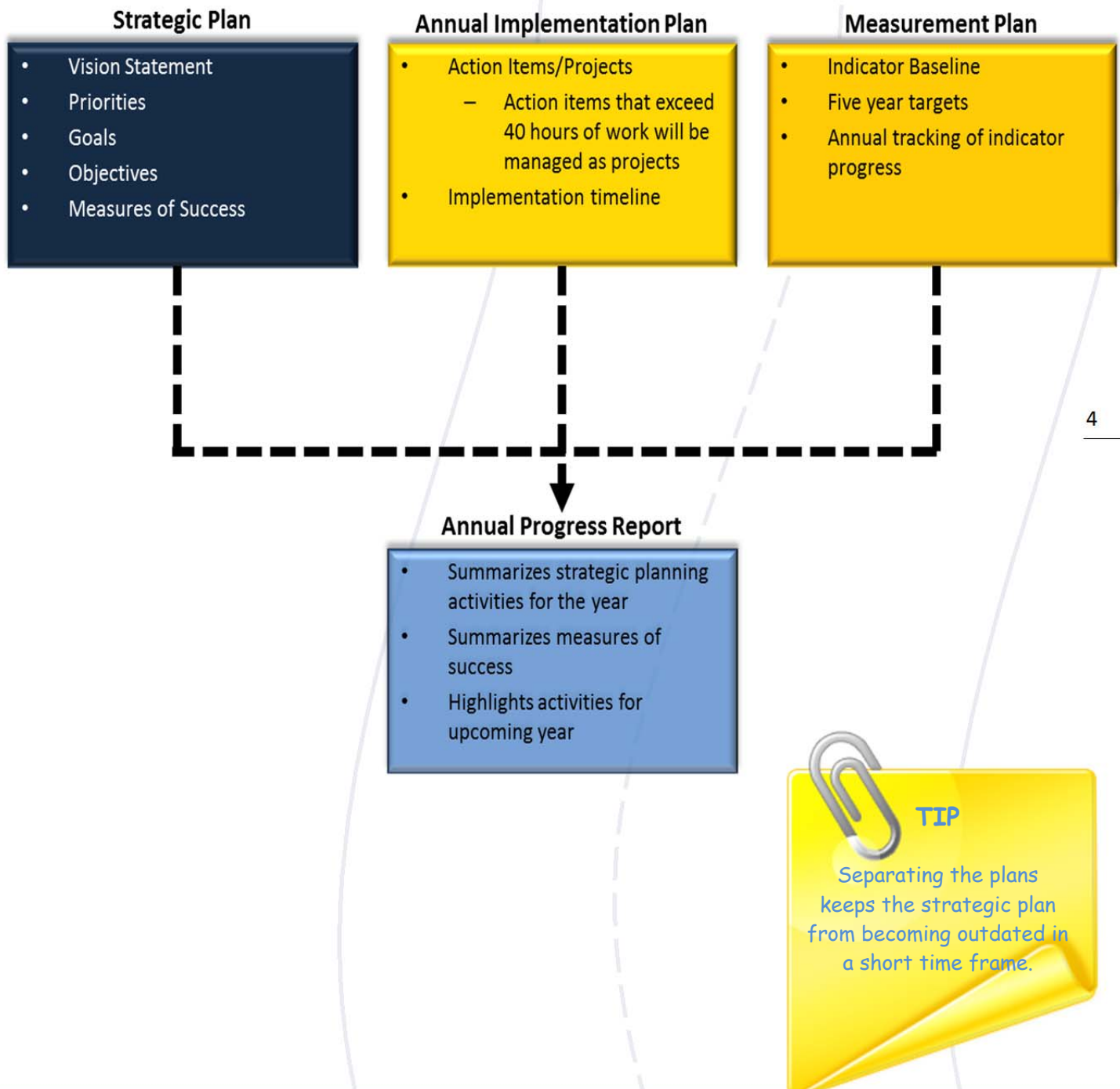
Many organizations spend countless hours developing a strategic plan just to have it sit on a shelf after its completion. In order to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in a strategic plan an organization has to plan for its implementation. In addition, the organization has to identify how they will know if they are successful in meeting their specified goals.

To be successful, a strategic plan needs to become a “living” document. This is achieved by implementing the critical components of effective planning, communicating, communicating, and communicating!

Critical Components for Effective Planning & Implementation

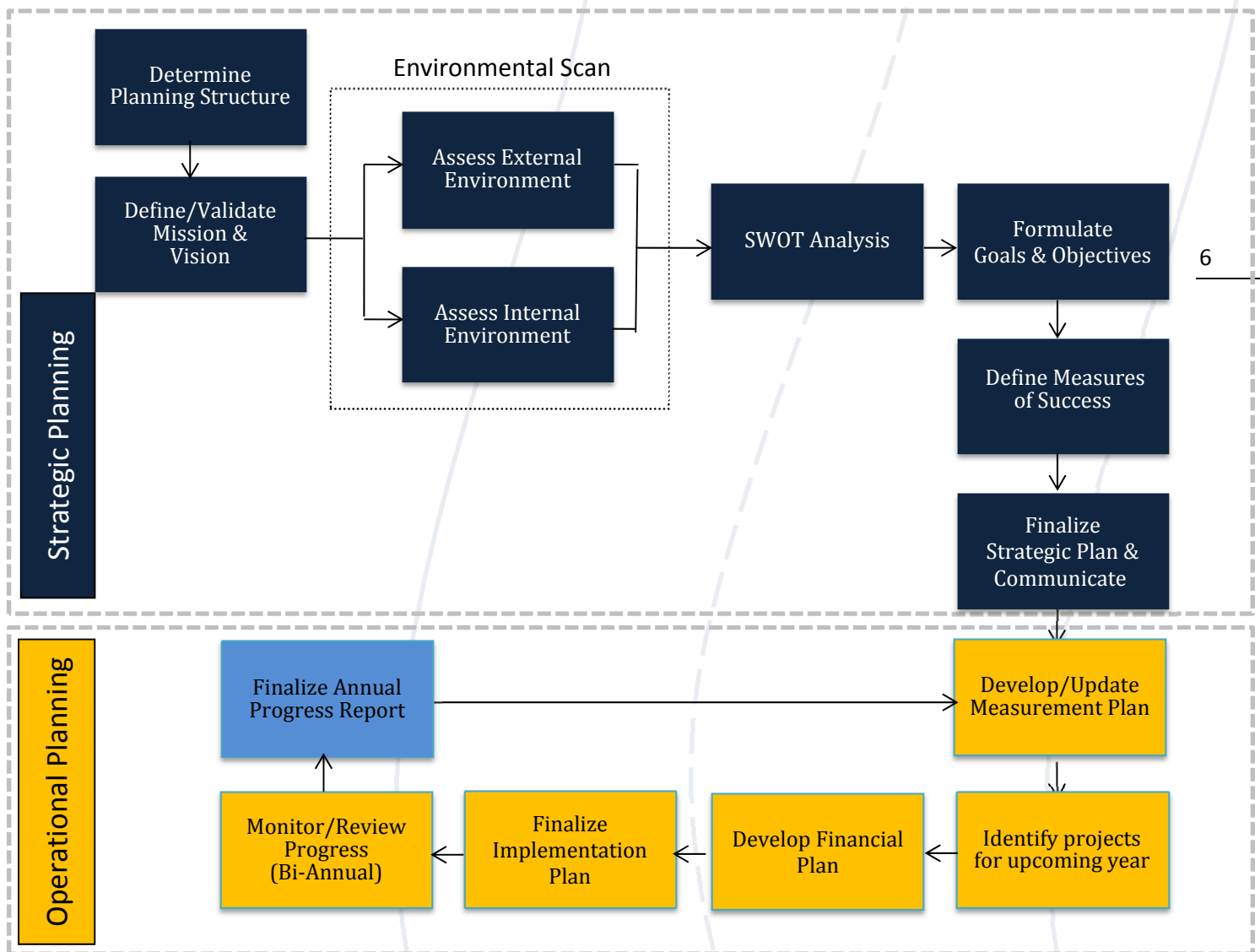
- ★ **Strategic Plan:** five to ten year high-level plan that highlights the organization/unit goals.
- ★ **Implementation Plan:** contains tactical projects/initiatives selected to move organization/unit closer to goals in strategic plan.
- ★ **Measurement Plan:** helps the organization “objectively” gauge if the projects/initiatives they have completed effectively move them towards achieving their goals in the strategic plan.
- ★ **Annual Progress Report:** document that highlights projects/ initiatives that have been completed in the previous year and how they are/have moved the organization closer to achieving their strategic goals.
- ★ **Project Management Tools (Methodology & Software):** creates accountability for achieving stated goals and allows an organization to proactively address issues that may prevent us from moving forward.

The diagram below illustrates the relationship between the planning components.



THE PLANNING PROCESS

The diagram below outlines the planning process. The blue boxes indicate strategic planning activities and the gold boxes indicate operational planning activities. The strategic plan should be reviewed annually when identifying projects; however, a complete strategic planning process should occur every five-ten years. Operational planning occurs on an annual basis and the purpose is to define projects/initiatives that will help move the organization/unit towards their goals.



FAST TRACK PLANNING

STRATEGIC PLANNING OVERVIEW

What is strategic planning?

The process of forming a vision of “what” the organization aspires to be, converting the vision into goals, objectives with objective measures that help assess progress/success.

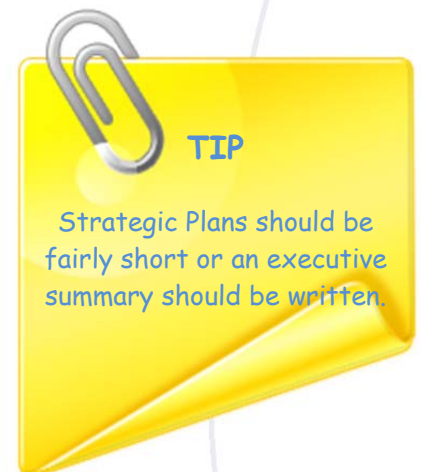
What are the objectives of strategic planning?

- ★ An idea of how trends impact the organization/units present and future
- ★ Identification of what the organization/unit does well
- ★ Clearly defined mission and vision
- ★ Specific goals that drive the organization/unit to common vision (focus)
- ★ Strategic allocation of resources
- ★ Consistent, sustained success, as opposed to marginal success
- ★ Development of strategic thinking and implementation skills

What is a strategic plan?

A strategic plan documents goals, objectives, and measures of success that are developed through a methodical process that identifies strengths, weaknesses and critical needs of the organization/unit, all within the context of the institutional mission/vision. Typically the strategic plan covers a five to ten year period.

The value of having a strategic plan document is that it clearly articulates what the organization values and would like to achieve moving forward. This allows everyone in the organization to be on the same page with regard to the direction the organization/unit would like to move. Obviously, the dissemination of the plan both internally and externally is key.

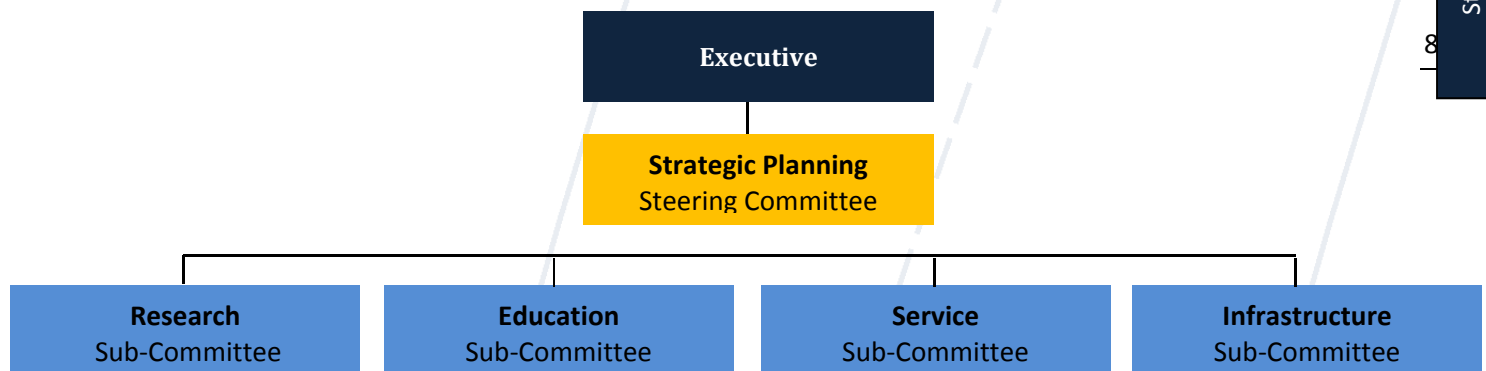


STRATEGIC PLANNING ACTIVITIES

The diagram on page 5 highlights the activities of the strategic planning process. Each of these activities builds on the previous activities deliverables; therefore, the sequence of the activities is very important.

Determine Planning Structure

The structure for the development of a strategic plan will vary on the size of the organization/unit. For a multi-unit strategic plan, an organization may elect to have a steering committee and a series of sub-committee to complete the necessary work and to gain feedback from key stakeholders. Typically in higher education it is important to have representation from faculty, staff, students, as well as community members/business leaders. Below is an example of a traditional strategic plan committee structure.



Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning Steering Committee Meetings

- ★ Steering Committee Membership will include all sub-committee chairs
- ★ Will be chaired by the XXX
- ★ Meetings will be scheduled at the beginning of the process. It is anticipated that each will be 1.5 hours in duration

Sub-Committee Membership Recommendations

- ★ No more than 10 members per committee
- ★ At least one students on each committee
- ★ At least one staff members on each committee
- ★ At least three faculty members

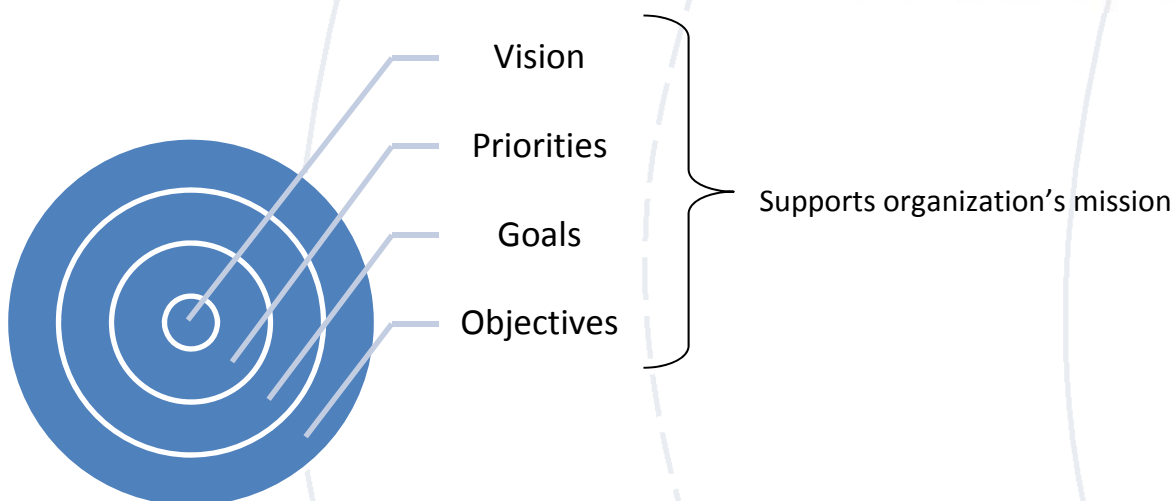


1. Define/Validate Mission & Vision

Mission and visions statements are the foundation to any strategic plan. They set the direction for the plan and all other components (goals/objectives/measures of success) should be developed based on the content of these two critical statements.

- ★ **Mission Statement:** a brief description of an organization/unit's fundamental purpose. A mission statement answers the question, "Why do we exist?"
- ★ **Vision Statement:** a short, concise statement indicating what the organization intends to become and/or to achieve at some point in the future. It describes future aspirations. A vision statement must be inspirational, memorable and reflect the desires of those with vested interests.
- ★ **Why formulate a vision?**
 - It gets people excited and moving in the same direction.
 - It establishes a standard of excellence.
 - It bridges the present and the future.

★ Relationship between vision, strategic planning and goal development



2. Environmental Scan

An **environmental scan** involves the consideration of factors that may influence the goals of the organization/unit. Information and trends discovered during the environmental scan can provide the foundation for the SWOT analysis. For example, if the environmental scan reveals that there will be a shortage of primary care physicians in WV, this shortage would likely be identified as an opportunity in the SWOT analysis.

External Assessment

During an **external assessment**, specific elements of external organizations are assessed to determine potential impact on the planning organization/unit's future. Elements that could be reviewed include:

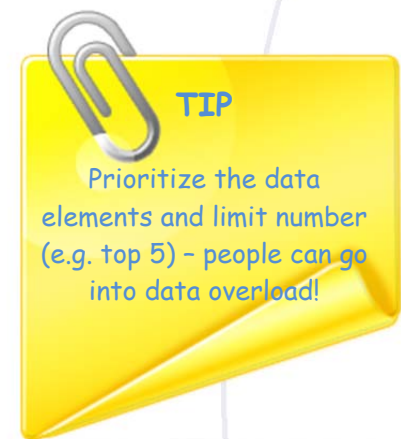
- ★ Government influences (NIH funding, state funding, Medicare funding, etc.)
- ★ Trends (workforce, technology, recruitment, tuition, etc.)
- ★ Competition (program development, etc.)

Internal Assessment

During an **internal assessment**, specific data is collected to objectively determine how the organization/unit is currently performing (preferably against national benchmarks). Data that could be reviewed include:

- ★ Workforce (retention, faculty demographics, diversity, etc.)
- ★ Student Body (student counts, admissions statistics, diversity, etc.)
- ★ Revenue Sources (state, federal, philanthropy, etc.)
- ★ Quality Indicators (graduation rate, board scores, placement, etc.)
- ★ Infrastructure (IT, facilities, finance, human resources, etc.)

During an environmental scan data is collected in order to get an accurate picture of both the internal and external environment. During the SWOT analysis the data collected is then sorted accordingly (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).



3. SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is a tool that helps to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organization/unit. Information from an environmental scan can be used to help complete the SWOT analysis. Using data helps to keep the SWOT analysis objective and not merely ones perception of reality. This is very important since the deliverable from the SWOT analysis will be used to help identify the goals and objectives for the strategic plan. Below is an example of a table commonly used during this activity.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we do well? • What is our <u>strongest asset</u>? • What do we offer that makes us different? • What <u>unique resources</u> do we have? <p>Note - Include only elements the organization/unit can control.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What don't we do well? • What can be improved? • What necessary expertise/ manpower do we currently lack? <p>Note - Include only elements the organization/unit can control.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New opportunities? • Opportunities can come from such things as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changes in technology ○ Changes in government policy ○ Changes in organizational structure ○ Changes in business priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stability of external funding? • Regulatory changes? • Changes in technology, and other trends that could threaten our position. • Competition? <p>Note - Include only elements the organization/unit DOES NOT control.</p>



4. Formulate Goals & Objectives

Goals and objectives are the core components of a strategic plan. A goal is a statement of what is to be achieved. It must be specific and realistic. An objective is a specific action which enables you to accomplish a goal. Goals and objectives will be translated into projects/initiatives during annual operational planning to ensure that the organization/unit achieves their goals within the strategic plan.

Goals and objectives must support organization/unit's mission and vision and be consistent with the findings from the environmental scan and SWOT analysis. In order to remain concise, it is recommended that no more than five strategic goals be developed and no more than five objectives for each strategic goal.

A word on SMART Goals

If too much detail is included in a strategic plan it can quickly be outdated. Like other industries, higher education is very dependent on external factors to achieve its mission(s). It is recommended to keep the goals and objectives within the strategic plan at a high level. Significant detail is added with addition of the implementation and measurement plan. Keeping these documents separate gives the organization/unit more flexibility while avoiding the need to rewrite a strategic plan every year. Therefore, the combined content of the strategic, implementation, and measurement plans should form SMART goals.

If you think about it, many goals in higher education do not change over time (perhaps just the wording). For example, most schools want to recruit the best and brightest students, have a high graduation and placement rates. What does change over time; however, is how we go about meeting these goals. The "how" is operational in nature and can change from year to year based on a variety of internal and external factors. Therefore, the planning process has to be flexible enough to allow for these types of adjustments. Hence the need for both strategic and operational planning



5. Define Measures of Success

In developing a strategic plan it is important to indicate how you will objectively determine progress/success. “Measures of Success” are indicators that are identified for each goal. When possible, “Measures of Success” should be identified that have associated national benchmarks. For example, six year graduation rate, various admission statistics, etc.

Detailed information (benchmarks, targets, etc.) with regard to each “Measure of Success” is included in the Measurement Plan.

6. Finalize Strategic Plan & Communicate

The final strategic plan should be a relatively short document. Most people will only want to spend a few minutes reviewing, so anything more than a few pages is probably too long. If it is absolutely necessary to have a larger document, you should consider making a shorter summary document or brochure. Also, it is important to consider how you can use a website to post your strategic plan as well as regular updates. Keeping the document “alive” is always a challenge and significant thought will need to go into how to achieve this.

Key sections of the strategic plan include: an introduction; explanation of the process and who was involved; mission; vision; goals & objectives; measures of success; and a brief summary.

Once the plan is in final format it is important to share the plan with all key stakeholders. This is an important step that is often overlooked. Different communication may be needed depending on the person’s role within the organization. A formal communication plan should be developed. Critical elements in the plan include: a list of stakeholders, methods of communication as well as the frequency.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE

Below is a strategic planning timeline for a multi-unit organization.

Major Activity	Deliverable	Month #1	Month #2	Month #3
Steering Committee Meeting #1 – review major tasks and timeline. Discuss sub-committee membership	N/A	X		
Form sub-committees & charge	List of committee members	X		
Each sub-committee will review previous Strategic Plans	N/A	X		
Mission and vision statements to be reviewed/revise	Mission & vision statements	X		
Each sub-committee will conduct an environmental scan.	Report: Environmental Scan & SWOT	X		
Steering Committee Meeting #2 – each committee to review their Environmental Scan & SWOT Analysis	N/A		X	
Each sub-committee will develop no more than five goals. Each goal will have no more than five objectives	List of goals & objectives		X	
Each committee will develop measures of success for each goal.	List of indicators		X	
Steering Committee Meeting #3 (this will most likely be a half day working session) – each committee will review their goals/objectives/indicators/targets	N/A		X	
Steering Committee Meeting #4 – committee will be presented with draft strategic plan	Draft #1 Strategic Plan			X
Edits made to strategic plan based on Steering Committee feedback from meeting #4	Draft #2 Strategic Plan			X
Draft #2 Strategic Plan will be presented to Executive Council for feedback	N/A			X
Edits made to strategic plan based on Executive Council feedback	Final Strategic Plan			X

STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

If you have a small unit, you can complete strategic planning during one day retreat. Below is an example agenda. To be successful it is important to have a good facilitator.

Strategic Planning Retreat Agenda

- I. 9:00 to 9:10 – Introduction
- II. 9:10 to 9:40 - Strategic Planning Process Overview
- III. 9:40 to 10:30 – Highlights from Environmental Scan
- IV. 10:30 to 11:00 – Mission/Vision
- V. 11:00 to 11:30 – SWOT Analysis
- VI. 11:30 to 12:30 – Strategic Goal Discussion
- VII. 12:30 to 1:30 – Lunch
- VIII. 1:30 to 2:30 – Breakout Session – Develop Objectives for Strategic Goals
- IX. 2:30 to 3:30 – Breakout Session Report Outs & Discussions
- X. 3:30 to 4:30 – Indicator Development
- XI. 4:30 to 5:00 – General Discussion/Next Steps/Closing Remarks

OPERATIONAL PLANNING OVERVIEW

What is Operational Planning?

The results of the strategic planning process answers the question of “what” the organization/unit wishes to achieve during a set period of time. The operational planning process answers the question of “how” the organization/unit will achieve their stated goals/objectives and “how” they will know if they have been successful. Operational planning occurs on an annual basis.

What are the objectives of operational planning?

- ★ Keep the strategic plan visible
- ★ Allocate resources on projects/initiatives that support the strategic plan
- ★ Respond proactively by monitoring indicators on a regular basis
- ★ Determine projects/initiatives based on relevant data/information
- ★ Create accountability for achieving specific results
- ★ Create transparency by communicating progress on at least an annual basis

Operational Planning Components



OPERATIONAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES

1. Develop/Update Measurement Plan

It is important to identify objective mechanisms to measure progress. While “measures of success” are identified in the strategic plan, benchmarks, targets, and annual tracking are done in operational planning. The reason to extract this from the strategic planning process is two-fold. The first, reviewing indicators should occur on an annual basis not every five-ten years like strategic planning. The second, external factors such as federal funding may impact a five year target and cannot always be anticipated during the strategic planning process. Separating indicator tracking from the strategic plan keeps an organization from having to update the strategic plan on a regular basis.

The components of a **Measurement Plan** include:

- ★ **Indicator:** A measurable variable (or characteristic) that can be used to determine the degree of adherence to a standard or the level of quality achieved
Example: Amount of clinical research funding (the measure that will be tracked to determine how XYZ University will know they are successful)
- ★ **Benchmark:** A standard of comparison used for judging performance
Example: A 10% increase in clinical funding over five years (the target that must be reached for XYZ University to know they have been successful)
- ★ **Baseline:** A standard by which things are measured or compared
Example: Current level of clinical research funding

Each goal and their respective objectives/indicators/targets collectively should meet the SMART principle.



Measurement Plan Template Example:

Goal	Indicator	Baseline	National Benchmark	5 yr. Target	Yr. 1	Yr. 2	Yr. 3	Yr. 4	Yr. 5
Infrastructure/Diversity	Percentage of female faculty	25%	45%	45%	26%	28%	35%	38%	45%

These columns are completed when measurement plan is first developed. The target can be adjusted annual ONLY IF external factors (something out of your control) changes that prevent the target from being reached.

Each year you add the corresponding data. In this example the indicator was tracked for five years. In year 5 the target was met.

2. Identifying Projects/Initiatives

Annually an organization/unit should identify specific projects/initiatives that will move them towards achieving their state goals/objectives. Projects may be mapped back to support more than one goal.

Prior to identifying projects it is recommended that the previous year's results highlighted in the measurement plan should be reviewed. If the organization/unit is losing ground on a particular indicator, or not moving as aggressively as planned, a project or initiative for the upcoming year may need to be identified.

It is recommended that the organization/unit develop a specific process for identifying and approving these projects. A project charter, similar to the one listed on page 18 can be used to collect similar information and aid in the decision making process.

Project Charter Example:

Project Management ^{Lite}		WVU-HSC
PROJECT CHARTER		
Project Name	Project Type Infrastructure	HSC School/Unit HSC Central
Project Description		
Project Sponsor	Project Manager	
Project Objectives		
Project Structure/Team(s)		
Project Management training completed? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Project set-up in Bamboo? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Project team access to Bamboo? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Project Scope		
Project Budget		
Dependencies on other projects		
Estimated start date?	Estimated completion date?	Estimated effort in hours?

3. Develop Financial Plan

Before the organization/unit moves forward with a specific project, they will need to first determine if the necessary resources are available. The information required for this analysis will vary across organizations/units. It is important to follow the appropriate procedures. It is recommended that a typical capital budget process be used to assess the financial requirements of these types of projects.

4. Finalize Implementation Plan

Create accountability. Once the financial resources have been secured for the various projects/initiatives, the Implementation Plan can be finalized. The Implementation Plan contains specific information about the list of approved projects. The components of an Implementation Plan include:

- ★ **Project Name:** approved project to be completed.
- ★ **Priority (1):** H=high, M=medium, L=Low. This is important to identify since some projects may not get done. Categorize projects as high if the indicator seems to be going in the wrong direction or not moving at the anticipated rate.
- ★ **Completion (2):** estimated date of completion typically done in quarters.
- ★ **Sponsor (3):** senior level leader that will provide oversight of the project.
- ★ **Project Manager (4):** person responsible for ensuring that the work on the project gets completed within the defined timeline and budget.
- ★ **Map Back to Strategic Plan (5):** indicates what goals in the strategic plan are being supported by this project.

Implementation Plan Template Example

Project	Priority ¹	Completion ²	Sponsor ³	Project Manager ⁴	Map to WVU ⁵
Goal: Infrastructure/Diversity					
Develop formal diversity plan for organization/unit	H	1Q	Smith	Jones	
Hire Chief Diversity Officer	H	2Q	Smith	Jones	

5. Monitor/Review Progress

Create transparency. The organization/unit will need to determine how they will communicate the progress of projects/initiatives to key stakeholders. Methods such as email, e-news, or website could be effective mechanisms for delivering this information. There are several benefits to making this information available including; reducing duplication of efforts, informing people with common interests, continually promoting the goals of the organization/unit. At a minimum updates should be provided at least bi-annually, preferable quarterly.

Progress Report Template Example

Project/Description	Due	Sponsor	Manager	Status	Map to WVU	Notes
Priority Contribute to the health of West Virginians through leading edge research programs that distinguish WVU HSC						
HSC Schools submit five year faculty recruitment plans for research	Q1	Butcher	Sundaram		Goal 2	
Consolidate efforts in research core development and maintenance - recruit Director	Q3	Dillon	O'Donnell		Goal 2	

When you click on “Notes” you are provided with a brief status

6. Annual Progress Report

On an annual basis an organization/unit should summarize their accomplishments related to the strategic plan. This document should highlight specific projects/initiatives that were achieved over the previous year and how they support achieving the goals within the strategic plan. Also, a summary of the measurement plan should be included – addressing areas of strength and weakness. The final section of the report should highlight projects/initiatives for the upcoming year.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Traditionally, project management has been used in the fields of information technology and engineering in order to achieve specific goals on-time, on-budget, and to the customer's satisfaction. Although an organization/unit may not implement a methodology as rigorous as the ones used in these fields, you should develop a methodology that will allow similar results. In addition to this methodology, you will need to identify how to track the progress of your organization/units projects. This can be as simple as an excel spreadsheet or as complex as using a project management software package. The important thing is to track progress regardless of the method.

Project Management Methodology & Tracking – combined creates accountability for achieving your goals and allows your organization/unit to proactively address issues that may prevent us from moving forward

Project Management Methodology Example

