

Innovation *insights*

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND
Institutional Assessment

Innovation Insight Series Number 1
<http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/innovation/>

Leading Unit Level Planning

Issues you can address through the integration of planning, improvement, and assessment

“We need to identify areas of excellence in which we should invest over the next few years.”

“Our resources are declining and we need to determine how to maintain our quality standards.”

“We want to adapt what we do to implement our new strategies.”

“We need to update our undergraduate program.”

“We need to be competitive in attracting new faculty.”

“We need to solve our enrollment and space issues.”

“We have lots of data but we aren’t using it to improve our programs.”

Starting a strategic planning initiative

Many faculty and staff are aware of strategic planning, but are not clear on how to successfully approach the process. Even seasoned leaders may have questions such as the following:

What exactly is strategic planning?

Bryson (1995) defines strategic planning as “... a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it” (p. 4). Strategic planning will help you and your colleagues identify where

you want your unit to be in the future and what you need to do to get there.

What are effective models and approaches?

Effective strategic planning approaches include several common elements. These are not always completed in the same order, and the approach you use should be tailored to your unit’s culture and needs.

Common elements often include the assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats; the identification of values, mission, vision, and goals; the identification of strategies and performance measures; and the development, implementation, and periodic review of action plans.

Figure 1 illustrates a model developed by the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment for use as guide when designing a planning process.

How do we prepare for, build, and implement a strategic plan?

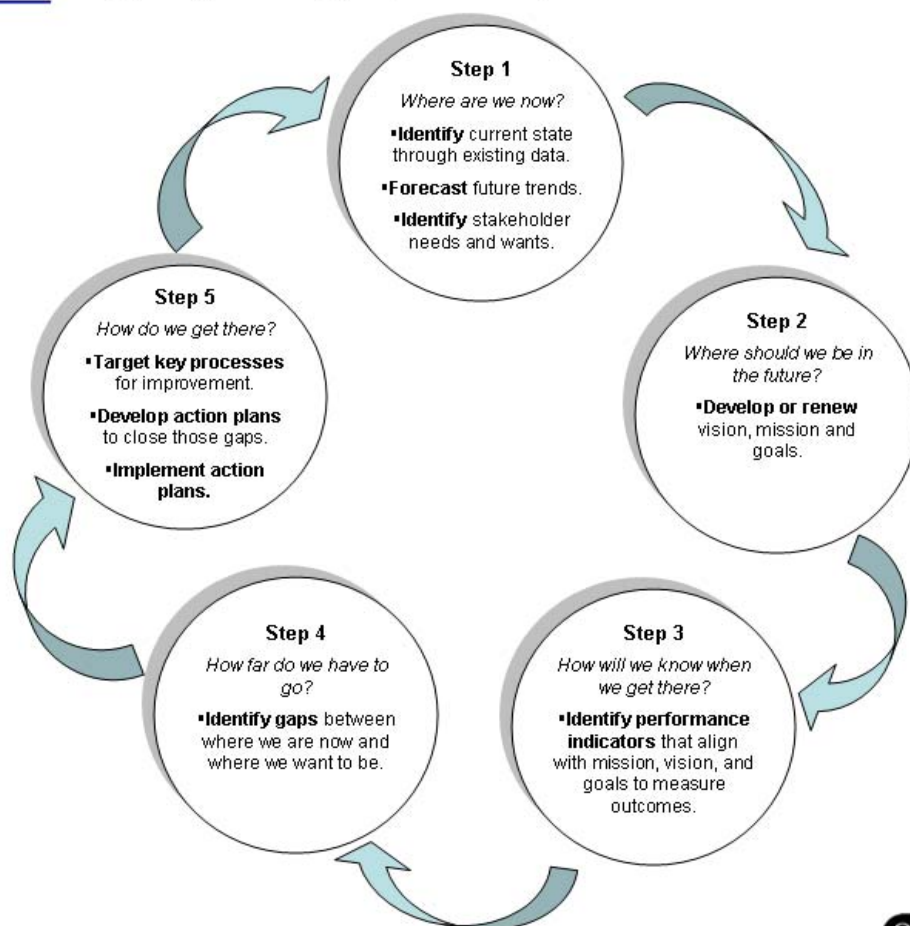
Often, a unit leader will initiate the planning process by meeting with a facilitator/consultant to plan a retreat or series of discussions. The leader will assure that assessment data are available to inform the planning process. Discussion(s) will be held with stakeholders to identify the unit’s priorities, and to determine how to achieve these priorities.

Implementation will follow, with regular progress reviews. It is important to develop an implementation schedule with an expected completion date and intermediate steps and dates.

Figures 2, 3, and 4 illustrate examples of three



Integrating Planning, Improvement, and Assessment: A Model



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Figure 1. A model for designing a planning process.

planning approaches, based on unit size and scheduling preferences. **There is no one right way to do unit planning; rather it is important to design an approach that fits your unit's culture and needs.**

Information in the final plan will probably fall into three categories: background and analysis (where the unit is), goals and measures (where the unit wants to go), and strategies and actions (how the unit will get there).

Who should participate, and how?

Faculty, staff, and others with responsibility for implementing the plan should be engaged in the planning process. A small unit, with less than 15 or so

members, may be able to involve all members in the planning process. A larger unit, with several departments, will need to identify an approach to provide all members an opportunity for feedback and involvement. The unit leader should also identify a means to provide his or her administrators with information on the unit's planning process, and receive feedback during the process to ensure alignment and support.

How should we initiate the process?

Begin where you are, and with the data you have. Planning is as much a process of engagement as it is a matter of data analysis. It is also an iterative process. Look at your plan as a dynamic document that is a guide to your routine activities, prioritization, and

resource allocation as well as a longer-term document, and a guide that can be revised and updated as your situation or environment evolves.

A planning checklist

The following checklist has been developed from the Strategic Planning component of the Baldrige National Quality Program *Education Criteria for Performance Excellence* (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2007):

- Establish a process for planning
- Gather and analyze data related to:
 - o Student, stakeholder, and market needs and expectations
 - o Local, regional, or national economics and demographics
 - o Organizational capabilities and resources, including time, funds, facilities, and people
 - o Education and technology trends
 - o Disciplinary trends
 - o Benchmarks and comparative data from peer organizations
- Identify key goals and objectives that align with University goals, and a timeframe for accomplishing them
- Identify key performance measures and targets for the goals and objectives
- Develop and implement specific action plans to accomplish goals and objectives, and identify a way to monitor the action plans and modify them as needed

You may also find the “Are We Making Progress?”, “Are We Making Progress as Leaders?”, and “easy Insight: Take a First Step Toward a Baldrige Self-Assessment” surveys, all available at the Baldrige National Quality Program Web site (<http://www.quality.nist.gov/>) useful in your planning process.

Week	Activity
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Strategic planning concepts ◆ Standard terminology of unit’s field • Draft mission and vision statements • Identify stakeholder populations and their perceived expectations
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Unit values, mission and vision statement ◆ Timeline for developing strategic plan • Develop interview protocol for stakeholder organizations
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review stakeholder interview protocol • Begin stakeholder interviews
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Progress with stakeholder interviews ◆ Historical data already compiled • Plan additional customer (student) data gathering
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop schedule for customer (student) focus groups • Review available data banks for focus group questions
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review interview data and target key interest/improvement areas • Review focus group protocol • Develop outline of strategic plan
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin work on goals and measures
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct focus groups
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data from focus groups • Target key interest/improvement areas
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize goals and measures • Begin work on strategies and actions • Draft background/analysis of strategic plan
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue work on strategies and actions • Draft goals and measures of strategic plan
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft strategies and actions section of strategic plan
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft of complete strategic plan available for review

Figure 2. Sample approach for a unit with fewer than 10 members. Incorporates planning into weekly 90 minute staff meetings over three months.

Meeting/Length	Activity
Retreat Preparation Two hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ground rules for retreat • Review unit mission and discuss vision • Review current barriers • Review strategic planning process • Confirm direction for full day retreat • Identify action items (information to be distributed before retreat)
Retreat All day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify unit strengths and challenges, both internal and external (individuals complete strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges matrix individually prior to retreat) • Develop desired image of unit 2 to 3 years in the future • Based on strengths, challenges, and desired image, identify key issues/ goals for unit • Identify current position of unit for each of these key issues • Identify which issues are drivers • Develop initial list of possible strategies for each key issue
Follow-up Half day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop additional strategies for key issues • Review issues and strategies based on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long or short term approaches • priority • whether within unit's control
Remaining actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with unit leader's administrator to review unit direction • Develop draft plan • Identify detailed actions to implement strategies

Figure 3. Sample approach for a unit with fewer than 10 members using a day-long planning retreat plus pre-work and follow-up.

Glossary

Values - Basic precepts about what is important in your unit, answering the question “What are our assumptions and beliefs?”

Mission - A statement of purpose, answering the question “What is our primary purpose?”

Vision - A clear and compelling overall description of the desired future state, answering the question “Where does our unit want to go?”

Goals - Broad statements describing how you will reach your vision, answering the questions “How will we know when we’ve arrived?” and “How will we get there?”

Strategies and Action Plans - Specific, detailed statements that describe how you will achieve your goals. Generally list what will be done, how and when it will happen, and who is responsible.

Performance Measures - Specific data that enable you to determine when you’ve achieved your goals.

Planning - A process for guiding future-oriented decisions, setting priorities, and allocating resources. Many departments make planning an ongoing activity that involves stakeholders.

Assessment - Using data to identify areas for improvement, and to track and analyze progress towards the achievement of vision and goals.

Improvement - An approach to enhance organizational performance through the use of data-based decision-making, process improvement, and stakeholder involvement.

Meeting/Length	Activity
Manager and Department Heads Three hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review strategic planning concepts Discuss values, mission, vision Identify unit stakeholders List possible strategies and actions Plan next steps
Entire staff 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present strategic planning approach Present department goals Answer questions
Manager/Dept Heads One hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department Heads provide written department goals to each other and Manager
Between meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager provides feedback to Department Heads on department goals Department Heads get input from their staff on mission and vision
Manager/Dept Heads One hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager provides draft of strategic plan Department Heads bring departmental input Department Heads bring prioritized list of departmental goals and strategies
Between meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager revises and distributes draft Department Heads share plan with staff and get feedback
Manager/Dept Heads 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review draft of strategic plan
Between meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department Heads and staff develop actions to implement strategies
Entire staff 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present strategic plan Answer questions
Remaining actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present plan to administrator with unit oversight

Figure 4. Sample approach to planning for a larger unit with several departments; incorporates information sharing.

Additional resources

National Institute of Standards and Technology
Baldrige National Quality Program. (2007).
Education Criteria for Performance Excellence.
www.baldrige.nist.gov

Bryson, John M. (1995). *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations—A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement (Revised Edition)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dolence, Michael G., Daniel J. Rowley, Herman D. Lukan. (1997). *Working Toward Strategic Change: A Step-by-Step Guide to the Planning Process*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Melum, Mara Minerva, and Casey Collett. (2000). *Breakthrough Leadership: Achieving Organizational Alignment Through Hoshin Planning*. Salem, NH: GOAL/QPC.

Society for College and University Planning Web site,
www.scup.org

Schwartz, Peter. (1991) *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday.

The Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment can help units use quantitative and qualitative data to assess and improve organizational performance. For more information, contact the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment at 814-863-8721 or psupia@psu.edu, or visit our website: <http://www.psu.edu/president/pia>.

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