

STRATEGIC PLANNING: IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

MOVING FROM THE STRATEGIC PLAN TO AN OPERATIONAL PLAN

Strategic plans provide broad guidance and direction for a higher education institution's immediate future. For a strategic plan to be successful, it requires diligence in execution and institution-wide participation in the development of the operational plan. An effective operational plan will account for:

- + *Integrating projects and activities tied to key measures of success*
- + *Aligning of resources tied to the activities, areas, and projects with the most impact*
- + *Accumulating unit level impacts on institutional strategy*
- + *Cascading delegation of responsibility, accountability, and ownership*
- + *Refining operational plans from unit level feedback and considerations*

This guide offers a roadmap to implementing strategy by developing comprehensive operational plans and processes for performance measurement and monitoring. It is organized according to

1. Getting Started – An overview of the governance structure and functions to develop the operational plan as well as a description of the components for unit plans.
2. Maintaining the Strategic Plan – Information and communications to support the strategy's management.
3. Coordinating the Budgeting, Reporting and Planning Cycles – Alignment of on-going strategic planning activities with other university planning cycles.

1. Getting Started

A finalized strategic plan will not only define an institution's vision for its future, but provide a perspective on the systems for measuring success in achieving high level goals and priority objectives. Institutional strategic goals require a structure and management processes for how the divisions, departments, and units each contribute to the success of achieving the goals of the plan. For the responsibilities and capabilities outlined below, the functions will already exist at Cal Poly Pomona in some cases and in other cases they will need to be developed. Additionally, existing functions may be mature or may be emerging and their configuration may be distributed across the university. As the work to execute the strategy is scoped, the university will want to determine not only which functions exist and where, but also what is the appropriate organizational structure model (e.g., decentralized) to bring them together.

DEFINE THE OPERATIONAL PLANNING PROCESS'S GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

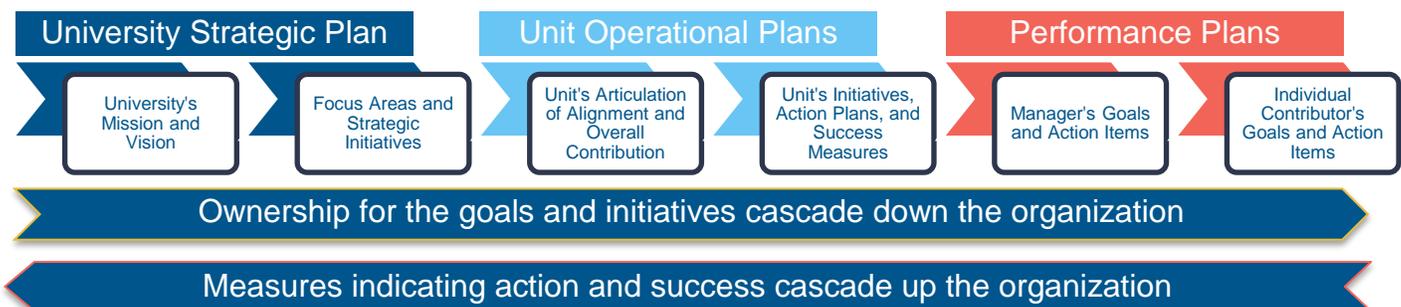
- + **Leadership and Governing Boards**
 - Once the university's governance has accepted the strategic plan, it holds institutional officers accountable to the plan's implementation, realization of outcomes, and achievement of key milestones. Additionally, trustees ensure that plans inform decision-making which sets priorities and allocates resources, and that are also periodically updated.
- + **Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC)**
 - A subset of the strategic planning committee should continue beyond the development of the strategic plan as a standing committee charged with oversight of the plan's implementation, plan refinement, and accountability for the institution's stakeholders who are involved in day-to-day execution, working with a project management function.
- + **Project Management Function (Typically Institutional Planning and Effectiveness)**
 - The project management function is charged with operational plan development and coordination, serving as

a single point of management for anyone involved in planning. A potential structure for this function consists of the following roles and key responsibilities:

- **Lead (e.g., Associate Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning, and Analytics)**
 - Serve as liaison to institutional leadership committees
 - Lead the development of standards, templates, and procedures
 - Cultivate relationships with internal unit leadership
 - Communicate and reinforce strategy to all participants
 - Monitor the allocation of resources across efforts and identify opportunities to enhance value
 - Work with individual project managers to establish plans and goals
 - Monitor capacity of teams
- **Project Manager**
 - Assist with planning (scope definition, activity planning and sequencing, effort estimation, and resource planning)
 - Augment day-to-day project management (schedule, task, resource management)
 - Report on assigned project progress, milestone achievement and outcomes realization
 - Promote adoption of standards, templates, and procedures
- **Business Analyst**
 - Configure and maintain systems of record
 - Collaborate with internal resources to collect and analyze data
 - Prepare analysis on execution, program, and outcome metrics
 - Maintain reporting dashboards and scorecards
- **Communications Specialist**
 - Prepare communications and vet through appropriate channels
 - Maintain ongoing communication channels (website, social media)
 - Collaborate with communications points-of-contact at all levels of the institution to ensure consistent messaging

DESIGNATE AN ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE

- + Cal Poly Pomona's strategic plan articulates the university's mission and vision and identifies high level focus areas and strategic initiatives. The operational plan translates these high level priorities into more detailed day-to-day actions. To be effective, the operational plan should empower the various levels of the institution to determine how they will contribute towards the focus areas and strategic initiatives.
 - Each of the focus areas, strategic initiatives, and their associated success measures is communicated broadly so each unit has a clear understanding of the plan's primary objectives and is able to determine the actions it can put in place to impact these focus areas. The action items and measures are owned by the unit and, in some cases, can also be assigned to individual contributors.
 - Tasking each unit with identifying their action items and priorities invites engagement and ownership over their contributions to the broader strategic plan.
 - Units should also understand that they will be held accountable to the measures they can directly control or impact. Impediments to success that are outside their control should be ultimately passed up the organization to the strategic planning steering committee to help resolve.
- + Cascading the strategic plan's goals, priorities, and initiatives down the organization to the individual contributor along with delegating responsibility for each contributing action and strategic initiative will help to successfully operationalize the strategic plan across the entire organization.



- + **Rethinking fiscal accountability:** Coordinating the budget with the strategic plan helps improve the plan's impact.
 - Traditional budgeting models often include incremental budgetary increases, where each unit has their own driving needs and plan for growth and budgets are spread evenly to accommodate.
 - To assist a successful implementation of the strategic plan, the emphasis on a the plan's several focus areas aligns with focused resource allocation to demonstrably impact agreed upon initiatives.
 - In practical terms, this means allocating more resources to the areas that will have the most impact on the focus areas. Some units may have to reallocate resources and find operational efficiencies to help others succeed. Cal Poly Pomona should find ways to encourage, recognize, and reward the units that collaborate to the success of others in order to more effectively help realize the vision and strategy.

DEVELOPING THE UNIT OPERATIONAL PLAN AND REQUEST

- + Undoubtedly, there are different ways the university can consider engaging and empowering its various stakeholders to contribute to the development of detailed, tactical operational plans for its units. Here we describe a grassroots approach that seems to be consistent with the culture at Cal Poly Pomona, though it could be reasonable to decide to invert these activities to undertake a more directive approach.
- + The unit strategic operational plan is the mechanism by which units share how they will specifically contribute to the university's strategy, as well as provide feedback to the strategic planning steering committee on the recent successes, anticipated goals, and resources they believe will be required for the period ahead.
- + There are **four major components** of the unit strategic plan and resource request: the unit's baseline analysis; proposed initiatives and measurements; recent achievements; and its resource request
- + **Unit Analysis** is an internal baseline assessment (e.g. SWOT analysis) to articulate the strategic drivers related to the unit's potential success in achieving their initiatives and should inform the number of initiatives it can reasonably undertake.
- + **The Unit's Initiatives** are a slate of actions the unit will take towards the initiatives and focus areas of the strategic plan. This is what the unit is endeavoring to accomplish. The Unit's Initiatives is comprised of several components:
 - **Areas of Focus:** come directly from the strategic plan and is included for context on the highest level goal of the strategic plan.
 - **Unit Initiatives and Action Steps:** the specific actions that unit will undertake towards achieving the goals of the larger initiative go into the blank boxes.
 - **Outcomes:** are designed to capture the specific measures for both the strategic plan initiatives and the unit initiatives, use a quantitative measure for the goal, and compare to the current state by identifying the gap between the two.
 - **Owner:** is the person or people designated as responsible for seeing to the achievement of action steps.
- + **Achievements:** provides an opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of the unit since the last operational plan was submitted, including the results and responsible parties for completion.

- + **Request:** is an opportunity to provide upward feedback to the strategic planning committee on the needs of the unit in the areas of organization, people, technology, policy, procedure, programming, space, facilities, or anything else that will help them succeed with their initiatives
 - **Organization:** A request to reorganize the organizational structure within the unit or suggest reorganizing structures across units or divisions in order to rethink how efforts are aligned and performance is achieved
 - **People:** A request for investment in the acquisition or development of competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities of the unit's talent
 - **Technology:** A request for new or upgraded technology to help create efficiencies, enhance capabilities, or optimize the efforts of the unit
 - **Policy/Procedure:** A request for changes to policies or procedures that may be impeding the progress of the unit's initiatives
 - **Programming:** A request for funding and, where necessary, permission to create programs that contribute to the strategic goals of the university
 - **Space/Facility/Other:** A request for other important resources that will contribute to the unit's success

UNIT OPERATIONAL PLAN TEMPLATE

Unit Analysis
 Conduct an internal audit of the unit's preparedness to support the vision and focus areas articulated in the strategic plan. Consider identifying or updating a strategic weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis for your unit.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Unit's Initiatives
 Use this table to identify initiatives your unit can undertake to support the university's vision and strategy, noting the primary action steps to address the initiative as well as the intended outcomes for each. Where possible include quantitative goals, current performance measure and the gap between them.

Focus and Initiatives		Outcomes			Owner
Initiatives & Unit Actions		Goal	Current	Gap	
Initiative:	Action:				
	A:				
	B:				
	C:				
Initiative:	Action:				
	A:				
	B:				
	C:				
Initiative:	Action:				
	A:				
	B:				
	C:				

Achievements
 Outline the actions taken over the past year(s) outside the strategic plan.

Action	Result	Responsible

Resource Requests

Area of Need	Description of Request	Explanation
Organization		
People		
Technology		
Policy/Procedure		
Programming		
Space/Facility/Other		

HURON

2. Maintaining the Strategic Plan

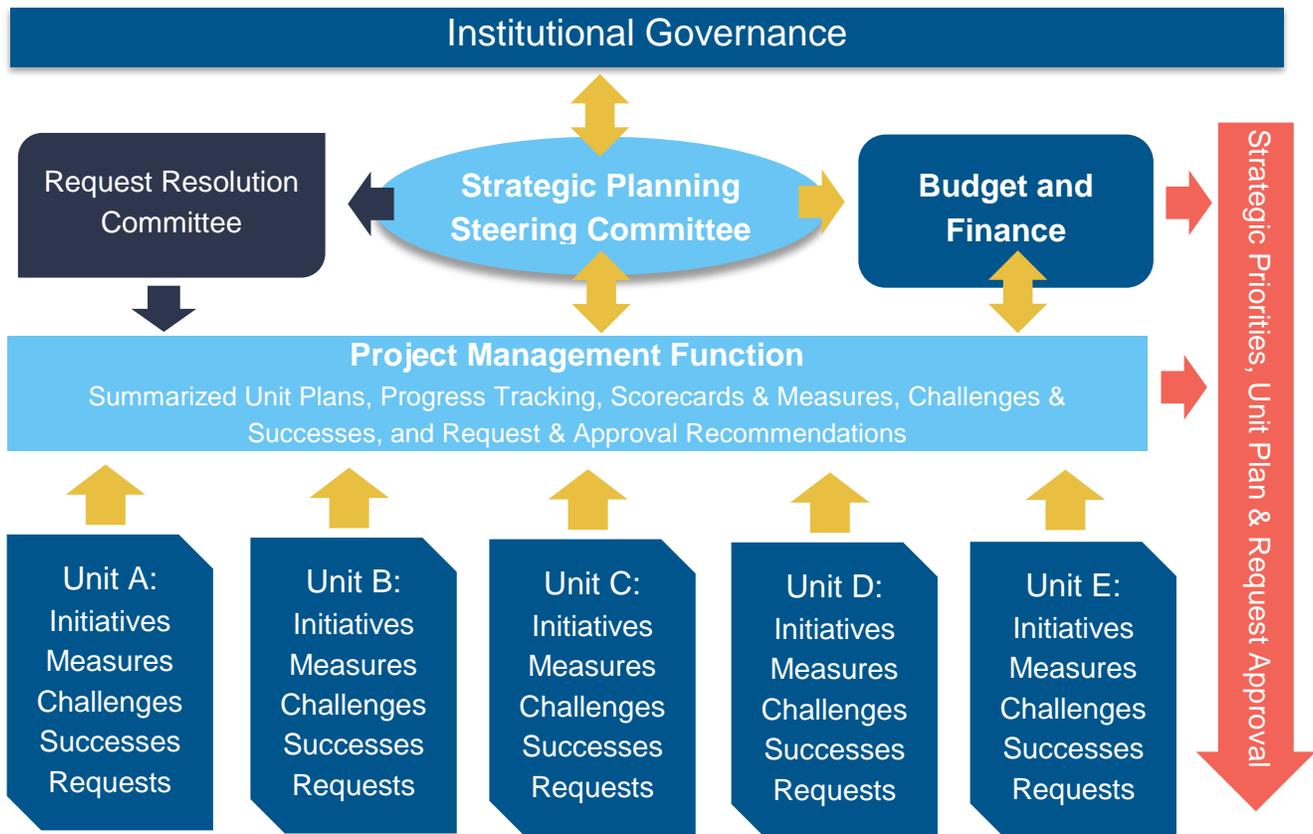
Maintaining the momentum generated at the launch of a new strategic plan requires accountability, structure, and consistent and effective information flows. As the strategies and tactics are achieved across the units, the strategic planning cycle should reveal if the overall strategy is being advanced across the institution and is designed to identify and address barriers and keep the organization moving in the right direction.

The graphic below illustrates an information flow designed to maintain accountabilities and continuously refine the strategic plan. The project management function plays a central role in coordinating key activities and providing relevant, timely information. The university may also determine that an initial step is to evaluate the existing tools and infrastructure to determine additional resources and capabilities might be necessary to effectively manage strategy execution and communications.

OVERSEEING THE FLOW OF INFORMATION

- + The various **Units** across the university develop tactical action plans.
- + The **Project Management Function** leads the process to synthesize, summarize, and make recommendations based on the unit level feedback. It is also responsible for continuously tracking cumulative success measures, providing a scorecard on the strategic plan progress and bringing attention to measures that are lagging and may need to be addressed.
- + The **Strategic Planning Steering Committee** continues to own the university strategic plan and helps advise on its implementation and execution. It helps with ongoing prioritization and sequencing of strategic initiatives, as well as adapting them as the university's operating environment evolves.
- + The **Request Resolution Committee** is a special project-based team comprised of the strategic planning steering committee leadership and selected University leaders. This team helps to address particular requests or initiatives

that may have a broad impact across the institution (e.g., reorganizing functions and people across unit boundaries, revising or creating policies, reallocating facilities and space, rationalizing enterprise-wide technology) or needs that require cross functional collaboration, focused attention, and leadership decision-making.



- + Information flows from the individual unit plans, which are collected and summarized by the project management function.
- + The project management function is responsible for tracking progress and identifying common challenges, requests, and resources needed from the unit. It requests feedback from units to enable their efforts to plan tactical action steps that help move the university forward. Additionally, the project management function provides the relevant information to budget and finance to support resource allocation decisions that effectively enable the plan. This function works with the strategic planning steering committee to review the progress made against plans, consider the input from the units, and help support updates and approvals from the university's governance.
- + The strategic planning steering committee and its leadership own the university's plan, refining its goals and priorities and present plan changes to the board, as needed. This committee sets direction for the cycle ahead, working with the project management function to articulate planned priorities and provide relevant information that will support the unit's ability to devise and refine operational plans.

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES

- + Everyone across the institution plays an important role in helping achieve the university's strategy. As initiatives and priorities are accomplished, holding recognition events to celebrate the efforts and achievements of the campus community will continue to support and further momentum for the strategic plan.

3. Coordinating the Budgeting, Reporting and Planning Cycles

Designing operational plans may be perceived as an additional time constraint in an already busy academic calendar and finding the right timing may be difficult. However, coordinating operational plans with the budget cycle and other planning initiatives, such as accreditation reviews and program assessments, should help ease the burden. While these cycles may not be aligned at the time that a strategic plan has been developed and approved, the institution should eventually strive to align and closely coordinate these cycles.

The operational planning cycle is coordinated with the budgeting cycle to ensure resources are allocated to the priorities of the strategic plan. Therefore, approved budgets have considered and underwrite initiatives that support the strategy. At the end of the budget period, all the unit requests have been made to inform the forthcoming budget with the intent of reducing repetitive budget requests. Focused resource allocation additionally helps with long range budget forecasting.

The operational planning cycle is marked by several key activities:

- + **Strategic Plan Review and Goal Confirmation** The strategic plan should be considered a living document. While the mission, vision, and focus areas should not change drastically, the initiatives, action items, and measures will continue to be revised in light of the evolving operating environment and the achievement of goals and milestones. Annually, the university's leadership will work with the board to agree to revisions in the strategic plan and the project management function will see that these changes are communicated across the institution and implemented in subsequent operational plans.
- + **Unit Operational Plans and Request** is a feedback mechanism from the units to the strategic planning committee that encompasses:
 - The activities they are planning to undertake to achieve the initiatives within the strategic plan's focus areas
 - Any progress thus far and current activities towards goal achievement
 - The challenges they are facing and a realistic assessment of their ability to succeed
 - The resources units will need to accomplish their intended outcomesThe project management functions coordinates units' requests and works with the strategic planning steering committee to ensure integration of the various unit action plans and effective resource allocation to enable the plan's fulfillment.
- + **Mid-Point Operational Plan Review** is a period for collecting the activities and measures from the units to identify the progress being made; reassess units' operational plans, challenges, and resourcing; problem-solve roadblocks and hurdles; and identify steps to support the units – from removing obstacles to securing resources – that ensure continued progress to realizing annual goals.
- + **End of Year Strategic Plan Assessment** is a report prepared for the to show progress made towards the strategic plan, celebrate success with the broader community, and identify institutional challenges that need to be resolved and is delivered by the strategic planning steering committee leadership with support for the project management function. The strategic planning steering committee will consider the progress that has been made at the end of the cycle as it works to sequence, plan, and confirm goals for the next cycle.