



Assessment Infused Strategic Planning



Resource Guide for Strategic Planning Work Groups

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Assessment Approach

What Do We Mean by Assessment?

Discipline-specific definitions range from the fields of education, psychology, health, engineering, information technology, to business. Diversity of thought on assessment is a strength, and various ways of [thinking and practicing](#) affect the approach and methodology of assessment across the university. Rather than seeing this as a liability, we see it as a strength. Multi-disciplinary perspectives leave room for more creative approaches to complex issues.

- *Assessment is any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, divisional, or agency effectiveness (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996, p. 18).*
- *Assessment is the process of providing credible evidence of resources, implementation actions, and outcomes undertaken for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of instruction, programs, and services (Banta & Palomba, 2015, p.2).*
- *Broadly defined, assessment is an ongoing, systematic, and organized process aimed at understanding and improving student learning, the environment for student learning, and all college operations (Borough of Manhattan Community College, Handbook).*

Assessment practice at CSUSB is grounded in [cross-disciplinary ethical principles as well as an established competency framework](#). It has the potential to empower as well as marginalize, and as these following tools and resources are presented, we are mindful of this potential through the models, structures, and processes we use.

Assessment Cycle

Central to the practice of assessment and strategic planning is that the process is cyclical. A simple cycle is presented below, followed by interjections points for **diversity, equity, and inclusion** considerations¹.



1. PLAN

- Articulate mission, goals, outcomes, and outcome measures using a culturally competent team with appropriate expertise in what is being assessed
- Consider existing data and evidence from previous cycles of assessment
- Identify and target inequities to be addressed and underlying historical, social, cultural, economic, and structural causes
- Understand goals, outcomes, objectives, and strategies in the context of assumptions and barriers and potential unintended consequences
- Co-design elements of the plan using a participatory and inclusive approach

2. DO

- In the process of carrying out the work, acquire evidence that can reveal impact and areas for improvement. Co-design accessible, culturally, and linguistically appropriate data collection instruments
- Use multiple measures and indicators for triangulation and to compensate for any shortcoming inherent within any single measure or indicator

¹ Hargreaves, M., Coffee-Borden, B., Jones, C., & Britt, H. (2022). Equitable systems change evaluation (ESCE) framework. American Evaluation Association 2022 Conference, New Orleans, LA, United States.

3. CHECK

- Engage in participatory analysis and interpretation of findings with people most impacted by the findings, and with other partners and collaborators

4. ACT

- Co-design the reporting and use of accessible and culturally and linguistically appropriate materials using multiple modes of communication that present both qualitative and quantitative findings
- Report balance of evidence and any unintended outcomes to inform next cycle
- Document plans to apply lessons learned to improve further in the next cycle

Developing a Shared Language for Assessment and Strategic Planning

Since the terminology and concepts used in strategic and assessment planning can be defined and applied in multiple ways depending on the user and context, it is valuable to establish a shared language and understanding for the development of the University Strategic Plan 2023-2028. The following table (as well as the logic model in the next section) introduces and defines terms and constructs as it simultaneously highlights the relationships between these planning components for clarity and structure.

Assessment Terms in Strategic Planning

	Meaning	Attributes	Example 1: Walking the Dog	Example 2: Lunar Landing
Goal	<i>General description of an intended broad end state to be achieved</i>	Ideas, Long-term purpose, around which organizational coordination is directed	To have a “successful” outing with the dog	We will land on the moon
Objective	<i>Specific description of intended achievements, pre-set targets, that are specific and measurable, in service of a goal</i>	Specific, verifiable, performance based	Walk the dog for 30 minutes	In this decade, we will perform a lunar landing and return to earth
Outcome	<i>Change, effect, result attributed to a program, policy, project, product, service, or process</i>	Results, effect, greater ownership	Dog peed, or dog didn't pee, or dog is so worn out & no longer cares about peeing, human got 1000 steps in, doggie enrichment in sights and sounds	One giant leap for mankind in 1969 (televised, collective experience of accomplishment)
Measure	<i>Data or other forms of evidence for understanding whether a line of work is having the intended effect</i>	Takes multiple forms-- both qualitative and quantitative, preferred to have multiple measures to triangulate	The dog lifted his leg 3 times during the walk; he sprinkled 2 bushes; no accidents were experienced at home upon return from walk.	Data from rocket performance, astronaut training & assessments, moon samples, witness testimony of achievement
Strategy	<i>Activities and attempts aimed in a specified direction</i>	Intermediate actions and tasks; adaptable based on context; Outputs	Walk the dog by the park, lawns, and bushes	Apollo program (create the technology to scientifically explore the moon and develop human capability to work in space & lunar environment)
Impact	<i>Longer term, larger scale changes in outcomes in a broad level of scope</i>	Change, synthesis of outcomes	Healthy person and acclimated pet	Expand the frontiers of knowledge, capability, and opportunity in space; existential understanding of the vastness of universe

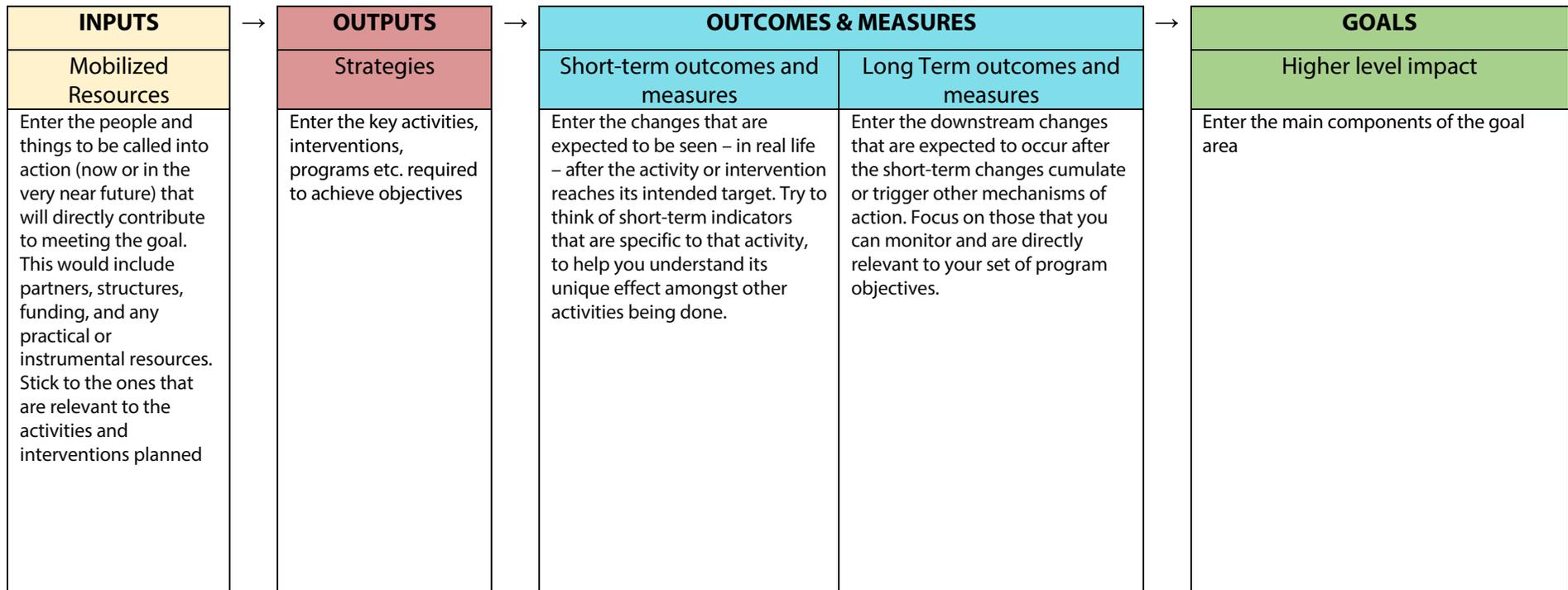
Tools

Logic Model

Logic models are a graphic tool that guide and explicate shared mental models of impact. While intended impact or higher order goals are at the end of a linear depiction of the model, they are really where groups should start. Beginning with impact helps us start with the “why” and reverse engineer the intermediate outcomes that lead to end goals. Logic models are also useful to incorporate context and meaning into the development of planning elements by surfacing assumptions, root causes, and potential barriers to proposed strategies, outcomes, and objectives.

- **Inputs**
 - the resources you put into your program/service/event such as people, time, and money.
- **Outputs**
 - the activities, strategies, services, events, and products that reach people.
- **Outcomes**
 - the results or effects of our work; the benefits from the outputs such as changes in knowledge, skill, behavior, capacity, efficiency, conditions, etc.
- **Impact**
 - term, broad, intended outcome of your effort.

Goal Area: <input style="width: 95%; border: none;" type="text"/>	Logic Model Date: <input style="width: 95%; border: none;" type="text"/>
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ASSUMPTIONS (root cause analyses, prior learning/experience)

Enter **a few key pieces of information** that lead you to believe that the activities and interventions planned are the right ones. Be aware that your assumptions can change as new information is acquired through learning and quality improvement, so don't be afraid to revise these as you go.

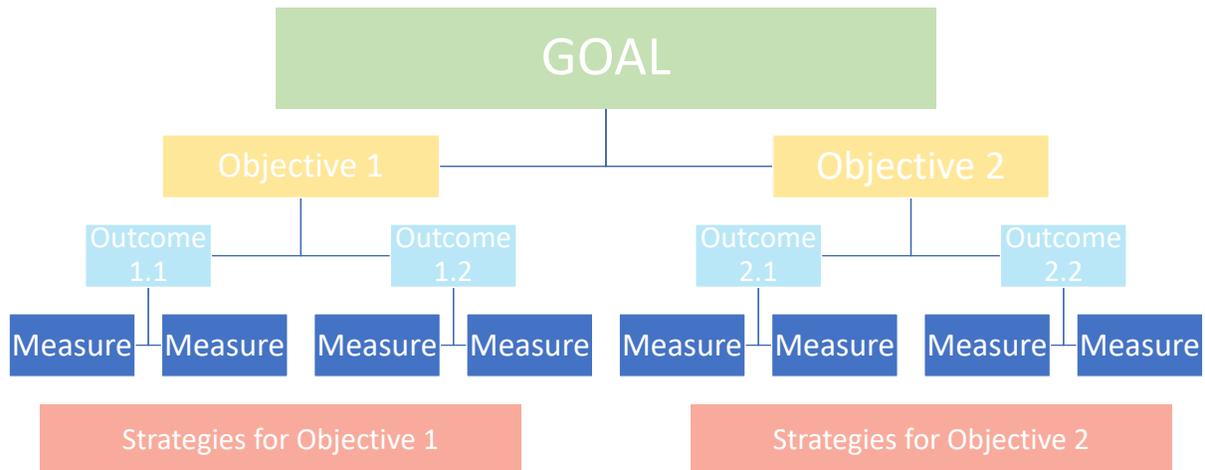
EXTERNAL FACTORS (barriers/facilitators)

Consider the context of the work, such as the local history, culture, and environment (both political and natural). Develop a **short list of relevant barriers and facilitators**. Some of them you might consider to be unpredictable or beyond your control, but others might later be amenable to change and should be kept under watch.

This material was adapted from Telligon, the Quality Innovation Network National Coordinating Center under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Deliverables for Strategic Planning Work Groups

Each strategic planning work group will draft a goal statement, 2-3 objectives, 2-3 outcomes per objective, 2-3 measures per outcome, and 3-5 key strategies per objective.



The above figure is an example using only two objectives. Managing more than 3 objectives and multiple outcomes can get unwieldy. This is why the process of prioritization is key.

Review: examine existing data and evidence from existing sources and previous cycles.

Generate: brainstorm content for deliverables according to a framework that provides appropriate coverage across deliverables.

Curate: prioritize deliverables to a manageable list that meaningfully captures what is articulated in the goal statement.

Evaluate: consider the quality and significance of what was brainstormed using quality assurance criteria.

At the point when work groups are at the prioritization and curation step, a template reflecting the structure above will be provided to capture the deliverables for the goal areas.

Quality Assurance Checklist for Outcomes, Measures, Objectives, and Strategies

In an effort to build collective capacity in the strategic thinking that informs the components of the strategic plan, a quality assurance process is presented that can support work groups. These checklists can be helpful in the curation and refinement of the work group deliverables.

An **Outcome** is the change, effect, or result attributes to a program, policy, project, product, service, or process.

Criteria to Evaluate OUTCOMES	Yes	Sort of	No
Alignment: Does the outcome map onto larger departmental, divisional, or institutional goals?			
Importance: Does the outcome represent an important change valued by a diverse set of stakeholders?			
Realistic: Is the outcome achievable given resources, context, timeframe, and needs of stakeholders?			
Potential for negative effects considered: has there been discussion of any possible unintended consequences for stakeholders?			
Results Oriented: is the outcome focused on intended impact?			
Measurable with multiple measures: do measures, data, or indicators already exist for this outcome? Do any need to be developed?			
Value forward: does the outcome have potential to lift marginalized voices and inform inclusive decision making?			

A **Measure** is evidence or data that provide an understanding of the intended effect of the effort around an outcome, objective, or goal. Measures are used in combination to understand a phenomenon of interest.

Criteria to Evaluate Outcome MEASURES	Yes	Sort of	No
Are multiple measures used to assess outcome achievement, including qualitative and quantitative measures?			
Are these measures meaningful ? Do the set of measures tell you how the work is affecting target/constituent groups of people and/or processes?			
Are they manageable ? Are they something you can conceivably generate or obtain?			
With this set of measures, do you have enough information to learn from unexpected results (positive or negative)?			
Are the instruments (surveys, rubrics, measure) designed in an inclusive, culturally responsive, and accessible way?			

An **Objective** is a specific description of intended achievements, typically phrased as pre-set targets or operationalized goals (specific and measurable)

Criteria to Evaluate OBJECTIVES	Yes	Sort of	No
Achievable: Can it be realistically accomplished given current resources and constraints?			
Relevant: Does it align with broader goals? Does it accurately address the scope of the problem or issue?			
Specific target: Does the objective describe the “Who” (target populations and persons performing the activity) and “What” (action/activity)?			
Measurable progress: Does the objective convey how much change is expected?			
Time-phased: Does the objective have a timeline indicating when it will be met?			
Clarity: Is the objective clearly written in plain language?			
Evidence Based: Is there a clear rationale for the targets (based on evidence)?			

The standard ingredients for an objective are [**verb noting direction of change**] + [**area of change**] + [**target population**] + [**degree of change**] + [**time frame**]

Direction of change: *to reduce*
Area of change: *unemployment status*
Target population: *graduating students*
Degree of change: *75% gain full-time employment*
Time frame: *within six months of graduation*

- All Objectives do not require targets.
- Consider the flipside of specified targets: can the objective be met, but still be true that *we’re not doing a good job in that area*? Or could the target not be met, but other evidence exists that we are doing a good job in that area?
- Collective consideration of this complexity is what keeps the why and what of measurement and tracking before the how.

A **Strategy** is an activity or output aimed toward accomplishing or contributing a goal/objective/outcome.

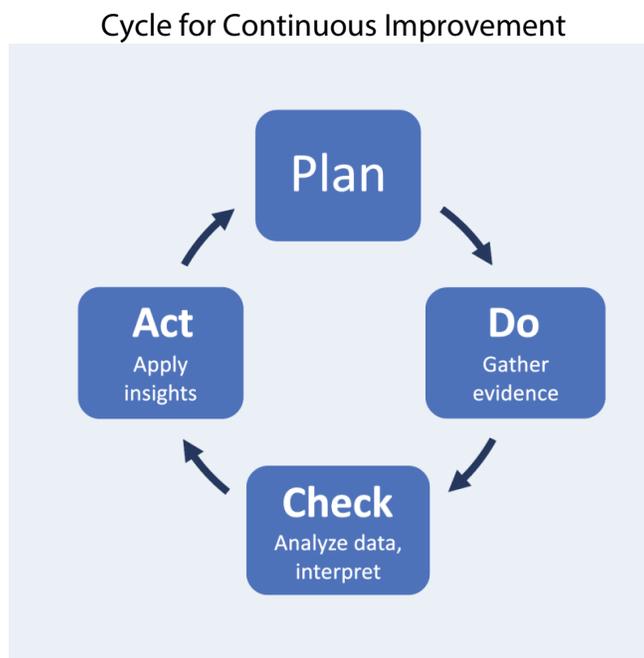
Criteria to Evaluate STRATEGIES	Yes	Sort of	No
Value – Will the strategy contribute to meeting agreed-upon goals?			
Appropriateness – Is the strategy consistent with the organization's mission, values, and operating principles?			
Feasibility – Is the strategy practical, given personnel and financial resources and capacity?			
Acceptability – Is the strategy acceptable to the key stakeholders?			
Cost-benefit – Is the strategy likely to lead to sufficient benefits to justify the costs in time and other resources?			
Timing – Can and should the organization implement this strategy at this time, given external factors and competing demands?			

University Strategic Plan 2023-2028 Outcomes Assessment: Standard Operating Procedures for Evidence-Based Continuous Improvement

Assessment is a process for learning. By both articulating the ways in which we aim to enrich students’ learning experiences and increase efficiencies across campus in support of student success and by regularly examining evidence surrounding those aims, the university can learn about its level of success and where there is need for revision of existing strategies to fulfill its aims. Importantly, assessment is also a mechanism for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion. For this to be realized, the evidence gathered to assess the university’s success needs to include a full range of voices from students, faculty and staff in our Campus Community. Further, the processes of interpreting the data, articulating lessons learned, and subsequently formulating plans for increased gains also need to involve the varying perspectives of our Campus Community members, particularly those directed affected by the initiatives and aims.

Toward these ends, this document defines CSUSB’s strategic plan 2023-2028 assessment cycle and processes, consistent with the *University Strategic Plan 2020-2022 Expansion Standard Operating Procedures*. Specifically, it exhibits the four phases of assessment, Plan, Do, Check

and Act, mapped onto the academic calendar as systematic and sustainable assessment processes leading to ongoing improvement. It also presents procedures for the collective review of assessment evidence, interpretation and learning, and application of insights for iterative improvement.



Phase 1: PLAN

Specify desired outcomes, evidence, and data in this phase. Existent contextual data or analysis and recommendations from previous CHECK and ACT phases inform the PLAN phase of the assessment cycle.

Upon the establishment of objectives, strategies, outcomes, and outcome measures for each of the four goals of the University Strategic Plan 2023-2028, the Goal Work Groups shall identify two groups to implement the assessment plan.

- 1) A set of individuals or offices that will be involved in the generation and acquisition of data and evidence and in performing preliminary analyses of the evidence to contribute to the assessment of the strategic plan outcomes.
- 2) A diverse set of Guiding Stakeholders (some of whom may be the same individuals), including students, whose role for a two-year period will be to interpret the evidence, make sense of the data findings, and create an action plan to apply the findings to the next cycle of the plan. At the end of their service period, the Guiding Stakeholder Groups will identify successors as needed to continue the work in subsequent years.

In addition, a responsible convener designated for each goal area will oversee the Guiding Stakeholder Groups through the assessment cycle phases for the duration of the plan.

Phase 2: DO, Data Collection

Evidence and data stemming from the outcome measures will be generated and collected across the fall and spring semesters of the academic year. Periodic reporting may take place during this phase to contribute to assessment in the CHECK and ACT phases.

Formative Intra-Cycle Reporting

- Reporting is completed by, but not limited to, the Guiding Stakeholder Groups specified in the PLAN phase to contribute evidence to understand outcomes for specific objectives. The schedule for Intra-Cycle Reporting for each objective is TBD by the responsible convener.
 - Changes and updates on resources, strategies, indicators, and/or evidence collected to date around outcomes
 - Templates will be available in CampusLabs/Anthology Planning for *updates/summaries of outputs and evidence*

Phase 3: CHECK, Evidence Interpretation & Learning

Data analysis: Formal analysis of the gathered outcome measures data takes place after the DO phase during the summer and may extend into the early fall of the following academic year.

Review and discussion of the findings from multiple measures: The responsible conveners will draw together the Guiding Stakeholder Groups to discuss and interpret the gathered outcome evidence that informs their objectives. Synthesis of the multiple measures and sets of findings to understand how well the university is doing in achieving the desired outcomes will take place in the summer. Groups will enter a final summary of their interpretation and learning into CampusLabs/Anthology Planning, including effects of adaptations made in the prior year.

Phase 4: ACT, Action Planning for Improvement:

The Guiding Stakeholder Groups will reflect on the findings and their learning from the CHECK phase. Analysis and interpretation of evidence will be shared in the Fall term to brainstorm recommendations from a broader range of stakeholders to inform options for iterative improvement for each objective. The Guiding Stakeholder Groups will review recommendations to identify steps that can be taken to improve outcomes and create an action plan to apply lessons learned to modify strategies and approaches for greater effectiveness in the following year of the strategic plan and assessment cycle.

Summative End-of-Cycle Reporting

Annual Assessment Reporting Schedule

Annual reporting is completed by the Guiding Stakeholder Groups specified in the PLAN phase.

- Summary of analysis and interpretation around outcomes from the CHECK phase and summary of recommendations for closing-the-loop in the ACT phase.
 - Report of outcomes assessment (summary of interpretations and learning) due no later than the end of term, Fall.
 - Report action plan for iterative improvement due no later than the end of term, Fall.

- Templates will be available in CampusLabs/Anthology Planning for *outcomes assessment* reporting.

The final summaries and plans will be available to the President's Office and Chief of Staff through the Anthology Assessment Management System for review by the President and the President's Cabinet.

Selected Readings

[Ahmed, S. \(2016\). 6. BRICK WALLS. In *Living a Feminist Life* \(pp. 135-160\). Duke University Press.](#)

[Bresciani, M. J. \(2010\). Data-driven planning: Using assessment in strategic planning. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2010\(132\), 39-50.](#)

[Champlain College Competency for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a tool for self-reflection upon entering collaborative work.](#)

[Chance, S., & Williams, B. T. \(2009\). Assessing university strategic plans: A tool for consideration. *Educational Planning*, 18\(1\), 38-54.](#)

[Hinton, K. E. \(2012\). *A practical guide to strategic planning in higher education* \(Vol. 7\). Ann Arbor, MI: Society for College and University Planning.](#)