

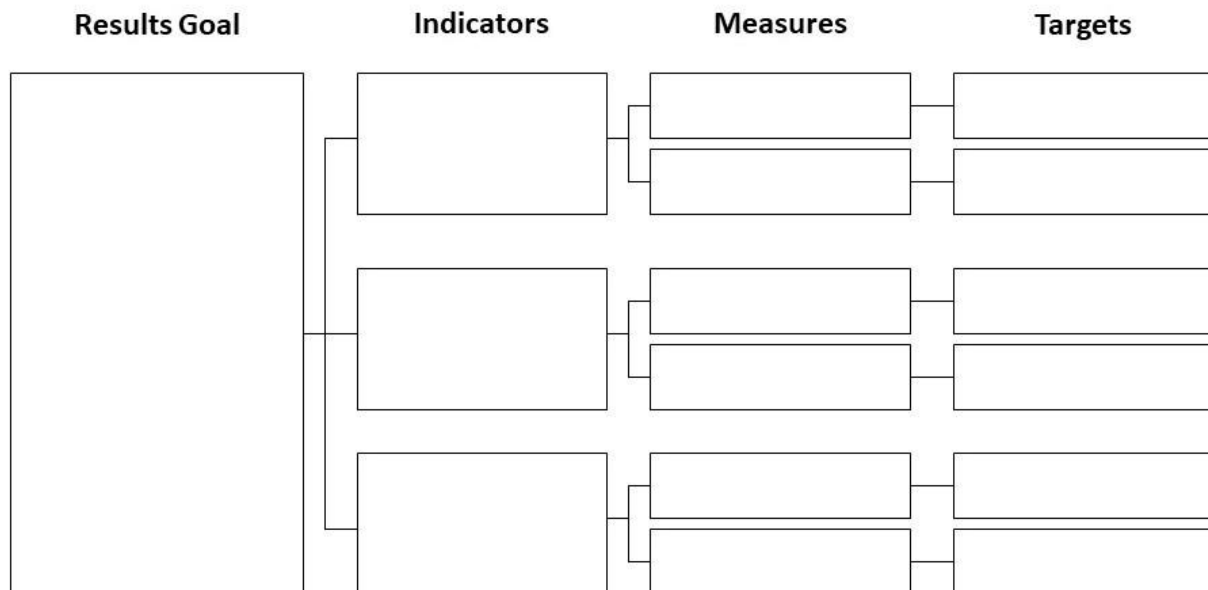
Planning Tools

Planning tools assist teams in mapping out future work. Paying attention to how plans will work out in practice is an important part of team learning and helps future activities go more smoothly. Some of the simplest planning tools are flowcharts. They help you plan the basic steps in a project or process.

The additional tools in this section add other dimensions to your planning:

- **Tree diagrams** help you imagineer – think ahead to what a plan needs to look like, beginning with the end in mind, then working backwards from the end of the project or activity. They can be used to think through the hierarchy from goals to strategies to tactics.
- **Responsibility matrices** help take the guesswork out of processes, identifying who will do what and in what sequence.
- **Gantt charts** can help teams add the details of time and sequence, and get a visual picture of how the work can or could overlap to be done most efficiently.

Tree Diagram



SMART Goal Tree Diagram

What It Is

A tool that helps make goals SMART: strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, time-bound.

Use It When

You want to align efforts toward a specific goal

Application

When planning SMART goals at the district, school, classroom, and student levels

How to Do It

1. Determine an area to focus on for improvement. This focus area should be based on a careful analysis of relevant achievement, demographic, and/or climate data. Consider not only this year's data, but also data over time.
2. Write a results goal in the left-hand box of the tree diagram. When writing a SMART goal at the school level, consider the most important measure(s) you analyze each year. Chances are these measures are state or national achievement tests and/or key climate measures such as parent, staff, or student satisfaction surveys.
3. In the first set of boxes to the right of the goal, identify the indicators that you and the students need to focus on to achieve the SMART goal.
 - Indicators are the standards, benchmarks, objectives, or skill sets that you would look for as evidence of progress on the SMART goal.
 - Ideally, indicators are derived from a careful analysis of test and other assessment data. At the school level, they should be derived from student data over time; at the classroom level, teachers will want to look at *this year's* students. Indicators are the key gap areas that are most in need of improvement. Consider using Pareto thinking to narrow your list down to the vital few indicators.
4. For each indicator, identify measures that will be used to assess progress on that indicator.
 - Measures are tools or assessments (for example, tests, portfolios, performance assessments, surveys, and observational tools).

- Measures should include standardized and district-, school-, or classroom-developed tools.
 - Measures should be agreed upon by faculty members. They should include summative (end of year) as well as formative (ongoing and/or periodic) tools.
 - Consider using components of tests that focus only on the identified indicators as you monitor student progress during the year.
 - Validity and reliability issues need to be taken into account when designing new measures, as well as when aligning existing measures to the goal. Are they aligned? Will they yield reliable results?
5. Identify targets for each measure that are attainable within a given time frame and given your resources and knowledge. These should also be based on a careful analysis of existing data, both snapshot and over time.
- Careful consideration of targets is important to success and to teachers' and students' motivation to work toward the target. For example, a target of 100% of students being proficient on a certain measure when only 25% are currently proficient may demoralize people before they start.
 - Targets should be selected by the teachers who will be working on them; however, the amount of stretch people are willing to commit to should be balanced against the need to achieve school and state expectations. Most importantly, if the target selected is a stretch, resources (time, professional development, etc.) must be made available to support achievement of that target.
 - Criteria for accomplishing or making progress on the targets need to be carefully considered as well. Is a target defining a certain percent or number of students achieving a specific level or is it identifying the desired growth rate for students? Both level and rate should be considered.
 - Targets are what will be monitored throughout the year to evaluate progress on the overall SMART goal.

Tips

- Enlarge the tree diagram and post it on a wall so that everyone can construct the plan together.
- Don't worry that every single box must be filled in for the tool to be done correctly; it is simply a way to organize ideas. Conversely, if there are more ideas than there is space on the diagram, feel free to add more space to the diagram.

Responsibility Matrix

Process	Decision Maker	Process Owner	Back-up	Involved Stakeholders
Word processing/ computer documentation support	Nick P.	Nick P.	Katie W.	Carl D./ Computer Committee
Coordinate committee meetings (memos, materials, schedule, etc.)	Keisha S.	Phil H.		Giselle S.
Process grant applications	Faculty/ Keisha S.	Phil H.		Giselle S.
Coordinate faculty leave	Faculty/ Keisha S.	Nick P. Phil H.	Marko A. Carl D. Julie C.	Phil H. Susan B. Giselle S.

Responsibility Matrix for Faculty and Staff Support Processes

What It Is

A matrix showing which individuals or groups have what type of responsibility related to core processes in your school

Use It When

You want to clarify roles and responsibilities for carrying out tasks and functions in a department, division, work unit, or other type of organizational unit

How to Do It

1. Determine the core processes for the unit. Record these vertically down the left side of the matrix.
2. For each core process, write in four types of names:
 - The decision maker
 - The process owner
 - People who serve as back-up
 - People involved as stakeholders

Role Definitions

Decision maker: The person who makes the decisions about operating or changing the entire process. The decision maker determines priorities and the scope of responsibilities for the process manager (sometimes they are the same person).

Process owner: The person responsible for doing the task on a regular basis. The process owner answers questions about what to do regarding a specific process or task.

Back-up: the person who operates the process when the process manager is away.

Involved Stakeholders: Includes people who give input to the process, use the service or products, or are otherwise affected by the process and its results. These are the people who should be involved if the process is changed.

Gantt Chart

Week								
Tasks	5/7	5/14	5/21	5/28	6/4	6/11	6/18	6/25
Conduct primary language arts assessment								
Conduct primary math assessment								
Analyze results								
Data retreat: set goals								
Create staff development plan								

Gantt Chart for Curriculum Improvement Project

What It Is

A scheduling tool for action planning that depicts relative timing of process steps

Use It When

You need to be able to judge the timing of action steps

Applications

- To schedule the steps needed to carry out an action plan
- After identifying action steps (e.g., after you've created a top-down flowchart)

How to Do It

1. Either brainstorm the steps needed to carry out the action plan or use the steps already outlined in a top-down flowchart.
2. Arrange the steps (tasks) down the left side of a grid.
3. Across the top, write in appropriate time intervals (days, weeks, or months) over which the plan will be implemented.
4. Estimate how long each step or group of steps will take.
5. Determine starting dates for each step (paying attention to what needs to be completed before you start any given step).
6. For each step, color the block or blocks that goes from the starting date for that step and extends for the expected duration.
7. Review the chart to identify potential conflicts in timing, resource needs, etc. Adjust the schedules as needed.

Modifications

- You can create the simplest form of a Gantt chart easily by hand, but it makes it harder to see timing relationships between steps. You can also design and insert a simple table.
- Project-planning software programs often use Gantt charts, and they let you identify the timing relationship between each pair of steps. (For example, does one step have to finish before another can be completed? Or are the two steps independent – their timing does not depend on each other?) The downside of

using software is that setting up the chart can take a lot of time if there are many tasks, many people, or intricate relationships between steps.

Tip

Consider scheduling parallel tasks whenever possible.

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