

**“TEAM- Together Everyone Achieves More”**

**Strategic Planning Retreat Toolkit**

**Administration for Community Living**

**Office of Performance and Evaluation (OPE)**

**2020**



**Strategic Planning Retreat Toolkit**

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# Strategic Planning Retreat Toolkit

### Section 1.0 Introduction

Strategic planning provides a sense of direction and outlines measurable goals. Strategic planning is a tool for guiding day-to-day decisions and for evaluating progress and changing approaches when moving forward. It leads organizations to be proactive rather than reactive by allowing organizations to foresee their future and prepare accordingly. These actions increase operational efficiency and the value of the organization.

In 2018, the Office of Performance and Evaluation (OPE) within the Administration for Community Living (ACL) completed a series of planning sessions resulting in the development of a strategic plan that articulates the goals, objectives, and activities OPE will undertake in support of ACL. This Strategic Planning toolkit is designed to support other ACL centers and offices with developing a strategic plan or framework.

* 1. Benefits of Using the Toolkit

Completing the strategic planning process, as outlined in this toolkit, will yield the following results:

* + - An increased collaboration within the organization through team building activities,
    - A common understanding and articulation of current and future strategic directions of the organization,
    - The development of key elements of a strategic plan, and
    - A better understanding and communication of staff roles and how individual work contributes to organizational success.
  1. Customizing the Toolkit

This toolkit provides a guide to help centers, offices, and programs develop a strategic plan using a comprehensive approach that may be more than a center, office, or program needs or can take on at one time. Some centers, offices, and programs may benefit from completing all sessions, but other may customize sessions to meet their needs.

### Section 2.0 Getting Started

Before convening staff to participate in planning sessions, several activities will help make the process efficient and effective. Preparation for the strategic planning retreat will take approximately three to four weeks to customize the process to meet your needs, gather reference materials, and ensure participants can set aside time to meet. The preparation process is described below.

* 1. Ensuring Staff Readiness

Before beginning any group planning activity, assess the receptivity of the team to the process and to take steps to ensure the group is ready to engage. This will identify individuals for the planning roles and mitigate any possibility for individuals to undermine the activity.

Ensuring staff readiness starts by sharing the goals and objectives for the strategic planning process. This may begin with an announcement at a staff meeting, an email to all staff, or both. Articulate what is to be gained from this process so the team can understand the expected result and how it benefits the centers, offices, programs and individuals. The goals and objectives of strategic planning vary but generally include the following:

* + - Provides a road map to where the center, office, or program is going and how to get there.
    - Supports decision making at all levels to ensure the center, office, or program achieves its mission and vision.
    - Provides awareness of the changing environment as a foundation for needed change.
    - Analyzes the internal center, office, or program culture and evaluates its impact on organizational performance.
    - Increases awareness of the center, office, or program potential considering its strengths and weaknesses.
    - Identifies and analyzes available opportunities and potential threats.
    - Raises strategic issues for top management review.
    - Helps the center, office, or program set realistic objectives that are demanding, yet attainable.
    - Develops better communication with internal and external stakeholders.
    - Improves internal coordination of activities.
    - Develops a frame of reference for budgets and short-range operating plans.
    - Gains a sense of security among staff that stems from an understanding of the changing environment and the center, office, or program ability to adapt.
    - Increases job satisfaction through meaningful and purposeful discussions that allow staff to contribute to innovations and connect to the mission and vision.

Providing an opportunity for staff to ask questions and voice concerns about the process in advance is important. If you know one staff member tends to dominate conversations, consider how to ensure all will be able to present their thoughts during the sessions. As necessary, have one-on-one conversations with individuals to gather their perspective on the strategic planning process, address questions, and ensure everyone understands their role. Stress the importance of communication without retribution that will ensure open dialogue, stimulate innovation, and give value and purpose to everyone throughout the process.

* 1. Identify Key Roles and Participants

To help make the strategic planning process run smoothly, consider the following four responsibilities: planning, facilitating, participating, and documenting. Thinking about each responsibility and the roles of selected staff in supporting these responsibilities will enhance the planning experience.

* + 1. *Planning*

Who are the key individuals to help plan the sessions and activities? Are there any approvals required for the session agendas and process? Typically, one to two individuals will be responsible for planning the strategic planning process. This person(s) will work closely with the Center, Office, or Program Director to understand the Director’s goals and objectives for the strategic plan, the time available for the team to complete the planning, and other parameters to guide planning for the sessions.

* + 1. *Facilitating*

For the best results, designate a facilitator to keep discussions on track and encourage participation. A facilitator may be available through contractor support or from another center or office within ACL. The key is for the facilitator to remain neutral and elicit input from all participants in addition to re-directing discussions as necessary. In addition to strong communication skills, facilitators can encourage open communication, active listening, building a rapport, structure and record facts and feelings, develop synergy, and use multiple, effective techniques of questioning.

**Key Roles o Assign:**

* Planner
* Facilitator
* Participant
* Documenter
  + 1. *Participants*

Identifying the necessary participants for the strategic planning session is critical. Occasionally, individuals may be inclined toward having a small group of select management, the planning process can be much more fruitful with an inclusive approach. By expanding to the entire center, office, or program and key personnel who represent all levels, the process yields a greater perspective as well as builds a consensus and buy-in to support the implementation of the plan.

* + 1. *Documenting*

Being able to capture discussions and final input ensures the plan is reflective of the collective thinking of the center, office, or program. Those planning the session should assign notetakers who will be responsible for capturing results. These should not be people who will be actively participating as that may impact the accuracy of the notetaking or the ability to fully participate. Two note-takers can increase effectiveness, providing a greater likelihood of capturing all the input accurately. If all participants agree, the center, office, or program may opt to record the sessions in place of, or in addition to, taking notes, although recording discussions can sometimes stifle the full participation and free-flowing discussion desired.

**Hint for Customizing:**

In addition to scaling sessions to meet your needs, consider breaking the five sessions into a greater number of shorter sessions to accommodate availability and schedules.

* 1. Scheduling

Each session runs approximately 2 ½ hours over a period of four days for continuity and to build on the evolving group dynamic that is conducive for participation. Choose a schedule that accommodates participants’ schedules with the caveat that the session should not span more than one week. Crossing over weeks can disrupt the flow of discussions and progress achieved. When scheduling, consider where the meetings will take place. Hosting meetings off-site can be more conducive to open discussion, reduce distractions and interruptions, and allow participants to focus on the task at hand.

* 1. Room Layout and Materials

The room layout should be designed to enhance collaboration and promote equality of ideas. Generally, this is a round table with comfortable chairs and enough room between seats to allow for comfort. Space in the room should accommodate the participant table, facilitator and any audio-visual equipment required, and provide ample space for icebreaker activities, teambuilding activities, or participants to move as needed during sessions.

Recommended equipment includes a laptop, screen, and projector to allow the facilitator to present the agenda, slide decks, materials, and other visual cues to convey activities and maintain focus. Depending on the size of the group and the room, microphone(s), in enough numbers to accommodate the facilitator and all participants, may be required. As with all meetings, the planner should ask participants if they need accommodations.

Planners should provide poster-sized “post-it” notes, dry erase boards, masking tape, easels, different colored markers, colored sticky notes or dots, notepads, and pens to capture input. Facilitators will often take pictures of information added to whiteboards or on other materials. Notetakers are advised and will need laptops and a space to sit where they can hear all the proceedings. If the center, office, or program opts to record the session, a digital recorder will be needed.

In-person sessions enable the facilitator to read non-verbal cues, facilitate open conversation, and support full participation. While in-person sessions are preferred, if staff are participating remotely, consider audio-visual supports. This might include a teleconference line, videoconferencing, and/or webinar platform to keep participants engaged. Individuals should be discouraged from having side conversations during all sessions with one person speaking at a time, this is particularly important when individuals participating remotely. The facilitator should also ensure they are recognizing remote staff and asking for their contributions. During small group breakouts, check in with individuals participating remotely.

### Section 3.0 Methods

This section provides a brief introduction to common methods and tools used to engage participants and capture input. Additional information is available in the appendices or on websites noted.

* 1. Ground Rules

Collaborative rulemaking during a group activity is a way to obtain buy-in for the process and establish standards for participation and constructive debate. When introducing the need for ground rules and the need for the participants to contribute to their development, presenting a few examples encourages participants to contribute and can diminish deference to rank among the strategic planning participants. Frequently, facilitators will post the ground rules in a visible location in the room and reference them throughout the sessions as a reminder for participants.

* 1. Icebreakers

An icebreaker is a facilitation exercise that can help members of a group see themselves as a collaborative team and focus them on a series of tasks that require vulnerability and personal and professional sharing. Consider an icebreaker at the opening and closing of each session to enhance team building and prepare participants for the next sessions. Icebreaker recommendations are provided for each session.

* 1. Brainstorming

Brainstorming offers an informal approach that encourages people to come up with thoughts and ideas that can be crafted into original, creative solutions and spark more ideas. Brainstorming helps to get people unstuck by jolting them out of their normal ways of thinking. The key to successful brainstorming is to create an environment that avoids judgment or criticism. All ideas are good and there is no analysis until brainstorming is complete. Group behavior can often impact participation and stifle innovation.

There are several techniques the facilitator can use to create the best environment for brainstorming, such as brainstorming for questions; brain writing, rapid ideation, round-robin, star bursting, and step laddering. Working with the facilitator, the planner can determine the best style to use for each exercise based on the center, office or program group dynamic.

* 1. Refining the Group Thinking

Once the brainstorming is complete, review the ideas and thoughts generated and explore solutions that the group concurs will be meaningful. This review can occur through various methods, including facilitated discussions, a show of hands for ideas that resonate, or by giving participants a select number (3-5) of colored stickies that they can place next to those ideas or thoughts that seem most relevant. This can also be accomplished with the annotate feature in many virtual meeting platforms. Regardless of the method used, the discussion focuses on highlighting thoughts that merit further development for the group to stand behind.

Finalizing

The final step in the process is finalizing the language. The group discusses the selected themes or ideas and the best way to articulate each point. Word selection is important to ensure meaningfulness in all contexts as required. Words selected should not have multiple meanings and they should resonate with the intended audiences. This includes the use of plain language and clear terminology. The government offers [guidelines for the Plain Writing Act of 2010](https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/). These guidelines help you write clearly, so your audience can: find what they need, understand what they find, and use what they find to meet their needs.

### Section 4.0 Approach

Using the approach outlined in this toolkit helps the ACL center, office, or program answer these important questions:

* + - Who are you as a center, office, or program?

**Key Takeaways:**

* The approach in this toolkit offers a framework for developing content and team building.
* The approach is easily customized to accommodate unique needs of each ACL center, office, and program.
  + - What does your center, office, or program do?
    - What has your center, office, or program accomplished?
    - Who does your center, office, or program serve?
    - Where is your center or office going as a center, office, or program?
    - How do anticipate your center, office, or program will get there?
    - How does the work of your center, office, or program align with ACL’s mission and priorities?

4.1 Overview of Five Strategic Planning Sessions

The following graphic presents the five sessions of this toolkit. Each session builds on the results of previous sessions to create a strategic plan that is comprehensive and supportive of the larger ACL mission, goals and objectives. A draft facilitator’s guide for each session is included. The guide includes the purpose and objectives of each session, an agenda, icebreakers for team building, and exercises to develop key components that inform the strategic plan. These sessions can be customized to meet the needs of the center or office.



Section 5.0 Writing the Strategic Plan

The outputs developed during the strategic planning sessions provide the inputs for writing a Strategic Plan. Each center or office will determine the level of detail necessary in the resulting Strategic Plan. For some, this may be more of a framework that will guide decision making at all levels within the organization. For others, there may be a need for a more formal document that articulates and presents the center or office strategy for moving forward. The level of formality reflects the needs of the center or office as well as the need for review, approval, or coordination within ACL. The following sections describe a process for preparing the strategic plan that can be adapted to meet individual center or office needs.

* 1. Prepare the Strategic Plan Outline

Developing a comprehensive outline for the Strategic Plan assists in determining whether necessary components are included and presented in a logical progression. Reviewing approved strategic plans by other groups will assist the participants in identifying key components for inclusion and a format acceptable to senior leadership.

* 1. Prepare the Introduction to the Strategic Plan

The introduction to the strategic plan should highlight the history of the center or office, and how it serves the larger mission of ACL. Background information, such as previously vetted historical information about ACL and the center, office, or program, should be reviewed, adapted, and updated as necessary for the introduction.

The introduction should answer the following questions:

* + - What does the center, office, or program do, and how does it align with the global mission and goals of ACL and HHS?
    - Is there “boilerplate” material from previously developed strategic plans, budget justifications, or documents that can be adapted or serve as a component for the strategic plan?
    - What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)?
  1. Draft the Strategic Plan

Participants will have spent the five strategic planning sessions, developing draft mission statements, vision statement, core values, organizational priorities, goals, and objectives. These materials should be refined internally, and information from the SWOT analysis should be used to describe how they align with the strengths of the center, office, or program, mitigate weaknesses, and are appropriate within the operational context of ACL.

* 1. How Stakeholders Benefit from the Strategic Plan

ACL serves the interests of people with disabilities, older adults, and other stakeholders. The strategic plan should describe how the goals, objectives, and actions listed benefit these populations. This section might also include a discussion of the role of stakeholders in the implementation of the strategic plan and the resources and activities to enhance the likelihood of successful execution of the strategic plan.

Multiple reviewers, both within and outside of the strategic planning team, should review the draft strategic plan for comprehensiveness and clarity. This might include circulating drafts among all or select participants from the planning sessions. Refinement of content occurs once this feedback is received. A professional copy editor should edit the document before submission to center, office, or program leadership and staff.

* 1. Submit to Center, Office, and Program Leadership for Review and Approval

Center, office, or program leadership, by nature of their role, may have a more nuanced understanding of upcoming ACL priorities and requirements. Their review and critique of the draft strategic plan are essential to incorporating this information into the plan and increasing the likelihood of acceptance by ACL senior leadership. This review can also ensure acceptance and support during implementation of the plan.

* 1. Submit for Organizational Review and Approval

If this resulting plan is considered a formal document, it may require review and approval within the organization. If that is the case, the Strategic Plan will be submitted to ACL senior leadership, once center, office, or program leadership edits have been completed. This step may be eliminated in situations where the resulting strategic plan serves as a framework for center, office, or program staff and further approval is not necessary.

# Session 1 – Introductions and Environment

**Purpose**: This session sets the stage for future planning sessions by presenting the purpose of strategic planning activities, defining the center, office, or program purpose within ACL, and identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The group and individual exercises open communication within the group and help individuals determine how they can best support the center, office, or program.

**Objectives**:

* Review center, office, or program mission statement, vision statement, and core values
* Conduct SWOT Analysis Findings
* Perform Individual Assessment

Introductions and Setting Expectations

Introduction of participants (30-40 minutes)

Rollcall: Name and professional role

The goal of the first icebreaker should be to begin forming a team among the strategic planning activity participants. “2 Truths and a Lie” is an icebreaker designed to begin a conversation between the participants and help them to get to know each other.

**2 Truths and a Lie**

*Instructional Prompt: Tell the group that each person will introduce themselves by stating two truths and one lie. They don’t have to be intimate, life-revealing things, just simple hobbies, interests, or past experiences that make each person unique. The lie can be outrageous, wacky, or sound like a truth and the rest of the participants have to guess which statement is a lie.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Example Strategic Planning Agenda: Session 1** | | |
| 8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. | Overview | Reader |
| 8:40 a.m. – 8:55 a.m. | Icebreaker | Team |
| 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | State of our center, office, or program  Vision, Goals, and Priorities | Facilitator |
| 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. | Who We Are  Developing our Mission, Vision, and Core Values | Facilitator |
| 10:15 a.m. – 10::25 a.m. | Break | Facilitator |
| 10:25 a.m. – 11:10 a.m. | SWOT Analysis | Facilitator |
| 11:10 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | Individual Assessment | Team |
| 11:45 a.m. – 11:55 a.m. | Break |  |
| 12:00 p.m. – 12:15 p.m. | Group Activity |  |
| 12:15 p.m. | Closing/Adjourn |  |

Ground rules (5-10 minutes)

The facilitator leads a discussion focusing on collaborative rulemaking during participation in the strategic planning activities. As a starting point, the facilitator lists two key ground rules:

* + 1. Everyone participates; everyone is “present.”
    2. All ideas and statements have value – this is a judgment-free zone.

The Facilitator asks participants to suggest additional ground rules by asking, “What additional ground rules should we, as a group, consider to help reach our goals?” Following the discussion, the facilitator should work with the group to document a finalize list. The ground rules should be posted for reference during the planning session. This list should also be reviewed periodically throughout the strategic planning process as a reminder for participants.

Why are we here? What is a strategic plan, and why should we develop one?

Before beginning the strategic planning activities, it is important to “set the stage” and introduce the questions that will guide the development of the plan. These questions are meant to be reflective and focus broadly on the topics of “who we are,” “what have we done,” and “what would we like to do.” The answers to these questions will inform our planning but it is also important to consider how the center, office, or program supports the ACL.

Review our mission, vision, and guiding pillars (10 minutes)

Each ACL center, office, or program provides a specific focus in support of ACL’s overall mission and strategic plan. Consider the broader mission so each center, office, or program’s strategic plan aligns with ACL’s mission. The [mission and vision for ACL](https://acl.gov/about-acl) can be used as a handout for this discussion.

How does the center, office, or program fit within the larger ACL organizational structure?

Understanding where the center or office fits within the broad ACL mission and strategic plan provides insight for the planning process. Understanding includes noting the reporting chain as well as relationships to other centers, offices, or programs. These organizational relationships influence not only activities of the center, office, or program but also help identify threats or opportunities in the next exercise. The [ACL organization chart](https://acl.gov/about-acl/organization/organizational-chart) can be used as a handout for this discussion.

Developing/identifying your mission, vision, core values and priorities

Though definitions vary, mission statements can be used to describe an organization’s purpose, or “reason for being.” They capture the essence of who an organization is, what it does, and for whom. Mission statements guide everyday activities and decisions and serve as the primary standard against which the center, office, or program evaluates plans and programs. Vision statements answer the questions of “where are we going” and “what can be achieved.” They are the roadmap that drives, inspires, and motivates those affiliated with the center, office, or program since they communicate the real purpose for going to work every day…how the world can be different because of the center, office, or program. Mission statements and vision statements are informed by the core values of the center, office, or program, the principles and ideas that bind together its stakeholders, and the ethical context and standards that inform its actions and decisions.

The mission statement and vision statement guide development of strategies, goals, and objectives. During this session we will focus on “Who we are” and “What we value” as individuals within the center, office, or program and begin to explore your center, office, or program characteristics. Later sessions will explore the strategies, goals, and objectives that focus on “what we want to become,” “how we will achieve our vision,” and “how we gauge our degree of success**.**

Large Group Exercise: SWOT Analysis (40-50 minutes)

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis highlights strengths and weaknesses and places them within a broader context of opportunities and threats. Strengths are aspects or characteristics of the business or project teams that give it an advantage over others – what the organization does well. Weaknesses are aspects or characteristics that place the center, office, or program at a disadvantage relative to others – areas that might require improvement.

Opportunities are internal and external prospects that can improve a center, office, or program’s performance – where the center, office, or program may be able to explore growth or provide a valuable contribution to ACL and other stakeholders. Threats are internal and external influencing factors in the environment that could negatively impact the function or project.

The primary objective of a SWOT analysis is to help the center, office, or program develop a full awareness of all the factors involved in making a business decision. Completing the SWOT begins with brainstorming. For each section of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), the participants develop a word cloud.



Once the word clouds are complete, participants discuss and develop final content, themes, etc. During the discussion, note any additional internal/external contextual factors. Examples may include the political landscape (e.g., changes in Administration), advancements in technology, or other considerations. By ensuring that the center, office, or program looks at the SWOT from both internal and external perspectives, the team will have a more comprehensive view of opportunities and threats, as well as future weaknesses to address or strengths to leverage.

Individual Exercise: Assessment-Myers Briggs Type Indicator (30 minutes)

Groups are a reflection of the individuals within them and benefit from a diverse set of strengths, skills, and perspectives. Understanding the personality traits of one’s colleagues, and how these manifest on a task is helpful in building an effective, dynamic team. The team that has come together for these strategic planning activities has diverse strengths, weaknesses, and work styles. Conducting a personality assessment can help to communicate to the team how best to engage with each member, and how to most effectively obtain their best thinking and input on a task.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Test is a commonly used assessment for describing how an individual “gets their energy,” “sees the world and gathers information,” “makes decisions,” and “likes to plan ahead.” Each member of the group should be provided a copy of the [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Short Version)](https://wvit.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Keys-to-Family-Communication-1-of-9.pdf) and asked to complete the assessment using the coding instruction to score themselves. Following the exercise, the facilitator should provide the group members copies of the [Short Myers-Briggs Test personality trait description](https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/the-16-mbti-types.htm)s and ask them to compare their results to the corresponding personality traits described.

Closing

The next session builds on this session’s conversation and outputs to begin describing the center, office, or program and objectives considering its position within ACL. The closing icebreaker reinforces the sharing of ideas and continues team building that has occurred through the first strategic planning session. This sets the stage for the next phase of strategic planning by exploring values and priorities at the individual level, an activity that will be “scaled up” as the group begins identifying goals and objectives aligned with the center, office, or program’s mission and values.

Closing icebreaker activity: Goal is to introduce the visioning activities in Session 2 (15 minutes)

**What Do You Really Care About: A Writing and Discussion Activity**

*Instructional Prompt: There are 100+ values below. Everyone in the room spends about 15 minutes looking through the values and choosing the ten that best define them. From there, they need to put those ten values in order of importance. Then, everyone goes around and reads their values out loud, discussing why they chose them and ordered them the way they did.*

As simple as this activity is, it is hard. To put one value above another when there are several that mean the world to you is somewhat agonizing. But, once you’re done, you have a picture of yourself that’s surprisingly informative. For this activity, you’ll want to print out copies of the list of values and hand them out to everyone in the group, along with pens or pencils.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Achievement Acknowledgement Adventure Authenticity Beauty  Challenge Change Cleanness Collaboration Commitment Integrity Intimacy Ingenuity  Joy Justice  Knowledge Law Leadership Love Loyalty Meaning Merit Money | Common Sense Communication Community Competence Compassion Connection Cooperation Courage Creativity Openness Order Originality Patriotism Peace Perfection  Personal Growth  Pleasure Power Practicality Preservation Privacy Progress | Decisiveness Design Democracy Discipline Discovery Diversity Ease Efficiency Equality Excellence  Exceptionalism Prosperity Purity  Quality Regularity Reliability Resourcefulness Respect Responsiveness Safety  Security Self-love Service Sexuality | Expertise Fairness Faith Faithfulness Family Freedom Friendship Fun  Genius Globalism Goodwill Simplicity Skillfulness Spirituality Stability Status Strength Success Teamwork Tolerance Tradition Trust  Truth Unity Vitality | Goodness Gratitude Hard Work Harmony Health Honesty Honor Humanity Independence Individuality Inner Peace Innovation Will  Well-being Wisdom Youthfulness |

# Session 2 – Visioning

**Purpose**: During this session, the team identifies the ACL center, office, or program’s values as reflected in its work. The team then develops draft mission statements, vision statements, core values, priorities, goals, and objectives for the strategic plan.

**Objectives**:

* Identify key activities representing the ACL center, office, or program
* Develop ACL center, office, or program mission statement, vision statement, and core values
* Develop ACL center, office, or program priorities, goals, and objectives

Icebreaker (30 minutes)

For Session 2, we recommend “People Bingo,” an icebreaker designed to reengage the participants and help them to get to know each other better. A bingo card template is available in the Appendix of Session 2. If you don’t know your participants, make a list of more general traits like “drinks tea instead of coffee,” “loves the color orange,” “has two cats,” “drives a hybrid,” or “went on a cruise in the last year.” You can make these easy or difficult depending on how much time you want the game to take.

**Icebreaker Instructions: People Bingo**

Give each participant a people bingo card and a pen. Explain that the group has 30 minutes to mingle, introduce themselves, and find people who match the traits on the card. They must put the person’s name in the corresponding box or have the person sign the appropriate square. The first person to fill five boxes across or down yells BINGO! and the game is over. For extra fun, give the winner a door prize.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Example Strategic Planning Agenda: Session 2** | | |
| 8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. | Overview | Facilitator |
| 8:40 a.m.- 8:55 a.m. | Icebreaker | Team |
| 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. | What We Do Two Years in Review Accomplishments | Facilitator |
| 9:45 a.m. – 9:55 a.m. | Break |  |
| 10 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Center Vision and Reflections | Guest |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | Special Presentation/Activity | Optional |
| 11:00 a.m. – 11:10 a.m. | Break | Team |
| 11:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Where We Are Going Guidance: ACL/ HHS/OMB Identifying Your Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Priorities | Facilitator |
| 12:00 p.m. – 12:15 p.m. | Group Activity | Facilitator |
| 12:15 p.m. | Closing/Adjourn |  |

Ground rules (5 minutes)

A copy of the ground rules should be posted for reference during the planning session. Remind the participants of the ground rules established during Session 1.

Summary of the previous session (20-30 minutes)

It is important to remind the group about the outputs from the previous session. This includes a quick review of how the center, office, or program fits within the organizational structure of ACL. It is also necessary to review the findings from the SWOT analysis.

Handout: SWOT Analysis with summary bullets from Session 1

Where have you been and where are you now (20 minutes)

This session builds on these previous discussions to develop mission statements, vision statements,

core values, priorities, and goals and objectives.

center, office, or program evolve and looking to the past can often help us understand where we are today and where we may go tomorrow. Your previously funded work and activities can tell a great deal about what is valued by your center, office, or program. To explore this topic, and use it to inform upcoming activities, brainstorm and document what your center, office, or program has funded over the last few years.

Large Group Activity: Accomplishments and Lessons Learned (20-30 minutes)

The group uses either the Key Projects template found in the Appendix for Session 2 or a pad of lined paper to generate a list of current and past funded projects from the last 3-5 years. This recall activity should be no more than 10 minutes so that the projects documented are the ones most memorable or illustrative of what the center, office, or program values, as shown by what it funds.

**Hint for Customizing:**

You may want to consider keeping this exercise as it, along with the SWOT analysis, will inform discussions about priorities, opportunities, and innovations.

The results of this discussion inform discussions we will be having about core values, priorities, and innovations.

Developing a mission statement, identifying center, office, or program priorities, and determining strategic goals & objectives (30-40 minutes)

Developing a mission statement and identifying center, office, or program priorities are essential first steps to developing strategic goals and objectives. As discussed during Session One, ACL has an overarching [Mission Statement and Vision Statement](https://acl.gov/about-acl) that describe its priorities, strategic goals, and objectives. The figure below shows the relationship between these items.

[*Section 200 of the Office of Management and Budget’s Overview of the Federal Performance Framework*](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/assets/a11_current_year/a11_2017/s200.pdf) provides a more detailed view of this relationship. The figure below is taken from this resource and its five-level design parallels that used by ACL.

200.20 Example Illustration of Goal Relationship11

A review of mission statement examples from other organizations can stimulate thinking in this area. Examples of corporate mission statements from prominent organizations can serve as a great resource. The mission statement should be one sentence that clearly describes the desired outcome you hope to achieve and addresses four key areas:

1. What does the center, office, or program do for its stakeholders?
2. What does the center, office, or program do for its staff?
3. What does the center, office, or program do for ACL?
4. What does the center, office, or program do for the community?

*1 United States Office of Management and Budget. (2016). OMB Circular A-11 section 200 overview of the Federal Performance Framework*. [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/ files/omb/assets/a11\_current\_year/s200.pdf](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/a11_current_year/s200.pdf)

Large Group Activity: Developing a Mission Statement

Developing your center, office, or program’s first mission statement, or writing a new or revised one, is your opportunity to define the group’s goals, ethics, culture, and norms for decision-making. The goal for this activity is to develop several draft mission statements that reflect the driving goal of the center, office, or program. The group considers stakeholders, staff, ACL, and the community as they discuss potential mission statements. Using a voting system or discussion, refine the draft mission statements until the terminology resonates with the group.

Large Group Activity: Developing a Vision Statement (10-15 minutes)

One way to view a vision statement is to consider what would occur if the mission statement, and its resulting actions were wildly successful. As an example, consider ACL’s vision statement, “For all people, regardless of age and disability, to live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate fully in society.” The goal for this activity is to draft a vision statement that describes what fully successful completion of the center, office, or program’s mission means. Using a voting system, polling, or discussion, refine the draft vision statement until the terminology resonates with the group.

ACL center, office, or program values

A center, office, or program’s values can be described as a set of values the whole organization not only acknowledges, but also actually lives and breathes through its people, inside and outside the center, office, or program. Values define what success means and a common direction for all employees. They provide guidance for ambiguous scenarios and tough tradeoffs, influencing daily decisions that propel the center, office, or program towards its mission.

Large Group Activity: Developing Core Values

Core values should be as specific as possible and go beyond those things that currently exist. When working through these questions, it is helpful to consider someone that is exemplary in your center, office, or program and think about the key attributes of that individual. After brainstorming around these questions, the group should have a list of traits and values to whittle down and refine into a short list of core values. Consider the following:

* What attributes are important for your center, office, or program to be effective?
* What does your center, office, or program to stand for?
* What behavior will your center, office, or program value?
* When and how should the success of the center, office, or program be recognized?

ACL center, office, or program priorities

Priorities are the most important things to be achieved over the year. They are not detailed like goals but are strategically and operationally critical to your success as you strive to support the ACL mission.

Priorities should reflect and address identified strengths or weaknesses from the SWOT analysis. These activities should be ones for which the center, office, or program is prepared to make a significant commitment to acting on. The identified priorities inform and guide the development of measurable goals and objectives within the strategic plan.

Large Group Activity: Developing Priorities

Center, office, or program priorities are the thematic components of mission and vision statements. They are the components or structures necessary for their achievement. ACL developed five priorities that are important for fulfilling its mission and vision. Organizational priorities may be developed to capitalize on strengths and opportunities or focus on overcoming weaknesses or threats. They must, ultimately, support an center, office, or program’s mission and vision.

For this exercise, participants review their draft mission and vision statements and list of funded projects or activities developed during this session, as well as the SWOT analysis conducted during Session 1. They then develop five to seven priorities necessary for the draft mission and vision statements to be realized.

Example Priorities

1. Continue to build good working relationships with other ACL offices, center, and programs.

2. Expand and strengthen our partner and stakeholder network, connect ourselves to people and resources that can help us organize the workshop and symposium

3. Increase data dissemination and use of data by ensuring continuity and improving quality of existing data, and providing prompt delivery of data to make it more available to users.

The facilitator or a group designated notetaker documents the draft priorities and any comments concerning additional factors or activities necessary to support these activities.

Developing Strategic Goals

The development of goals is essential to the development of a strategic plan. Goals inform the development of measurable center, office, or program objectives, organizational and programmatic compliance standards, and funding opportunities for external stakeholders (e.g., grantees, contractors).

OMB describes three types of actionable short or long-term goals for inclusion in a strategic plan. These include:

* Cross-Agency Priority Goals: Presidential priorities which are long-term in nature that require interagency coordination to overcome pressing management challenges
* Agency Priority Goals: The Department heads of major Federal agencies set approximately 4 to 5 goals that reflect the top near-term, implementation-focused priorities to be achieved over the next two years
* Strategic Objectives: The long-term objectives, outcomes, and impacts an agency hopes to accomplish throughout the term of the Administration.

Strategic goals should reflect broad, long-term outcomes that the center, office, or program anticipates achieving. They communicate efforts to address national problems, needs, challenges, and opportunities that align with ACL’s and the center, office, or program’s priorities. Strategic goals are programmatic and organizational outcomes an organization is trying to achieve. It may be helpful to review HHS or ACL goals.

Large Group Activity: Developing Goals

Participants review their draft mission and vision statements, its list of funded activities, its list of identified priorities, and the SWOT analysis conducted during Session 1. They then develop five to seven goals that align with their draft priorities and address a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat identified in the SWOT. OPE’s draft goals can serve as examples for gauging the degree of specificity needed for this task.

The facilitator or group designated notetaker documents the draft goals and any comments concerning additional factors or activities necessary to support these activities. Goals and objectives can ultimately be captured in the template in the Appendix.

Developing Objectives

Objectives are specific components of a goal that are measurable and have a defined criterion for success. They are very similar in construction to performance measures in that they identify an aspirational criterion for success or compliance and a defined period for reaching that criteria.

When developing objectives, one should apply the “SMART” test:

Are the objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely? Ensure the objectives are:

* Precise, time-based, measurable actions that support the completion of a goal.
* Relate directly to the goal
* Clear, concise, and understandable
* Stated in terms of results
* Worded to begin with an action verb
* Associated with a date for accomplishment
* Measurable.

Small-Group Activity: Developing Objectives (30 minutes)

Participants should review their draft mission and vision statements, list of funded activities and identified priorities, the SWOT analysis, and the draft goals. The facilitator forms two teams of participants and divides the list of previously developed draft goals between the two groups. Each group takes 20 minutes to develop 2-3 SMART objectives for each draft goal assigned to them. The group should designate or be provided a notetaker that will present the objectives at the end of the 20 minutes. These draft objectives should provide measurable criteria for a component within the draft goals and address a need identified through the groups’ previous brainstorming activities. The groups re-convene and take 10 minutes to share and discuss the objectives each small group developed. During the presentations, the larger group refines the objectives.

Closing icebreaker activity

The goal of the closing icebreaker is to introduce the idea of needing others (i.e., stakeholders, partners, supporters) to accomplish goals that are necessary for progress. To accomplish this goal, OPE selected the “Marooned” icebreaker. This activity and subsequent discussion will inform the Session 3 activities that focus on identifying and effectively communicating with stakeholders.

**Icebreaker Example 4: Marooned**

*Hi, my name is Deb. If I were marooned on a deserted island, I would want Tim with me because he’s smart, strong, and fun, and I love him. He would know how to make a shelter and find food, and we’d have wonderful conversations. My second choice would be someone who tells great stories, like Garrison Keillor or Eoin Colfer. And my third would be Solomon Burke, the blues singer, so we’d have soulful music.*

# Session 3 – Engaging Stakeholders and Reach

Purpose: This session focuses the group on identifying external stakeholders, their information needs from the appropriate ACL centers, offices, and programs, determining what information they provide, and the effectiveness of current communication practices.

Objectives

* Identify internal and external stakeholders, with labeling of “key” and “highly important” stakeholders
* Identify information that needs to flow TO stakeholder groups
* Identify information that needs to flow FROM stakeholder groups
* Identify stakeholder communication strategies and their functions

Icebreaker: Goal is to reinforce the need for mutuality, support, and collaboration within groups (20-30 minutes)

The goal of Session 3 opening icebreaker is to reinforce the developing relationships and sharing between the group members. To accomplish this goal, we recommend using the “What’s Your Theme Song?” icebreaker.

Ground rules (5 minutes)

Post the ground rules for reference during the planning session. Remind the participants of the ground rules to the list.

***Instructional Prompt:*** *Ask the team to imagine they’re in a movie. What song would play when they walk into a scene? Would it be a rousing number like in Rocky or maybe something more somber? You can use that information throughout the project to say “play music” when a milestone has been completed.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Example Strategic Planning Agenda: Session 3** | | |
| 8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. | Overview | Facilitator |
| 8:40 a.m.- 8:55 a.m. | Icebreaker | Team |
| 9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. | What We Do Two Years in Review Accomplishments | Facilitator |
| 9:45 a.m. – 9:55 a.m. | Break | Facilitator |
| 10 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Vision and Reflections for your Center | Facilitator |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | Special Presentation/Activity | Guest |
| 11:00 a.m. – 11:10 a.m. | Break | Team |
| 11:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Where We Are Going Guidance: ACL/ HHS/OMB Identifying Our Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Priorities | Facilitator |
| 12:00 p.m. – 12:15 p.m. | Group Activity | Team |
| 12:15 p.m. | Closing/Adjourn | Facilitator |

Summary of the previous session (20-30 minutes)

It is important to reorient the group to the previous sessions’ outputs to include the mission and vision statements, core values, goals, objectives, priorities, and SWOT analysis. During this review the group should begin to consider the stakeholders and partners needed to achieve the goals and objectives already defined and how to best communicate with key stakeholders, partners, and other audiences regarding information related to the center, office, or program’s mission, vision, priorities, goals, and objectives.

Handout: Draft materials from previous sessions. Who are your Stakeholders? (40-50 minutes)

Stakeholders are persons, groups, or organizations that have an interest in or concern about a center, office, or program. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by a center, office, or program’s actions, objectives, and policies. ACL, as a component of its mission, provides specific emphasis on people with disabilities and older adults, and the communities in which they live. ACL also has reporting requirements to HHS, OMB, and obligations to Congress and the public. These are examples of external stakeholders. ACL centers, offices, and programs also share information, collaborate, and coordinate with sister centers, offices, and programs within ACL in order to achieve missions, goals and objectives. These are internal stakeholders. Communication and collaboration with external and internal stakeholders are essential to achieving strategic goals and objectives.

**Hint for Customizing:**

Consider providing a list of internal and external stakeholders to serve as a starting point. The group will then add to or take away from the list and indicate those that are highly important.

Large Group Activity: Identifying stakeholder (20 minutes)

Develop a word cloud of stakeholders from both internal and external stakeholders; add a “star” to those who the group identifies as “key” or “highly important.”

What do your Stakeholders need to know from you? What do you need to know from them? (20-30 minutes)

Effective communication with stakeholders can be a valuable tool for advancing a center, office, or program’s goals and objectives. Stakeholders benefit from understanding the mission, priorities, goals, and, often, the limitations or restrictions of an ACL. The center, office, or program benefits from understanding the needs and priorities of its various stakeholder constituencies. This information is valuable for policy planning, resource allocation, and other activities that may vary by the center, office, or program.

Large Group Activity: Identifying Information Dissemination priorities (20 minutes)

Develop a word cloud of information that needs to flow TO identified stakeholder groups. Remember to consider the following:

* What aspects or components of your mission statement, organizational priorities, goals, and objectives do each of your stakeholders need to know and understand?
* How does this information change based on whether the stakeholder is internal or external?
* What information does your center, office, or program need from your stakeholders to effectively execute its mission?

How do you currently communicate with your stakeholders? Is your communication effective? What would be necessary to make it more effective?

There are many modalities a center, office, or program can use to communicate with stakeholders, with various degrees of formality required for different groups. For example, communication with HHS officials, Congress, or other U.S Government Agencies may require more formal processes than communicating with partners or other internal stakeholder groups. It is critical to consider the audience, formal/informal processes, and advancing technologies as the group discusses communication practices and their effectiveness.

Large Group Activity: Identifying effective Stakeholder Communication strategies (40 minutes)

Develop a series of word clouds that examine the methods the center or office uses to communicate with its stakeholders, and what additional methods might be used.

#### Definitions

* Inform: This is essentially one-way ‘communication.’ Announcements, press releases, position statements, and prepared statements are all methods and tools for this level.
* Consult: Proposals and options are presented to stakeholders, who provide feedback that is incorporated in planning. This is commonly done through focus groups, individual interviews, or surveys. The goal is to benefit from stakeholders’ greater knowledge of local conditions or opinions.
* Involve: Stakeholders are authentically engaged in generating options and carrying out actions that emerge from their input, but their participation falls short of sharing formal decision-making authority.
* Collaborate/empower: Deciding and acting together with stakeholders based upon shared goals. It is a long process, which requires more preparation and support for stakeholder involvement.

Closing

The next session focuses discussions on how your strategic plan aligns with ACL goals and objectives and reflects the ACL Performance Strategy.

Closing icebreaker activity

The closing icebreaker introduces the idea of innovation, and its potential for impact, in a static or antiquated environment. This action sets the stage for Session 4.

**Icebreaker Instructions: The Ultimate Theoretical Question.**

You are sent back to the Middle Ages in a time capsule the size of a telephone booth. You can bring one modern object back with you to help you survive and thrive during that time. Besides that object, nothing else but the clothes you are wearing can come back. The object you choose can contain only the parts and accessories that are normally a part of that object, such as wires or batteries, but nothing else. What do you bring?”

# Session 4 – Aligning and Assessing Our Work

**Purpose**: The purpose of Session 4 is to review the work of the center, office, or program and align it with ACL goals and priorities and explore tools for evaluating the work the center or office completes.

Throughout the previous two sessions, the group has described its current organizational environment, developed material for a strategic plan, and identified who should know about it and how the information can be shared. The focus of this session is to further review and assess the work of the center, office or program; and to consider what

innovations would assist in executing the strategic plan – to include how to measure results in order to know when innovation is required and when it is not.

**Objectives**:

* Align the ACL center, office, or program work with ACL goals and priorities
* Identify activities and innovations for getting the ACL center or office work complete
* Consider performance measurement, program evaluation, and the ACL Learning Agenda in the center, office, or program strategic plan

Icebreaker (10-15 minutes)

**Icebreaker Instructions: Masking the Future**

Participants will share past experiences and future aspirations. Stick a long length of masking tape to the floor. Write “the past” on one sheet of paper and “the future” on another, taping these pages to each end of the masking tape. Give the group 5-10 minutes to reflect and identify important aspects of their past and ambitions for the future. These can be personal or professional.

Each group member then moves along the masking tape and shares their key points.

Ground rules (5 minutes)

A copy of the ground rules should be posted for reference during the planning session. Remind the participants of the ground rules established.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Example Strategic Planning Agenda: Session 4** | | |
| 12:30 p.m. – 12:35 p.m. | Overview | Facilitator |
| 12:35 p.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Icebreaker | Team |
| 12:50 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | What Innovations Will Enhance Our Work | Facilitator |
| 1:30 p.m. – 1:40 p.m. | Break | Facilitator |
| 1:40 p.m. – 2:10 p.m. | Strategy; Messaging/ Branding | Team |
| 2:10 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. | Our Action Plan | Team |
| 2:40 p.m. – 2:50 p.m. | Recap: What We Have Accomplished: Retreat Accomplishments and Lessons Learned | Invite Leadership |
| 2:50 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | ACL Reflections | Team |
| 3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. | Group Activity | Team |
| 3:30 p.m. | Closing/Adjourn |  |

Summary of the previous sessions (15 minutes)

It is important to reorient the group to the accomplishments of the previous two sessions to focus the group on thinking about ways to better act on the draft strategic plan and what that might mean as the group begins finalizing the document.

Handout: Draft materials from previous sessions.

* Strategic Plan; Completed center, program or office Mission Statement, Vision Statement, priorities, goals, and objectives
* Completed center, office, or program Stakeholder Lists and Outreach Modalities

Reviewing and Aligning Our Work (2 hours)

During Session 2, the group developed an inventory of projects and activities and developed goals and priorities that align with ACL goals and priorities. During this session, Session 4, the group will review the inventory of projects considering the established goals and priorities (at both the ACL and center, office, or program levels) to identify opportunities for improvements and innovation.

The group exercises described below will work to identify the information in the following table. The Appendix provides a template the groups can use to complete these exercises. (Note: The template should be revised to accommodate the number of goals, objectives and projects for the center, office, or program.)

Small Group Exercise Part 1: Aligning work with goals and priorities? (30 minutes)

Divide the group in two and assign half of the projects listed on the key project list to each group. During this discussion, each small group assesses how well the work we currently do aligns with the goals and priorities for the center, office, or program as well as with ACL goals and priorities.

(Handouts: Center/office/program goals and priorities (from Session 2), and ACL goals and priorities (in the Appendix for Session 4).

**Prompts:**

• Does the work we do align with the center, office, or program goals and priorities?

• Does the work align with ACL goals and priorities?

• Is there work we should not be doing?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategic Goal** | **Strategic Objective** | **Priorities** | **Assigned Project(s)** | **Staff** | **Target Due Date** |
| Goal 1 | Objective 1 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Objective 2 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Goal 2 | Objective 1 |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Objective 2 |  |  |  |  |

* Are there new programs, projects, or activities we should consider

Small group Exercise Part 2: Determining how we get our work done? (30 minutes)

The group brainstorms on who within the center, office, or program is doing the work and whether there are innovative methods for getting the work done.

Prompts:

* Who does the work?

• What staff are assigned to the work?

• Are they well-matched?

• What work does the staff enjoy doing the most?

• Are there skill sets the center, office, or program should consider obtaining?

Small Group Exercise Part 3: Focusing the work that we do (30 minutes)

The groups review their assigned projects and brainstorm opportunities to re-focus work to best meet the needs and expectations of the center, office, or program’s stakeholders.

Handouts: Key Projects List (Session 2), List of information flowing to stakeholders (Session 3)

Prompts:

• Is the center, office, or program doing the right work (i.e., programs, projects, and activities)?

• Does the work meet the needs and expectations of our stakeholders? If not, are there new projects or activities that should be considered?

Large Group Exercise: Identifying innovations in our work (30 minutes)

At the end of the small group discussions, each group shares their results with the larger group. During this discussion, participants add to the results from each of the small group discussions to create consensus around the work that should be done and how it aligns with ACL and organizational goals and priorities.

**Prompts:**

* What new, evidence-based or innovative approaches, strategies, frameworks or models do the center, office, or program use?
* Are there new, evidence-based or innovative approaches, strategies, frameworks or models the center, office, or program should consider?

Beginning to Evaluate Our Work (1 hr.)

This part of Session 4 helps a center, office, or program understand the importance of incorporating evidence into strategic planning efforts as encouraged by the Foundations on Evidence- based Policymaking Act of 2018 (2019) and OMB in Memorandum 19-23 (2019). This includes a review of what evidence is and its use and importance and value for centers, offices and programs. We will also discuss the ACL Learning Agenda and ACL Performance Strategy and how these two activities promote the use of evidence at all levels. Objective for this discussion include:

* Knowing what evidence is and why is it important for ACL.
* Understanding performance measurement data and performance management and its uses
* Understanding program evaluation and its significance
* Aligning center, office, or program activities with the ACL Performance Strategy and Learning Agenda.

Evidence

The Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 defines evidence as “information produced as a result of statistical activities conducted for a statistical purpose.” OMB (2019) broadly defines evidence and includes foundational fact-finding, performance measurement, policy analysis, and program evaluation. Having an evidence-based culture in federal agencies means using the results of high-quality research, analysis, and evaluations to make program and agency decisions. There is increasing recognition that using evidence can help agencies target resources efficiently, improve performance and outcomes, and identify the best ways to structure operations and service delivery to maximize results.

Performance measurement and program evaluation produce two different types of evidence organizations use to assess programs, services, projects, functions, or policies in a systematic way and to generate information useful for accountability, budgeting, and policymaking.

**Performance measurement** refers to the measures that monitor program performance.

**Program evaluation** systematically assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of programs. It applies rigorous methodology to determining what is working well and meeting stakeholder needs and where improvement may be needed. This supports continuous improvement as well as policymaking.

**Performance management** refers to a process of ensuring that a set of activities, outputs, and outcomes meets an organization’s goals in an effective and efficient manner. It may refer to the use of data collected from different approaches such as performance measurement and evaluation to ensure center, office, or program objectives are met.

Used together, performance measurement and evaluation can provide critical insights for learning, program improvement, and policy and programmatic decision-making. Although complementary, there are key differences between the two data efforts: performance measurement is an ongoing planning tool that identifies the results of programs and an evaluation is a periodic or ad-hoc research tool that identifies how or why programs work. The *Draft Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation Document* and *ACL Performance Strategy* in the Appendix.

ACL Learning Agenda

The Administration for Community Living recently instituted a Learning Agenda approach that uses a broad series of questions to focus work program and policy priorities through evidence-based decision- making. Learning Agendas require agencies to identify and set priorities for evidence building to leverage resources, improve operational and programmatic outcomes, and develop appropriate policies and regulations to accomplish its mission.

ACL’s Learning Agenda will focus on its mission of maximizing the independence, well-being, and health of older adults and people with disabilities across the lifespan, and their families and caregivers, as well as the requirements defined in authorizing statutes for ACL and its centers. The priority questions will include short, medium, and long-term goals organized around ACL’s Five Pillars, which include: supporting families and caregivers, protecting rights and preventing abuse, connecting people to services, expanding employment opportunities, and strengthening the aging and disability networks. (See the Appendix for Session 4 for more information.)

ACL Performance Strategy

The ACL initiated an agency-wide performance strategy recently that reflects a high-level approach to the planning, conduct, and implementation of performance management. Performance management and performance measurement increase public confidence in the federal government by holding federal agencies accountable for program results. They also track and report program effectiveness, service delivery, improvement, and accountability by focusing on results, the quality of service, and customer satisfaction. Finally, they enhance Agency/Departmental, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Congressional decision-making.

ACL’s Performance Strategy represents the agency’s commitment to providing rigorous, relevant, and transparent performance data highlighting all the programs and initiatives ACL supports. It also reflects ACL’s continuous effort to build and enhance its repository of data and evidence including high quality performance data in support of ACL’s mission and vision. (See Session 4 Appendix for more information.)

The ACL Performance Strategy requires close collaboration with various partners who have a vested interest in ACL’s performance including senior leadership, program offices, budget officials, and external stakeholders.

Large Group Discussion: Integrating the ACL Learning Agenda and Performance Strategy into ACL center, office, or program activities.

With a common understanding of performance measures and program evaluation and having reviewed the ACL Performance Strategy, the group can begin to consider how to ensure their resulting strategic plan will incorporate the principles and practices of the ACL Performance Strategy.

Closing Activity:

By contemplating the following questions, the group can prepare for the final session.

Areas for the group to consider:

* + - How does the center, office, or program fit within and support the ACL performance strategy?
    - What are the performance measures we use to track and assess program and grantee progress?
    - Do we the most appropriate and relevant performance measures? Should we add or delete any measures?
    - How do we use our performance data to improve our programs and work?
    - Do our program evaluations answer the following questions?
      * Are our programs effective?
      * Are we reaching our target populations?
      * Are we disseminating useful information to stakeholders?

# Session 5 – Evaluating and Implementing Effectively

Purpose: The purpose of Session 5 is to review and discuss the performance measures and program evaluations that a center, office or program has established or may need to establish. The session will also focus on planning for the effective implementation of the strategic plan, which includes discussion of important resources and capacity needed to ensure success.

Objectives:

* Review specific performance measures for the center, office, or program and their usefulness
* Identify specific program evaluations for the center, office or program, evaluation plans, needs, and lessons learned
* Develop a plan for implementation for the strategic plan with concrete action steps

**Icebreaker Instructions:** “Sweet Talk,” an icebreaker designed to invite the group members to share information about themselves and build on the camaraderie developed during the strategic planning sessions. Before playing, empty a packet of M&Ms or Skittles into a bowl. Everyone will need at least five pieces each, so make sure you have enough. Warn participants NOT to eat any of the candy once the game starts.

On a sheet of paper, write down what each color means. For example:

* Yellow Skittle – The Last book read
* Red – Most memorable work party
* Green – One thing you love about your job
* Orange – Favorite work thing you do to keep you motivated
* Blue – One stressful thing in your job you wish you could improve
* Purple – One life goal you’re working on

The facilitator can either display the sheet of color meanings for all to see or review them while playing the role of question master. As the bowl goes around, each player shares something based on the color they pick. They must pick colors at random – so no deliberate choosing! It’s okay if a player picks the same color again. This gives them the chance to say more about themselves.

Ground rules (5 minutes)

A copy of the ground rules should be posted for reference during the planning session. Remind the participants of the ground rules established during Session 1.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Example Strategic Planning Agenda: Session 5** | | |
| 8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. | Overview | Facilitator |
| 8:40 a.m.- 8:55 a.m. | Icebreaker | Team |
| 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | Identifying Performance Measures and Evaluations | Facilitator |
| 10:00 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. | Break | Facilitator |
| 10:10 a.m. – 11:10 a.m. | Planning for Implementation | Facilitator |
| 11:10 p.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Group Activity/Icebreaker | Team |
| 12:00 p.m. | Closing/Adjourn |  |

Identifying the center, office or program performance measures and program evaluations (1 hour)

Review the information about performance measurement and program evaluation provided during Session 4.. The *Draft Performance Measurement and Program Evaluation Document* and *ACL Performance Strategy* in the Appendix for Session 4 provides additional background information.

During Session 4, the group also worked through how the center, office, or program aligns with the ACL Performance Strategy and Learning Agenda. The homework assignment asked the group to think about the several questions:

This session continues discussions and draw upon your answers to these questions to identify performance measures and program evaluations.

Large Group Exercise: Reviewing performance measures (30 minutes)

By measuring that which really matters, management can focus on those attributes and improve performance. Care should be taken that what the center, office, or program is calling performance measures are not milestones. Performance measures follow the guidance in the ACL Performance strategy and ACL Performance Measure toolkit, measures should be:

* Relevant.
* Timely.
* Actionable.
* Both financial and non-financial.
* Results-focused and not action-focused.
* Predictive in nature, indicating what drives business value

Good performance measures allow for comparisons to be made to enable performance improvements and they reflect on the overall organizational goals and strategies. During this discussion, the group will review their performance measures to identify any changes or additions that could improve the work for the center, office, or program.

Large Group Exercise: Identifying program evaluations for the center, office or program (20 minutes)

Program evaluations allow centers, offices, and programs to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs, projects, and activities they conduct. Program evaluations apply a rigorous methodology to determining what is working well and meeting stakeholder needs and where improvement may be needed. This supports continuous improvement as well as policymaking.

Background information on program evaluation is also available in OMB Memorandum Phase I Implementation of the Foundations for Evidenced-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas, Personnel, and Planning Guidance. Conducting program evaluations requires objectivity and specific skills that may not be available within the center, office, or program. The ACL Office of Performance Evaluation is a resource available to help centers, offices, and programs plan, design, and conduct program evaluations.

Prompts:

* What program evaluations has the center, office, or program conducted?
* If a program evaluation is occurring or has occurred, describe its design and findings (if available).
* What influence have these program evaluations had on the programs?
* Are there other program evaluations that still need to be conducted?
* How do program evaluations help the center, office, program determine whether they are addressing their strategic goals, objectives and priorities?
* Does your center, office, or program require assistance in conducting program evaluations?

Planning for Implementation (1 hour)

There are many options a center, office, or program can adopt to facilitate the adoption and implementation of a strategic plan. Not all practices are appropriate for all centers, offices, or programs. A discussion of pros and cons are necessary. There are some common principles to adhere to:

* Commit to spending additional time to meet to solidify the implementation plan.
* Ensure the plan clearly articulates what will be done, by whom, and when.
* Establish accountability and buy-in among the center, office, or program team as well as leadership to ensure implementation support.
* Use the center, office, and program meetings to monitor progress against the plan and make any adjustments necessary.

Large Group Exercise: Brainstorming innovations in implementation (10 minutes)

The following is a list of common policy and programmatic innovations the group can consider.

* Communicating the Mission Statement
* “Living” the Mission Statement
* Communicating organizational priorities
* Referring to organizational priorities during the annual planning
* Aligning activities with the goals
* Measuring progress towards meeting goals
* Aligning activities with the objectives
* Measuring progress towards meeting objectives

Participants review the list, discuss what an operational definition for each would be in the context of their center, office, or program, and recommend additional strategies that could be helpful. Once a comprehensive list is developed, group members receive ten stickers, 2 of each color. Each color has a different point value, with the highest equaling 5 points and the lowest equaling 1 point. Participants assign “importance scores” to the list of innovations using the highest value stickers placed on the strategies each participant views as most important and the lower point value stickers placed on strategies viewed as less important. The facilitator totals the points given by the participants, and the group discusses the top three innovations.

Small Group Exercise: Developing implementation plan (50 minutes)

In order to allow enough time for developing an implementation plan, break the group into small groups that can tackle assigned objectives, goals and priorities.

Prompts:

* + - What are the current strengths and weaknesses found in the implementation of innovations by your center, office, or program?
    - How can we enhance the identified strengths or mitigate weaknesses to improve the center, office, or program’s success?

The content of the draft plan and size of your group will dictate how many small groups will be needed. This includes the following for each task:

* + - Task
    - Target milestone
    - Deadline/Due date
    - Dependencies (if the task is dependent upon the completion of another task)
    - Task Lead/Point of Contact

After 30 or 35 minutes, reconvene the large group to review the plans each small group developed and make additional suggestions.

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| **Task** | **Target milestone** | **Dependencies** | **Task Lead** | **Due Date** |
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Closing

The final session refines the strategic plan, identifies agency approval required, and summarizes proposed innovations that can enhance organizational success for presentation to leadership. Conduct a closing “icebreaker” to serve as a wrap-up and to recognize the achievements of the group.

**Icebreaker Instructions: Reflections**

Each participant answers the following:

What was your aha moment or biggest take-away from this process?

Name one thing you are going to do that you were not going to do prior to the planning sessions?

These can be related to the actual work, what you’ve learned about the organization, what you’ve learned about yourself, what you’ve learned about a colleague, or whatever the planning process has inspired.

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March 2020

# Appendices

HHS & ACL Mission and Vision

**HHS Identified Goals**

Strategic Goal 1: Reform, Strengthen, and Modernize the Nation’s Healthcare System

Strategic Goal 2: Protect the Health of Americans Where They Live, Learn, Work, and Play

Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen the Economic and Social Well-Being of Americans Across the Lifespan

Strategic Goal 4: Foster Sound, Sustained Advances in the Sciences

Strategic Goal 5: Promote Effective and Efficient Management and Stewardship

**ACL’s Mission**

Maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across the lifespan, and their families and caregivers.

**ACL’s Vision**

For all people, regardless of age and disability, to live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate fully in society.

Key Projects Template

| **KEY PROJECTS TEMPLATE** | |
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| **Projects** | **Current or Past** |
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Goals and Objectives Template

| **Strategic Goal** | **Strategic Objective** | **Priorities** | **Assigned Project(s)** | **Staff** | **Target Due Date** |
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| **Goal 1** | **Objective 1** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Objective 2** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Goal 2** | **Objective 1** |  |  |  |  |
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| **Objective 2** |  |  |  |  |

Implementation Planning Template

| Number | Task | Target Milestone | Dependencies | Task Lead | Due Date |
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People Bingo Template

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|  |  | Free  Space |  |  |
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# Resources

**2 Truths and a Lie**

Adapted from Peterson, D. (2019, November). *How to play two truths and a lie*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/2-truths-lie-idea-list-1-31144>

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