

## APPENDIX H: DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING STRATEGIC PLANS

---

Once a representative from within or outside state government has obtained commitments from all three branches of government to proceed with the three-branch approach, this guide can help state core, implementation and extended teams create or expand a statewide strategic plan by designing a series of brainstorming discussions that result in the identification of measurable goals relevant to each branch, performance indicators tied to each goal for use in tracking progress and a set of concrete action steps. Specifically, this guide outlines four discussion sessions, which should be spaced out to give team members time to process and reflect on material discussed during the sessions.

### **Discussion Session Overview**

- Session 1: Define and Refine the Vision.
- Session 2: Conduct Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) Analysis.
- Session 3: Refine Goals and Action Steps.
- Session 4: Finalize the Strategic Plan.

### **Role of Facilitators**

Planners should identify a neutral party to serve as a facilitator for all four discussion sessions. This facilitator has an important role:

- The facilitator should not have a preconceived idea of what the state “should” be doing but rather through discussion help the teams move to consensus and action on their own ideas.
- The facilitator should prompt discussion, ask questions, encourage each branch to participate in the strategic planning process, encourage the team to think about new ideas or strategies and help the team move to action.
- The facilitator should keep notes on the teams’ discussions and help them capture a snapshot of their plans to share at the conclusion of the meeting. The SMART Goals Worksheet (Appendix G) helps teams record their goals and planned activities.
- The facilitator can encourage teams to consider new ideas presented during the sessions and by guest speakers and make revisions as necessary to involve all branches of government.

### **Pework**

Prior to hosting brainstorming discussion sessions, team members should have an opportunity to educate themselves about the selected issue. Team members should receive relevant report or related data to review prior to attending the sessions. Planners can also use the meeting to bring in experts to present on the selected topic or share important perspectives from children and families with lived experience.



## Session 1: Define and Refine the Vision.

**Objectives and Desired Outcomes of Session 1**

**Desired outcomes:**

- Teams understand the role that each branch plays in the identified issue.
- Teams have a snapshot of current practice and state-specific data.
- Teams have a starting point in the three-branch approach and an initial definition of success following initiative implementation.

Structure	Discussion questions
<p><b>Introductions</b> Team member and facilitator introductions and discussion of desired outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Three measurable goals they want to focus on that are relevant to each branch.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A performance indicator (or indicators) associated with each goal to track progress.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Action steps with associated time frames.</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator manages the flow of the discussion and encourages all to participate.</p> <p><b>Reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss reactions to materials provided prior to the session.</li> </ul> <p><b>Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As a group, team members will review challenges, potential activities and collaborations that team members had identified individually.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reflect on what success will look like after implementation of the strategic plan.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What ideas or opportunities did you learn about in your prework that resonated with your work or planned work?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Did approaches you learned about resonate with your state’s goals with regard to the issue identified?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there an expert that you would like to invite to future meetings, if the person is available?</li> </ul> <p><b>Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Based on the data, what challenges does your system appear to face with regard to the identified issue?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What activities and relevant collaborations are currently in place in each branch that can be used for this work?</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What does success look like when your state has completed and implemented the strategic plan?</li> </ul>

## Session 2: Conduct SWOT Analysis.

### Objectives and Desired Outcomes of Session 2

#### Desired outcomes:

- Teams have completed a SWOT analysis to inform goals.
- Teams have started to develop or refine their state goals, performance indicators and action steps.

#### Structure

##### Analysis

Using the SWOT Analysis Worksheet, ask each team member to identify any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to this work from each branch's perspective.

##### Planning

It's important to help the teams focus on three goals so that they can identify a manageable to-do list within the time frame of the planned three-branch approach:

- Discuss the difference between strategies and goals. When someone suggests a strategy, ask, "What is the underlying reason you would pursue that strategy?" Help them develop a goal.
- For each goal, the teams should determine one or more performance indicators they can use to measure progress toward that goal.

#### Discussion questions

##### Reflection

- Which aspects of the conversation from the first discussion session resonate with you as we dive further into developing the state strategic plan?

##### Analysis

- Round robin:** What are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with regard to moving the work forward?

##### Planning (use SMART Goals Worksheet)

- Based on the SWOT analysis, what are potential goals for your state's work?
- With regard to goals in the current draft strategic plan, are there changes you would like to make?
- Questions to consider during discussion of performance indicators for each goal:
  - What data points can paint an accurate picture of progress toward a goal?
  - What data are available in the state right now?
  - Who has access to these data?
  - How often are the data points updated?
  - Are there data to which the state teams do not currently have access but could gain access?
- If the SMART Goals Worksheet is used, walk through additional embedded questions.



## Session 3: Refine Goals and Action Steps.

### Objectives and Desired Outcomes of Session 3

**Desired outcomes:**

- Teams develop and refine goals and action steps

<b>Structure</b>	<b>Discussion questions</b>
------------------	-----------------------------

**Reflection**

- State teams will share reflections on what they have covered in sessions thus far.

**Planning**

- Teams will continue to identify or refine actions associated with each goal. They will assign roles for each team member and for stakeholders, including the implementation team.

**Barrier busting**

Teams will reflect on potential barriers and challenges to reaching the identified goals, including:

- Policies — those currently in place that hinder implementation of a strategy or those that do not exist but are needed to move forward with a strategy.
- Judicial or legislative practices or systems challenges.
- Political considerations or sensitivities.
- Communication issues.
- How will the teams’ work continue through possible transitions in gubernatorial administrations and legislative leadership?

**Reflection**

- What have you heard that reinforced what your team discussed?
- Did new ideas emerge that you would like your team to consider?

**Planning**

- Which action steps need to be taken to bring the goal to reality?
  - Consider short-term and long-term steps.
- Who will take the lead on each action step, and what is the time frame or deadline?

**Barrier busting**

- Which barriers, challenges or issues currently stand in the way of taking those actions?
- How might those barriers be addressed to move forward?
- How can the state work around barriers if they cannot be changed?

## Session 4: Finalize the Strategic Plan.

### Objectives and Desired Outcomes of Session 4

#### Objectives:

- Solidify action steps.
- Understand which team members are responsible for each action step.
- Determine the timeline for moving forward.

#### Desired outcomes:

- Teams finalize action steps.
- Identify the next meeting date.

### Structure

#### Review and assessment

Review the plan (or SMART Goal Worksheet), paying particular attention to action steps that have been identified for each SMART goal. Also review the timeline for undertaking both short- and long-term actions to keep timelines manageable. Make adjustments as needed.

#### Preparing for the next session

Walk the teams through preparing for the next session, including gaining individual commitments from team members prior to the next meeting.

### Discussion questions

#### Review and assessment

- In total, how does this look? Will it get you where you want to go?
- Is it reasonable?
- Is there sufficient involvement from each branch?

#### Preparing for the next session

- When will this group convene next?
- Who else needs to be brought in?
- What needs to happen before the next session?
- What individual commitments will team members make?