

Operational Planning Guidebook

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The Need for Operational Planning

Chapter 8E of the Iowa Code, known as the Accountable Government Act or AGA, requires departments to develop operational plans and to annually review those plans and make updates as needed. Each department should submit one operational plan for their aligned organization.

What is it?

Operational planning guides day-to-day operations of the department. It is a representation of the mission; generated to define annual goals and highlight measures and metrics for those goals.

Note that the term “performance planning” has been used interchangeably with “operational planning”; moving forward, to ensure consistency and understanding, it is referred to as operational planning.

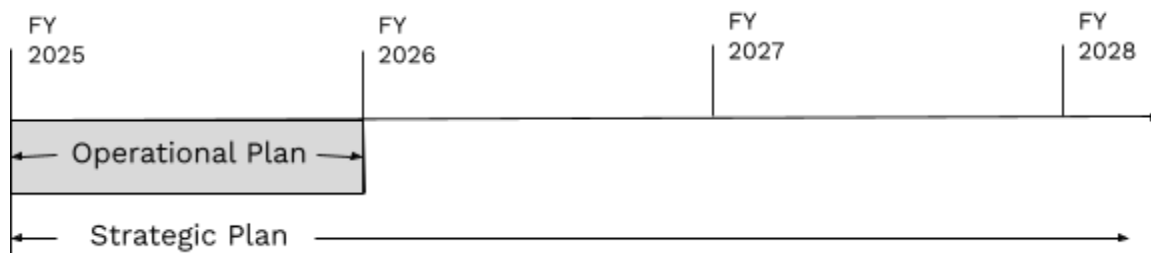
What are the benefits?

Operational plans identify goals for the year as well as strategies and actions that will be implemented to achieve those results. An effective operational planning process identifies measures and metrics for each operation and for key services, products, and/or activities.

When done well, operational planning helps employees support the achievement of goals, strategies, and actions leading to results. Operational plans also provide stakeholders with a view of current priorities for the department.

How is an operational plan different from a strategic plan?

An operational plan is a detailed outline of what the department will focus on in the current fiscal year while the strategic plan focuses on mission, vision, and high level goals for the next 3 to 5 years.



Creating the Operational Plan

When creating an operational plan, a department reviews initiatives from their strategic plan and assesses what components are actionable in the upcoming year. The State of Iowa's operational planning process requires each department to look at the upcoming fiscal year to lay out essential goals with metrics and measurements to ensure that departments remain focused on achieving their mission.

Departments are required to update their plan annually. Operational plans should highlight initiatives and targets related to strategic plan goals as well as contribute to achieving the governor's priorities. You can find more details for each of the governor's priorities at <https://governor.iowa.gov/>.

Governor's Priorities for 2024

1. Elevating Education for Every Student
2. Preparing the Next-Gen Workforce
3. Cutting Taxes
4. Supporting Health and Well-Being
5. Holding Government Accountable
6. Protecting Iowa's Farmland

A successful operational planning effort includes the commitment of department leadership and input from employees, the public, customers, and major stakeholders who have an interest and investment in the department and its success. The planning effort looks at current state, future state, and the routes that can be taken to achieve goals.

Elements of Department Operational Plans

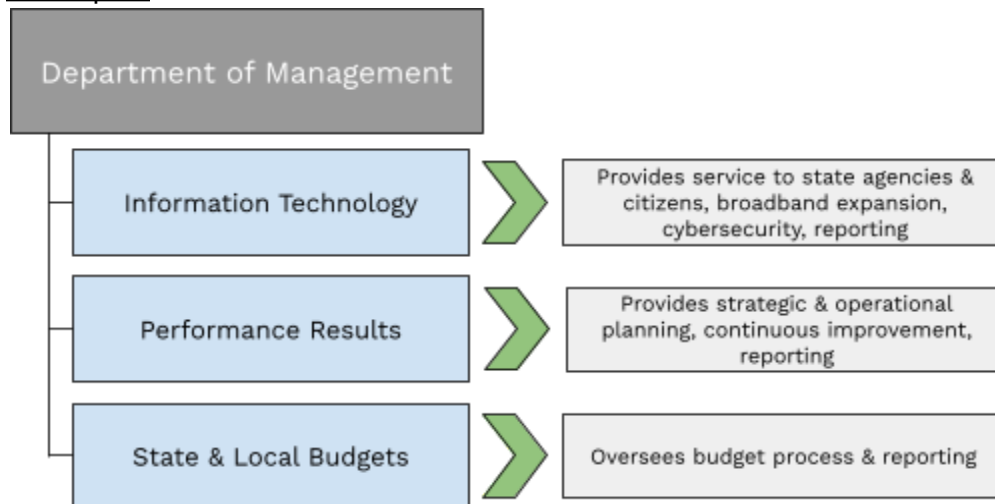
1. Organizational Structure
2. Core Functions and Key Services, Products, and/or Activities (SPAs)
3. Operational Goals for the Next Fiscal Year
4. Metrics and Measures Used to Monitor Operations

1. Organizational Structure

All operational plans should contain an overview of your organization's structure, including a high level view of the department and any bureaus. A defined organizational structure enables stakeholders to understand the role of each group within the state government.

It is a best practice to spell out any acronyms the first time they are presented (ex. Division of Information Technology vs. DoIT).

Example:



2. Core Functions and Services, Products, and/or Activities

A core function is defined as a group of key services, products, and/or activities (SPAs) designed to achieve the department's mission.

Each department is asked to define its core functions. When defining core functions questions to consider include:

- What is the primary purpose of each bureau in your department?
- What are the specific services, products, or activities that each bureau provides?

Example:

To support the Department of Management's mission, the Performance Results Office executes strategic planning processes, ensures data availability, and strengthens continuous improvement projects across the enterprise.

3. Operational Goals for the Next Fiscal Year

After core functions have been defined, goals should be identified for each core function. Operational goals are narrow in scope, easily measured, and describe a specific action or direction for FY 2025. Questions to consider when identifying goals include:

- What outcome should the Core Function or SPA have to best serve citizens?
- Are there performance gaps to be addressed?

Once goals have been established, connections should be made to identify how each goal ties to the department's strategic plan goals (SP) or the governor's priorities (GP)

Example:

The Performance Results Office goal for FY 2025 is to ensure that 100% of strategic plans submitted by departments are connected to the governor's priorities.

- This supports governor's priority 5 (Holding Government Accountable)

4. Metrics and Measures Used to Monitor Operations

Measures and metrics should be established for each core function and for each key service, product, or activity (SPA); each goal a department is working towards needs a target. Measures are used to monitor and understand progress towards goals. Metrics are the actual number-based measurements that can be used to determine if progress has been made.

Measures and metrics are essential to monitoring operations to assist stakeholders in understanding a department's performance towards their goals. The performance measures and metrics also help inform Iowans what they receive for their investment of tax dollars.

Steps to take when setting metrics and measures include:

1. Determine how progress can be measured
2. Measure the actual prior performance from most recent data (if available)
 - a. May need to establish baseline data if not available
3. Determine the target that is achievable for FY 2025
 - a. Consider if the target is to keep the current performance level, to increase service, or to decrease issues
 - b. Target should be a numeric value - ex. 90%

4. Review if the most recent performance is in line with the target
5. Plan any strategies/actions to bring or keep FY 2025 performance in line with the target

Example: The Division of Information Technology may look to achieve a goal of keeping the core network available for end-users. A potential way to measure this goal along with metrics could be the following:

Example Goal:	Example Measure:	Example Metrics:
Maximize availability of network for end-users	% of time that the core network was available	Current year target: 99.9% Prior year actual: 99.97%

In this example, we can see that the goal was able to be measured, and that the target is to maintain a similar performance level to the prior year.

If recent performance is in line with the target, the strategies or actions taken may be to employ similar resources to maintain that performance. However, if performance was below the target, a redistribution of resources may be needed to achieve expected results.

Resources

How to Use an Operational Plan

An operational plan can be used to:

- Demonstrate accountability to customers
- Guide resource allocation (annual budget) and human resource decisions, especially recruitment and hiring
- Align enterprise and employee goals by providing context and connectivity
- Serve as the foundation for reviewing organizational progress and performance
- Provide training material during employee orientation
- Drive ongoing planning and changes