

**GUIDE FOR
STATE AGENCY
STRATEGIC
PLANNING**

**State of Iowa
Revised January 2023**

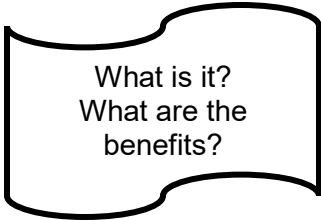
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>SECTION</i>	<i>PAGE</i>
THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING	3
CREATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN	4
Mission Statement	5
Vision Statement	7
Assessment.....	8
Guiding Principles.....	9
Goals with Measures	9
Strategies	10
Action Planning.....	11
USING THE AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN	14

THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

Chapter 8E of the Iowa Code, known as the Accountable Government Act or AGA, requires each state agency to develop a strategic plan and to annually review the plan and make updates as needed. The Department of Management is charged with adopting a format and elements for agency strategic plans. The basic format and elements outlined in this guidebook were established with the help of a team of agency leaders from across state government.

Strategic planning describes the future an agency wants to create. It is basic to an agency's effort to allocate resources and measure results. Strategic planning makes it possible to align agency goals and strategies with customer needs in the face of an ever-changing environment, targeting scarce resources to most efficiently achieve desired results. An effective strategic planning process provides the framework for reviewing customer needs, identifying key organizational challenges and considering what opportunities might be leveraged to better achieve the agencies mission and vision.



When done well, strategic planning helps agency leaders to organize, direct, and support goals, strategies and actions leading to results.

A comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process can serve as a powerful force for fostering cooperation and focus toward realization of the goals outlined in the strategic plan.

CREATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In creating a strategic plan, an organization analyzes current and historical trends and other factors to try and anticipate the future. The state of Iowa's strategic planning process asks agencies to look three to five years into the future to lay out essential goals, strategies, and measures to ensure that it remains focused on achieving its vision and mission. Agencies are required to review their plan on an annual basis, and, if appropriate, refine the plan. Agency plans should address strategic challenges or opportunities (see assessment p. 7) related to their mission, programs and services. To the extent possible, agencies should align their plans to help to contribute to achieving the Governor's priorities for Iowa. You can find more details for each priority at <https://governor.iowa.gov/>.

Governor's 2023 Priorities:

- Supporting Success at School
- Promoting Healthy Families and Communities
- Building Workforce Through Apprenticeships
- Combatting the Fentanyl Crisis
- Aligning Government to better Serve Iowans
- Protecting State Investments from ESG

Plan development requires strategic thinking regarding information from both an internal and external assessment to develop the agency's vision statement, mission statement, goals and strategies. A successful strategic planning effort requires the commitment of agency leadership and input from employees, the public, customers and major stakeholders, all of whom have an interest and investment in the agency and its success. This input can be direct, through involvement of representatives from these groups in the formal plan development process, or indirect, from needs assessments, surveys, focus groups, budget hearings or Web-based forums.

ELEMENTS OF AGENCY STRATEGIC PLANS

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Mission Statement | 5. Goals (3 to 5) with Measures |
| 2. Vision Statement | 6. Strategies |
| 3. Assessment | 7. Action Plan |
| 4. Guiding Principles* | |

* Optional

1. Mission Statement

A mission statement is a broad comprehensive statement of the agency's purpose. It defines what the agency is and why it exists. A mission statement may define a geographical location an agency operates within or an area served. The words of intent in the mission statement must be able to be translated into goals, strategies, and actions focused on results.

Criteria for a Mission Statement

- ✓ Tells what the agency does
- ✓ Tells who the agency serves
- ✓ Tells how the agency provides services
- ✓ Tells why the agency exists

Developing a Mission Statement:

Development of a mission statement is often done through a team approach. It should also reflect the benefits your stakeholders care about, while supporting key agency functions. The Iowa Code language that identifies the powers and duties of an agency or department provides an excellent starting point to begin to think about the mission.

The accompanying Mission Development Template can be a helpful tool in guiding an organization toward establishing its mission statement.

Mission Development Template
Who we are:
What we do:
Who we do it for:
How we do it:
Why we do it:
MISSION STATEMENT:

Mission Statement Examples

- **Iowa College Student Aid Commission**
 - We advocate for and support Iowans as they explore, finance and complete educational opportunities beyond high school to increase family and community success. (2019-2021 Strategic Plan)
- **Iowa Utilities Board**
 - The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) regulates utilities to ensure that reasonably priced, reliable, environmentally responsible, and safe utility services are available to all Iowans. (2019-2023 Strategic Plan)
- **Iowa Workforce Development**
 - We power Iowa's possibilities by connecting workers to opportunities and employers to workforce solutions. (2018-2023 Strategic Plan)
- **Department of Cultural Affairs**
 - We empower Iowa to build and sustain culturally vibrant communities by connecting Iowans to the people, places and points of pride that define our state. (2019-2021 Strategic Plan)
- **Department of Veterans Affairs**
 - To serve veterans and their families; to connect veterans with their benefits; to provide dignified services, compassionate family assistance, and high-quality operations at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery. (2018-2022 Strategic Plan)

2. Vision Statement

A vision statement describes the agency in the future. A great vision statement is one that will not only inspire and challenge, but will also be meaningful enough that employees will be able to relate it to their jobs.

Developing a Vision Statement: Vision statements can be set by the organization's leader(s) or crafted through a more participatory or team approach. The participatory process needs to take place in a setting where everyone's opinion is valued and everyone feels free to be creative.

Criteria for a Vision Statement

- ✓ Descriptive of the future
- ✓ Brief
- ✓ Inspiring
- ✓ Challenging
- ✓ Believable

Vision Statement Examples

- **Iowa Workforce Development (IWD)**
 - To create, enable and sustain the most future ready workforce in the nation. (2018-2023 Strategic Plan)
- **Department of Human Services**
 - The Iowa Department of Human Services makes a positive difference in the lives of Iowans we serve. (2020-2021 Strategic Plan)
- **Iowa College Student Aid Commission (ICSAC)**
 - All Iowans can achieve an education beyond high school. (2019-2021 Strategic Plan)
- **Iowa Utilities Board**
 - The Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) is valued as the regulatory expert and solutions-oriented partner regarding utility issues. (2019-2023 Strategic Plan)
- **Department of Cultural Affairs**
 - Iowa will be a state that fosters creativity and serves as a catalyst for innovation, job creation and a positive community culture for all. (2019-2021 Strategic Plan)

3. Assessment

An effective assessment identifies the internal strengths and limitations of an agency, as well as external threats and opportunities. It also evaluates an agency's capacity to respond to issues identified and determines whether or not those issues are of a critical nature. It should include a review of resources, agency structure, services, products, activities, mandates, and policies that support or hinder the achievement of desired results. In brief, the assessment process analyzes major factors that are likely to influence how a vision and mission are carried out and anticipates barriers to achieving results.

The external assessment paints a picture of the environment in which an agency is operating. The assessment should identify the challenges and opportunities that may impact the agency during the time period addressed by the strategic plan. The content of external assessments will vary from agency to agency, based on agencies' missions, clientele, and history; therefore there is no "cookie cutter" to guide the creation of external assessments. There are some useful criteria that are likely to prove relevant to the design of external assessments for different agencies. These include the following:

- A description of the population served by the agency, and major trends affecting that population. The choice of exactly what factors should be included in the trend analysis is specific to each agency and its role. For agencies that serve the general population, census data are likely to be a significant source of information. For agencies that primarily serve other state agencies, information on the state workforce and trends affecting it may be relevant.
- Public opinion survey data, customer satisfaction survey data, and focus group data on perceptions of the agency are likely candidates for inclusion in an external assessment. Data do not always exist or may not be current, but this type of information can be useful if available.
- Information on national or state trends in areas directly relevant to the mission of the agency may be useful elements to include in an external assessment. Examples might include data on crime, traffic accidents, or fire loss for the Department of Public Safety, data on poverty rates for the Department of Human Services, or data on unemployment trends or labor market information for Iowa Workforce Development. Note that data useful in an external assessment *may* be data that the agency collects and publishes.
- Systematic trend data is optimal for inclusion in the external assessment, but carefully chosen anecdotal information may also be useful to include. This should be done cautiously, as there is a risk of choosing such information in a selectively biased manner.

4. Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are the core values and philosophies describing how an agency conducts itself in carrying out its mission. Guiding principles are a foundation of beliefs supporting the vision and mission. They guide decision-making and the way the agency does business.

NOTE: Having guiding principles in your strategic plan is optional. For many agencies using the State of Iowa Guiding Principles is a good option. Other agencies may wish to expand upon these with additional guiding principles that are important to their agency, or develop their own.

State of Iowa Guiding Principles

- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Strategic Planning/Deployment
- ✓ Customer Focus
- ✓ Performance Measurement & Analysis
- ✓ Employee Engagement
- ✓ Continuous Improvement/Lean
- ✓ Results

5. Goals with Measures

Goals are the desired benefits or results to be achieved to carry out the mission of the agency and fulfill the vision. Goals are broad statements that often require coordinated action or collaboration and may involve more than one agency. They are statements of intent that set future direction, in a way that is measurable. For Iowa's strategic planning purposes, agencies should identify three to five goals that extend three to five years into the future.

Criteria for a Goal

- Results-oriented
- Important
- Useful
- Measurable
- Reflective of the assessment findings
- Realistic
- Contributes to agency vision, mission or an Enterprise Goal

Iowa State government's focus on achieving results for Iowans changes the expectations of employees, stakeholders, and customers. It is no longer sufficient to just have results-oriented goals. It is also necessary to measure the impact we are having and to know where we are on the path to achieving results. We do this with performance measures.

There are several kinds of performance measures that are often referred to as a "family of measures." As with any "family," each member can provide critical information but it takes all of the members to paint the picture in full detail. However, it is crucial that we be prudent about what and how we measure.

Goals Examples

- Improve the voluntary compliance with Iowa's tax system.
- Empower local communities to address youth development and juvenile justice issues.
- Reduce the impact of illegal drugs on Iowa citizens.
- All children will be raised in a safe and secure environment.
- Ensure that Iowa has enough workers with the necessary skills to meet current and future workforce needs.

Measures Examples

- Percent of tax due but not paid.
- Percent of local planning regions with comprehensive strategic plans for youth development and juvenile justice that identify potential multi-source funding.
- Percent of criminals sentenced to prison or jail for illegal drug offenses or with illegal substance abuse problems.
- Founded child abuse and neglect rate.
- Percent of employers surveyed indicating satisfaction with availability of qualified workers

6. Strategies

Criteria for Strategy Development

- ✓ Customer focused
- ✓ Cost and benefit effective
- ✓ Best alternative given constraints
- ✓ Realistic

Strategies are general methods or overall approaches targeted toward achieving goals. Strategies do not provide specifics on what steps need to be carried out; they provide direction or pathways to achieving the goals. In a strategic plan, strategies show generally what kinds of approaches will be pursued to achieve goals.

Strategies Examples

Goal: Ensure that Iowa has enough workers with the necessary skills to meet current and future workforce needs.

Strategies:

- Identify demand occupations by region and regularly share the information with job seekers, workforce partners, economic developers, and training entities.
- Ensure that the size of Iowa's workforce is adequate to support and grow our current future economy.
- Lead and guide Iowa's employment and training system to provide quality services to our workforce and to our businesses.

7. Action Planning

Strategies should be linked to an action plan, which outlines the tactical follow-up to implement strategies. The action plan identifies the specific steps, timelines and responsible parties for implementing each strategy. Following (pages 9 through 11) is an example of a partially completed action plan template. The action plan develops from the broad goal to multiple strategies designed to achieve the goal and, finally, to the specific actions steps intended to implement the strategies.

Example Action Plan

Goal 1

Ensure that Iowa has enough workers with the necessary skills to meet current and future workforce needs

Strategies	Actions	Person(s) Responsible	Due Date
<p>1. Identify and expand targeted training opportunities that reflect State and regional demands for workforce skills.</p>	<p>a. Identify demand occupations by region and regularly share the information with job seekers, workforce partners, economic developers, and training entities.</p> <p>b. On-going development of workshops, training opportunities and projects promoting soft skill development; e.g. Workplace Essentials & IA Advantage.</p> <p>c. Establish and expand work skills assessment & certification programs.</p> <p>d. Identify resources and methods, including distance learning and short-term opportunities, to expand job specific training programs</p> <p>e. Develop and initiate activities to provide information to K-12 institutions and students on careers in Iowa's current and future economy.</p> <p>f. Identify resources that promote the local development of innovative training programs and best practices.</p>		

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2. Lead and guide Iowa's employment and training system to provide quality services to our workforce and to our businesses.
 - a. Establish operational guidelines for One-Stop Centers in order to promote strong local partnerships and consistent, effective services.
 - b. Expand I-Works electronic tracking and case management system to encompass all major employment and training programs operated by or through IWD.
 - c. Provide annual training opportunities to all Regional Workforce Investment Boards (RWIBS).
 - d. Establish policies which require RWIBs to engage independent staff to assist the board in its planning and oversight responsibilities.
 - e. Provide State technical assistance and State-directed opportunities to promote regional economic development activities, including multi-regional and inter-State initiatives.

USING THE AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan may be the single most important document an agency possesses. The benefits of a strategic plan may include the following:

- Guides decisions on resource allocation (annual budget).
- Facilitates the development and use of performance measures.
- When used in conjunction with performance measures, gauges progress towards desired results.
- Can help to align enterprise and employee goals (provides the “big picture of connectivity.”)
- Guides human resource decisions, especially recruitment and hiring.
- Provides an excellent vehicle for on-going employee communications, and to promote and market your products and services to your customers.
- Can be used at staff meetings as the foundation for reviewing progress and continually soliciting input.
- Can be used for employee orientation.
- Can be used as the cornerstone for on-going planning changes (don’t need a “new” plan every year).
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- Can be used with performance data to demonstrate accountability to customers.
- Can be used as a tool for employee performance plans and evaluations.
- Can be used as the foundation for making decisions on proceeding or not proceeding with future opportunities.

Revisiting and revising the strategic plan annually will help keep it relevant and useful, although it does not need to be rewritten annually. Agencies should consider a major rewrite every three to five years, when circumstances substantially change goals or the operating environment.