Strategic Action Plan (SAP) Decision Tree and Table

Instructions:

This decision tree was created to facilitate your Strategic Action Planning by guiding you through five steps. Please complete each of the following steps carefully and thoughtfully:

- Step 1. Stating the problem or goal
- Step 2. Defining the objectives
- Step 3. Establishing indicators
- Step 4. Deciding on strategies
- Step 5. Planning actions.

If you wish, you can use the table at the end of this document to fill in the pertinent information after each step (you can add rows to this table as needed).

The number of objectives, strategies, and actions indicated in this decision tree is meant to serve as a guideline for your planning process and should not be considered a requirement; feel free to adjust the number of objectives, strategies and actions depending on your needs.

Definitions:

- *Problem statement:* A statement that views the difficulties, obstacles, or deficiencies of an organization which should be resolved.
- *Goal statement:* A purpose statement that has a long-term vision as to the strategic achievement that is sought by an organization. Sometimes thought of as a "long term, strategic objective" or "mini-visions".
- *Objective:* A statement that is relatively short-term and can be defined by measurable strategies and actions. The objective seeks to help achieve an overall goal or solve a problem.
- *Indicator:* A way to measure or evidence that the objective has been achieved.
- *Strategy:* A statement that responds to the objective by indicating the approach or tactic that will be used to achieve and resource said objective.
- *Action:* Statement about the steps that need to be executed in order to achieve the strategy.

Step 1. Stating the Problem or Goal

Reflect on the "big issue" that you believe needs to be addressed in your faculty. Think about possible "problem statements" or, alternatively, "goal statements" that you can draw from this big issue. Jot your ideas down and pick one problem or goal statement for the next step.

What is the problem you want to resolve or what goal do you want to achieve? (This should be written as one brief statement).

Reflect on the possible underlying causes of the problem or problems that should be resolved before you address the problem you are thinking about. Alternatively, reflect on the possible underlying goals that you should achieve before you achieve the goal you are thinking about.

Is this "problem" truly what I want to solve? Alternatively, is this "goal" truly what I want to achieve?

Y

Continue to Step 2 where you will define two to three objectives to either address the problem or achieve the goal. Use the problem or goal statment defined here as your starting point.

N

There is a different, larger or underlying issue that I should be targeting before I address this problem. Alternatively, there are different, larger, or underlying achievements I should be reaching before I can address this goal.

Go back and refine your problem or goal statement until you feel you are really expressing the underlying problem that you want to solve or the larger goal you want to achieve. You may benefit from returning to your initial reflection about your faculty's "big issue" and looking at the alternative statements you jotted down.

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Step 2. Defining the Objectives

Begin with the finalized problem or goal statement from Step 1. Repeat Step 2 two or three times in order to define two or three specific objectives as follows.

What do you want to achieve with regard to the problem or goal? That is, what is the objective? (This should be written as one brief statement).

Reflect on whether the objective truly responds to the problem/goal or whether it responds to a different problem/goal.

Does the objective respond to my problem/goal?

Y

N

Is the objective something that is within your scope as a Dean/Director/Other?

Will you have all the resources needed to complete the objective (e.g., financial, infrastructure, human, time)?

Do you have the time left in your term to achieve this objective (or will it be sustained by the person who follows you)?

Is the objective aligned with institutional strategic planning?

Y

N

Continue to Step 3 where you will define indicators for each objective. Use the two or three objectives defined in this step as your starting point.

Go back and refine the objective until you feel it is really responding to your problem/goal.

Go back and refine the objective so that it (1) is within your scope, (2) can be achieved with the resources you have available to you, (3) can be achieved with the time you have left (or can be sustained by the person who follows you), and (4) is aligned with your institutional strategic plan. If needed, return to "Step 1".

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Step 3. Establishing Indicators and Defining Possible Branching Points

Begin Step 3 with the objectives defined in Step 2. You should repeat Step 3 at least once for each objective, but you can do so more times in order to have more than one indicator per objective.

What evidence will you accept as an indicator that you have achieved the objective? How will you know you have been successful?

Can the indicator occur because of an external factor or due to something other than having achieved the objective?

N

If after the proposed timeline the objective has not been achieved, how will you measure advances with regard to the indicator?

Continue to Step 4 where you will decide on strategies that will help you achieve your objective (strategies which will also give you evidence that you have reached your objective).
Use the objectives defined in Step 2 and the indicators defined in this step as your starting point.

Y

Go back and refine the indicator until you feel it is something that can occur only (or at least mostly) in response to having achieved your objective (e.g., it cannot occur because of because the law in your country changed). That is, refine your indicator until you feel it will truly *evidence* that you have fulfilled your objective.

Step 4. Deciding on Strategies

Begin Step 4 with the two or three Objectives defined in Step 2 (and keep in mind the indicators defined in Step 3). For each objective, repeat Step 4 two to four times in order to decide on two to four strategies for each objective as follows.

How will you achieve the objective? That is, what strategy do you need to implement in order to reach your objective? (This should be written as one brief statement).

Reflect on whether the strategy is the best and most direct way to achieve your objective. Remember that strategies usually do not stand on their own but are, instead, usually accompanied by other strategies.

Does the strategy help achieve the objective?

Y

Is the strategy feasible?

Will you have all the resources needed to complete the objective (e.g., financial, infrastructure, human, time)?

Do you have the time left in your term to achieve this objective (or will it be sustained by the person who follows you)?

If the strategy needs to be sustained through time, is it sustainable?

Y

Continue to Step 5 where you will define actions for each strategy. Use the strategies defined in this step as your starting point.

N

N

Go back and refine the strategy until you feel it is helping achieve the objective.

Go back and refine the strategy so that it (1) is feasible, (2) can be achieved with the resources you have available to you, (3) can be achieved with the time you have left (or can be sustained by the person who follows you), and (4) is sustainable. If needed, return to "Step 2".

Step 5. Planning Actions

Begin Step 5 with the strategies defined in Step 4. For each strategy, repeat Step 5 two to four times in order to decide on two to four actions for each strategy as follows.

Reflection questions you should consider when planning your actions:
- Who has to participate in the action? Will they cooperate with the action? How can you ensure that they do?
- What areas external to your academic unit need to be involved? Do you have the capacity to get them involved?

Define what kind of (corrective) actions will be implemented if you do not reach the expected milestones.

What action should be taken to achieve the proposed strategies? That is, what steps need to be performed in order to complete the strategies? (Each action should be written as a brief statement).

What resources (e.g., financial, infrastructure, human, time) do I need to execute the action?

Do I have the necessary resources to execute the action?

Y

Who will be responsible for the action?

Will this person fulfill the action?

Y

What is the timeline needed to complete this action?

Is there enough time to complete the action?

Y

N

Go back and refine your action until you feel you have the resources needed to execute it. Alternatively, plan on how to ensure the resources that you need to complete the action

N

Refine the action or the person responsible for the action until you feel the person responsible for it will fulfil it adequately. Alternatively, plan the actions that will be necessary to ensure this person adequately fulfils the action.

N

Refine your action or the timeline until you feel there is enough time to complete the action. Alternatively, plan the actions that will be necessary to ensure the original timeline suffices.

Strategic Action Plan Table

Goal or Problem Statement:						
Objectives	**Indicators**	**Strategies**	**Actions**	**Required Resources**	**Responsible**	**Timeline**
Objective 1	Indicator 1 (Indicator 2) (Indicator 3)	Strategy 1	Action 1	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
			Action 2	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
		Strategy 2	Action 1	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
			Action 2	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
			Action 3	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
		Strategy 3	Action 1	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
			Action 2	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
Objective 2	Indicator 1 (Indicator 2) (Indicator 3)	Strategy 1	Action 1	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
			Action 2	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
			Action 3	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
		Strategy 2	Action 1	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
			Action 2	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
Objective 3	Indicator 1 (Indicator 2) (Indicator 3)	Strategy 1	Action 1	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
			Action 2	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
			Action 3	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time
		Strategy 2	Action 1	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1	Time
			Action 2	Resource 1, Resource 2, Resource 3	Person 1, Person 2	Time