OSSE

School Planning Guide

What are we trying to do?
How are we planning to do it?
At any given moment, how will we know whether we are on track?
If we are not on track, what are we going to do about it?

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The mission of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is to remove barriers and create pathways for District residents to receive a great education and prepare them for success in college, careers, and life.

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Introduction

"A GOAL WITHOUT A PLAN IS JUST A WISH." - ANONYMOUS

Plans are essential. Constructing and using a plan gives stakeholders an opportunity to become clear on their goals and articulate everyone's roles and responsibilities to achieve them. While embarking on a planning process can be daunting, using a clear, specific process can make the process much more effective and efficient. This guide is intended to provide school teams with the knowledge and tools that they need to quickly develop a functioning implementation plan. It can also be a useful resource for local education agency (LEA) leaders to use with their school teams. Plan development can be all-consuming if we let it be, but if we appropriately limit its scope and focus on the key improvement strategies, plans are not only manageable to produce but also truly helpful as we do our work in our schools.

This guide contains suggested tools and processes to answer **four critical questions** that are the foundation of a good plan:

■   What are we trying to do?

■   How are we planning to do it?

■   At any given moment, how will we know whether we are on track?

■   If we are not on track, what are we doing to do about it?

While this guide is written as sequential phases in a process, many schools begin with some pieces already in place – you may not need to start from the very beginning. LEAs and school leaders are encouraged to use this guide as a flexible tool to help teams improve outcomes for students. To use this guide, you will need a dedicated school leadership team and be able to commit to meeting regularly to develop the plan's contents. If done well, the outcome will be a document that prioritizes and clearly defines the work underway at your school for all involved and drives continuous improvement.

Planning Process Summary and Timeline

This guide contains a series of planning phases, tools, and exercises to complete your plan. The table on the next page presents each of the phases included in this guide, along with guiding materials and the approximate time required for each phase. Each school's planning process will be different and your school may emphasize or deemphasize some phases depending on need. For this reason, there is an additional column included in the table for you to use to map out your own timeline, factoring in the realities at your school. As you work your way through this document, return to this table and consider when you may be able to complete each step. This planning process can be completed in as short as five weeks, but may take longer depending on scheduling constraints or the amount of stakeholder engagement necessary.

The amount of time needed will also depend on your school context. Most school teams find that planning beyond a four year period is too demanding, while planning for a time period shorter than two years means your team will be spending too much time revising the plan.

PLANNING PROCESS SUMMARY TABLE

Planning Phase	Guiding Materials	Estimated Time Required	Your Draft Timeline
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Phase 4: Planning your strategies	■ Exercise: planning your strategies ■ Appendix F: Planning Your Strategies Template	■ 4 hour meeting ■ Allow one week after the meeting for strategy finalization	
Phase 5: Monitoring progress	■ Table 3: Characteristics of good routines ■ Appendix E: Routines rubric ■ Tables 4 and 5: Sample routine schedules ■ Appendix H: Assessment Framework ■ Exercise: calibrate and set routine objectives ■ Appendix I: Assessment Framework rating template ■ Appendix J: Routine Agenda template ■ Exercise: The routine	■ As plan is finalized or immediately after finalization ■ 1 hour to define progress monitoring routine objectives each time a routine is held ■ 1-2 hours to hold each progress monitoring routine	

Phase 1: Pre-Planning

While a fairly straightforward step, spending time before your planning begins will be important. There are three key questions to consider during this phase:

- What is our timeline for completing the plan?

- Who are the key people to engage on the planning team?

- Which stakeholders groups should be engaged throughout the process?

Assembling your planning team should be done thoughtfully. Since this plan will emphasize the greatest priorities at your school, the team most directly involved with the process should possess the authority to make the necessary decisions. Teams are usually comprised of the school principal and other key individuals, such as assistant principals, representatives from instructional personnel, support personnel, teacher assistants, and parents. In secondary schools, consider including a student representative. Try to balance representation and the size of your team. Stakeholder groups who are not represented on the core planning team can still be included in your guiding coalition, described below. **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** can be used to capture the major stakeholders that are supporting the work.

Most members of the planning team will become **strategy leads**, or the individuals who are responsible for seeing through the work described in the plan. Strategy leads are not necessarily the ones completing all of the tasks associated with their strategy, but they are the ones who are ultimately in charge of making sure the work proceeds as planned and, if there are bumps in the road, determining what can be done to address them. For example, if your planning team determines that professional learning communities (PLCs) are a key strategy for improving student outcomes, the plan will designate one strategy lead who will ensure that PLCs, as envisioned in the plan, are implemented effectively at the school by engaging with staff who will regularly plan and run them. While it is likely that most strategy leads will be members of the school's planning team, the identification of strategy lead can also take place after the plan is drafted if a natural fit becomes clear after that time.

There will be other individuals who represent stakeholder groups that you will want to consult as you plan. This is your **guiding coalition**, the people whose feedback you will seek as you write your plan, but who are not members of the planning team. Members of this coalition may represent groups that are not already included in the planning team, such as parent groups, community groups, or other stakeholder groups.

It is important to define clear roles among your team for the planning process. **Table 1** contains the questions to consider when designating members of your planning team, as well as recommended answers.

Question	Answer
■ Who will be the point person who manages logistics for the planning process?	■ This is usually a single person, either an assistant principal or a high-capacity administrative staff person who has the trust of educators at the school, who can effectively schedule the meetings and keep everyone informed of their expected roles and responsibilities.
■ Who will actually write the plan?	■ Each strategy lead, described on the previous page, will be responsible for writing their own Strategy Profile (Strategy Profiles are introduced on in Phase 3), so these individuals are important to include at the beginning of the process where possible. ■ However, there should be one lead writer who combines and finalizes all Strategy Profiles into one coherent document. This role could be held by the point person described above, but does not have to be.
■ Who will facilitate team exercises?	■ This person will have an important role, and should be someone who can be trusted to lead a difficult conversation. The facilitator will help the team complete the exercises in this guide as efficiently as possible, ensure that the planning process is on track, support strategy leads, and hold the team accountable for developing a strong plan. ■ This can be the same person who holds one or both of the above responsibilities, but again, does not have to be.
■ Whose approval do we need before the plan can be finalized?	■ Approvers will always include the principal, but could also include board members if you are a charter school, or central office staff if you work within a traditional local education agency (LEA).
■ Who else should be consulted?	■ Beyond the planning team, it will be important to consult your guiding coalition; teachers, parents, students, and other school staff to inform and provide feedback on the plan.

With the timeline, planning team, and stakeholders identified, you are ready to get started! We suggest providing an overview of the process and the date for the goal setting meeting as a first step. You might also consider scheduling the subsequent meetings to ensure that there is a clear schedule for completing all five phases.

Phase 2: Setting Goals

When planning and prioritizing your work, a logical first question is, "What are we trying to do?" or, "What are we hoping to achieve?" Many schools have existing mission or vision statements, which are a good start but often do not explicitly mention the measureable student outcomes that the school is working to achieve. Being clear about the answer to these questions is important because understanding what you are trying to achieve is necessary in order to ensure you actually achieve it. If your school has a stated mission or vision, or if your LEA has developed broader goals for your school or the entire LEA, you are encouraged to think about how your goals align and to seek input from LEA leaders.

Review Past Performance to Determine Root Causes

Before you can set the goals in your plan your team must understand the root causes of current challenges at your school. It is recommended that schools designate one person to collect and analyze relevant data so that your team clearly understands and agrees on strengths and areas for improvement at your school in terms of student outcomes and the status of implementation on existing initiatives currently underway.

Table 2 outlines suggested questions that your data will answer, as well as example data sources that other schools have used to answer those questions.

Table 2: Questions and data for assessing past performance

Question	Example data sources
■ In what subjects or grades are our students performing well? Not performing well?	■ School formative and summative assessments ■ District formative and summative assessments ■ State summative assessment ■ Response to Intervention (RTI/Student Support Team (SST) data ■ Suspension and enrollment data ■ Teacher evaluations
■ Which student subgroups in our school are performing well? Not performing well?	■ School formative and summative assessments ■ District formative and summative assessments ■ State summative assessment
■ Which existing interventions are going well? Not going well?	■ Intervention implementation data ■ Student attendance data ■ Teacher attendance data ■ Exit tickets from intervention/tutoring sessions ■ Professional development evaluations from teachers ■ Observation data
■ What are the biggest needs of teachers and students in our school right now?	■ Staff/school climate survey ■ Parent survey ■ Student survey

A quality data analysis will be crucial to help your team develop a shared understanding of current strengths and challenges if one does not already exist.

Example from the field: A Washington D.C. Charter School

Like many schools, a charter school in DC wondered to what extent student misbehavior was correlated with lower academic performance. The conventional wisdom on this question is clear and logical: students who misbehave in class are not spending time learning, and are therefore less likely to achieve.

The school went a level deeper, however. Teachers were asked to code student misbehavior into specific, escalating categories, from simply talking out of turn to a full-blown tantrum and various levels in between.

After analyzing the data, educators at the school discovered that students who most frequently displayed minor types of misbehavior – they used the threshold of the students with the top 10% of incidents – showed no difference in outcomes than their peers. Students who were responsible for the most disruptive incidents, however, were less likely to be successful in each subject and grade level. This result held even after factoring students' remediation status, behavioral or otherwise. This analysis had real implications the school's behavior management policy. It told teachers that filling tutorial slots with minor offenses was an inefficient use of resources. Remediation sessions became smaller and targeted the students who needed the most support, and school leaders are regularly monitoring whether the approach is showing indicators of success.

Decide on Your Goals

Your first task when sitting down with your planning team is to answer the question, "What are we trying to do?" Initially, the answer could appear obvious: "Raise student achievement!" However, everyone in your school will benefit from a goal or goals that are well-defined, measureable, and represent significant gains for students at your school. You want each person at your school, educators and students alike, to be able to easily recall or recite the goals in your plan.

You likely already have goals that are set for you through statute or district policy. For this plan, you may want to select the most meaningful of those goals or set goals beyond these if you believe that they should be more ambitious or targeted for your school environment. For schools that are classified as "Focus" or "Priority" schools because of the underperformance of a specific subgroup or the entire school, you may need to develop goals that specifically target areas that led to the school's identification.

To make these goals meaningful for your plan, they need to be SMART:

- Specific: Clearly defined, straightforward, and easily generated without complex calculations

- Measureable: Easy to measure using agreed-upon methods, and benchmarked against reliable data

- Attainable: Represents transformative change in the school, but reflective of what has been achieved elsewhere with hard work

- Relevant: Connected to the strategies in your plan and reflective of the needs of students in the school

- Time-bound: Given a clear deadline, and able to be measured at a frequency that will allow for problem-solving

To ensure this plan focuses on your most impactful work, *it is encouraged that your team choose no more than three SMART goals*, with at least one defined in terms of student outcomes. Having a strong rallying cry ("Everyone will graduate ready for college and careers!") is great, but school staff will want to know what that means in terms of measureable outcomes.

Example from the field: Laurie Barron and Smoky Road Middle School

For eight years, Laurie Barron served as Principal of Smokey Road Middle School, a Title I school in Georgia with historically low performance. Early in her tenure, Principal Barron knew that she needed to make some major changes in the school in order to improve student performance, but she was not sure where to start. She recognized that she needed to focus the school on a few areas of improvement in order to make progress. The objective of those goals were (in order of priority):

1) Get kids to school
2) Keep kids safe
3) Build relationships
4) Focus on teaching

Each of these goals were aligned with SMART metrics to measure the school's progress.

By the end of Principal Barron's tenure, Smokey Road Middle School students were achieving above the state average, and had eliminated achievement gaps for students with disabilities in math. Based on her hard work, Principal Barron earned the MetLife Middle School Principal of the Year award in 2013.

Note: Some readers may notice that the four goals in this example contradict the rule suggested in the above paragraph to limit to no more than three goals. In Smokey Road's case, Laurie Baron did not move on to the next goal until she had achieved the one before it, so in fact this approach represents a step-by-step series of one-goal plans for the school.

Examples of SMART goals include:

■ College- and career-readiness: 80% of students who take an Advanced Placement AP course will score a 3 or above on the AP assessment each year.

■ Growth: 80% of students in grades three to eight will show improvement based on their math or English/Language Arts index value.

■ Attendance: 90% of our students will attend school each day during the school year.

The exercise below describes how your team could conduct a conversation to set goals.

Exercise: Setting Goals (2-3 Hours)	
Time	Activity

■ 30 mins	■ Individually, review your data analysis and consider the following
	  — Where are we seeing success? Where have we struggled for several years?
	  — Where are we succeeding and struggling more than our peers (similar schools, district average, etc.)?

■ 45 mins	■ As a group, discuss the following and record on flip chart paper/white board
	  — Which areas of challenge are the most important to address now?
	  — What is the rationale for focusing on these areas first?
	  — What past and present goals exist and how could they apply to this process and goals for this plan?

■ 60 mins	■ As a group, define your goals (see example below)
	  — Choose up to three areas of focus and define the metric that you will use to measure progress
	  — Complete your goal(s) by noting the current status according to your chosen metric, the target for that metric, the target year, and any supporting data that you will use to measure progress (15 minutes)

■ 15 mins	■ As a group, agree on next steps for goal finalization
	  — Who else needs to be involved?
	  — When is a realistic deadline for finalizing goals?

Example outputs from goal setting exercise (see **Appendix C** for blank template; repeat for third goal if desired)

Area of Focus 1: Improve third grade reading proficiency Metric: Percent of third graders proficient in reading on annual state test	Area of Focus 2: Improve school-wide attendance rate Metric: Percent of students present at 9 am, according to teacher attendance records
Current status (baseline): 53% of third graders proficient in reading Target: 80% of third graders proficient in reading Target year: In two years Supporting data: District formative assessment	Current status (baseline): average of 84% daily attendance Goal: 95% of students are present at 9 AM each day Target year: Next year Supporting data: Suspension rate
Next steps to finalize this goal: Benchmark against past performance at other schools in our district Deadline to finalize goal: Next week	Next steps to finalize this goal: None Deadline to finalize goal: Completed

After this exercise, your logistics lead and lead writer (if these are different people) can refine and finalize the goal language, then ensure that school leaders have an opportunity to review the goal and give their final approval.

You should share your proposed goals with all educators at the school and with parents. Building buy-in for your goals and the planning process is powerful; however, be explicit in the role parents and teachers will play in the planning process. Your team will need to decide to what extent you will seek input from school stakeholders broadly and anticipate implications for your timeline.

Phase 3: Identifying and Prioritizing Strategies

The next step in the planning process is to address how you are planning to achieve your goal(s). In other words, you know what you are trying to do; now how are you planning to do it? Answering this question will require reflecting on the strategies currently underway at your school and narrowing to the ones that you will focus on more deeply. *It is strongly advised that your team not exceed five strategies in the plan*, even if you are trying to address more than one goal.

The narrowing step in the process may feel unusual to your team. Schools typically use dozens of strategies and interventions to help students succeed. For this plan to be meaningful, your team must commit to asking a tough question: "What do we absolutely need to get right in the next 1-2 years in order to hit the goal we have set?" For example, if you have been providing professional development and coaching on the shifts required under the Common Core, but it has not been effective, you may include a strategy about how you will strengthen that PD.
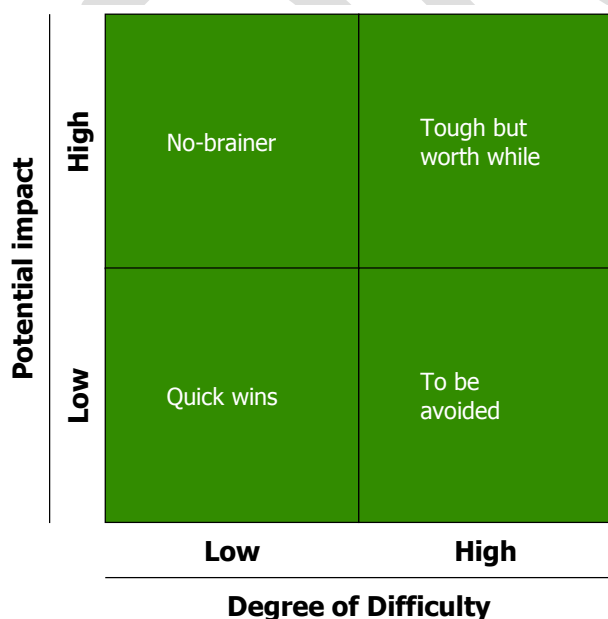
If your school has been designated as an academically struggling (Priority, Focus, or other designation) school, consider narrowing the focus even further to the one to three strategies that are going to have the biggest impact and transform learning for students.

Tool 1: 2x2 Matrix

Tool 1, the 2x2 Matrix, is very useful as you choose your strategies. The 2x2 will help your team prioritize by ranking your proposed strategies in terms of how impactful they are likely to be (in terms of number of students impacted) and how difficult they will be to implement (in terms of skill needed, resource constraints, etc.). Note here that if your team is working on two or three goals, you should complete a 2x2 Matrix for each.

Tool 1: 2x2 Matrix

Goal Statement: _____

Your team will likely already have some idea about what needs to happen at your school to reach the goal. However, as you have this conversation, the team should be willing to put "everything on the table" and potentially stop doing activities that are not having the impact needed to reach the goal. This can be a difficult conversation, but one that is essential in order for your school to accelerate student achievement.

At the conclusion of this meeting, teams should choose your strategy leads – the individuals on your team who will lead the development of each strategy – as noted earlier in this guide. Note that the actual implementation of the strategies will likely include a number of educators and school staff. The strategy lead is responsible for ensuring that everyone at your school is clear on the strategy and their roles, and will serve as the person who, at any given moment, will know whether the strategy is on track.

Exercise: Identifying and Prioritizing Strategies (3-4 Hours)	
Time	Activity
■ 15 mins	■ Individually, brainstorm on cards or post-its your proposed strategies
■ 75 mins	■ As a group, place your strategies on the 2x2 Matrix — Designate one person to facilitate the 2x2, then discuss all the strategies the team has written, placing each on the 2x2 according to potential impact and degree of difficulty (45 minutes) — As you discuss, work to create a spread on the 2x2 in order to differentiate strategies — Once all strategies are placed, consider whether any need to be moved or combined (30 minutes)
■ 60 mins	■ As a group, use your completed 2x2 to choose your one to five key strategies by discussing the following — Are any of these strategies required, or non-negotiable? (E.g., an LEA-wide initiative)? — Do you see any "quick wins" that may not have the highest potential impact but will be relatively easy to implement successfully? — Do you see any "no brainers" that will likely have a big impact on the goal but are low difficulty? — What are the strategies that are tough but worthwhile to implement?
■ 30 mins	■ With your strategies chosen, designate leads for the strategies by considering the following — Who on this team is familiar with this work already? — Who has the capacity (the will to do the work and the know-how to carry it out) to take this on? — How can you distribute responsibility to both enable a quick planning process and effective progress monitoring?
■ 30 mins	■ Once your leads are chosen, discuss the **Strategy Profile** and **Plan Rubric** (details below and in Appendix), then agree on the expectations and timeline for completion before the next meeting

Next, assign your strategy leads the task of completing a Strategy Profile for their strategy. This process can take between one and two weeks. The profiles do not have to be perfect; just in draft form so that the team can share and revise them when you meet again. The purpose of the Strategy

Profile is to ensure that everyone has a common understanding of what the strategy entails. It is not meant to be a detailed work plan – individual leads can outline develop them on their own.

Tool 2: Strategy Profile

- Description: Describe the strategy and its purpose in a sentence or two, including the impact that the strategy will have on the overall goal. Explain why the strategy was chosen (e.g., will it address the needs of a specific subpopulation of students? Is it based on best practice?)

- Definition of success: What would success look like for this specific strategy, and by when? What 1-3 measures will we use to measure success of this strategy each year?

- Lead: Who is responsible for ensuring this strategy is successful?

- Delivery Chain: How and through whom will the strategy impact student achievement?

- Scale: At what scale (number of students, educators, etc.) will it be implemented?

- Milestones: What 3-7 actions need to happen for us to ensure this strategy will help achieve the goal, and by when?

- Feedback loops: What 2-3 measurable indicators of implementation and quality – that happen between annual measures – will we use to regularly determine whether we are on track?

- Resources required: What people, time, money and professional development will be needed for successful implementation?

Strategy Profiles need not be long – three pages should be the longest you need with everything included. Refer to **Appendix D1** for an example of a completed Strategy Profile, and consider distributing this example to the team as you give the Strategy Profile assignment.

When your team reviews the completed Strategy Profiles, it will use the Planning Rubric (**Appendix E1**) to assess the quality. It is best to introduce the Planning Rubric along with the Strategy Profile to give your leads an idea of what a good plan looks like.

Phase 4: Planning Your Strategies

By the time your team comes back together, your strategy leads should have completed their Strategy Profiles and sent them to your logistics lead. During this last planning meeting, your team will review each Strategy Profile for your plan, use the Planning Rubric to assess whether any part of each profile needs to be strengthened, ask clarifying questions, and agree on refinements that your strategy leads will make before the profiles are finalized. This review is the team's final opportunity to take a close look at the strategies, what they include and do not include, and whether, taken together, they are likely to result in achieving the goal(s) in your plan.

Exercise: Planning Your Strategies (4 Hours)	
Time	Activity
■ 60 mins	■ Individually, review each Strategy Profile with the Planning Rubric – this could be done before the meeting to save time, but it is best to ensure dedicated, uninterrupted time to concentrate on this step

■ 45 mins per profile	■ As a group, discuss each Strategy Profile. For each profile, consider the following questions for discussion:
	  – Is the language within each section of the profile clear and error-free?
	  – Does this strategy overlap with any of the others and, if so, how can we clarify to avoid confusion?
	  – Is the profile rigorous enough in terms of description, scale, milestones, and feedback loops?
	  – Is it clear how this strategy impacts the goal?
	■ Record the discussion on a graphic organizer like the one in **Appendix F**

■ 15 mins	■ As a group, review agreed-upon modifications and a timeline for completion, and add to the graphic organizer (likely within 1-2 weeks)

See **Appendix F** for a template for this exercise.

After this exercise, your lead writer will have all he or she needs to combine the Strategy Profiles, and format the content to complete the plan. Once this is completed, the plan will be sufficient to drive your work, though the team may need to make some modifications to the plan as it is implemented.

Phase 5: Monitoring Progress

After setting clear goals and identifying specific strategies to achieve them, establishing a robust progress monitoring plan to consistently drive implementation is essential for success. This section details how your team can frequently and rigorously reflect on two key questions:

- At any given moment, how will we know whether we are on track?
- If we are not on track, what are we going to do about it?

While this step is presented last, your team should not wait until the plan is complete before beginning to monitor progress. Progress monitoring provides the regular checkpoints you need to make the plan drive your day-to-day work at your school. In many cases, setting the date for your first progress monitoring meeting is good for implementation and plan completion.

Routines are the mechanism by which you will check in on your plan. They are a system of progress monitoring; either in-person meetings or written notes that capture:

- Implementation progress for each strategy,

- Areas of strength and challenge in implementation, and

- The next steps needed to stay on track.

Regardless of format, all routines should meet four key characteristics, outlined in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Characteristics of good routines

Key Characteristic	Questions to Consider
Regularity	■ Happens regularly enough? ■ Correct people present?
Strong execution	■ Buy-in to purpose and preparedness? ■ Clear roles and responsibilities? ■ Participants come prepared? ■ High-quality materials? ■ Well facilitated? ■ Clear next steps?
Focus on performance	■ Clear areas of focus? ■ Shared view of performance? ■ Focus on the most important aspects?
Action on performance	■ Helps identify most critical barriers? ■ Tough questions asked? ■ Creative problem-solving? ■ Encourages learning?

The full rubric for defining and reflecting on the quality of routines is included in **Appendix G**. The rest of this section outlines how to set up and prepare for routines in order to achieve these four characteristics. Note that while the context of this section is focused on establishing new routines, it is recommended that you make use of existing meetings wherever possible and repurpose them to monitor progress as often as it appropriate.

Establishing Routines

When your team meets to assess progress, they will be able to look at the data and milestones as defined in the Strategy Profile, compare the data to where you hoped you would be, and make a judgment on the likelihood that your strategy will succeed in making its expected contribution to your goal.

Consider several questions as you establish your routines:

■ **What should be the focus of the routines?** Will the routine(s) with your school leadership team discuss progress on all strategies at once, or rotate the focus on one or two at a time?

■ **Who should participate in our routines?** For a routine to work well, you will need at least three key people:

– Principal: the person holding the strategy lead accountable

– Facilitator: the person facilitating the routine, ensuring proper preparation, curating the materials and agenda, and making sure the team sticks to the agenda (note: this does not need to be the same person who facilitated planning activities)

– Strategy lead: the person/people who take responsibility for progress on a particular strategy

■ **What format should our routines take?** Will your routines take place via in-person meetings or written updates? Or a combination of the two? The decision should depend on your team's working preferences, but an in-person meeting should be at least part of your schedule of routines (even if it is supplemented with periodic written updates).

■ **How often should our routines occur?** Depending on the urgency and pace of the work, decide how often routines should occur. If you are setting up multiple routines, consider how the schedules should build upon one another. You will want to schedule routines that occur every two to four weeks. Routines only work if the team faithfully prepares for and uses them to drive its work.

It is recommended that a schedule be created via your school's calendar tool of choice (e.g., Microsoft Outlook or Google Calendar) as soon as possible.

Prepare for Your Routines

By the time the routine actually takes place using the steps described above, the principal, facilitator, and strategy lead(s) should all have a good understanding of the content to be discussed and can move to next steps quickly. The most productive routines take place when the conversation about progress does not last long because everyone has a general sense of progress for the strategy.

There are two key elements to consider when preparing for a routine:

■ How will you rate progress?

■ How do the ratings of progress inform the focus of the routine?

The remainder of this section will include suggestions for these two questions.

How will you rate progress?

As discussed earlier, a key characteristic of an effective routine is a focus on performance, but often it can be difficult to reach a shared view of implementation progress. Moreover, data is not always available when it is needed, and it is difficult to compare implementation between strategies because each will have different measures of success (like the implementation of Response to Intervention).

The **Assessment Framework** tool standardizes the definition of success with one question: what is the **likelihood** that this strategy or plan overall will be successful? It does this by using a set of consistent and balanced criteria in three key areas for assessing the quality of implementation, then rating the overall likelihood of achieving the strategy or goal.

- Quality of planning
- Capacity to drive progress
- Evidence of progress

Tool 3: Assessment Framework

Judgement	Rating	Rationale Summary
Quality of planning	(Red / Orange / Yellow / Green)	
Capacity to drive progress	(Red / Orange / Yellow / Green)	
Evidence of progress	(Red / Orange / Yellow / Green)	

Likelihood of delivery (Red / Orange / Yellow / Green)

Key

Color	Description
Red	Highly problematic – requires urgent and decisive action
Orange	Problematic – requires substantial attention, some aspects need urgent attention
Yellow	Mixed – aspect(s) require substantial attention, some good
Green	Good – requires refinement and systematic implementation

The Assessment Framework is a **formative** tool to assist in reaching a shared view of implementation progress. The ratings provide a clear and relative picture of progress, differentiating between performance across your strategies, and identifying areas for learning (green) and areas for support, decisions, or problem solving.

The facilitator should use this tool with the strategy leads to collect and analyze relevant data, which may be quantitative data, qualitative observation data, or other information, then come to judgments.

Appendix H is the rubric to use in completing the ratings, while **Appendix I** is a tool to capture the ratings and rationale based on the rubric.

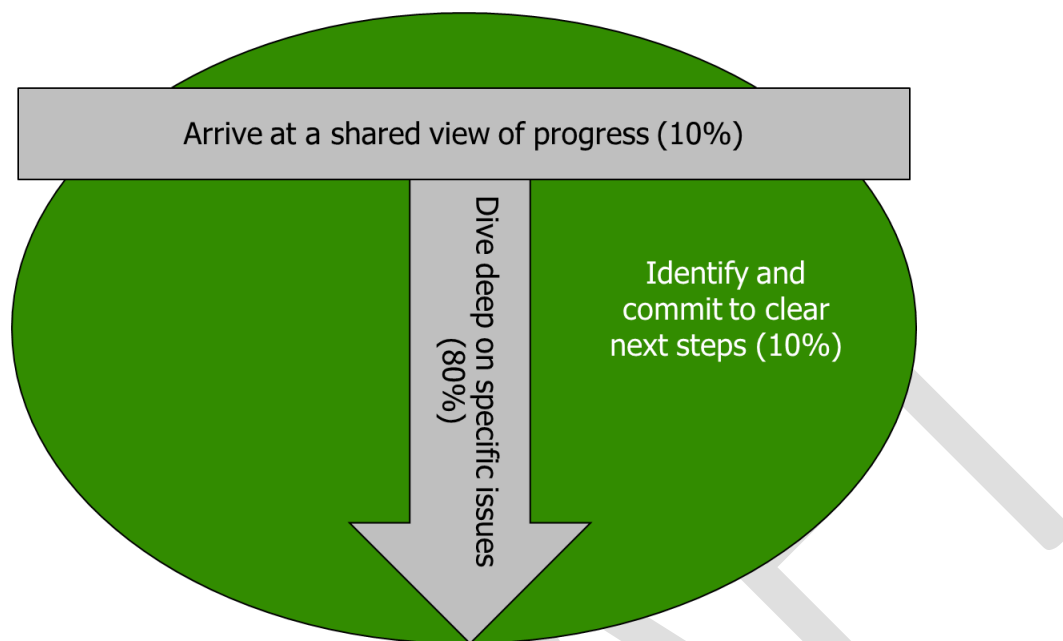**How do the ratings of progress inform the focus of the routine?**

One you have completed the Assessment Framework, you can use those ratings to establish an agenda for your routine meeting.

A good routine takes a "T-shaped" approach to the agenda, illustrated on the next page, spending 10 percent of the time on the overall picture of implementation using a succinct summary of the data, with the remaining 90 percent focused on two to three areas that require discussion, decisions, and a clear understanding of next steps.

To create the agenda, the facilitator and strategy leads should start by identifying the specific goals for the deep dive areas of the meeting. These should be informed by your Assessment Framework. Areas that were rated orange or red should be addressed in depth, and include a discussion of

challenges, next steps, and help needed. Strategy leads should come to the routine ready to propose solutions to challenges surfaced in the Assessment Framework ratings.

T-SHAPED ROUTINE

Exercise: Setting Routine Objectives (1 Hour)	
Time	Activity

■ 15 mins	■ As a group with strategy leads, review all Assessment Framework ratings and rationales. Consider the following:
	  − Do the ratings, taken as a whole, accurately reflect current progress?
	  − Does the same color rating generally reflect the same level of success or challenge across strategies or rubric categories?
	  − Do we need to change any ratings to reflect where we think we should focus during the routine?

■ 30 mins	■ Discuss in a group which 2-3 areas need special focus for the routine, and the critical pieces you need to cover. Record on a flip chart:
	  − What are our 2-3 biggest challenges for deep discussion?
	  − What do we know about why these areas are challenges? Do the data suggest what we need to do in order to improve?
	  − What decisions can we make on our own, and where to we need support from others?

■ 15 mins	■ Based on the areas of focus and the decisions or conversations needed, finalize your routine objectives.

Once you have completed your objectives, consider what you will do in the meeting to achieve them. Think about how much time each item on the agenda will take, the necessary materials you will need, and particular pieces of evidence or data to bring to the discussion. A PowerPoint presentation or written memos are important elements of a routine as well.

The routines agenda template in **Appendix J** can help to think through the objectives, how to achieve them, and the supporting materials, key facts/data and key questions/decisions for discussion. The final agenda should be shared with everyone prior to the routine so that there are no surprises.

These steps will lead to a conversation that allows you to address the final question: "If we are not on track, what are we going to do about it?" After conducting a routine, you should have concrete next steps for addressing your most important challenges.

Example from the field: Oregon turnaround schools

In 2014, the Office of School Turnaround in the Oregon Department of Education began asking its 90 turnaround schools to complete regular progress checks on the three key strategies that each school was using to improve outcomes. These strategies were defined individually by each school, and the state used the data to differentiate support to groups of schools experiencing similar challenges.

In order to provide a picture of current strengths and challenges, each school principal was asked to use the Assessment Framework to rate and provide rationales for their quality of planning, capacity, and evidence of progress for each self-identified strategy. As they began to familiarize themselves with this process, many principals saw the value of the conversation and began engaging with their entire leadership team in the exercise. This provided more complete and reliable results to the state, but more importantly, it ensured that the entire leadership team at the schools shared a common understanding of their progress.

This shared view of progress is key component to a successful routine. Once the principals and their teams agreed on progress for the key strategies at their schools, they could have targeted conversations about the strategies that needed the most attention and celebrate work that was going well.

Running the Routine

Once the preparation is done, running the routine is the easy part! There are some key things to remember when you conduct a routine. In particular, the facilitator should lead the meeting and manage the process towards achieving the meeting's objectives. Their leadership will allow the other participants to fully engage with the issues under discussion. The principal should focus on the key facts and key questions, pushing the strategy lead(s) to understand, learn, problem solve, and agree on actionable next steps.

The following is an example exercise for running the routine itself. Time allotments may change depending on the number of objectives and duration of the meeting, but they do reflect where the majority of the time should be spent – on the deep part of your T-shaped conversation, and specifically on next steps.

Exercise: The Routine (1-2 Hours)	
Time	Activity
■ 5 mins	■ Welcome and agenda overview
■ 30 mins per strategy	■ Review overall progress for the strategy (10 minutes) — Strategy leader gives short presentation using summary data on progress (5 minutes) — Principal gives reactions (5 minutes) ■ Deep give on areas of focus (20 minutes) — Strategy leader outlines key areas of focus and proposed next steps (5 minutes) — Principal and strategy leader discuss and/or problem solve (15 minutes) — Facilitator records key decisions and next steps
■ 10 mins	■ Review next steps and adjourn — Facilitator reads next steps to ensure all were captured — Team assigns any needed leads and timelines to next steps

Conclusion

The tools provided in this guide will assist your school team as it creates and monitors a plan that can truly drive progress at your school. Planning and progress monitoring are both ongoing processes that will likely require adjustments to be made as you implement the work. This is normal and encouraged! As you modify and adjust your plan and progress monitoring to fit your school's needs, remember to refer back to this guide to ensure a continued adherence to the principles of school planning.

Thank you for your hard work to support the District of Columbia's most important resources—our students!

Appendix A: **School Improvement Team**

Membership Summary

Identify the name and stakeholder group for each member of the School Improvement Team:

Name	Stakeholder Group	Role in Team

Appendix B: Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Identify each person's name, stakeholder group represented, and a description of the person's involvement in the school improvement planning process.

Name	Stakeholder Group	Description of Engagement

Appendix C: **Goal Setting Graphic Organizer**

Area of Focus 1: Metric:	Area of focus 2 (optional): Metric:
Current status: Goal: Target year: Supporting data:	Current status: Goal: Target year: Supporting data:
Next steps to finalize this goal: Deadline to finalize goal:	Next steps to finalize this goal: Deadline to finalize goal:

Appendix D1: Sample Completed Strategy Profile

Strategy name	3rd grade reading targeted intervention
Strategy description	Data-driven remediation to students who need extra assistance to read at grade level. Based on bi-weekly formative assessment, students are assigned extra time for help in reading using one of these three methods: ■ In-class remediation ■ In-school tutorial period twice weekly (1.5 hours total) ■ After school tutorial three times weekly (2.5 hours total)
Definition of success	By SY 2017-18, no more than 15% of third graders require out-of-class remediation based on our formative assessment system All 3rd graders are proficient on the end of year assessment
Lead	Karen Smith – 3rd grade reading specialist
Delivery chain	■ Principal Dodd gives responsibility to Mrs. Smith ■ Mrs. Smith engages and plans with elem. reading teachers (4 total) ■ Mrs. Smith asks for formative assessment data from Tracy Jones (data director) on bi-weekly basis (every other Thursday) ■ Each elementary teacher will be responsible for maximum 5 students (20 students total)
Scale	■ 120 3rd graders total in the school ■ No more than 15% assigned remediation at once – maximum about 18 students

Milestones	■ Facilitate first planning meeting between Karen Smith and reading teachers (within two weeks)
	■ Complete first formative data run, establish protocol for running data with Tracy Jones (this week)
	■ Hold three-month check in:
	  — How many students have been in remediation?
	  — Are we serving maximum 18 students at a time?
	  — What is going well and what needs improvement?
	■ Survey data indicates at least 80% teacher satisfaction with RTI model (1 year)

Feedback loops	■ Regular bi-weekly formative assessment data ■ Tutorial attendance ■ Teacher reactions (informal feedback) ■ Karen evaluates whether remediation is effective at getting kids to grade level, or if the same students are being remediated each week
Resources required	■ Karen is a resource dedicated to this effort ■ All four reading teachers have signed on to this effort ■ Depending on how the planning meeting goes, we may need to give some teachers additional training in remediation instruction

Appendix D2: **Sample Strategy Profile**

Goal:	
Strategy name	
Strategy description	
Definition of success	
Lead	
Delivery chain	
Scale	
Milestones	
Feedback loops	
Resources required	

Appendix E1: Planning Rubric (with school turnaround addendum)

	Criteria	Key Questions	Weak Plan 🔴	Strong Plan 🟢
Strategies	Articulate its aspiration	Have we defined a vision for what we want this plan to achieve in terms of outcomes? What will success look like? How will things be different?	• Aspiration is not well defined or is ambiguous • Desired outcomes are not specified	• Plan specifies an ambitious, easy-to-understand aspiration with a clear moral imperative • Plan defines the aspiration in terms of specific and measurable outcomes • Aspiration is linked to overall system commitments and goals
Strategies	Identify the relevant strategies	Have we defined a coordinated and coherent set of strategies that will collectively help us to achieve the aspiration? How and why do we believe that these strategies will work?	• No strategies are defined or strategies are vaguely defined	• Plan has defined a clear set of strategies that are based on best practices inside and outside the system • Strategies are defined and sequenced to work together to achieve the aspiration • Each strategy has a theory of action for how it will have an impact on the aspiration
Strategies	Assign leadership, management, and accountability	Have we defined a single person who is responsible for the plan as a whole and for each of the strategies? How will these people interact with other leaders and with the delivery team?	• Overall plan has no owner or multiple owners • Each strategy has no owner or multiple owners • Other roles not defined	• Overall plan has a single owner from the senior leadership team who is responsible for ensuring that the plan achieves the aspiration • Each strategy has a single accountable owner • Role of delivery team in supporting leaders is well defined
Delivery Chains	Identify the relevant delivery chain(s)	Do we know how each strategy will reach the field at scale? Have we specified who needs to do what, what capacity or motivation they will need, and who will engage them and how?	• Roles not well defined, or roles give an inaccurate/incomplete picture of realities on the ground	• Each strategy specifies clear roles at every level, from state to classroom, with clear analysis of how the necessary capacity and motivation will be developed at scale

Delivery Chains	Create feedback loops for managing performance	Have we specified how we will know that each strategy is working? Do we know how we will collect and monitor this information?	• No indicators given other than the main measure of success
			• Implementation timeline is vague or non-existent
				• Each strategy has a defined set of indicators of success that is based on the delivery chain, including:
				  – Specific and time-bound implementation milestones
				  – Leading indicators of implementation quality
				• Plan includes mechanisms to monitor this information

Delivery Chains	Anticipate and prepare for risks	Have we identified the major risks and weaknesses in the delivery chain that might throw the work off course? Do we know how we will manage them?	• No risks identified, or risk assessment is unrealistic, with no attempt at real solutions for management	• The plan details risks and constraints along the delivery chain, including weak relationships, chokepoints, funding shortfalls, and other major issues • There is a potential solution for managing each risk
Delivery Chains	Describe the resources and support required	Have we identified the personnel, financial, technological, and other resources that are required for the plan's success?	• Resources are not mentioned or are vague/unrealistic	• Plan gives a clear picture of how the plan can be achieved with Federal, state, and local resources available – or it specifies how the needed resources can be obtained
Targets and Trajectories	Set a trajectory for implementation	Have we defined a clear measure of success – what it means to achieve the aspiration? What is our end target for this measure? Our intermediate targets? Why do we believe that our strategies will allow us to hit these targets?	• Measure of success not well defined • No linkage drawn between strategies and impact on the measure of success • No intermediate targets	• Plan defines a clear measure of success for the aspiration and a time-bound end target • Trajectory of intermediate targets comes from a series of evidence-based estimates of the impact that each strategy will have on the measure of success • Target and trajectory are validated by relevant benchmarks to ensure that they are ambitious and realistic

Appendix E2: Planning Rubric school turnaround addendum

	Criteria	Key Questions	Weak Plan 🔴	Strong Plan 🟢
School Turnaround	Align to turnaround principles	Does the plan acknowledge and address the top 1-2 turnaround principle challenges at the school?	• Plan does not reflect prioritization of turnaround strategies	• Plan emphasizes turnaround strategies of greatest focus while acknowledging efforts underway to address all principles • Plan notes that additional emphasis may be added to other principles in the future
	Align expenditures to strategies	Are the use of time, resources, and money at the school aligned to the strategies? Are supplemental funds directed at students who need the most support?	• Distribution of funding does not reflect the prioritization described in the plan • Programs are not targeted to the students in the most need of support	• Plan outlines how appropriate resources will be dedicated to the strategies • Plan demonstrates how students who have been historical underperformers will receive greater assistance to close achievement gaps • It is clear how prioritization in the plan will redistribute resources to create lasting change at the school
	Define the critical adult and student actions	Are the expectations for changed behavior of staff clear? Are the expectations for changes behavior of students clear? Do both include clear measures that can be monitored periodically in between annual student outcomes?	• There is no evidence described that would inform judgments as to whether behaviors are changing as expected	• Plan describes how behavior – of both adults and students – will change to implement the strategies as described • Key behaviors are described in a manor specific enough to enable objective review of whether those behaviors are occurring at the school
	Support a rigorous school for monitoring progress	Does the school have a process for checking in on progress monthly or bi-monthly? Is a shared view of progress monitored for areas of success, continuous improvement, and problem solving, based on solid evidence (quantitative and qualitative)?	• Plan sits on a shelf – it is not referenced in the day-to-day work • School leaders meet about progress, but do not use relevant data or do not agree on next steps	• School leaders have established a robust system of progress monitoring, consisting of regular data-drive routines, rigorous problem-solving, and concrete next steps • Progress monitoring results in honest conclusions about success and mid-course corrections • Leaders follow up on next steps, whether they own the action directly or are responsible for oversight

Appendix F: Planning Your Strategies Template

Strategy profile name	Current strengths	Current areas for improvement	Next steps and timeline

Appendix G: Routines Rubric

Category	What weak performance (1) looks like	What strong performance (4) looks like
Regularity ■ Does the routine happen regularly enough to drive performance? ■ Are the right people present? Including: — the "leader" holding the actors accountable, — the "actors" driving the work and reporting on progress, and — the "broker" facilitating the discussion	■ Takes place sporadically and is often cancelled or rescheduled ■ So frequent that changes in performance are not observable, or so infrequent that performance "drifts" in between ■ Key players are rarely present	■ Provides a stable rhythm for the work; participants plan around the schedule of routines ■ Discussions are timely (not too early / too late) ■ Key participants – including the leader – attend; senior team members are informed enough to account for performance and commit to necessary actions
Strong execution ■ Do participants buy in to the purpose of the routine and come prepared for a productive discussion? ■ Are roles and responsibilities clear? ■ Are the supporting materials high-quality? ■ Is the meeting well facilitated? ■ Are clear next steps defined?	■ Participants are confused about the routine's purpose/objectives or do not believe in them ■ Important participants are not sufficiently well-prepared to contribute ■ Participants are unclear about their roles ■ Supporting materials are confusing, lack detail or are missing important information ■ Starts late; runs out of time; departs from agenda ■ Next steps are not identified	■ All participants can articulate the routine's objectives and want to play their role in achieving them ■ Key participants are well-prepared ■ Agenda and supporting materials are clear, concise, relevant, and prepared in advance ■ Meeting runs according to schedule; changes to agenda are deliberate ■ Leader ensures that objectives are met and clear next steps are identified
Focus on performance ■ Is the area of focus for the routine clear – do we know what we are assessing progress on? ■ Does the routine allow participants to quickly form a *shared view of performance* and progress, based on strong evidence? ■ Does the agenda of the routine allow for a focus on the most important issues impacting performance?	■ Routine is merely a check-in during which participants give updates ■ Evidence is sporadic/inconsistent; discussion is mostly based in anecdote/opinion; data are disputed or not recognized by participants ■ Data are presented in raw format with little or no attempt to discern patterns or implications ■ All items get equal weight, with no attempt to make meaningful comparisons or focus on key issues	■ Performance on specific goals, strategies or entities is selected as the focus of the discussion ■ A wide range of evidence is presented in a way that is clear and consistent, including outcome data, leading indicator data, and evidence on quality of implementation ■ Data is synthesized to identify key patterns and comparisons ■ Debate is vigorous but an overall picture of performance emerges quickly; the majority of discussion is on the biggest areas of challenge

Action on performance		
Action on performance ■ Does the routine help participants to identify and agree on the most critical barriers to progress? ■ Are the tough questions asked? ■ Does the routine result in creative problem-solving that empowers participants to address the challenges and holds them accountable for doing so? ■ Does the routine encourage participants to continuously learn and improve?	■ Problems may be identified but are too vague to be actionable; root causes are poorly understood, if at all ■ Data is discussed to no practical end; discussion tends to dwell on problems, with little attempt to seek solutions; key issues are left unresolved ■ Actions and next steps are superficial, with no real expectation that they will "move the needle" ■ There is no follow-up on actions between routines ■ Participants are reluctant to engage in open dialogue about their own/colleagues' performance; challenging conversations are either avoided or seen as a "gotcha"	■ Discussion allows participants to identify specific barriers to success and identify actions to address them ■ Leader asks the tough questions, and presses for answers until adequate, realistic solutions have been identified ■ Between routines there is a shared expectation that actions will be followed-up upon ■ Participants are open to supporting, challenging and learning from each other ■ Cross-project comparisons create a spirit of friendly competition and professional learning across teams ■ Learning points are captured and shared

Appendix H: Assessment Framework

Element	Key Questions	Ratings	
		Red (weak)	Green (strong)
Quality of planning Red Orange Yellow Green	■ Is it clear how (and how much) this strategy connects to our larger goal/outcomes? ■ Have we identified a key person and team responsible for leading the strategy and ensuring success? ■ Is the strategy guided by a plan (possibly as part of a larger plan) that is widely understood and has clear implementation milestones, measures of progress, risk mitigation strategies, and identification of resources? ■ Is the plan used to drive the day-to-day work of implementation?	■ The strategy and its associated goal are not clearly linked or may be working in conflict ■ We have no clear accountability for this strategy ■ We have no plan, or we have a plan that falls short in several ways: — No milestones or measures — No connection made to the goal — No analysis of risks or necessary resources ■ Plan does not reflect the current reality of the work	■ We can articulate a plausible case for how this strategy will have an impact on the goal ■ There is a clear leader and team who are held accountable for the success of this strategy ■ There is a plan for the strategy that clearly states milestones, measures of progress, analysis of risks, and identification of necessary resources ■ The team uses the plan to drive its ongoing work and monitor progress
Capacity to drive progress Red Orange Yellow Green	■ Have we specified the roles that everyone will need to play in order for the strategy to have real impact on the goal? ■ How well are we engaging with these actors to build capacity? How willing and able are they to play their roles right now? ■ Do those responsible for implementation have the necessary time, resources, skills, and support to do so effectively?	■ We do not have a clear sense of who will need to do what in order for the strategy to be successful ■ Those responsible for implementation are lacking the necessary time, skills, or support to implement effectively	■ We have identified the specific individuals at every level critical to the strategy's success and the role each will have to play to implement the strategy at scale ■ Most of these critical individuals have sufficient capacity and buy-in, and we are working to actively build capacity and support where necessary ■ We have identified the necessary time, resources, skills, and support for successful implementation and are working to ensure these exist

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Element	Key Questions	Ratings	
Evidence of implementation progress Red Orange Yellow Green	■ What evidence do we have that show that the strategy is working as intended and that it will have an impact on the goal? ■ Do we use the evidence to make mid-course corrections as needed? ■ What do the latest data say about our progress on this strategy (e.g., milestones, process metrics)? What do the latest data say about our progress on the goal itself (e.g., outcome metrics)?	■ We do not consistently collect or use evidence on this strategy, or our evidence is limited to the data on the goal (outcome metrics without process metrics) ■ We may review some data, but we do not use it to drive changes to our implementation efforts ■ To the extent we have any kind of evidence, the data are stagnant or moving in the wrong direction	■ We collect and review relevant evidence as soon as it is available; this includes both process metrics and milestones, which indicate quality of implementation, and outcome metrics, which indicate progress on the goal ■ When necessary, evidence collected results in mid-course corrections ■ Data on process metrics are improving; where available, data on outcomes/goals are also improving
■ LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green): Given current state and judgments above, how likely are you to successfully implement this strategy?			

Appendix I: Assessment Framework Rating Template

Strategy:		
Characteristic	**Rating**	**Rationale**
Quality of planning		
Capacity		
Evidence of progress		
Overall likelihood of success		

Potential challenges	
Potential next steps	
Help needed	

Appendix J: Routine Agenda Template

Time	Objective	Materials	Key facts/data	Key questions/ decisions