



Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

# Strategic Planning Guidelines for State Agencies

## Overview

Strategic plans are required to align with the Governor's priorities and be the link between the agency's operations, budget, and future direction.

Plans should show innovation, technological advancement, thought in improving business efficiency, and enhanced customer engagement. This plan should not be a wish list, but rather it should reflect a strategic approach about an agency's future based on current budget and priorities. Newly funded initiatives passed in the Appropriations Bill should be included in updates to the strategic plan to demonstrate implementation or changes to current processes. Agency plans should be four-year plans, which cover the most recent fiscal year, the current fiscal year, and the following two fiscal years. Agencies should also include a mission statement, vision statement and environmental scan according to statutory requirements.

## Plan Development

### 1. Does the plan have all the necessary elements and are all elements complete and appropriate for the agency?

The elements of an agency strategic plan should include the following:

- Agency Mission Statement that aligns with statutory authority
- Agency Vision to reflect the priorities of the Governor as well as statutory requirements
- Environmental Scan (e.g., benchmarking against similarly situated entities in other jurisdictions, identifying trends)
- Critical Issue Identification
- Up to 5 Objectives
- Action Plans
- Measurable Outcomes

Agencies should identify what current or anticipated obstacles are being addressed by their strategic plans. The plan should include enough narrative context or background to provide sufficient understanding to these obstacles, as well as objectives, action plans, and measurable outcomes. The context may be included in the details of the action plan and the environmental scan. One common type of environmental scan is performing ongoing trend analysis. Agencies collect data in many ways including customer engagement, surveys, system interactions, etc. These data can be used to identify and quantify the gap between an agency's objectives and measurable outcomes. As an example, if an objective strategic target of an agency is to reduce turnover for a specific job class there should be data to quantify and measure the trend of turnover as well as data to substantiate the trends for why employees leave the agency. Data should also be used to substantiate the achievability of the target. Again, using the example of staff turnover, if an agency has data supporting a turnover rate of 50% it is unlikely it can lower its turnover rate to 10% in one year.

Agencies should include up to but no more than five objectives to meet the mission and vision of the Agency. There should be action plans for each objective that should explain the activities the agency intends to implement to achieve its goals. Each action plan should include a brief description that summarizes the objective and then a more detailed explanation, which should include the specific agency mission to be impacted, which funding in the budget is associated with the plan, and the specific activities

such as workforce, technology, legal, administrative, etc. to execute the plan. The plan should also identify the entity or resource responsible for each activity as well as a due date for each objective.

**2. Do the elements flow in a logical order, with each level supporting the plan appropriately?**

Each element should support another. Activities should appropriately measure progress toward achieving the objective that they fall under; action plans should appropriately work toward meeting specific objectives; and an agency's objectives should align with the primary mission or vision of the agency.

**3. Do the objectives and action plans align with the strategic goals for the state of Georgia?**

The state goals can be found in Appendix A.

**4. Does the plan cover multiple years?**

The agency strategic plan is a four-year agency plan, geared toward recent and the future. It should cover the most recent fiscal year, the current fiscal year, and the following two fiscal years.

**Review Process**

In many cases, feedback OPB provides will merely need to be incorporated into the next year's plan. However, in some instances, plans may need to be adjusted for the current cycle. See "Submission" on page 4 for further information.

*Please note that acceptance of strategic plans by OPB does not constitute approval of any funding requests.* Please also note that OPB will not be reviewing for grammatical or language edits. The agency is responsible for proofing plans and the plan must have approval from the head of the agency prior to submission.

In addition, OPB will work to provide more consistent feedback to agencies regarding plan receipt and review.

**A Note on Length and Design**

*The length and design of the plan should reflect the scope of the agency's work, while promoting the usefulness of the strategic plan.*

There is no set length requirement, nor will every agency's plan have the same number of pages. While it is up to the discretion of the agency to determine the appropriate length, plans should fully cover the material outlined in the overview of these guidelines. The agency strategic plan is limited in scope. It should not cover everything the agency has to accomplish in a four-year cycle from an operational standpoint. **Rather, the strategic plan is focused on a limited number of up to five priority objectives, and related action plans that the agency will concentrate on to improve customer engagement and agency efficiency, with a particular focus on Governor priorities and agency mission.** The focus on the objectives should be on the quality of the plan to reach the objective rather than the quantity of the objectives. The agency strategic plan highlights what the agency will pursue that that will ultimately influence achievement of its objectives.

While well designed strategic plans are encouraged, OPB will not provide feedback on designs except in cases where the design could hinder readability or usefulness. All plans should be presented in a concise easy to follow format.

Appendix C aids with developing agency strategic plans if needed. See Appendix D for information on the design templates.

### **A Note on the Differences between Objectives, Action Plans, and Outcomes**

An objective should be high-level and outcome oriented but not overly specific. Action plans ideally should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. These plans should reflect the obtainment of an objective. Activities typically start with a verb and should state the action steps the agency will take to achieve the objectives and its action plans. Outcomes are the expected result of a completed objective. See Appendix C for more information and examples of each.

### **Plan Use**

Agency strategic plans first and foremost should provide use to the agency by allowing agency leadership to communicate clear direction and priorities to its employees, customers, and stakeholders.

Second, the plans will be used by OPB and the Governor's Office as a point of reference when evaluating agency budget requests and agency legislative proposals, as well as alignment with state strategic goals.

Third, OPB and other enterprise-supporting agencies (e.g., GTA, SAO, DOAS, SPC) may utilize the plans to acquire a better understanding of the respective needs of the agencies, to make decisions regarding ways to assist agency or multi-agency initiatives, and to prioritize resource planning. Enterprise-supporting agencies (ESAs) are agencies in state government whose primary purpose is supporting the business functions of state government and whose primary customers are state agencies.

### **A Note on Performance Measures**

OPB collects two sets of measures:

1. **Agency Plan Outcomes:** These show the progress of activities found within strategic plans. Please refer to the examples in Appendix C for examples in creating agency plan outcomes.
2. **Program Performance Measures:** These measures are specific to budgetary programs and are entered into PBCS each fall in conjunction with the submission of agency budget requests.

Regarding *Agency Plan Measures*, OPB does not intend at this time to require additional performance reports beyond what is contained in the agency strategic plan. However, either in the environmental scan or action plan, progress updates should be provided on key strategies and objectives.

Agencies are expected to enter all *Program Performance Measures* into PBCS at the beginning of September. If you wish to add, remove, or edit your performance measures, please reach out to your OPB analyst.

## **Submission**

Completed agency plans should be emailed to Gus Elliott ([gus.elliott@opb.georgia.gov](mailto:gus.elliott@opb.georgia.gov)). OPB will accept agency strategic plans in the provided Excel template. For any other formats, agencies will need to seek prior approval from OPB before submitting. PowerPoints will not be an accepted format. Regardless of the format, all plans should be presented in an easily readable and easily printable manner.

Prior to submission, please ensure that the head of the agency has consensus on the content and direction of the agency strategic plan and those plans have been proofread. The agency head must approve the document prior to submittal to OPB for submission.

Once submitted, agency plans are considered final, and OPB may rely on the information contained in them or share them with others, including the public. OPB provides a strategic plan Quick Reference Guide (Appendix B), which may prove useful in a final assessment of plans prior to submission.

To promote a smoother, more useful review process for agencies, OPB will attempt to limit the number of resubmissions it requires. In most cases when OPB provides feedback, agencies will simply need to incorporate the suggested improvements when updating their plans for the next fiscal year. In some cases, however, OPB may require that changes be made to the current year's plan update. In these instances, OPB will notify the agency to revise the plan and resubmit it.

## **Additional Assistance**

Agencies can seek additional guidance from OPB upon request by emailing Gus Elliott at [gus.elliott@opb.georgia.gov](mailto:gus.elliott@opb.georgia.gov). Certain enterprise-supporting agencies can also aid related to their areas of expertise. See Appendix C for additional details.

## Statutory Foundation

The Official Code of Georgia Annotated lists the Office of Planning and Budget as the agency that coordinates the strategic planning process for the state as well as requires state agencies to develop plans consistent with the state goals (see O.C.G.A § 45-12-73 and O.C.G.A § 45-12-175). This code section also outlines the specific content required for agency plans.

In addition, “each agency shall develop a work force plan as a component of the strategic plan.” (O.C.G.A § 45-20-1 (e)).

### Other pertinent code sections:

Technology: O.C.G.A § 50-25-4 (a 10 and 13)

State property: O.C.G.A § 50-16-35(a1) (A-E)

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### EXCERPT FROM O.C.G.A § 45-12-175

“[...] in the development of their [agency] strategic plans which specifically deal with their respective future directions and organizational missions. Each strategic plan developed by each department, board, bureau, commission, institution, authority, and other agency of state government shall contain a description of its future direction; a statement of its organizational mission; a description of the current and anticipated future needs being addressed by its preferred future direction and organizational mission; a description of planned actions designed to address these needs; a description of the goals for the program or services to be improved; a course of action for achieving the planned improvements, including an implementation timetable; a description of the evaluation system to be used to determine if the goals are being attained; an estimated annual cost for each planned improvement of a program or service; all efforts to decentralize its administrative and operational functions; and all other items as the Office of Planning and Budget may deem necessary. Each department, board, bureau, commission, institution, authority, and other agency of state government shall submit its own strategic plan to the Office of Planning and Budget as supporting information for the budget estimates required under Code Section 45-12-78.”

# Appendices

Appendix A: Governor's Strategic Goals

Appendix B: Quick Reference Guide

Appendix C: How to Develop a Strategic Plan

Appendix D: Example Design Templates

## Appendix A: Governor's Strategic Goals

**Vision: Put hardworking Georgians first through streamlined, accessible, and fiscally responsible government**

### Governor's Strategic Goals for Georgia

- **Make Georgia #1 for Small Business**
  - Cut obsolete, unnecessarily burdensome, and bureaucratic hurdles for small business
  - Maintain Georgia's competitive tax environment
  - Develop a skilled workforce to meet current and future needs across the industry spectrum
  - Expand Georgia's role as a world-renowned hub for global commerce
  - Ensure taxpayers can easily navigate and find necessary information through government interfaces
- **Reform State Government**
  - Maintain Georgia's AAA bond rating
  - Maximize taxpayer value with conservative budgeting
  - Expand public-private partnerships and leverage technology to best utilize limited state resources
  - Improve agency call centers and similar constituent services to be courteous and helpful
- **Strengthen Rural Georgia**
  - Increase rural broadband access for economic growth, educational opportunity, and healthcare access
  - Deploy regional strike teams to areas with economic challenges or lessening populations to collaborate with local leaders and seek opportunities for growth
  - Address Georgia's teacher shortage by removing barriers to professional entry and increasing pay
  - Dismantle Common Core and reduce high-stakes testing for a more student-centric approach to learning
  - Improve literacy rates for students in third through twelfth grades
- **Put Georgians First**
  - Crack down on gang activity and human trafficking affecting every community across Georgia
  - Lower costs, improve quality, and increase access to quality healthcare in every region
  - Continue efforts to keep students, teachers, and personnel safe on campus
  - Expand access to mental health resources in schools for children and young adults

## Appendix B: Quick Reference Guide

### Mission:

*Purpose of the organization and why the agency exists.*

- Is the mission statement supported by the statutory authority of the agency?
- Does the mission statement reflect the priorities of the Governor and the legislative intent for the Agency?

### Vision Statement:

*An optimistic view of the desired future; should be realistic but challenging.*

- Is the vision statement specific to the agency?
- Is the vision statement consistent with the mission of the agency?
- Does the vision statement offer the employees a sense of purpose?

### Environmental Scan/Challenges:

*Analysis of external and internal factors and critical issues facing the agency.*

- Does this section provide sufficient context for the rest of the plan?
- Are specific trends and critical needs identified?
- Is there data supporting trends and critical needs?
- Does it provide an update on the agency's current environment and progress?

### Objective:

*Up to five high-level, priority objectives to achieve in the time of agency's four-year strategic plan.*

- Do the agency objectives meet the mission and vision of the agency?
- Do the agency objectives collectively reflect the agency's top priorities to be completed?
- Are these objectives based on current resources at the agency?

### Action Plan:

*Each objective should have an action plan detailing implementation.*

- Does the action plan include the specific agency mission impacted and associated funding?
- Does the action plan detail what activities/disciplines are needed to complete the objective?
- Does the action plan assign a responsible party or resource for the objective?
- Is there a due date for the completion of the objective?

### Outcomes:

*The desired result of the completed objective.*

- Is the outcome related and relevant to the objective?
- Are outcomes measurable to show progress?
- Are outcomes timebound?

## Appendix C: How to Develop a Strategic Plan

Each state agency is required by law to have a strategic plan. This appendix aids in developing that plan for agencies that would like additional guidance. The information contained in this appendix provides suggested order of steps in creating a strategic plan, examples of required elements, and who should be engaged in the process.

The agency strategic plan is four-year plan and should align with the Governor's goals for the state. The final product must be presented in a readable, logical order and comparable to future plans. The agency strategic plan should explain the top five objectives that the agency is focusing on to improve operations, services, and customer experiences.

The following guidelines provide general instruction to agencies that can help with strategic planning.

### Focus on the Strategic Objective

The agency strategic plan focuses on specific activities that will improve outcomes for the agency's customers and employees. The strategic planning guidelines are designed to focus agency activities that support the time, energy, and resources necessary to achieve the agency's strategic objectives. Other state processes, such as the annual operating budget and budget program performance measures, focus on the overall management and resources related to agency operations.

#### Preparing the Agency Strategic Plan

- Initial logistical planning
- Prepare mission statement
- Develop a vision statement
- Assess environmental factors
- Identify critical issues
- Establish strategic objectives
- Create an action plan to achieve objectives
- Determine expected measurable outcomes
- Identify impacts on IT, the workforce, budget, and facilities/space

### General Guidelines for Agency Strategic Planning

The process should be inclusive and use consensus to arrive at decisions whenever possible. While it is unlikely that staff will totally agree with every decision, members should possess general support for the outcomes of the planning sessions.

### Getting Started

To get started, the agency must first address the logistics of the planning process, allowing time for specifying participants, process duration and location, and data gathering.

According to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), "It is essential that the strategic plan be initiated and conducted under the authorization of the organization's chief executive (Agency Head), either appointed or elected. Inclusion of other stakeholders is critical, but a strategic plan that is not supported by the organization's chief executive (Agency Head) has little chance of influencing an organization's future."

While employees at all levels can be included in the process, it is crucial that the head of the agency and the executive leadership team be committed and willing participants. They should agree with or take the lead in developing the agency's mission, vision, objectives, and action plan.

This phase will also include collecting and analyzing data and information that will be used as part of the environmental scan process and outcomes. Helpful information may include statutory requirements, budgeted initiatives, demographic trends, trends related to services provided, customer and employee satisfaction survey results, facility trends, and workforce trends.

### Prepare a Mission Statement

*Mission:* The purpose of the organization; why the agency exists.

Statutory and regulatory requirements provide the foundation for the mission statement. It should be a complete sentence that is precise, clear, and provides a framework that can be used to align the agency's vision and goals.

When developing a mission statement, keep the following attributes in mind:

1. Specificity to the agency and its core functions
2. Descriptive of the services the agency provides
3. Descriptive of the population the agency serves
4. Descriptive of the purpose and way the agency provides their services

*Examples:*

**Use:** *The mission of the XYZ agency is to provide access to affordable, quality health care to Georgians through effective planning, purchasing, and oversight.*

**Not:** *To assist our customers by providing leadership, and reliable business services.*

### Develop a Vision Statement

*Vision:* A picture of a desired future, one that is both challenging yet possible to attain. It defines the optimistic view of where the organization wants to be in the future, focusing on its customers and desired outcomes.

When developing a vision statement, keep the following attributes in mind:

1. Specificity to the agency and its statutory authority
2. Alignment to the mission statement
3. Provision of a sense of purpose to employees

The vision statement should be directly aligned with the mission statement. When read, the vision statement should provide employees with a sense of purpose that can serve to broadly guide decision making.

*Examples:*

**Use:** *The ABC agency will be recognized as the guiding force for innovative public policy and sound fiscal management.*

**Not:** *To be customer focused as we oversee agency finances.*

If an agency prefers, it may also separately define its core values, which are the ideas, beliefs, and enduring tenants that guide the work of the organization.

### Assess Environmental Factors

A thorough analysis of the organization’s internal and external environment and relevant trends.

The environmental scan is a review of external and internal factors that affect the environment in which an organization operates. The environmental scan examines these factors and their impact on Georgia citizens, state agencies, and the services they provide.

A thorough analysis of the agency’s internal and external environment sets the stage for an effective strategic plan. One viable method for conducting an environmental assessment is a trend analysis. A trend analysis uses available and tracked data by agencies, the Georgia Data Analytics Center (GDAC), university partners, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and others to predict future shifts and gaps in performance. Identifying these trends can help drive the creation of action plans to correct or continue certain trends.

*Internal scan:* The internal scan is a process of reviewing the agency's resources, assets, and day-to-day operational structure, such as organizational climate or internal communications. Factors identified in the internal scan are more agency-specific than the broad, environmental factors identified in the external scan. This information should include employee feedback and may also include internal factors ranging from an assessment of appropriate resources to accomplish mission-critical tasks to the pending retirement of a significant portion of the agency's workforce.

*External scan:* The external scan reviews information about events, trends, and relationships in an organization's external environment that impact how the agency conducts its business. This information may include, for example, recent legislative mandates that alter the agency's mission. Information from the external scan assists agency leadership in planning the organization's future course of action.

An agency should also consider how future conditions may impact space, facility, and other capital investment needs. In turn, the physical condition, functionality, and location of current facilities may impact how well services are being delivered. This process demonstrates the relationship between the agency's strengths and weaknesses and the challenges the agency must address to develop its course of action.

Typical information sources that may be used in the agency's environmental scan include:

- Governor’s state strategic goals (see Appendix A)
- New statutory, regulatory, and/or judicial mandates
- Governor's speeches and legislative initiatives
- Budgetary and staffing data

- Comparisons to similar functions in other states
- Previous program results
- Employee and customer feedback
- State and national legislative trends
- Workforce trends
- Technology initiatives, needs and trends
- Economic indicators
- Demographic data analysis, including workforce
- Information from conferences
- Internet or library research
- Internal and external audits
- Performance trends as shown by statewide indicators
- Facilities/Space needs and physical and functional condition and capacity

### Identify Workforce Issues

As part of the environmental scan, the agency should look at workforce trends. Workforce planning is a systematic process for ensuring that the right people with the right competencies are in the right place at the right time. The first step in this process is the accumulation of data on the make-up of the workforce. Among the data included is information on turnover, diversity, learning needs, knowledge management strategy, and succession planning. The HCM module within TeamWorks can assist agencies with this step in the process. Workforce planning uses components to provide refined information on the changes to be anticipated, the competencies that retirements may take from the workforce, key positions that may need to be filled, and strategies to fill the gaps.

### Identify Critical Issues and Challenges

“Once the environmental analysis has been completed, the next step is to use the resulting information to identify the most critical issues. Issue recognition should reflect stakeholder concerns, needs, and priorities as well as environmental factors affecting the desired objective.

The strategic planning process requires agencies to identify the critical issues or “challenges” facing the agency. These challenges are the foundation upon which the agency develops its strategic objectives.

### Agree on Objectives

Objectives should be focused on outcomes. Apart from the state strategic goals, agencies may identify other objectives that are of specific importance to the agency and aligned to the agency mission and statutory requirements.

Objectives should be customer focused (derived from internal and external customer data included in their environmental scan) and should address “the most critical issues facing the agency and its customers. The agency should prioritize its objectives and select up to five for the plan.

When developing agency objectives, keep the following attributes in mind:

1. Specificity to agency’s activities and core functions
2. Alignment to state goals (does not conflict)

### 3. Reflection of the agency's top priorities

#### Examples:

**Use:** *Improve the customer experience for licensing applicants.*

**Not:** *Improve customer service.*

### Create an Action Plan

*Action Plan:* A set of tasks needed to achieve defined objectives.

Action plans should be created for each objective, helping break it down into smaller achievable steps. Action plans should provide a more detailed description of the objective and identify the mission impacted, what budgeted, existing funding is associated, and what resources are needed (workforce, technology, legal, administrative, etc.) to execute the plan. Each step in the action plan should be assigned to a person, team, or resource to create ownership of that activity. Finally, an action plan must include a due date for the completion of each step and the objective. When developing an action plan, the agency should also consider the resources required and impacts on the organization. Questions include:

- What is the cost to implement? Are there ongoing maintenance costs? Will it require procurement?
- What funding in the budget is used? Why was it added originally? What types of funds are used (e.g., state, federal, grant funds, other funds)?
- What are the benefits of implementation? ...to the customer? ...to the agency? ...to the State?
- Which budget programs are impacted?
- What is the timeline? Are there any critical external deadlines?
- Who are the key partners?
- Who will do the work (workforce impact and resources required)?
- What are the technology implications and what IT projects (current, planned and proposed) support the strategy?
- What are the impacts on space and facilities? What additional capital asset investments are required?
- Are there existing internal practices that are no longer required or necessary that can be eliminated to repurpose existing resources.

When developing an action plan, keep the following SMART attributes in mind:

1. Specific
2. Measurable
3. Attainable
4. Relevant
5. Timely

### Measure Outcomes

*Outcomes:* Specific, measurable results to be achieved.

For each objective, the agency should have outcomes in mind that will be used to determine progress in meeting the objective. Outcomes should not be another objective or action step but a quantifiable measure or indicator with an end date. The agency tracks outcomes to help demonstrate performance improvements.

- Outcomes are typically stated as “X as of Date to Y by Date,” where “X” is the baseline performance and “Y” is the target performance. Typically, the “by Date” is the last year of the four-year strategic planning cycle.
- Outcomes show how the customer will be better off.

Any outcomes containing past dates need to be met, revised, or deleted. When developing outcomes, keep the following attributes in mind:

1. Alignment to their respective agency goals
2. Consistency with the X as of Date to Y by Date format
3. Description of an identifiable outcome

*Examples:*

<p><b>Use:</b> <i>Decrease call hold times from 20 minutes in 2017 to 5 minutes in 2019, based on monthly average.</i></p> <p><i>Increase customer satisfaction scores from 65% satisfied in 2016 to 80% satisfied in 2019, using annual survey.</i></p> <p><b>Not:</b> <i>Decrease call hold times by 75%.</i></p> <p><i>Increase number of customers surveyed from 75% to 95%.</i></p>
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**Obtain Approval of the Plan**

The agency senior leadership should have consensus on the content and direction of the agency strategic plan. The agency head must approve the document prior to submission to OPB.

## Appendix D: Design Template

A template is available for download on the Office of Planning and Budget's Strategic Planning page at <https://opb.georgia.gov/planning-and-evaluation/strategic-planning>.