

Strong School Systems Strategic Planning Tools, Resources, and Activities

The **Strong School Systems**, strategic planning initiative, is designed to improve student outcomes by focusing on whole-system improvements required to accelerate and sustain school performance. The Strong School Systems approach ensures priority-based alignment of resources and executes a plan based on a shared vision.

"The strategic planning document itself was a game changer for our school system. Not only was it centered around varying data sources, but it has helped us to prioritize our needs based on what the data yielded." - East Feliciana Parish

The planning tools, resources, and activities outlined in this section of the School System Planning Guide sample the professional learning and technical assistance Strong School Systems leaders used to develop their five-year strategic improvement plans. This section is not a required component of the School System Planning Guide and completion of the Super App processes; however, it is highly recommended that each school system have a 3-5 year strategic plan with an aligned budget to drive funding requests. **See Appendix A: P5.9.4-6 for funding opportunities.**

The curated list of links, although not all-encompassing, leads system leaders to complete the following deliverables while participating in the Strong School Systems cohort: 1) establishing leadership norms, 2) planning stakeholder engagement, 3) diagnosing strengths and gaps, 4) developing a vision statement, 5) setting outcome goals, 6) strategizing priorities and initiatives, 7) aligning budgets, 8) building a dashboard to monitor progress, and 9) communicating and implementing the plan.

Step 1: Build a Strong Foundation

✓	<p>Build a Strong Team: System Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) creates a strategic planning team responsible for developing or revisiting the strategic plan and completing the Super App. The team should have decision-making authority and expertise in the following areas: academic content, assessment, high school programming, educator development, diverse student populations, early childhood, federal grant programs, budgeting, and finance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Guidance for creating a team</i> link ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Establish team norms</i> link
✓	<p>Assign Planning Lead: System Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) selects a planning lead to oversee and coordinate the strategic planning process. A successful planning lead has visibility across the whole organization, an orientation towards action and decision-making, the ability to marshal resources from across the organization, coordinate with more than one member of the ILT/strategic planning team, and manage multiple workstreams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Create a detailed project plan for the strategic planning process that includes the collection of diagnostic data and a timeline.</i> Sample project plan for engagements link Sample project plan with timeline link ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Use a guidance tool outlining exemplar plan descriptors (rubric)</i> link
✓	<p>Collect data and artifacts, and create a plan for class observation: The Project Manager works with system leaders to collect performance data and instructional artifacts as well as schedule in-person observations of instruction and/or collect video recordings of instruction for review. This information will serve as input to assess the current state of the school system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Performance data</i> link Tab 1 ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Artifact request</i> link Tab 2 ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Video request (or could be scheduled to be in person)</i> link Tab 3
✓	<p>Collect stakeholder input: Strategic planning team solicits input from school leaders, educators, students, parents/families, and community members on the implementation of the previous year's priorities and initiatives, including school and organizational cultural components.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Establish a stakeholder engagement plan</i> link ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Stakeholder survey</i> link <i>and communications to frame the survey with stakeholders</i> link ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Interview guide</i> link ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Focus group guide</i> link

Step 2: Articulate Aspirations and Diagnose

✓	<p>Establish or Revisit Aspirations: Strategic planning team needs to be directionally aligned on organizational aspirations to identify priorities successfully. The team completely answers the question: What do we want to be true about our school system in 5 years in terms of 1) graduates' capabilities, 2) student academic outcomes, 3) student well-being outcomes, 4) access to opportunities, 5) the student academic experience, 6) the student culture experience, 7) the family experience, 8) the staff experience, and 9) operations and finance.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: Aspirations link</i></p>
✓	<p>Needs Analysis: School system leadership 1) generates an organizational diagnostic report identifying the system's strengths and growth areas, grounded in analysis of performance data, classroom observations, instructional artifacts, and constituents' perspectives, and 2) reviews existing school system strategic plans to identify known revisions to goals or priorities.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: Org diagnostic report link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Constituent perspectives synthesis link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Video/classroom observation notes link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Artifact review analysis link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Lesson observation analysis link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Integrate data sources into the diagnostic link</i></p>

Step 3: Develop a System-wide Strategic Plan

✓	<p>The planning team will work to develop a strategic plan in response to the needs analysis. This will include at the highest level 4-6 strategic priorities that articulate the major strategic areas the system will focus significant organizational attention over a five-year period. These strategic priorities will be broken down into multi-year initiatives representing new work or significant improvements to existing work for teams to implement. Then, these initiatives are broken down into concrete deliverables to ensure the initiative's success.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: High-level overview of a strategic plan link</i></p>
✓	<p>Develop/refine strategic priorities: The planning team 1) uses the organizational diagnostic report to identify 4 to 6 priorities that represent a) significant improvement or expansion of existing work or b) new work; and 2) uses the Professional Learning Roadmap, School System Planning Guide, and other relevant guidance to select strategies for priority areas.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: Criteria for success for strategic priorities link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Sample strategic priorities developed in response to a diagnostic link</i></p>
✓	<p>Develop/refine and sequence initiatives: The planning team will work together to generate and sequence multi-year initiatives with which to pursue their strategic priorities. This is done through a series of exercises that involve both selections of initiatives and then prioritizing and sequencing these initiatives over the 5-year strategic plan.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: Criteria for success for initiatives link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Planning team activity - generate a list of initiatives</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Request to brainstorm initiatives link</i> ◆ <i>Strong Practice: Sample prioritizing activity link</i></p> <p>After the planning team has selected and/or generated initiatives, they need to sequence them over 5 years. This is accomplished through another round of homework activities.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: Sample sequencing activity link</i></p> <p>After the planning team has completed the activity above, they then need to synthesize the results and create a straw person (draft) of how they ultimately will sequence these initiatives given teammate capacity and system resources. The key is to not take on too much in any given year. Additionally, the planning team will have to work together to assign leads to each initiative who will ultimately be accountable for the initiative's success.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: Sample strawperson and sequencing link</i></p>
✓	<p>Develop/refine and sequence deliverables: Initiative leads define deliverables for initiatives launching in Year 1 of the plan. A deliverable represents a major component of an initiative and can be broken down into action steps. Each deliverable has a start date, due date, and the lead responsible for ensuring the completion of each step.</p> <p>◆ <i>Strong Practice: Develop/refine and sequence deliverables link</i></p>

Step 4: Plan for Implementation



Build Implementation Plan through the creation and sequencing of action steps: Deliverable leads define action steps for their deliverables. Action steps represent the most important steps one must take to complete a deliverable. Each action step has a start date, due date, and lead responsible for ensuring the completion of each step.

◆ *Strong Practice: Develop / refine and sequence deliverables [link](#)*



Establish measures and targets at the mission level: The planning team will work together to define mission key results (MKRs) for the purpose of 1) defining and communicating system-wide aspirations more precisely and 2) determining the extent to which you are making progress on our aspirations. Mission key results are broken into two components 1) the measures - what you will measure to gauge success and 2) the targets - the quantifiable goal your system is working toward on a particular measure.

◆ *Strong Practice: MKR measures and targets overview [link](#) and how-to [document](#)*

◆ *Strong Practice: Assessing MKR targets [link](#)*

Step 5: Complete Super App



Build Budget: The planning team 1) considers available funds and develops a proposal for budget priorities and competitive funding requests based on the data review and strategies selected; 2) develops and enters answers to all application questions into the [SPB Workbook](#); and 3) collaborates with key personnel to develop the Coordinated Funding Request template for early childhood seats (Super App upload).

◆ *Strong Practice: Align priorities and initiatives in the strategic plan to funding sources, e.g., competitive funding or Super App funding, and other federal funding.*

◆ *Strong Practice: Completion of Super App*

The planning lead for Super App is responsible for setting and facilitating a schedule of regular budget planning meetings to ensure the timely completion of each application and will serve as the primary point of contact for LDOE communications related to Super App. The planning lead will also determine the team members responsible for completing each application section in the [SPB Workbook](#).

Assign CIR/UIR Team Lead(s): School system leadership selects a team member to coordinate among decision-makers to complete the CIR/UIR components of the plan and funding requests.

Complete Contacts in Central Data (eGMS): To ensure LDOE contacts the correct team members, school systems must review, update, and save the Contacts tabs in eGMS within LEA Central Data. Central Data must be complete in order to submit Super App. Note: school systems will be asked to provide a "Super App Primary Contact" (for questions specific to Super App) as well as a "School System Planning Lead" (for questions related to holistic school system planning). This may or may not be the same person on your team.

Enter Data In Super App (eGMS): School System Planning Lead and school system leadership select one person to complete the application in eGMS using answers from the SPB Workbook. Additional document uploads are required as part of the application submission: 1) the Coordinated Funding Request will be uploaded in the Priority 5: Systems-Structures-Partnerships section of Super App, and 2) any applicable "Alternate Evidence-based Options" will require an upload of the required form.

Verify Information: Once all information has been entered into Super App, the planning lead verifies accuracy and receives approval from school system leadership. The planning lead ensures the submission of the application by the due date.



Build Communication Plan: The Superintendent and the planning team will develop a plan to share the strategic plan with the school community (staff, families, community members, etc.). This plan should include strategies for each key stakeholder group and will help inform the collateral needed to communicate the plan to various audiences. A district may consider hiring an outside marketing firm to develop this collateral.

◆ *Strong Practice: Communication plan template and sample [link](#)*

◆ *Strong Practice: Town Hall Communications Deck sample [link](#)*

Step 6: Progress Monitoring



Execute the strategic plan with excellence: Progress monitoring is a collection of tools and processes to help teams across an organization effectively and collaboratively manage their strategy by focusing on execution. Cohort participants are supported by a progress monitoring tool and monthly meeting cadence that allows teams to track their progress toward their plan and key results.

◆ *Strong Practice: Progress monitoring overview, dashboard, and sample meeting aims [link](#)*