



IT Strategic Planning **Discover** Playbook, Part II

Guidelines and Workshop Exercises to Cascade Your
Institution's Strategic Goals into Supporting IT Activities



How to Use This Playbook

EAB Center of Excellence: IT Strategic Planning

Plug-and-Play Resources to Guide Your IT Strategic Planning Process

This Center of Excellence includes coverage of the IT strategic planning process with basic guidelines, workshops, templates, and diagnostic tools to educate peers and stakeholders, as well as advanced practices effective at higher education institutions. It also offers guidance and support to replicate those practices on your campus.

IT Strategic Planning Playbook, Part II

This playbook has resources to help with institutional goals alignment, part of the **Discover** phase of IT strategic planning. The purpose of institutional goals alignment is to identify the IT activities needed to support the institution’s strategic goals. The alignment process involves discovering institutional strategic goals and objectives, cascading them into IT activities, and categorizing those activities for subsequent development of IT strategic goals.

For complementary Discover activities that provide inputs to this playbook, see the related [IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part I](#). Process steps and tools are numbered consecutively in the two Discover playbooks.



Discover Phase: IT strategic planners assess what is happening in the IT organization, the institution, and the broader market to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They also assess the IT implications of institutional strategic goals. Results of this phase are reviewed in the Distill phase to identify IT strategic goals and objectives.

Included in This Playbook

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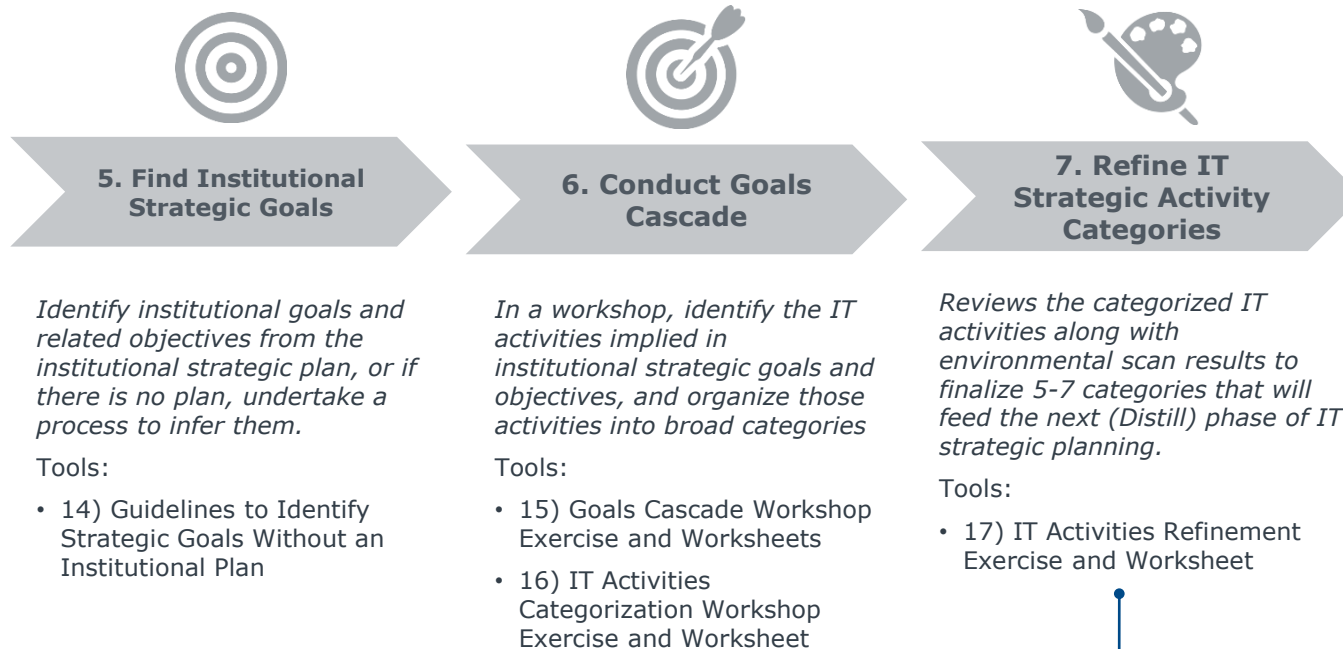
Goals Cascading Aligns IT Activities with Campus Strategies

The Goal Cascading Process for IT

The purpose of IT strategic planning is to identify IT activities that will help achieve institutional goals—in short, to align with the institution’s strategy. That process begins by uncovering the IT components implied in the institution’s goals. For each such goal, planning participants dissect the relevant objectives to understand the activities IT must undertake to support them. The resulting list of IT activities is then regrouped into categories that will be used to develop IT strategic goals and objectives.

Some of the work described in this playbook depends on prior work described in the complementary [IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part I](#). The steps and tools below are numbered sequentially following those in the Part I playbook.

Three Steps to Conducting a Goals Cascade and Categorizing Strategic IT Activities



You must complete an IT environmental scan before carrying out this step. See the [IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part I](#).



Find Institutional Strategic Goals

Scrutinizing Institutional Strategy to Guide IT Strategic Planning

STEP

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- Institutional Strategic Goals Fundamentals
- Guidelines to Identify Strategic Goals Without an Institutional Plan

Institutional Strategic Goals Fundamentals

Effective IT strategic planning begins by understanding what the institution wants to accomplish. Ideally, that can be found in an institutional strategic plan that identifies strategic goals and objectives (or other terms indicating broad ambitions and supporting actions).

If you have such a plan, be sure all IT strategic planning participants read and understand it. But be careful: aligning institutional and IT strategies can be challenging.

Using institutional strategic plans to inform IT's direction often requires extrapolation. Expressions of the campus's specific direction and focus can be hard to find. Many plans express generic strategic goals and break them into numerous unprioritized objectives. Usually there is little or no direct mention of technology.

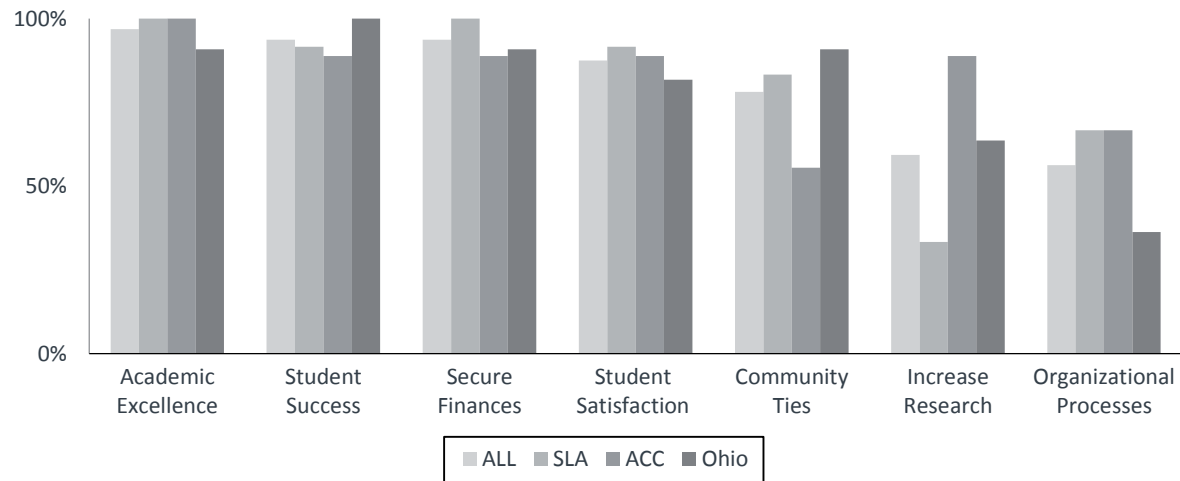
In short, IT strategic planners must decode the institutional plan to identify an IT strategy.

If there is no up-to-date strategic plan, see the next page for ways to infer or discover the institution's implicit strategic goals.

Identifying IT's Role in Institutional Strategy Requires Deeper Analysis

Most Institutional Plans Highlight the Same High-Level Strategic Goals

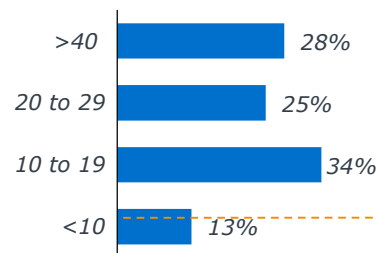
Percentage of Audited Strategic Plans that Include Indicated Strategic Goals



(n=32 strategic plans; ACC=9; Ohio=11; SLA=12)¹

And Over Promise on Strategic Initiatives

Total Number of Initiatives Per Strategic Plan Audited



Experts recommend that plans identify no more than seven strategic initiatives per planning cycle to help institutions focus resources on the highest priority initiatives.

1) Audit participants include a selection of schools from the Atlantic Coast Conference, the University System of Ohio, and several small liberal arts conferences.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Tool 14: Guidelines to Identify Strategic Goals Without an Institutional Plan

In the Absence of an Institutional Strategic Plan, Assess Available Strategic Cues

If your institution has no strategic plan, or the plan is out of date, other sources likely express strategic priorities. In these cases, assemble a set of institutional (not technology) strategic goals by examining influential documents, conducting interviews, and analyzing performance metrics. A campus listening tour (as described in EAB's [IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part I](#)) can be a powerful way to uncover institutional goals. This work is best done by the IT strategic planning working group with input from the oversight and review committee.





Conduct Goals Cascade

Resources to Determine IT Activities Needed to Support Institutional Strategy

STEP

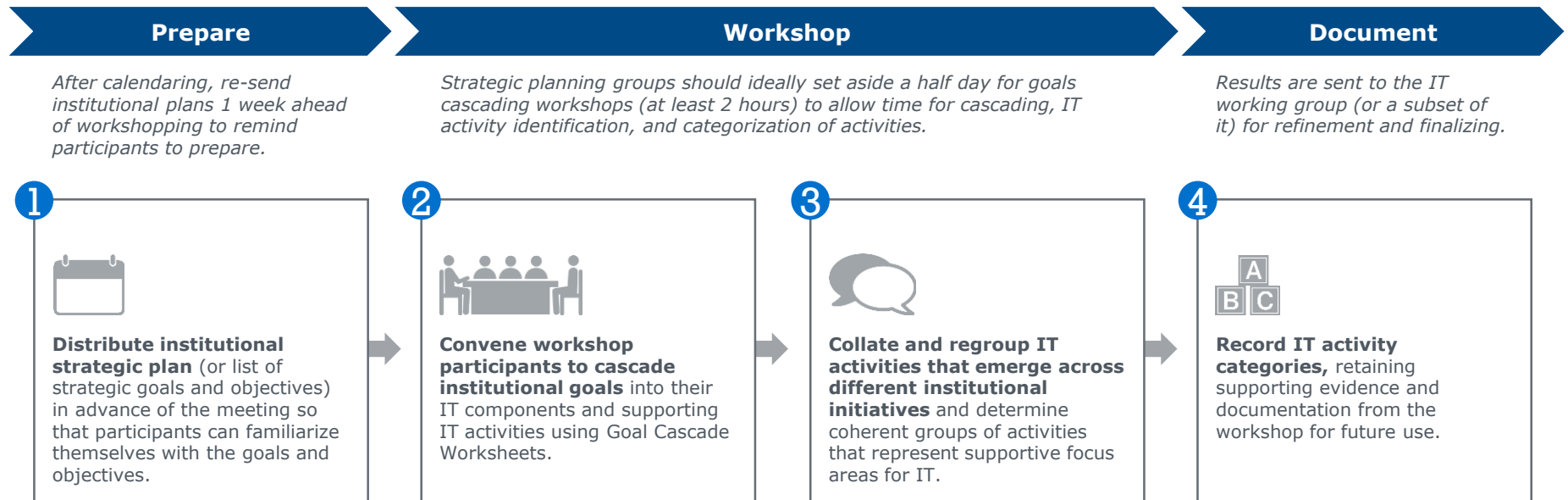
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- Goals Cascade Fundamentals
- Goals Cascade Workshop Exercise and Worksheets
- IT Activities Categorization Workshop Exercise and Worksheets

Goals Cascade Fundamentals

Identifying IT components in the institution’s strategic goals requires unpacking of the aspirational and often unclear statements found in most institutional strategic plans. This is best done in a workshop. For each institutional goal, workshop participants identify the relevant objectives, and then dissect those objectives to identify the activities IT can undertake to support them. Using the generated list of IT activities, participants regroup activities into broad categories that will guide subsequent steps in the IT strategic planning process.

Steps for Conducting a Successful Cascading Workshop



Staffing Suggestion

The *Strategic Plan Goals Cascade* is a group exercise, and should be completed by an assembled group of 12-18 participants. These may include members of the IT strategic planning working group and others with a solid understanding of IT’s work at the institution- likely those you have identified as advisors ([IT Strategic Planning Preparation Playbook](#)). Where available, your group will benefit from a non-IT facilitator for this session because they are a neutral third party.

Strategic Plan Goals Cascade Output



Draft of IT Activity Categories

Documentation describing categories that group IT activities, along with documentation of relationships to institutional objectives.

Tool 15: Goals Cascade Workshop Exercise

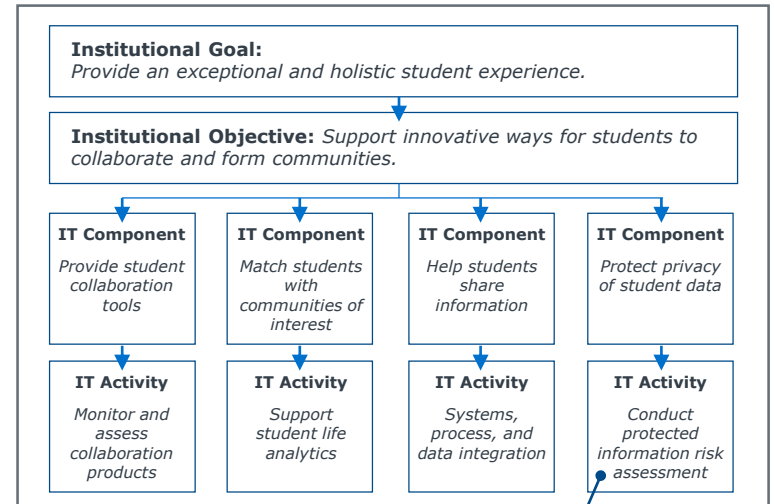
Cascading Institutional Strategic Goals into IT Components and Activities

Instructions: The first exercise of the workshop breaks the institutional strategic plan into its constituent goals and objectives, which in turn are cascaded into IT components and activities. In small groups, participants work on designated institutional goals, using the strategic plan to identify related campus objectives and initiatives. Groups then analyze these objectives to determine the components that require or imply IT support, and identify enabling IT activities for each component.

Cascading Institutional Goals into IT Activities Process

- 1 Facilitator separates workshop participants into 3-5 smaller groups to work on designated institutional goals**
When possible, groups should comprise a diverse mix of participants, and the workshop facilitator should seek to move between groups as required by participants.
- 2 Groups work to cascade their designated institutional strategic plan goals into constituent objectives**
For plans that are already broken into objectives and sub-objectives, this process will be simpler; for plans that are high-level only, participants must analyze the plan's language and other relevant campus knowledge to infer related objectives. (See *Institutional Goals and Objectives Worksheet*, p. 10).
- 3 Groups determine IT components and activities that support institutional objectives**
Participants should thoroughly document the IT components each objective calls for, as well as related IT activities that enable the component. Use the *Strategic Goals IT Cascade Worksheet* (p. 11).

Example Goals Cascade



Clarification of Terms

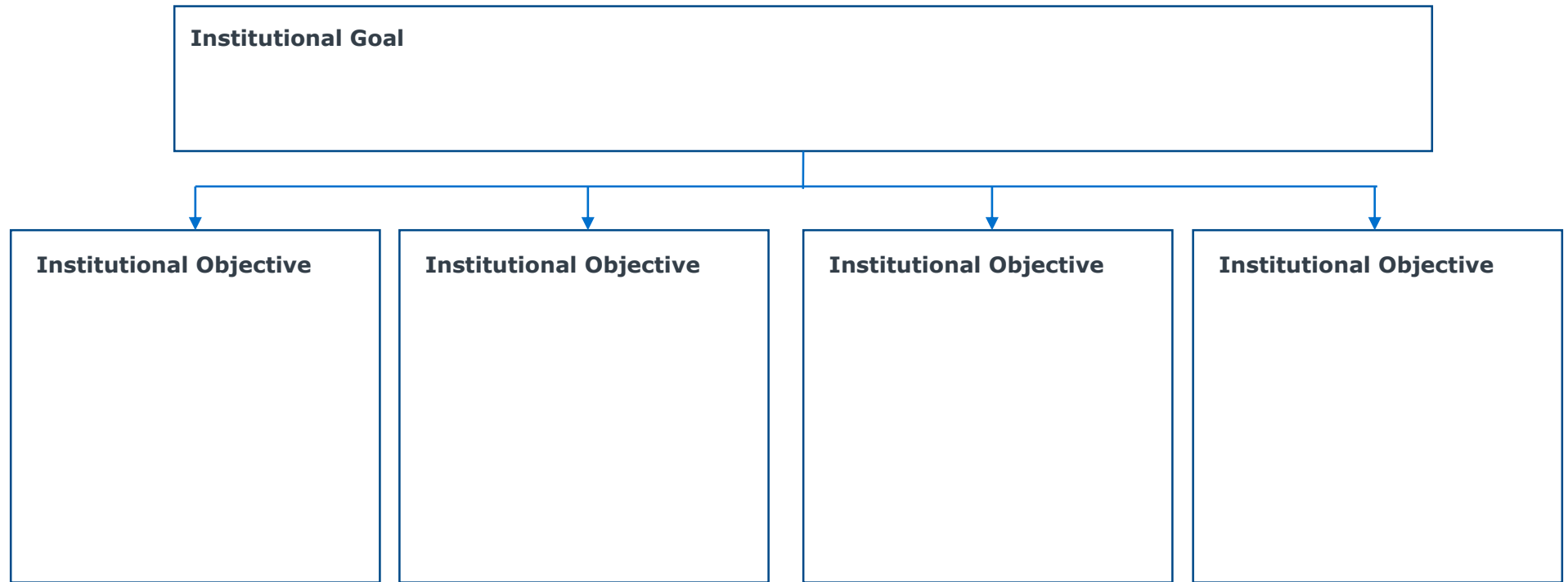
IT Component: an aspect of the institutional goal or objective that involves the use of technology or services provided by IT

IT Activity: a specific action or process undertaken by IT that enables the IT component

Tool 15: Goals Cascade Workshop Exercise

Institutional Goals and Objectives Worksheet

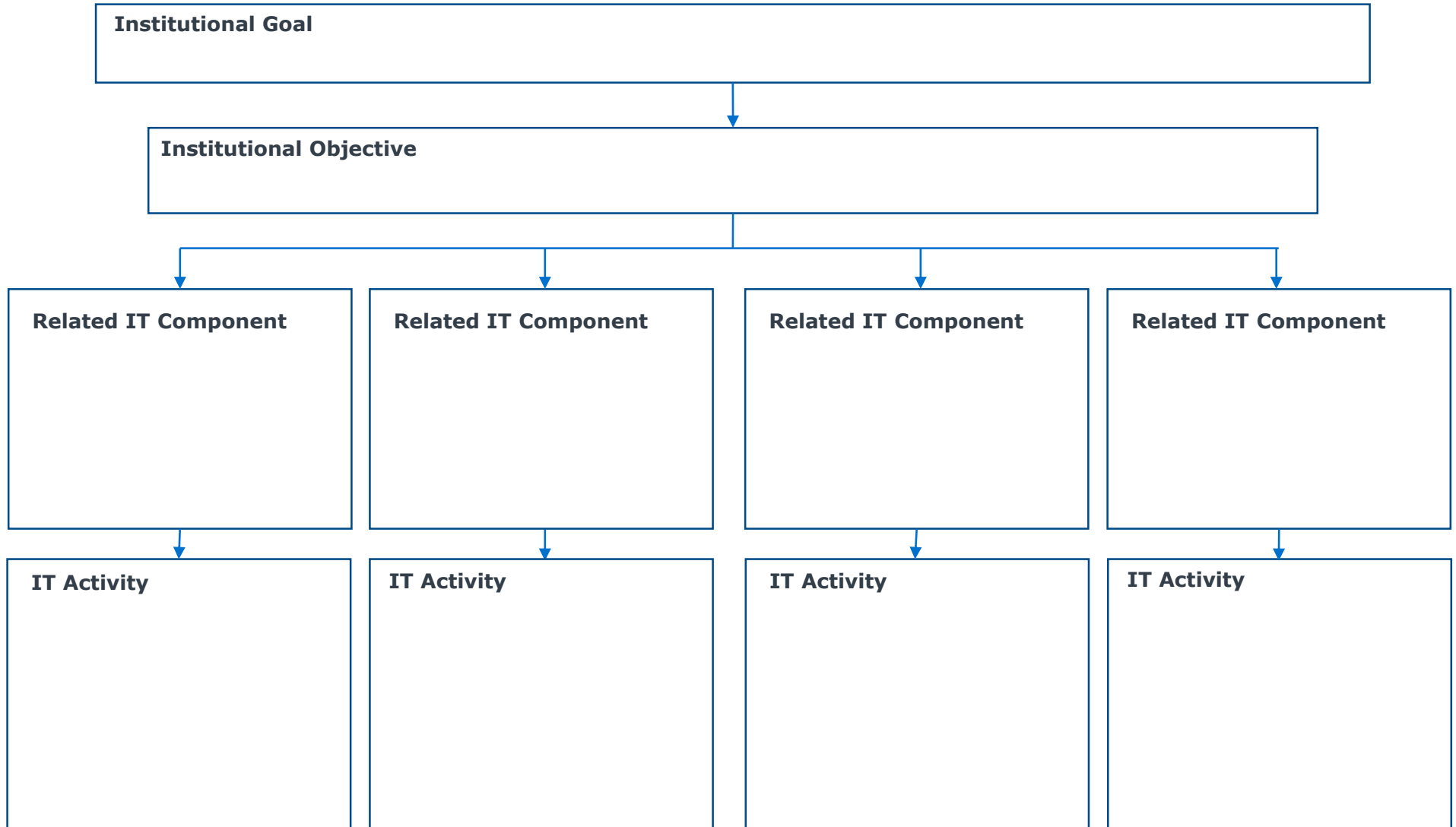
Instructions: Use the boxes below to document the objectives related to one institutional strategic goal. An objective is a specific action that contributes to achieving the goal. If objectives are not identified in your institutional strategic plan or other documents, draw on your group's institutional knowledge to identify reasonable objectives implied by the goal.



Tool 15: Goals Cascade Workshop Exercise

Strategic Goals IT Cascade Worksheet

Instructions: Use the boxes below to document IT components and activities required or implied by a specific institutional goal/objective. An IT component is an aspect of the institutional goal/objective that involves the use of technology or services provided by IT. An IT activity is a specific action or process undertaken by IT that enables the IT component. Note that there may be more than one activity per component; likewise, some activities may support multiple components. See [Goals Cascade \(Workshop Exercise #1\)](#) (p. 7) for an example of a goals cascade.

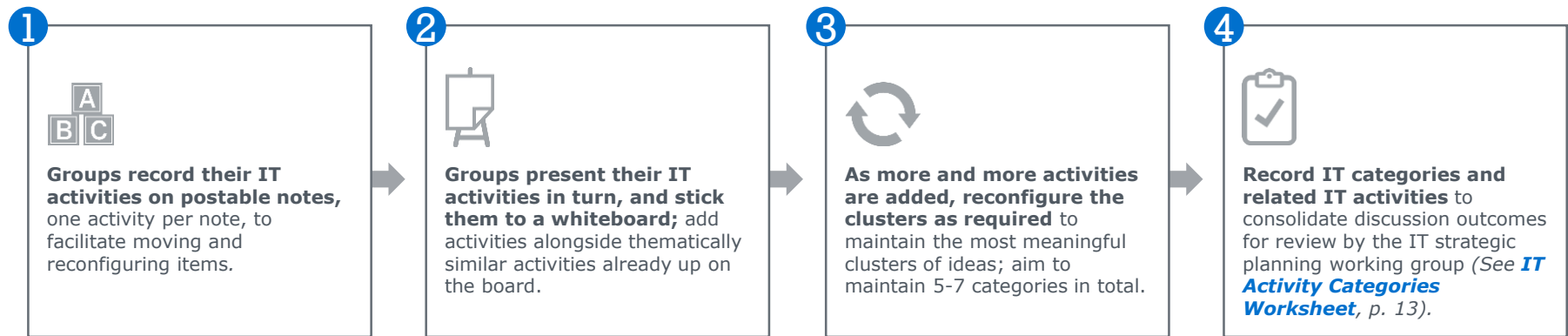


Tool 16: IT Activities Categorization Workshop Exercise

Grouping IT Activities into Clusters to Draft IT Strategic Goals

Instructions: The second exercise of the workshop regroups IT activities from [Tool 15: Goals Cascade Workshop Exercise](#), pp. 9-11, into common clusters or categories that will inform development of the IT organization’s strategic goals for supporting the institution. As different groups bring forward their identified IT activities, participants group them together, and redistribute as new collections emerge. Once all activities are input, participants adjust and refine the categories and review to see if some activities should be assigned to other categories. The resulting categories will represent a “rough sort” of strategically important IT activities.

Process for Regrouping IT Activities into Common Categories



Example: Across IT Activities, Integration and Data Access Emerge as Strategic Categories

Institutional Objective:
Implement Innovative and Creative Learning Strategies

Related IT Activities:

- Manage identities and **data access** for companies offering co-op and internship opportunities
- IT will **manage integration** of job portal with scheduling system for recruiters and students

Institutional Objective:
Invest in Support and Systems to Enhance Student Experience

Related IT Activities:

- IT will **integrate systems** that track student activity participation into the enterprise data warehouse
- IT will provide academic advisors with **access to student activity data**

Institutional Objective:
Emphasize Strategic Enrolment Management Initiatives

Related IT Activities:

- IT will reconfigure Academic Program Codes to improve curriculum records maintenance
- IT will implement International Management Software to **improve access to international activities data**

Tool 16: IT Activities Categorization Workshop Exercise

IT Activities Categories Worksheet

Instructions: IT categories represent groupings of similar IT activities. Related IT activities should be identified in [Tool 14: Strategic Goals IT Cascade Worksheet](#), p. 9.

IT Category _____
Related IT Activities _____ _____ _____ _____

IT Category _____
Related IT Activities _____ _____ _____ _____

IT Category _____
Related IT Activities _____ _____ _____ _____

IT Category _____
Related IT Activities _____ _____ _____ _____



Refine IT Strategic Activity Categories

Guidance for Finalizing Goals Cascade Outputs to Inform IT Strategic Planning

-
- IT Activity Categories Refinement Exercise

STEP

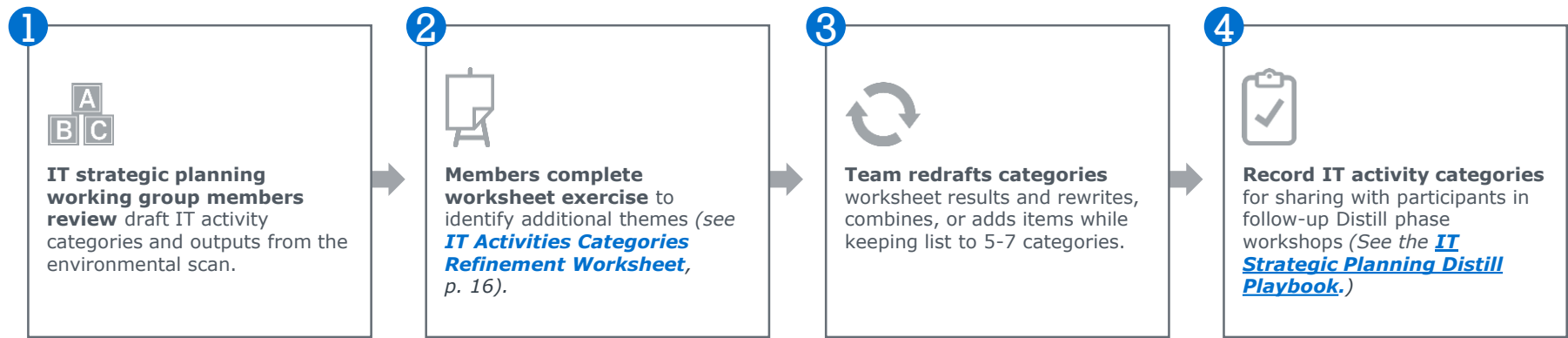
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Tool 17: IT Activity Categories Refinement Exercise

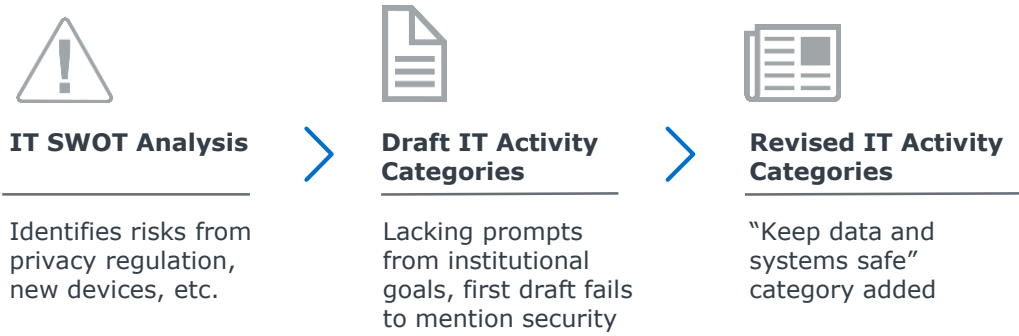
IT Strategic Planning Working Group Looks for Themes Not Surfaced by the Institutional Goals Cascade

The goals cascade helps ensure that IT strategy will serve the institution’s most important objectives. However, the institutional strategic plan often fails to mention technology or to encompass strategically significant opportunities and threats emerging in the IT environment. In this exercise, members of the IT strategic planning working group examine outputs from the environmental scan (especially the SWOT analysis) to supplement and refine the IT activity categories developed in the goals cascade workshop. This finalized set of categories feeds the next stage of IT strategic planning. For more on the environmental scan and its outputs, see the [IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part I](#).

Supplementing Cascade-Driven Strategic Themes



Example: SWOT Identifies Risks Unmentioned in Institutional Strategic Goals



Tool 17: IT Activity Categories Refinement Exercise

IT Activities Category Refinement Worksheet

Instructions: After reviewing the workshop IT activity categories and documentation from the environmental scan (including the SWOT analysis), answer the following questions to identify potential themes that the goals cascading process left undiscovered or underdeveloped. Then draft any new IT activity categories that need to be considered as you develop the IT strategic plan.

1. List strategic opportunities or threats identified in the SWOT analysis that are *not* addressed in the draft IT activity categories, or that need to be more explicitly stated.

2. Do the draft categories and IT activities imply capabilities that the IT organization does not currently have? List changes or improvements that IT would need to undertake to provide these capabilities.

3. Do the draft categories fail to address major customer concerns or needs discovered in your listening tour, customer satisfaction survey, etc., that have strategic implications for your institution? List them here.

4. Use the boxes below to identify any IT activity categories that must be added or redrafted to address the issues above.

IT Category <hr/>
Related IT Activities <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

IT Category <hr/>
Related IT Activities <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

IT Forum

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