EAB

IT Strategic Planning
Distill Playbook

Tools, Worksheets, and Guidelines to Identify IT Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives

PREPARE | DISCOVER | DISTILL | FINALIZE | IMPLEMENT

IT Forum

IT Strategic Planning Center of Excellence

How to Use This Playbook

EAB Center of Excellence: IT Strategic Planning

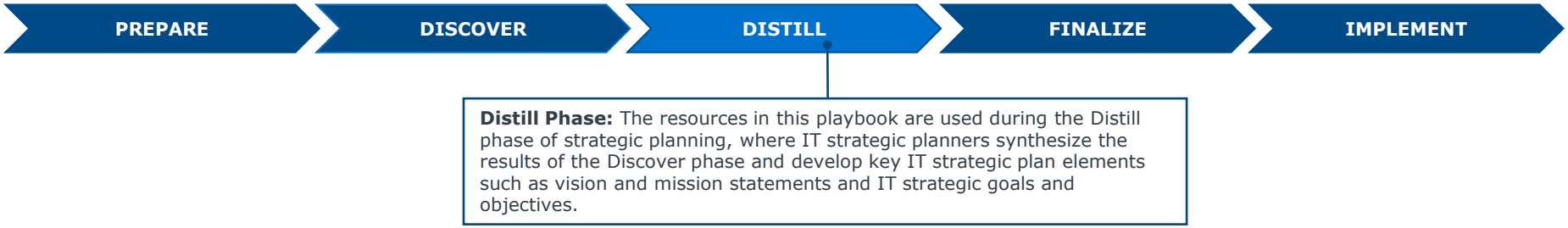
Plug-and-Play Resources to Guide Your IT Strategic Planning Process

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 Distill Playbook

This playbook describes how to develop IT vision and mission statements and IT strategic goals and objectives. This work is part of the Distill phase of IT strategic planning, where IT strategic planners synthesize the results of the previous Discover phase to develop core IT strategic elements.

For prior IT strategic planning activities that produce outputs used in this playbook, see the ***IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbooks, Parts I and II***.



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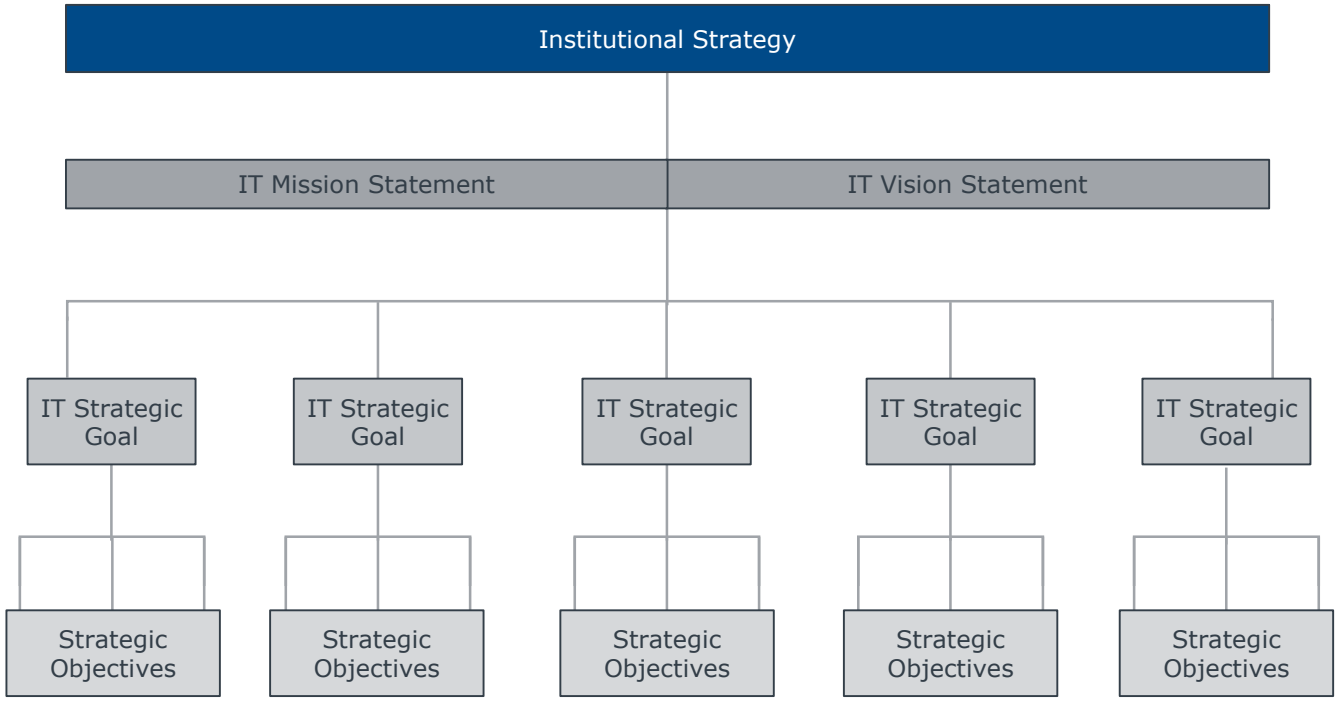
The Core Elements of IT Strategy

During the Distill phase of IT strategic planning, you will use the outputs from the earlier Discover phase to define the core elements of an IT strategic plan:

- *Mission*—what IT does and who it serves
- *Vision*—the ideal future state IT aspires to realize
- *IT Strategic Goals*—the strategically significant outcomes IT will pursue to support institutional goals and achieve its vision
- *IT Strategic Objectives*—for each goal, specific actions or means for attaining that goal

Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives Define IT's Strategy



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IT Mission, Vision, and Goals and Objectives Development Process

Workshops Central to Collaborative Development of Core IT Strategy Elements

Creating the core elements of an IT strategy- IT mission, vision, and goals and objectives- requires broad understanding of the institution and absorption of many sources of information. They are best developed in collaborative workshops that include varied viewpoints and diverse expertise.

Two distinct workshops are needed: one for IT vision/mission statements, and one for IT strategic goals and objectives. Following each workshop, outputs are further refined by the IT strategic planning working group. This is followed by community and oversight committee review, after which the working group makes necessary changes and finalizes the items.

The work in this playbook depends on prior work described in the ***IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Parts I and II***.

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

Collect and distribute outputs from the environmental scan, institutional goals cascade, and other relevant materials.

Tools:

- 1) Pre-Workshop Review Materials Checklist

Workshop creates draft IT mission and vision statements, which IT strategic planning working group refines and submits for community and oversight committee review.

Tools:

- 2) Mission Statement Workshop Exercise and Worksheet
- 3) Vision Statement Workshop Exercise and Worksheet

Workshop creates draft IT strategic goals, then objectives for each goal. The IT strategic planning working group further refines these and submits for community and oversight committee review.

Tools:

4) IT Strategic Goals Workshop Exercise and Worksheet

5) IT Strategic Objectives Workshop Exercise and Worksheet

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Prepare for Distill Phase Efforts

Resources for Assembling and Distributing Supporting Materials for IT Strategic Goals Identification

STEP 1

- Distill Phase Strategic Planning Workshops Fundamentals
- Pre-Workshop Review Materials Checklist

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Distill Phase IT Strategic Planning Workshops Fundamentals

In the Distill phase of IT strategic planning, workshops produce significant elements of the IT strategic plan: first the vision and mission statements, then a set of IT strategic goals and related IT objectives. Participants pre-read preliminary material, brainstorm plan elements in small groups, collate and comment on draft elements, and revise. They may vote on the elements they think are best.

Workshops do not produce a finished output. Their purpose is to draw on community expertise and create a collection of drafts for the IT strategic plan working group to use when finalizing the element.

Steps for Conducting a Successful IT Strategic Planning Workshop

Prepare

After calendaring, re-send review materials 1 week ahead of workshopping to remind participants to prepare.

Workshop

Workshops will take 3-4 hours depending on the number of participants and complexity of tasks.

Finalize Draft

Aggregate workshop results, revise, and distribute to participants within 1 week of meeting.

1. **Distribute review materials in advance of the meeting** to give participants time to familiarize themselves with the issues. Prepare worksheets and work items for use in the workshop sessions.
2. **Convene workshop participants** in small groups, asking each participant to draft strategic elements for sharing with the group.
3. **Share draft elements**, collect feedback, and revise. May take a vote on best items.
4. **Document completed items,** refer to ITSP working group to refine into an interim reviewable draft.

Format Suggestion

Each IT strategic planning workshop is a group exercise, and should be completed by an assembled group of 15-25, including members of the IT strategic planning committee, and likely those you identified as in a advisory role (***IT Strategic Planning Preparation Playbook***). These participants work in breakout groups with 3-5 people in each. Where available, your group will benefit from a non-IT facilitator for this session who can act as a neutral third party.

IT Strategic Planning Workshop Output

IT Strategic Elements Drafts

The workshop should produce a short list of participant-reviewed draft elements that the IT strategic planning working group can choose from, combine, and edit into a final first draft.

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Tool 1: Pre-Workshop Review Materials Checklist

Defining IT's mission, vision, goals, and objectives depends on prior work analyzing the IT environment and identifying the institution's strategic goals. Results from these efforts should be distributed at least a week ahead of time to participants in the mission/vision and IT goals/objectives workshops.

Relevant Discover phase outputs are listed below. Your institution may not have produced all of these; likewise, you may wish to include others not mentioned here (e.g., an institutional report or a sample IT strategic plan from a peer institution). Primary outputs like the institutional SWOT analysis and institutional strategic goals should be reviewed by all workshop participants. Supporting outputs need not be reviewed by everyone, but should be available in the event participants wish to query them in detail.

For more on the Discover phase processes that produce these materials, see the ***IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbooks, Parts I and II***.

Source	Review Item	Resource Type	Sent Y/N
Environmental Scan	SWOT Analysis	Primary	
	Issue and Trend Documentation	Supporting	
	Issue Impact Analysis	Supporting	
	Listening Tour Needs Compilation	Supporting	
	IT Customer Satisfaction Data	Supporting	
	Distributed IT Engagement Feedback	Supporting	
	Staff and Skills Audit	Supporting	
	IT Capabilities Assessment	Supporting	
Institutional Goals Alignment	Institutional Strategic Plan	Primary	
	List of Institutional Strategic Goals/Objectives (if not in plan)	Primary	
	IT Activity Categories	Primary	
Other	List of IT Activities (identified during strategic goals cascade)	Supporting	
	List other desired review items here		

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Develop IT Mission and Vision Statements

Resources for Defining What IT Does and What It Strives to Become

STEP 2

- IT Mission and Vision Fundamentals
- Mission Statement Workshop Exercise and Worksheet
- Vision Statement Workshop Exercise and Worksheet

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IT Mission and Vision Fundamentals

Mission and vision statements are foundational elements of the IT strategic plan. The mission statement describes what the IT organization does and for whom–in effect, its reason for existing. The vision statement indicates IT's ideal future state. Together they provide a broad framework for setting IT strategic goals and objectives and for guiding the IT organization as it implements its strategy.

Mission: What We're Here For
Communicates the Purpose of the Organization (What, Why, For Whom)

- Identifies the organization's "business"
- States major activities and objectives
- Defines commitment to stakeholders
- Supports the vision

Vision: Where We Want to Go
States What the Organization Will Accomplish if It Succeeds

- Future aspirational state
- Inspiring and challenging, but achievable
- Broadly applicable guidance, communicated succinctly
- Flows from the mission

Examples

University of Kentucky

Mission: "In support of UK's strategic plan, ITS provides, through customer engagement, outstanding technology infrastructure, services and solutions that advance teaching and learning, enable research, empower staff to provide exceptional services, enrich the student experience, and effectively manage and protect institutional data."

Vision: "ITS will strive to provide and protect an environment that features "IT abundance," wherein IT infrastructure, services, and solution are innovative, readily available, and utilized to provide exceptional support to students, faculty, and staff in their endeavors to uphold the UK mission."

James Madison University

Mission: "Deliver a technology environment and services that enable the university community to learn, innovate, collaborate and provide excellent service."

Vision: "Enhance learning, collaboration and service delivery through application of strategic technologies and secure universal access."

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Tool 2: Mission Statement Workshop Exercise

Developing a Mission Statement

The first exercise of the IT Mission and Vision workshop is collaborative work to create mission statement drafts. Voting is used to identify the mission statements that participants think best express the IT mission. The goal of the exercise is not to create a final statement, but to elicit community ideas and provide a collection of drafts that the IT strategic plan working group can draw upon when finalizing the mission statement.

1. **Facilitator separates participants into 3-5 smaller groups.**

   Participants should be familiar with a pre-assigned set of materials, such as the institutional strategic plan or outputs from the IT strategic planning environmental scan.

2. **Within groups, participants complete items 1–3 on the *IT Mission Statement Worksheet* *(p. 11)*.**

   Each group selects a reporter who writes answers on a flipchart. Note common elements among different answers, and look for particularly apt language or ideas.

3. **Participants write a draft mission statement and read it to the group** (Response to item 4 on worksheet).

   Participants may write individually or collaborate on a draft. After reading and discussing their statement, they write a final version on a note and post it to the flipchart.

4. **Groups break up for lightning review and voting round.**

   Participants circulate around the room reading the posted drafts. Each person has three voting stickers which they affix to the three statements they think best articulate the IT mission.

5. **Top-voted statements read aloud.**

   Return to tables. Facilitator identifies top-voted drafts and authors read them aloud. Draft statements are documented with author name(s) and vote count and used by the IT strategic plan working group for creation of a final first draft mission statement.

Markers of an Effective Mission Statement

- Describes the "what, why, and for whom" of IT
- Expresses ideas about IT, not just a list of activities
- Informs users what to expect, IT staff what to do
- Uses simple language that reads well when spoken aloud
- Concise: 40 words or fewer

Needed For This Exercise

- Tables for group work
- Flipcharts, markers at each table
- Sticky notes (index card size)
- Worksheets
- Voting stickers (three per person)
- 90–120 minutes

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Tool 2: Mission Statement Workshop Exercise

IT Mission Statement Worksheet

Instructions: Answer the questions below and be prepared to share them with team members/workshop participants.

1. What does IT do for your institution? Sum up the full breadth of its work in 3–4 short phrases.

2. For whom does IT perform these activities? Who are its major constituents?

3. In one or two concise phrases, describe the impact IT has on your institution when it does its work well.

4. Use your answers above to draft a mission statement for IT in the space below. You can write your own or collaborate with other participants in your group to jointly develop one. Your draft should:

- "Tell the story" of IT—what it does for the institution, why, and for whom
- Describe an achievable mission, not a utopian one
- Avoid clichés ("thinking outside the box") and flowery language
- Be concise—no more than 40 words and two sentences

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Tool 3: Vision Statement Workshop Exercise

Developing a Vision Statement

This exercise builds on the previous mission statement exercise and follows the same format to brainstorm ideas and language for a vision statement. The goal of the exercise is not to create a final statement, but to elicit community ideas and provide a collection of drafts that the IT strategic plan working group can draw upon when finalizing the vision statement.

1. **Facilitator separates participants into 3-5 smaller groups.**

   Participants should be familiar with a pre-assigned set of materials, such as the institutional strategic plan or outputs from the environmental scan.

2. **Within groups, participants complete items 1–4 on the *IT Vision Statement Worksheet* *(p. 13)*.**

   Each group selects a reporter who writes answers on a flipchart. Note common elements among different answers, and look for particularly apt language or ideas.

3. **Participants write a draft vision statement and read it to the group** (Response to item 4 on worksheet)**.**

   Participants may write individually or collaborate on a draft. After reading and discussing their statement, they write a final version on a note and post it to the flipchart.

4. **Groups break up for lightning review and voting round.**

   Participants circulate around the room reading the posted drafts. Each person has three voting stickers which they affix to the three statements they think best express an IT vision.

5. **Top-voted statements read aloud.**

   Return to tables. Facilitator identifies top-voted drafts and authors read them aloud. Draft statements are documented with author name(s) and vote count.

6. **Meeting concludes.**

   Drafts are forwarded to the IT strategic planning working group for creation of a final first draft vision statement.

Markers of an Effective Vision Statement

Written in future tense; states where the IT organization is headed

Describes an ideal, but achievable, IT organization

High-level guidance about how to achieve strategic goals

Uses simple language that reads well when spoken aloud

Concise: 40 words or fewer

Needed for This Exercise

- Tables for group work
- Flipcharts, markers at each table
- Sticky notes (index card size)
- Worksheets
- Voting stickers (three per person)
- 90–120 minutes

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Tool 3: Vision Statement Workshop Exercise

IT Vision Statement Worksheet

Instructions: Answer the questions below and be prepared to share them with team members/workshop participants.

1. What are the most important goals that your institution (not IT) is currently pursuing? You may wish to refer to an institutional strategic plan or information from your institution's recent environmental scan.

2. List five significant ways in which IT can help realize these goals. Describe broad areas of support or service (e.g., "Support innovative teaching practices") but avoid specific details or projects ("Implement XYZ application").

3. Complete this sentence: To help our institution achieve its strategic goals, in the next five years IT must…

4. Compose a vision statement for IT in the space below. You can write your own or collaborate with one or more people in your group. Your draft should be written in the future tense and should:
    - Describe the ideal state IT should aspire to
    - State positive changes or outcomes IT will bring about and indicators of success
    - Avoid clichés and unachievable promises
    - Be concise—no more than 40 words and two sentences

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Develop IT Strategic Goals and Objectives

Resources for Expressing What IT Must Do to Achieve Its Vision

STEP 3

- IT Strategic Goals and Objectives Fundamentals
- IT Strategic Goals Workshop Exercise
- IT Strategic Objectives Workshop Exercise

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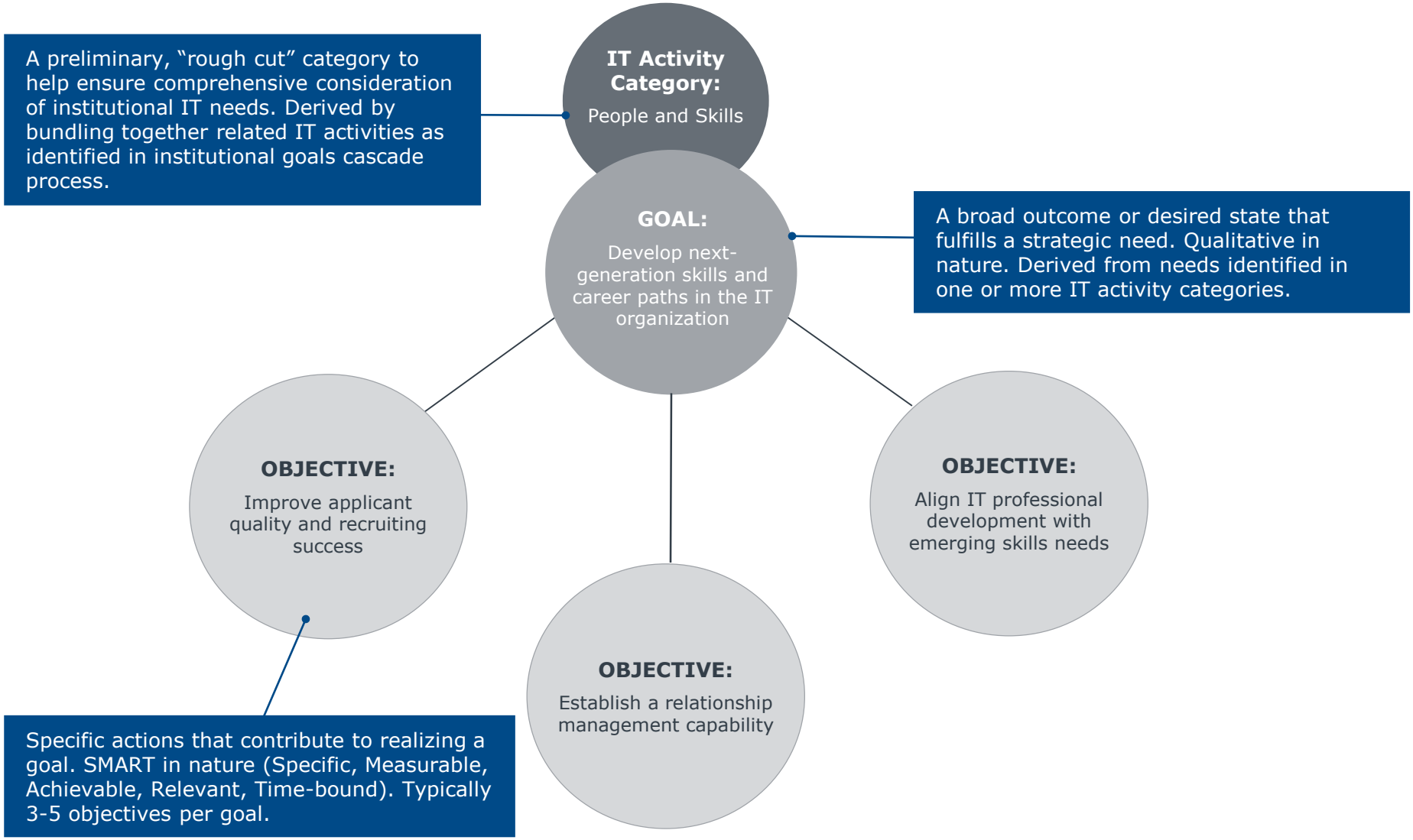
IT Strategic Goals and Objectives Fundamentals

Strategic goals are the building blocks of an IT strategic plan. In the Discovery phase of IT strategic planning, institutions collect raw materials such as institutional strategic goals and a SWOT analysis, and use them to identify and categorize needed IT activities (See ***IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Parts I and II***). In the Distill phase, these inputs are refined into strategic goals: broad outcomes desired in strategically significant areas that collectively define what the IT organization must accomplish to achieve its vision. Goals are then resolved into objectives: specific, measurable actions that contribute to the goal. Aim for 5-7 IT strategic goals, each with no more than 5 objectives.



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Tool 4: IT Strategic Goals Workshop Exercise

Developing IT Strategic Goals

This exercise presumes that the IT strategic plan working group has prepared a set of IT activity categories needed to support institutional goals (see the ***IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part II***) and distributed a list of them to workshop participants. Participants in this workshop are organized in small groups, each addressing one or more IT activity categories. Groups collaboratively develop draft strategic goals, receive feedback from the rest of the participants, then refine their goals.

1. **Facilitator separates participants into groups.**
   Each table is assigned one or more IT activity categories. The group selects a note taker.

2. **Within groups, participants complete items 1–6 on the *IT Strategic Goals Worksheet* *(p. 17)*.**
   Each group develops draft strategic goals for their assigned categories. Participants may write goals individually or collaborate. Drafts are posted on flipcharts for review.

3. **Groups break up for lightning review round.**
   One member of each group stays at the table to answer questions while others circulate around the room reading the other groups' posted drafts. Circulating participants leave comments or suggestions.

4. **Groups reassemble and revise goals.**
   Participants return to tables, review comments and questions, and draft final versions of their goals. Some draft goals may be combined or eliminated at this time.

5. **Report.**
   Participants read their draft goals to the whole room.

Characteristics of an IT Strategic Goal

- Broadly expresses a qualitative desired outcome
- Addresses a significant institutional or IT need
- Achievable over the time period of the IT strategic plan
- Concise: 25 words maximum, plus a short descriptive name

Needed for This Exercise

- Tables for group work
- Flipcharts, markers at each table
- Sticky notes (index card size)
- Worksheets
- 90–120 minutes

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Tool 4: IT Strategic Goals Workshop Exercise

IT Strategic Goals Worksheet

Instructions: Answer the questions below and be prepared to share them with workshop participants. If your group is evaluating more than one IT activity category, use one worksheet per category. To review the relationships between IT activity categories, goals, and objectives, see p. 15.

1. IT activity category (e.g., "infrastructure," "people and skills"): _____.

2. As a group, discuss the category to be sure you share a common understanding of its definition and scope. Record major points about the category on the flipchart.

3. Using sticky notes, write 1–3 broad outcomes that your institution must achieve in the next five years in order to fulfill institutional and IT needs in the specified category. You may work individually or with others in your group. These outcomes should cover the whole scope of the category.

4. Read each outcome aloud and put each sticky note on the flipchart. Put sticky notes with similar outcomes close together on the flip chart. As a group, consider ways to consolidate, eliminate, or improve the draft outcomes. Look for gaps in coverage: does anything need to be added?

5. Assign the reviewed/consolidated outcomes to group members. Develop them into strategic goals as follows:
   - The goal should describe a desired state that IT must achieve to address a significant part (or all) of the institution's needs in the IT activity category.
   - Goals should be broadly stated, clear, and achievable.
   - Each goal should have a short name or title and a more detailed description of no more than 25 words.
   - Write each goal on a sticky note.

6. Post the draft strategic goals on the flipchart for review and comment by the larger group (lightning review round).

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Tool 5: IT Strategic Objectives Workshop Exercise

Developing IT Strategic Objectives

This exercise adds objectives to the strategic goals developed in Exercise #1. Participants remain in their thematic groups and break down strategic goals into objectives. Groups discuss and revise objectives, then receive feedback from other participants before finalizing drafts.

1. **Reassemble groups.**

   Each team continues addressing the IT activity categories assigned in the goals drafting exercise. The group selects a note taker.

2. **Within groups, participants complete items 1–4 on the *IT Strategic Objectives Worksheet*** (p. 19)**.**

   Participants may write goals individually or collaborate and develop 2-5 draft objectives per IT strategic goal. Drafts are posted on flipcharts alongside related strategic goals for review.

3. **Groups break up for lightning review round.**

   One member of each group stays at the table to answer questions while others circulate around the room reading the other groups' posted drafts. Circulating participants leave comments/suggestions on flipcharts.

4. **Groups reassemble and revise goals.**

   Participants return to tables, review comments and questions, and draft final versions of their objectives. Aim for 2-5 objectives per goal. Some draft objectives may be combined or eliminated at this time.

5. **Report.**

   Groups read their draft objectives to the whole room.

6. **Meeting concludes.**

   Drafts are forwarded to the IT strategic plan working group for creation of a final first draft set of goals/objectives.

Characteristics of an IT Strategic Objective

SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound

An action that contributes to achieving a strategic goal

Can be further resolved into detailed activities/initiatives

Concise: 15 words maximum, plus a short descriptive name

Needed for This Exercise

- Tables for group work
- Flipcharts, markers at each table
- Sticky notes (index card size)
- Worksheets
- 90 – 120 minutes

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Tool 5: IT Strategic Objectives Workshop Exercise

IT Strategic Objectives Worksheet

Instructions: Answer the questions below and be prepared to share them with workshop participants. To review the relationships between IT activity categories, goals, and objectives, see p. 15.

1. IT activity category that your group is evaluating (e.g., "infrastructure," "people and skills"): _____.

2. For each of the IT strategic goals you drafted in Exercise #1, write 2-5 objectives necessary to achieving that goal. Objectives are actions that meet the following SMART criteria:
    - Specific – Targets a particular area for action
    - Measurable – Progress indicators (preferably quantifiable) can be identified
    - Achievable – Can be accomplished with available resources
    - Relevant – Is within the scope of the related strategic goal and is not redundant with another objective
    - Time-Bound – Time to complete can be determined and is within the timeframe of the IT strategic plan

3. Copy your objectives on sticky notes. Read them aloud and affix notes on the flipchart under the appropriate strategic goal. Group discussion assesses whether the objectives meet the SMART criteria and offer suggestions for improvement.

4. Revise objectives as desired, and post the revised copies on the flipchart for review and comment by the larger group (lightening review round).

5. Following larger group review, revise objectives as needed.

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IT Forum

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