

IT Strategic Plan Sample Outline

An IT strategic plan is the documented output of the IT strategic planning process. Its purpose is to communicate the IT organization's vision, mission, and strategic goals and objectives in a way that is accessible to the IT organization, its campus customers, and the public at large. IT strategic plans come in many shapes and sizes, and employ differing terminology, but they tend to share common features and address similar audiences. This sample outline provides a basic model that working groups can depart from as their institution requires.

An IT strategic plan typically consists of the following sections, which together create its table of contents:

1. Introduction
2. Vision and Mission Statements
3. SWOT Analysis
4. Overview of IT Strategic Goals
5. IT Strategic Goals and Objectives

Below is a sample outline for an IT strategic plan that draws on information from other sections of the IT Strategic Planning Center of Excellence and explains how to compile the separate segments into a complete plan. We provide a short explanation, examples of these sections in other plans, and a suggested length for each section.

1 Introduction

Use this section to explain why IT undertook this strategic planning effort, and why IT is integral in carrying out institutional goals and activities. Expressing IT's alignment with the institution's strategic objectives is key to making the case for IT's role as a strategic partner for campus. The introduction should provide contextual information, such as the time period that the IT strategic plan covers, how and by whom the plan was developed, and how it is organized. It might also include a note from the CIO or an overview of IT's organizational structure.

Target Length: 1 to 2 pages

Examples:

[University of Massachusetts, Amherst](#) (Pages 4–6)

[University of Florida](#) (Page 1, Pages 13–14)

2 Vision and Mission Statements

This segment should set the stage for the subsequent presentation of IT's strategic goals. The mission statement describes what IT does, why it exists, and who it serves. It should express an idea about IT, not a specific list of activities. Make it clear and succinct: aim for no more than 40 words.

The vision statement is more action-oriented. It explains what IT will do— using the future tense— to serve the institution and carry out strategic goals. It tells the reader where IT is headed, in simple and concise language. Some institutions will also add a separate section on IT's core values.

To better stress the ways that IT's vision and mission support those of the institution, consider including the institutional statements alongside IT's.

Target Length: ½ to 1 page

Examples:

[Queen's University](#) (Pages 5–6)

[Boston College](#) (Page 3)

For additional guidance on drafting Vision and Mission Statements, see the IT Forum's [IT Strategic Planning Distill Playbook](#).

IT Strategic Plan Sample Outline

3 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Prior to sharing goals in their IT strategic plan, some IT organizations provide readers context on the process that they went through to identify areas of strategic importance. The SWOT analysis, completed in the Discover phase of the IT strategic planning process, identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that exist in the institutional IT environment. The final SWOT analysis should be easy to understand, succinct, and avoid jargon. The intention is to provide readers insight into how IT prioritized its strategic goals.

Target Length: 2 pages

Examples:

[University of Alabama, Birmingham](#) (Pages 8–9)

[Ithaca College](#) (Full Document)

For additional guidance on completing a SWOT Analysis, see the IT Forum’s [IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part I](#).

4 Overview of IT Strategic Goals

This section serves as a brief overview of IT’s strategic goals. Strategic goals are broad outcomes desired in strategically significant areas, as determined in the IT strategic planning process. These strategic goals collectively define what the IT organization must accomplish to achieve its vision. The goals must be achievable over the time period of the IT strategic plan.

This segment of the IT strategic plan permits the reader to review all of IT’s strategic goals at a glance and roadmaps the pages to come, which will dive more deeply into each IT strategic goal and offer specific objectives and action steps. Keep this explanation high-level: each goal should be no more than 25 words long, with a short, descriptive name.

Target Length: 1 page

Examples:

[University of Michigan](#) (Page 2)

[University of Alabama, Birmingham](#) (Page 11)

For additional guidance on drafting IT Strategic Goals, see the IT Forum’s [IT Strategic Planning Discover Playbook, Part II](#), and the [IT Strategic Planning Distill Playbook](#).

5 IT Strategic Goals and Objectives

This segment is the bulk of the IT strategic plan. It is where the IT strategic goals are explained in greater detail, and specific objectives are attached to each goal. Objectives are specific action steps that, when carried out, will accomplish the strategic goal. It can be valuable to list alongside each IT goal the institutional strategic goals it supports.

In order to be effective, objectives should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Objectives can be further broken down into detailed tasks that the IT organization will carry out, but these operational details are best left out of the primary IT strategic plan document.

Target Length: 1 to 2 pages per strategic goal

Examples:

[Ithaca College](#) (Pages 4–9)

[University of Massachusetts, Amherst](#) (Pages 14–18)

For additional guidance on drafting IT Strategic Objectives, see the IT Forum’s [IT Strategic Planning Distill Playbook](#).

A Note on IT Strategic Plan Design

Why is design important?

IT strategic plans are meant to be consumed by various campus partners: deans, faculty, administrators, and IT staff. An engaging, cohesive design can help maintain readers' interest in IT initiatives and help them navigate the IT strategic plan's content. Below are five key design elements to consider when finalizing your IT strategic plan.

