

Strategic Planning Guidance

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this document is to advise agencies of the elements that comprise a Strategic Plan and to provide an explanation of the analysis which should take place in order to make the agency's Strategic Plan viable. These plans will ensure consistency with both a statewide performance management strategy and the budget process.

Agency Strategic Planning in New York State

In preparation for the upcoming Budget, State agencies will work with the DOB, the Executive Chamber and the NYS Lean Office to develop a three year Strategic Plan (covering FY 2018 through FY 2020) in order to evaluate agency-specific operations, identify areas where progress is most essential, and create and execute a plan for the future. The Strategic Plan should not, however, be a binding document that prevents agencies from learning from experiences and adapting their plans to changing circumstances. Additionally, agencies will complete Annual Performance Plans to provide one-year snapshots of the progress they plan to make by the end of the upcoming fiscal year toward achieving their Strategic Plan goals and objectives, as further outlined in Attachment B.

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning provides a decision-making framework that enables agencies to effectively plan for long-term goals and properly communicate the agency's vision for the future to their staff, stakeholders and the citizens of New York. When undertaking the strategic planning process, agencies should establish what they will work to achieve over the next three years to support their mission and vision. The strategic planning process identifies the long-term goals and objectives the agency aims to achieve and outlines actions the agency will take to realize those goals.

Effective organizations regularly take time to ask and answer a few critical questions as part of the strategic planning process:

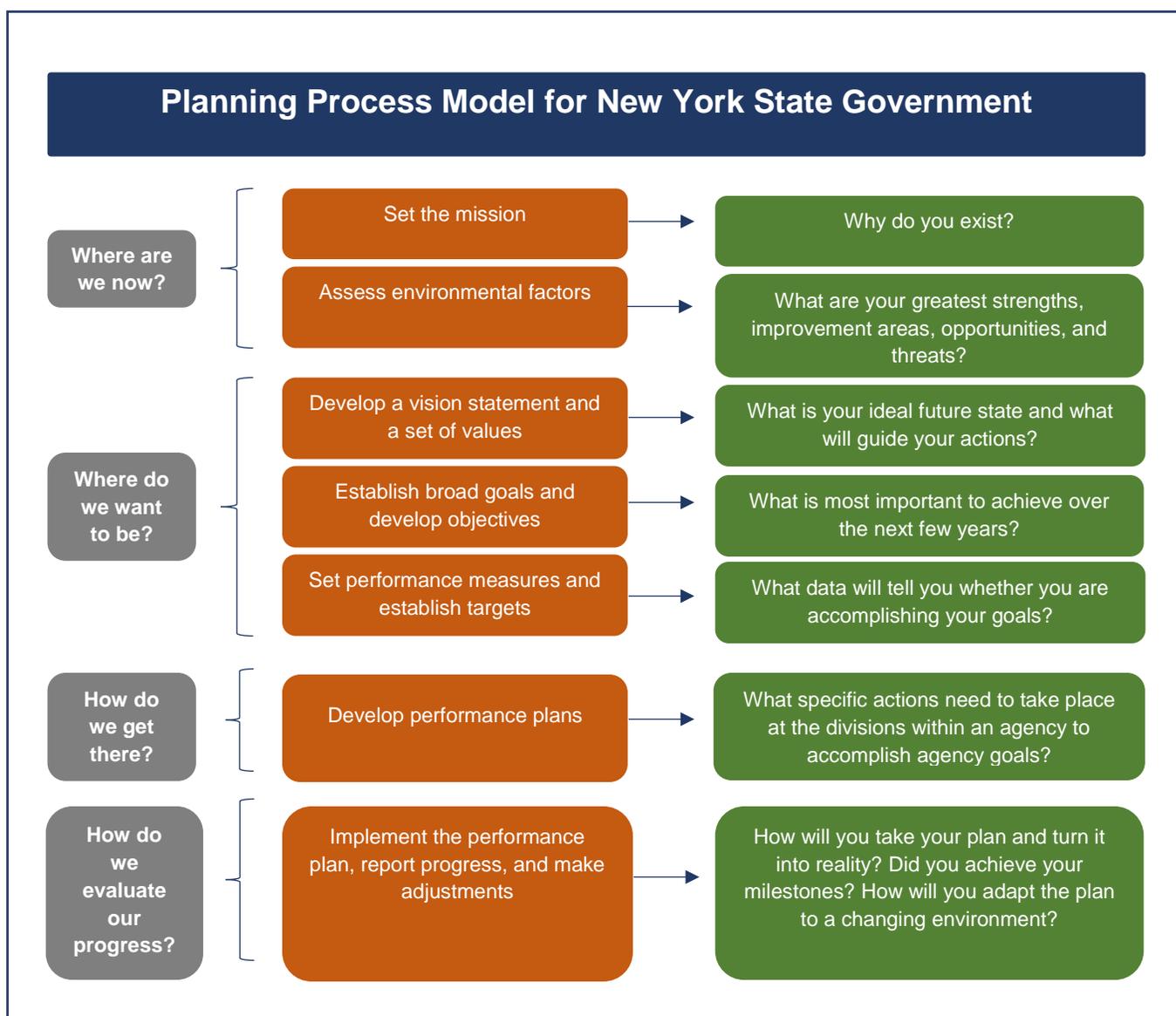
- What do we do and for whom?
- What are our main products and services?
- Who are the customers of those products and services?
- Where are we today?
- Where do we want to be in the future?
- How do we close the gap?
- How will we know if we are succeeding?

Strategic planning in the public sector should aim to answer these additional questions:

- What is the desired social outcome, or “public good” we want to achieve?
- How do we expect to contribute to the desired final outcome?
- What resources will we need to implement these strategies?

The most valuable part of the agency’s Strategic Plan is the periodic process of confirming goals, assessing progress toward an outcome, evaluating what is effective and what is not, and adjusting strategies to improve performance. The planning process should also incorporate a broad range of perspectives from across an agency. Figure 1 details the planning process model for New York State.

Figure 1: Planning Process Model for New York State Government Agency Strategic Plan Elements



Responsibility for development of the Strategic Plan belongs to agency leadership. Each agency will determine who is involved in developing the plan. These individuals shall have a broad understanding as to how the entire agency operates and how each core functional area of the agency fits together to achieve the overall mission.

In general, an agency Strategic Plan is completed at the agency level. For some larger agencies in particular, developing plans for the individual divisions within the agency first and then combining these division plans into an overall agency Strategic Plan may better meet the agency's needs. It is expected that the strategic planning efforts are distributed across all divisions in order to achieve a cross-cutting effect that ensures agency coherence and efficiency.

An agency Strategic Plan consists of five elements that must be submitted (Template A):

1. Agency mission statement;
2. Assessment of external and internal environmental factors;
3. Agency vision statement;
4. a) Goals and b) objectives; and
5. a) Performance measures and b) targets

While the above elements are those that must be included in the submitted Strategic Plan, agencies are highly encouraged to develop more comprehensive packages outlining their Strategic Plan in further detail. These more detailed plans, while not required for submission, can be useful documents to help guide the agency toward fulfilling their mission. For example, a more comprehensive Strategic Plan package should describe major management challenges the agency faces, identify planned actions to address such challenges and which agency official will be responsible for carrying out those actions.

Element Descriptions

Element 1: Mission Statement

Identifying why an agency exists is a critical component of strategic planning as it guides the rest of the Strategic Plan and the actions of the organization. The mission statement will be a practical tool to make decisions surrounding priorities, actions and responsibilities. The mission should simply describe in a direct and concise sentence what the organization does, why it does this and for whom. It should be easy to understand, simple, focused, and relevant.

Element 2: Environmental Factors

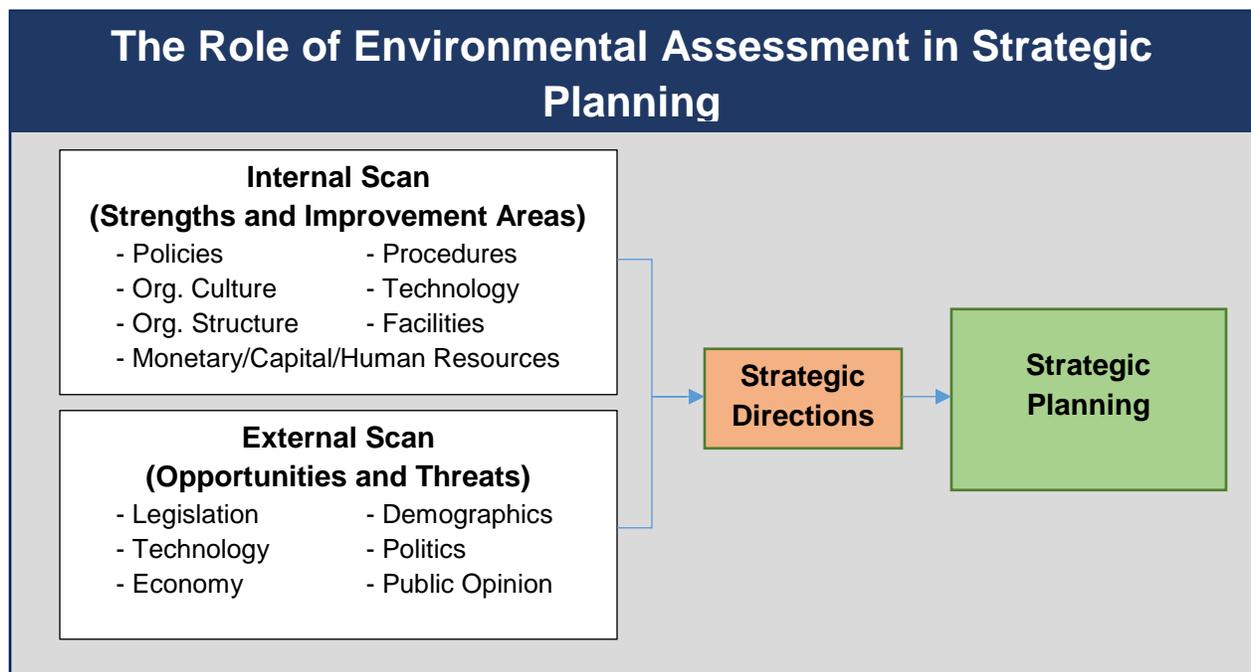
The strategic planning process provides a good opportunity for an agency to perform an environmental assessment which examines the internal and external factors that can

impact its ability to accomplish agency mission, goals, and objectives. Awareness of these internal and external factors informs the strategic planning process and allows for proactive planning. Examples of questions to consider include the following:

- What are key workforce issues that affect agency performance?
- What workforce issues must be addressed to achieve business goals?
- Do you see a need or opportunity for changes in service delivery methods?
- Will your strategies require an increase in staff and, thus, a need for more space? Will they require changes in the type of space? Are there pressing facility maintenance and operations needs or requirements?
- What is the current technology environment? What are the capabilities and risks afforded by your current technology environment?
- How can additional staff, space, operations, and technology needs be accommodated within current fiscal constraints?
- Are there trends in revenue sources, fund balance changes, or cost pressures that may affect your financial sustainability?
- What is happening in our environment that we can't control, but will impact the organization?

Under an environmental assessment, an agency explicitly identifies internal factors (strengths and improvement areas) and external factors (opportunities and threats) that may impact its ability to achieve results. This analysis can be used to develop strategies to capitalize on positive factors (strengths and opportunities) and mitigate adverse factors (improvement areas, and threats). This information should be collected, analyzed, and summarized for use in an agency's planning efforts as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Role of Environmental Assessment in Strategic Planning



Element 3: Vision Statement

The vision statement clearly paints an aspirational picture of where the agency sees itself in the future. The vision statement should be both realistic and challenging, as this desired end-state will motivate and drive agency results. It can be general and does not need to include specifics. The vision describes a future identity while the mission serves as an ongoing and time-independent guide. The mission describes why it is important to achieve the vision.

Element 4: Goals and Objectives

a) Goals

Goals are broad statements of what an agency wants to achieve over a long period of time. They stretch and challenge an agency while being realistic and achievable, and help provide answers to the question, “Where do we want to be?” They should reflect the agency’s major areas of responsibility for delivering services to New Yorkers.

An effective strategic goal is a broad, long-term outcome that supports implementation of the agency mission. The desired end-state should be reflected in the statement, without being overly specific in its detail. While the statement of the goal does not need to be specific, goals should have the ability to be assessed using the SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely). It is important that agency Strategic Plans include goals that not only aim to achieve a certain quantity of effort, but also aim to achieve quality of that effort. Agencies should aim to include three to five high-level goals in the Strategic Plan, which should collectively touch on each core functional area of the agency.

During the goal development process, an agency should answer the following questions:

- Are the goals in harmony with the agency’s mission and will achievement of the goals fulfill or help fulfill the agency’s mission?
- Are the goals derived from the environmental assessment and do they reflect responses to identified factors?
- Do the goals provide a clear direction for agency action?
- Do the goals reflect agency priorities?

b) Objectives

Objectives are clear targets for specific action that define how an agency will work to achieve a particular goal. They are steps in the effort to achieve an agency’s mission which are measurable. Objectives represent the extent to which agency goals will be achieved at the end of the three years covered by the Strategic Plan. Strategic objectives should address the outcome or management impact the agency is trying to achieve.

Each strategic objective will support a strategic goal by providing a specific outcome that the agency is trying to achieve. Agencies should aim to provide at least two strategic objectives for each strategic goal listed in priority order.

The following questions should help an agency assess its objectives:

- Is the objective clearly related to the stated goal?
- Does the objective clearly state what the agency intends to accomplish?
- Does the objective have specific targets and time frames? Can progress toward completion of the objective be measured?
- Is the objective aggressive and challenging, yet realistic and attainable within available resources?
- How does it compare with the objectives of other states?
- Will someone unfamiliar with the program understand what the objective means?

Element 5: Performance Measures and Targets

Performance measurement is a key element in achieving the goals and objectives that are identified as part of an agency's Strategic Plan. Identifying performance measures that can be used to incrementally assess progress toward achieving a particular goal and objective, and establishing explicit targets for those measures, further refines the answer to the question, "Where do we want to be?" at the end of the planning horizon. Performance measures and targets should be developed for each Strategic Plan objective and are expected to be reported on an annual basis. In this way, the Annual Performance Plan targets will act as guideposts for judging whether progress is being made in achieving goals on schedule and at the levels originally envisioned.

Performance Measures outline the criteria that will be assessed in order to know whether progress is being made, as in "What is being measured?"

Targets set a specific, numeric measurement that the agency hopes to achieve in the given timeframe.

Performance measurement gives life to the mission and goals of an agency and its programs by providing a framework that lets each employee know how they contribute to the agency's success. Effective performance measures and explicit targets serve as agents for change. They bring an agency's work into focus by describing in concrete terms what will be produced and by orienting stakeholders to the tasks to be accomplished.

They should provide a basis for answering the following questions:

- How well are we doing?
- Are we meeting our goals?
- Are our customers satisfied?
- Where are improvements necessary?
- What has been missed?

Additional Performance Measures Guidance

Performance measures and targets provide factual information used in making decisions for the planning, budgeting, management, and evaluation of government services. These measures can inform decision makers on a wide variety of topics, including quantity, efficiency, quality, effectiveness, and impact. Credible, timely performance data is essential to having an effective performance management system and to accomplishing agencies goals. Agencies should also ensure that the measures they are developing are:

Informative

Measurement information must add value to the discussion. The focus of performance management systems is on using performance information to make decisions, so it is critical that managers and decision makers have confidence in the information, and that it can be used to make well-informed decisions.

Well-Understood

Measurement definitions must be transparent so data collectors, managers, and policy makers are clear on the data's meaning and are able to use the information appropriately.

Relevant

Measurement information must be appropriate for the audience for which it is intended – managers, budget directors, elected officials, or citizens. If measures are not relevant to the situation and meaningful to the audience, they will not be used. To accommodate a diversity of interests, measures should be developed so that they serve multiple stakeholder groups.

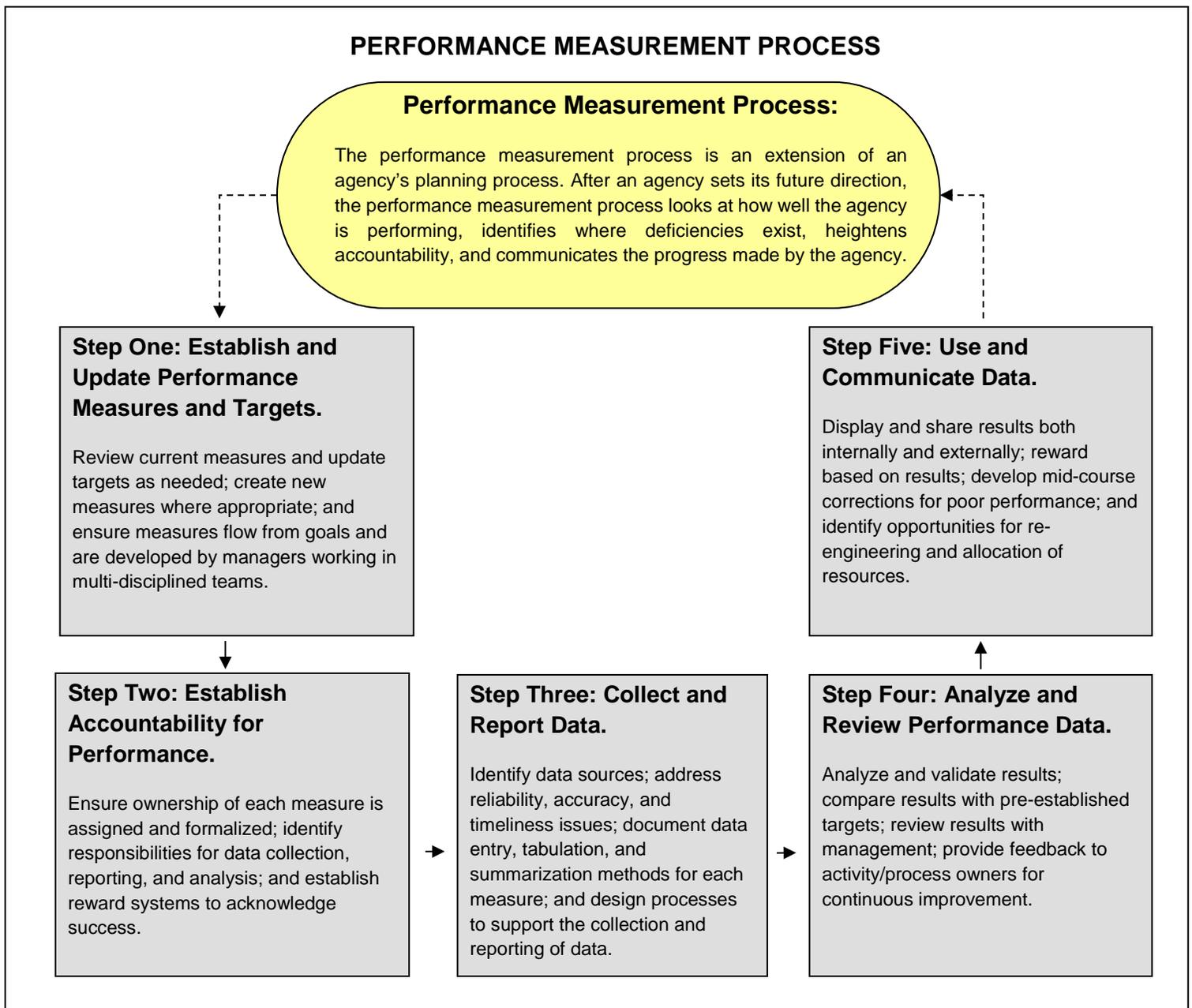
When developing measures, it is best to keep things simple. There is no advantage to tracking hundreds of performance measures that are never used. It is important, however, to collect the right measures. A good set of measures provides a complete picture of an agency's performance. Agencies are strongly encouraged to collect benchmark data in a timely manner to ensure that data is available both substantively and in the format desired. Such data should be driven by what works and what does not, and evidence (e.g. evaluations, research studies, audits, pilot programs, etc.) that identifies the greatest needs and opportunities for the purpose of which public funds are being used. If data is not readily available, a different measure should be selected at the outset of the strategic planning process.

Targets associated with each measure should be both realistic enough for the given timeframe as well as challenging enough that they will move the agency towards achieving their goals and objectives.

Performance Measurement Process

Figure 3 describes the recommended performance measurement process. It is advisable that agencies follow this process to develop a strong set of measures that ensure effective tracking of performance and clear reporting. The process includes establishing and updating what to measure, establishing accountability for collecting and reporting data, analyzing data to gauge performance and improve operations, and reporting performance to both internal and external stakeholders.

Figure 3: Performance Measurement Process



Strategic Planning Best Practices

A good strategic planning process will help the agency to:

- Identify an agency's mission, core business processes, primary customers, and stakeholders;
- Articulate an agency's vision and values;
- Focus on a limited number of key priorities and outcomes;
- Set clear goals and measureable objectives for priority outcomes;
- Analyze external forces that influence the ability to achieve the mission;
- Assess internal capacity to deliver services and manage effectively;
- Develop strategies that will, when implemented, achieve the objectives;
- Establish performance measures and targets to determine if strategies are successful at meeting objectives;
- Maximize the benefit provided by enterprise services and agencies (e.g. ITS, OGS, SFS);
- Implement the plan through resource and staffing decisions and operational plans;
- Regularly monitor progress; and
- Involve leaders, managers, employees, customers, and stakeholders throughout the process as appropriate.

When done well, strategic planning helps agency leaders to organize, direct, and support goals, strategies and actions, leading to desired results. Agencies will be required to review their plan on an annual basis and if appropriate, refine the plan.

Example Agency Strategic Plan Elements *(for illustrative purposes only)*

1) Mission Statement:

- As a scientific entity, it is our mission to serve the lifelong educational needs of visitors through our collections, exhibitions, scholarship, programs, media and publications. We strive to explore and express significant natural and cultural diversity, past and present.

2) Environmental Factors:

- External Factor: New media and social networking – Technology – New tools and technologies will exponentially broaden our access worldwide; however, we also must leverage these new technologies effectively in order to remain relevant to visitors who come from around the world.

- Internal Factor: Lack of physical space – Facilities – Collections are fundamental to our work and to that of countless scholars and many agencies; it is our responsibility to preserve them for future generations. In order to ensure they remain available, we will improve collections storage and management, substantially expand access to collections through digital technologies, and build public/private partnerships that strategically enhance collections care.

3) Vision Statement:

- Shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world.

4a) Strategic Plan Goal:

- Be the trusted, authoritative organization for credible, impartial scientific expertise and data to inform global initiatives and policy formulation related to the sustainability of biodiversity and ecosystems.

4b) Strategic Plan Objectives:

- I. Capitalize on the agency's reputation and status to convene conferences, symposia, and workshops of experts and policy makers on current issues.
- II. Digitize the agency's science collections and develop new ways to analyze, integrate, and share this information in formats appropriate to different audiences.

5a) Strategic Plan Performance Measure:

- I. Attendance at symposia on key areas of global concern.
- II. Rate of digitization.

5b) Strategic Plan Targets (3-year):

- I. Increase attendance at symposia by 30%.
- II. Double the current rate of digitization.

6) Evidence and Data Collection

- I. We have undertaken a pilot program that has demonstrated that use of social increases attendance at symposia.
- II. A recent research study indicates that young adult access to digital scientific materials increases the likelihood of completing a high school degree.

Definitions

Environmental factors: impact the agency's ability to accomplish their mission, goals, and objectives can be *external* (e.g. legislation, demographics, technology, politics, economy, and public opinion) or *internal* (e.g. policies, organizational culture, organization structure, monetary/capital/human resources, procedures, technology, and facilities) in nature.

Evidence: available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid; can be quantitative or qualitative and may come from a variety of sources including: performance measurement, evaluations, statistical series, retrospective reviews, and other data analytics and research.

Goals: broad statements of what an agency wants to achieve over a long period of time; should reflect the agency's major areas of responsibility for delivering services to New Yorkers; may be subdivided into multiple objectives.

Measures: describe *what* is being measured to ensure effective and efficient use of resources; enable agencies to objectively gauge and report progress in achieving their goals.

Mission Statement: the reason for an agency's existence; succinctly identifies what the agency does, why, and for whom.

Objectives: clear target for specific action; interim steps toward achieving an agency's mission and long term goals; should address the outcome or management impact the agency is trying to achieve.

SMART framework: acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely.

Strategic Planning: a decision-making framework that enables agencies to effectively plan for long-term goals and properly communicate the agency's vision for the future to their staff, stakeholders and the citizens of New York.

Targets: numerically define the desired level of performance for each measure to be achieved in a given amount of time.

Vision Statement: paints an aspirational picture of how the agency sees itself in the future; should be both realistic and challenging as this desired end-state will motivate and drive agency results.