Data-Driven Human Capital Strategies

CYCLE OF IMPROVEMENT PLAYBOOK:
Human Capital

Create a Plan for Human Capital Improvement

SEPTEMBER 2021

Background

A cycle of improvement uses data and other information to identify key successes and challenges in a system and creates a vision and plan for the most important work that needs to be done. This cycle of improvement playbook lays out a framework that leaders can use within a local education agency (LEA) to improve their human resources work through five key steps [Figure 1]. Using a Cycle of Improvement Framework allows an LEA to identify and focus on the most important work based on their data, context, and available resources. Each step of the Cycle of Improvement Framework is described in detail in this playbook, with examples of what it looks like in practice and recommended tools and resources that can be used at that step.

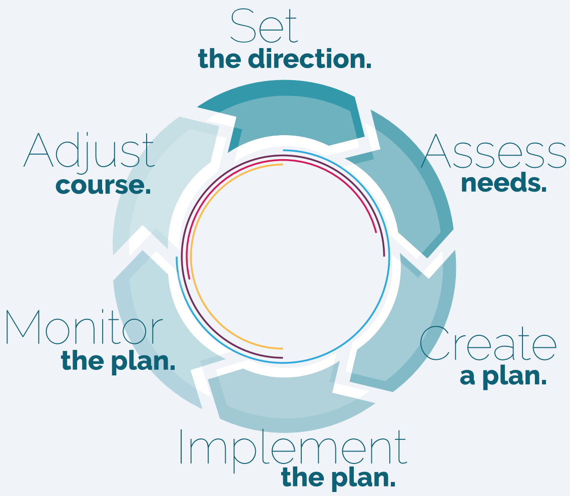

Figure 1.
The Cycle of Improvement

Create a Plan for Human Capital Improvement

Overview

The purpose of the previous step — **Step 1: Assess Needs** — is for the LEA to better understand the current state of human capital performance, including strengths and weaknesses, and to prioritize areas for improvement. In **Step 2: Create a Plan**, the purposes are:

- to **set measurable goals** for the identified priority area/s;
- to **identify existing or new strategies** that contribute to these goals; and
- to **determine how** the strategies can and should relate to other LEA work.

From there, LEA should define tactical plans for each strategy. This guide will outline how to set measurable goals for the priority areas; identify key strategies; and build plans to organize people, time, resources and implementation to support these strategies.

Process for Creating a Human Capital Improvement Plan

The first step in creating a Human Capital Improvement Plan is to set measurable goals with metrics for the priority area/s identified in **Step 1: Assess Needs**. To develop these goals, LEAs should consider the following questions:

- What do we want to achieve at the end of year one in our area of priority? Why?
- What do we want to achieve at the end of three years in our area of priority? Why?
- How will we know when we've gotten there (or fallen short)? (e.g., How will we measure it?)

The high-level goals are measured by big-picture outcomes, such as the retention of highly effective staff or the quality of the pool of candidates. The basic template below illustrates how this process primarily focuses first on the **why** (i.e., what outcomes we are trying to achieve) and the **what** (i.e., what strategies we will employ to get there). Goal areas are accompanied by metrics, and supported by programs, initiatives and projects that are expected to drive improvement.

Sample Goal Areas and Metrics		Sample Key Strategies	
Sample Strategic Goal Areas	**Sample Metrics**	**Year 1: 2020-2021**	**Years 2-3: 2021-2024**
1. Recruit & Build a Quality Teacher Candidate Pool	• Applicant-to-vacancy ratio • New hire quality • Diversity of pool	• Pipeline effectiveness study • Identify & recruit/hire student teachers • Teacher turnover and retention analysis • Offer early contracts to teacher candidates in the spring	• Improve conversion of early contracted teachers • Build new university partnerships • Teacher residency program • New applicant tracking system
2. Strategic & Equitable Staffing	• Equity in high versus low need schools • Mutual consent • Incentives	• Identify schools that have high turnover • Mutual consent hiring vents	• Incentives for hard-to-staff positions • Contract terms for surplus/layoff

Once the high-level goals and metrics are identified, LEAs next determine determine a set of key to drive progress towards the goal. To identify best practices, LEAs can use the **human capital content guides and sub-topic briefs here**.

For LEAs, the choices on which strategies to pursue are critical given limited time and resources. The Impact vs. Effort matrix is a process LEAs can use to be more intentional about how they select strategies to pursue to support each identified human capital goal. The Impact vs. Effort Matrix[1] consists of three key steps:

1. **Identifying promising strategies the LEA might pursue** related to a particular topic area or challenge.

2. **Mapping each strategy under consideration into the following matrix** based on the LEA's assessment of the strategies' required effort versus impact. To calibrate around where to place the strategies, the team can discuss 1) what goes into effort (e.g., money, time, resources) and 2) how likely various strategies are to have their predicted impact, and what those predictions are based on.

3. **Selecting and prioritizing the strategies based on the impact v. effort mapping** – prioritizing strategies in the Implement Quadrant since they represent the best return on investment.

EFFORT

IMPACT

I – Implement (Low Effort, High Impact) *"Home Runs"*	**C – Challenge** (High Effort, High Impact) *"Worth the Effort?"*
P – Possible (Low Effort, Low Impact) *"Quick Hits"*	**K – Kill** (High Effort, Low Impact) *"Not Worth the Effort"*

1. LeanSixSigma. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pick_chart

This process is complete when the team has a set of clearly articulated goals and aligned strategies that describe how the district will improve from the current state to the desired state. These goals should be measurable, and they should leave little room for confusion about the **why** and the **what**. Remember less is more; the LEA should start with their most important goals and strategies and pick a workable set of goals/metrics to track.

The final step is to outline the more tactical part of the plan: the **who**, **when** and **how** in more detail for each strategy and how it contributes to the larger goal. To develop the tactical plan, LEAs should consider the following key questions:

- *For each strategy, who is responsible?*
- *What resources (time, money, people and technology) do we need?*
- *Are there activities which we can stop/jettison or activities we must start doing to achieve our larger goals?*
- *What stakeholders should be involved in planning and implementing this strategy or initiative?* (See **"How to Engage Stakeholders" here**.)

The table below outlines some key elements for LEAs to consider as they develop their tactical plan.

Tactical Plan Elements	Details
a. Define programs and initiatives needed to achieve goals	Programs and initiatives may need to be broken down into projects, which can be planned at a more detailed level. Consider engaging staff members in out-lining the strategy, particularly those that are going to be accountable for im-plementing it.
b. Estimate resources and costs for each (people, time, money)	For each discrete project, estimate the required resource in terms of people, time and budgets. Make reasonable estimates of how much time and effort each project will require.
c. Organize related projects and initiatives into groups	Once key work streams are identified, see where it might make sense to group related projects to streamline execution and communications across key stake-holders. For example, you might have a group that is working on technology enhancements.
d. Determine timelines, interdependencies and sequencing	Choose a format that lets you easily view multiple work streams at once, and to track their execution and interdependencies. The overall timeline is the mas-ter calendar for the execution of the strategy. Check to see how workload is distributed across the year and how it aligns or conflicts with existing timelines for the LEA's other work.

e. Assign staff, budgets and ownership	The R.A.C.I. assignment matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) is a good way to define both accountability and support.
f. Set project objectives, metrics, and oversight	For major programs or key projects, teams may undergo a subsequent process to further define their own objectives and metrics. The leadership team should be clear on how to oversee and manage the overall strategy.
g. Communicate the plan	Communicate the plan and its intended outcomes to all stakeholders involved in and/or affected by its implementation and intended outcomes.

Ideally senior leadership is involved in establishing the key goals and metrics, and tactical planning is delegated to team leads and those that will ultimately execute the work. An example of what a completed tactical plan could look for an LEA is below.

Sample HC Improvement Plan

Strategic Goal: 1. Recruit & Build A Quality Pool

Metrics & Targets:

- Applicant-to-vacancy ratio
  - Baseline = 3:1, 1:1 for critical shortage fields
  - Target = 5:1, 3:1 for critical shortage fields
- New hire quality: 100% new hires meet screening criteria; 85% new hires receive effective evaluations by year 3
- Diversity of new hires compared to student population

Key Strategies for 2013-14:

- Pipeline Effectiveness Study
- Turnover and Retention Analysis
- Leverage Student Teachers
- New Screening Instrument

Action / Task	Owner	Start Date	End Date	Resources / Support
Measure effectiveness by pipeline; report & discuss w. leadership team	RECRUITMENT LEAD	9/1/20	10/15/20	
Collect data and develop strategy to recruit and hire effective student teachers in the district	RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST	10/1/20	12/1/20	NEED SUPPORT FOR DATA; NOT CURRENTLY TRACKED

Report historical turnover and retention by school; use data to build initial vacancy tool to project future demand	TALENT LEAD	10/1/20	11/15/20	REVIEW OTHER DISTRICT TOOLS
Develop report to analyze new hires (0–3 years) by pipeline and effectiveness ratings (1-year history)	TALENT MANAGER A & B	12/1/20	2/1/20	

HC Improvement Plan Blank Template

Strategic Goal:				
Metrics & Targets:				
Key Strategies for [school year]:				
Action / Task	**Owner**	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Resources / Support**

Tools and Resources

For the development of tactical plans, some useful activities and frameworks are included below:

- **The Hexagon: An Exploration Tool (PDF)** (see page 2) to help determine what strategies to select to meet identified goals, taking into account the LEA's existing capacity, resources, relationships with stakeholder groups, and other key factors.

- **Root Cause Analysis Tool**: Help determine why the LEA is experiencing a specific challenge or why an existing strategy is not having its intended impact.

- **HR Annual Planner**: Provides an LEA with key activities of an HR team throughout the year which can support with tactical planning.

- **Stop/Start/Continue Framework**: Guides a team in determining what processes might need to be stopped, started or continued. Don't forget that stopping something can also be very strategic (and free a team up to do higher value, more strategic work) and should be part of your planning considerations!

- **Planning Best Practices Assessment**: Teams can use this tool to reflect on their planning processes.

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