

Workforce Planning Toolkit

A Quick Guide to Action Planning Facilitation

2015

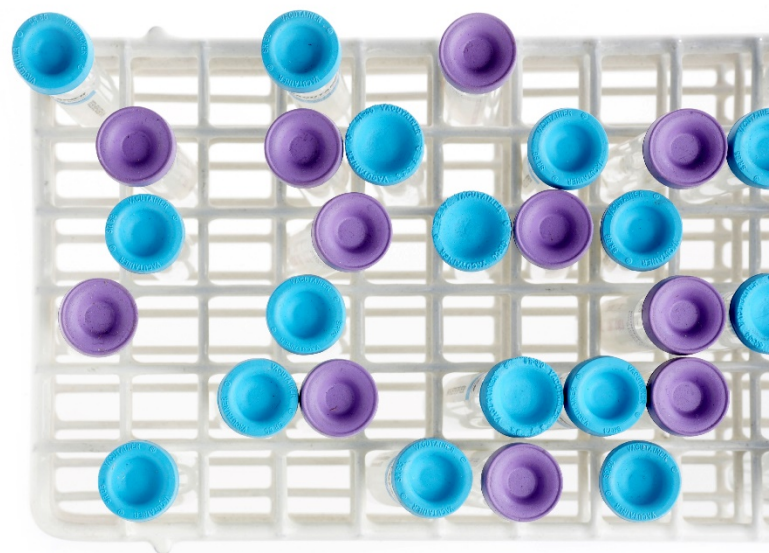


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Introduction

Welcome to the Action Planning Facilitation Tool.

This tool was developed to serve as guidance to NIH Institutes and Centers on how to make use of information contained in employee satisfaction surveys such as the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS). This tool provides instruction on core concepts of action planning including data analysis, facilitation, change management, stakeholder engagement, and the development of an effective action plan.

How is Action Planning being conducted at NIH?

Federal leaders have recognized the importance of **building, maintaining, and motivating a high quality workforce** as drivers of agency performance. EVS results offer a roadmap for building on reported strengths and identifying challenges agency leaders face in ensuring the Federal Government has an effective civilian workforce and how well they are responding. The NIH Employee Engagement Liaisons group (NEEL), with members from across the Institutes and Centers (ICs), was established in January 2015 to share best practices.

What is the EVS?

The EVS is an annual survey tool administered by the Office of Personnel Management that measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies.

Why do Action Planning at NIH?

- Action planning has a direct and measurable impact on employee engagement
- Action planning is a way for federal agencies to **understand root causes** and **strategically respond** to employee feedback with the goal of **improving employee engagement**. It is important to follow through with actions after an employee survey to show **leadership commitment to improving the organization**. It also shows that **employee feedback is valued**; that they are being heard and that they will see improvements as a result.
- The process of action planning itself demonstrates that the opinions of each person in the organization count.

The Value of Action Planning



How can action planning help me?

Employee engagement isn't only about conducting a survey. It is important for organizations to act on employee feedback received through surveys, such as the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and pulse surveys, in order to drive engagement. Employees need to feel like their input is being used to influence positive change. Knowing how to prioritize focus areas and develop action plans is key to success.

Common Benefits of Action Planning

- ✓ **Boosts employee engagement**
- ✓ Identifies root causes of employee perceptions
- ✓ Drives data-driven problem solving
- ✓ Facilitates high-performing teams
- ✓ Helps prioritize meaningful strategies
- ✓ Aids in the evaluation and redesign of initiatives

What is employee engagement and how does it impact my organization?

Employee engagement is a reflection of employees' satisfaction with their work. Engaged employees have an emotional commitment to their organization and are willing to apply discretionary effort to ensuring their organization's goals are met.

Engaged employees are also less likely to turnover, resulting in lower recruitment and training costs to the organization. Additional organizational benefits that can be reaped from increasing employee engagement include lower absenteeism, fewer safety incidents, reduced errors, and higher productivity.

How to Use This Tool



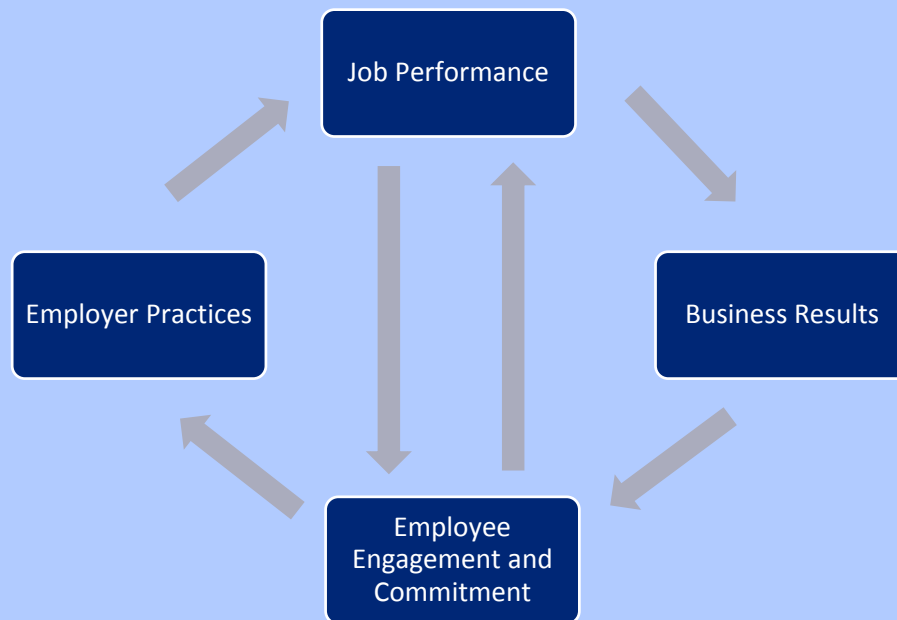
The right tool for the right job.

This tool is just one component of a larger workforce planning toolkit with many tools, processes, and case studies to assist you as you implement workforce planning in your organization. Make sure and explore the entire toolkit for other tools that might be helpful such as the:

- NIH Employee Engagement Liaisons SharePoint Site
- Stay Interview Guide

How to Conduct an Action Planning Workshop

The objective of this tool is to provide you with resources and best practices that will help you facilitate action planning and lead employee engagement efforts in your IC, resulting in enhanced job performance and improved business results.



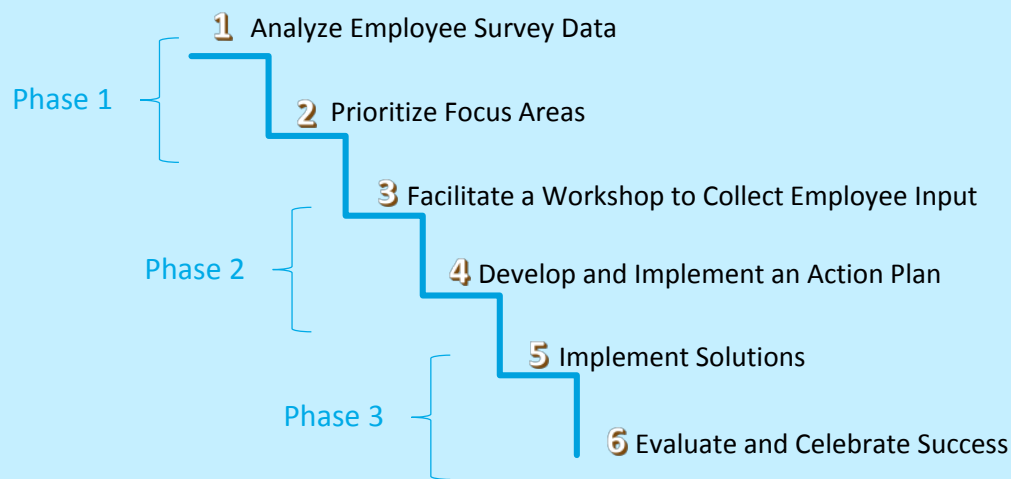
Tool Summary



What is involved in action planning?

There are three phases to the action planning process. Phase 1 involves the analysis of survey results and prioritization of focus areas. Phase 2 involves the facilitation of an action planning workshop to dive deeper into the data and identify potential solutions. Action plans are then implemented and evaluated in phase 3.

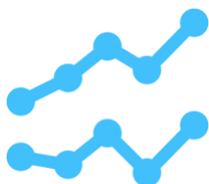
The Action Planning Process



“Action Planning is the process of **identifying root causes**, brainstorming potential solutions, and building an agreed upon plan to **implement** those **solutions** and ultimately **improve the workplace** in targeted areas.”

- Partnership for Public Service

Analyze Employee Survey Data



How can I understand all this survey data?

The EVS and other employee surveys contain a wealth of information that can be difficult to synthesize at first glance. It is important to know how to prioritize and narrow your focus in order to be able to conduct effective action planning and keep things manageable.



What should I consider when looking at my organization's data?

Consider the following things when looking at and trying to interpret your data:

- OPM Index scores (i.e., Employee Engagement Index, Inclusion Quotient) – How does your IC score in the various indexes?
- Individual question data – What are your IC's percent positive, neutral, and negative response rates?
- Satisfaction trends – How does the data compare from year to year or within different demographic groups (i.e., age, gender, GS level)?
- Benchmarks – How does your IC's data compare to similar organizations?
- Your experience – What about the data do you find surprising? Which areas are important to your leadership?

Prioritize Focus Areas



Where do I focus action planning efforts?

Upon analyzing your survey data, you may uncover multiple areas where action planning could be done. It is important to clearly define and prioritize focus areas to where you think the greatest impact will be realized rather than trying to tackle too many things with little return.

Basic Principles & Best Practices



Focus on where you have the best chance of improving employee satisfaction and commitment.

“What’s most important?”

- Look for areas that are important to your Institute or Center
- Keep it simple: 2- 3 focus areas

“What can we and can’t we change?”

- Think about external/internal influential factors
- Address both strengths and areas for improvement

Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan



What change management principles should I apply?

As you develop your action plan, you will want to apply change management principles to ensure that action items are successfully implemented. Ensure buy-in from all levels. Clearly message the what, why, how, and when of the action/change being implemented. Also, it is important to keep the lines of communication open throughout the process with appropriate stakeholders.

Who should be involved and/or kept informed?

Identify Key Stakeholders

Ensure a shared vision that begins with senior leadership (i.e., an executive champion/engagement sponsor) and extends across all levels of the organization. Take time to identify relevant stakeholders and the appropriate level of interaction to maintain, whether it is to be actively involved or to just keep informed with the process.

Develop Your Message

Use clear communications to build trust and cultivate a relationship of understanding, transparency, and responsiveness. Identify key points that you want to communicate to each stakeholder group. Know the purpose, objective, and goals of your communications and craft your message appropriately for each audience.

Begin Stakeholder Outreach

The method of delivery matters as much as the content of the message. Consider the most optimal communication platform (i.e., emails, intranet, town halls) when reaching out to various stakeholders. When possible, allow for two-way communications to gather feedback from stakeholders.

Planning for the Workshop



What does an action planning workshop look like?

In a facilitated workshop, employees have an opportunity to share their perspectives and offer solutions to challenges. Involving staff in the process allows for generation of more ideas, greater understanding of challenges at all levels, and increased buy-in from participants.

Selecting & Inviting Workshop Participants

- Workshop participants should:
 - Demonstrate high energy and enthusiasm for improving engagement
 - Be able to commit to additional responsibility
 - Come from a variety of job functions, levels, and demographic groups
- Connect with people on an individual level, through town hall meetings, staff meetings, or via electronic communications
- Invite the executive champion to kick-off the meeting and emphasize their support for improving employee engagement

Action Planning Workshop Checklist

- Consider how the group will interact with one another and ensure that the room is set up appropriately (i.e., small breakout groups, remote attendees)
- Think about how feedback/ideas will be captured (i.e., sticky notes, flip chart)
- Decide what materials are needed and what should be distributed in advance
- Design a meaningful agenda based on the audience and discussion topics and consider roles and responsibilities

Group Action Planning Instructions

- Determine how many participants you want to involve
- If you have a large group of participants, you may want to choose to have small breakout groups to brainstorm root causes and potential solutions
- Small breakout groups can be more manageable to ensure all participants have an opportunity to provide input

Collect Employee Input



What is the facilitators role?

An effective facilitator acts as an unbiased party who guides the interactive process. The more you know about how to shape and run a good planning process, the more your contributors will feel empowered about their own ideas and participation.

Facilitation Fundamentals

Designing an agenda

- Outline goals and stay on track
- Consider your audience, time and resources, and preparatory materials

Planning the Process

- Consider the location, logistics, and ground rules for interaction

Effective Communication Strategies

- Ensure an open dialogue and conversation
- Engage participants by asking different types of open-ended questions

Language of Facilitation

- Summarize and paraphrase, check perceptions, and report behavior that could hinder progress

Managing Challenges

- Develop techniques to manage conflict and different personalities

Develop & Implement an Action Plan



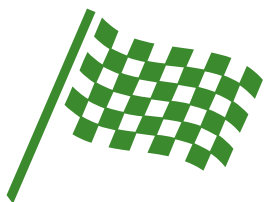
How do I synthesize ideas from the workshop?

Once you have completed the workshop and gathered feedback, you will need to compile all of the information into a format that can be presented to senior leadership.

After the workshop:

- ✓ **Compile action plans**
 - Organize information into a summary report
 - Include a brief description of what will be improved if the action is taken
 - Include a timeline (i.e., quick win or strategic improvement), resources needed, and assign a business owner
 - Identify metrics to track progress
- ✓ **Prioritize recommendations**
 - Select top ideas for improvement while keeping in mind resource constraints and leadership priorities
 - Consider the level of impact and effort; avoid actions that require a high level of effort but deliver low impact
- ✓ **Present recommendations to leadership**
 - Determine who to involve in the presentation: only the facilitator or select workshop participants
- ✓ **Implement solutions**
 - Identify the right individuals to lead implementation efforts
 - Recognize challenges and obstacles; maintain flexibility
- ✓ **Evaluate progress**
 - Continually monitor progress using defined metrics
 - Adjust plans accordingly
 - Celebrate success through employee communications!

Conclusion



The conclusion.

Action planning is a continual process. Ensure that positive efforts are celebrated and sustained through continued resource and leadership support. Organizational or external changes are inevitable so be prepared to modify plans as needed to stay on course. Creating and maintaining an engaged workforce requires ongoing commitment at all levels. Learn from past efforts and celebrate continued future success.



Be persistent

Maintain momentum behind your efforts; keep results visible



Maintain alignment with senior leadership goals and agency mission

Keep leaders informed and involved



Plan for future improvements

Use lessons learned to adjust solutions and prepare for future cycles

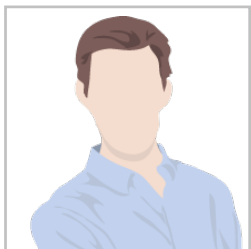


Continue to evaluate the environment

Find ways to adapt and improve



Conduct Your Own Action Planning Workshop



Now it's your turn.

Now that you understand the different components of action planning facilitation, it's time to create your own action plan! [Refer to the corresponding resources in the toolkit to get started.](#) You will find information on best practices for facilitating and designing your own action planning workshop and a sample action plan template.

Good luck!

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Ideas} \\ + \text{Action} \\ \hline = \text{Change} \end{array}$$

My Action Plan					
Goal Statement:			Action Planning Participants:		
Proposed Action	Issue Addressed (What will be improved?)	Timeline	Business Owner	Resources Needed	Status

