

**Grantee Onboarding Packet for
Health Resources and Services
Administration (HRSA)
Rural Communities Opioid Response
Program (RCORP)-Planning Grantees**

Developed by JBS International, Inc.

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Guidance: Developing a Strategic Plan

Essential Elements of an Effective Strategic Plan

RCORP-Planning grantees are required to develop a comprehensive strategic plan. According to businessdictionary.com, this type of plan entails a systematic process of envisioning a desired future and translating this vision into broadly defined goals or objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve them. For RCORP grantees, this plan is required to:

- Address the gaps in OUD prevention, treatment (including MAT), and/or recovery services, as well as access to care identified in the analysis
- Incorporate evidence-based, promising, and innovative approaches proven to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdose in rural communities
- Ensure affordability of and accessibility to services for target populations
- Detail plans to leverage existing federal, state, and local OUD resources and to secure community support
- Provide specific strategies for implementing the identified evidence-based, promising, and innovative practices after the project year ends
- Develop strategies to eliminate or reduce costs of treatment for uninsured and underinsured patients

Effective strategic plans provide clear and actionable direction for where resources and action should be focused to address (1) the root causes of problems with the most effective strategies and (2) changes in organizational effectiveness needed to implement them.

The results of your thorough needs assessment/gap analysis provide you with a solid foundation from which you can build a strategic plan. You have a vision and mission for your project to help you stay focused, and you have conducted an objective assessment of the data. Actions that are not based on objective assessment data and that do not address root causes are usually ineffective. Sometimes, they can even make problems worse.

An effective planning process starts with identification of a problem that can be documented with data. You can then strategically drill down through data to carefully and comprehensively diagnose where and why this problem occurs. This process enables you to map the relationships among the problem, its characteristics, and the factors that drive it so that you can determine most effective course of action. Although not a required deliverable for RCORP-Planning grantees, this visual map—or logic model—can provide an important foundation for your strategic planning effort.

In addition to laying out the following six steps, this document includes several attachments to guide you during your strategic planning process:

- Attachment B: Logic Model Template
- Attachment C: Sample Logic Model
- Attachment D: Strategic Planning Process Map
- Attachment E: Sample Strategic Plan

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**DON'T FALL INTO THE
"LACK TRAP"**

The "lack trap" can result by incorrectly assigning blame to one sector or discipline, which can drive people apart instead of bringing them together.

Step 1: Create a Problem Statement

A **problem statement** is a concise and specific description of a priority issue identified during the assessment process that your planning process will address. The problem statement should include the measure of the problem (e.g., incidence, prevalence, cost burden) and the populations impacted by the problem. If you have multiple problems to tackle, you should develop a problem statement for each one. Your problem statement should describe the problem that **exists**, not one that **doesn't exist**. A problem statement that defines a problem as a “lack” of something assumes that addressing the “lack” will solve the problem. It rarely does. Important considerations when selecting a problem statement include:

- The problem is well documented by data.
- Stakeholders agree that the problem has negative consequences.
- Many stakeholders would like to address the problem.
- There is consensus that the problem is solvable.

Step 2: Define the Direct Target Populations

Target populations are those individuals and groups that are affected by, are involved in, or contribute to the problems and/or consequences identified in your problem statement. Target populations may be direct or indirect. **Direct target populations** comprise those who are directly impacted by or involved in the problem or consequence. **Indirect target populations** comprise those who play an important role in the conditions that promote or prevent the problem. At this point, you should refer to your needs assessment data to clearly understand the characteristics and demographics of the individuals impacted by your problem statement.

Step 3: Develop Goals

Goals describe general, desired changes in behavior that are needed to address the problems and consequences identified in your problem statement (e.g., decrease opioid misuse among youth). Your goals should be specific enough to be measurable.

DON'T “JUMP TO STRATEGIES”

If you find yourself using an action verb in your goals (e.g., provide, implement, train, enforce) instead of a descriptive verb (e.g., is, are) you are describing **action** you intend to take, not an existing or desired **state**. **Using action verbs leads you to “jumping to strategies!”**

Step 4: Develop Objectives

Objectives describe specific changes in the factors and intervening variables that must occur to achieve your goals. You likely already have some data on factors and intervening variables that you associated with the problems and behaviors you identified. A key question in this process is: What ties the members of these target populations together? The answer may be apparent, or it may require additional data collection and analysis.

Once you have validated existing intervening variables or identified new ones, you are ready to write objectives that target them and the indirect target populations involved with them. You will likely have multiple objectives for each goal. As with goals, your objectives should be specific enough to be measurable.

Step 5: Develop Outcomes

Outcomes identify the types and degrees of change you would like to achieve within three timeframes:

- **Long-term outcomes** are linked to goals and reflect a quantifiable, time-limited degree of change in the problem.
- **Intermediate outcomes** are linked to objectives and reflect a quantifiable, time-limited degree of change in factors and intervening variables needed to impact behaviors and problems to achieve the goal.
- **Immediate outcomes** are linked to strategies and activities and reflect a quantifiable, time-limited degree of change in knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to change the factors and intervening variables and achieve objectives.

For intermediate and long-term outcomes, you also need to identify outcome indicators to monitor your progress and to make any needed midcourse corrections along the way.

Step 6: Develop Strategies and Activities

A **strategy** is a course of action that is based on a theory of change and may consist of programs, policies, and/or practices. An **activity** is a specific action that is undertaken as part of an overall strategy. Most strategies require the identification and completion of numerous activities.

The strategies you select should be documented to be effective in addressing the specific problems, consequences, and underlying conditions targeted by your goals and objectives. In

WRITING SMART OBJECTIVES

Objectives should be:

Specific: State exactly what you want to accomplish.

Measurable: Establish clear definitions to help you use data to measure progress toward your goal.

Achievable: Set reasonable, but still challenging, targets.

Relevant: Align the outcome with your key responsibilities and goals.

Time Limited: Set a specific date for completion.

addition, it's important to make sure that the selected strategies are culturally and situationally appropriate, as well as good conceptual and practical fits for your community.

Strategies may be environmental (focused on changing conditions in the shared social environment) or individual (focused on changing specific behaviors). Research documents that comprehensive approaches using both environmental and individual strategies are the most effective in changing behavior. As you review potential strategies to determine which will be the most effective for your community, consider the following information:

- Characteristics of the target population for which the strategy has been documented to be effective, including age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as universal, selective, or indicated population
- Geographic setting for which the strategy has been documented to be effective (e.g., rural, suburban, urban)
- Domains or social environments in which the strategy has proved to be effective (e.g., individual/peer, family, school, community)
- Specific intervening variables and underlying conditions the strategy has proved successful in addressing
- Specific outcomes the strategy has proved successful in achieving
- Implementation and evaluation requirements associated with the strategy (e.g., staffing patterns and qualifications, required training and TA, strategy activities, required materials and supplies, adaptation or fidelity protocols, evaluation needs)

Finally, when selecting strategies, you should consider the sustainability of the outcomes that will be produced.

Please be aware as you submit your strategic plan to your Project Officer, you must include the following:

- Gaps in the OUD prevention, treatment (including MAT), and/or recovery services and access to care identified in the analysis
- Evidence-based, promising, and innovative approaches proven to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdose in rural communities
- Affordability and accessibility of services to the target population
- Strategies to eliminate or reduce costs of treatment for uninsured and underinsured patients
- Plans to leverage existing federal, state, and local OUD resources and to secure community support
- Concrete strategies for implementing the identified evidence-based, promising, and innovative practices after the project year ends.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your PO or TEL for further assistance.

Template: Strategic Plan
(CONSORTIUM NAME)
(CITY, STATE)
(DATE)

Grantee Organization		
Grant Number		
Address		
Service Area		
Project Director	Name:	
	Title:	
	Phone number:	
	Email address:	
Contributing Consortium Members and Stakeholders		

Strategic Plan

Complete a plan for each problem statement and related goal your initiative proposes to address. Complete an objective worksheet for each objective in your project. See Attachment E for a sample strategic plan.

A. Assessment Summary

Briefly summarize the relevant data regarding the overall problem identified in your needs assessment.

B. Problem Statement

Concisely describe the priority problem based on your assessment data.

C. Target Population

Describe the individuals or groups most affected by the problems in your problem statement above.

D. Goal

State the major changes in behavior that need to occur within your identified target population to achieve your vision.

E. Long-Term Outcome

Define the change you are seeking to make in problems or behaviors.

F. Long-Term Outcome Indicators

List the indicators that will demonstrate you are making progress toward your goal.

Template: Strategic Plan Objective Worksheet

Objective: [Insert Objective]

Intermediate Outcome (Define the change you are seeking to make in the intervening variables or underlying conditions of your identified problem):

Intermediate Outcome Indicators (List the indicators that will demonstrate you are making progress toward your goal):

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Strategy

Activities	Timeline		Who Is Responsible?	Process Indicators	Short-Term Outcomes
	Start Date	End Date			

Strategy

Activities	Timeline		Who Is Responsible?	Process Indicators	Short-Term Outcomes
	Start Date	End Date			

