



THE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL **GOAL PLAYBOOK**

Tools and resources to help set, plan,
and achieve complex goals.



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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, solving big problems requires flexible, cross-functional solutions. The siloed organizational structure of the Federal Government can impede our ability to meet these problems head on. The good news is that Federal agencies are increasingly working across structures to identify long-standing problems, set clear goals, and implement solutions.

Sports teams use playbooks as a set of strategies to inform how to respond to the situation on the field. This set of plays is designed to help individuals and teams think through how to **set** a goal; develop a **plan** for the way forward; and **achieve** the goal through execution and continuous refinement of the plan, tracking progress, and continuous improvement. While inspired by the Cross Agency Priority (CAP) Goal and Agency Priority Goal (APG) processes that identify ambitious, time-limited Federal goals, the plays described here can be applied to any new goal or initiative.

WHO CAN USE THIS PLAYBOOK



APG and CAP Goal team members

Use this playbook to build a goal action plan and think through how to implement strategies and achieve goals. The playbook complements, but does not replace, OMB-issued guidance.



Members of the Performance Management Community

Use this playbook to facilitate the goal setting, defining, planning, and implementation processes with the teams who will be responsible for the goal.

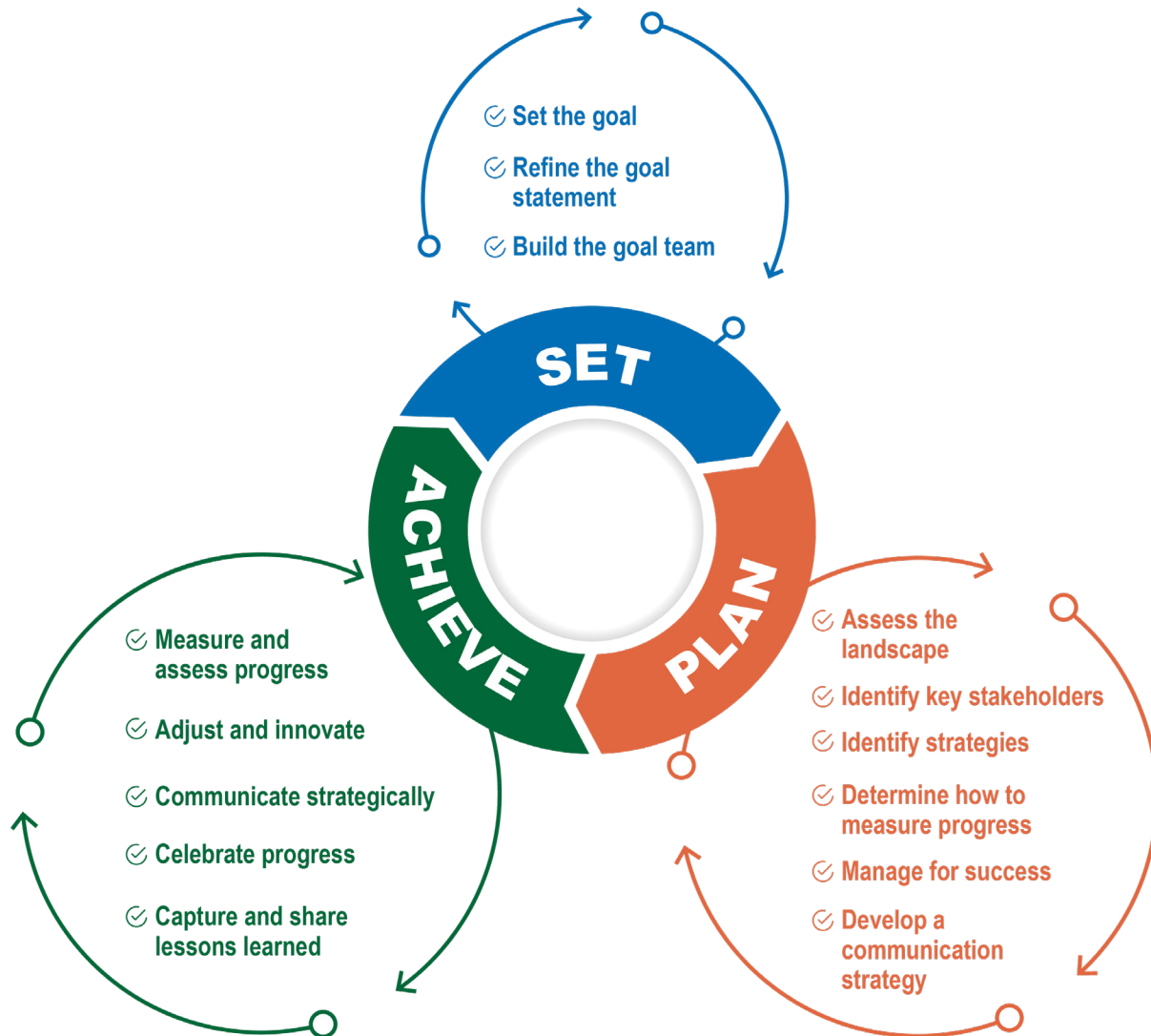


Problem solvers looking for helpful tools

Use this playbook to find useful elements to support setting a goal and working methodically to achieve it.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

While the plays are broken into three phases — **Set**, **Plan**, **Achieve** — all of the activities are interrelated and interdependent. It's critical to loop back and forth throughout the phases while learning more about the environment and working on changes.

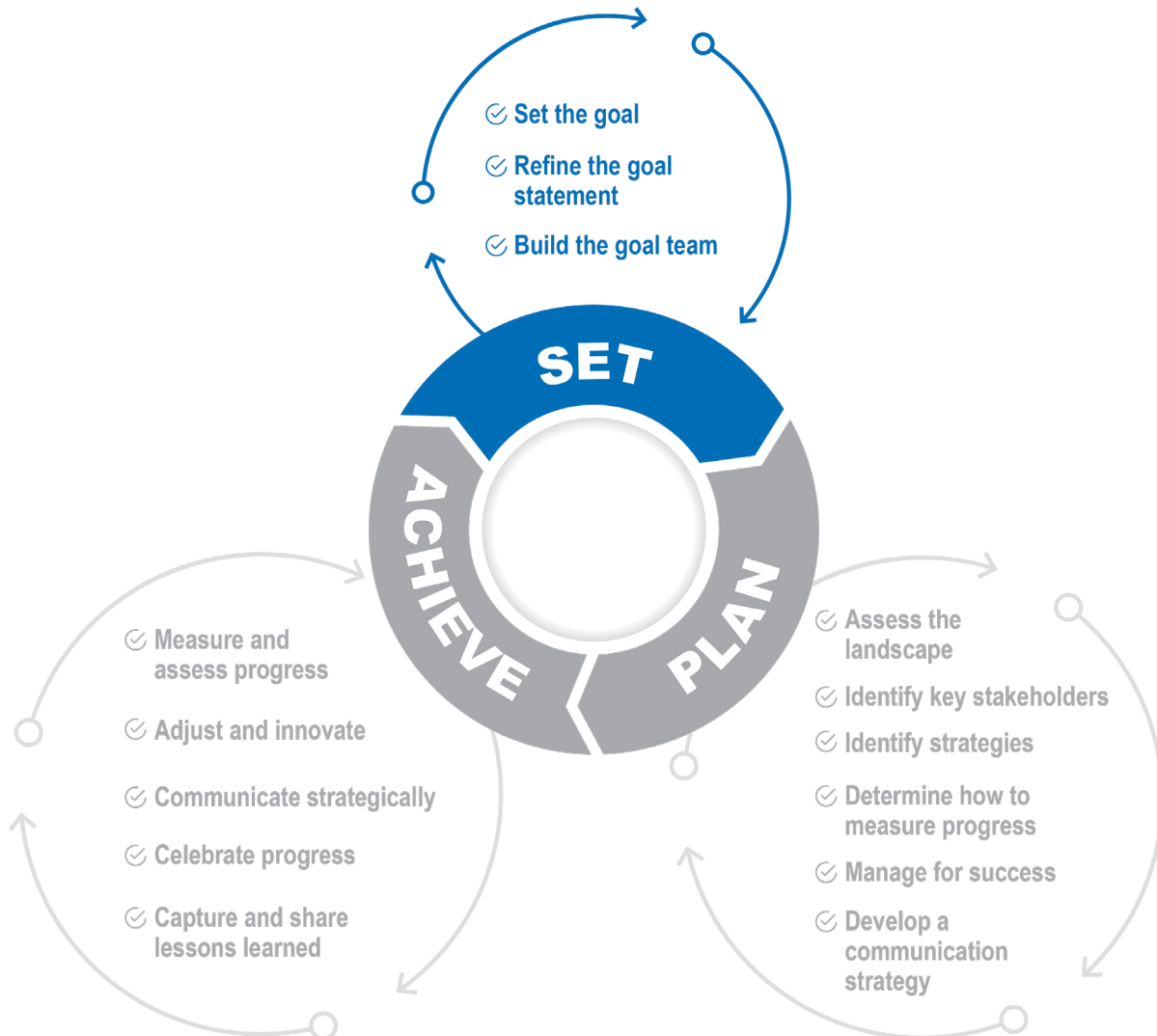


THE GOAL PLAYS

PHASE 1: SET	PHASE 2: PLAN	PHASE 3: ACHIEVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Play 1: Set the goal<input type="checkbox"/> Play 2: Refine the goal statement<input type="checkbox"/> Play 3: Build the goal team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Play 4: Assess the landscape<input type="checkbox"/> Play 5: Identify key stakeholders<input type="checkbox"/> Play 6: Identify strategies<input type="checkbox"/> Play 7: Determine how to measure progress<input type="checkbox"/> Play 8: Manage for success<input type="checkbox"/> Play 9: Develop a communication strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Play 10: Measure and assess progress<input type="checkbox"/> Play 11: Adjust and innovate<input type="checkbox"/> Play 12: Communicate strategically<input type="checkbox"/> Play 13: Celebrate progress<input type="checkbox"/> Play 14: Capture and share lessons learned

PHASE 1: SET

Making specific commitments to a limited number of actions and results allows organizations and teams to focus efforts and resources for maximum impact. If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.



PLAY 1: SET THE GOAL

While priorities may fluctuate and shift over time, identifying desired outcomes and setting specific goals around those outcomes will give programs a clear and steady purpose. Developing and adhering to goal selection criteria sets organizations and teams up for success by ensuring goals will be relevant over the lifecycle of the goal.

Key Questions

- What criteria should be used to select a goal? Which criteria matter more than others? Who sets the criteria and prioritization method?
- What is the goal area(s) that meets the criteria and rises to the top in terms of priority?
- Does the goal clearly address a critical problem and/or opportunity?
- Who are the ultimate customers of this goal? What do they want and need?
- Would this goal, and the contributing affiliated programs, benefit from elevated attention from leadership, regular monitoring and discussion, and possible public reporting?
- Does the potential implementing program(s) have sufficient authority, resources, and levers to move the needle for the proposed goal?
- Is the goal reflected in the priorities and incentive structures for the implementing agency, teams, and individuals? Is there buy-in (existing or potential) throughout the delivery chain? Who will/should champion the goal? How much influence do/will they have among the key stakeholders? (See [Play 3: Build the goal team](#))

Checklist

- Develop goal selection criteria in coordination with the appropriate senior leaders and communicate criteria for goal selection.
- Develop and communicate the method of prioritizing, ranking, or otherwise assessing comparative value of proposed goals.
- Develop a list of goal options and articulate, share, and incorporate feedback on those goal options with relevant stakeholders. (See [Play 5: Identify key stakeholders](#))
- Select which goal or goals will move forward for further refinement and planning.
- Begin engaging with the potential goal champion/leader, discuss expectations, and gain a tentative or understood agreement to engage further.

PLAY 2: REFINE THE GOAL STATEMENT

Once a goal area has been identified, developing a clear goal statement - specific, time-bound, measurable - is critical to framing and articulating the goal and vision of success for internal and external stakeholders. The process of developing the goal statement should cultivate a robust conversation around and decision on what success looks like.

Key Questions

- What is the problem we're trying to solve? Whose problem is it? How do we know that it's a problem?
- Why are we doing this? Why does the effort matter?
- How ambitious should the goal be? "Attainable" to drive achievement? "Aggressive" to drive improvement? "Almost impossible" to drive transformation?
- What does the desired future state look like? How will we know we've been successful? What is the baseline and target?
- Are the problem, goal, and future state articulated in terms of a clear outcome or target?
- If the following people were to read the goal statement, what do we want them to know? (U.S. citizen; media; delivery partner; federal employee in a contributing agency) Does the goal statement speak to each audience? (See [Play 9: Develop a communication strategy](#))

Checklist

- Develop a one sentence goal statement that explains the planned action or initiative and the intended outcome including the key metric or milestone that will indicate whether the goal has been achieved.
- Develop an inventory of available key measures to consider in the goal statement and solicit input from relevant stakeholders. (See [Play 7: Determine how to measure progress](#))
- Develop a succinct theory of change that maps the causal relationship between the goal and the outcome defined in the goal statement. Consider creating a visual representation of assumed or documented causal connections. As planning continues, further flesh out the map to include the steps in between the goal and the outcome.
- Develop a methodology for setting a target that is both ambitious and realistic. Review the methodology with a data expert or statistician. (See [Play 7: Determine how to measure progress](#))

PLAY 3: BUILD THE GOAL TEAM

A goal's success is contingent upon having a limited set of senior leaders in place who are committed to providing vision and support, being a spokesperson for the goal, and delegating authority to make decisions and to take action, while accepting accountability for the goal's results. Equally as important is a dedicated staff-level team that is given the authority to implement the key strategies over the course of the goal.

Key Questions

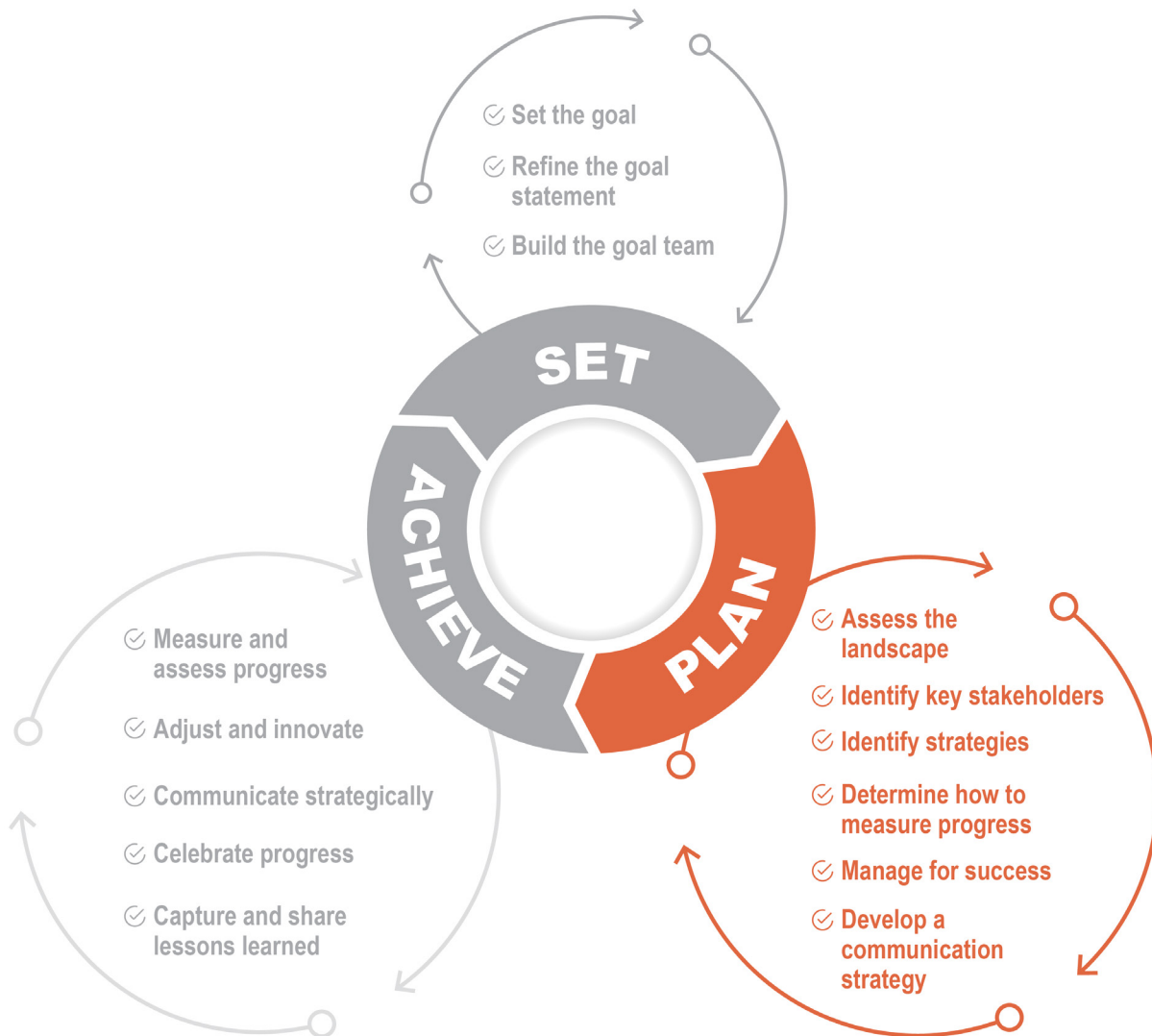
- Which organizations are most directly aligned with the implementation efforts of the goal?
- Who is in the most appropriate position to make decisions with regard to key strategies?
- Who is passionate about the work?
- Who are the deputy goal leaders and/or implementation leads who can help drive change over the course of the goal?
- How will this goal be staffed? What mix of knowledge and skills do we need to harness in order to meet or exceed the goal? Where will the people come from? How much time will they need to commit?
- What governance structure will be most effective for this goal? (See [Play 8: Manage for success](#))

Checklist

- Identify and gain the commitment of one or more senior leaders who will help prioritize and enforce priorities. Begin to discuss and document expectations.
- Identify and create a list of career staff who will be involved, with initial estimates of their time and availability.
- Consider goal leadership and team incentives and accountability mechanisms: e.g., inclusion in annual performance plans, required presence and active role in data-driven review sessions, routine check-ins with senior leader, etc. (See [Play 8: Manage for success](#))

PHASE 2: PLAN

Planning is the act of considering and committing to a path forward in order to coordinate decisions and intended actions. The planning process should include multiple stakeholders, consider the needs of key customers, identify and plan for risk, and take into account timeline and resource constraints. The resulting plan should guide decision-making at both the strategic and operational level and be a living document updated on a regular basis.



PLAY 4: ASSESS THE LANDSCAPE

Understanding the lay of the land sets the stage for designing a path forward which can help goal teams avoid pitfalls, manage risk, and take advantage of opportunities. Assessing the landscape goes hand-in-hand with [Play 5: Identifying key stakeholders](#).

Key Questions

- Who are the ultimate customers of the goal? What do they want and need? What issues are they currently focused on?
- Who or what are the most influential people or organizations that can help or hinder success?
- What is our assessment of risk to implementing the goal? What is the worst that can happen? What is the potential reward for varying risk paths?
- What are potential barriers to achieving or exceeding the goal?
- What connections/relationships, emerging trends, or complementary efforts could be leveraged for this goal effort?

Checklist

- Identify and document the key challenges inherent in the goal (calculation of potential pain).
- Identify and document the opportunities related to the goal (calculation of potential gain).
- Begin a stakeholder analysis that will continue to be fleshed out in the planning process. (See [Play 5: Identifying key stakeholders](#))
- Complete a risk assessment.

PLAY 5: IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Goals and goal teams never operate in a vacuum. Even goals that are championed by individuals or organizations rarely operate that way. Along with building the core goal team, knowing who and what exists in the ecosystem of the goal space will help clarify how to best coordinate efforts to achieve maximum impact.

Key Questions

- Which entities inside the Federal Government are delivering programs and services related to this goal? How are they contributing? What about non-Federal individuals or organizations?
- Who will be the goals' biggest champions and how will we leverage them? Who will be resistant to the goal and how will we manage their resistance and build their buy-in?
- How will we coordinate the efforts of the key players across organizations? Across functions? How can we maintain momentum with our coordination efforts?
- What existing processes and governance structures can we leverage to coordinate across this shared goal?
- Is there a legal (e.g., GPRAMA) need to consult with Congress? If so, how can that best be leveraged to move the goal forward?

Checklist

- Continue to build out a stakeholder map (See [Play 4: Assess the landscape](#)) to help with descriptions of roles, overlap, complementary and competing programs or services. Map out customers and end users and where possible, incorporate customer journey maps.
- Map the delivery systems for each of the contributing programs to better understand how they are delivering services and to whom.
- With a deeper understanding of key stakeholders, adjust the goal team as needed.
- Examine which Federal and non-Federal organizations and people impact and influence but do not directly contribute to the goal.
- If appropriate, consult with Congress and document what transpired.

PLAY 6: IDENTIFY STRATEGIES

After determining the ultimate desired outcome (the *what*) and doing the legwork to best understand the ecosystem that the goal exists in (the *who*), the next step is to figure out the path to get there (the *how*) by identifying strategies, choosing the most effective approaches, and mapping out the specifics of what the goal efforts will look like.

Key Questions

- How will we move the goal from the current state to the targeted state? Under what conditions? Rapid or steady progress? Through existing means or by creating new ways of doing things? By methodically resolving underlying causes or by going directly after the desired end effects?
- What evidence do we have that the strategies will have the desired effect? If we do not have sufficient evidence now, how will we collect it as we go? What is the causal connection between each strategy and each desired result?
- Do resource limitations or the theory of change suggest phasing of strategies? What milestones might we set along the way in order to motivate periodic achievement at key points in the goal period? (See [Play 7: Determine how to measure progress](#))
- Are strategies complementary, additive, or synergistic and how might we accelerate progress using them?

Checklist

- Diagram the goal, including sub goals (as appropriate) and strategies to ensure that work on the goal is aligned to achieve the desired outcome (e.g., logic model or theory of change).
- Develop a visual representation (chart, table, graphic, etc.) of the key strategies that make up the goal. Consider a logic model or similar structure that shows the relationship from inputs to the outcomes in the goal statement.
- Begin to document evidence of the problem and the utility of chosen strategies.

PLAY 7: DETERMINE HOW TO MEASURE PROGRESS

Choosing milestones, measures, and targets that are meaningful - that make sense to people on the team and are logically linked to goals and strategies - will help the goal team track progress towards meeting the goal. Meaningful measures act as gauges to indicate when actions have moved the needle in the right direction or at the pace needed to meet the target within the timeframe. Each progress review can be used as an opportunity to make adjustments to strategies, resources, or actions along the way.

Key Questions: Milestones (Qualitative)

- What meaningful, interim progress steps will we plan to achieve along the way? How will we know we have achieved them?
- What types of milestones will be most helpful in maintaining momentum?
- Are the milestones discrete and results-oriented?
- How representative are the milestones in making real progress toward the larger desired outcome rather than just delineating the process or set of program activities?

Key Questions: Measures (Quantitative)

- Which measures will tell us the most about our progress? How much will they tell us about the effectiveness of the actions we are taking?
- Is it possible to measure our customers' experience and/or satisfaction with our actions?
- Which measures have the most frequent data to inform how well we are doing so that we can make adjustments as we go? Can quarterly targets be developed?
- For each measure, what is the reporting frequency? Historic data availability? Baseline data? Target? Data source? Data lag? Is the data quality sufficient for its intended use?
- Are there supporting measures that would tell us something about the interim progress being made towards our key measure(s)?
- Are our contextual indicator(s) sufficiently sensitive to show progress in a limited period of time? What is the lag and how long will it take for this data to reflect movement of this effort?
- Which measures are outcome-focused? Output-focused?
- Is there data that is not currently collected but would enhance our ability to determine whether or not progress is being made? How can we develop those data collection(s) and acquire the data? When?
- What are the best measures to use for internal management? For delivery partners? For the public?

Checklist

- Develop a calendar of milestones that will help keep the goal (or intermediate outcomes) on track throughout the goal period.
- Determine and get buy-in on which measures will be used to track progress on both the ultimate goal and any interim outcomes.
- Baseline current customer satisfaction where possible.
- Refine or expand the logic model (See [Play 6: Identifying strategies](#)) that maps which strategies are connected to each key measure and milestone in order to ensure that activities and data collected are aligned to achieve the desired outcome.
- Revise the data inventory (See [Play 2: Refine the goal statement](#)) or develop an inventory if not previously developed.

PLAY 8: MANAGE FOR SUCCESS

Navigating complex systems, differing management structures, stakeholder needs, and team dynamics to achieve the goal will be challenging. Putting in place clear management and decision structures and using program and performance management tools helps to manage those challenges and set the team up for success.

Key Questions

- What new or existing governance structures will our team use to generate engagement? To generate accountability? To manage goal efforts? (See [Play 3: Build the goal team](#) and [Play 5: Identifying key stakeholders](#))
- Does the governance structure map to strategies? (See [Play 6: Identifying strategies](#))
- What are the roles and responsibilities on our team? Who leads/supports each aspect of the goal (strategies, resources, decisions, etc.)? How will we coordinate and communicate with each other? What is the mechanism for resolving conflicts?
- How will we monitor the goal's progress? How frequently? By whom? (See [Play 10: Measure and assess progress](#))
- How will we learn who has what talents so they can be best leveraged? What talents will we need to recruit?
- What routines or standard operating procedures will we put in place to ensure smooth goal management (e.g., clearance process) or to ensure that problems are properly identified, raised, and handled?

Checklist

- Determine the appropriate governance structure and consider developing a graphic (e.g., org chart) showing relationships and dependencies.
- Develop a roles and responsibilities matrix or other chart to identify who is leading/supporting which aspects of the goal management.
- Outline expectations and commitments (e.g., memorandum of agreement, charter).
- Develop standard operating procedures (e.g., communication, reviews, clearance).
- Develop a resource directory including staffing and funding. Identify resource gaps and options for alternate resourcing.

PLAY 9: DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Proactive messaging about plans, progress, challenges, and results to internal and external stakeholders allows teams to discuss progress, get feedback, and keep decision-makers informed. It also provides a strategic opportunity to drive engagement from a variety of stakeholders (gather new ideas, become aware of unforeseen consequences, etc.), manage risk, and communicate success.

Key Questions

- What internal messaging will be needed to get buy-in from the start? What about throughout the goal period?
- Does messaging need to be tailored to different internal audiences (goal leader, goal team, oversight bodies, etc.)?
- What do we want the public and external stakeholders to know about the issue, why it is important, what we are doing about it, how well we are doing, etc.? Do we know what stakeholders currently think and know about the issue?
- What do we want special interest groups, delivery partners, or direct customers to know throughout the goal period? What do we want them to understand or to do? Can they help advance the goal or tell the story?
- What communication platforms (outside of [Performance.gov](https://www.performance.gov)) might be leveraged? What should the format and frequency be for key audiences?
- What is the appetite for risks associated with communication?
- Who needs to clear/approve different types of messaging?

Checklist

- Develop a list of internal and external audience(s), frequency of contact, type of information needed, and the medium for delivering information.
- Identify information exchange and feedback needs and sources, frequency, and mechanisms.
- Develop specific language (e.g., message maps) to communicate goal information internally and externally.
- Assess communication risks and develop a mitigation plan.
- Determine an internal process for communicating progress to stakeholders, managing the associated expectations (e.g., clearance, public reporting, etc.), and assigning communication roles.



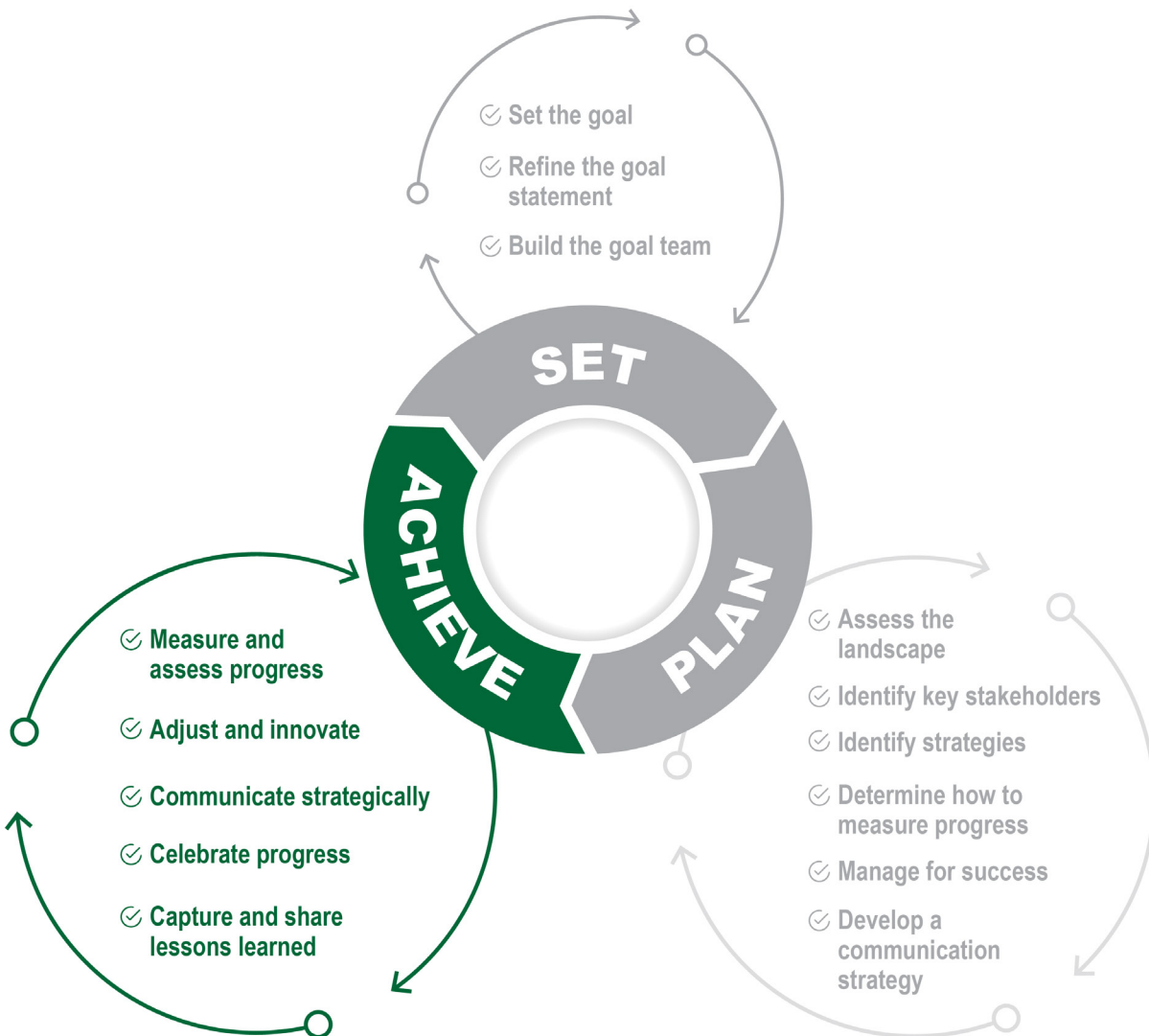
PAUSE

Before moving into the next phase, let's pause and revisit the first phase. A few questions:

- Does the goal still feel like the right goal? Is it still relevant?
- Has any new information and insights gained prompted a change to the goal statement? The key measure?
- Is the leadership and goal team still the right group of individuals to be leading and supporting this goal?
- As we continue to learn through this process, how comfortable are we in looping back to our goal statement, team, strategies, milestones, and measures to refine them?

PHASE 3: ACHIEVE

It's time to set in motion the plans that have been developed and focus attention on achieving the goal. While goal execution looks like many activities and processes in motion at the same time, there are a core set of plays to help keep the ball moving down the field while adjusting strategies as needed.



PLAY 10: MEASURE AND ASSESS PROGRESS

Good implementation requires a continuous cycle of monitoring progress using milestones and measures, determining when a goal is on and off track, identifying emerging challenges and opportunities, and making changes to how a goal is being delivered.

Key Questions

- Are our measures and data telling us what we need to know about our progress and/or impact? Are they timely and/or granular enough to flag something that needs to be investigated, diagnosed, and solved? Do we have the skills needed to analyze the data?
- Are we seeing improved customer experience and satisfaction?
- Are we progressing as quickly as we had planned? Are we meeting our milestones and interim targets?
- Are there legislative or funding changes impacting our ability to execute our initial plan? How?
- What assumptions did we make at the beginning of the goal that are not proving to be true? What have we been right about?
- How are we intentionally and routinely assessing our progress? How often? Are we leveraging the right people and groups to do this? Goal leader? Data analysts? External stakeholders?
- How open and transparent are our discussions about how much progress we are making?
- What should we do with our assessments and analysis? (See [Play 11: Adjust and innovate](#))

Checklist

- Collect, analyze, and present data in a way that can be consumed by the goal team, goal leader, and, if appropriate, external stakeholders (e.g., public progress update).
- Assess the usefulness of collected data.
- Hold data driven review meetings on a regular basis with the goal leader, goal team, and other stakeholders as appropriate. Adjust the timing, structure, and cadence of these meetings until they are effective. (See [Play 8: Manage for success](#))
- Consult with agency/component performance offices for insight, advice, or assistance.

PLAY 11: ADJUST AND INNOVATE

As goal teams measure and assess progress, they learn more about their ever-changing operating environment and effect of early actions, making it critical to adjust strategies, activities, measures, and milestones. By asking “what’s changed” and questioning early assumptions, goal teams can flex, pivot, and adapt. Setting ambitious goals can and should also open the door to experimenting and innovating to test new approaches to program delivery.

Key Questions

- Do we need to adjust or change our course, resources, or methods based on our analysis and assessment of progress? Based on customer feedback?
- Have any of our key stakeholders’ and/or customers’ needs changed? How does that impact what we’re doing or how we’re doing it?
- Are we empowered by leadership when we need to make necessary changes? Are there any legal or statutory constraints on making changes?
- Will we actually implement improvements? How would we track their impact?
- Are we ready to rapidly test promising ideas, review test results, and iterate based on such results? Do we have some flexibility in our plans, assessments, and decision-making to account for possible failures?
- What is the goal leader and teams’ appetite for taking risks? To what extent do we operate in a “safe to fail” environment? How can we grow that environment/culture?
- Who are the change makers in our organizations? What about in industry, nonprofits, or state, local, tribal or international governments? Can we connect with them to gather insights and best practices?
- Would access to an innovative technology or process allow us to jump forward?

Checklist

- Identify improvement opportunities and steps to implement needed changes.
- Schedule a session with the goal team to reassess and revise the planning documents: project or action plan, stakeholder map, logic model, data inventory, and communication strategy.
- Connect to innovation experts (e.g., Human-Centered Design, Continuous Process Improvement, Agile) across government.
- Develop guidelines about what is and isn’t considered an acceptable risk.
- Consider conducting an innovation sprint.
- Identify a pilot to test something out on a smaller scale and see if it works.
- Test solutions with the customer. Solicit and implement their feedback.

PLAY 12: COMMUNICATE STRATEGICALLY

Strategic communication and keeping stakeholders informed looks like different things - communicating progress, engagement with stakeholders, storytelling - and can be used for different purposes - seeking feedback from stakeholders, engaging decision-makers, managing risks. Leveraging a communication strategy (See [Play 9: Develop a communication strategy](#)) to engage and communicate with stakeholders in an intentional, tailored way fuels progress and can contribute to improved performance by motivating and inspiring goal team members and partners to play their role.

Key Questions

- Are we providing the right kind and amount of information to our various stakeholders so that we are transparent about our progress and impact? What do we want them to know or do as a result?
- Do stakeholders use our information to make decisions? Do they have enough information to do so?
- What kind of input and feedback about the performance of our goal efforts do we want from customers? From external partners? From stakeholders? Are we able to ask them for it?
- Are we using our communication strategy in a way that helps us achieve our goal by leveraging what our stakeholders have to offer (e.g., expertise, platform, ideas)?
- Are leaders outside our goal team able to see or learn of our progress easily and regularly? How can they help us solve a problem, remove a barrier, make a connection, or celebrate a success?
- Do we focus on sharing information internally as much as we do externally?
- How can we be creative in the way we communicate to appeal to different audiences?

Checklist

- Revisit the communication plan/strategy and adjust as needed. (See [Play 9: Develop a communication strategy](#))
- Ask customers and stakeholders if they are getting the information they need.
- Assess the effectiveness of the platform or medium used to communicate (e.g., how many hits were received on the latest post? Did anyone reach out with feedback?).

PLAY 13: CELEBRATE PROGRESS

Setting and achieving a goal is a marathon, and it's important to refresh along the way in order to keep goal team leaders and members motivated and keep up momentum. One way to do this is to acknowledge and celebrate progress.

Key Questions

- How will we identify success? Is there a process or a set of criteria that help us determine what is celebrated formally or informally?
- How will our goal leader and team acknowledge and celebrate progress? Are there non-monetary incentives that the goal lead may be able to tap into (e.g., acknowledgment from a senior official, certificate of recognition, etc.)?
- When will we celebrate progress? At specific milestones? Certain intervals?
- Are there individuals who are going above and beyond for this goal? How might they appreciate being recognized?
- How can we document successes so that other teams or initiatives may learn from them? (See [Play 14: Capture and share lessons learned](#))
- Can we celebrate progress and successes publicly through established communication channels? (See [Play 12: Communicate strategically](#))

Checklist

- Document key successes which would not have been possible without this goal effort.
- Ask goal team members how they like to be recognized.
- Consider adding recognition into standard operating procedures (See [Play 8: Manage for success](#))
- Routinely pulse goal team members to gauge motivation and the need to recognize progress being made.
- Identify which team or individual successes can be turned into content to communicate externally.

PLAY 14: CAPTURE AND SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

Capturing and sharing lessons learned in the pursuit of a goal are often overlooked and undervalued. The value of documenting actions taken, the conditions under which they were taken, and the results are critical in an environment where resources are tight. Knowing what worked or didn't can help goal teams save time and effort in the future.

Key Questions

- What did we do that worked particularly well? What conditions may have led to those successes?
- What would we not try again? Might those things have worked under different conditions?
- Which of our lessons learned may be identified as a promising or best practice?
- Who may benefit from our lessons learned? Other government teams? The public?
- Where should we keep our lessons learned? Who will have access? How will they be updated?
- How will we incorporate lessons learned into regular reviews of progress and adjustments to the goal plan? (See [Play 11: Adjust and innovate](#))

Checklist

- Identify a standard, straightforward format to document lessons learned.
- Incorporate lessons learned documentation in team standard operating procedures (See [Play 8: Manage for success](#)) and/or the communications plan. (See [Play 9: Develop a communication strategy](#))
- Incorporate lessons learned discussions into regular progress reviews. (See [Play 10: Measure and assess progress](#))