

Recommendations on Executing and Monitoring Your Action Plan

A climate assessment helps leaders validate issues and concerns and formulate an action plan to effectively address them. To successfully execute the action plan, its goals need to be balanced, realistic, specific, measurable, and achievable within a specified time period. These climate assessment-identified goals may include: abolishing disparities in discipline, awards, and training opportunities; improving morale; enhancing safety; reducing risks; and eliminating discrimination and sexist behaviors. There may be matters that require the assistance of subject matter experts to effectively address them, such as Human Resource Officers, Inspectors General, or Equal Opportunity Advisors.

The final plan should prioritize the organization's more compelling concerns. For example, issues involving members' safety and well-being clearly warrant immediate attention. Priority should also be made for those concerns that can directly—and negatively—impact the organization's mission success.

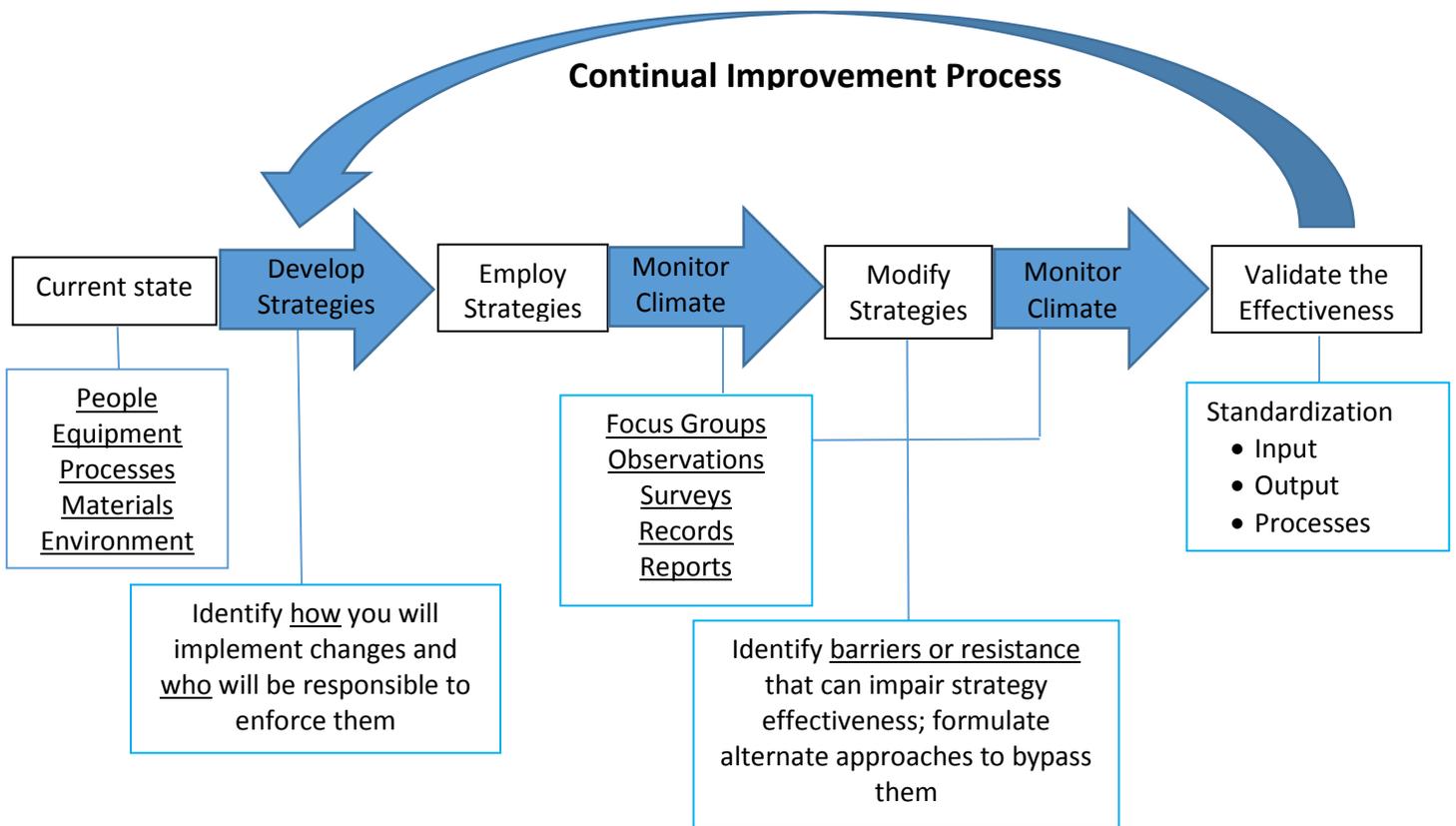
The published action plan needs to explicitly identify the individuals responsible for each step. It also needs to be actively tracked, showing progress realizing specific milestones. Adopting this strategy illustrates leadership's active execution of climate-enhancing actions to the organization's members.

Determining an action plan's success relies on accurately monitoring each step's completion, and the impact of each step on climate. The relative success of each step should be gauged against the specific goal defined for that step. This process should be conducted in real time, so that those steps in the plan that have not realized the anticipated effect can be modified. It is important to note that evaluating the impact of individual action plan steps often relies on different sources of information. For example, confirming the timely submission of award packages, or replacing outdated computers can be empirically determined. On the other hand, determining the effectiveness of leadership's efforts to improve communication—or the organization's climate in general—may rely on conducting focus groups with the staff.

Finally, it is important to recognize that leaders at different levels in the organization will often be responsible for executing steps in the action plan. For example, middle-level leaders are often directly responsible for mentoring subordinates, monitoring the local climate, and enforcing policies. The onus is on senior leadership to assign to those intermediate leaders a list of explicitly-defined steps they will need to take, and offer their continuous support in this endeavor whenever the plan needs to be modified to realize its goals.

The figure on the following page demonstrates a Continual Improvement Process (CIP) strategy to execute and evaluate action plan steps. The purposes of the CIP strategy are to: clearly identify the party responsible for executing each step in the action plan; define the method(s) used to determine the success of each step; explain modifications made to a step whenever its goal-state is not immediately realized; and determine the success of these modified approaches.

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The benefit of conducting a comprehensive organization assessment provides leadership with a keen awareness of organizational issues from multiple sources. Moreover, understanding the sources of those concerns helps leaders craft an action plan to directly address them. Executing the plan—and dynamically modifying it as needed throughout its execution—helps leaders sustain or improve their organization’s climate.