

Best Practices for Qualifying Strategic Planning & Management Frameworks Association for Strategic Planning (ASP)

This document provides best practice criteria for authors of strategic planning and management frameworks that support the Association for Strategic Planning's *Lead-Think-Plan-Act* rubric and accompanying Body of Knowledge. These best practices have been developed by a group of international trainers, coaches, and consultants, with experience in many different strategic planning and management systems and frameworks. Several purposes are served:

- ASP will expand and refine the current Body of Knowledge to include these best practices
- ASP will maintain a list of qualifying commercial and academic frameworks that can be used to provide certification examination preparation training, to prepare participants to sit for the three ASP certification examinations
- ASP will use these criteria to evaluate potential Registered Education Providers
- ASP will use these criteria as part of the Richard Goodman Award criteria
- ASP members and other interested parties can use these best practices to refine and improve their own product and service offerings

To qualify for the ASP stamp of "Qualifying ASP Framework", a candidate strategic planning and management framework must meet the following best practice criteria. A scoring system (1 to 5) will be used to score each framework applicant and a score of 80% or higher will be needed to secure the "Qualifying" designation.

Attribute 1 – Uses a Systems Approach that starts with the end in mind. The systems approach includes: agreed-upon definitions of terms, an understanding of what is to be accomplished (outcomes), how desired outcomes will be accomplished (strategy, processes, human capital, and technology), how progress will be measured, and how results will be evaluated and corrective action taken. The systems approach incorporates strategic thinking, leading and leadership development, people, technology, processes, change management, rewards and recognition to incentivize desired behaviors, clear communication, inclusion and transparency, customer and stakeholder value creation, and organization culture. Feedback loops are incorporated to promote continuous improvement and learning, and a periodic cycle (e.g., yearly) is established to refresh the system. A discipline to get things done turns systems thinking into strategy execution and action.

Attribute 2 – Incorporate Change Management and Leadership Development to effectively transform an organization to high performance. "Changing hearts and minds" is built into the fabric of the system development process and led by senior leaders (e.g., the Board, C-level executives and managers), rather than treated as an add-on for the Human Resources Department to address *after* the system is developed. Roles and responsibilities are defined, as are governance policies and procedures. Employee internalization of "what's in it for me" is as important as "what's in it for the organization". Communicating necessary organization changes with clarity starts with a shared vision of the future and the senior leadership team, and becomes everyone's responsibility. Leadership development happens at all levels in the organization, not just at the C-level.

Attribute 3 – Provide Actionable Performance Information to better inform decision making. Meaningful strategic and operational performance measures and targets, logically derived, are used to monitor progress against targets. Appropriate outcome (accomplishment), output (production), process (efficiency), project (schedule and resource adherence), and input (resource) measures are the basis for transforming performance data into performance information, and performance information into business intelligence. Performance information is provided in a timely manner throughout the organization to better inform decision-making at all levels, not just at the executive level.

Attribute 4 – Incorporate Assessment-Based Inputs of the external and internal environment, and an understanding of customers and stakeholder needs and expectations. Strategic thinking and discovery is used to describe the current situation in terms of the social, economic, political, competitive, technological, and regulatory factors affecting the organization. Possible future states are discussed and analyzed. Optional business strategies for achieving the organization’s vision are derived from the external and internal assessments of strategic inputs. These inputs include: mission, vision, core values, customer value and needs, competitive analysis and marketplace positioning, workforce competencies, organization culture, environmental and policy variables and guidance, and desired results.

Attribute 5 – Include Strategic Initiatives to focus attention on the most important performance improvement projects. Prioritized initiatives (e.g., projects or programs) are developed consistently as part of strategy development, and turned into risk-managed projects, where schedule and resource adherence are tracked and reported; risks are identified and mitigated; and scope creep is managed.

Attribute 6 – Offer a Supporting Toolkit, including terminology, concepts, steps, tools, and techniques that are flexible and scalable for building and connecting the elements of the system in a consistent and integrated manner—horizontally across business and support units as well as vertically from the enterprise to the shop floor and the desktop. Use efficient and effective automation systems to transform performance data into business information and intelligence, and to document the strategic thinking process and deliberations.

Attribute 7 – Align Strategy and Culture, with a focus on results and the drivers of results. Employees need to be part of system development, so everyone takes ownership of the system, not just the senior executive team. The focus on unifying strategy should also include: line-of-sight alignment of enterprise-wide strategy with departmental strategy and personal objectives, individual and collective accountability for results, and a shared vision of the future that can be translated into action for all employees. This future vision is based on input at all levels so that the vision created is actively supported as it cascades throughout the organization. Necessary changes are communicated with clarity throughout the organization, based on a communication and change management plan and strategy. The system reports on how well strategy is being implemented and the degree to which results are achieved.

Attribute 8 – Integrate Existing Organization Systems and Align the Organization Around Strategy. The system is integrated into the organization’s structure and culture so that it meshes with existing project management, process improvement, and budgeting and other financial systems. Changes are made to the holistic system as new information becomes available, and the system focuses organization attention and effort on strategy. Strategy developed at the organization-wide level is cascaded down to business and support units, and then to teams and individuals, to make strategy everyone’s job and build ownership and accountability for results.

Attribute 9 – Be Simple to Administer, Clear to Understand and Direct, and Deliver Practical Benefits Over the Long-Term. The system uses common business language, logical structures, and documentation. Practical benefits, measureable results, and improved customer value are evident and demonstrable, and there should be evidence of use in a variety of business and industry, government, and non-profit organizations. The system is not treated as a separate system -- it becomes part of the organization’s culture –“it’s just the way we work around here”.

Attribute 10 – Incorporate Learning and Feedback, to Promote Continuous Long-term Improvement. The system has feedback loops built in, so the benefit of learning at both the strategic and operational levels can be incorporated, along with changes in assessment variables, into revised strategies and business plans. The system is flexible and sustainable, and improvements are incorporated when appropriate to create long term enhancements.

