

STEP 5 Set Goals and Develop Metrics

You have your vision of where you want to go and you have identified the internal capacities you can leverage to get you there. It's time to set some goals and metrics that will get you moving.

Tools you will learn to use in this section:

- Strategy framework for sustainability
- Real brainstorming
- Decision Matrix
- SMART Sustainability Goal Builder

Strategy Combines Big Wins and Quick Wins

As a unit finds the overlap between sustainability and its mission, we find that ideas of all sizes emerge. Strategic sustainability prioritizes and organizes such ideas in order to get the right combination of short-, mid-, and long-term goals. We call these “big wins” and “quick wins.”

Big Wins: Larger, longer term initiatives linked strongly to a unit's unique mission and expertise. A well-selected, ambitious initiative can galvanize a group and deliver real results. These require more investment of resources and can even involve a change in structure or business model.

Resources for Quick Wins

The guidebook is focused on identifying larger, strategic opportunities and planning around those. But many resources exist for “quick wins.”

The Green Paws Office Certification Program, for example, has checklists of many “quick win” actions.

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One of our pilot units, Penn State Public Media, set a “big win” goal of bolstering an existing, very ambitious project called Water Blues, Green Solutions, a public service media project on green infrastructure/value of ecosystem services.

Quick Wins: Short-term, tactical steps

that build momentum, confidence, and enthusiasm around the larger initiatives. Many of these small actions taken over time lead to big results.

Penn State Public Media set a “quick win” goal to add sustainability criteria—such as local sourcing, reduced packaging, and minority- and women-owned businesses—to their purchasing practices.

Tip for the Facilitator

Good goals leverage strengths, go after opportunities, and make a real impact. When you have brainstormed a list of six to 10+ potential strategies, see if there is overlap and combine them where possible. Plot them on the decision matrix (which you recreate on a whiteboard or sheet of paper). Discuss and try to end with three to six goals. Create subteams to work on each goal using the *SMART Strategy Builder* and *Metrics Worksheet*.

Above and beyond: Involve external partners in brainstorming potential strategies and identifying the role they could play in making them a reality. Consider ways that students could be involved by, for example, gathering data or conducting research to support the process.



Image: Christie Clancy

The Nittany Lion charges his car at the MorningStar solar home at Penn State's University Park campus.

The Strategy Framework for Sustainability

Your unit's focus on strategic sustainability will feature goals and strategies in a number of areas. We have created the Strategy Framework for Sustainability that shows five major areas on which Penn State as a whole is focused. Notice that each area is distinct yet connected to the others. Research, for example, is separate but linked with community engagement and operations.



Overview of the Strategy Areas

Teaching and Co-curricular

This refers to opportunities to infuse sustainability into student learning: both curricular and co-curricular programs. This area also is home to goals aimed at increasing the capacity and capability of faculty through faculty development workshops and changes in policies or systems that impede strategic sustainability.

Examples for Academic Units

Sustainability is added to new student orientation to highlight opportunities and stories within your unit and at Penn State. Your college or campus convenes a workshop or roundtable for faculty to integrate sustainability into their courses. A Student Sustainability Summit is organized to highlight career and grad school opportunities, on-campus activities, and community resources.

Examples for Support Units

A group of staff hires an intern to help assess opportunities to reduce resource use (energy, water, material waste). Facilities staff work with a faculty member and her class to develop on-campus project proposals for applied research. Energy managers work with a writing class to develop a report on all the energy efficiency projects and results on campus.

Research

This refers to the addition or enhancement of sustainability in undergraduate, graduate, and faculty research conducted by your unit. Perhaps there are opportunities to better link existing sustainability research or start a new research program.

Examples for Academic Units

Collaborative team forms to conduct a pilot study using regional/campus data to inform the development of a larger proposal. A new initiative to help identify sustainability-focused funding opportunities and publications is initiated.

Examples for Support Units

A team trying to figure out the most sustainable product for a particular purpose (computer or cleaning supplies for example) partners with a faculty member with relevant expertise who can conduct the proper analysis.

Service and Community Engagement

This refers to the blending of sustainability into existing or new community partnerships that provide learning opportunities for students, applied research opportunities for faculty, and benefit to the community. What problems exist in the community that your unit's expertise could help to solve? What changes—new incentives or the removal of barriers—are necessary to allow for the sharing of this expertise?

Examples for Academic Units

Staff conduct a sustainability assessment of the region to identify new market opportunities. A meeting is convened with local and regional government, business, and non-profit partners. Faculty and student teams work with local social service and environmental agencies to create a job skills program focused on sustainability.

Examples for Support Units

Staff members work with local partners to arrange for a farmer's market to be held on campus. The waste management team and dining services work with local government and businesses to develop a composting program.

Operations

This refers to the integration of sustainability into the management and use of the physical facilities, vehicles, and grounds of your unit, including classrooms, labs, sports facilities, offices, and service vehicles as well as at events, conferences, and meetings. What are ways your unit can reduce resource use such as in fuel, electricity, water, materials, etc.?

Examples for Academic Units

Faculty members convene a panel of facilities and operations staff in order to understand their environmental and human health and safety challenges. Following the panel, faculty and students create proposals to offer solutions.

Examples for Support Units

A group works with professional development and training staff to create a sustainability-focused educational program. A director creates a new policy for sustainable purchasing which makes requirements for all major contracts and purchase orders.

Planning and Administration

This refers to the ways a unit has integrated sustainability into its organizational structure, systems, and policies. Have formal structures been put into place, like a sustainability working group or committee with representatives from various departments?

Examples for Academic Units

Leadership appoints a well-respected leader to be the college or campus sustainability chair. An awards program is created to recognize sustainability leaders among students, faculty, and staff at an annual event. A task force is appointed to explore how the promotion and tenure criteria can support applied work on campus and in the community.

Examples for Support Units

A new policy is developed for sustainable purchasing in order to reduce packaging and the resource efficiency of products. A section is created in the newsletter to highlight sustainability projects and their results. A sustainability management system is developed with IT faculty and students to track and report on sustainability measures.

Brainstorming

Many employees use this method of gathering ideas but few take full advantage of its potential. It is key to set the stage and utilize some simple rules to make “brainstorming” really effective. After you have a good set of ideas, the next tool, the “Decision Matrix,” on the next page, can help you sort them and prioritize them.

How to brainstorm

Brainstorming was developed by Alex Osborn, an advertising executive, in his 1953 book, “Applied Imagination.” Many researchers and practitioners since then have utilized and expanded his original ideas. From the many applications of his ideas, some keys to a good brainstorm have emerged:

- A compelling question or problem
- A creative and open environment
- A spirit of non-judgment or no discussion/debate. It limits creativity at this point.
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.

The goal is quantity, breadth, and variety. You will organize the ideas later.

You have a vision of sustainability, and by now, a good sense of your unique contribution. The key question for the brainstorm is something like:

“What are the critical steps we must take to arrive at our vision?”

List as many possibilities as you can from the mundane to the outlandish. After you have a list, you can look for connections between ideas and for overlap. Then you can use the Decision Matrix to zoom in on a smaller number of strategies.

Worksheet

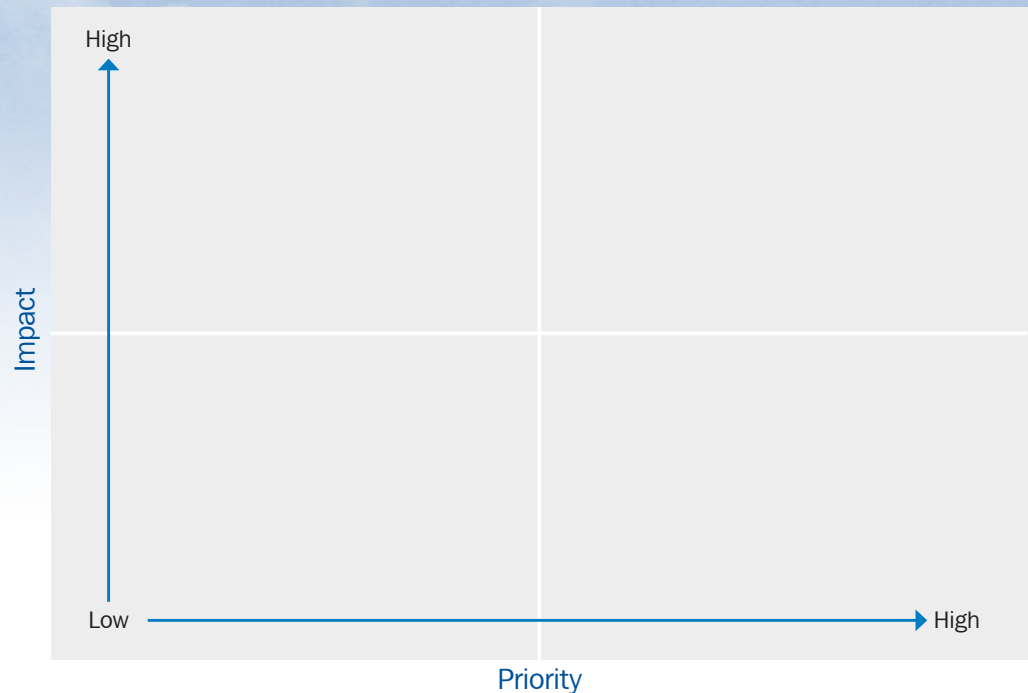
Decision Matrix

The Decision Matrix can be an effective way to prioritize a brainstormed list of potential strategies. First, define and determine criteria for what constitutes “Impact” and “Priority”. Second, plot the potential strategies on the matrix.

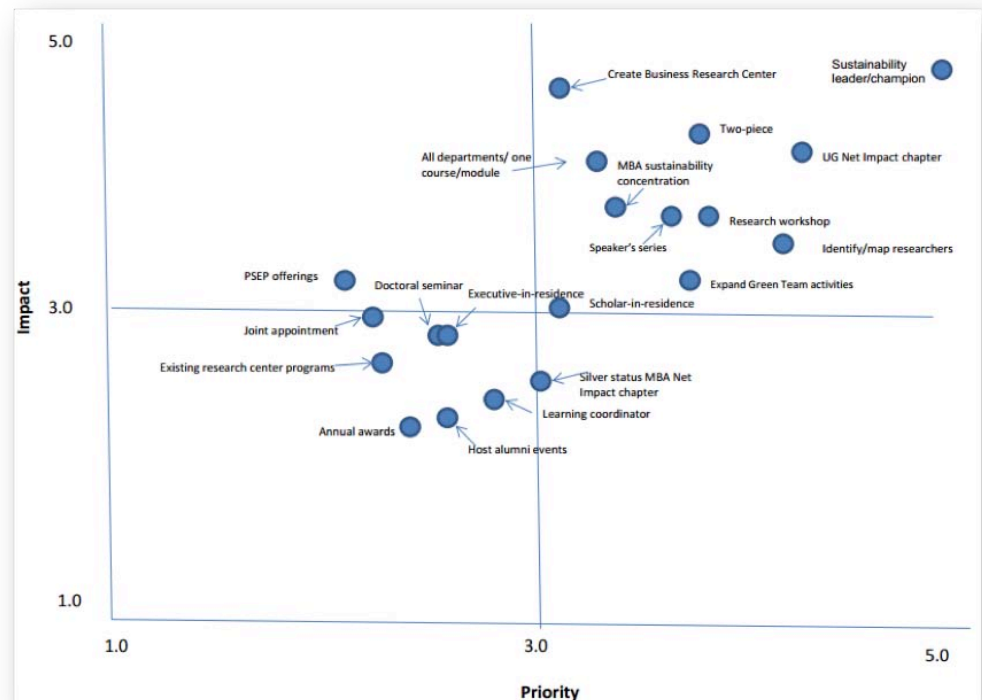
The plotting can take place via a scorecard process: a spreadsheet with criteria and associated weights assigned to each. Then each strategy is scored by individuals present and the scores are summed and averaged. The plotting can also take place more quickly and subjectively, with individuals making a determination in light of the criteria.

The items in the upper right that are high priority and high impact are the top candidates.

Prioritized strategies or goals often need to be rewritten so they are specific, actionable, and measurable. The SMART Strategy Builder is a powerful, yet simple tool for this purpose.



Example:



Smeal Decision Matrix – “Two-piece” refers to a new two-course set in sustainability for undergrads. “PSEP” stands for Penn State Executive Programs. This was excerpted from the Smeal Sustainability Plan available at: sustainability.psu.edu.

SMART Strategy Builder

What are SMART strategies? SMART strategies are:

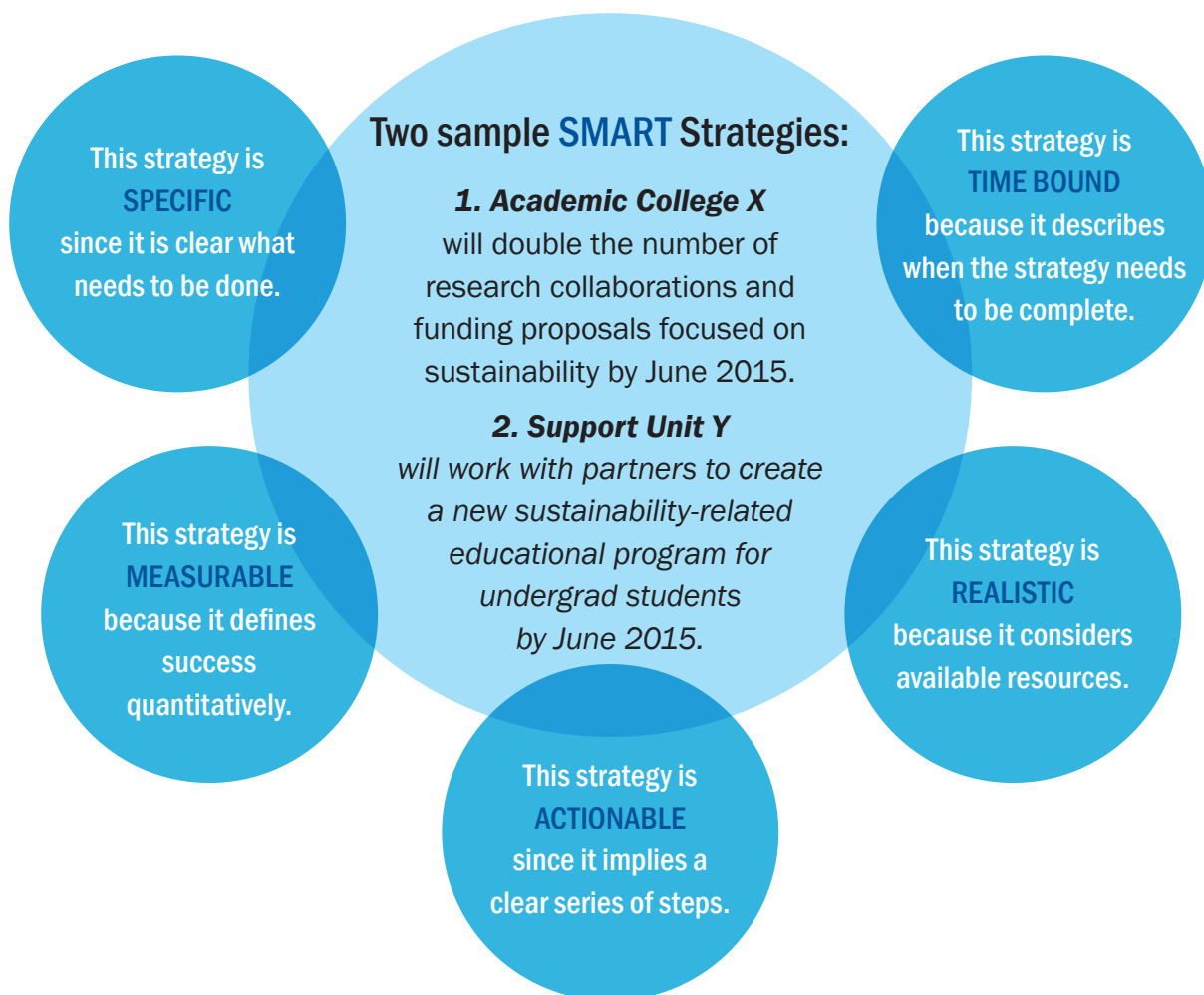
Specific: Is the strategy detailed enough that someone who isn't a part of our team would know what needs to be done and how?

Measurable: Is there a clear way to measure success?
How will you know when you've reached your goal?

Actionable: Is there a clear series of steps to take to accomplish your strategy?

Realistic: Is it possible to reach this strategy considering the resources available to your team?

Time Bound: When will the strategy be accomplished?



Worksheet

You may want to make more copies of this worksheet for your planning team.

1. Write a rough version of the strategy or goal here:

2. Use the table below to help you consider the five SMART dimensions of your strategy. Refer back to the previous page for leading questions and an example. Use the space provided below to write your initial thoughts/ideas for making the strategy specific, measurable, etc.

S
SPECIFIC

M
MEASURABLE

A
ACTIONABLE

R
REALISTIC

T
TIME BOUND

3. Use the insights gained above write your unit's SMART strategy.

You can write drafts of your strategy statement here. Keep trying different versions until it is clear and meets the SMART strategy framework. Finally, be sure to decide who is responsible for making the strategy happen.

Worksheet

Metrics Worksheet¹¹: The saying “what gets measured, gets managed” holds true for sustainability. Effective integration of sustainability leads to strategies that are measurable and accountable. The Metrics Worksheet below is a tool to help you develop your metrics.

Most columns are probably self-explanatory except for “Sample Chart,” which encourages teams to identify early how data will be presented. Teams can work backwards from what the chart or table will look like to what kind of data they need and how they need to collect it. The table can be easily recreated in Excel or a similar program. Make sure you develop good metrics and a way to track and report on them.

Metric	Ultimate Goal	Baseline	Source of Data	Sample Chart
Academic example: Percentage of courses in strategic areas within our dept/college with sustainability content	45% by 2016	10% in 2013	Internal survey	
Support Unit example: Monthly electricity consumption	50% reduction by 2016	150,000kwh/month	Office of Physical Plant	

Before You Go On!

Go back to page 5 and write your conclusions in **Step 5**.

¹¹Hitchcock, Darcy E., and Marsha L. Willard. The Step-by-step Guide to Sustainability Planning: How to Create and Implement Sustainability Plans in Any Business or Organization. London: Earthscan, 2008