

**Guidelines for Program Review Action Plans**

**Purpose of Action Plan**

Program review action plan provides a sequence of strategic steps for continuous modification and improvement to strengthen a program.

Action plan is the most vital part of a program review process. In Milestone 5 and 6 of the process, the goal of the action plan is to transform the program’s improvement opportunities into actions. More specifically, the plan is data-driven; major findings and recommendations resulting from the program review become the action plan goals for improvements.

An action plan will:

* Identify key recommendations[[1]](#footnote-1) that came out of the review process (i.e. areas to be studied, opportunities to be pursued, specific steps to be implemented, etc.).
* Outline strategies intended to *fully understand* areas in need of improvement, opportunities to be pursued, specific steps to be implemented, etc.
* Identify key performance indicators that are achievable and measurable.
* Assign actions to specific individuals or groups that will carry out the plan and ensure completion.
* Indicate when the action items will be completed.
* Be up to date, incorporating subsequent communication (electronic or otherwise) and any changes or related issues that have arisen since the conclusion of the review.
* Reflect the input of your constituents, including, as appropriate, faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders.
* Require your program to stretch and extend itself to achieve your goals.
* Recognize that resources are limited.

**Main Steps to Develop Action Plan**

The following steps will guide the development of the action plan.

*Step 1: Identify goals, recommendations, improvement opportunities, and/or issues*

* Develop a list from the recommendations of External Reviewer Team (if applicable). The list can also have improvement opportunities from relevant findings uncovered during the self-study phase.
* Edit the list by eliminating repetitions and by grouping similar items.
* Prioritize the list and select 3-5 items that need to be addressed in the action plan. Consider the following questions to prioritize the list:
  + What is the vision of program’s next 5-7 years?
  + What are the program’s strengths and weaknesses?
  + What can the program do, with the available resources, to improve the program?
* Set goals/recommendation statements.

*Step 2: Identify actions to be taken*

* Consider the following questions to develop the steps:
  + How will we achieve these goals?
  + What are all the steps that must be taken to achieve the goals?
* Break down any large steps into smaller components.
* Focus on one step at a time (e.g., if an additional exploration is necessary, the information-seeking should be included as an action).

*Step 3: Determine key performance indicators*

* Identify key performance indicators that are achievable and measurable. By measuring progress toward indicators, the program will be able to monitor its success.

*Step 4: Assign individual(s) or group(s) specific responsibilities*

* Assign actions to specific individuals or groups that will carry out the plan and ensure completion.

*Step 5: Define planned completion date*

* Specify the deadline that the action/s will have been completed.
* Ensure that target dates are realistic and manageable.

*Step 6: Identify Resource needs*

* Think about space, time, and financial requirement.
* Consider if the necessary resources are available.
* Additional expenditures will require an approval by the Provost and Chief Financial Officer.

**Action Plan Annual Follow-up**

One year after internal review, the Program Chair and the College Dean will submit an update of the action plan to the Provost. Annual follow-ups are required each year after the program review is completed until the next program review is conducted. More specifically:

* The program will provide supporting evidence and documentation to show that the action plan has been used as a tool in guiding program change and improvement.
* The action plan should be updated or modified based on ongoing progress (e.g., accomplishments, delays, or failures).

**Tips for Successful Action Plan**

* SMART, which is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Appropriate, Realistic/Relevant and Time-framed, is a commonly used technique to develop an effective action planning.

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| **S** | Specific | Actions should be **specific**, clear and detailed. |
| **M** | Measurable | Results need to be **measurable**. |
| **A** | Achievable/appropriate | Goals/recommendation statements need to be **achievable** and **appropriate** to your program. |
| **R** | Realistic/Reasonable | Actions should be **realistic** and **reasonable**, considering resources, time, finances, and ability of the individual/group. |
| **T** | Time-framed | Actions should be grounded within a **time-frame**. Deadlines for achieving each stage should be set. |

* Program leaders (e.g., Deans, Chairs, etc.) have responsibility in this process with a clear oversight of its implementation.
* Action plan should reflect the input from a meaningful cross-section of program representative, such as faculty, staff, students and other stakeholders.
* Keep it simple. Try not to take on too much, too fast. Plan out each step.
* Avoid taking on a long list of goals/recommendations which will be impossible to achieve.
* Consistently use the action plan as a tool for identifying steps and tasks within the program
* Set up mechanisms (e.g., a reminder system) to make sure everyone knows what they are expected to do and to monitor the progress of each action.
* While the action plan is not in and of itself a budget request form, it should serve as an important instrument for decision making, distribution of resources within the program, and future budget requests over the next several years.
* It is highly desirable to share the action plan within the program, and to distribute the work.

Program Review Action Plan

**(PROGRAM)**

**(Most Recent Review Year)**

| **#** | **Recommendation** | **Action(s) To Be Taken** | **Intended Outcome** | **Start Date** | **End Date** | **Assigned Individual(s) or Group(s) with their Responsibilities** | **Resource**  **Needs\* (Y/N)** |
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\*Attach explanation and proposal per guidelines above. Note that additional expenditures will require approval by the Provost and Chief Financial Officer.

Signature of Dean: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Ordinarily, programs will include 3-5 broad recommendations/actions in the template [↑](#footnote-ref-1)