

Governance Policies and Procedures

OCUL Strategic Planning Procedure

Approval date: Executive Committee, May 14, 2024
Revised: Editorial revisions, June 21, 2024
Date for review: May 2027; every three years

Overview

The Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) will establish an ongoing strategic planning process that translates OCUL’s mission into actionable goals, strategies, initiatives and services, including Scholars Portal (SP).

The strategic plan will provide direction for long- and short-term decision-making by the Council and OCUL/SP staff to fulfill the consortium’s purpose. Annual workplans from the Standing Committees, Communities and OCUL/SP staff will align with the strategic plan. The annual budget for OCUL and SP factor in the priorities of the strategic plan.

The strategic plan is approved by the Council and its development is overseen by the Executive Committee, which ensures effective implementation of the plan and strategic alignment of services and programs. The OCUL Executive Director and SP Director have the authority to make decisions, implement and manage all operational practices and activities within the scope of the strategic plan relevant to their respective operations.

Definitions

To achieve successful development and implementation of a strategic plan, it is essential there is a clear differentiation and understanding between goals, objectives, strategy, and tactics. The following definitions of these terms are informed by Horwath (2014), Bryson (2018), Kolbusa (2013), Stevens et al. (1997), and Valcik (2016).

- **Goal** (or strategic priority) – the long-term, broad primary outcome sought
- **Objective** – the specific, measurable result that demonstrates goal achievement

- **Strategy** – the general area of focus or method to achieve an objective
- **Tactics** – the shorter term, tangible actions/activities within the strategy; these are typically outlined in annual workplans

To illustrate these terms in a library consortium context:

Goal: Expansion of shared resources and infrastructure

Objective: Expand the shared library services platform partnership from 5 to 10 institutions by the end of the strategic plan period

Strategy: Promote the advantages of the shared library services platform

Tactic: Create a business case for the platform to share with potential partners; host a webinar about the platform for invited potential partners; meet with administrators and leadership at potential partner institutions

Strategic Planning Process Framework

Duration of the strategic plan: Four years; June start for strategic plan term

External facilitation and/or support: The Executive Committee can elect to strike a working group to help lead the development of the OCUL strategic plan. This group should comprise representation from the member library workforce and leadership and may include external partner and OCUL or SP staff representatives. The Executive Committee can recommend utilizing an external consultant/consultancy to support plan development.

Process: The strategic planning process will include active engagement across all levels of the consortium. Consultations to inform the strategic plan should seek input from the broad OCUL membership including the Council, Standing Committees and OCUL Communities, plus consortial partners and OCUL and SP staff. Input can be gathered via surveys, townhalls or world cafes, and individual or small group interviews. Supporting research provides a lens to the current environment in which the consortium operates and may include strategic analyses (e.g. SWOT, SOAR, PEST), member institution reports or plans, and industry benchmarking.

The strategic plan written document should, at minimum, include:

- OCUL's mission and core principles or values
- Environmental factors assessment
- A summary of consultation methods and results
- A long-term vision statement that describes how OCUL will look at the end of the strategic plan period
- Goals – 3 to 5 maximum
- Measurable objectives
- Strategies
- Measurement/assessment framework and success indicators

A synopsis of the written document will be prepared for public distribution, e.g. on the OCUL website and to members.

Work Cycle

The OCUL fiscal year is May 1 to April 30; the annual (spring) meeting of the Council typically takes place between April and May, with budget approvals for the coming fiscal year occurring at the fall meeting of the Council, usually in November.

Development of a new strategic plan:

- At the spring meeting in the final year of the current strategic plan: The Council is presented the process for the next strategic plan's development.
- June – September: Consultation, environmental analyses and data gathering.
- October – November: First draft of new strategic plan presented to Executive Committee.
- November – December: Council approves new strategic plan.
- June: New strategic plan term begins.

Annual planning:

The following timing aligns annual staff and governance group workplans to the strategic plan:

- December – April: Annual plan development by staff and relevant governance groups.
- April/May: Annual plans presented to OCUL Executive Director, with plans brought to Executive Committee as needed.
- June: Annual plan period starts.
- November: Annual implementation progress report, with update on strategic plan progress/milestones, presented to OCUL Directors at fall meeting.

References

Bryson, J.M. (2018). Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement. John Wiley & Sons.

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Kolbusa, M. (2013). The Difference between Goal, Strategy, Tactics and Execution. In: Implementation Management. Management for Professionals. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-42036-8_1

Stevens, R.E., Loudon, D.L., Oosting, K.W., Migliore, R.H., & Hunt, C.M. (1997). Strategic Planning for Private Higher Education (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.4324/9780203708385>

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