**Integrating Resource Considerations into the Planning Process**

This overview discusses the importance of resources to the success of planning and previews options for leaders to integrate resource topics into different stages of the planning process. The actual facilitation guides and worksheets are found with the planning documents on the Planning for Success [website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/).

**Why this aspect of planning is important**

As district and school teams engage in planning, they are integrating the creative, optimistic, and aspirational thinking of the visioning process with their analysis of where the district or school is today and why, identifying what they want to achieve in the future (strategic objectives) and how (strategic initiatives and the resources to support them). District leadership will play an important role in helping members recognize the district’s or school’s unique resource opportunities and challenges while encouraging them to not limit their aspirational thinking as a result. Leaders should decide how and when resources should be considered to avoid constrained thinking due to perceptions of budgetary limitations.

As plans are developed, leaders have many opportunities to introduce resource considerations, including:

* Broadly defining the notion of "resources" to include ingredients: people, time and materials, as well as money;
* Introducing some resource-related context in the launch of the planning process (i.e., enrollment trends, expected changes in key staff; award of new grant funds);
* Ensuring that systems and resources will be aligned to the plan as they are needed (e.g., budget and hiring cycles, scheduling, and multi-year implementation, if necessary); and
* Developing one-year action plans identifying specific resources (new and reallocated) for implementation.

Specifically, the PfS facilitation materials provide options for incorporating resource discussions during different activities of these two phases of the PfS planning process:

* Phase 1: Creating the Plan
	+ Designing the planning process and team
	+ Analyzing the current context
	+ Drafting and revising the plan
* Phase 3: Implementing the Plan
	+ Creating annual action plans

Throughout the PfS facilitation documents, the resource icon (time, people, materials, money) will signify an opportunity to integrate resources into the planning activity.

***Resource Alignment Opportunity #1:*** [***Designing the Planning Process and Team***](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/designing-team.docx)

In designing your planning process and team, leadership may want to consider how to and at what points in the process resource discussion will best fit your district’s planning process. Defining resources broadly to include people, time, materials, and money, can make these discussions more inclusive, as not all team members will know the budget well, but many will understand teacher schedules, coaching resources, PD calendars, etc., which all are included under the resource umbrella. Also, including one or more finance officials on the planning team can strengthen the finance/educator partnership and create a strong connection between planning and budgeting.

***Resource Alignment Opportunity #2:*** [***Analyzing the Current Context***](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/create-plan.html)

**Creating a shared understanding of the district resource context:** Integrating some discussion about resources into the planning process can allow team members to see the current big picture more clearly, look for creative ways to use existing resources, and, if new resources are required, approach the budget process with a realistic sense of the new investment needed for the plan to succeed.

It may also help members of the planning team to hear about some big-picture resource-related circumstances, such as enrollment trends that may lead to building or closing a school or the need to expand programming for English learners. If past budget cycles have been challenging, a shared understanding early in the planning process could be an opportunity to develop a shared understanding and shift the budget conversation in a positive way. The materials provided suggest some of DESE’s resource-related tools, including Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR) with key district indicators over the prior four to five years.

***Resource Alignment Opportunity #3:*** [***Drafting and Revising the Plan: Resource Mapping Objectives and Initiatives***](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/create-plan.html)

**Considering resource needs and sequencing implementation for strategic initiatives**: After agreeing on the vision and deciding on strategic objectives and initiatives for the multi-year plan, the leadership and/or planning teams will need to make decisions about where to start and how to sequence implementation.

For example, consider two initiatives that are expected to have similar impacts for the district. One will require significantly more new funding than the other will, and the budget for your district has already been approved for the upcoming school year without that new funding. Your team may determine to sequence the initiatives so that the one requiring new funds starts in the second year of the plan or may decide to start on both, understanding that funds will need to be repurposed or perhaps new grant funds sought to do both simultaneously. Assessing the resource lift, type of impact, and time required for implementation (e.g., planning, PD, retaining new staff) should help districts decide how to sequence implementation of initiatives over the course of the plan to maximize success.

**Resource Mapping Worksheet**: The materials include a graphic organizer where planning team(s) can quickly assess key factors (resources, impact, and implementation timeframe), which will then inform decisionmaking for sequencing objectives and initiatives over the course of the multi-year plan. By thinking through these factors, teams will be in a position to suggest realistic (yet ambitious) priorities for each of the plan years to make sure the district has built the needed capacity to act on objectives and initiatives.

If the larger planning team participates in this exercise, the district can build consensus around sequencing of the initiatives, as well as advocates for changes in the way resources are used or for new resources in coming budget cycles. This exercise does not require determining exact dollar figures for implementation, but still allows a rich conversation about resources in the context of implementing the plan. It can provide an opportunity for teams to discuss, in a general way, ideas for resourcing initiatives, which can then be carried over to the action planning phase. Sequencing that considers district resource capacity, realistic timeframes for implementation and the scope of impact for each initiative will help with both with success of implementation and a shared understanding of how the plan will unfold over its lifetime.

***Resource Alignment Opportunity #4:*** [***Creating annual action plans***](http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/success/implement.html)

**Developing the one-year action plan:** When teams are developing action plans to implement specific initiatives, they will want to be more detailed about the “how” -- what will implementation look like across the district and what resources will be required. If the district has prioritized and selected the initiatives to be implemented for the year using the Sequencing Map worksheet, the action planning team can take advantage of any resource discussions that accompanied that activity.

The Action Planning template allows teams to record, for each initiative, all required resources (people, time, materials and money) and all reasonable possibilities for generating those resources (e.g., repurposing entitlement grant funds, hiring of personnel with a particularly beneficial skill set, or tapping a community-based partner or parent group willing to donate time and or staff). Teams may consider whether the initiatives could be accomplished by 1) rearranging or repurposing existing resources, 2) raising new funds or resources, or 3) some combination of these two. This is a time to tap into the team’s knowledge of what existing resources could be better allocated to strategic initiatives, based on their experience and expertise, as well as how to best invest in new resources.

Being concrete and realistic about resources at the action planning stage is essential, as an under-resourced initiative will not have the best chance to succeed.