

# Action Planning Guide: Proactive Approaches to Domestic & Sexual Violence

## About the Action Planning Guide

The Action Planning Guide can assist agency leadership in creating a plan to address areas of opportunity identified through the agency self-assessment and community assessment. This guide walks through the steps of goal development, implementation of goals, and sustaining change so that agencies can set and achieve both short- and long-term objectives to enhance their approaches to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.<sup>i</sup>

## Developing Goals

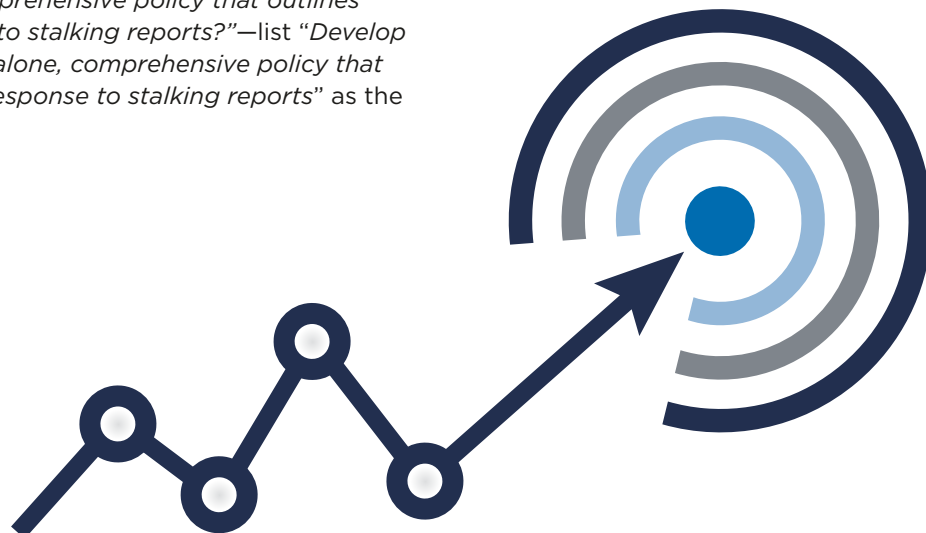
With agency self-assessment results in-hand, the first stage of developing an action plan is to identify and develop the long-term goals of the organization. While these goals may vary to suit each individual organization and its situation at the outset of the change effort, overall your agency's goals should seek to project where your agency would like to be in the future with respect to its practices and policies related to gender-based violence.

### 1. Review the results of your agency self-assessment.

Each question of your agency self-assessment is designed to contain a recommended promising practice. For those questions on which your agency answers "no," "none of the time," "some of the time," or similar answer, list out the suggested practice contained within. For example, if you agency answers "no" to the question "*Does your agency have a stand-alone, comprehensive policy that outlines your agency's response to stalking reports?*"—list "*Develop and implement a stand-alone, comprehensive policy that outlines your agency's response to stalking reports*" as the suggested practice.

### 2. Create goals from identified suggested practices.

Each suggested practice statement listed during step 1 is a great launching point for goal development. Goals should be concrete and specific enough to be meaningful and should include not only what your agency intends to accomplish, but also *why* it intends to do so. For example, instead of "*To commend officers for properly responding to sexual assault calls,*" a more specific and meaningful goal might be "*To implement a commendation system for officers who effectively respond to sexual assault calls in order to recognize excellence and set a standard for the team members to better support victims.*" Goals also need to be clearly defined; if the successful completion of the goal cannot be measured, it requires additional clarification and specificity.<sup>ii</sup>



# Implement & Sustain

Developing agency goals is only the first stage in moving from assessment to action; next, your agency must create a plan to prioritize and implement those goals.

## 1. Prioritize goals.

Incremental implementation of desired goals is likely to be more attainable than an abrupt, immediate transition across multiple areas, practices, policies, etc., of the organization; thus, the next phase in the action process is prioritization. As part of prioritizing your ideas for action, acknowledge steps your agency has already taken to enhance response to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. All the other strategies you choose to implement will build on those efforts. The weight given to the various factors and the final order of the list of goals will be unique to each agency, but considerations might include urgency, practicality, complexity, and projected length of time for each item. An agency may choose to consider the following criteria when evaluating its list of goals for prioritization:

Need for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Time urgency</li> <li>■ Perceived importance</li> </ul>
Ease of implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Compatibility with agency philosophy and organizational culture</li> <li>■ Extent to which strategy builds on agency strengths</li> </ul>
Required resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Funding and other resources required</li> <li>■ Officer and/or community partner buy-in</li> </ul>
Scope of impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Anticipated short-term “wins”</li> <li>■ Expected long-range impacts</li> <li>■ Overall timing of results</li> </ul>

Your agency’s goals will likely include both short-term and long-term objectives; as the project team considers the prioritization of its various goals, also consider how the goals may build off of one another toward long-range goals and fit into your agency’s overall long-term strategic plan. Most important, **this is not an all-or-nothing effort**;

action on even a single goal is progress toward improving responsiveness to victims and ability to hold offenders accountable.

## 2. Create the action plan.

For each goal statement, identify potential challenges, outside partners, and tools needed—and break the overall goal out into smaller action steps. The specific action steps identified will depend largely on each agency’s unique situation at the time of goal-setting; in the example above about implementing a commendation system, the list of action steps will look differently for one agency that has no existing commendation system at all, than an agency that does have a commendation system that does not currently include recognition of response to sexual/gender-based violence calls.

- **ACTION STEPS** should be specific and measurable, and each goal should include a sufficient number of action steps needed to complete the goal in its entirety.
- For each action step, there should be a specific, articulable **ANSWER** to the question, “how will we know when we have completed this step?”
- For each individual action step, your agency should **IDENTIFY** responsible parties and a time frame in which the step should be completed.
- **IDENTIFY** what results are expected in the short and long term.
- **ENHANCE** your strengths; don’t simply maintain them. For example, if your agency is already perceived as communicating well with the public, look for creative ways to augment that communication.
- **SELECT** a few strategies that are likely to have positive impacts in the short term to help sustain momentum and encourage internal buy-in.
- **ESTABLISH** timelines and dates for your goals. When should implementation begin, and how long it is expected to take? Your timeline may incur delays, so remain flexible.
- **ASK** leadership team members to take accountability for specific elements of your plan. You do not want to have to guess what people are willing to contribute.
- **IDENTIFY** required resources and where they might be obtained.

See next page for a sample goal broken down into action steps.

**Topic:** Department Standards

**Goal:** To develop and implement agency policy on agency member-perpetrated sexual misconduct in order to establish standards of practice and ensure fair process for all involved parties.

Action Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Develop policy drafting committee with representatives from city attorney and city human resources offices, local sexual violence service agency, prosecutor's office, and the police union	Chief of Police, Sex Crimes Unit Supervisor, Internal Affairs/Professional Standards Bureau Supervisor	1 month
2. Review model policies and research implications of relevant existing laws, policies, bargaining agreements, etc.	Drafting Committee	1 month
3. Draft policy and release for internal comment	Drafting Committee, Chief of Police	4 months
4. Review by partners identified in Step 1 to gain buy-in	Drafting Committee	1 month
5. Finalize policy and distribute with signed acknowledgement of personnel	Chief of Police, Drafting Committee, Supervisors	1 month
6. Conduct in-service training highlighting officer and supervisor responsibilities regarding policy	Training Supervisor	1 week prep, 1 day in-service
Outside Partners	Tools Needed	
City attorney's office City human resources office Local sexual violence service agency Prosecutor's office Police union	Model policies and policy development resources, relevant state and federal laws, agency policies, collective bargaining agreements, etc.	
<b>Target Date for Completion:</b> November 20XX		

### 3. Implement the action plan.

As a group, the project team and agency leadership should choose strategies and plans of action for implementation based on your agency's individual makeup. In the development of the action plan, incorporate strategies and follow through with policy development or revision that will encourage and sustain internal and external buy-in.

Strategies for achieving internal buy-in may include:

- **ASKING** for and providing credit for ideas;
- **LISTENING** and responding to concerns;
- **ACKNOWLEDGING** challenges;
- **CONTINUOUSLY REINFORCING** the benefits of enhancing victim response; and
- **KEEPING** personnel and stakeholders informed about the positive impacts of their efforts.

Concerns about mission and role shifting can be addressed with encouragement such as memoranda to staff and Question and Answer sheets to reassure

personnel that their primary mission remains protecting and serving civilians. Victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are community members, and enhancing your agency's response to them will improve the ability to accomplish this critical mission. Leadership may also choose to communicate with individual staff members in a variety of ways to highlight the many benefits of enhanced response to victims and personally engage staff at all levels in the effort.

Strategies for achieving buy-in from external partners may include:

- **INVOLVING** partners early in the process—consider inviting key stakeholders to be a part of the project leadership team;
- **INVITING** stakeholders' ideas and responding to their concerns;
- **COLLABORATING** to resolve problems; and
- **KEEPING** victim service providers informed about the results of joint efforts and expressing appreciation for their work to support and assist victims.

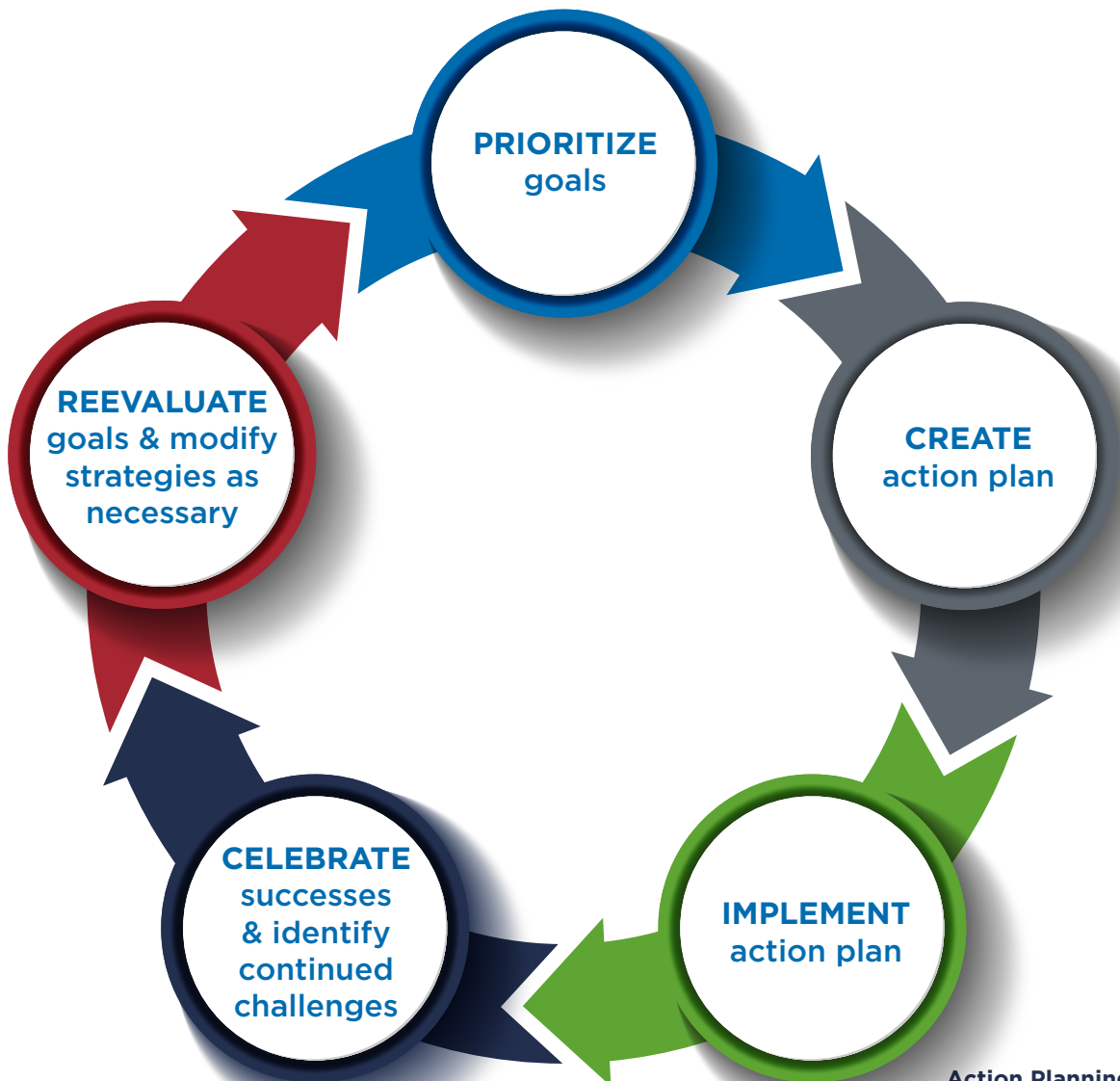


# The Action Planning Process

## Develop Goals



## Implement & Sustain



## Notes

- i International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims: Implementation Guide*, 2009, <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/document/2-enhancing-law-enforcement-response-to-victims-implementation-guide>.
- ii John R. Austin, "Initiating Controversial Strategic Change in Organizations," *OD Practitioner* 41, no. 3 (2009): 52-57.

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