



Strategic Planning Framework & Guidelines

Updated: August 2020



1. Strategic Planning framework

1.1 Introduction and Context

Federation University is introducing a new strategic planning framework to provide senior staff with a more transparent, robust and consistent approach to strategic and operational business planning going forward. The new framework will help to support decision making about organisation-wide and unit level priorities, timeframes and resources, and includes an ongoing commitment to monitoring and reporting on progress, and continuous improvement.

This document illustrates the hierarchy of plans in the new framework and the associated accountabilities for delivery; explains how the University's overarching strategic plan fits with core and supporting plans; outlines an annual planning calendar; and describes what a typical organisational unit level plan should incorporate. A planning template to be used in developing plans for Schools, TAFE, Directorates, Campuses, and Research Centres can be accessed in the Strategic Planning Framework and Plans SharePoint site.

A recent review of Federation University's strategic planning process highlighted that although a significant amount of planning activity is taking place and that plans demonstrate links to the University's strategic plan there are a number of ways we can improve our planning processes, including:

- Better linking plans to each other and to the University's budget process
- Developing clearer and more measurable targets and performance indicators
- Developing plans collaboratively across teams, organisational units and via the relevant University fora
- Introducing a consistent approach to planning, including a planning calendar, and the use of templates
- Implementing a clearer process for sharing plans, and instituting a formal approval, monitoring and reporting process

1.2 The strategic planning framework

Strategic planning is complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic. It involves the translation of clear goals and objectives into meaningful strategies for implementation. The strategic planning framework aims to assist senior staff to achieve Federation University's strategic goals by providing the following:

- A clear process for cascading the University's strategic plan throughout the institution
- Formal specification of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and associated targets, linked to the objectives in the Strategic Plan, and associated reporting of performance against the KPIs
- Regular monitoring of progress and reporting on achievements against key plans (at all levels)
- Clearly assigned accountabilities for actions in the supporting operational plans
- Integration of planning with budgeting.

The framework provides for tiers of interlocking plans that support the cascading of the Strategic Plan goals, targets and actions throughout the University:

- Federation University Strategic Plan
- Core Plans
- Organisational Unit Plans (Schools/TAFE/Directorates/Research Centres and Campus Plans)
- Supporting Plans.

Figure 1 below illustrates the hierarchy of plans in the strategic planning framework, and the associated accountabilities for delivery.

Figure 1: Planning and performance accountability

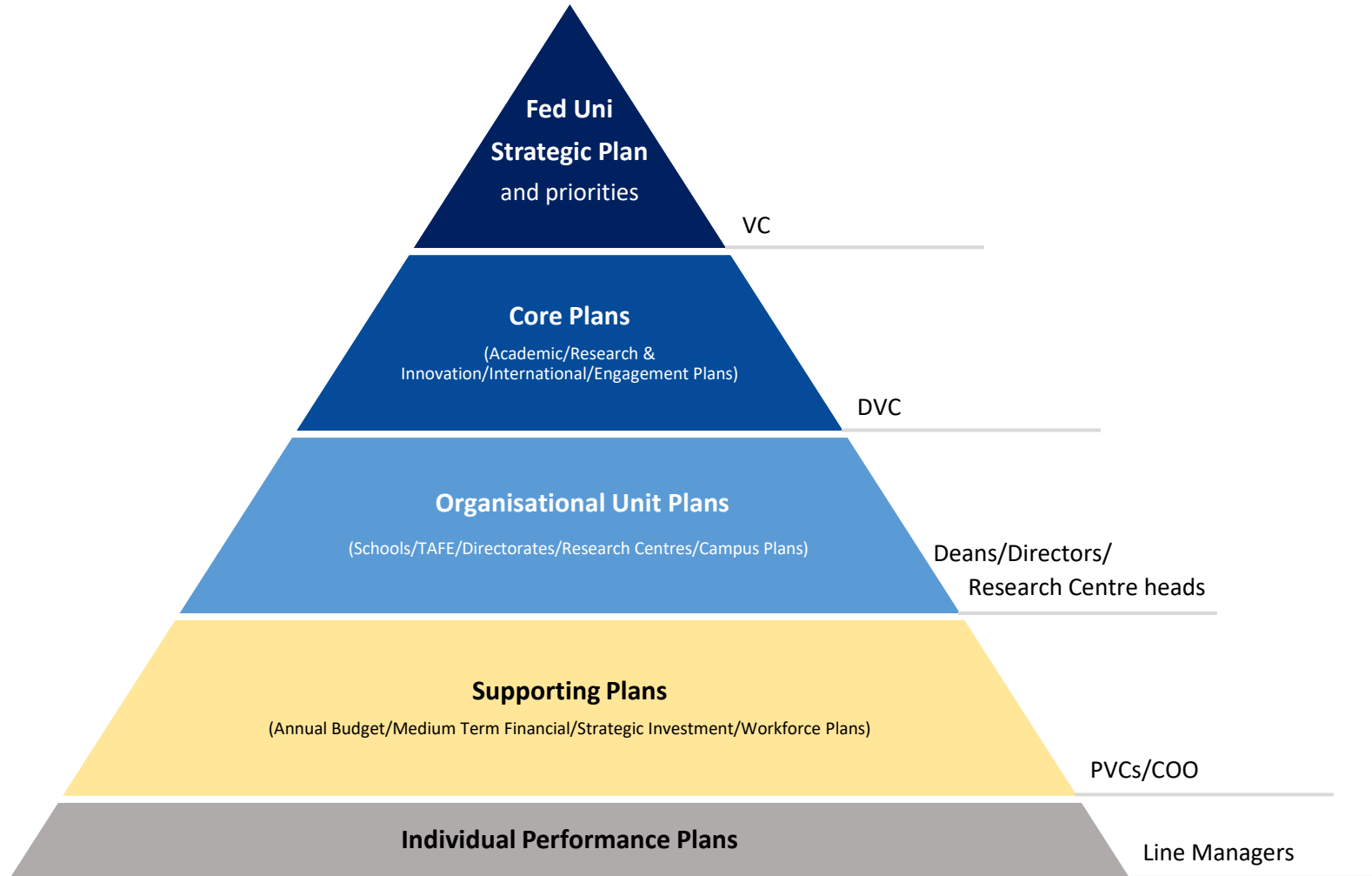
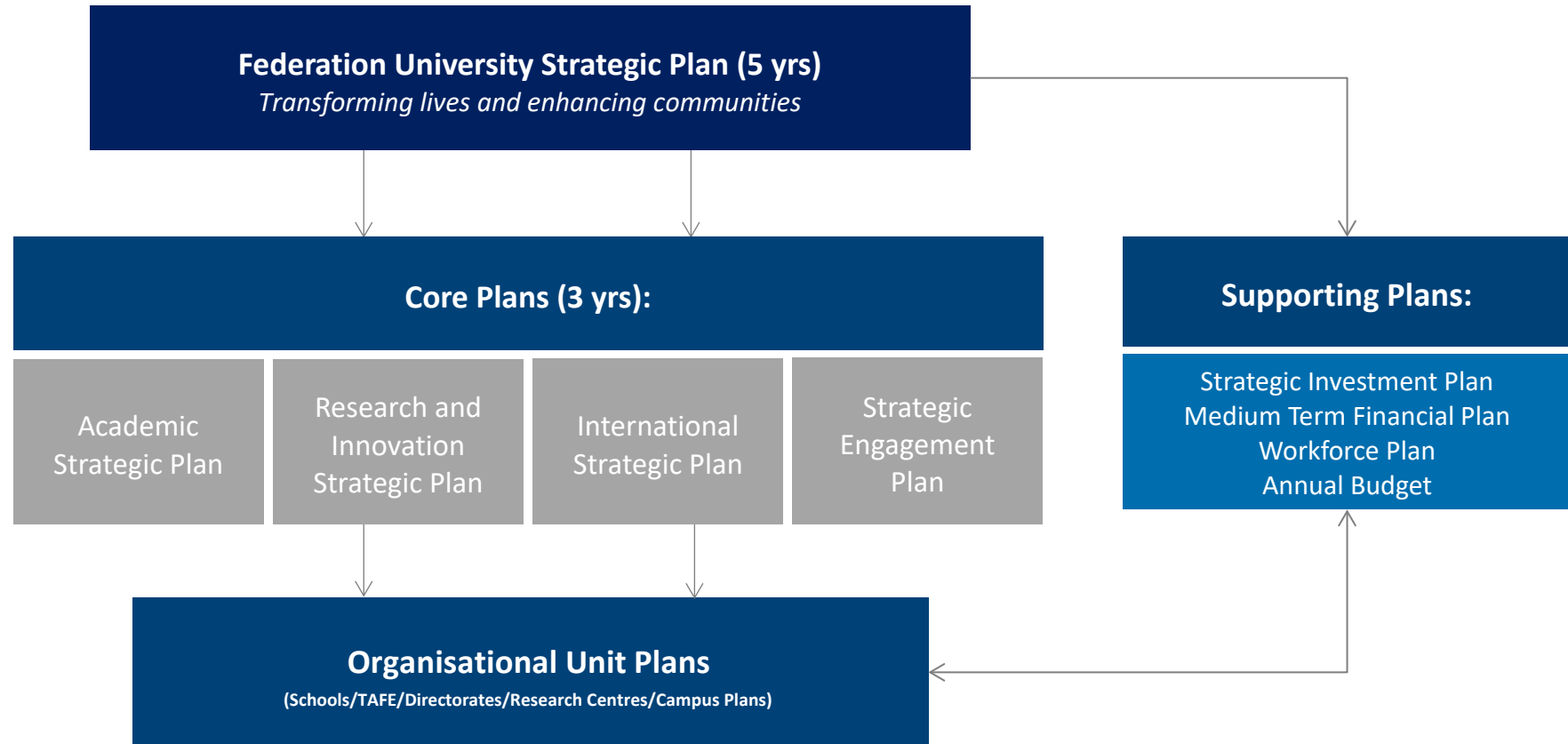


Figure 2 shows the plans and their relationship.

Figure 2: The planning framework



1.3 Federation University's Strategic Plan

Federation University's Strategic Plan provides the blueprint for our development over a five-year time horizon and is prepared at least every 5 years. The Strategic Plan articulates our vision, mission and the goals to be achieved for the core activities of the Academic, Research and Innovation, International and Engagement.

We measure our progress towards the achievement of those goals through an associated set of KPIs, for which targets are set for the duration of the Plan. Our Council receives regular reports on the KPIs and monitor performance against the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan is based on an analysis of the external and internal environments and is developed in consultation with our community. It is intended to be a high-level document that remains unchanged over the period of the Plan, unless there is a dramatic change in government policy, external factors, or the University's own performance.

The Strategic Plan is approved by Council.

1.3.1 Annual strategic priorities

Achievement of the Strategic Plan objectives is facilitated by the identification of annual strategic priorities to inform the organisational unit's operational plans and the annual budget. These strategic priorities are set on an annual basis, commencing in June/July and identify the areas that will be focused on in the coming year to deliver on the longer-term goals of the Strategic Plan.

1.4 Core Plans

The Strategic Plan's goals are to be further elaborated in the four Core Plans: the Academic Plan, the Research and Innovation Plan, the International Plan and the Engagement Plan. These plans reflect our core activities and provide guidance to the University community by translating our high-level goals ('the what') into university-level strategies ('the how').

Figure 3: Core Plans



Given the dynamic nature of our environment, the detail of these plans may be reviewed and updated periodically as we test the efficacy of our strategies, mature in our understanding of what is required to achieve specific goals or as the external environment changes. In that regard, the Core Plans will represent the most up-to-date thinking of the University about the strategies or broad courses of action it needs to pursue to achieve the learning and teaching, research, international and engagement goals outlined in the University Strategic Plan. It is proposed that these plans have a three-year time horizon to provide more focus on the short to medium term aspirations required to underpin the University's Strategic Plan.

Development of the Academic, Research and Innovation, International and Engagement plans are led by the DVC (Academic), DVC (Research and Innovation) and the relevant senior leader with responsibility for the activities respectively. The plans will be developed collaboratively with key university

stakeholders including Schools and Centres as well as taking account of input from the relevant University Committees such as the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Research Committee and the International Committee.

The University's Core Plans are approved by VCST and the Vice-Chancellor.

1.5 Organisational Unit Plans

Given the size, complexity and diversity of our organisational units and the competitive higher education environment, each School, TAFE, Directorate, Research Centre and Campuses will interpret the Core Plans within their own context.

Organisational units will each develop a single plan containing two components:

Part A: the strategic direction (3yr horizon) - the strategies or broad courses of action to be adopted by an organisational unit to support the achievement of University Strategic Plan goals and the implementation of University-wide actions as defined in the Core Plans.

Part B: an annual operational plan to support achievement of the strategies set out in Part A.

While each of these plans will be developed in close alignment with the University-level plans, they should reflect the goals, targets and actions of each area. It is expected that organisational units will share and collaborate with key stakeholders and teams across the University when plans are being developed to ensure consistency and responsibility of shared goals are clearly outlined.

The School/TAFE Plans are to be approved by the DVC (Academic), the Research Centre Plans are to be approved by the DVC (Research and Innovation), the Directorate Plans are to be approved by the relevant Portfolio head and the Campus Plans approved by VCST.

1.6 Supporting Plans

Federation's supporting plans are aimed at ensuring that the University has the enabling resources and actions required to achieve its Strategic Plan and associated Core Plans over the short and longer terms. These include, but are not limited to, the Strategic Investment Plan, a Diversity and Inclusion plan, a medium-term financial plan, a Workforce Plan and the annual budget. These will have different time horizons. Some will have a three-year time horizon and others (such as the Strategic Investment Plan) may have a longer timeframe. The Strategic Investment Plan includes the longer term capital (property, ICT) planning and any planning for other strategic projects requiring significant investment.

1.7 Performance Monitoring

As mentioned above, plans will contain key performance indicators and targets. These KPIs will depend on the goal being measured and over what timeframe. Targets should be set with measurable KPIs in mind. Regular reporting of performance against targets is recommended in these plans.

This reporting needs to be adaptable to changing circumstances either internally or externally as experienced this year with COVID-19's impact on the University. Significant change may necessitate even more regular review of performance and highlights the need for a regular feedback loop in the planning and performance monitoring framework.

Performance monitoring is to be undertaken as follows:

- Strategic Plan - annually
- Core Plans - annually
- Supporting Plans – mid-year and annually
- School Plans – progress towards achievement of strategic goals reviewed annually, operational performance reviewed mid-year and annually
- Research Centre Plans – annually
- Directorate Plans – progress towards achievement of strategic goals reviewed annually, operational performance reviewed mid-year and annually
- Campus Plans - progress towards achievement of strategic goals reviewed annually, operational performance reviewed mid-year and annually

This reporting will inform management actions in the current year through identification of areas for improvement and will inform the annual strategic priorities. Reporting of performance against targets should be provided to the Governance and Strategy Committee as well as to the University's regular internal forums and committees, including VCST, Deans and Directors, the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Research Committee and the International Education Committee.

Regular reporting of financial performance, and other reporting such as student enrolment reporting to VCST, Resources Committee, Governance and Strategy Committee, Council and others will continue.

2. Planning cycle and calendar

2.1 Calendar of activities in a typical year

The following calendar describes the key planning and performance monitoring planning activities that would take place in a typical year. This calendar is designed to integrate strategic and operational planning with the annual budget cycle. Budget development will occur alongside operational planning and final budgets and plans will be aligned.

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Prior year performance analysis prepared												
VCST review overall prior year performance												
DVC's and COO meet with direct reports to review prior year performance												
Extended leadership team review and discuss outcome on current year plans												
Develop 5 year Strategic Plan (every 5 years)												
Mid-year operational performance reporting												
Set strategic priorities for next year												
Core plans are reviewed & updated for next year												
Develop organisational unit plans for next year												
University financial plan development (including the budget)												

GSC – Governance & Strategy Committee

RC – Resources Committee

C - Council

Month	Activity
January	Compilation of data to enable analysis of prior year performance against target utilising university level and operational level KPIs.
February/March	<p>VCST review overall prior year university performance.</p> <p>DVC (Academic), DVC (Research and Innovation) and Chief Operating Officer meet with direct reports to review prior year performance, discuss areas identified for improvement and emerging priorities. The DVC (Research and Innovation) also meets with Schools to discuss research performance.</p> <p>A forum of the extended leadership team meets to discuss outcomes of the strategic review and to determine impact if any on current year plans.</p>
May/June	<p>Commence student load planning for next year.</p> <p>Development of strategic priorities for coming year. Extended Leadership Team meet.</p> <p>University long-term financial plan updated. Budget targets are established for the coming year, using modelling of mid-year student load and provisional full year forecasts.</p>
July	<p>Mid-year reporting and monitoring of performance.</p> <p>All areas commence development of annual operational plans and budgets. Operational plans will take account of review of current year performance using relevant KPIs as well as agreed university strategic priorities.</p>
August	Alongside development of the operating budget, submissions for strategic initiative funding reflecting the University's strategic priorities, and capital project funding are developed for review.

September	<p>Operational plans are finalised by all areas following approval of the budget. This ensures that operational plans and resourcing are aligned.</p> <p>Budget is finalised and approved by VCST.</p> <p>Budget submitted to Resources Committee.</p>
October/November	<p>Budget is reviewed and finalised aligning with any amendments from Resources Committee.</p>
December	<p>Budget is submitted to Council.</p>

3. Organisational Unit Plan Template

The following guidance notes are provided to assist Schools/TAFE/Directorates/Research Centres and Campuses in developing their plans.

The template has been designed to provide a simple and consistent format that can be adopted and modified for all areas of the University and is to be used broadly as a basis for preparing plans. It is expected that organisational units will share and collaborate with key stakeholders and teams across the University when plans are being developed to ensure consistency and responsibility of shared goals are clearly outlined.

The template described and provided has been developed for Schools but can be modified to reflect the relevant activities undertaken in other areas of the University.

3.1 Planning template

The organisational unit plan has 2 components:

Part A: Strategy (3yrs) and Part B: Operational plan (1yr)

3.1.1 Part A: Strategy

Part A should set out the strategies the organisation unit will adopt to support the achievement of the University's goals, as articulated in the Core Plans, that is, the strategies the organisation unit will adopt to achieve specific goals in the Core Plans. These strategies are then translated into a set of concrete actions or tasks in the organisational unit's annual operational plan.

This component of the plan has three sections.

Section 1 Context

This section provides a strategic overview of the organisation unit. This starts with a vision statement or statement of intent outlining what the organisation unit is seeking to achieve over the planning period and sets the overall direction which is then articulated in the plan.

It is suggested that the overview of the current state should include the following dimensions:

- The organisational unit's recent performance and trends – the emphasis may vary across organisation units depending on previous strategic directions, but would typically include performance in relation to student enrolment/load, retention, research, revenue generation
- Assessment of the external environment – the global and domestic trends or changes occurring that are relevant to the organisational unit's future direction and plans
- Market positioning – an assessment of the organisational unit's current competitive position, any distinguishing features of the program profile and research areas.
- Organisational unit's strengths and opportunities for improvement – a summary of strengths and opportunities flowing from this analysis and how this shapes the future strategic direction of the unit.

Section 2 Goals and Strategies

This section sets out the strategies to be implemented by the organisational unit to support achievement of the goals articulated in the Core Plans. The goals in the Core Plans will have been developed to align with the University's key strategic goals.

Each strategy should where possible have a measurable outcome which can be tracked over time. Each will identify who is accountable for its execution and outcome.

The organisation unit's annual operational plan will identify the specific actions or tasks to be undertaken in the relevant year for each strategy.

Section 3 Targets and performance measures

This section brings together a suite of KPIs that can be used for monitoring performance against targets across a range of dimensions.

It is intended that some of these KPIs will be consistent across all organisation units and would link to a University wide KPI; there may be some which are linked to a specific area of focus for an individual unit. As an illustration of a common set of KPIs, the template provides a suggested categorisation to reflect performance relevant to the dimensions of strategic development, learning and teaching, research and innovation and operations (for example, finance and staff).

The plan would set targets to be achieved by Year 3 or earlier. This will be informed by the actual/expected performance in prior years.

The annual operational plan will establish a performance target which will be monitored at semi-annual intervals.

3.1.2 Part B: Operational plan

Part B is an annual operational plan that is intended to translate the organisation unit's strategies (outlined in Part A) into a set of specific actions, which are the steps or tasks to be undertaken in the relevant year. The annual operational plan has three sections:

Section 1 Key priorities

This is intended to provide a concise overview of the key priorities being addressed in the plan for the year. It will be informed by a strategic review of performance, progress made towards achievement of the organisation unit's strategies, as well as agreed University strategic priorities.

Section 2 The Annual plan

In this section, strategies are reproduced from Part A of the Plan. Delivery of each strategy is through a specific action or set of actions. Accountability indicates who is responsible for the action and for reporting on progress. Timing indicates when the specific action will be completed.

Progress reporting on the annual plan takes place at regular intervals during the year through a simple traffic light report and commentary format to assist with this.

Section 3 Targets and performance measures

This section sets out the performance measures consistent with those adopted in the strategic component of the plan. The annual target will reflect expected performance of the prior year and where necessary any refinement of longer-term targets. It is expected that performance reporting takes place on a semi-annual basis for relevant measures.