



POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS ASSET MAPPING TOOLKIT

Step 4: Identifying College and Career Readiness Priorities

See *PSAM in action: San Francisco*: <http://www.fhi360.org/projects/postsecondary-success-collaborative-san-francisco>

How to identify your priorities

At this point in the process, the PSAM team will have analyzed the PSAM data in all five asset areas and completed a Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement worksheet for each asset. As a result, the team will have: (a) a list of programs, services and supports *identified as strong*; (b) a list of programs, services, and supports *requiring improvements*.

Looking at your lists, it is likely you have identified more areas to work on than is realistically possible. Don't feel overwhelmed! What is actually doable will be different for each school and will depend on many factors, including feasibility and importance. The team may come to quick agreement on a few clear priorities, in which case, you can move to action planning. But, it is more likely that the team will need an activity such as the one provided here to come to consensus about the priorities. The following activity will get you there.

RESOURCES

Worksheet: Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Identify criteria and ask questions to help you reach consensus about what to prioritize

Below are questions and some criteria to discuss with your team as you review the lists of strengths and opportunities for improvement. Throughout the discussion the team may move some items from the area of strength to an area for improvement, or vice versa. That is okay. The questions below can help you refine your priorities and rethink areas of strength and need.

Recommended criteria to determine high quality programs in your school

Availability to students + Number of students using it + Measurable outcomes = **High Quality Program Component**



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For the areas on your worksheet in need of IMPROVEMENT:

- Are there any low hanging fruit: items that we can do ourselves or through our partnerships?
- Are there items that are absolutely can't be put off for getting students ready for college and career?
- Are there items that will create staff resistance so we may not have wide support at first?

For the areas on your worksheet which are STRENGTHS:

- While this intervention may be strong programmatically is it really reaching all students or the intended target students?
- Is this something that could easily be strengthened by using our present grade or department team planning structures in new ways?
- Even though many students are using/doing this activity/program, the available data indicates it is not effective. Should it be downsized, eliminated or replaced?

Look at the school improvement plan and find areas of alignment

- Are there items from our PSAM strengths and improvements lists that are aligned with what we are already doing or plan to do?
- Are there items from our PSAM strengths and improvements lists that can be leveraged through existing resources or other initiatives that are already under way?

What can we realistically accomplish and be successful with? And how will we know?

- Do we have the resources required? If not, can we get them?
- What expertise do we have in our building? Among our partners?

Review existing program data to determine strengths and needs

What items on our PSAM strengths and improvement lists will give us the most improvement for the greatest number of students?

What is the **availability** of the program, support or service to students?

- Do students know about it? Families?
- Is it easy for them to access?
- Is it available to all students or only to some?
- If only to some, which students and why?

How many students are actually using the program, support, or service?

- Does the school track the number of students involved?
- Are the students who are most in need of the programs using them?
- Does the same small group of students take advantage of the programs, supports, and services that the school has available?
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- Is the school serving as many students as possible given the number of programs, services, and supports?

What are the **measurable outcomes** of the program, service, or support?

- Does the school measure and track outcomes for any or all of the programs/services/supports regularly over time?
- Does it share this data with the staff and partners who are providing the services to the school?
- Do the partner organization share data they collect and measure with the school?
- What does that data tell you about the program?

If after discussing the items on your priorities list you still have more items than you can realistically work on, below are two different activities to choose from that can help your team create a realistic list.

Activity: Rating Priorities on Importance and Feasibility

- Write the items that you are trying to prioritize for the action plan on large pieces of chart paper.
- Post the chart paper and place markers around the room.
- Using a scale of 1-5 (1 is lowest and 5 is highest) ask participants to go up to the chart paper and rate each item on two criteria: Importance (I) and Feasibility (F)
- Allow time for everyone to think and rate each item on BOTH criteria.
- After everyone has rated the items, add up the totals. Each item will have one total for importance and another total for feasibility.
- Decide if you want to combine the feasibility and importance scores for a grand total, or make a decision based on a separate total for each criteria.
- Circle the priorities that receive the highest score(s).

Activity: Chalk Talk

- First, conduct the following silent group activity on chart paper or white board. Then discuss the responses.
- Post blank pieces of chart paper and markers around the room. You can also use a white board, but you will need to snap a photo of the board at the end to capture the ideas.
- Ask participants to go up to the chart paper and write their top three priorities for the action plan. This part of the activity is silent.
- Allow time for everyone to think and write on the chart paper until everyone has taken a seat. Encourage people to write responses, agreements, or additions to what others have written.
- When no one is still writing, ask everyone to take a few moments to look at what was written, and then facilitate a discussion:
 - Is there consensus?
 - What do people notice about where the priorities are?
 - Is there great disagreement?
 - If there are more than 3 or 4 items for the action plan, are there some that can be taken on and addressed quickly?
 - Are there some that are long-term strategies?

Up Next –Step 5: *Developing and Implementing an Action Plan*