

Defining and Setting a Scope in Strategic Planning

What is Scope?


Scope is a way to set boundaries for a strategic plan and concretely determine the plan’s goals, deadlines and deliverables. Setting a scope is a collaborative effort and should be done in partnership with your stakeholders.



Why is Scope Important?

Defining the scope of your strategic plan is critical for a variety of reasons, including:

- Creating a shared vision among stakeholders.
- Making a difference. Without a scope, it can be difficult to get anything accomplished on your strategic plan. If your scope is too expansive and you try to accomplish too much, you may spread resources too thin and fail to make impactful investments.
- Accountability. Creating a scope means that you are holding your agency and your stakeholders accountable for what is contained within the plan. This will spur action and ensure everyone works toward the same goals.
- Allows for a clear understanding of what will (and what will not) be accomplished with the plan. This can help manage stakeholder expectations.

<p>Key Definition</p>		<p>A scope statement is a written description of your project’s scope.</p>
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SCOPE STATEMENT EXERCISE

There are numerous processes of identifying a feasible scope for your strategic plan. Before you embark on this process, it might be a good idea to refresh your memory on the key steps for strategic planning—[review our guide here](#). The following questions will guide you toward the creation of a scope statement. You can do this as internal staff and present the statement to your public safety planning board OR you can go through this process with your board. If you undergo this process with your board, make sure you inform them ahead of time so they can come prepared. For each of the following questions, use a white board or flip chart to catalogue answers from all board members. Aim to catalogue all of the answers described but focus on areas of commonality and consensus.

The following page outlines the key questions to ask your team (or your board) in the creation of a scope statement. In addition to these questions and instructions, you’ll find key examples you can use to bolster your understanding of what the process can look like. Feel free to adjust according to the needs of your own strategic planning processes and/or public safety board processes.



Scope Statement: Instructions and Example

STEP ONE: WHY?

Why are we working on this strategic plan? What are our goals? Tie back to any guiding principles/mission and vision statements. For this step, focus on exploring the why, even if the strategic plan itself is a required grant component. Why is this an important process to undergo?

EXAMPLE: WHY?

We are creating a Byrne-JAG strategic plan (to run through 2029) that is data-driven and includes input from a diverse group of stakeholders, both in the criminal justice system and beyond. We believe deliberate planning is critical to identifying the state's most pressing needs and leveraging limited resources to best meet those needs.

Our guiding principles include the following:

- We consider the impact of our actions on the world and we do our best to make the world a better place.
- We leverage the collective wisdom and diverse thinking of our team by collaborating whenever possible.

Our overarching goal for this plan is to improve the criminal justice system in our state by allocating resources as effectively as possible. This planning process will allow us to determine, primarily, how to allocate Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) dollars across the state according to needs; additionally, this planning process will reveal additional gaps and needs which may be met with other sources of funding, whether state, local or federal.

STEP TWO: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

What needs have we determined based on data and stakeholder engagement? In addition to describing the needs, describe where the information came from. What kind of data did you access or consult? What does it indicate? What stakeholders have you consulted (and who are they?) What needs did stakeholders describe as the greatest?

EXAMPLE: ASSESSING NEEDS

We have conducted an assessment of needs across the criminal justice system based on a thorough review of data and stakeholder engagement.

For data, we consulted the following:

- NIBRS state data
- Our Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) provides us with state-level data
- Current subgrantee reports
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) data
- We receive a quarterly report every year from our Department of Corrections
- Data from local law enforcement

- Census data
- Crime victimization surveys
- Everytown for Gun safety data on our state

In terms of stakeholder engagement, we have done the following:

- Engaged all Byrne JAG required stakeholders
- Engaged justice-impacted individuals through targeted focus groups
- Created and disseminated a stakeholder needs assessment survey, which was sent to 700 contacts across the justice system
- Gathered input from behavioral health and substance misuse partners through a targeted meeting with partners. We found input in this area to be lacking from the original survey and wanted to dive deeper.
- There was a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) meeting, and we gathered additional feedback and insight on needs through discussions.

Through data and stakeholder engagement efforts, the following needs have been identified:

- Individuals want access to crisis support outside of a law enforcement context
- More deflection and diversion programs, particularly for those with behavioral health concerns
- Lack of access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), particularly in rural areas
- Gun violence is a huge issue in our state
- Our state’s protection order system needs an overhaul. There are unnecessary delays.
- Culturally specific and holistic reentry programs
- After school programs for youth at the highest risk for gun violence in our state.

STEP THREE: MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS/ESTABLISHING PRIORITY AREAS

What problems have we identified as the most pressing to solve based on the needs assessment in step two? This will determine your priority areas. This step is where you narrow a large list of expansive needs to a more defined list of priority areas. Remember, this should be based on the information gathered in step two.

 **EXAMPLE: MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS/PRIORITY AREAS**

The needs listed in step two are based upon a synthesis of the primary needs discovered through an assessment of the available data and through stakeholder engagement efforts. While all of the above needs are vitally important, we only receive so much money through the Byrne JAG grant. Thus, we need to streamline our efforts and come up with a more effective scope so we can make the most impactful change with the resources we have at our disposal.

The most pressing problems were defined through the needs assessment above—we gathered a larger list of needs and narrowed them down to the most pressing problems to solve with this particular funding source. The process of narrowing down needs into the following priority areas was accomplished through a thorough review and analysis of what stakeholders, as well as the data, indicated we should prioritize:

- Gun violence reduction programming
- Expanding crisis response and behavioral health services

STEP FOUR: SETTING GOALS

What goals will we use to determine success? Goals should be based on needs and priority areas identified in steps two-three and should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) For assistance with setting goals, [please see our worksheet on SMART goals.](#)

EXAMPLE: SETTING GOALS

After determining our priority areas for our strategic plan, we need to set goals. Setting goals helps give us something to work toward and allows us to measure progress toward our intended effects. Based on the above two priority areas, we have set the following goals for our strategic plan:

- By September of 2029, we will increase access to MAT in rural areas by 5% by a) supporting three mobile units and b) conducting a targeted public information campaign geared toward individuals with opioid use disorders in rural counties.
- Implement two community response-based mobile crisis intervention programs in the two main urban areas of the state by September 2029, with a focus on crisis response services that don't require a law enforcement presence.
- By September 2029, we will expand seven existing after school programs for youth at the highest risk for gun violence, with a particular emphasis on prioritizing programs in neighborhoods with the highest levels of reported gun violence.
- Create and/or expand five community violence intervention programs to reduce gun violence in the state by 5% by September 2029.

STEP FIVE: CONSTRAINTS

What are our constraints? This can include resources, budgets and staffing levels. Time, for example is a constraint. For example, goals for a two-year strategic plan vs a five-year strategic plan will be very different—in five years you can accomplish more, meaning you can have a larger scope. Administrative/leadership changes can sometimes act as constraints as well. Perhaps you have all new staff or very little staff—think about what is possible using what you HAVE, not what you don't.

EXAMPLE: TAKING STOCK OF CONSTRAINTS

Our Byrne JAG award is approximately \$4 million. This strategic plan will be submitted in 2024 and will run through 2029. Our primary constraint is that we don't receive a large amount of money on this particular grant. Because of this, we propose adjusting the goals identified in step four to read as follows:

- By September of 2029, we will increase access to MAT in rural areas by 5% by a) supporting three mobile units and b) conducting a targeted public information campaign geared toward individuals with opioid use disorders in rural counties.
- Implement two community response-based mobile crisis intervention programs in the two main urban areas of the state by September 2029, with a focus on crisis response services that don't

require a law enforcement presence.

- By September 2029, we will expand seven existing after school programs for youth at the highest risk for gun violence, with a particular emphasis on prioritizing programs in neighborhoods with the highest levels of reported gun violence.
- Create and/or expand **five two** community violence intervention programs to reduce gun violence in the state by **5% 2%** by September 2029.

As an agency, we plan to apply for a CVI-specific grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, which we hope will allow us to fund the additional three CVI programs as part of goal four. Further, our agency plans to use state funding to supplement Byrne JAG funding for after school programming (goal 3), meaning that state and federal funding will be combined to maximize impact.



One great way to visualize scope is to draw a circle on a white board and/or flip chart. After completing all of the above questions with your board and notating their answers and finding areas of consensus, make sure everyone is clear on what the scope really means. For example, determine goals and priorities that fit within the scope you've all jointly decided on by placing them fully in the circle, and decide what doesn't fit (what is outside of the scope) by placing those priorities/goals outside the circle. This step is helpful in going from consensus to fully understanding the scope, and you can make any last-minute changes to the scope of your strategic plan here.

Using Your Scope in Your Strategic Plan

Completing the above exercise will help your internal staff, as well as your public safety board, fully understand and conceptualize the scope of your strategic plan—what it will cover, and what it will not. You might include a section in your strategic plan describing how you underwent a scope exercise with your board as part of your stakeholder engagement section. And importantly, the goals you determine in part 4 will be their own section of your strategic plan. The goals will be something you come back to again and again to assess progress. Keep in mind that completing this exercise will be much easier after you are further along in your strategic planning process—notably, after you have done some preliminary digging into the criminal justice system data in your state/territory as well as determining needs and priorities for the state through various stakeholder engagement techniques such as surveys, focus groups and/or town halls.

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