

## **Writing an Action Plan based on your Assessment**

### **A. Intro:**

Have you finished your assessment, and now you want to take action to improve your program? Now is the time to think about writing an action plan!

An action plan is a plan for how to improve your program. It takes far-off goals and hard changes and breaks them down into steps you can keep track of and complete. An action plan usually includes goals, steps, assignments, and deadlines.

You'll want to improve your program every year and respond to changes in your program every year. But it may take more than a year to make major changes or achieve big goals. You can give yourself more time for these major changes and goals. Your action plan may take one, two or even three years to complete.

### **B. Using A Team Approach**

If you take into account more people's ideas, you should end up with a stronger action plan.

Some things to think about:

- It's common to use a team for writing action plans. It may be best if team members think about the questions and issues on their own and then bring their ideas to the table. This should help you:
  - get a wider variety of ideas to work with
  - reduce "group think"
  - end up with a stronger action plan
- You may do this work with the same team that did your assessment. Or you may set up a different team to write and carry out your action plan.
- You may choose to get more input from program youth, families, staff, or partners about questions that come up through the action plan process.

### **C. Sample Action Plan Chart:**

Your program may have a format that you use for action plans. Or you may have a format in mind based on your needs. If you're not sure what format you want to use, you may find this sample chart helpful:

**Goal:**

**Standard(s) this goal relates to:**

**Current situation/rating:**

**Target date of reaching goal:**

<b>Steps to take</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Due date</b>

Sample filled-out chart:

**Goal:** Make our program’s space more welcoming and youth-centered.

**Standard(s) this goal relates to:** Indoor/Outdoor Environment, Standard #1

**Current situation/rating:** Indoor/Outdoor Environment, Standard #1, Elements b (lighting) and e (youth work on display) rated 2 because our light is too harsh/all fluorescent and we don’t have enough youth work on display due to shared space at the school

**Target date of reaching goal:** 3 months from now

Steps to take	Who is responsible?	Due date
Review NJSACC’s “Imagine: Afterschool Space That Works” document	Program director	First month
Determine budget for improvements	Program director	First month
Purchase non-fluorescent lights – floor lamps, task lamps, lanterns, etc.	Program director/admin staff	First month
Identify ways to display youth work that are transportable (ie. can be put up and taken down each day)	Program Director	Second month
Discussions with youth about what they would like to see in the space	Program director and front line staff	Second month
Determine and carry out follow-up tasks based on youth discussions	Program director/others TBD	Third month

## D. Choosing Your Goals:

When choosing goals and standards/elements to focus on, think about these four questions:

- What's our rating on this standard/element?
- How important is this standard/element or goal?
- How reachable is this goal?

We suggest these steps to help you choose:

- Pick out any standards/elements your program rated 1 or 2 on
- Then, highlight the ones you or others in the program think are most important. You may want to get more input from others to get a better sense of what they care most about.
- Then, choose the ones you think you're most likely to be able to improve your rating on within your time frame.

Some tips:

- You may choose a goal for your Action Plan that relates to more than one standard. You may find that low ratings on a few standards stem from the same problem.
- Think about choosing some goals that you can reach in a short time period so you and others have a sense of progress and success. Keep spirits high!
- You may choose to focus most on one or a few categories in one year and focus on other categories the next year.

## **E. Choosing the Steps to Take:**

Now it's time to choose the steps to reach your goals.

Keep these tips in mind:

- For each part of your program that you want to improve, ask:
  - What's the reason we're having this problem?
  - Is there more than one part to the problem?
  - What might fix the problem?
  - What steps can program staff or others take to help us reach the goal?
- Try your best to set realistic target deadlines. Ask these questions that relate to timeline and resources:
  - Can we do this in-house or do we need outside help to meet this goal?
  - Do we need extra financial resources?
- Check out the resource section of this booklet.
- Contact NJSACC for help.

## **F. Using Your Program's Strengths:**

Which standards/elements did your program rate well on? You should look at these too. This can help you:

- Celebrate your program's strengths! And recognize the people behind those strengths.
- Define what makes your program special. For your action plan, you can get ideas about how to solve problems using your program's strengths.

For example, maybe your staff have great relationships with the youth but your programming needs to improve. You could involve the staff in coming up with new programming that reflects the interests and needs of the youth they know.

- Maintain program strengths. You may have to pay special attention to a part of your program that's already strong in order to keep it that way.

For example, you may have grant money running out or a strong staff person leaving. You can include in your action plan a goal to find the funds to replace the grant money or steps to maintain quality through the staff change.

## **G. Action Plan Follow-up:**

It's a good idea to look at your action plan about every three months to check on your progress and make needed changes.

You may choose to:

- Check off goals that you've reached. Celebrate your success! And recognize the people who got you there.
- Revise steps, assignments, or deadlines based on how the plan is going so far.
- Revise goals if you see a major problem with your plan.

Just checking in with your action plan once in a while should help keep you on track and see your program improve!