F.A.C.E.S Welcome Review

Family & Community Engagement in Schools

How welcoming is your school?

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Australian Council
of State School
Organisations Inc.

FACES: Family & Community Engagement in schools Welcome Review

Content

Creating a welcoming and friendly environment for families and community members is an essential component for building on family engagement practices in schools.

The Family and Community Engagement in Schools Welcome Review (FACES) is a tool designed to ;

- assist school teams to review current practices and policies within the school for relevance
- conduct a walk through of your school, and take an overall look at the user friendliness and
- review communication practices, materials and modes

through answering the following;

- a questionnaire on the current state of practices
- evaluating the schools current situation and
- goal setting for desired future states

on each of the topics highlighted.

The purpose of the FACE is to assist schools in self assessing how welcoming the schools physical environment, interpersonal actions and communicative processes are to families and community members.

The FACE concludes with an school action plan template to assist schools in developing a strategy to improve how welcoming their school is to families and the community.

Dianne Giblin

Chief Executive Officer

Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc

Assessing school wide policy & practices

Creating a positive and collaborative school culture

The positive interaction and collaboration between the school staff and its community is an essential element of a positive school culture. Your team should observe the school staff and visitors, watch their behaviour, and listen to interactions between staff and adults who call or visit the building. This assessment isn't intended to be an evaluation of individual staff members, but rather is intended to evaluate the climate and culture of the school.

Assessing school wide policy & practices questionnaire	Yes	Requires review
Does the school have a budget for family engagement initiatives?	☐	☐
Our school conducts orientation for new staff on family and community engagement.	☐	☐
Our school conducts regular professional development on family engagement.	☐	☐
Staff conduct Community Inquiry Audit.	☐	☐
Families and students are greeted in front of the school BEFORE school each day.	☐	☐
Families and students are greeted in front of the school AFTER school each day.	☐	☐
Families know where to find key personnel.	☐	☐
Is tea and coffee made available for families?	☐	☐
Are there restrooms available for families to use?	☐	☐
Families are surveyed to identify their needs.	☐	☐
Families are surveyed to identify family's availability for events, meetings and activities.	☐	☐
Does the office staff greet visitors quickly with a smile and in a friendly, courteous way?	☐	☐
Do all staff greet families and visitors with a smile and say hello, even if they do not know them?	☐	☐
When a family member attempts to walk through the hallway without a badge or pass, do staff members approach him/her politely and cordially and then invite/escort him/her to the office to sign in?	☐	☐
Do staff members passing in the hall ask visitors if they may be of assistance?	☐	☐
Are there parent and community volunteers in the school?	☐	☐
Volunteers and community partners are recognised and celebrated.	☐	☐
Do the staff ensure attention is paid to pronouncing parents' names correctly?	☐	☐
Does the school offer workshops and information sessions to the community regularly?	☐	☐
Is student learning data shared?	☐	☐

Assessing school wide policy & practices

How are the principal's or executive office hours convenient for families?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How are school office hours convenient for families?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How do school staff and families have informal occasions/events during which they can get to know each other?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How are parent-teacher meetings offered at convenient times for families?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the school collaborate with families on school policy?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the school assist parents in choosing appropriate educational programs for their children?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

Assessing school wide policy & practices

How does the school utilise the skills available within the community in the classroom or school?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐　　Requires review ☐

How/when does the school provide bilingual speakers who can be called upon to translate or become a"buddy family" if needed?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐　　Requires review ☐

How are family leaders kept informed about important school matters and encouraged to form a family network to pass the word?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐　　Requires review ☐

How are families and others in the school community invited to use the school for planned events?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐　　Requires review ☐

How does the school collaborate with families in school decision making and improvement?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐　　Requires review ☐

Assessing school wide policy & practices

How are volunteer opportunities available to families and others in the school community?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the school collaborate with external agencies in the community to assist with school goals and student achievement and well being?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How do you promote 2-way communication?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does your open day program and initiatives engage families?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How are family engagement activities, programs and initiatives linked to learning?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

Assessing school wide policy & practices

How are activities, programs and initiatives developmental, collaborative and interactive for participants?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How are school procedures and conduct codes for students, families & teachers outlined for families at the beginning of each year?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the school provide information packets for new families?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How often do teachers call each student's family throughout the school year to invite them to an event or report something positive?
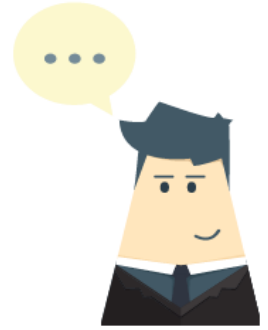
Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the schools family/teacher interviews/conference model provide the opportunity for families and teachers to discuss student goals, explain what the school is doing to assist the student in achieving the goals and offer suggestions for what families can do at home? Are recommendations made for students to attend also?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

Evaluation: Assessing school wide practices and policies

In the area of assessing school wide policy and practices, what are we doing well?
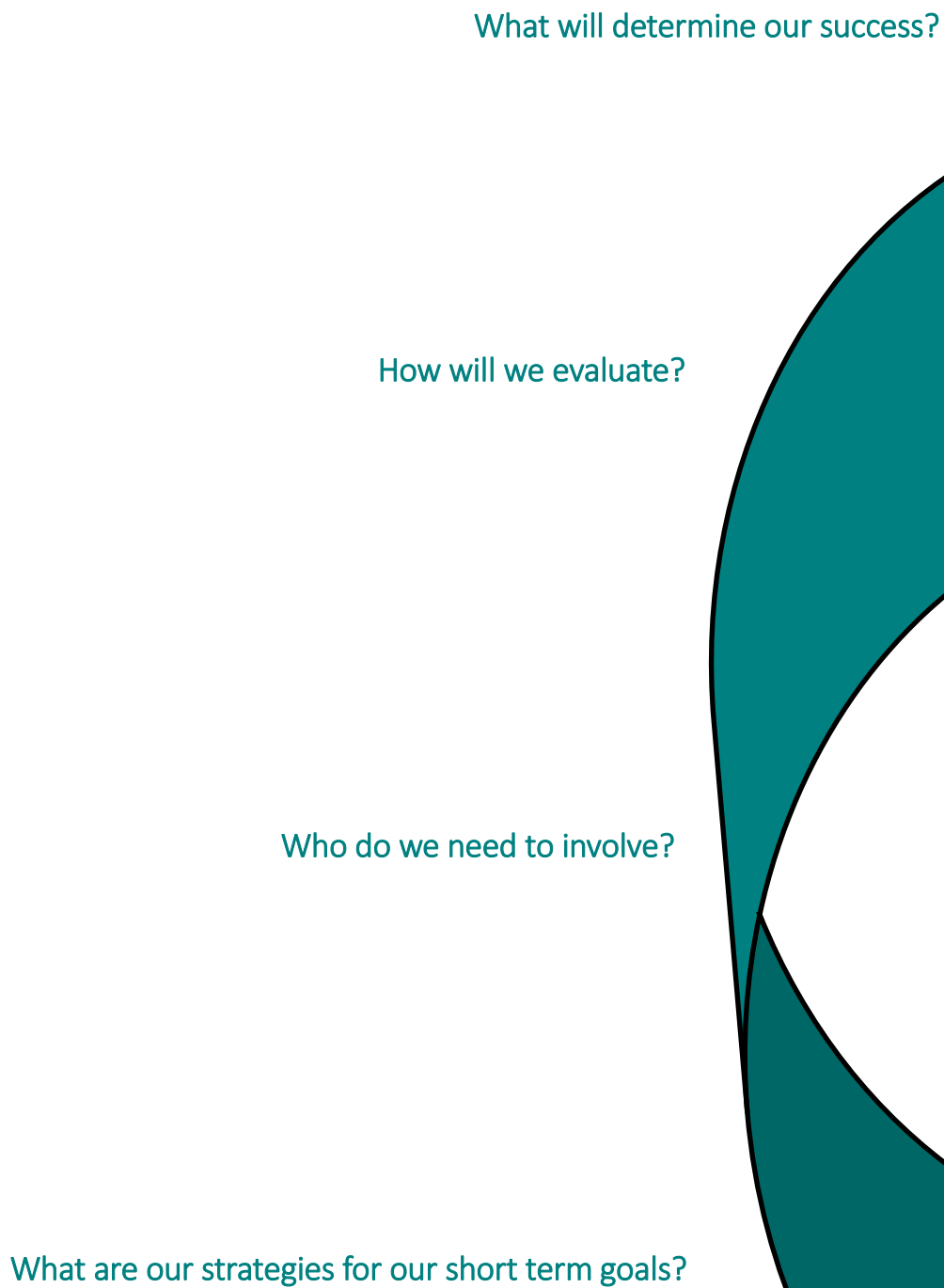
Has our evaluation in this area raised any additional questions which should be addressed?
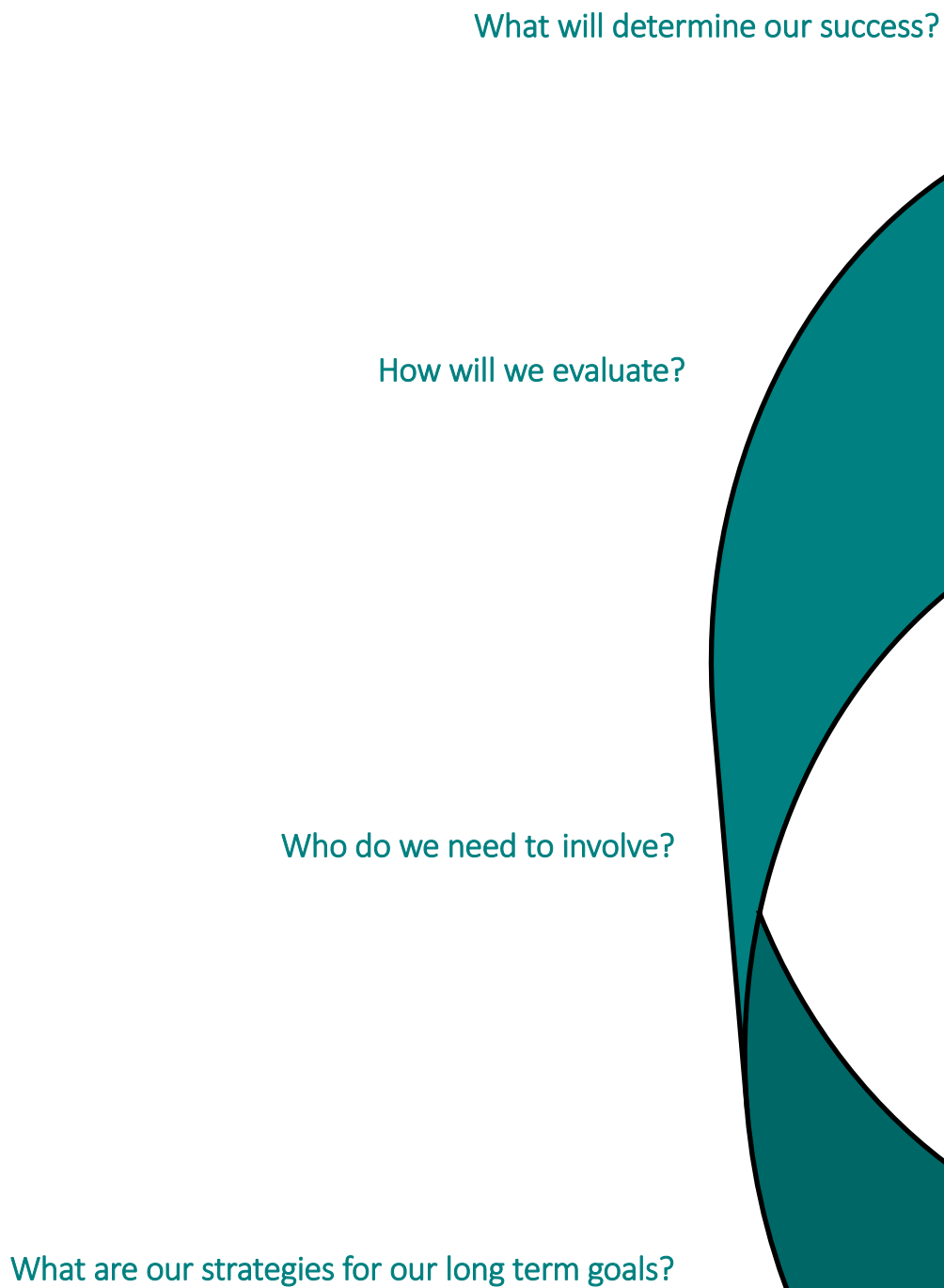
What are our areas for review?

Based on our identified areas for review, what could our short term goals for improvement be?

Based on our identified areas for review, what could our long term goals for improvement be?

What will determine our success?

How will we evaluate?

Who do we need to involve?

What are our strategies for our short term goals?

What will determine our success?

How will we evaluate?

Who do we need to involve?

What are our strategies for our long term goals?

User friendly schools

Evaluating the physical environment

The physical appearance of the school is an essential element in creating a welcoming environment. Your team will tour the school and evaluate the physical environment of the school. While you and your teammates tour the building, consider the items listed below. Be sure to make notes so you will be able to discuss your observations.

User friendly schools questionnaires	Yes	Requires review
Is there signage for people with disabilities to let them know which doors are accessible? Where the accessible restrooms are? Does signage include braille?	☐	☐
Are the parking areas, landscaped areas, playground areas and sports fields clean?	☐	☐
Is there adequate and welcoming signage directing visitors to the school office?	☐	☐
If the school is security gated, is there a message on the gate or near the buzzer which encourages visitors to enter and how? ie: our gates are locked for the safety of our students please press the buzzer and we will be happy to let you in.	☐	☐
in schools with security fencing, are visitors offered a friendly welcome when they press the buzzer?	☐	☐
Is a welcome sign displayed near the entrance? In more than one language?	☐	☐
Is the sign welcoming?	☐	☐
Are signs giving clear directions from the main entrance to the office clearly posted near the main entrance? Is there a school directory near the main entrance that highlights frequently requested locations?	☐	☐
Are the school day hours and office hours clearly noted near the main entrance?	☐	☐
Are there friendly, clear instructions for all visitors to sign in at the office and obtain a building badge/pass?	☐	☐
When entering the school, are visitors directed to pick up a badge that says "Parent," "Volunteer," or "Visitor," indicating that the school considers them to be especially important?	☐	☐
Is a guest book kept in the main office for guests to sign when they come into the school?	☐	☐
Are hallways well lit?	☐	☐
Does bulletin boards thank volunteers, the family groups/committees, and community members for their contributions?	☐	☐
Are bulletin boards and displays throughout the building student-oriented, colourful, well maintained, and current?	☐	☐
Do pictures, photographs, bulletin boards, showcases, and displays reflect the faces of the school's children and their families, including cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity and a variety of family structures?	☐	☐
Is there a place where school publications are displayed and easily accessible to visitors?	☐	☐

Evaluation: User friendly schools

In the area of user friendly schools, what are we doing well?

Has our evaluation in this area raised any additional questions which should be addressed?

What are our areas for review?

Based on our identified areas for review, what could our short term goals for improvement be?

Based on our identified areas for review, what could our long term goals for improvement be?

What will determine our success?

How will we evaluate?

Who do we need to involve?

What are our strategies for our short term goals?

What will determine our success?

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Communication

Evaluating communication avenues

A more welcoming atmosphere is created when the written materials and communications sent from the school are clear, understandable, and meaningful to parents and others reading them. While you and your teammates review the school's handbooks, newsletters, directories, calendar of school events, web sites, fliers, and other printed materials, consider the items listed below. Be sure to take notes discuss your observations with your teammates.

Communication assessment questionnaire	Yes	Requires review
Are printed materials clear and understandable to someone who is new to the school?	☐	☐
At what level are the materials written? Ask for a version of some documents in Microsoft Word and run the "readability statistics" (a function of the grammar checking tool that you can turn on).	☐	☐
Are printed materials free of educational jargon; are acronyms explained?	☐	☐
Do printed materials use a font that is easy to read and are they neat and clean?	☐	☐
Are a variety of school programs highlighted, including special education, music programs, general education, English as a Second Language, Kidsmatter etc.?	☐	☐
Is the school web site up to date?	☐	☐
Are voice mail messages up to date?	☐	☐
Can families get through to the office when they call?	☐	☐
Are different electronic methods used for communication (e.g., website, email, texting, social media).	☐	☐
Is information about family groups, organisations, events, and meetings shared?	☐	☐
Is important event information like conferences, meetings, and tests shared in various formats ie: flyers, videos, workshops?	☐	☐
Are there pictures of families helping or attending school events?	☐	☐
Is all information distributed current?	☐	☐
The school bulletin board is organised and doesn't overwhelm with too much information.	☐	☐
Do people who answer the telephone do so in a friendly, professional way?	☐	☐
Is prompt attention given to telephone calls and messages?	☐	☐
When an irate parent calls does the staff member answering the phone remain calm, listen attentively and attempt to solve the problem or find someone who can?	☐	☐

Communication

How often does the school provide a regular newsletter with information for parents?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the school communicate regularly with non-custodial parents?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How is collaboration with the school's Parent group and other parent groups obvious and promoted?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How is collaboration with the community obvious and promoted?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How do the publications mirror the diversity of the student body and school community?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

Communication

How are parent and community volunteers recognised?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How are new students and their families officially welcomed?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How are the school's educational and extra-curricular programs explained?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How are translated publications readily available and distributed to families who need them?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How is the school web site address communicated?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

Communication

If the school has a social media site what information is provided and how often is it updated?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the person answering the phone invite two-way communication?

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

When a person with limited English proficiency calls , how does the staff member answering the phone demonstrate patience and attempt to find someone who can speak his/her language or refers him/her to a phone number or person who can help? (This will need to be asked rather than an observation)

Is this practice successful? Yes ☐   Requires review ☐

How does the school make available to families resources on parenting and becoming engaged in their child's education?

Evaluation: Communication

In the area of communication, what are we doing well?

Has our evaluation in this area raised any additional questions which should be addressed?

What are our areas for review?

Based on our identified areas for review, what could our short term goals for improvement be?

Based on our identified areas for review, what could our long term goals for improvement be?
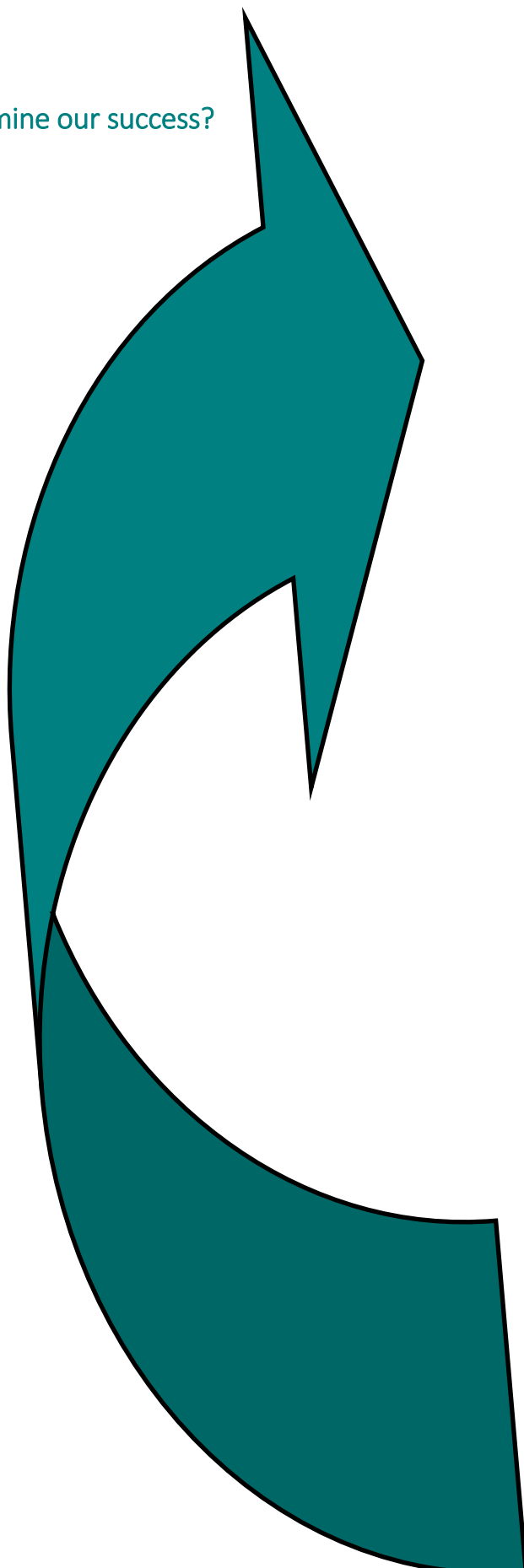
Short term goal setting: Communication

What will determine our success?

How will we evaluate?

Who do we need to involve?

What are our strategies for our short term goals?

What will determine our success?

How will we evaluate?

Who do we need to involve?

What are our strategies for our long term goals?