

# Thinking Strategically Session Advanced Workshop

## Homework

### **Pre-Session Assignment: Strategic Alignment Scan**

#### **Purpose**

Strong proposals are not standalone ideas and should demonstrate clear alignment with institutional priorities, system-level strategies (for those colleges part of a system), workforce, and community needs. This assignment prepares you to position your idea as essential, rather than optional, within your institution. You have been prompted with the approximate time you might spend on each homework part, as this assignment is not intended to be onerous or time-consuming.

#### **Part 1: Rapid Plan Discovery (approximately 15-30)**

Identify and skim 2-4 key documents relevant to your institution. Prioritize examples such as:

- Institutional Strategic Plan (college/campus level);
- System-level plan (if applicable, e.g., University of Hawai'i (UH) System, and UHCC system);
- Academic and/or Workforce Development Plan;
- STEM/CTE/Innovation plan (if available);
- Student success, transfer, or similar initiatives; and
- Relevant external drivers (state workforce plans, regional economic priorities)

You need not read everything. Spend approximately 15-30 minutes scanning for headings, goals, metrics, and priorities.

#### **Part 2: Strategic Signal Extraction: What Stands Out (approximately 10-15 minutes)**

From your document review, capture:

1. Top Priorities
  - a. What are the repeated themes?
  - b. Where is funding or growth clearly being emphasized?
2. Language That Matters
  - a. Write down exact phrases (this is critical for proposals). For example, “STEM workforce pipeline,” “place-based education,” “student persistence,” and “industry partnerships”.

3. Metrics & Accountability Signals

- a. What outcomes are being tracked? For example, Enrollment? Completion? Transfer? Workforce placement?
- b. Where is your institution being held accountable?

**Part 3: Opportunity Mapping (approximately 10 minutes)**

Complete this quick alignment table. Your ideas may be very general at this point, or this may help you to generate some draft ideas for your proposal. We realize these may change for you as your further develop your proposal.

Institutional Priority	Where Your Idea Fits	Evidence Phrase (from plan)

**Part 4: Strategic Positioning Prompt (approximately 5 minutes)**

Write a short (3-4 sentence) positioning statement. Again, we realize you may be at early stages and not sure of your proposal. However, do write one for purposes of the experience and knowing you are likely to modify this later.

Here is an example format:

*This proposed project directly advances [institutional priority] by [your activity], aligning with [specific plan language]. The proposed project supports measurable outcomes in [metric] and strengthens [system/workforce/community need].*

**Part 5: What is Missing and Where You Fit (approximately 5-15 minutes)**

Examining untapped strategic opportunities for you to lead, consider:

- 1. Where do plans NOT yet address a gap that your idea could fill?
- 2. Where could your proposal help the institution meet an unmet metric or mandate?

### **Part 6: The Strategic Framing Question (approximately 5 minutes)**

1. Which institutional priority would make your project impossible to ignore? In other words, what is your strategic anchor or what is it that makes your proposed project impossible to ignore?

An example Strategic Anchor: This project directly advances our institution's priority to strengthen STEM workforce pathways by increasing student retention and completion. By integrating place-based instructional strategies with structured academic supports, the project addresses persistent gaps in STEM persistence identified in the college's strategic plan. The result is a scalable model that improves student success, strengthens faculty capacity, and increases the number of graduates prepared for regional workforce needs.

You can use this template to help you, but keep in mind this is not the only template you could use.

*This project advances [institutional priority] by [core activity], addressing [specific gap or barrier]. The project supports measurable outcomes in [key metric] and strengthens [institutional/system/workforce goal].*

### **Part 7: Expanding Your Alignment Beyond the Institution (10-20 minutes)**

Strong proposals demonstrate not only institutional alignment, but also responsiveness to external drivers, funder priorities, workforce needs, and community priorities. Building on the plans and themes you identified earlier in this assignment, briefly consider how your project connects to these broader contexts. You do not need to write full narrative statements but simply identify key connections and alignment points. Part 7 intentionally builds on ideas identified throughout Parts 1-6 and is designed to help you begin thinking about proposal competitiveness beyond institutional alignment alone.

1. *External Drivers and Workforce Alignment*

Review any external drivers, workforce priorities, or regional/community needs you identified in Parts 1–6.

- a. What workforce, economic, educational, or community need does your project address?
- b. Which external plans, reports, initiatives, mandates, or data sources support the importance of this need?  
Examples may include: State or regional workforce development plans; industry or labor market reports; Transfer or attainment initiatives; Regional STEM or economic priorities; or Community-identified educational needs.
- c. How does your project help position your institution to respond to these external expectations or opportunities?

2. *Funder Alignment (NSF TCUP Example)*

- a. Now consider alignment with the funding opportunity itself. Which TCUP strand (TSIP, ICE-TI, TSETS, SGR, TEA Centers, for example) appears most relevant for your proposed project? (TCUP strands are discussed under Section II. Program Description.)
- b. What TCUP or NSF priority area does your project most clearly support?
- c. Which elements of Intellectual Merit and/or Broader Impacts might your project address?

3. *Integrated Alignment Reflection*

Complete the sentence below using ideas from throughout the assignment:

*In addition to advancing institutional priorities, this project responds to [external driver, workforce, or community need] and aligns with [funder priority or program goal], strengthening the overall relevance, competitiveness, and potential impact of the proposed project.*