NHTSA
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee

Strategic Planning Guide

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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16. ABSTRACT

The State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Strategic Planning Guide provides State TRCCs with practical, replicable processes for developing and implementing effective strategic plans that will reduce roadway fatalities. A *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* describes the desired future of the data systems a State uses to support data driven safety decisions and how to get there. States expressed the need for specific traffic records strategic planning guidance and NHTSA developed this guide in response. The Guide includes strategic planning processes, templates, and examples. State TRCCs can use the guide to help identify new stakeholders, determine strategies for engaging stakeholders, and make their traffic records strategic plans more comprehensive and effective.

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Table of Contents

Key Terms vii

Chapter 1. Introduction 1

Project Background 2

Identifying the Need for Strategic Planning Tools 2

Methodology 3

Audience 4

TRCC Roles and Responsibilities 4

Roadmap to the Guide 5

Chapter 2. *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* Stakeholders 9

Define Stakeholders 9

Evaluate Stakeholder Representation 10

Identify Potential New Traffic Records Strategic Plan *Stakeholders to Engage* 12

Engage Traffic Records Stakeholders 15

Chapter 3. Strategic Plan Development 23

Key Strategic Planning Terms 23

Steps in the Strategic Planning Process 25

Step 1. Define Needs 26

Step 2. Establish Vision and Mission 27

Step 3. Establish Goals and Objectives 30

Step 4. Identify Possible Projects 36

Step 5. Prioritize Projects 38

Step 6. Establish Performance Measures 42

Step 7. Identify Funding, Milestones, Relationships 44

Step 8. Publish Strategic Plan 46

Chapter 4. Strategic Plan Implementation and Updates. 47

Implementing the State Traffic Records Strategic Plan 48

Annual Update to the Traffic Records Strategic Plan 54

References. 55

State TRCC Strategic Planning Toolbox 57

Traffic Records Strategic Plan Template. 98

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Sample Stakeholder Gap Analysis Tool 11

Figure 2.2. Traffic Records Stakeholder Map 14

Figure 3.1. Key Terms in Strategic Planning 22

Figure 3.2. Strategic Planning Process 23

Figure 3.3. SWOT Analysis 28

Figure 3.4. Four Box Analysis 37

Figure 4.1. Example Subcommittee Structure 49

List of Tables

Table 3.1. Example SWOT Analysis. 29

Key Terms

Action plan

Tool to track, evaluate, and update implementation of a project or the strategic plan.

Environmental scan

Defines the internal and external environment and describes factors that help or hinder the organization's ability to achieve its vision.

Goal

A high-level statement of what the organization hopes to achieve, in a specific area under the strategic plan.

Measure

The mechanism for tracking progress toward meeting the metric.

Metric

A target value for a performance measure. A metric is a quantifiable performance target in safety or data quality, against which performance measures are compared. A target is established to address an area of improvement.

Milestone

Marks the anticipated date of delivery for a key product in a project.

Mission statement

Expresses the ways the TRCC and its member agencies will achieve the vision.

Monitoring

Tracking, evaluating, and updating the plan throughout its intended lifespan.

Need

Although the traffic records assessment reports contain a list of opportunities for improvement, this Guide refers to them as challenges. A need is a challenge that the State considers in the Traffic Records Strategic Plan.

Objective

A quantified improvement the TRCC hopes/wants to achieve by a specific date through a series of related projects.

Opportunities

External emerging trends and changes in culture that the organization could capitalize upon.

Performance Measure

A data quality measure. A performance measure is a mechanism for tracking progress toward meeting a metric. Projects should have at least one performance measure and a project-level target. Quantifiable objectives can help define the metrics at the statewide level—targets over all related projects.

Project

A plan to execute a series of steps—within a timeframe and budget—to achieve a specific objective.

Stakeholder

Any person or group, regardless of TRCC membership, level of influence, or affiliation, who has an interest in or is considered when planning any changes to the traffic records system's components.

State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC)

A collaborative group of people working together to improve the collection, management, and analysis of traffic safety data in their State.

Strategic plan

Guides the direction of an entity towards its vision statement.

Threats

External obstacles to achieving the organization's vision.

Tracking

Records the performance measures' progress to reach the metric.

Traffic Records Strategic Plan

Describes the desired future of the data systems a State uses to support data driven safety decisions and how to get there.

Strengths

Internal advantages of the organization or plan.

Vision statement

A brief statement of an ideal.

Weakness

Internal areas for improvement.

List of Acronyms

AAMVA	American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators
CDIP	Crash Data Improvement Program
DOT	Department of Transportation
DOT|TRCC	United States Department of Transportation Traffic Records Coordinating Committee
FAST	Fixing America's Surface Transportation
FDE	Fundamental Data Elements
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
GIS	geographic information system
HSIP	Highway Safety Improvement Program
HSP	Highway Safety Plan
IT	information technology
LRS	linear referencing system
NEMSIS	National Emergency Medical Services Information System
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
RDIP	Roadway Data Improvement Program
SHSO	State Highway Safety Office
SHSP	Strategic Highway Safety Plan
SME	subject matter expert
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TRCC	Traffic Records Coordinating Committee
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation

1 Introduction

A State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC) is a collaborative group of people working to improve the collection, management, and analysis of traffic safety data. TRCC membership, stakeholder engagement, responsibilities, and authority are influenced by many factors and vary across States. To be effective however, all TRCCs must fulfill specific roles and responsibilities—one of which is strategic planning.

Many State TRCCs have reported challenges with strategic planning and have sought guidance at industry conference discussions such as the Traffic Records Forum's TRCC Roundtable sessions. Results from the traffic records assessments—which revealed that many States are not meeting the 'ideal' description of strategic planning—further quantify these concerns.

Together, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and United States Department of Transportation TRCC (USDOT|TRCC) listened to State concerns and developed a solution. This **State TRCC Strategic Planning Guide** (hereafter referred to as the Guide) provides State TRCCs with a practical, replicable process for developing and implementing effective strategic plans that will improve safety data quality and reduce roadway fatalities.

Project Background

High-quality data provides the foundation for traffic safety programs by supporting a data-driven, evidence-based approach to reducing motor vehicle crashes, fatalities, and injuries. States collect and use safety data to identify problems, develop countermeasures, and evaluate program effectiveness.

State TRCCs support data driven decision-making on local, State, and national levels by helping to manage the continual improvement of their traffic records program. Despite the funding, technical assistance, and voluntary guidance available, State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs) and State TRCCs are frequently challenged to strategically use these resources to support activities such as staffing, directing project funding, managing safety information systems, and relationship building. Other factors such as political climate, unwillingness or inability to share data, lack of proven cooperative relationships, and organizational data silos can prevent State TRCCs from being truly effective.

In response to these concerns, USDOT|TRCC, NHTSA, and FHWA developed the *State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-15-083) guide to provide examples of effective practices for State TRCC managers and members. The publication aims to help TRCCs become more effective by a) adopting and adapting noteworthy examples from other States, and b) implementing advice from subject matter experts (SMEs). Six case studies highlight the noteworthy practices and attributes that characterize effective State TRCCs. The document concludes with a series of practices TRCCs can consider when addressing issues relevant to their State. While strategic planning receives special focus in the noteworthy practices guide, it was examined primarily from a best practice perspective, whereas this document goes deeper into strategic planning activities and tools.

Identifying the Need for Strategic Planning Tools

The purpose of a strategic plan is to guide the direction of an entity towards its vision. More specifically, a *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* describes the desired future of the data systems a State uses to support data driven safety decisions and how to get there. States need to develop, monitor, evaluate, and update strategic plans using agreed-upon performance metrics and measures to track their progress.

Metric: A target value for a performance measure. A metric is a quantifiable performance target in safety or data quality, against which performance measures are compared. A target is established to address an area of improvement.

Measure: The mechanism for tracking progress toward meeting the metric.

States expressed the need for specific traffic records strategic planning guidance through various outlets. State TRCC members and other traffic records stakeholders participated in a webinar and in-person discussion at the 2016 Transportation Research Board Annual meeting to learn more about the information presented in the *State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-15-083) guide. At that time, TRCC members noted weaknesses in strategic planning due to limited resources or staff's lack of knowledge and experience in strategic planning. Participants asked for guidance on strategic planning including processes, templates, and examples.

Traffic records assessment results based on NHTSA's 2012 *Traffic Records Program Assessment Advisory* (DOT HS 811 644) (herein referred to as the Advisory) further support the States' expressed need for assistance. A diverse group of SMEs developed the Advisory to describe and measure a State's alignment with the 'ideal' traffic records system. The strategic planning component of the Advisory features 16 questions regarding traffic records strategic planning. Results from the latest 5-year cycle of traffic records assessments revealed that very few States met the 'ideal' standard for 12 of the 16 strategic plan-related questions. A large percentage of States did not meet the 'ideal' for the following topics:

- Identifying strategies that address the timeliness, accuracy, completeness, uniformity, integration, and accessibility of the six core data systems (crash, roadway, driver, vehicle, citation and adjudication, and injury surveillance).
- Indicating what funds are used to pay for the projects listed in the plan and describing specifically how §405(c) funds contribute to meeting the strategic plan's stated goals.
- Establishing processes for prioritizing projects, identifying performance measures, addressing training, leveraging funds, establishing project timelines and responsibilities, and integrating State and local data needs and goals into the strategic plan.

This Guide and the associated material provide TRCCs with information and tools for developing and maintaining effective *Traffic Records Strategic Plans*. State TRCCs can use the Guide to help identify new stakeholders, determine strategies for engaging stakeholders, and improve strategic planning development and implementation.

Methodology

In preparation for this Guide, NHTSA sought feedback from States on their needs, consulted existing TRCC resources and legislative requirements, reviewed strategic planning practices across industries, and examined States' *Traffic Records Strategic Plans* and the most recent assessments. NHTSA developed a draft set of strategic planning practices and templates and asked assembled SMEs for comments during the 2018 Traffic Records Forum TRCC Roundtable. Finally, the content and tools in this Guide were piloted with the Mississippi State TRCC.

Audience

The primary audience for the Guide is State Traffic Records Coordinators and TRCC Chairs, TRCC members, and the broad group of traffic records stakeholders. State agency executives and TRCC sponsors also make up an important segment of the audience for this document, as they provide oversight and direction to their States' TRCCs, are ultimately responsible for the core traffic records systems, and would need to approve the time and resources required for strategic planning *and* the system improvements described in the plan.

Traffic Records Coordinators and TRCC Chairs can use this Guide to do the following:

- Identify new members and other traffic records stakeholders.
- Engage existing TRCC members and other traffic records stakeholders.
- Develop or improve strategic planning practices.
- Communicate the TRCC's accomplishments and goals with agency leadership.

Traffic records stakeholders can use this Guide to do the following:

- Improve understanding of their agency's role in the TRCC and strategic planning.
- Identify how their agency can better collaborate with other stakeholders.
- Communicate the TRCC's accomplishments and goals with agency leadership.

Agency executives and other top-level managers can use this Guide to do the following:

- Provide a foundation for the traffic records strategic planning development and implementation.
- Track the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* progress towards goals and communicate accomplishments to stakeholders.
- Engage other stakeholder agency executives and managers.
- Approve time and resources for planning and data improvements.

TRCC Roles and Responsibilities

NHTSA's Interim Final Rule (Federal Register, 81 (99), 32554-32605) regarding Uniform Procedures for State Highway Safety Grant Programs published in response to the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act advises that a TRCC should have diverse membership with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities. The intent is that the TRCC will have the technical knowledge and access required to review any of the State's highway safety data and traffic records systems. Fully representative TRCCs can provide executive level leadership and decision-makers the information they need to support traffic records improvements.

The FAST Act describes minimum requirements for State TRCCs on meetings and membership, strategic plans, quantifiable and measurable progress, and the traffic

records assessment. The strategic plan requirement (23 CFR 1300.22(b)(2)) states that strategic plans must accomplish the following:

1. Describe specific, quantifiable and measurable improvements that are anticipated in the State's core safety databases.
2. Provide a list of all recommendations from the most recent traffic records assessment.
3. Identify which traffic records assessment recommendations the State tends to address, along with which Highway Safety Plan (HSP) projects will address each recommendation, and the performance measure used to track progress.
4. Identify which recommendations from the traffic records assessment the State will not address and provide reasoning.

Whether a State's TRCC has instituted a one- or two-tiered structure, it is important that a TRCC can fulfill both the executive and technical functions described in the Advisory, transportation legislation, and other NHTSA resources for TRCCs. The roles and responsibilities of State TRCCs will continue to evolve based on future legislation, polices, and guidance.

Roadmap to the Guide

The Guide includes four chapters plus appendices featuring supporting material. The Guide is structured to lead practitioners through the stages of the strategic planning process.

1. This **Introduction** includes the purpose of the Guide, an overview of strategic planning, the methodology used for the Guide's development, an overview of State TRCCs' roles and organizational makeup, and legislative requirements related to TRCCs. This chapter also includes a Self-Assessment for TRCC Strategic Planning to help States identify baseline performance and where to turn in this Guide for more information.
2. Chapter 2 focuses on **Traffic Records Strategic Plan Stakeholders** and communicates the representative nature of stakeholders, the cooperative nature of strategic planning decision-making processes, and provides effective strategies for identifying and engaging stakeholders.
3. Chapter 3 presents a process for **Strategic Plan Development** that State TRCCs can follow to develop a comprehensive multi-year plan. The chapter includes planning process demonstrations, tools, worksheets, and case studies (as appropriate) to further assist States in their implementation.
4. Chapter 4 provides information to State TRCCs for conducting **Strategic Plan Implementation and Updates**. The chapter includes information to help State TRCCs support implementation and manage updating the plan.

Throughout the Guide, the reader will see reference to the **State TRCC Strategic Planning Toolbox**. Located at the end of the Guide, the Toolbox includes detailed instructions and templates that will assist TRCCs in the strategic planning process. The Guide also features several call-out boxes for key references found throughout the document. Red boxes indicate a reference to the State TRCC Strategic Planning Toolbox. Blue boxes provide key terms and definitions related to traffic records strategic planning. Other key resources located at the back of the Guide include key terms, references, additional resources, and a ***Traffic Records Strategic Plan* Template** to assist States with developing and implementing their *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*.

The content included in the Guide and the complimentary resources present an approach to develop a comprehensive and effective strategic plan. States can use any parts of the Guide to supplement or improve their ongoing strategic planning process.

The Guide supports in-person technical assistance to improve State TRCC strategic planning capabilities. The training material is also available in an online format to provide flexibility to meet each State's needs, with or without in-person assistance.

Self-Assessment for TRCC Strategic Planning

There are internal and external factors that influence the planning process. A self-assessment of a State's traffic records strategic planning process can be a useful exercise in identifying baseline performance. Using the following questions, States can undertake this self-assessment as an honest reflection on the structure, abilities, and environment of the TRCC along with a review of past versions of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*.

The following self-assessment questions are based on the *State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-15-083) guide, the Advisory, and the material presented later in this Guide. Notes after each question show where to turn in this Guide for more information.

1. **Are there stakeholders that represent executive authority, collectors, managers, and users for each core system?**
   - For more information see Chapter 2 – Evaluate Stakeholder Representation.
2. **Are a majority of traffic records strategic planning stakeholder agencies actively engaged in the strategic planning process and implementation of the strategic plan?**
   - For more information see Chapter 2 – Identify Potential New Traffic Records Strategic Plan Stakeholders to Engage.
3. **Is there clear and regular communication among TRCC members and traffic records stakeholders to provide and receive feedback during strategic plan development and implementation?**
   - For more information see Chapter 2 – Communicate Traffic Records Strategic Plan Related Updates and Needs.
4. **Does the strategic planning group include local agency partners and are those agencies needs addressed in the strategic plan?**
   - For more information see Chapter 2 – Evaluate Stakeholder Engagement and Identify Potential Barriers.
5. **Does the strategic plan effectively address deficiencies and recommendations made during the most recent traffic records assessment?**
   - For more information see Chapter 3 – Define Needs.

6. **Have *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* stakeholders fully identified the internal and external factors that support or hinder the strategic planning process and implementation?**
   - For more information see Chapter 3 – Establish Goals and Objectives.
7. **Does the strategic plan effectively identify projects with detailed descriptions and a clearly defined project prioritization process?**
   - For more information see Chapter 3 – Identify Possible Projects.
8. **Does the strategic plan include performance metrics and measures beyond the minimum legislative requirements?**
   - For more information see Chapter 3 – Establish Performance Measures.
9. **Is the strategic plan promoted throughout traffic records stakeholder agencies to support implementing data improvements across the State?**
   - For more information see Chapter 4 – Implementing the State Traffic Records Strategic Plan.
10. **Is the strategic plan routinely monitored and updated (at least annually) to address project progress and the State's changing needs?**
    - For more information see Chapter 4 – Annual Update to the Traffic Records Strategic Plan.

2 *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* Stakeholders

Traffic records data is used by a range of individuals in State, local, and Federal agencies. Changes to data systems affect data collectors, managers, and users and impacts their ability to do their jobs, particularly safety decision-making. Therefore, decisions about altering traffic records data systems should not be made by a narrow group of individuals or any one agency in isolation. This is but one reason an effective TRCC builds its strategic plan by including the broadest practical range of stakeholders. This inclusivity produces a plan that addresses the needs of most of the data collectors, managers, and users. It also encourages broad, multi-agency support for the plan's implementation.

This chapter describes noteworthy practices in evaluating stakeholder representation, identifying new stakeholders, and engaging all stakeholders. Together, these practices promote strong stakeholder participation, which in turn strengthens and builds support for the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*.

Define Stakeholders

The *Project Management Body of Knowledge 6th Edition* (Project Management Institute, Inc., 2017) defines a stakeholder as an individual, group, or organization that may affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity, or outcome of a project. For the purpose of traffic records, a *stakeholder* is any person or

group, regardless of TRCC membership, level of influence, or affiliation, who has an interest in or is considered when planning any changes to the traffic records system's components. Common stakeholder types include the following:

- TRCC members
- Other traffic records system representatives (not yet represented on the TRCC)
- Data collectors (e.g., law enforcement, State and local transportation staff, emergency medical technicians)
- Data managers
- Data users
- Researchers
- Policy advocates
- Public interest groups

Many of these stakeholders may come from agencies that receive funding for projects recommended by the TRCC, which are funded and managed by the SHSO. However, TRCCs should encourage involvement from a broader group of representatives than just those seeking grant money. For example, engaging SHSO program managers in the TRCC's activities and the traffic records strategic planning process can add perspective to TRCC priorities. Expanding the TRCC to include representatives from agencies that do not typically seek §405(c) grant funds is also imperative to getting all components of the traffic records system considered in the strategic plan.

The next section provides guidance for the TRCC on stakeholder outreach.

Evaluate Stakeholder Representation

At the beginning of a strategic planning process, TRCC leaders and members should evaluate the existing level of representation among their stakeholders. This process will identify current stakeholders and their level of engagement as well as make it clear if the TRCC is missing active representation for any data system.

Although TRCC membership structure varies from State to State, the six core systems provide a starting point for a meaningful review of stakeholder involvement. The State Traffic Records Coordinator or TRCC Chair should review their TRCC member list, meeting attendance, and most recent traffic records assessment as resources to document the distribution of current stakeholders or note any areas that lack representation. TRCC leadership can use the Stakeholder Gap Analysis Tool, shown in Figure 2.1, to help visualize the level of stakeholder representation and engagement. The exercise can help to identify areas where actions may be needed to improve representation or engagement. TRCC leadership can use a modified version of the tool (minus participation columns) to engage TRCC members in a discussion about opportunities to improve representation. Evaluating and addressing stakeholder representation helps stakeholders provide as many viewpoints as practical for each traffic records system component during the strategic planning process.

See the **Stakeholder Gap Analysis Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox for more instructions on how to complete the activity and a full-size blank worksheet.

	Participation Level					Crash				Vehicle				Driver				Roadway				Citation/ Adjudication				Injury Surveillance			
Stakeholder, Agency	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**E**	**C**	**M**	**U**	**E**	**C**	**M**	**U**	**E**	**C**	**M**	**U**	**E**	**C**	**M**	**U**	**E**	**C**	**M**	**U**	**E**	**C**	**M**	**U**
Colonel, State Police			X			X			X													X			X				
State Police IT				X			X	X															X						
State Police CMV Section			X				X		X														X		X				
Director, SHSO			X			X			X																X				
Traffic Records Coordinator, SHSO					X			X	X				X				X				X				X				X
Research Analyst, SHSO		X							X				X				X				X				X				X
FARS Analyst, SHSO			X						X				X				X				X				X				X
Director, University Research Center			X						X				X				X				X				X				X
State Safety Engineer, State DOT		X							X									X	X	X	X								
Research Analyst, State DOT					X				X												X								
County Engineer		X							X										X	X	X								
Director, Injury Prevention		X							X												X					X		X	X
Deputy Director, Injury Prevention				X					X																		X	X	X
Research Analyst, State Health Department			X						X																		X		X
Epidemiologist, State Health Department		X							X																		X		X
Executive Director, State EMS					X																					X		X	X
Director, State Public Safety			X							X		X	X	X		X	X												
Supervisor, State Public Safety				X							X	X				X													
Major, State Police	X							X	X														X	X	X				
CIO, State Public Safety IT		X				X																X							
TOTALS	**1**	**6**	**7**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**15**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**5**	**1**	**0**	**2**	**5**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**8**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**8**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**9**

Key: Executive (**E**), Collector (**C**), Manager (**M**), User (**U**)

Participation Level: 1 = Has not participated in the previous six months, 2 = Attends few meetings with minimal participation, 3 = Attends few meetings with active participation, 4 = Frequently attends meetings with minimal participation, 5 = Frequently attends meeting with active participation.

Note: This sample table uses stakeholder titles, but TRCCs may wish to also use the names of the individuals when filling out the table.

Figure 2.1. Sample Stakeholder Gap Analysis Tool

Once a TRCC has a complete assessment of its stakeholders, its goal is to identify strategies for filling gaps, determine each stakeholder's role, and engage them in the strategic planning process.

Identify Potential New *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* Stakeholders to Engage

State TRCCs should acknowledge the following considerations when identifying stakeholders and assessing a potential stakeholder's contributions to the development of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*:

- A stakeholder may have limited influence over a traffic records system component but may provide valuable insight into the role the data plays in their agency's planning, policies, or practices.
- A stakeholder may have influence over a traffic records system component but may not have extensive knowledge of all the data user needs/expectations.
- A stakeholder may be directly or indirectly affected by the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan.*

All stakeholders are potential participants in the traffic records strategic planning process. TRCCs may use the following stakeholder engagement techniques to identify new stakeholders and bolster stakeholder representation (adapted from *Project Management Body of Knowledge 6th Edition*).

Collect and Analyze Data on Existing Members

Before identifying new stakeholders, the TRCC should first evaluate the existing stakeholder group to better understand each member's expected contributions in the strategic planning process. TRCCs can use brief questionnaires to collect each member's contact information, core traffic records system represented, role within the agency, uses for safety data, and projects related to safety data quality improvement.

In addition to the baseline information, the Traffic Records Coordinator should evaluate stakeholders for the following qualities:

- **Knowledge.** What does the person or group know that would help improve the State's traffic records data based on the model performance measures?
- **Impact.** What is their understanding of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan's* effect on the person or group?
- **Ownership.** Is the person or group a data owner or custodian?
- **Contribution.** How does the person or group benefit the State's data quality efforts by participating in the traffic records strategic planning process?

TRCCs can also use the questionnaire as a part of their new stakeholder onboarding process. The *Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-15-083) guide provides an example of how Connecticut's TRCC successfully implements this strategy.

Use Expert Knowledge to Identify New Stakeholders

TRCC members may be familiar with SMEs, data system representatives, or other agency leaders through exposure at conferences, meetings, and other industry events. Some traffic records stakeholders may also contribute to other strategic planning efforts such as Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSPs), HSPs, Highway Safety Improvement Programs (HSIPs), local agency plans, or State agency efforts. The traffic records strategic planning process can benefit from their engagement in several ways. First, the TRCC will be aware of changes occurring in specific data systems that may have widespread impacts—such as the DMV transitioning to bar coded driver's licenses while the State Police are considering purchasing magnetic card readers. Also, this awareness and engagement should expand the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* to include non-§405(c) funded projects as it is meant to do. Finally, traffic records stakeholders can increase visibility of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* with other agencies. For example, TRCC involvement in the SHSP can promote inclusion of traffic records as an emphasis area while TRCC representatives can actively identify new potential stakeholders.

> Pennsylvania created their 2017 SHSP through a comprehensive process that engaged a diverse set of stakeholders. The plan features a Priority Safety Focus Area for Improving Traffic Records Data. The focus area features actions with an emphasis on data quality improvements and increasing data analysis capabilities. Additional actions related to traffic records data are found throughout the plan's other Priority Safety Focus Areas. (Pennsylvania Strategic Highway Safety Plan, 2017)

The TRCC can pool its knowledge of such leaders to identify potential new stakeholders. Traffic Records Coordinators and TRCC leaders should take responsibility for recruiting the new stakeholders and communicating their role in the TRCC and strategic planning process.

Analyze Potential Traffic Records Strategic Plan *Stakeholders*

TRCCs can use a visual representation of potential stakeholders to help fill identified gaps. The Traffic Records Stakeholder Map Tool can be used by TRCCs to list potential individuals, agencies, organizations, or groups to engage in the traffic records strategic planning process. Figure 2.2 shows an example traffic records stakeholder map with sample text. Each bubble represents one of the core traffic records system components with potential stakeholders listed inside one or multiple bubbles. The Traffic Records Coordinator and/or TRCC Chair can use the information generated to prioritize groups to engage.

The **Potential Stakeholder Benefits from Engagement Tool** provides a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders to consider.

See the **Traffic Records Stakeholder Map** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox for more instructions on how to complete the activity and a full-size blank worksheet.

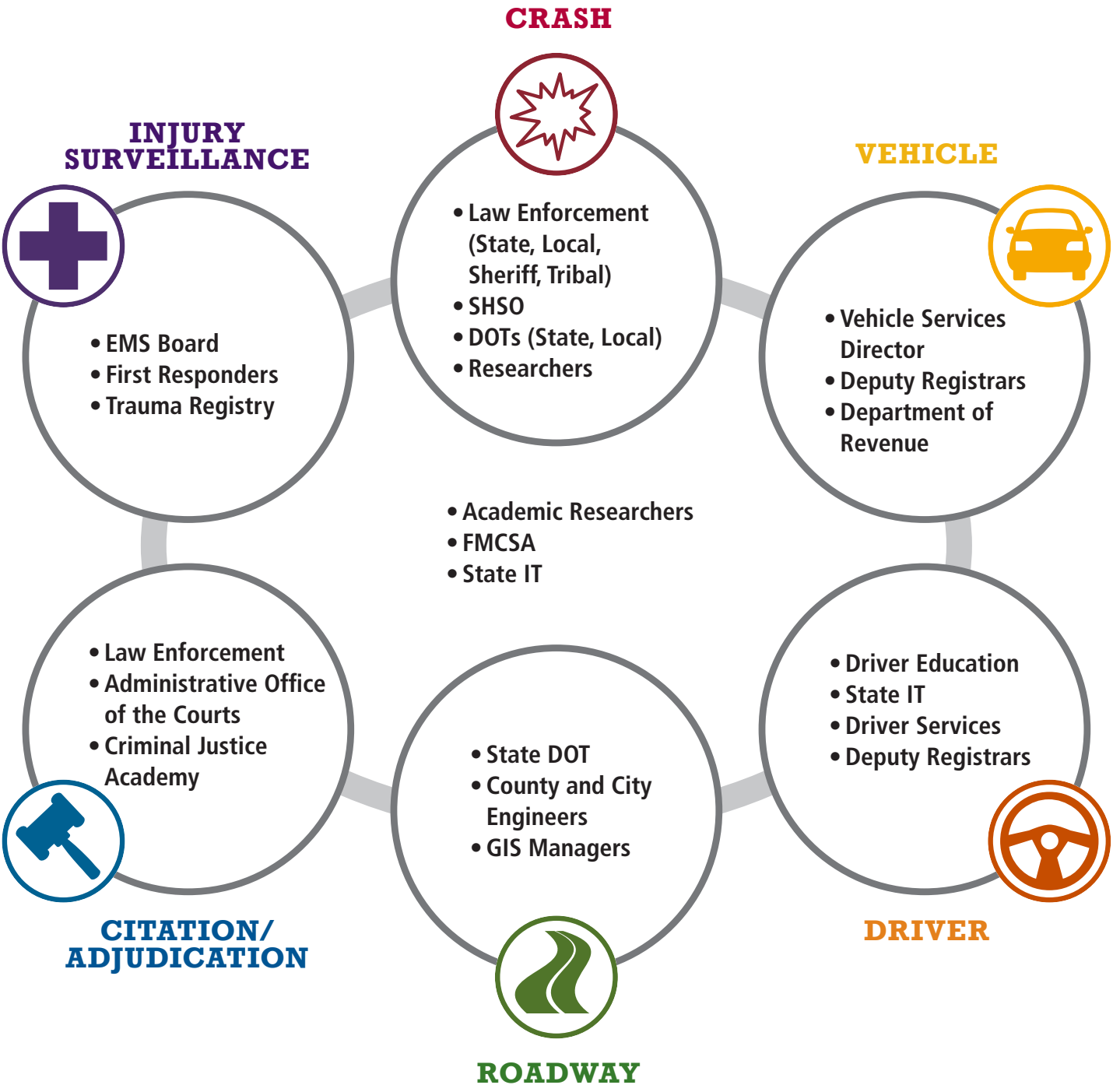

Figure 2.2 Traffic Records Stakeholder Map

Engage Traffic Records Stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement in the traffic records strategic planning process should be well planned and coordinated among existing members. Engagement approaches should account for stakeholder needs, expectations, and potential influence (both positive and negative) over the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. The level of engagement from the traffic records community will have a direct correlation to the development of an effective plan.

The following three steps can help accomplish stakeholder engagement:

- Establish benefits for stakeholders by addressing their needs.
- Communicate needs/updates on a regular basis through a variety of methods.
- Evaluate levels of engagement and identify potential barriers.

Establish Benefits for Traffic Records Stakeholders by Addressing Their Needs

Understanding the potential benefits of working with the TRCC on the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* will help guide communication and outreach to current and potential stakeholders. Stakeholders have varying degrees of interest in the TRCC and plan, and the TRCC should be realistic in working to address those interests and needs to maintain member engagement and buy-in. Recruiting an additional representative from a system or organization may be necessary if the current member does not have the time or interest to fully represent their own interests to the TRCC. Regardless, providing opportunities for stakeholders to participate and provide input will go a long way in fostering buy-in from a broad group of stakeholders to support the development and implementation of a *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*.

The *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* is unique in that it is a product of a multi-agency approach that focuses on data needs and data quality in support of decision-making. It is a plan that focuses exclusively on data improvement and promotes input from a broad range of data collectors, managers, and users. A State's *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* encompasses all traffic records systems and should not principally favor or represent the interests of any one system, agency, or program. An effective and actionable *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* will require consideration of, and participation from, all stakeholders.

The TRCC can use the results from the Stakeholder Gap Analysis Tool to target their engagement strategies. To better engage stakeholders, the TRCC should first identify stakeholder needs and barriers, how the TRCC might address them, and then communicate directly with the stakeholders. The following are commonly cited stakeholder needs and corresponding messaging to address each need.

STAKEHOLDER NEEDS	
Stakeholders need data to support specific decision-making requirements.	Required data should be made available to decision-makers in time to support scheduled processes (e.g., legislative sessions, grants deadlines).
Stakeholders need the ability to link variables from various data files.	The *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* may address how the TRCC will develop analytic support to accomplish data linkage.

The following lists commonly cited barriers that constrain or prevent stakeholder participation, engagement, or action to support traffic records data improvements. The included commentary can help TRCCs to address each barrier.

STAKEHOLDER BARRIERS	
Financial constraints	Funding limitations are a barrier to data improvement projects. The *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* identifies funding sources and opportunities. The planning process can also bring funding and resource needs to executives' attention.
Time	The opportunity to identify and develop projects is key to good planning. The cyclical and iterative nature of the strategic planning process means that agencies should be thinking about potential projects on a continual basis and be prepared to submit when the opportunity arises.
Gaps in institutional knowledge	Data systems and quality can be affected when key personnel leave an organization or change roles. The *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* can reinforce data governance practices that make sure such inevitable changes do not automatically result in a loss of institutional knowledge.

Solitary data collection, maintenance, and usage	Data silos can lead to political division and a lack of interagency collaboration. Engaging in the traffic records strategic planning process allows stakeholders to learn what other data systems support and how it may impact their own priorities. With the TRCC's statewide perspective, strategic planning can help avoid expensive duplication of data and eliminate silos.
Inadequate technology management capabilities or knowledge	A lack of information technology (IT) capabilities or involvement can impede project identification and development. Having IT involvement in the traffic records strategic planning process can help meet performance goals and project delivery objectives.
Agency priorities	Legislation, policy, and other competing priorities often lead to focusing on tasks that "need" to be completed instead of what "should" be completed to advance States' capabilities. Creating a culture and focus around safety in the State will help solidify a common top priority for all stakeholder agencies.

See the **Potential Stakeholder Benefits from Engagement Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox for more information on specific benefits to stakeholders that result from participating in the strategic planning process.

Communicate Traffic Records Strategic Plan *Necessary Updates and Needs*

TRCCs can sustain a high level of stakeholder engagement through continuous, meaningful communication throughout *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* development and implementation as well as through other regular TRCC activities. Identifying methods for fostering regular communication with stakeholders outside of the traditional TRCC membership should be a critical step to increasing stakeholder participation in the TRCC and traffic records strategic planning process. Traffic Records Coordinators and TRCCs should adapt their communication efforts based on organizational structure, the needs and capabilities of the State, and the needs and capabilities of the target audience (contributing or interested stakeholders, new or existing members).

Establish a TRCC website

A dedicated website can house both internal traffic records information and provide a public-facing resource for all safety related programs. A private access portal can provide specified users access to internal TRCC communication, processes, and documents.

Use social media platforms

Engage new traffic records stakeholders and provide an additional communication forum to reach a diverse community of users through non-traditional platforms.

Create an online network or digital information sharing portal

TRCCs can use various software programs to increase responsiveness and collaboration among all stakeholders. These programs often include calendars, reminders, file sharing, instant messaging, conversation tracking, and other interactive utilities that could be helpful to the traffic records strategic planning process.

Practice proactive meeting planning

Providing a well-thought-out agenda to stakeholders in advance of a meeting communicates purpose and that the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* is not being developed to check off minimum requirements. Agendas should emphasize action and express that stakeholders' time is valuable and respected.

Establish a strategy for two-way communication

TRCCs can use listservs or similar methods to create two-way communication between TRCC leadership and stakeholders. TRCCs can use this to publicize meetings in advance, solicit input for meeting locations and agenda topics, and provide a way for stakeholders to submit comments or inputs on strategic planning.

Create formal or informal TRCC documentation

Provide guidance documents by clearly outlining expectations, responsibilities, and timelines for stakeholders to allow stakeholders to assess their interest and time investment they can provide. Sharing a "How to Get Involved" document or post online provides ease of access and can engage users who traditionally would not get involved.

Form a strategic planning subcommittee or working group that can meet more regularly than the TRCC

The smaller group can focus on completing specific tasks efficiently in a setting where participating stakeholders may feel they have greater influence, and therefore greater return on their time investment. Progress will be reported back to the TRCC for consideration. When groups meet more regularly, engagement often increases.

Evaluate Stakeholder Engagement and Identify Potential Barriers

TRCC leadership should continuously evaluate stakeholder engagement and involvement. Leadership can conduct a formal evaluation at least once a year, preferably leading up to the traffic records strategic planning process. Leadership can also routinely exercise informal evaluation techniques in consideration of the traffic records environment such as brief surveys or roundtable discussions at meetings. Questions should evaluate the following themes:

- Is information freely shared between members/agencies?
- Are conversations about the state of traffic records systems or improvement projects positive and productive?
- Does the stakeholder feel that goals and objectives can be met?
- Does the stakeholder feel their needs can be met?

Evaluation is important regardless of whether stakeholder involvement is robust or minimal. If engagement is high, feedback from stakeholders provides insight into methods or strategies that are working and a chance to reevaluate those that are less successful; if engagement is lower than desired, internal evaluation can help TRCCs address identified barriers. Traffic Records Coordinators and TRCC leaders can use any of the following methods to conduct ongoing or periodic evaluations:

- **Provide a regular or continual feedback loop.** An annual or more frequent survey that includes questions on stakeholder satisfaction with the traffic records strategic planning process can serve as an effective feedback tool. The member survey can also ask stakeholders to report successes or issues not captured in meeting proceedings. The TRCC can evaluate stakeholder engagement by monitoring the level and relevancy of responses received.
- **Track social media or web analytics.** The TRCC can analyze web-based stakeholder activity to draw conclusions that may improve engagement or communication practices and identify and measure common stakeholder interests. This may be a useful tool for TRCCs interested in tracking downloadable material or online tools promoted by the TRCC.
- **Track and review stakeholder participation.** TRCCs can examine attendance records or tabulate meeting minutes to evaluate participation in discussions. TRCCs can also update their Stakeholder Gap Analysis Tool annually and use the results as a resource.
- **Host one-on-one or small group feedback sessions.** Consult other stakeholder opinions on engagement or potential barriers in the traffic records strategic planning process. These meetings can take place over the phone or through web conferencing platforms.

Effective and comprehensive stakeholder engagement throughout the traffic records strategic planning process will help TRCCs produce a plan that addresses the needs of data collectors, managers, and users and encourages broad, multi-agency support for the plan's implementation. After engaging stakeholders—particularly new stakeholders—TRCCs should strive to maintain these relationships through communication and evaluation throughout the plan development process and beyond.

3 Strategic Plan Development

This chapter presents a process State TRCCs can follow in developing their *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. This is a detailed and comprehensive process—TRCCs need not implement all steps in the process to be successful. TRCCs should use the results of the self-assessment in Chapter 1 to determine the step(s) most relevant to their needs and focus their resources on those areas.

Key Strategic Planning Terms

It is important that all stakeholders have a common understanding of the terms used in the strategic planning process. Brief descriptions are listed here and illustrated in Figure 3.1. More thorough explanations appear in the relevant sections later in this chapter.

- **Need:** Although the traffic records assessment reports contain a list of opportunities for improvement, this Guide refers to them as challenges. A need is a challenge that the State considers in the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*.
- **Goal:** A high level statement of what the organization hopes to achieve, in a specific area under the strategic plan.
- **Objective:** A quantified improvement the TRCC hopes/wants to achieve by a specific date through a series of related projects.

» **Project:** A plan to execute a series of steps—within a timeframe and budget—to achieve a specific objective.

» **Performance Measure:** A data quality measure. A performance measure is a mechanism for tracking progress toward meeting a metric. Projects should have at least one performance measure and a project-level target. Quantifiable objectives can help define the metrics at the statewide level—targets over all related projects.

» **Metric:** A target value for a performance measure. A metric is a quantifiable performance target in safety or data quality, against which performance measures are compared. A target is established to address an area of improvement.

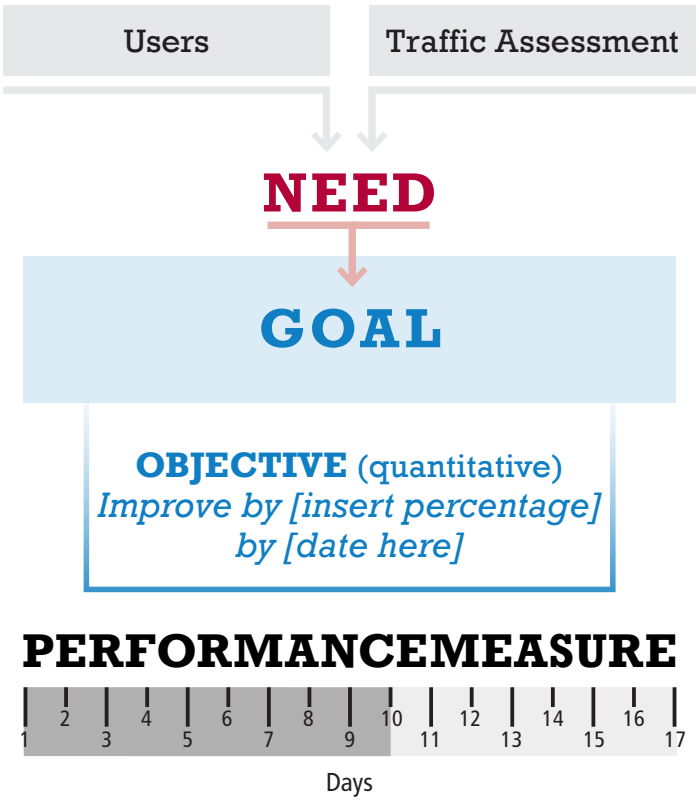

Figure 3.1. Key Terms in Strategic Planning

Steps in the Strategic Planning Process

This section describes an eight-step strategic planning process and the connection between these steps and traffic records improvement efforts (Figure 3.2). Effective strategic plans remain relevant and continue to guide future actions even as time passes and the organization addresses new challenges, new information, or new priorities. Groups involved in strategic planning, such as the TRCC, should begin with a commitment to this cyclical process and recognize that the process does not end with a published plan.

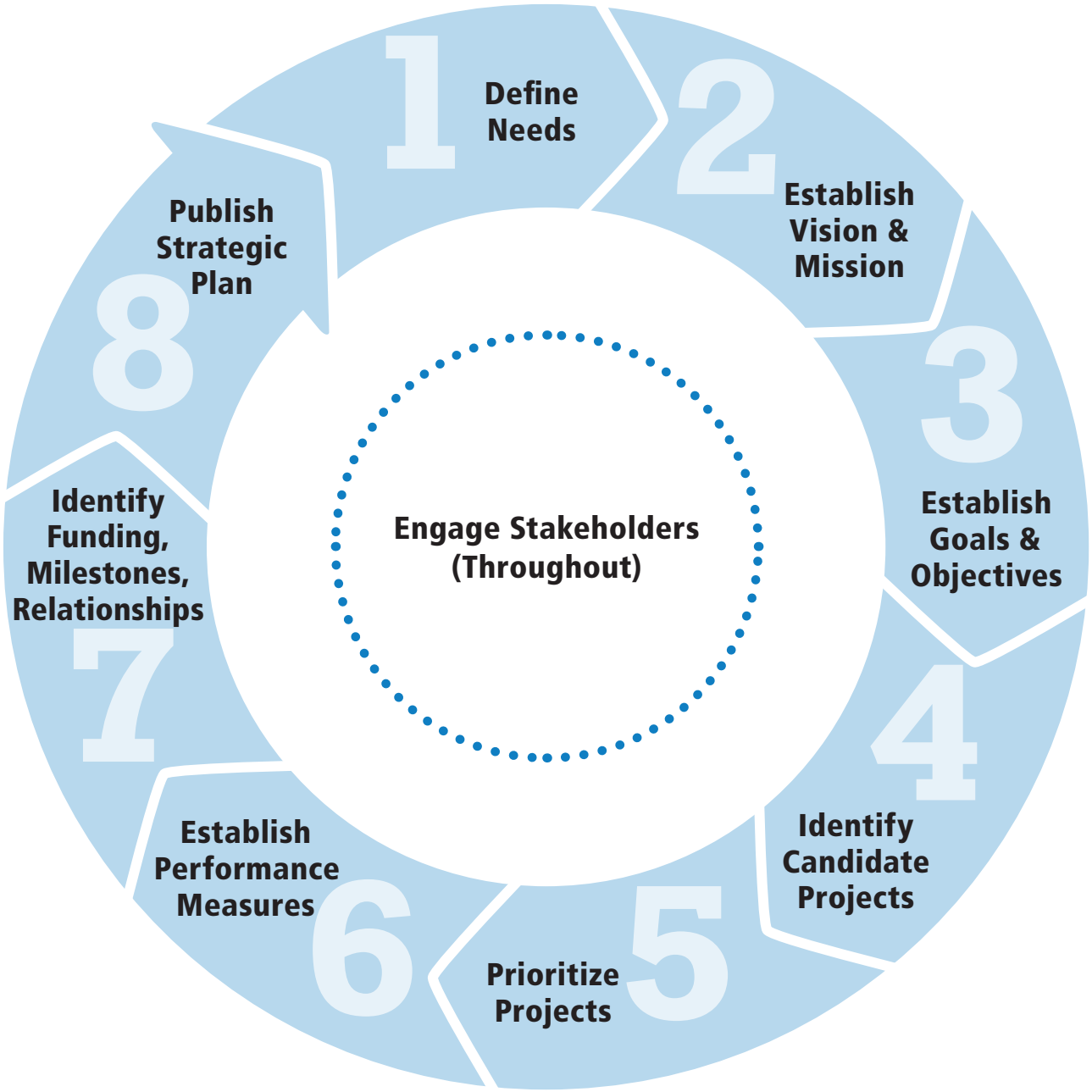

Figure 3.2. Strategic Planning Process

1 Step 1. Define Needs

The strategic planning process begins with a list of items the plan will address. For strategic plans addressing traffic records improvements, this typically begins with a list of needs tied to the timeliness, accuracy, completeness, uniformity, integration, and accessibility of traffic safety system data. Ideally, the strategic plan would include any project that will impact the traffic records system, regardless of the TRCC's role.

There are several ways to identify traffic records needs:

- A State's traffic records users, managers, and collectors are uniquely qualified to identify challenges in any of the traffic records system components and should serve as a resource in identifying needs and suggesting potential solutions. Needs may be identified through stakeholder feedback, policy or legislative changes, and surveys, among others. The strategic plan is intended to express the varied needs of the TRCC members and individual agencies. The plan should include all needs the TRCC decides to address.
- A traffic records assessment should provide detailed comparisons of the State's six core traffic records system components (crash, driver, vehicle, roadway, citation and adjudication, and injury surveillance) against the ideal described in the Advisory. TRCCs should not, however, limit their needs identification process to the recommendations made in the assessment report.
- States may request evaluations of specific systems' data through NHTSA, FHWA, and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), among others. Available evaluations include the Crash Data Improvement Program (CDIP), the Roadway Data Improvement Program (RDIP), and State-requested reviews through the NHTSA GO Team program. States may also use the data dictionaries and other resources on the National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS) and American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) websites to compare the data they collect against national models.
- A review of current and past strategic plans may reveal other previously identified needs for consideration.

See the **Needs Identification Tool**, available in the Strategic Planning Toolbox, to complete this step. The worksheet provides more details on this step of the process and a sample template for organizing needs and the corresponding resources by data quality, data system, and priority.

Step 2. Establish Vision and Mission

Developing vision and mission statements is a pivotal next step after defining needs. These statements provide the foundation and direction for identifying the strategies in the plan. As part of the strategic planning process, ample time should be set aside to create or review the vision and mission to create statements that all stakeholders support.

The **vision** is the future ideal the organization is working toward. The **mission** states the reason for the plan's existence. It concisely identifies what it does, why it does it, and for whom it does it. In strategic planning terms, organizations **accomplish** their missions while **pursuing** their visions.

The Strategic Planning Toolbox provides two corresponding activities: **Vision Development** and **Mission Development**. TRCCs can use these exercises to develop a vision and mission for their strategic plan, as needed.

Create a Vision

A vision statement is a brief statement of a goal—the description of a plan's desired result. It is the future state of things; the outcome of the plan once it is fully implemented and expresses the TRCC's realistic, long-term aspirations for the future of the traffic records system. The TRCC can update the vision statement periodically to reflect changing circumstances.

Questions to ask when developing a vision statement:

- What do we want our organization look like in 5 years? In 10 years?
- How will our needs change in the future?
- How will our organization adapt to meet changing needs?

Sample Vision Statements

The *Guide to Community Energy Strategic Planning* (U.S. Department of Energy, 2013) offers a step-by-step process for creating a strategic energy plan for governments and communities by suggesting tools and tips to complete the steps. The guide suggests beginning with a powerful three-word vision and only add words that the agency absolutely needs to complete the statement. It includes examples of vision statements from successful planning efforts around the country (https://energy.gov/eere/slsc/guide-community-energy-strategic-planning)

- We want Austin to be the most livable community in the country–Austin, TX.
- Reduce climate change impact, and become the renewable energy capital of Canada–Toronto, ON.
- Albany is a model of community health and sustainability in its planning, restorative development, and conservation of energy, water, and natural resources–Albany, NY.
- Assuring reliable, affordable, and clean electricity is essential to the continued attraction and retention of [New York] businesses and residents–New York, NY.
- Montpelier and its neighboring communities will be leaders in creating an economically sustainable and environmentally responsible community reducing fossil fuel consumption by at least 80 percent by 2030–Montpelier, VT.

Traffic Records Vision Example

The purpose here is not to write a vision that every State will adopt. However, the following can be used as a "strawman" to get the conversation started. Note that this example includes both a TRCC vision and a vision for the strategic plan.

- **The TRCC's vision is to move toward zero deaths and injuries on our State's roads by supporting data driven decision-making with continuously improved data.** The vision for this strategic plan is to collect, maintain, and use high-quality traffic records data gathered through state-of-the-art data collection and data transfer methods to achieve timely, accurate, and complete data that adheres to national guidelines and standards, is fully integrated, and accessible to all approved users, including the public.

Create a Mission

The mission statement expresses the who, what, where, when, and why of the strategic plan and supports the vision statement. It should describe the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan's* purpose and should identify and quantify the top-level goals of the strategic plan. Reviewing all proposed strategies will help determine if they align with the mission.

Questions to ask when developing a mission statement:

- Who are we as an organization and who do we serve? How will the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* reflect this?
- Why does the plan exist? What basic problems has our organization identified to address?
- What makes our organization and plan unique?

The mission should be brief—no more than one paragraph in length.

Sample Mission Statements

- Virginia's 2017-2021 *Strategic Highway Safety Plan* includes the mission: *"To save lives and reduce motor vehicle crashes and injuries through a data driven strategic approach that uses enforcement, education, engineering, and emergency response after strategies."* (Virginia Department of Transportation, 2016)

Washington, DC's *Vision Zero* plan includes the mission: *"Using a holistic set of tools that incorporates the disciplines of engineering, evaluation, law-enforcement, and education, Vision Zero will eliminate transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries on our streets by the year 2024."* (Vision Zero: Safe Streets for Washington, DC, 2015) (https://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/page_content/attachments/Final_2016%20Progress%20Report_V3.pdf)

Example Traffic Records Mission Statement

As with the vision example, the purpose here is not to write a mission that every State will adopt. However, the following can be used as a "strawman" to get the conversation started. Note that this example includes both a TRCC mission and a mission for the strategic plan.

- **The TRCC's mission is to promote traffic records improvement and utility in a cooperative multi-agency setting.** The TRCC established this strategic plan's mission of achieving, within the next 5 years, 100-percent electronic data collection for all core traffic records sources, fully electronic data submission and sharing, and automated data linkage and integration among crash data, driver, roadway, and injury surveillance files (EMS, trauma registry, emergency department, and hospital discharge) in a managed data environment that automates data quality measurement and reporting; tracks results of data quality checks and data corrections; and meets all major users' expectations in support of safety decision-making.

3 Step 3. Establish Goals and Objectives

Developing goals and objectives requires a context that tells the participants something about the current capabilities of the organization and how it interacts with external forces. Goals state what the TRCC hopes to achieve through the strategic plan and should be accompanied by at least one objective. Goals and objectives should address specific needs and should be reflected in the performance measures and performance metrics for statewide improvements. Within the cyclical strategic planning process, this is an essential step before identifying and prioritizing projects.

Conduct Environmental Scan

An environmental scan defines the internal and external environment and describes factors that help or hinder the organization's ability to achieve its vision. Figure 3.3 shows the components of the environmental scan in the form of a SWOT matrix. To conduct an environmental scan, strategic planning participants list Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT), and their definitions are as follows:

- **Strengths**: Internal advantages of the organization or plan.
- **Weaknesses**: Internal areas for improvement.
- **Opportunities**: External emerging trends and changes in culture that the organization could capitalize upon.
- **Threats**: External obstacles to achieving the organization's vision.

As shown in Figure 3.3, the internal scan includes a review of beneficial (strengths) and detrimental (weaknesses) factors. The corresponding components of the external scan are the opportunities and threats.

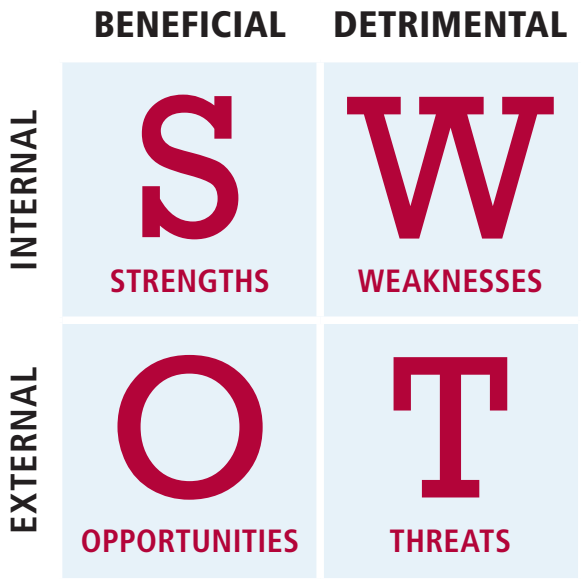

Figure 3.3. SWOT Analysis

In traffic records strategic planning, the internal environment is composed of the collective strengths and weaknesses of the partner agencies that contribute to the traffic records system. The list of strengths and weaknesses may include the level of technology adoption, capability to support advanced analyses, degree of cooperation and coordination among TRCC member agencies, and competition for needed resources such as IT, GIS, and funding for hardware and software deployments. A review of other major internal planning efforts (specifically the SHSP) helps determine items relevant to data improvement. The external environment is the opportunities and threats to success that are imposed by outside factors including State and Federal laws and policies, grant program requirements, and the impact of the economy on available resources. Strategic planning participants should contribute lists as part of the SWOT analysis, as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Example SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
» Expert staff » Multiple years of data » Statewide GIS and spatial location tools » Effective automation in some systems » Strong upper management support » Strong support from key users	» Low data quality in some systems » Very little capacity for integration » Informal data quality management » Insufficient access to IT resources » Poor coordination among business units » Too few agencies seeking grant funding » High cost of some system upgrades
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
» Growing Federal technical assistance » Increased grant funding available » Useful existing standards and guidelines » Strong division office and regional support	» Mandates pull funding from priority efforts » Annual start/stop of funding flow

The SWOT analysis establishes the context for the TRCC's development of goals and objectives. Thinking about the environmental factors helps the group capitalize on strengths and opportunities while, at the same time, addressing weaknesses and avoiding the threats to successful completion of the plan. This analysis should be conducted for the whole of traffic records at a minimum, but States may find it useful to drill down and look at the same analysis for each component system as the results may vary among the data sources.

The **SWOT Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox provides TRCCs with a template for this step.

Set Goals

A goal is a high-level statement of what an organization hopes to achieve in a specific area under the strategic plan. Goals should support the TRCC vision and mission statements as directly as possible. Goals should clearly say what the TRCC intends to achieve within the life of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. The State should be able to list at least one need per goal. Preferably, the needs and goals are both quantifiable; however, it is most important to set quantifiable goals to address needs no matter how precisely the needs are expressed. In the description of each goal, it is helpful to include a brief discussion of the relevant portions of the SWOT analysis. Linking goals to both needs and the SWOT analysis helps to explain the importance of the goal and why objectives and projects help to address the goal.

Sample Goal Statements

- To reduce fatalities and serious injuries by half by 2030. (Virginia Department of Transportation, 2016) (http://www.virginiadot.org/info/resources/SHSP/VA_2017_SHSP_Final_complete.pdf)
- Promote, develop, and support continuous improvement of safe and secure public transportation systems. (American Public Transportation Association, 2015) (https://www.apta.com/about/governance/strategic/Documents/APTA%20Strategic%20Plan%202015-2019.pdf)
- Overall Goal: The FICEMS will work to achieve the six EMS system goals described in this plan by coordinating interagency policies, programming, and messaging, as well as soliciting and integrating stakeholder input from across the EMS community. (Federal Interagency Committee on EMS, 2014) (https://www.ems.gov/ficems/plan.htm)

Traffic Records Example Goal Statements

- To reduce the percentage of reports with an error in critical data fields on crash reports.
- To increase the percentage of records matching among EMS, Emergency Department, and Trauma Registry files for all persons transported for treatment within the State.
- To code all crash locations using the Dempatment of Transportation's (DOT's) linear referencing system (LRS) and establish effective quality control over the location coding processes.

The **Goal Development Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox provides a template for developing goals that incorporate all of these features.

Develop Objectives

Each goal should have at least one corresponding objective. An objective is a quantitative and time-bound expression of what the State will accomplish (through a series of related projects listed in the strategic plan). For example, an objective may be to move from 50 percent to 100 percent electronic crash data collection over 5 years. Some of the objectives developed here may lend themselves to becoming performance measures for assessing data quality and demonstrating incremental improvement over time. The example objective stated as a performance measure would be "increase the use of electronic field data collection software by 10 percent annually over the next 5 years." For each of the objectives listed in the plan, there will be one or more projects designed to achieve the desired level(s) of improved data quality both at the project and statewide levels. Project descriptions should say how each one supports the overall statewide performance metrics.

An objective must be meaningful, have a metric (a target level of performance), and a planned date of completion. At least one project that helps to meet the stated target and its anticipated completion date should accompany each objective. In traffic records strategic planning, project-level performance measure targets should realistically combine to meet the objective's statewide performance targets. All objectives should reference both the goal and the needs. Using the example goal for improving crash data timeliness, one objective could be to "collect and submit 50 percent of all crash reports electronically by the beginning of the next calendar year." Projects related to this objective might include increasing use of a State-supported software solution and encouraging local agencies to update their records management systems to electronically submit data to the State. For each project description included in the plan, the State should list the corresponding goal(s) and objective(s). This will help show how listed projects relate to the other sections of the plan.

Projects related to a specific system's improvement may overlap, so there is no requirement that their projected performance improvements must exactly equal the annual targets expressed in the performance metrics. They should, however, be logically related and, if there is overlap, it should be noted clearly and all related documentation should make sense. For example, a State might create one project that improves timeliness of paper crash report processing and a second project that improves timeliness through electronic crash reporting and submittal. Those two projects may address different aspects of the need, and both would improve overall timeliness, by virtue of improving timeliness for a segment of the crash reports processed by the State.

Sample Objective Statement

To identify and creatively address barriers to working differently, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) 2015-2019 Strategic Plan describes four goals that are aligned with objectives that are meaningful, have a target, and are timebound.

Goal: Funding supports the three practices for advancing health equity.

Objectives:

- 50 percent of grants applied for by MDH will include one or more of the three practices for advancing health equity by December 31, 2019.
- At least one new funding source for advancing health equity work is received each year between January 2016 and December 2019.

Example Traffic Records Strategic Objectives

The Traffic Records Assessment identified a need for a common LRS for all spatial data.

Goal: State DOT will establish a statewide LRS for roadway, crash, and traffic volume data so that all highway safety data can be linked in an automated manner.

Objectives:

- State DOT will create and maintain an LRS for all roads open to the public within 3 years.
- The State will implement a map-based crash location data collection tool for use by all law enforcement within 5 years.
- The DOT will implement a GIS-based data integration process to map all crashes, roadway inventory elements, and traffic volume data in one fully integrated system within 10 years.

Unaddressed Needs

At the end of the goal-setting exercise, the organization should understand the anticipated accomplishments outlined in the plan, know how to achieve those goals through quantified objectives, and have a preliminary (and likely incomplete) set of projects. Even achieving just one of these steps puts the TRCC in a position to be aware of its needs. This is also a good time to examine the links between needs and the plan's goals and objectives to determine if any important needs are not being addressed. The organization can then decide to expand the plan in order to address those remaining needs, or to leave them unmet for the time being.

In traffic records strategic planning, it is not uncommon for the list of needs to be very long and varied to the point where some are left unaddressed in the current planning cycle. The TRCC should examine unaddressed needs to see if any are high priority for the State and require inclusion in the current year's plan. If so, the TRCC may choose to add goals to make the plan more comprehensive. If any important needs are left purposefully unaddressed, the TRCC should make a note of the decision and justification. This should be a purposeful choice by the TRCC and documented in the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* so that a reviewer can easily see the nature of the unaddressed needs. One example of such deliberate deferment is when the State is preparing to propose a major system replacement (e.g., a complete replacement of the Driver and Vehicle system). In such circumstances, it may be premature to list the new system replacement in the strategic plan, but it might also be best to avoid any interim solutions when a more global solution is being sought. Documenting the reasons why the important needs were left unaddressed, for now, will help the State track progress toward the eventual solution and not lose sight of any important needs.

Step 4. Identify Possible Projects

The next step is to list potential projects that address each objective, and to establish the criteria used to decide which projects should be included in the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. If a project does not address any objective within the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*, the project should be discussed to determind if the objectives need to be updated or if the project should not be included in the plan. Projects should not be limited to items funded by the §405(c) grant funding stream—self-funded and even unfunded projects can be part of the plan. The *State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-15-083) guide presents information on multiple funding sources—updated information can be obtained through the sponsoring agencies.

Each project description should include the following information:

- Traffic records core system(s) affected
- Project identification number
- Start and end dates
- Problem statement
- Project description
- Project justification
- Performance area(s) impacted
- Budget for the project
- Funding sources
- Project point of contact and lead agency
- Strategic plan goals and objectives addressed by the project
- Quantifiable project-level and statewide performance measures predicting how the project will improve data quality
- Project status (including updated performance measure outcomes) as the project progresses
- Milestones for project deliverables

Projects are specific actions that the organization will take to meet one or more objectives in the plan. The completion of a standardized project description form helps the project developers focus their descriptions in ways that link it to the strategic plan. Ideally, the lead agency should take responsibility for filling out the project description. The TRCC and traffic records coordinator can help review and revise the project descriptions as needed. The TRCC should also review the performance measures in each project description and suggest revisions in line with the strategic plan's goals and objectives. The draft project descriptions should include all relevant information required for planning participants to understand the project's potential contributions to the strategic plan. The form should have sections for the proposer to identify the corresponding goals and objectives, the needs the project addresses, and the performance targets for the project. All projects should include annual

performance targets for every year the project will be in effect—up to the 5 years covered in the plan.

Project discussions should take place in a TRCC strategic planning meeting. The agency proposing the project should make a brief presentation explaining how the project addresses specific needs, goals, and objectives. Projects occurring entirely at an agency level without funding from the TRCC should be presented to the group for inclusion in the strategic plan as a way to address needs while avoiding duplicative efforts.

The TRCC will then review the list of projects under each objective to confirm the objective's targeted performance levels can be achieved with the projects listed. This step will help tie the plan to a set of specific, numeric targets and due dates. This makes it easier for the plan to be expressed in terms of annual performance targets and to be monitored by comparing actual performance to proposed targets.

The **Possible Projects Identification Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox provides a sample template TRCCs can use to collect and organize this information.

Step 5. Prioritize Projects

This step describes how to perform project prioritization within the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* and the TRCC organization. Having fiscal responsibility for the funds, the final funding decisions for use of Federal §405(c) funds, largely rests with the SHSO or its designees. However, the plan should include projects funded by any source, and even some projects that are not funded at all so long as they can be attached to a goal.

Before prioritizing projects, the TRCC should decide on a list of goals and objectives, and have a list of proposed projects. It is typical to have more projects than are strictly necessary to meet the objectives, as well as projects that do not align well with specific goals or objectives. It is up to the participants through discussion, balloting, and consensus building to select their projects that will best support the State's vision of the traffic records system.

In traffic records strategic planning, the project prioritization step takes on additional importance due to the impact on funding decisions. In fact, the TRCC may decide to include all or most of the proposed projects in the plan, but only prioritize, and recommend funding, a select few projects. As a result, the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* will list goals, objectives, priority projects under each objective, and additional projects that contribute to meeting the goals and objectives for informational purposes only. This has important implications for what the TRCC tracks later when it monitors completion of the plan. It also has implications for projects submitted by the State for funding under the NHTSA traffic records grant program and other Federal grant programs.

Stakeholders can use a formal project prioritization process to assist with assigning the priority to each project. Projects that do not contribute to at least one goal or objective of the strategic plan should not be included in the plan.

A four box analysis, as shown in Figure 3.4, is often helpful in focusing the prioritization discussion on the important factors of 1) the ease of project completion, and 2) the anticipated benefit of the project to traffic records data quality improvement. TRCC leaders should encourage agencies proposing a project to prepare to discuss these two factors as well as the "fit" of their project in the context of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan's* goals and objectives.

States can use the results of the four box analysis to identify the projects that are low cost/low difficulty and produce a high benefit (the top left quadrant) and try to avoid those that are in the high-cost/high-difficulty and produce low benefit category (the bottom right quadrant).

Strategic planning is most useful for helping the group choose among the projects that fall in the bottom left and upper right in the four box analysis. These are, respectively, the projects that are easier to implement but yield small benefits and the projects that are more difficult to implement but yield larger benefits. Many of the projects within any plan will fall in one of these two quadrants. The purpose of a plan is to strategically identify those projects that will achieve the greatest possible result with the available resources. The SWOT analysis can help at this stage as it will anchor the discussion on practical issues of

the State's internal and external environment as the planning meeting participants discuss each project and try to decide where it belongs in the list of priorities.

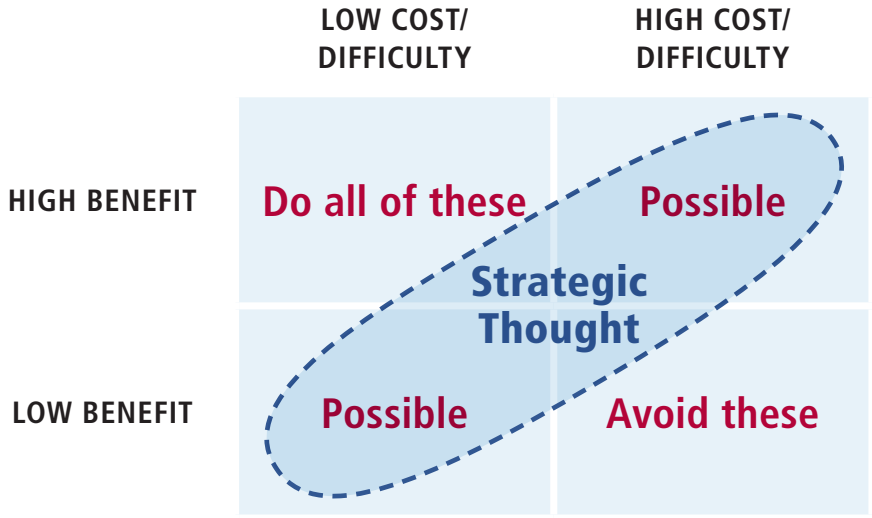

Figure 3.4. Four Box Analysis

The four box analysis is not, by itself, a prioritization process; it does not produce a list of high-priority projects, but it does help in thinking about priorities in concrete ways. In traffic records strategic planning, States should adopt a formal process for prioritization, such as the Modified Delphi technique described below. This formal process has been successful for many States and includes the following steps:

- **Project presentations:** The agency proposing the project should make a brief presentation (1 to 3 minutes) explaining the project's importance, how it addresses one or more goals and objectives, and where the project falls in the four box analysis. After all project presentations are completed, the group should be prepared to discuss the projects. It is helpful to prepare a master list of projects in advance, but the strategic planning team should plan to handle late additions as well as to make presentations on behalf of those who cannot attend the meeting.
- **First-round discussions:** Participants are all considered SMEs for the purposes of this exercise. The group should discuss all projects with a focus and emphasis on the merits of each project. This is intended to be a respectful but very frank discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the project ideas. Modifying and joining projects at this stage is highly encouraged. At the end of this step, a first-round list of projects is ready for balloting.
- **First-round ballots:** All eligible projects are listed—often written on sheets of paper taped to the walls. All voting members receive a number of votes (equal to approximately two-thirds of the total number of projects) to distribute among the potential projects as they deem appropriate. This requires the participants to make choices and not simply assign one vote per project. When voting, the participants can assign as many or as few of their votes to each proposal as they see fit, up to

and including placing all their votes on one proposal. At the end of this activity, the votes are tallied and the results are presented to the group.

- **Second-round discussion:** The group reconvenes to discuss the first-round ballot results. At this point, participants can advocate for dropping, splitting, or combining proposals. They can also advocate for or against any of the proposals in an attempt to sway the opinions of the other participants. Once the discussion is complete and no one raises any objections to proceeding, the final list of projects is produced and made ready for second-round ballots.
- **Second-round ballots:** As in the first round, every voting participant receives a number of votes equal to about two-thirds of the total remaining proposals under consideration. As before, the votes may be distributed however the participant thinks best. Once all votes have been cast, the results are tallied and displayed for review.
- **Final discussion:** The purpose of the final discussion is to review the prioritized list of projects as developed based on the second-round balloting. The participants are then asked if they will support a plan, and project prioritization, as represented by the ballots. The intention is that individuals will take ownership of the plan, advocate in favor of it in their own agency, and affirm that the process was fair and reflects the consensus of the planning group.

As a practical note, this process is best done over a split day, with a break between the second-round discussion and the final ballots. Even a short break (such as over a lunch hour) is sufficient to allow time for private reflection without the need to immediately vote again. In some cases, the final ballot may take place via e-mail or other remote method. It is important, however, that the presentations and discussions all take place in person in the large group setting. A webinar may be suitable as long as the participants can all hear each other and interact effectively.

The advantage of the Modified Delphi technique is that it rapidly achieves consensus in a large group; however, a State is free to adopt other prioritization methods if it decides that a different prioritization method is more suited to its situation. The collaborative element for the delphi process allows it to be a fair procress and legally must be agreed upon by the group.

To qualify for §405(c) funding and §1300.22 State Traffic Safety Information System Improvements grants, the State must submit a strategic plan—approved by the TRCC—that describes specific, quantifiable, and measurable improvements that are anticipated in the State's core safety databases.

Other important considerations include the following:

- Project discussions and prioritization may need to take place outside of the initial meeting to determine the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. This allows

time for project advocates to tailor their presentation to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. If sufficient time is not available to split these into two meetings, the strategic plan organizers may wish to arrange time for discussion and balloting (e.g., via e-mail) in order to provide participants time to consider the projects.

- States may decide that the plan should include every project. Some projects may be identified for monetary or broad multi-agency support while others may be limited to brief descriptions of actions of the responsible agency, regardless of external funding and/or requirements of the current planning cycle. These may be considered part of the long-term plan and not for immediate implementation.
- An action plan typically includes projects categorized as "priority," which the TRCC will actively monitor for progress towards implementation and completion. Non-priority projects may not receive the same level of scrutiny and support from the TRCC. Although it is not required for a priority project to be funded using NHTSA traffic records grant program funds, many are funded through this mechanism.
- The State may choose to schedule a project prioritization meeting separate from the initial strategic planning meeting. The first strategic planning meeting could address the vision, mission, needs, goals, and objectives. This second meeting should take place later in the planning cycle and address project linkage to objectives, project presentations, and the prioritization process.

See the **Project Prioritization Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox for templates for the four box analysis and Modified Delphi technique.

Sample Alternative Prioritization Techniques

- National Association of County and City Health Officials' *Guide to Prioritization Techniques* reviews five comment prioritization processes (including those described in this Guide) and provides brief examples of the methods. (www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Gudie-to-Prioritization-Techniques.pdf)
- National Association of Development Organizations' 2011 *Transportation Project Prioritization and Performance-based Planning Efforts in Rural and Small Metropolitan Regions* scanned regional planning and development organizations to explore how regional planning organizations make decisions and recommendations for transportation investments. This document provides several case studies of how different organizations structure the project selection process. (www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/RPOprioritization.pdf)
- *NCHRP 08-36, Task 112: Cross Mode Project Prioritization* (2014) explores how transportation agencies can incorporate a benefit-cost analysis as a metric for cross-modal project prioritization method. (http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/docs/NCHRP08-36(112)_FR.pdf)

Step 6. Establish Performance Measures

Every project should include at least one data quality performance measure. Each objective further defines the metric (target) for the performance measures addressed by that objective and its associated projects. The metrics are at the statewide, systemwide level as they must apply to an overall assessment of the data's quality. The project descriptions include the anticipated performance improvements expected from the project. These are best expressed in a way that takes into account the project's impact on the targets set in the corresponding objective and performance metric(s). For example, if the timeliness objective is expressed as the percentage of crash reports received within 3 days of the crash event, the projects addressing crash data timeliness should include (at least) the same performance measure—what is the project's impact on the percentage of crash reports received within 3 days of the crash event?

The purpose of this step is to compile all the project-level data quality improvement estimates into the objectives' targets and then document the annual plans for data quality performance for each system and data quality attribute. NHTSA's *Model Performance Measures for State Traffic Records Systems* (DOT HS 811 441) provides example data quality measurements that a State may wish to adopt in developing objectives and addressing with individual projects. There are also a small number of mandatory performance measures. For example, to comply with 23 CFR Part 924.11, each State must incorporate specific, quantifiable, and measurable anticipated improvements for collecting of MIRE Fundamental Data Elements (FDE) into the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. The State should recognize that the need for data quality performance measures extends beyond those mandated by law or suggested in the NHTSA report. The best approach is for the participants to examine the needs, vision, mission, goals, objectives, and projects to determine which data quality performance measures are most relevant and identify the best strategies for tracking success.

Ideally, these decisions would fit into the context of an already existing formal, comprehensive data quality management program, as described in NHTSA's *Traffic Records Program Assessment Advisory* (DOT HS 811 644). When such a system already exists, applying the strategic plan's performance measures is already a part of the standard practice and helps to make certain that the strategic plan aligns with the performance measures the State has already defined. States that do not already have a comprehensive, formal data quality management program can start one by creating traffic records data quality performance measures and metrics. That is only one component of the full program, but it is clearly an important one and central to the effectiveness of a TRCC. Ideally, States will:

» Establish statewide, comprehensive, formal data quality performance management programs for each core component of the traffic records system. This will simplify the strategic planning process' performance measurement requirements. An existing formal performance management program will have defined the data

quality performance measurements and established a set of annual targets. The strategic plan could be aligned with that exact set of performance measurements, rather than requiring an entirely new measurement effort.

» Confirm that objectives include performance measures that address data quality at the statewide/systemwide level. This helps to make sure targets presented in the strategic plan are consistent.

» Confirm that the project-level data quality measurements combine to contribute toward meeting performance measurement targets (metrics) and the plan objectives. This recommendation imposes a requirement that the promised improvements at the project level are relevant to improvements planned at the systemwide level. This will benefit the strategic planning and prioritization efforts by showing the real impact of each project and helping the TRCC set realistic objectives given the available projects for any plan year.

While the list above is comprehensive, making progress towards any of these steps will lead State TRCCs in the direction of a more complete strategic plan.

The **Establishing Performance Measures Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox includes a pair of templates for TRCCs to 1) compile the goals, objectives, and project details and 2) develop and organize measures and metrics. The Tool also provides an example for each step.

7 Step 7. Identify Funding, Milestones, Relationships

In the seventh step of the strategic planning process, agencies describe the prioritized projects, determine funding mechanisms, establish milestones, and identify relationships.

Funding

Project priority does not depend on available funding; however, the plan should identify potential or existing funding for each high-priority project. A *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* should include all §405(c)-funded projects. It should also include any traffic records data improvement project, regardless of funding source (or even those lacking funding if they are marked as high priority). An important consideration is how best to include projects that are self-funded by the custodial agency. These are often very large projects (such as updating the driver licensing and vehicle title and registration system) that have an enormous impact on the traffic records system. The *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* would be incomplete without some mention of these projects and the State would miss out on the chance to take credit for major system improvements along with gaining valuable insight from the TRCC members' contribution. By tracking the project funding, the State can monitor how resources are allocated to improve data quality.

TRCCs can dedicate meeting time to identifying funding sources relevant to each of the six core traffic records system components. These discussions may result in the TRCC asking for additional information to help them understand the projects and their funding mechanisms. Another strategy is for TRCCs to establish funding-specific working groups with the primary responsibility of identifying, monitoring, and pursing funding streams beyond the §405(c) grant funds.

TRCCs should be creative—looking to non-traditional partners and using traditional funding in non-traditional ways. For example, engineering partners may be able to use HSIP funds for data improvement projects. Similarly, Departments of Public Health and University Transportation Centers may receive grants to support data collection and analysis and those funds may also be applied to data improvement projects. Finally, agencies may use their own funds (such as for licensing, titling, and registration system improvements). The *Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-16-083) guide provides examples of how TRCCs have effectively used non-traditional funding.

An ideal ***Traffic Records Strategic Plan*** will show all projects related to traffic records data improvements, even those without funding or funded through non-traditional sources.

Milestones

A milestone marks the anticipated date of delivery for a key intermediate product in a larger project. Milestones help the TRCC monitor the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* continuously to determine if projects are on schedule and delivering as promised. By tracking milestones, the TRCC can evaluate project implementation and identify ongoing issues—or anticipate roadblocks—and develop solutions. A custodial agency can help identify milestones through an action plan with assistance from the TRCC. In an action plan, each project will be represented as a series of steps, each of which can be viewed as a milestone (a projected date for a deliverable). Information on the development and use of action plans to support implementation of the strategic plan can be found in Chapter 4 of the Guide (a full worksheet is available in the Strategic Planning Toolbox).

Relationships

In identifying milestones, certain relationships are required to address the needs of a project. A project-level action plan lists the responsible agency and personnel for each step of each project. Projects within the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* may require interagency coordination, especially where there are tasks that will impact the start dates of various steps. For example, a State may wish to develop an advanced point-and-click interface for gathering location information on citations and crash reports. Their plan might require first that a statewide map of all roadway segments and intersections exist and that it match the LRS used by the State DOT. Even though the crash and citation system projects are all under the control of a different State agency (e.g., a Department of Public Safety), there is a clear relationship with the State DOT's projects for all-public-roads base map and linear referencing. Ideally, the strategic plan would include all projects as well-defined priorities (regardless of funding). If that is the case, then the action plan will reflect the relationships among projects. If the plan does not already include some of the influential projects, one way to plan for their impact is to document the relationship between the priority projects in the strategic plan and the various activities by agencies that will affect the priority projects.

Step 8. Publish Strategic Plan

Approval of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* is the final step before submitting to NHTSA. The strategic plan is an important document for the TRCC member agencies and stakeholders because their expert input lays the groundwork for the future direction of the system. While the action plan is continuously updated, the strategic plan should be finalized and submitted for approval from traffic records stakeholders and NHTSA (if applying for §405(c) funding). Once this document is completed, the TRCC should complete the following steps for approval.

- **Obtain plan endorsement.** The TRCC members should be willing to affirm that the plan reflects the expert opinions of the TRCC members. If the State has an executive level TRCC, this technical endorsement provides the backing that those members need in order to know that it was created with support from the State's own technical practitioners.
- **Get executive signoff.** Once the plan has been vetted by the TRCC, it should be submitted for approval of the executive level TRCC if one exists. The members must have adequate time to review the document before giving approval.
- **Publish the approved plan.** Once the plan is approved, it is ready for submission to NHTSA and distribution to all TRCC members (technical and executive) as well as any other traffic records stakeholders. The plan may also be shared via listservs, a TRCC webpage, and conferences.
- **Set dates for annual and ongoing updates and general plan maintenance.** The strategic plan is a living document that will require regular review.

4 Strategic Plan Implementation and Updates

Once a State TRCC has completed its *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*, the TRCC will need to shift its efforts towards implementation. This chapter provides guidance on tracking performance metrics and measures, evaluating progress, and updating the plan. In this phase, the TRCC will support and coordinate implementation of projects within the plan and take the lead in soliciting and managing plan updates. Table 4.1 shows examples of the items States use to track implementation progress for a *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*.

Table 4.1. Example Strategic Plan Implementation and Tracking Items

Key Term	Definition	Example
Performance Measure	A data quality measure. A performance measure is a mechanism for tracking progress toward meeting a metric. Projects should have at least one performance measure and a project-level target. Quantifiable objectives can help define the metrics at the statewide level—targets over all related projects.	Number of police agencies using e-crash.
Metric	A target value for a performance measure. A metric is a quantifiable performance target in safety or data quality, against which performance measures are compared. A target is established to address an area of improvement.	250 of 300 police agencies using e-crash by April 30, 2020.
Tracking	Records the performance measures' progress to reach the metric.	Monthly or at least quarterly updates on progress reported to the TRCC on the number of police agencies using e-crash.
Evaluating Progress	Records the difference between the actual performance—as indicated by the performance measure—and the planned performance or metric.	At least an annual comparison of the actual number of police agencies using e-crash to the established performance target.
Plan Updates	Captures the collective (TRCC) decisions on what to do (if anything) about a project that is not making sufficient progress, and when it is appropriate to drop or add projects to the plan.	As of April 30, 2020, 210 of 300 police agencies are using e-crash. The TRCC assess progress and identifies access to equipment as a limiting factor. The TRCC initiates a new project to increase agency capabilities to support the e-crash initiative.

Implementing the *State Traffic Records Strategic Plan*

State TRCCs should establish an implementation process that best meets their needs, structure, and capabilities. Developing a formal implementation process can promote stronger relationships between agencies to support projects, optimize time and resource allocation, and, as applicable, help the State and TRCC fulfill the requirements for the State traffic safety information system improvements grant. The

implementation process should include the following elements, which this chapter discusses in more detail.

- Reestablish roles and responsibilities.
- Establish a communication process.
- Establish a timeline for monitoring.
- Facilitate a monitoring and reporting process.
- Develop and implement action plans based on the above processes.
- Update the plan.

Reestablish Roles and Responsibilities

First, the TRCC should assign roles and responsibilities for monitoring the plan's progress. While a multi-disciplinary group of stakeholders is responsible for developing the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*, a smaller group of individuals should implement the projects, monitor ongoing progress, and report back to the larger group. Setting clear roles and responsibilities will help individuals and agencies understand how they fit into the implementation process and set clear expectations. Answering the question "what do we want this particular group or individual to do to contribute to the process?" can help define roles. Responsibilities, which are more specific, need to detail how the individual or group will successfully manage their role. For example, a project representative's role may be to monitor the implementation of a traffic records project. Their responsibilities may include working directly with the project staff to develop monthly progress reports and present status reports at TRCC meetings.

At a minimum, the Traffic Records Coordinator and TRCC Chair should be responsible for coordinating and monitoring implementation efforts.

Figure 4.1 illustrates an example subcommittee structure that identifies specific groups or individuals and their roles in implementing the strategic plan. The blue boxes (lines three, four, and five) represent a potential structure for a strategic planning subcommittee. The "Other Stakeholders" group may not be directly involved with a project included in the plan or a member of the TRCC but may convey technical expertise to support plan implementation. All members of the subcommittee can monitor performance and address issues for the overall strategic plan.

Alternatively, the TRCC may establish a subcommittee with representatives from each agency that owns one of the core traffic records system components. While this approach lessens the burden on individual project managers, it increases the responsibility of the representatives to monitor progress.

A third approach is to establish one or more subcommittees to manage or direct specific projects listed in the plan. For large, multi-year projects involving several member organizations, a project-specific steering subcommittee can be useful in monitoring progress, advising the custodial agency throughout the project, and may avoid monopolizing the plan implementation subcommittee's focus.

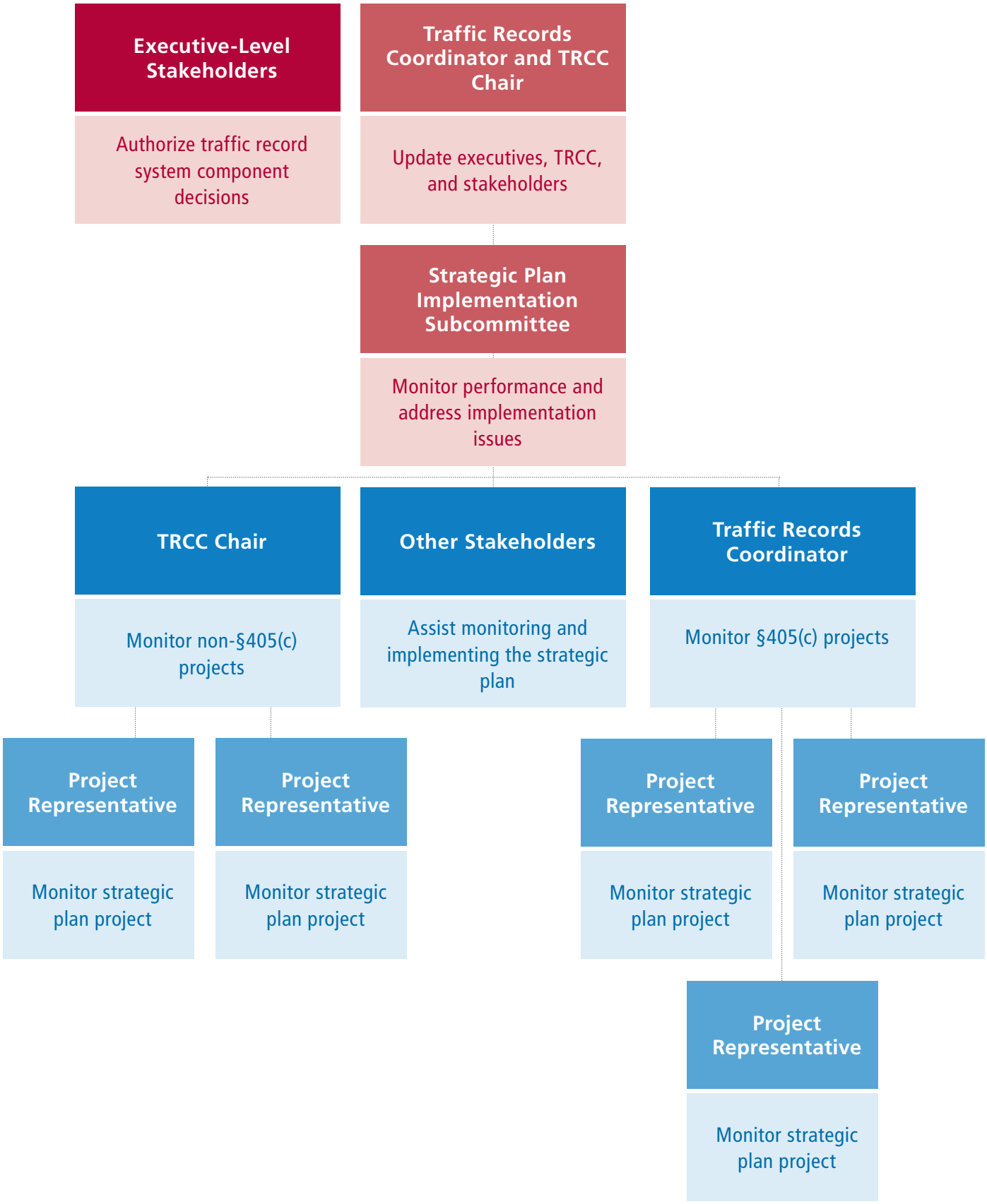

Figure 4.1. Example Subcommittee Structure

The project-specific subcommittee or other selected personnel can be responsible for monitoring project steps, funding, outcomes, and providing status reports to the custodial agency and TRCC. The *State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-15-083) guide includes additional information on successful TRCC subcommittee practices.

Establish a Communication Process

The TRCC needs to identify the best strategies to communicate updates to the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan's* implementation to the TRCC stakeholders. Not all these stakeholders need or want the same level of detail on the plan's progress. The TRCC should consider what information to communicate, to whom, how often, by what method, and for what purpose. Example communication processes include:

- Project managers will provide quarterly progress reports to the TRCC in person and answer any questions the TRCC members may have.
- TRCC website managers will post project and performance achievements to the website to communicate accomplishments to stakeholders.
- The TRCC will provide agency executives quarterly progress summaries by e-mail to support high-level engagement.
- Project managers will notify the Traffic Records Coordinator by e-mail if the custodial agency identifies any project issues.

Existing TRCC ground rules for meetings can provide a foundation for meaningful discussion. As described in the *State Traffic Records Coordinating Committee Noteworthy Practices* (FHWA-SA-15-083) guide, conversations about implementation progress should always focus on the goal of producing positive outcomes. If challenges arise with a project or portion of the plan, the discussion should be solution-oriented and focus on what "can be done" to achieve the desired result.

Establish a Timeline for Monitoring

The TRCC should establish dates or timeframes to track, evaluate, and update information on strategic plan implementation. The *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* should include all data improvement projects regardless of the funding source. In current practice, the SHSO funds many projects featured in a *State Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. Depending on the State and grant programs' policies and procedures, SHSO grant managers may require sub-grant recipients to submit progress reports on at least a quarterly basis to track progress toward goals and objectives, expenditures, and project activities to help identify any issues impeding implementation. Therefore, the TRCC may consider aligning the TRCC's strategic planning implementation monitoring schedule to the SHSO's reporting procedures to reduce redundancies.

Depending on the complexity, cost, and ownership of the individual projects, the TRCC can use a combination of the following approaches to establish a monitoring timeline:

» **Continuous Monitoring:**
  - Update action plans as the status of identified tasks change.
  - Request and receive updates on projects at least monthly.

» **Periodic Monitoring:**
  - Prepare summary updates to the TRCC (e.g., quarterly).
  - Identify successes and challenges.
  - Explore opportunities to address existing or new traffic records needs.

» **Annual Monitoring:**
  - Complete the annual update to the strategic plan.
  - Provide information to the SHSO.

An **action plan** is a tool to track, evaluate, and update implementation of a project or the strategic plan.

Facilitate a Monitoring and Reporting Process

The purpose of the performance measures for the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan's* statewide system level and project level is to monitor progress toward goals. Monitoring includes tracking, evaluating, and updating the plan throughout its intended lifespan. The following sections provide more detail on monitoring approaches that can apply both individual projects and the strategic plan.

Track

Tracking strategic plan and project implementation involves collecting the relevant information to evaluate progress. Responsible parties should collect details to support routine updates and promptly report any issues or successes. Periodic tracking can include gathering information and providing updates to the TRCC. The State may want to develop standard progress report templates that outline the critical information to collect and report to the TRCC, such as the following components:

» Summary of project activities
» Information about performance measures and metrics
» Detailed accomplishments and/or challenges
» Points for discussion with TRCC

The TRCC should make sure that progress report templates requests all the information they need to report to the SHSO so that project managers can satisfy all reporting requirements with one submittal.

Evaluate

The information collected during the implementation of the strategic plan and projects can be analyzed to evaluate performance. A clearly defined evaluation protocol will help the TRCC address issues that can delay progress. The TRCC and project managers can compare the tracked data and planned performance to assess if progress is sufficient. Transparent and honest evaluation discussions keep the plan and projects relevant while reinforcing accountability, which can drive progress.

The TRCC will need to consider how their project's lifecycle impacts evaluation. Evaluating progress is important and possible during all stages of a project. If a project has not started or performance data is lacking, evaluators can explore additional qualitative measures. For example, if a project is not due to start, then evaluation could be based on the following:

- Funding mechanisms are in place.
- Sufficient and qualified staff are ready to execute project tasks.
- Prerequisite tasks are on time to support starting the project.

Individuals responsible for monitoring implementation will need to continually evaluate a projects' progress and gather updates on efforts to address any issues that arise. Periodic evaluation should include performance-based evaluations using the performance measures and metrics from the strategic plan. For example, if a project aims to increase the percentage of all public roads included in the LRS, the information collected and shared with the TRCC can be used to evaluate if the project is performing as expected or identify possible actions if progress is lacking. Timely descriptive narratives about a project can also provide insight for assessing progress. The TRCC can also consider an evaluation of the strategic planning and implementation process to identify areas for improvement.

Update

As the TRCC tracks and evaluates the plan and projects, they can record updates related to performance, any corrective actions, or newly identified needs. After evaluation, the TRCC may recognize a need to adjust the implementation of a project or portion of the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. If the TRCC finds that project implementation is lacking, the TRCC can investigate barriers and provide solutions. The TRCC can serve in an advisory role to address issues with performance measures, funding, timelines, staffing, or other components affecting implementation. Updates may also include considering future removal or addition of projects.

While the TRCC is implementing the strategic plan, they should also be collecting information to update it. This includes tracking performance measures, objectives, and goals, updates to project descriptions or action plans, or other notable updates.

Stakeholders can decide on what updates should be made during TRCC meetings or through other communication methods. Documenting or applying incremental updates throughout the year will lessen the burden of the annual plan update process for the TRCC.

Develop Action Plans

TRCCs can choose to create action plans as a mechanism to monitor projects and the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. Action plans outline how the strategic plan and projects will progress by describing actions, individual responsibilities, and task or project relationships. Based on the needs and capabilities of the TRCC, an action plan can range from high-level documents that only including significant milestones to a comprehensive plan that describes specific actions, responsibilities, and relationships.

TRCCs can develop project action plans for all or only high-priority projects in the strategic plan. To contain all the details, either the Traffic Records Coordinator, TRCC chair, or the relevant subcommittee should develop a comprehensive high-level action plan for the projects included within the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. Processes discussed in this chapter (roles and responsibilities, communication, timeline, monitoring) provide a framework for developing an action plan for the strategic plan.

The Action Plan Tool in the Strategic Planning Toolbox provides a draft template—as well as a useful example—for TRCCs to use or adapt to their needs. The action plan should include the following details:

- *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* goal(s) and objective(s) that a project will support, as well as any project-level objectives
- Step-by-step actions for completing the project included in the plan
- Proposed start and end dates for each identified action
- A primary contact from the agency that is responsible for completing each step.
- A plan to monitor the project risks
- A list of task dependencies
- Any additional notes including frequent status updates and problem resolutions while the project is active

The **Action Plan Tool** in the Strategic Planning Toolbox provides a template for TRCCs to develop an action plan for each project included in the strategic plan.

Annual Update to the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*

The annual update provides an opportunity to discuss progress toward goals, objectives, and performance measures, which will identify improvements or interventions as needed. While multiple funding sources should support the plan, the TRCC will need to assess projects and performance measures and update the *Traffic*

Records Strategic Plan to support a State's §405(c) application. Depending on State practice, this may be the one time a year where executive representation is present to receive updates and authorize decisions about traffic records system components.

The update should reflect changes that occurred through implementation, such as action plan updates and revised project descriptions. Additionally, the update is an opportunity for the TRCC to review the Charter/Memorandum of Understanding, past meeting minutes, TRCC membership (data system representation), and the State Traffic Records Coordinator position. This advanced preparation will streamline the update process.

When applying for a §405(c) grant, the update needs to include written descriptions of the performance measures, and all supporting data, that demonstrate the TRCC's anticipated progress towards quantitative improvements about one or more of the significant data program attributes. Additionally, to comply with §405(c), the State must incorporate specific and quantifiable and measurable anticipated improvements for the collection of MIRE FDE into the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. The Traffic Records System Achievements section in the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* template provides a format to satisfy the federal quantitative improvement requirements.

See the ***Traffic Records Strategic Plan* Template** at the end of the guide for more information.

Continuing the Strategic Planning Process

Updates to the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* will include adding new projects and updating the status of ongoing or closed projects. The SHSO is essential when initiating or continuing SHSO-funded projects in the update. As previously discussed, TRCCs can refer to the most recent traffic records assessment to identify traffic records needs. If a project in the State HSP addresses an assessment recommendation, it must be noted and included in the *Traffic Records Strategic Plan* update. TRCCs can also improve the efficiency of their annual updates if they regularly update the plan as part of TRCC or subcommittee activities.

The information and strategies detailed in this Guide can help TRCC stakeholders responsible for developing or updating a *Traffic Records Strategic Plan*. The State should select a strategic planning process that is realistic and supported by their current structure, authority, and capabilities. Over time, the State can refine and improve their strategic planning and implementation processes to address identified traffic records needs for data quality improvement.

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