APS TARC

Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center

enhancing effectiveness of **APS** programs

Formula Grants Operational Plan Toolkit

Revised July 2024

Contents

Introduction

The Adult Protective Services - Technical Assistance Resource Center (APS TARC) Toolkit is intended to assist States/Territories/Districts prepare their Operational Plan for submission to the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL) as required for formula grant funding for adult protective services. APS Operational Plans (OP) were first required under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. They continue to be required for Elder Justice Act (EJA) funding through 2028 when State Plan requirements will replace OP requirements. Current OP projects should align with the APS Final Rule and reflect compliance with new federal regulations. For more information about the APS Final Rule, please visit ACL.gov/APSrule.

States/Territories/Districts may submit plans in the format of their own choosing. States/Territories/Districts do not need to create an entirely new plan and may leverage all or parts of any existing plans they may already have.

The APS TARC is providing guidance and support to states in preparing their Operational Plans. This toolkit is intended to assist in creating your Operational Plan along with a few tips from broader strategic plans to help you implement your plan with confidence!

This toolkit provides instructions on how to complete the template. Both a blank template and completed example template are available at https://apstarc.acl.gov/regulations.

States/Territories/Districts should pick and choose from the guidance offered here to create a plan that best suits their individual needs. If you submit all the information asked for in the attached template, you will meet the ACL requirements. The toolkit includes a largely fill-in-the-blank template designed to meet the reporting requirements.

The APS Logic Model provides a structure and potential areas of improvement for framing the improvement projects.

Glossary of Terms

Communications Plan – Optional plan for communication tools to keep your stakeholders "in the loop."

Core Values – (also known as, Guiding Principles) The most fundamental values and principles that you CHOOSE to incorporate into your program. You can fall back on them when faced with difficult decisions and dilemmas.

Delphi Technique – A research design to obtain the most reliable consensus from a group of experts. Here we suggest consideration of a simplified version of the technique to help set organizational goals that all stakeholders can buy into and support.

Environmental Scan – A core part of a plan that provides an overview of the environment in which you currently operate. The scan looks at internal conditions (which you can often control or at least influence) and external conditions (which you often cannot control).

Goals – A core part of the plan that describes the handful of highest-level results which an APS program must achieve to reach its vision. Your Improvement Projects should fall under each high-level goal.

Guiding Principles – (also known as Core Values) The most fundamental values and principles that you choose to incorporate into your program. You can fall back on these values when faced with difficult decisions and dilemmas.

Improvement Projects – Those activities or projects which you will undertake to achieve your Goals for Program Improvement.

Logic Model – A framework for defining a picture of how your organization does its work – the theory and assumptions underlying the program. A program logic model links outcomes (both short- and long-term) with program activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/principles of the program. The APS Logic Model is a one-page depiction of the following elements of APS programs: context, inputs/resources, activities, activity metrics, and expected results.

Mission Statement – A core part of a plan that provides a statement of your organization's purpose. It states why your program exists, who you will serve, and what you want to accomplish as outcomes.

Operational Plan Template – An optional fill-in-the-blank form to create an Operational Plan submission. The elements you see in this template will meet ACL's requirements.

PESTEL Analysis – (Sometimes called PEST or PESTLE) PESTEL Analysis is a strategic framework used to evaluate the external environment of your program by breaking down the opportunities and risks into Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal factors. PESTEL Analysis can be an effective framework to use in your Environmental Scan.

Risk Tracking – An optional tool to track and act as an "Early Warning System" for changes in the external environment that may create challenges to achieving your plan goals.

Semiannual – Occurring twice a year; half-yearly or every 6 months.

SWOT Analysis – A tool used to assess your current environment. It consists of a 4 square grid in which you list your internal Strengths and Weakness and the Opportunities and Threats you face in the external Environment.

Vision Statement – A core part a plan that provides a future-oriented statement of what the program will look like once the goals are achieved. Typically worded as if the future had already happened.

Operational Plan Elements

The Operational Plan template includes the following elements. Each is explained in more detail in this section:

- Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles
- Environmental Scan
- Goals for Program Improvement
- Improvement Projects
- Optional Risk Tracking
- Optional Communications Plan

Vision, Mission, Values: What are they, how they differ and why they matter?

The Operational Plans require a Vision of how you will be making investments in APS programs and systems. When you are creating your Operational Plan you have an opportunity to revisit (or codify for the first time) your APS Program's Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles (aka Core Values).

Vision 2028

The Vision clarifies what your grants aspire to become and to achieve for the next 3-5 years. It is designed to inspire by providing a picture of where the program is heading in 3-5 years.

A Vision Statement is Future Oriented, Ambitious, and tells the world what you want the program to look like in the future. It typically describes what the future will look like after the vision is achieved.

A Vision Statement is a vivid "Word Picture" of what the program wants to become.

Look at your vision statement and ask does it get our juices flowing, do we find it stimulating, does it spur forward momentum?

The Operational Plan template includes a Vision statement for your APS Program.

Examples

Maryland Department of Human Services
We envision a Maryland where people independently support themselves and their families and where individuals are safe from abuse and neglect.

Iowa Department of Human Services
The Iowa Department of Human Services makes a positive difference in the lives of Iowans we serve.

Tip: If your program is a part of a larger organization that has its own Vision of the future you may want to adapt it to your own APS program.

Mission Statement

Mission and Values statements can be an effective tool to educate the public; state and local government officials; state government agencies; provider agencies; and service recipients as to what the adult protective services is and how they do business.

Mission Statements answers four key questions about your APS Program:

- Who do we serve?

- What needs do they have that we can fulfil?
- How do we meet the clients' needs to make their life safer?
- Does it link directly to the Vision Statement?

Your Mission Statement should be short, succinct, easy to understand and jargon free. It should be focused on today and remain largely stable over time. In short, it's why you get out of bed and come to work in the morning!

Tip: Don't be afraid to "borrow liberally" from other mission statements that already exist for similar organizations.

Examples

South Carolina
Adult Protective Services for the state of South Carolina exists to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by investigating and providing temporary assistance until risk is minimized and services are secured.

West Virginia
The primary purpose of Adult Protective Services is to investigate reports of adult abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation while providing least restrictive interventions. It is the mission of APS to provide support and services to vulnerable adults in order to improve the safety, well-being, and independence of victims of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and financial exploitation.

National Adult Protective Services Association
The National Adult Protective Services Association's (NAPSA) mission is to strengthen Adult Protective Services (APS) programs in order to improve the safety and quality of life of APS clients, as defined by state statute, who are victims of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation.

Tip: If you are a part of a larger organization that has its own Mission Statement, you may want to adapt it for your own program.

Guiding Principles (also known as Core Values)

Core Values are the few values and principles that you *choose* to incorporate into your APS Program. You can fall back on them when faced with difficult decisions and dilemmas. These values may make your life easier, but you would *choose* to follow them even if they didn't!

The core values of an APS Program underlie all its activities, including the strategies and projects undertaken to fulfil its mission, and how the members of the APS Program interact with one another, with other stakeholders and with its clients.

> *"Core Values are essential and enduring tenants of an organization. A small set of timeless guiding principles, core values.... have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organization" Adapted from J. Collins and J. Porras (Collins & Porras, 1996)*

We recommend three to five Core Values that are most important to the organization and give a one sentence description of each. In terms of number of core values, keep the list manageable and memorable. If you have two or three values, great. If you have six, okay. If you have 20 you may be confusing values (which don't change very often) with operational practices, organizational strategies, or cultural norms (which should be open to change). Furthermore, if you have too many, no one will remember them!

Core values should guide and inspire! Core Values will stay largely stable over time!

Examples:

"APS programs and practitioners believe that "every action taken by APS must balance the duty to protect the safety of the vulnerable adult with the adult's right to self-determination." - APS TARC webinar, YouTube (March 17, 2020)

"To that end, APS programs are organized around the principle that adults should have the right to be safe, while also retaining their civil and constitutional rights and having the right to accept or refuse services or even investigation of allegations." -WebEx Interview with Georgia Anetzberger, PhD, ACSW, Advisory Board Member, National Center on Elder Abuse (August 17, 2021).

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services - APS guiding principles

Our Core Values

- We champion the **safety** and **dignity** of vulnerable adults.
- We conduct ourselves with **integrity**.
- We demonstrate **respect** for all persons.
- We **collaborate** to improve outcomes.

Itasca County, Minnesota – Department of Health & Human Services

Our core values are the touchstones for our decisions. The Health and Human Services Department holds these core values as we carry out our daily work in order to better serve Itasca County residents who are in need:

- We value people, families, and communities.
- We value work, independence, and self-responsibility.
- We provide safety nets and ladders up for the people we serve.
- We value collaboration with communities and organizations to mobilize support that helps people function and succeed.

Disney

- Imagination
- Wholesomeness

Tip: If your program is a part of a larger organization that has its own set of Guiding Principles or Core Values, you may want to adapt them to your program.

Environmental Scan

The environmental scan answers the question: What is going on in your environment (internal and external) that caused you to choose the goals you chose?

Rationale: It is important to periodically take a close look at your program's current situation to assure you that your assessment of your current environment is accurate and up to date.

Purpose: Take an unbiased assessment of the environment in which your program operates, looking at both internal factors (that you typically control) and external factors (which you don't control).

Who to Include: We recommend completing this portion with your colleagues and stakeholders. The more program associates and stakeholders you involve in the analysis, the more accurate it will be. Use the tools described below to brainstorm then go through a review and edit process until you have a description of your current operating environment.

General Description of Your Environment:

The description of your environment could be in narrative form or could be summarized in a chart that looks at your program's strengths and weaknesses as well as the threats and opportunities created by factors in the external environment that you do not control.

Tools

There are many ways to complete an environmental scan. Below we provide you with examples of two tools you might use, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental Factors, Legal).

Tool #1 is called a **SWOT** Analysis. There are two sections to complete.

- The first row includes an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses of your program. List the most important strengths in the first box. Then list the internal challenges or weaknesses of your program in the next box. The more candid you can be, the more helpful the SWOT will be for helping you set your improvement goals.
- The next row in the SWOT analysis is the external environment, which you do not control, but which can affect what you need to do. There are a lot of things in the external environment that can affect your program. Break the external environment into smaller clusters of things that can affect you and look at each one individually.

Summary of how to complete a SWOT analysis.

Internal:

- Internal strengths of your program which contribute to being able to achieve your mission, vision, and core values.
- Internal weaknesses that limit the ability of the organization to achieve your mission, vision, and core values.

External:

- Identify opportunities external to your program that contributes to being able to achieve your mission, vision, and core values.
- Identify external threats to your program that limit the ability of the program to achieve your mission, vision, and core values

Exhibit 1 - Sample SWOT Analysis

	Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Internal	• *Proud to work for APS* • *APS staff work together well* • *APS is Visible to stakeholders* • *Client Focused* • *Passionate, Dedicated and Resilient Staff* • *APS Policy*	• *Salaries not competitive* • ***Turnover affects quality of my work*** • *Workload high and unmanageable* • *Lack of support for complex cases* • *APS Policy*
	Opportunities	**Threats**
External	• Grow program awareness to serve increasingly aging population • Explore new practices based on lessons learned • Enhance communication between APS leadership and field • Address new training needs	• ***Ongoing COVID Threat in served communities*** • *Lack of appropriate and adequate funding and staff resources* • **Increased workload of complex financial exploitation cases** • *Program too small to address the needs of the growing elderly population*

EXAMPLE: Based on the Environmental Scan, these three Improvement Projects could be chosen:

1. High turnover and increased workload are the context for purchasing Computer equipment and tablets to reduce paperwork time and stress and allow field inspectors to spend more time interacting with clients.
2. Ongoing COVID threat in the community and high turnover rates are context for purchasing personal protective equipment and training all employees in its proper use.
3. Growing level of complex financial exploitation cases creating context for investment to work with 3rd party experts and other agencies who have training beyond that of our staff.

PESTEL

Tool #2 is called a **PESTEL** analysis. There are six areas to consider.

PESTEL is an acronym for

- Political
- Economic
- Social
- Technological
- Environmental Factors
- Legal

Purpose: There are many things in the external environment which are beyond your control, and which can create both threats and opportunities for your APS Program. Using PESTEL analysis can make it easier to survey the broader environment by breaking it into smaller, discrete pieces to consider one at a time. It can also spur you to consider factors that you might have otherwise overlooked by defining categories you may not consider in your day-to-day work.

Who to Include: We recommend completing this portion of the plan with the colleagues and/or stakeholders you worked with in the SWOT analysis. The more program associates you involve in the analysis, the more accurate it will be.

Next Step: Select the key PESTEL aspects that most affect your program and focus on those instead of the entire range of PESTEL.

Look at each of these six areas of an external environment and brainstorm (just like you did with your internal Strengths and Weaknesses) about how the external changes might affect your clients or create new opportunities for your program. Your team can brainstorm through these quickly. You may find a few areas that you want to research more thoroughly and include your research in your plan. Factors to consider include:

Political

- Potential policy changes as outcomes of the next election at national, state, or local level
- Changes in legislative priorities or state/territory/district initiatives
- Changes in tax policy, economic stimulus which might affect senior's income
- Changes in entitlements, eviction programs, unemployment etc.

Economic

- Economic growth rates
- Interest rates
- Inflation
- Unemployment rates

Social

- Cultural aspects & perceptions of family roles
- Population growth rates and age distribution
- Media involvement with advocacy issues or talk about adult protective services

Technological

- Need for computer and mobile phone literacy
- Internet availability
- New cryptocurrencies and new potential scams
- Technological advances in healthcare like remote monitoring

Environmental

- Climate change
- Severe weather and temperature changes
- Pollution
- Issues due to difference in geography – i.e., rural vs urban coverage

Legal

- New regulations
- Changing interpretation of laws in the courts
- Licenses, permits, certification requirements

The more stakeholders you include in this process, the better your results will be. Once you understand your program's strengths and the external environment more completely you can set your Operational Plan Goals and Projects with confidence. Once you prioritize your improvement topics it is easy to identify your Targeted Improvement Projects.

Goals for Program Improvement

Rationale: These are the high-level goals to be obtained to move your APS program from its current state to you achieving your Vision. You should have a small number (three to five) of high-level goals. There may be multiple targeted improvement projects to which you deploy funds under each high-level goal.

Purpose: Goals (for the purpose of this template) are the handful of highest-level results an APS program must achieve to reach its Vision.

Who to Include: These highest-level goals will need buy-in from all levels of the organization, and often from your parent agency and those you collaborate with. Make sure that everybody is rowing in the same direction!

Tools: Of course, goals can simply be dictated from the top and handed down, but you want wide buy-in for your organization's goals to get the best results. One method is to use something called a Delphi Technique. At its most basic level, one expert or group develops a solution to a future problem. Then they send it to another expert or group who gives their own suggestion. The process goes back and forth until a consensus is reached among the experts. In this instance, everyone has a role in setting goals so all can feel ownership and pursue achieving them with vigor because they believe they are the right goals to pursue.

Now that you have new funds targeted for your work with APS, what can be enhanced or improved in your current program? It is recommended these goals become **SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timely).

Examples

- Reduce Staff Turnover by 50% and improve job satisfaction for APS employees by 2028 by streamlining processes and using technology to reduce employee workload.
- Reduce the potential for financial exploitation of clients by developing better training, tools, and partnerships with other agencies to identify newly evolving financial scams over the next two years.
- Seek additional long-term funding to add necessary staff and streamline processes of the APS program to better serve the anticipated growing senior population in our state over the next decade.
- Improve our APS case management capability and efficiency by identifying, purchasing, and fully implementing a new online case management system within the next two to three years.

Targeted Improvement Projects

Rationale: Using the results of your Environmental Scan, describe the targeted improvement projects and enhancements needed for this planning cycle. The intent of this section is to show how you will deploy your assets (people and resources) using the funds made available. The projects are intended to be a practical guide to allocating funds in your APS program and system.

Who to Include: Once again we recommend completing this portion with your program colleagues and stakeholders.

Purpose: Using a Logic Model framework will Explain the Why, the Context, and the Justification of how you will use the funds for program improvement or enhancement**.**

Tool: You have flexibility in the format you use to show how the funds will be deployed. One option is to use a logic model format to show what needs you will fill, what resources or inputs you will use, what activities you will undertake and what outputs and outcomes you hope to achieve.

Example

We have put a few examples in bold in the weaknesses and threats sections of the SWOT analysis to show you the next step in this process. Based on the SWOT Analysis, three projects for program Improvement are chosen.

Exhibit 2 – Sample SWOT Analysis

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	• *Proud to work for APS* • *APS staff work together well* • *APS is Visible to stakeholders* • *Client Focused* • *Passionate, Dedicated and Resilient Staff* • *APS Policy*	• *Salaries not competitive* • ***Turnover affects quality of my work*** • *Workload high and unmanageable* • *Lack of support for complex cases* • *APS Policy*
	Opportunities	Threats
External	• Grow program awareness to serve increasingly aging population • Explore new practices based on lessons learned • Enhance communication between APS leadership and field • Address new training needs	• ***Ongoing COVID Threat in served communities*** • *Lack of appropriate and adequate funding and staff resources* • **Increased workload of complex financial exploitation cases** • *Program too small to address the needs of the growing elderly population*

1. (Weakness) **High turnover and increased workload** are the context for purchasing Computer equipment and tablets to reduce paperwork time and stress and allow field inspectors to spend more time interacting with clients.
2. (Threat) **Ongoing COVID threat in the community** and high turnover rates are context for purchasing Personal Protective Equipment and training all employees in its proper use.
3. (Threat) **Growing level of complex financial exploitation** cases creating context for investment to work with 3rd party experts and other agencies who have training beyond that of our staff.

Please be sure your targeted improvements are concrete, measurable, and complete. Show both anticipated short term (first year) and long term (three to five year) outcomes.

Exhibit 3 – Example of Targeting Improvements Using a Logic Model Framework

Purpose/ Needs to be Filled by ARPA Funds	Inputs/ Resources Deployed	Activities	Outputs from Investment	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
Based on the environmental scan, what needs of your APS program will be served by the Elder Justice Act Funding? These needs should have a clear "connection" with the Environmental Scan or PESTEL items.	People, financial, organizational, or community resources directed toward doing the activity.	Develop Improvement projects. Identify the "What" for each targeted improvement, with enough context and information to explain.	Direct products of program activities. May include types, levels, and targets of services to be delivered by the program. **Examples** include number of people served, number of events held, and number of units of service provided.	Specific changes in behavior, knowledge, skills, status, or level of functioning in 1 year. Internal Benefits	Specific changes in behavior, knowledge, skills, status, or level of functioning. Long-Term outcomes should be achievable within the 2-to-5-year timeframe of grants. Benefits to your Clients

Purpose/ Needs to be Filled by ARPA Funds	Inputs/ Resources Deployed	Activities	Outputs from Investment	Shor-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
1. Spend more time with clients by reducing time spent on paperwork.	December 2021 One-time investment of $100k. Investment for tablets and related training.	**Example Project 1** Buy tablets for field investigators to reduce time spent on writing reports.	Increase face to face time spent with clients by 10% Create a matrix of resources for investigators to use in the field.	December 2021 Each field investigator has a tablet and is trained to use it. Creation of tools for investigator to use. Implementation of Communication Plan with stakeholders.	Increased time spent with clients because paperwork is automated.
2. Protect Staff from exposure to COVID.	$75k to purchase Personal protective Equipment for staff.	**Example Project 2** Protect staff from COVID infections when in the field.	Staff using PPE 100% of time when meeting with clients.	Staff have been trained and always use appropriate PPE.	No COVID infections spread from field interactions.
3. Greater Skill needed to combat growingly complex financial exploitation cases as our current capabilities are lagging.	$100k initial funding required to work with university and 3rd party consultants on training to spot and combat financial Exploitation.	**Example Project 3** Complexity and sophistication of financial fraud and exploitation is increasing so additional training and community partnerships are needed.	Increase the number of financial exploitation schemes detected and prevented by as much as 50%.	Field staff are better trained to detect potential financial exploitation and know when and how to involve law enforcement or other parties when needed.	Our staff regarded as above average among states / territories / districts in finding and addressing financial exploitation which benefits and protects our clients

Optional Risk Tracking – How to watch out for "Bumps in the Road" that may affect your plan.

Purpose: There are always unexpected events which require plans to adapt to new circumstances. In this section we look at how to be better prepared for the unexpected by tracking those factors that represent a potential risk to your plan and being prepared to act quickly if circumstances change in ways unfavorable to your plan. We call this "risk tracking." While not part of the required Operational plan submission, we recommend that you employ some form of risk tracking.

To begin the process, identify potential risks to achieving the plan, who will track them, what early warning signs we will watch for, and how we might respond. Elements to consider:

- Identify potential risks.
- For each risk, how likely is it to happen (high, medium, low).
- For each risk, how disruptive would it be if it happens (high, medium, low).
- Identify early warning signs that the risk is beginning to happen.
- Assign who will monitor each individual risk on an ongoing basis.

Review risks on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually). Include risk review as part of regularly occurring meetings or reviews. A simple categorization might be:

GREEN	No problem currently, continue to monitor.
YELLOW	Likelihood of risk is increasing, begin developing action plans and increase the intensity of monitoring review.
RED	The risk is becoming real. Act now! Develop new strategies to achieve your Goals in this new, less favorable environment.

You may want to consider developing formalized plans to address risks.

Exhibit 4 - Example: Risk Tracking Dashboard

Risk #	Potential Risk	Likelihood (Low, Medium, High)	Potential Disruption Level (Low, Medium, High)	Early Warning Signs	Current State (Green, Yellow, Red)	Who Will Monitor
Risk 1	COVID Flare Up	Medium	High	Infection Rate, Vax Rate, ICU Beds	Green	Karl
Risk 2	Economic Slowdown	High	High	Unemployment, Inflation	Red	Loren
Risk 3	Opioid Use Growth	Medium	High	Sales, Arrests	Yellow	Mike
Risk 4	New Financial Scams	Medium	Medium	Bitcoin, Bank Scams	Green	Jennifer
Risk 5	xxx	Medium	Low	xxx	Green	Andrew

Optional Communication Plan – How to keep your stakeholders "In the Loop".

Purpose: Effective communication requires a shared vocabulary (see Glossary), so people new to your program can understand and work together.

Goal: As you develop your Operational Plan have your team develop the right words to establish clear communication. Determine how frequently you will communicate.

Who to Include: Your team!

Ways to communicate: Webinars, virtual meetings, face to face meetings, email, phone calls, etc.

Exhibit 5 - Example: Communication Plan

Description Description Name of the Communication	Frequency How often it will happen	Method Method of communication	Audience Who will receive the communication	Owner Who is responsible
Staff Meeting	Monthly updates	In person	Internal Staff	Department Head
Webinar	Once	Online Video Webinar - Available for replay.	All internal Stakeholders.	Department Head
Phone Meeting with APS TARC SMEs.	Quarterly Updates or As Needed.	MS Teams Video Call.	Internal Staff, APS TARC SME.	Department Liaison
Program Update Emails	Quarterly or as needed.	Email Blast	Parent Agency and other internal stakeholders.	Department Liaison
NAMRS Submission	Annually	Online Submission.	NAMRS Staff and those they share with such as APS TARC staff.	Department Liaison or IT Person

References

Collins, J. C., & Porras, J. I. (1996, September-October). Building Your Company's Vision. *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 1-14.