

INITIATIVE (INT)

Initiative involves identifying a problem, obstacle or opportunity and taking appropriate action to address current or future problems or opportunities. As such, Initiative can be seen in the context of proactively doing things and not simply thinking about future actions. Formal strategic planning is not included in this competency.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> volunteering information or pin-pointing potential problems at work even if you are not directly involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focusing on your immediate concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taking action that will lead to improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hoping that you will get better over time, without really trying
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognizing courses of action which can be taken to handle potential problems before they are obvious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> waiting for someone else to point out the problem and suggest a solution, or operating by constantly "putting out fires"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> suggesting courses of action that others can take to improve work processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> thinking that things should be done differently but keeping those ideas to yourself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> questioning the way things are done and taking action that will lead to improved performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accepting the status quo and believing that improvement is an evolutionary process that will occur naturally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staying current with developments in your own and related fields in order to identify trends or emerging issues which apply to government practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focusing on work from one target to the next, without looking to see what else may be "coming down the pipe"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> being resilient and dealing productively with obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> letting the situation take control of your actions

Developmental Activities

Identify needed resources.

- On an ongoing basis, but particularly when new initiatives are introduced, identify the resources needed to accomplish your goals, seeking input from project team members.
- Identify the things you are able to obtain on your group's behalf and take action.

- Identify any constraints that exist in terms of providing required resources.
- Engage the group in problem solving to develop plans to overcome obstacles or shortages of resources.

Reflection Tip:

- * Is this initiative similar to a previous one? If so, can you use that previous experience to anticipate needs in this project?

Think about where your time goes.

- Create an estimate of what you should spend your time on each week, then keep a log of what you actually spend your time doing. Compare reality and your estimation. Have you consistently underestimated in particular areas?
- List any obstacles that are diverting your attention from the priorities.
- Identify strategies for overcoming the obstacles.
- Based on this review, take action.

Reflection Tips:

- * Consider the patterns which are emerging in your analysis – do they indicate a 'blind spot' for you? Would more information/ knowledge resolve the problem? Are your estimates simply unrealistic? You may just need to adjust your expectations.
- * Discuss your findings with your peers. Do they agree with your findings? Are they experiencing similar challenges?
- * Where do these obstacles come from? Are they internal? External? Personal? Which ones can you remove? Which ones must you simply work around? Are there any existing systems/support which would help you do this?

Try to think of improvement that could be made in your branch/organization.

- Chat with your co-workers about opportunities for making the branch more efficient.
- Arrange to meet with your manager and discuss these ideas.
 - ⇒ Do not be discouraged if your ideas are not implemented. As you think of, and discuss ideas, you will get a better sense for those which are practical in your organization.
- Assess the number of contributions you made as time progresses.

Reflection Tip:

- * Track your suggestions in a journal. Do you notice a trend in the types of suggestions you have been creating?

Keep an open mind about suggestions from others.

- Resist saying no to suggestions before you have had time to consider the idea.
- List all of the positive aspects of the request.
- List all of your concerns.
- Determine if the suggestions are consistent with your branch/Organization's strategy and direction.
- Ask yourself "What is the worst thing that could happen if this fails?" Decide whether you are willing and able to take that risk.
- Prepare an action plan for implementing the suggestion if it has merit.

Reflection Tip:

- * If the suggestion isn't appropriate in its initial form, spend some time thinking about how it would need to change in order to become appropriate.

Look for ways to improve the quality of your work.

- Identify the three to five most important quality measures for your own work.
- Use these measures to identify the area which is in greatest need of improvement.
- Develop an action plan to improve this area of quality over the next three months.
- Make sure your goal is "SMART" - specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and timed.
- Use the quality measures to assess the effectiveness of your plan over those three months.

Find out more about your organization.

- Take the initiative to understand your branch/organization better. For example, you might want to find out about what different jobs do, or you might want to find out more about information systems that support various functions within your branch/organization.
- Whatever it is you find interesting, the important thing is to take the initiative on your own to find out more than would normally be required in your job.

Reflection Tip:

- * Can you think of any opportunities you might have within your job to demonstrate or utilize this new knowledge?

Ask your manager what problems and opportunities he/she foresees arising in your work or in your area.

- Note how your manager thinks about the future; pay attention to the kinds of things he or she looks for in future opportunities.
- Consider how these ideas affect your current plans and priorities and take appropriate action to modify your plans to align them with the goals of your manager and your organization.

Reflection Tip:

- * Pay attention to how others evaluate problems and opportunities. Do you notice anything that might be useful for yourself?

Look for ways to challenge the status quo.

- Identify a key process or function for which you are accountable.
- Look for more effective ways to execute that process or function.
- Take proactive and sustained actions to remove any roadblocks that are impeding the process, and replace them with a more efficient approach that will improve the process.
- Ask your peers/manager for feedback on this new process.

Reflection Tip:

- * Sometimes a new process will impact people differently. Reflect on the varying impact of your new process throughout your team.

Level 2-3 Activities

Ask your manager to involve you in task force concerning a timely departmental problem. (The task force should be concerned with solving a problem, not writing a report on how someone else should do something).

- Use this opportunity to practice thinking ahead (e.g., 1-3 months) and acting on your thoughts.

- Play an active part in providing direction and ideas for the task force. Don't sit back and wait for other task force members to direct the action plan or tell you what to do.

Reflection Tip:

- * Reflect on your participation in the task force. What did you learn? What will you do differently next time?

Review initiatives that did not meet your expectations.

- Ask yourself and others "what happened?"
- What did you or others do or not do that contributed to the outcome?
- List those things that you or others would do differently.
- Develop a plan to ensure corrective action is taken in the future.
- Follow up on the effectiveness of this plan.
- Assess whether the forecasts actually materialized and were effectively dealt with.

Reflection Tip:

- * Do others have a different point of view than you do about what happened? Why?

Discuss with your manager your interest in taking on a broader range of job responsibilities.

- Consider the kinds of skills and knowledge you will need in the future.
- Talk about concrete steps you can take to move you toward your goals.
- Create a written action plan with forecasted timelines with your manager to develop those skills and knowledge for the job.
- Meet with your manager to review your timeline and determine whether your goals are being met.

Test new ideas that you have read about or learned form some other source to see if they could apply to your team.

- Develop a plan to incorporate the new idea into your team, even if you believe the idea may not be supported.
- Solicit feedback. Identify key learnings form your group's feedback. What changes would you have to make to your plan to make it fit your branch?
- Determine if there is still merit in bringing the idea forward. If so, present the plan to your manager, and discuss how it could be implemented within the next 4-12 months.

Reflection Tip:

- * Before presenting to your manager, identify and reflect on the potential outcomes associated with the implementation of the plan.

Take a longer-term project or assignment that you have become involved in and invest time to look ahead for potential problems.

- Break down the project or assignment into all the critical tasks and key milestones.
- Analyze each task and identify any potential areas of risk. Try to determine any areas where something could potentially go wrong (such as an untried technology, a shortage of experienced employees or a lack of resources).
- Sort the potential problems into high and low risk and prepare possible alternatives if the potential problems you have identified should occur.
- Review your task break-down, risk analysis and alternatives with your manager.

Reflection Tip:

- * Did you miss any critical areas in your analysis? Is there any action you could take so that you won't miss those critical areas the next time?

Identify an opportunity to make a unique contribution.

- Set an innovative goal to improve something in your department.
 - ⇒ If the goal is a particularly large one, improve the likelihood of achieving it by breaking it down into achievable steps.
- Publicly commit yourself to making this contribution by telling your peers what you intend to do.
- Clearly communicate the vision and purpose to all involved.
- Ensure project roles and accountabilities are clearly defined and understood by participants.
- Ensure progress reviews occur periodically, and are shared with all involved.

Reflection Tips:

- * What resources do you have available to help achieve the goal?
- * What impact will the goal have on your own and other branches/ministries?
- * Monitor the impact your contribution has made on your department.

Measure each accomplishment versus your goals.

- Each month, review what you have achieved relative to your goals.
- Take into account changing priorities. It will not always be simple to assess what you have accomplished versus your goals when the goals change. However, do not use this as an excuse to avoid self-assessment.
- Consider what you intended to accomplish over the months and ask yourself how satisfied you are with what you actually achieved.
- List any obstacles that are getting in the way of achieving your objectives.
- Identify strategies for overcoming the obstacles.
- Based on this review, take action.

Level 4 Activities

Look for ways to challenge the status quo.

- Identify a key process or function for which your team is accountable.
- Look for more effective ways to execute that process or function.
- Take proactive and sustained actions to remove any roadblocks that are impeding the process, and replace them with a more efficient approach that will improve the process.
- Ask your colleagues/team for feedback on this new process.
- Review initiatives that did not meet your expectations.
- Ask yourself and others "what happened?".
- What did you or others do or not do that contributed to the outcome?
- List those things that you or others would do differently.
- Develop a plan to ensure corrective action is taken in the future.
- Follow up on the effectiveness of this plan.

Reflection Tip:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Are there any common roadblocks that consistently get in the way? |
|---|

Look ahead for opportunities and problems.

- Conduct a scenario planning session with your team:
 - ⇒ Lead team members through the process of identifying what could happen in the next six months (either positive or negative) that could take them off their track, regarding planned actions.
 - ⇒ Describe the possible scenarios.
 - ⇒ Lead them in developing a plan to handle these situations if they should arise.
- Assess whether the forecasts actually materialized and were effectively dealt with.

Develop an action plan for each of your key initiatives.

- Prioritize your initiatives based on the following questions:
 - ⇒ Is it important to the organization's strategic objectives?
 - ⇒ Is it realistic or achievable in the expected time frame?
 - ⇒ Is it challenging, innovative and of moderate risk?
- Identify the performance measures that you will use for each initiative.
- Write down the specific goals that you want to accomplish for each initiative and the date by which you want them accomplished.
- Develop an action plan to support each of your goals.
- Identify resources required, time frames and plans for overcoming anticipated obstacles. Share these action plans with your employees and make sure they understand their role in implementing these action plans.
- Regularly monitor progress against goals for yourself, the department and individual employees. Adjust resourcing, as required.
- Recognize appropriate progress made toward goals and do what is necessary to ensure that goals are met.
- Celebrate your successes as a team.

Reflection Tip:

- * Get employees' input on the resources required for new initiatives. What do they think it will take? Is it feasible, given other commitments? Have they participated in similar initiatives in the past? What were the resourcing challenges? How can you work together to avoid similar problems?

Develop an ability to “bounce back” after a setback.

- Think of a recent initiative that has stalled.
- Identify all obstacles that are currently impacting the initiative.
- Review the priority of the initiative. Given the present state of the obstacles you've just identified, is it still worth pursuing?
- If you decide to pursue the initiative, examine each obstacle individually, and list potential methods of removing or minimizing their impact.
- Put together an action plan, with other team members by evaluating the list of methods you've just created.

Reflection Tips:

- * Discuss the stalled initiative with your peers. Do they have any additional insight into the present obstacles?
- * Consider who else could be involved to aid in dealing with the obstacles. Do the obstacles impact different members of your team differently? What could you do to assist the team members?

Create a task force to come up with new ways of increasing productivity, quality, etc.

- Select a cross-functional group of people who have demonstrated innovation in the past.
- As a team, review and analyze the operations and processes performed by each functional area for factors such as ease of use, quality, effectiveness, efficiency, contribution to customer satisfaction.
- For those processes/operations which are not favourably evaluated, rank their importance to the attainment of departmental goals.
- Challenge the team to develop alternatives to existing work processes/operations in the high priority areas.
- When alternatives have been developed, compare them to the existing processes and strategic objectives of your division. Also compare them to the strategic objectives of the organization.
- Evaluate the relative costs and contributions of each alternative. Calculate the return on investment as specifically as possible – you may need to investigate which metrics exist that will best suit your analysis.

- Develop an action plan with the team for implementation of the best alternative. This plan should include a timeline, required resources, steps to be taken, issues to be resolved or addressed and a communication strategy for keeping the affected parties informed regarding the proposed changes and the expected costs and benefits.

Reflection Tips:

- * Provide your team with the boundaries (time, resources, etc.) within which they need to work. Alert them to any points of integration with which they may be unfamiliar.
- * Do these new processes align with the organizational objectives? Do they fit within the boundaries? Will they serve the customers (internal and external) well?

Assess the implications of implementing.

- Identify a complex issue you are going to have to address over the next few months and list the choices of action you have.
- List the most likely significant consequences for each choice (use the table shown in the example at the end of this exercise).
- Rate the importance of each consequence. Use a five-point scale:
⇒ 1 (not very important) to 5 (very important)
- Label each consequence as a cost (-) or as a benefit (+).
- Make a rough estimate as to the *likelihood* of each consequence. Use 0% (certain the consequence won't happen) to 100% (certain the consequence will happen).
- Multiply the importance rating by the likelihood value for each consequence and sum the total (see the example following).

Example: Should we introduce a new program to our already busy schedule?

Consequence	Importance	Likelihood	Total
Improve Service	+4	100	400
Positive response by customers	+3	50	150
Increased stress level	-5	100	-500
TOTAL			+50

In this example, the analysis indicates the benefits outweigh the costs for this particular choice of action.

- Repeat the above analysis for each choice of action you have identified.

- Select the option with the highest totals once you have completed the totals for each option.
- For that option, document the steps that you will need to take to increase the impact and likelihood of positive consequences and decrease the impact and likelihood of negative consequences.
- Review your analysis with your manager and ask for his or her input. Add any other consequences you both identify and repeat your analysis.
- Ensure nothing important is missing and commit to your course of action.
- Keep a written record of the decisions you make based on this technique.

Reflection Tips:

- * Reflect on the consequences you've identified. Did you miss anything? Don't forget to think broader scope to consider organizational consequences, as well.
- * Ask yourself if there are steps you could take to impact the likelihood of particular consequences.

Identify a situation where there are several possible courses of action you can take to move ahead with your vision and initiatives.

- Write down the situation.
- Identify several possible options to achieve your vision. Write these across the top of the chart.
- List the criteria you will use to evaluate each option down the left side of the chart. For example:

Criteria	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Resource costs (e.g., time, people, capital)			
Political Risk			
Efficiency			

- Determine how well each option meets each criterion. Assign a weight for each option against each criterion using the scale below:
 - ⇒ 1 = Option does not meet criterion
 - ⇒ 2 = Option minimally meets criterion
 - ⇒ 3 = Option somewhat meets criterion
 - ⇒ 4 = Option fully meets criterion

Competencies that support PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

⇒ 5 = Option exceeds criterion

Criteria	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Resource costs (e.g., time, people, capital)	1	2	3
Political Risk	4	5	2
Efficiency	3	2	1
TOTALS:			
Pros/Cons			
Selection			

- Total the weight scores for each option at the bottom of the chart.
- Determine the pros and cons of each option on the chart.
- Select the option which best meets your most important criteria.
- For that option, develop and implement a plan to limit the impact of the cons and maximize the pros.

Reflection Tip:

- * Share your analysis with peers, and ask for their comments and evaluation of the situation.