AzCAN Assessment Process

Introduction

In 2011, the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN) convened a Student Stands Task Force (Task Force) to define college and career readiness for Arizona students. Over the course of nearly two years and through a highly engaging and iterative process that included the review of literature, best practices and expert feedback, the Task Force -- composed of practitioners and experts in secondary education, higher education, community-based organizations, and workforce development -- developed the College Access Standards for Student Success.

The seven AzCAN Standards support the overarching goal of helping all Arizona students succeed in life -- from completing high school and postsecondary education to finding success in meaningful careers. Each AzCAN Standards includes a set of knowledge and behavior competencies that enable students to be college and career ready when they graduate from high school. The AzCAN Standards also align with the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) Common Measures. Developed in 20120, the NCAN Common Measures articulate for the college access and success field a set of common outcomes to track student progress toward postsecondary enrollment and completion.

Taken together, the AzCAN Standards and the NCAN Common Measures provide a consistent language about what students need to become college and career ready and how to track their progress. The AzCAN Standards present a framework of knowledge and skills that college access and success practitioners need to support to help students meet long-term success pursue meaningful careers while the NCAN Common Measures help track student progress.

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Introduction cont.

The College Access Standards for Student Success

AzCAN's College Access and Success Standards outline the factors critical to students' postsecondary success and provide a guide for professionals along the PreK-16 continuum to prepare all students to be college and career-ready. These Standards are intended to be used by college access programs and school educators to improve the effectiveness of programs and services.

Standard 1:

Students build awareness and aspirations about postsecondary options, including college and careers.

Standard 2:

Students recognize the roles of social, emotional and cultural factors that affect their postsecondary planning and transition.

Standard 3:

Students build a rigorous academic foundation and develop academic behaviors essential to preparing for postsecondary pathways.

Standard 4:

Students develop a comprehensive support system that contributes to their academic success.

Standard 5:

Students acquire the college knowledge and skills necessary to successfully transition into postsecondary education pathways.

Standard 6:

Students understand the fundamentals of financial literacy and financial planning for postsecondary education.

Standard 7:

Students enroll, persist and successfully complete a postsecondary education program of study.

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Putting the Standards and the Common Measures into Action

This toolkit outlines a three-step Assessment Process to help college access and success practitioners apply the AzCAN Standards and the NCAN Common Measure to their own activities, programs and organizations. The Assessment Process helps college access and success practitioners take stock of what supports students success and what additional improvements may be necessary to enhance this success.

The Assessment Process is designed to help participants:

EXAMINE CURRENT PRACTICES:

What services and supports do we provide? How do these services and supports help students achieve success?

DEFINE QUALITY:

What does "excellence" look like in our programs? How can we continue to build the quality of our programming to increase student success?
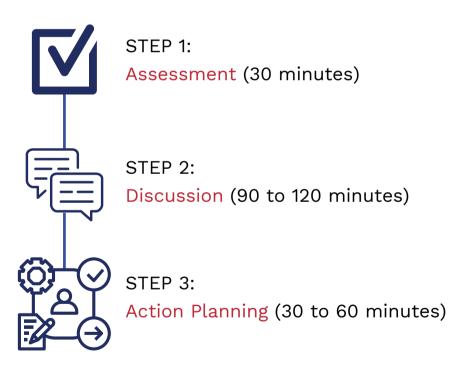
REFLECT ON IMPACT:

What impact are we having on our students and how can we measure that impact? How can we continue to strengthen our programs and activities, and build organizational capacity to increase student success?

Introduction cont.

The three-step Assessment Process takes two to four hours to complete, including planning time and depending on the length and depth of discussion and action planning

STEP 1:
Assessment (30 minutes)

STEP 2:
Discussion (90 to 120 minutes)

STEP 3:
Action Planning (30 to 60 minutes)

Following the Introduction is a Facilitator Guide for the individual(s) leading the Assessment Process. Within the Facilitator Guide are the three-step Assessment Process materials. The At a Glance Standards Activities and Measures section includes an "At a Glance" reference table with the AzCAN Standards and competencies, sample services or activities and NCAN Common Measures or other metrics.

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STEP 1:

Assessment

This step should take approximately 30 minutes to complete

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Assessment Instruction

To complete the assessment:

- Review resources, specifically the "At a Glance" table, in advance of, and as a reference when completing the assessment.

- Set aside 20-30 minutes and complete the assessment. Please answer honestly.

- If completing online: follow the online instructions.

- If using a paper version: submit the assessment to your facilitator.

STEP 2:

Discussion

This step should take approximately 60 to 120 minutes depending on the depth of discussion.

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Discussion Guide

Now that you have completed and compiled the results of the assessment the following Discussion Guide will help you reflect on the results and plan your next steps.

Teams are encouraged to treat the Discussion Guide as a menu of questions in three areas: (1) students, (2) program quality and (3) organizational capacity. Choose the questions of the greatest importance and interest for your team.

Teams will have the opportunity to explore the What, So What and Now What of their work:

- **What:** Teams discuss their individual assessment results and compare the data/evidence they used to make their assessments.
- **So What:** Teams use the complied assessment results to identify and think about the strengths and gaps in their programs - for example identifying ways to refine and expand their work.
- **Now What:** Teams identify next steps. The goal at the end of the discussion is a strong action plan with clear methods for measuring results.

What

Now What Action Planning Worksheet

Now What

So What

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Discussion Guide

What:

- Where did opinions among respondents align and where did they differ?

- Where is there a variety of different responses? Why do we think that is?

- Which AzCAN Standards did team members identify as primary or secondary areas of focus and which were not? Why do we think that is?

So What: Students

- Focusing more deeply on our students: What do we know about the assets and the needs of our students? How do we know? (Look for evidence and data sources, both anecdotal and systematic)

- Which students are we not reaching that we should and why? How do we know? (Look for evidence and data source, anecdotal and systematic)

- Considering our students -- those benefiting from our services and those we may want to reach -- and the AzCAN Standards that we are focused on (answers in Section 2 of the assessment). Of those Standards, which do we think are meeting our students need well? Which ones might we need to focus on or improve?

- Which AzCAN Standards are we not programming toward that our students need?

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Discussion Guide

So What: Program Quality

- In section 3 of the assessment, which AzCAN Standards do most of us agree that we are programming toward well? Where do we think we need to improve?
- For each identified "target" AzCAN Standard:
  - What do we know about the quality of our services and activities associated with this Standard?
  - How are we measuring quality? (Look for evidence and data sources both anecdotal and systematic) Which NCAN Common Measures Apply?
  - Referring to your assessment results, which Quality Indicators are lowest, which ones are highest, and why? On which Quality Indicators do staff members differ in their opinions of quality? Why is this, and what can we do to alleviate this difference?
  - What would we need to focus on to improve the quality of our services to help students meet this AzCAN standard?
- Taking into consideration what we discussed and know about our students, our programmatic and organizational priorities, and the results of this assessment, which AzCAN Standard(s) should we target? Why?
- In what ways might we want to expand our programming, for example to new students or with a more comprehensive set of services?
- What AzCAN Standards, if any, are we not programming to currently that we would like to explore? Why?

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Discussion Guide

So What: Organizational Capacity

- What organizational capacities do we need to focus on if we are going to continue to increase the quality of our programming and improve student outcomes? Why?
- Given our current assets and resources, what can we do to improve current programs?
- What organizational policies or practices might we need to fine-tune? Which ones are missing that we need to address? How do we know?
- How can we connect with external partners and resources to provide more comprehensive services, supports and activities for our students or provide the services or resources that are outside of our organizational scope or ability? What potential partners exist and what would this sort of relationship require of us?

Consensus on Final Assessment

In the same discussion or a subsequent time, review compiled results and agree to final responses for each AzCAN Standard. These can be the group average or a score reached through discussion. The facilitator will submit the final assessment to AzCAN.

Now What: Action Planning

Following the discussion, the facilitator or note-taker should summarize the discussion notes, highlighting the key issues/desired changes that arose. Use these key issues to complete the Now What Action Planning Worksheet to identify and prioritize specific actions. Keep a copy of this Worksheet to review progress over time.

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STEP 3:

Action Planning

This step should take approximately 60 to 120 minutes depending on the depth of discussion.

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Action Planning

This Now What Action Planning Worksheet provides space for documenting actions that result from the team discussion. After the note taker or facilitator has shared summary notes from the discussion, reconvene the assessment team to prioritize specific actions that can address the key issues/desired changes that emerged from the discussion.

Teams should use this worksheet to:

1. Identify specific actions to address the agreed-upon changes,
2. Establish priorities, and identify who is responsible for specific actions, and
3. Create timelines for next steps.

- Modification of existing programming, including curriculum, design, and activities
- Development of new programming
- Identification of technical assistance needs
- Evaluation activities
- Planning and research of best practices and curriculum
- Outreach and building new partnerships or changes in partnerships
- Identification or modification of continuous improvement processes
- Professional development opportunities for staff

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Action Planning: Worksheet

Based on discussion of key issues, describe the actions you will prioritize. List higher priority actions at the top and lower priority actions below. Map out responsibilities, timing and next steps.

Action	Timeframe Start-End	Team Member(s) Responsible	Immediate Next Steps

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