



Strategic Plan 2017–2022

Adopted on October 18, 2017

Updated on October 31, 2019



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
History and Accomplishments	6
THE NEED AND OPPORTUNITY	8
POSITIONING SMARTER BALANCED FOR THE FUTURE	9
VISION, MISSION, AND BELIEFS	11
SMARTER BALANCED’S STRATEGIC DIRECTION	12
GOALS AND STRATEGIES	13
GOALS AND STRATEGIES: 1–5 Years	14
▲ Assessment System Improvements and Innovations	14
▲ Communications and Public Affairs.....	16
▲ Operating Model and Governance Structure	17
GOALS AND STRATEGIES: Long Term	18
▲ Assessment System Improvements and Innovations	18
Appendix: STRATEGIC PLANNING METHODOLOGY	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium provides parents and educators with an innovative assessment system that is fair, reliable and accessible and that provides actionable information to improve teaching and learning. With a membership comprised of 13 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Bureau of Indian Education, Smarter Balanced has engaged thousands of educators across the country in the development of this state-of-the-art, online assessment system, as well as complementary tools for educators, that are aligned to college- and career-ready content standards.

Consortium members and staff are unified by the conviction that a high-quality, comprehensive system of assessments, developed collaboratively with educators, can provide information and tools that improve instruction and help students succeed regardless of physical abilities, degree of English language proficiency, race, ethnicity or economic security. Smarter Balanced's mission is to develop high-quality, innovative assessments, data and tools that help policymakers, educators and families better prepare students for success in college and careers.

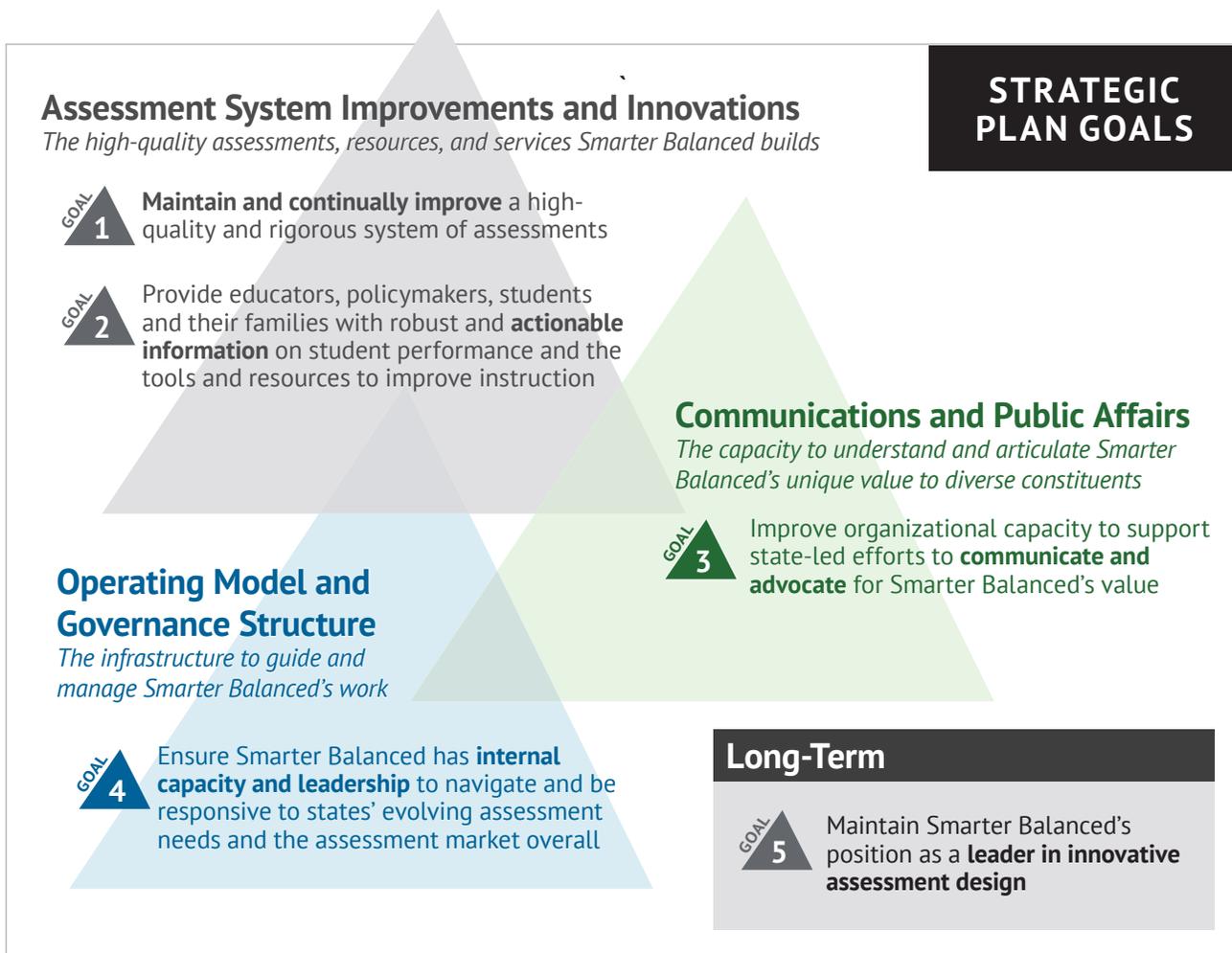
“ Smarter Balanced’s mission is to develop **high-quality, innovative assessments, data and tools** that help policymakers, educators and families better prepare students for success in college and careers. ”

Strategic Plan Process

Smarter Balanced began a seven-month process to develop its 2017–2022 strategic planning in October 2016. The organization worked with Education First, a national strategy and policy organization, to fine-tune its long-term vision, clarify a guiding theory of action, and articulate goals, strategies and potential investments that would serve the organization's mission over the next five years. The planning process engaged over 80 representatives from all members—including state chiefs, other education agency policymakers, assessment directors, higher education leaders and researchers—at different points as the plan evolved. Smarter Balanced and Education First also sought out perspective and advice about the challenges and opportunities facing Smarter Balanced from a diverse range of external partners, education leaders, advocates and funders.

Goals

Throughout the process, these conversations affirmed Smarter Balanced's unique value as a provider of a distinctively high-quality assessment system. These conversations also led to the identification of opportunities for the organization to innovate and evolve in response to the changing education landscape and a growing interest in learning that is more adaptive, personalized and accessible to educators, students and families. These insights clarified three critical areas of focus to strengthen the organization's value proposition and helped inform the development of five goals within the strategic plan, as described below.



To prioritize and communicate the operational work necessary to achieve the goals, the plan also details the main strategies to pursue under each goal and specific activities to implement over the next 1–2 years. These activities are designed to both improve the Consortium's assessment system in the near-term and to lay a strong foundation for longer-term innovations.

Importantly, while the strategic plan sets out clear markers to guide Smarter Balanced in the next few years, it also maintains a commitment to continuous improvement and refinement. The Consortium will engage its members—including policymakers, educators and families in their states—to help monitor and adjust the plan as needed to confront emerging needs and challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Begun in 2010 as states were redoubling their efforts to prepare students with the skills and knowledge to succeed beyond high school, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is a unique state partnership to provide high-quality assessments and resources for improving teaching and learning. Specifically, Smarter Balanced and its members are tackling the shared challenge of assessing student learning (using rigorous items, computer-adaptive technology and rich accessibility supports for all types of learners) and providing useful tools for educators to use this information to improve student achievement. Since its inception, Smarter Balanced has successfully created an innovative and comprehensive assessment system—including a **Digital Library** of formative assessment tools, **interim assessments** for periodic student check-ups, and a best-in-class **summative assessment** with a rich array of performance-based tasks—as well as a variety of educator and policymaker tools to support student success. Independent reviews—from researchers to educators actively teaching in a classroom—have validated the exceptional quality of Smarter Balanced’s tools.

To guide activities that build on these successes and ensure Smarter Balanced continues to create value for its member states, the Consortium has adopted a new strategic plan for 2017-2022. This plan builds on its past successes and prioritizes a set of short-term and long-term innovations, new supports for members and additional educator resources. This plan is designed to inform coherent and effective decision-making and action at all levels of the organization and provide an overall vision for the organization’s future.

<h2>A Balanced Assessment System</h2> <p>With online assessments that measure students’ progress toward college and career readiness, Smarter Balanced gives educators information and tools to improve teaching and learning.</p> 	<h3>DIGITAL LIBRARY</h3> <p>An online collection of thousands of educator-created classroom tools and resources</p> 
	<h3>INTERIM ASSESSMENTS</h3> <p>Optional and flexible tests given throughout the year to help teachers monitor student progress</p> 
	<h3>SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS</h3> <p>Year-end assessments for grades 3–8 and 11 with a computer adaptive test and performance tasks in math and ELA</p> 

HISTORY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since its inception, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium has focused on building an innovative and comprehensive system of assessments, including a state summative assessment, interim and formative assessment tools for educators and a suite of teaching resources—all aligned to college- and career-readiness content and achievement standards. Importantly, Smarter Balanced tools have been designed for and with educators, with thousands of educators involved in developing test specifications, specific items and accompanying resources.

For decades prior to 2010, the assessments available to educators across the country were narrow in scope and low in rigor, and did not focus on the problem-solving, writing and critical-thinking skills students need for success. In addition, students learning English and those with other special needs were too often excluded from these assessments all together; tests were not built to allow these students to show what they knew and could do, thus keeping their progress and performance in the shadows.

Seeing the opportunity to improve the quality of assessments dramatically if they pooled resources and knowledge, states and territories from across the U.S. came together to create the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.

A New Type of Assessment System

Smarter Balanced's members formally adopted its original vision, mission and operating model in March 2013. Since then, Smarter Balanced has made critical investments and impressive progress in creating a new type of assessment system that meets the needs of all students and maintains fair and high standards for how to measure what students know and are able to do. Early elements of this system include:

- ▶ Summative assessments are focused on measuring critical thinking, problem solving and students' abilities to apply their knowledge via an accessible, online computer-adaptive testing platform. These assessments were piloted in 2013 and field-tested in 2014 before they were fully implemented in member states during the 2014–15 school year. They have now been used successfully for five rounds of annual state testing and are part of state accountability systems.
- ▶ Smarter Balanced provides educators with access to an online Digital Library equipped with training modules, exemplar teaching units and other resources that support educators in making data-based decisions about how well their students are learning. The Consortium also developed formative assessment tools and optional interim assessments that allow educators to check students' progress throughout the year, giving them information they can use to improve their instruction and tailor supports for struggling students.
- ▶ Smarter Balanced's summative and interim tests include state-of-the-art accessibility resources that address visual, auditory, and physical access barriers—allowing virtually all students to demonstrate what they know and can do. These accessibility resources such as Braille, stacked Spanish translations, videos in American Sign Language and glossaries in more than 10 languages would be cost-prohibitive for states to create on

their own.

- ▶ Smarter Balanced invests in ongoing research and evaluation to validate and continuously improve its assessments and other tools. Complementing these efforts, independent reviews of the quality and content of Smarter Balanced’s end-of-year summative assessment have shown it provides information that is valid, reliable and cognitively demanding. For example, award-winning educators convened by the National Network of State Teachers of the Year to review the test concluded that Smarter Balanced better aligns “...with the kinds of strong instructional practices these expert teachers believe should be used in the classroom, and thereby better supports great teaching and learning throughout the school year.”¹

Designing, refining, successfully rolling out and evaluating the efficacy of its then new summative assessment, alongside other tools for educators, were complex and critical undertakings. While investments will continue to be made in improving the summative assessment, Smarter Balanced also recognizes that state tests alone will not change student learning; these tests are one important tool in a larger system designed to ensure students are learning what they need for success. Thus, a major priority for Smarter Balanced moving forward will be to maintain the quality and innovation embedded in its summative assessment while also prioritizing the development and roll-out of additional interim and formative assessment and other tools to support educators.

What makes Smarter Balanced different?

Fair and Accurate for *All* Students



Our end-of-year tests are supported by Computer Adaptive Technology and include a broad array of accessibility features, allowing all students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Endorsed by Higher Education



More than 200 colleges and universities in ten states use Smarter Balanced test scores as a factor in determining students’ readiness for credit-bearing college courses.

Created by Teachers



The Smarter Balanced assessment system has been developed by the states that use it. More than 5,000 educators have contributed to creating test items and instructional resources.

Helps Teachers Help Students



Teachers can use optional and flexible interim assessments throughout the year to check student understanding, helping them target their instruction where students need help.

Measures Critical Thinking



Unlike bubble tests of the past, our tests require students to write, think critically, and use evidence to support their answers, better preparing them for college and careers.

Supports Classroom Instruction



Educators have access to a Digital Library of thousands of high-quality instructional tools and resources—created by educators for educators—to support classroom teaching.

1. Catherine McClellan, Jilliam Joe, Katherine Bassett. [The Right Trajectory: State Teachers of the Year Compare Former and New State Assessment](#). NNSTOY Report, November 2015.

THE NEED AND OPPORTUNITY

Education policy and priorities at the national, state and district levels all have shifted significantly since most states adopted new college- and career-ready standards in 2010. These changes in state standards have led to changes in curriculum and a need for richer assessments to measure student learning.

Increasingly, educators are clamoring for more tools to support their efforts to boost student learning and to complement what the main state summative assessment tool provides—and state education leaders are prioritizing providing these resources. These supports include:

- ▶ receiving student achievement data that is more actionable,
- ▶ more standards-aligned,
- ▶ day-to-day formative assessment processes to use in classrooms, and
- ▶ resources to help translate assessment information into effective teaching practices.

Looking further out, over the next decade, education and assessment leaders expect the trend to continue toward personalized, “competency-based learning,”² where student learning is organized and progress is measured using state-sponsored definitions of the knowledge and skills (or competencies) students need to master before advancing through the education system. As a result of rapid shifts in technology, learning has the potential to be more adaptive, personalized, and directly accessible to educators, students and families. More than ever, these innovations will require the creativity, expertise, and commitment of skilled educators.

2. Susan Patrk and Maria Worthen. [The Every Student Succeeds Act: A Catalyst for Competency Education at Scale?](#) iNACOL CompetencyWorks Report, October 2016.

POSITIONING SMARTER BALANCED FOR THE FUTURE

Smarter Balanced is poised to build on its successes as a “next generation” innovator in testing and educator tools. It will continue to embrace and invest in creating high-quality performance-based assessments and using technology to provide educators better information about student learning. Smarter Balanced will succeed by continuing to refine and improve its core systems and by responding to new demands in a competitive field of assessment providers and new state education policies.

Recognizing the Critical Role of Educators

Smarter Balanced’s strategic planning efforts are rooted in the belief upon which the organization was founded—and what research suggests matters most for student learning: Great educators and great content are key to student learning. Smarter Balanced cannot achieve its mission without excellent educators. The organization is committed to promoting and supporting the important role that educators play as the critical facilitators of student learning. Accordingly, the strategic plan prioritizes strengthening tools for educators to improve teaching and learning.

“Great educators and great content are key to student learning. Smarter Balanced cannot achieve its mission without excellent educators.”

Utilizing Stakeholder Input

In addition, Smarter Balanced’s 2017–2022 strategic plan re-affirms its founding principles of rigor, accessibility and participatory governance. Smarter Balanced has thrived in so many states across the country because of the shared commitment of its members to developing a higher-quality system of assessments—across multiple states and by engaging educators and stakeholders within states.

State leaders and educators guided the creation of Smarter Balanced in 2010 and their input and expertise informs Smarter Balanced’s future direction now. Indeed, with the support of Education First, Smarter Balanced engaged nearly 80 stakeholders over six months, including state chiefs, other state education policymakers, higher education leaders, researchers, advocates and educators (see Appendix A for a full list). These consultations have helped clarify and refine its organizational priorities and strengthen its capacity to respond to educator needs across member states.

For example, part of this stakeholder consultation included one-on-one interviews with a diverse mix of education leaders across the sector who could speak to Smarter Balanced’s value to states, areas for future growth and new innovation, and challenges to navigate. Findings from these interviews—which directly impacted choices about what to prioritize in the strategic plan—are summarized below.

Stakeholder Findings

Stakeholders identified several important findings that serve as the foundation for Smarter Balanced’s renewed vision, mission, goals and strategies.

- 1 Smarter Balanced’s summative state assessment is known for its **high quality**, and its accessibility features are considered “best-in-class.”
- 2 The assessment needs and the local context of state leaders have changed and **state decisions about assessment are informed by a range of factors** including cost, test duration and length, frequency and availability of formative and summative results.
- 3 Recognizing Smarter Balanced’s differentiator from other assessment options is its commitment to providing a **“system of assessment” for improving teaching and learning**. It should further strengthen its system through its suite of interim assessments, making data reporting more user-friendly reporting and increasing the use of the Digital Library.
- 4 To maintain a strong position in the field and support states’ evolving assessment needs, Smarter Balanced should build on its leadership in innovative assessments, **strategically investing in research and development** beyond the current state summative assessment.
- 5 Smarter Balanced should be more proactive in **supporting states’ communications**, specifically around the value that local stakeholders seek out of their assessment system.
- 6 Smarter Balanced should **increase its internal capacity and leadership** to even more effectively navigate and respond to states’ evolving assessment needs and the changing assessment market overall.

Committed to Continuous Improvement

Importantly, while the strategic plan sets out clear markers to guide Smarter Balanced in the next few years, it also maintains a commitment to continuous improvement and refinement. The plan sets out a set of immediate priorities for Smarter Balanced to tackle in the next few years as well as innovations and new products for the consortia to explore further. Mirroring the best formative assessment practices, Smarter Balanced is articulating its intended outcomes and approach in this plan but also knows these will need to shift over time to respond to new learning. The members of the consortia—and feedback from policymakers, educators and families in their states—will be engaged in deliberate reviews to help monitor and adjust the plan as needed to confront both emerging needs and new opportunities.



VISION, MISSION, AND BELIEFS

Smarter Balanced’s commitment to providing educators with meaningful, actionable information and resources to guide teaching and learning serves as the foundation for the organization’s vision, mission and beliefs.

Vision

Educators have the resources, tools and knowledge to prepare students—regardless of background and ability—for successful, productive futures and choices after high school.

Mission

Smarter Balanced develops high-quality, innovative assessments, data and tools that help policymakers, educators and families better prepare students for success in college and careers.

Beliefs

All students can learn rigorous content.

Smarter Balanced assessments and supporting resources are accessible to student populations and customizable to individual student needs.

Assessments can help ensure all students have equitable access to learning.

A system of high-quality assessments—including interim and summative tests—is one essential tool for helping understand the needs of individual students as well as the tracking the progress of schools, districts and the state as a whole.

Educators can be more successful when they have high-quality tools, data and resources.

High-quality assessments—coupled with high-quality resources and supports—help educators adjust their instruction to better meet the needs of all students. Smarter Balanced aims to help educators better help students.

Assessment systems need innovation and improvement.

States created Smarter Balanced because the quality of vendor-driven assessment systems is uneven. Working through the Consortium, states are able to pioneer innovative assessment design and item types. And, recognizing assessment shouldn’t be a one-time event, Smarter Balanced is giving educators connected, continuous resources that allow students to demonstrate what they know and can do over time and to more quickly diagnose where they need help.

States can accomplish more together.

States can better implement a bold, aggressive and innovative vision in partnership and with pooled resources. The Consortium is effective because of the broad participation, active engagement, shared learning agenda and thoughtful governance of policymakers and educators from its member states.

SMARTER BALANCED'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Theory of Action



IF Smarter Balanced works with its members to:

1. Maintain and continually improve a **high-quality and rigorous system of assessments**
2. Provide educators, policymakers, students and their families **robust and actionable information** on student performance from these assessments and the tools and resources to improve instruction
3. Maintain Smarter Balanced's position as a leader in **innovative assessment design**
4. **Improve organizational capacity** to support state-led efforts to communicate and advocate for Smarter Balanced's value
5. Ensure Smarter Balanced has **internal capacity and leadership** to navigate and be responsive to states' evolving assessment needs and the assessment market overall



THEN States will have the **resources, tools and knowledge** necessary to implement a high-quality system of assessments to improve teaching and learning.



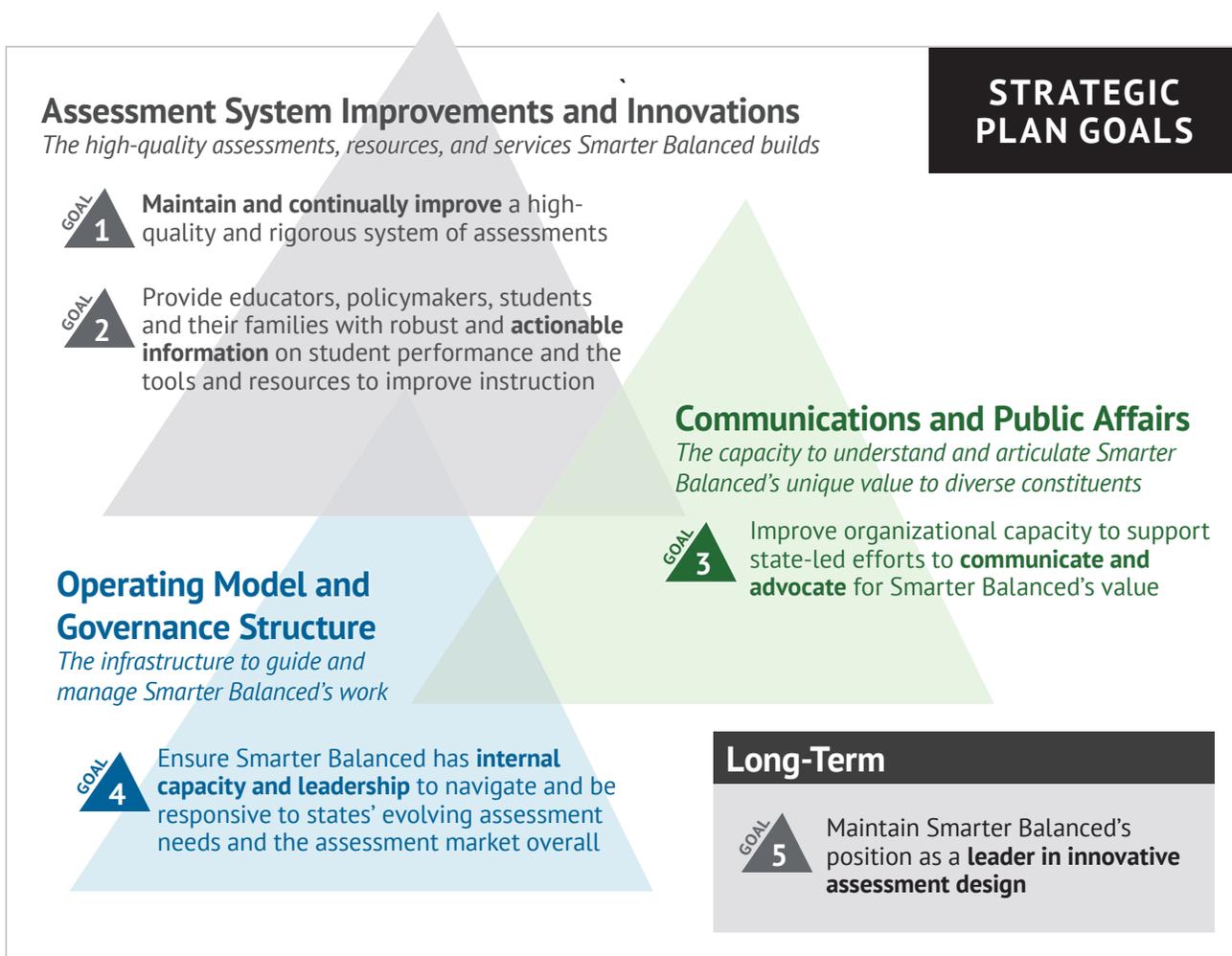
AS A RESULT, Students, regardless of background and ability, will be **prepared for a successful, productive future and choices** after high school.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The foundation of Smarter Balanced’s value, as identified by its stakeholders, rests in three key areas:

1. **Assessment System Improvements and Innovations:** The high-quality assessments, resources, and services Smarter Balanced builds.
2. **Communications and Public Affairs:** The capacity to understand and articulate Smarter Balanced’s unique value to diverse constituents.
3. **Operating Model and Governance Structure:** The infrastructure to guide and manage Smarter Balanced’s work.

Smarter Balanced staff and members have set 5 key goals and committed to supportive strategies to achieve their vision, mission and theory of action, in alignment with these three areas. Smarter Balanced’s goals are as follows:



The goals and related strategies within each area are designed to focus decision-making and planning over the next five years. In addition, activities proposed within each strategy reflects the work that Smarter Balanced will prioritize to improve the existing system while also laying a critical foundation for innovations that could span over the next decade.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES: 1–5 YEARS

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AND INNOVATIONS



Maintain and continually improve a high-quality and rigorous system of assessments

Part of Smarter Balanced’s value proposition is its coherent and aligned assessment system from elementary through high school that measures students’ readiness for college and careers. Extending its best-in-class reputation for quality, Smarter Balanced will further enhance the precision and accessibility of its assessment questions and their predicative validity for success after high school—making a strong system even stronger. In addition, Smarter Balanced will prioritize the further development and improve the utility of its interim assessments to fully complement its high-quality summative assessment.

5-YEAR STRATEGIES	KEY ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY IN THE NEXT 1–2 YEARS
<p>A) Enhance the precision and accessibility of the existing summative assessment</p>	<p>i) Create additional items at all achievement levels on the summative assessment to increase precision for students throughout the performance continuum</p> <p>ii) Deploy additional accessibility features (such as illustration glossaries, accessible calculator and multi-stage Braille and unified English Braille) to further ensure that data from the tests are meaningful from all students</p>
<p>B) Enhance existing and create additional interim assessments</p>	<p>i) Develop additional and more specific interim assessment options for English language arts/literacy and mathematics</p> <p>ii) Provide instructional resources that support educators to effectively use additional interim assessments to help their students learn</p>
<p>C) Build the capacity of vendors to support members states by improving the quality and volume of test platform specifications</p>	<p>i) Provide resources and support to increase the number of service providers that can successfully implement the Smarter Balanced assessment system</p>
<p>D) Strengthen the evidence-base and partnerships necessary for Smarter Balanced to be more broadly recognized and used as a measure of college and career readiness</p>	<p>i) With K-12 and higher education representatives, conduct analysis and publish results to improve the predictive validity of Smarter Balanced assessments, both for students’ transition from middle school to high school (8th grade test) and high school to college and careers</p> <p>ii) Create a partnership with one or more nationally-recognized college admissions assessment vendors (e.g., ACT and SAT) to build a high-school assessment that creates more value for students and their families (e.g., career- and college- recognized certifications to show mastery of certain bodies of knowledge)</p> <p>iii) Provide models that members use to report test scores to private and public colleges inside and outside of their home state</p> <p>iv) Evaluate the summative assessment’s “cut scores” to ensure it aligns with college-and-career-ready expectations</p> <p>v) Make the expectations embedded in the assessment scale more transparent to policymakers, educators and families by building and sharing assessment item exemplars and text-based descriptions of assessment items</p> <p>vi) Facilitate the sharing of promising practices and knowledge among members</p>



Provide educators, policymakers, students and families with robust and actionable information on student performance and the tools and resources to improve instruction

Even as it strengthens its total system of assessments (Goal 1), Smarter Balanced also will be investing in new tools that help educators use assessment results to improve teaching and learning. Educators need clear information about student learning, support for interpreting and acting on assessment results, and ready access to aligned teaching tools they can deploy to support individual student needs. Smarter Balanced will be helping educators better interpret diagnostic assessment results and navigate, use and enhance its Digital Library resources.

5-YEAR STRATEGIES	KEY ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY IN THE NEXT 1–2 YEARS
<p>A) Enhance the accessibility, functionality and use of the Digital Library</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Make technological enhancements to the Digital Library that improve accessibility, integration, marketing and growth ii) Make content-based enhancements to the Digital Library that augment the depth and breadth of available formative assessment, instructional and professional learning resources iii) Offer training and strengthen calibration across the network of educators who submit and review resources in the Digital Library iv) Increase awareness among local educators and leaders to increase use and engagement with the Digital Library
<p>B) Improve reporting to provide more actionable information in less time and with a more user-friendly format</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Increase the utility of the summative test by increasing the level of information that can be yielded from individual test items ii) Improve the interim assessment reporting to provide more readily accessible and usable data to educators iii) Develop a richer reporting application, with functions such as allowing members to include subject areas in addition to mathematics and ELA/literacy, generating user-defined reports that meet the needs of members’ local educators, presenting links to Digital Library resources to support educators’ next steps based on the results of student assessments, etc. iv) Add item-level analysis to score reporting from interim assessments v) Add new functionality to score reports to show student growth vi) Support members’ capacity to manage the Smarter Balanced score reporting system in their state and link to state accountability systems (e.g., ESSA reporting)
<p>C) Design tools and trainings to support the understanding and use of Smarter Balanced assessment data by students, their families and policymakers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Create tools and trainings for direct use by states and districts to guide various stakeholders through analysis and interpretation (e.g. parents, school board members, local legislators)
<p>D) Support states in identifying high-quality professional development providers to improve the use of data to inform instructional practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Open the Digital Library to private professional development providers that individual states and districts have identified/work with—so the library’s resources can be more readily integrated into educator development activities ii) Working with members, investigate and define Smarter Balanced’s role in supporting state and local educator professional development

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Improve organizational capacity to support state-led efforts to communicate and advocate for Smarter Balanced’s value

While member states remain the primary communications channels to inform their policymakers, educators, students and families about Smarter Balanced, states can be even more effective in this role with greater tools and support, including ones that are readily customized to the state context and unique needs. Smarter Balanced will more directly and regularly support its members in communicating consistently with stakeholders about the role of assessment in advancing student learning, the unique benefits of Smarter Balanced over other systems and the full suite of resources Smarter Balanced provides to educators. The strategic plan recognizes an elevated focus on strategic communications is necessary for the Consortium’s theory of action to be realized.

5-YEAR STRATEGIES	KEY ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY IN THE NEXT 1–2 YEARS
<p>A) Provide state-specific support to assess communications and public affairs needs and align flexible, resources to support the local efforts</p>	<p>i) Provide flexible state-based support to build and enhance states’ communications and public affairs efforts, including needs assessments, communications plan development and implementation support</p> <p>ii) Convene state agency public information officers and government relations directors regularly to share promising practices and brainstorm solutions to common challenges</p>
<p>B) Streamline and continue to provide information and tools for state-based communications and advocacy (e.g., convening state communications directors, customizable Member portal resources)</p>	<p>i) Build and enhance Smarter Balanced’s social media presence, including supporting campaigns to help high school students and other stakeholders understand the value of the Smarter Balanced assessment</p> <p>ii) Begin a campaign to build awareness about the variety and use of helpful resources in the Digital Library by educators in member states</p> <p>iii) Create and support the use of a communications and public affairs toolkit to assess the needs in each state and a customizable “roadmap” that outlines the steps to develop an effective communications and public affairs campaign</p>

OPERATING MODEL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Ensure Smarter Balanced has internal capacity and leadership to navigate and be responsive to states’ evolving assessment needs and the assessment market overall

Successful implementation of this strategic plan requires exceptional staff at Smarter Balanced who are committed to delivering excellent work, closing achievement gaps and supporting the inspiring work happening in member states. It requires the continued active engagement, guidance and counsel of its member states in setting priorities, monitoring progress, and making adjustments. It will also require new infusions of resources and energy from new members states and new product lines. Smarter Balanced will prioritize these investments in internal capacity and leadership to ensure the strategies identified under Goals 1–3 are implemented well.

5-YEAR STRATEGIES	KEY ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY IN THE NEXT 1–2 YEARS
<p>A) Maintain Smarter Balanced’s strong, participatory, member-led governance structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Maintain the member-led Executive Committee’s role providing oversight and guidance to Smarter Balanced’s overall work ii) More regularly engage member chiefs, the Executive Committee and the Consortium’s entire membership in monitoring progress and adjusting priorities in implementing the strategic plan iii) Continue hosting the semi-annual Member Collaboration Conference, to bring together key K-12 and higher ed leaders in each member state to share promising practices and provide feedback on key decisions iv) Provide members with quarterly updates on implementation of the strategic plan
<p>B) Create a more agile business model that allows for greater flexibility in the service offerings to the field (e.g., interim assessments), but also creates greater stability in the membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Transition to a new fiscal agent ii) Implement fee-for-service offerings that allow non-members to access new and some existing Smarter Balanced products without compromising the value of membership
<p>C) Enhance Smarter Balanced’s ongoing capacity to effectively assess and make strategic, market-informed and politically-informed decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Establish an executive advisory committee to inform and guide the public affairs strategy overseen by the Deputy Executive Director and Executive Director ii) Provide facilitation and support to member states to enhance states’ capacity to implement and optimize the value of the Smarter Balanced assessment system

GOALS AND STRATEGIES: LONG TERM

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AND INNOVATIONS



Maintain Smarter Balanced’s position as a leader in innovative assessment design

Smarter Balanced member states created the Consortium because they were committed to innovation and creating a next-generation assessment that maximized new research about student learning and new possibilities with technology—and this commitment to innovation will continue to be a priority moving forward. Even as Smarter Balanced creates the best summative assessment and associated teaching tools for today’s needs in schools, it will continue to anticipate and support evolving policymaker and educator needs. Member states are interested in exploring a range of innovations, including how Smarter Balanced tools could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of students’ career readiness and how its summative assessment could support a true “competency-based education” system; a working group will help further research, refine and prioritize these ideas to guide investments moving forward.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES	KEY ACTIVITIES
<p>A) Allocate and prioritize resources for ongoing research and development for new, innovative assessments that build on Smarter Balanced’s core competence</p>	<p>i) Establish a member taskforce to guide Smarter Balanced’s research and development agenda and assess the viability of new proposed assessments (e.g. applied work setting assessments, curriculum-embedded assessments)</p> <p>ii) Secure and protect resources for ongoing research and development in new assessment areas, including interim and summative assessments and their accompanying Digital Library resources</p>
<p>B) Conduct a feasibility analysis on the development of a competency-based assessment with the potential to certify student-acquired bodies of ELA and math knowledge portable to various post-secondary contexts</p>	<p>i) Establish a member taskforce to make recommendations on the viability, timeline, investments and overall strategy for supporting states pursuing a shift towards competency-based learning</p> <p>ii) Conduct a trial and subsequent pilot phase to test the design of a competency-based assessment drawing from Smarter Balanced’s existing assessment and potentially building new items</p>

APPENDIX: STRATEGIC PLANNING METHODOLOGY

Smarter Balanced embarked on a seven-month strategic planning process in October 2016. The organization worked with Education First, a national strategy and policy organization, to develop a long-term vision and theory of action and to articulate aligned goals, strategies and potential investments that would serve the organization’s mission. Rather than starting from scratch, the planning process built on the organization’s existing vision, mission and values and applied research findings from a variety of stakeholders to refine Smarter Balanced’s strategic direction. The process was accomplished in four phases:

Phase 1: Preliminary Research and Due Diligence (Nov–Dec 2016). Education First worked with the executive director and other Smarter Balanced leaders to understand the organization, major initiatives underway and challenges to its work. This research included a thorough review of taskforce recommendations, member feedback on a preliminary draft of revised strategic goals from the October 2016 Collaboration Conference and discussions with Smarter Balanced leadership.

Phase 2: Internal and External Landscape Analysis (Nov 2016–Feb 2017). Education First conducted one-on-one interviews and focus groups and facilitated discussions at conferences with a variety of internal and external stakeholders to gain additional perspective on Smarter Balanced’s work and future direction. This research focused on the future of teaching, learning and assessment, Smarter Balanced’s contributions and unique value and the current needs and opportunities in the education field. It was important to Smarter Balanced to deeply involve its members but also to seek input from education leaders outside the K-12 arena who might offer additional future thinking perspectives. As part of this landscape analysis, Education First interviewed stakeholders described in the table below.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	STAKEHOLDER (with organization affiliation at time of interview)
SB Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60+ state, institutions of higher education and other leaders from SB member states during the Oct 2016 and May 2017 Member Collaboration Conferences Focus group of Assessment Directors/State Leads: Michelle Center (CA), Abby Javurek-Humig (SD), Duncan Robb (ID) and Roger Stewart (ID)
Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kenji Hakuta, UL/SCALE John Cohen, AIR Linda Darling-Hammond, Learning Policy Institute
State Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Melody Schopp, SD John White, LA Mike Kirst, CA
Higher Education Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demaree Michelau, WICHE
Field Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barbara Chow, Hewlett Foundation Andy Plattner, consultant Gavin Payne, consultant Carissa Miller, CCSSO Mike Petrilli, Fordham Institute
Assessment and Tech Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Oswald, ETS Rich Miner, Google Education
Smarter Balanced Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tony Alpert, executive director Christyan Mitchell, chief operating officer Smarter Balanced leadership team

During this phase, Education First also conducted background research to better understand the

changing national context in which Smarter Balanced operates and identify emerging trends in the field. It analyzed and synthesized the research and interview data.

Phase 3: Refine and Finalize Strategic Plan (Feb–May 2017). Education First presented its landscape analysis findings and its analysis of threats and opportunities to Smarter Balanced’s leadership, staff and a selection of members who attended the March CCSSO Legislative Conference—to seek feedback on what the findings suggested for priorities. Using this input, Education First helped develop a revised and refined theory of action along with long-term organizational goals, strategies and recommendations for potential investments. It also designed and facilitated activities at the Member Collaboration Conference in May to review and offer a final round of feedback on a revised, near-final version of the strategic plan.

Phase 4: Final Member Ready Draft, Resources and Vote (June–July 2017). In this final phase of the process, Education First completed a final draft of the strategic plan for review by Smarter Balanced leadership and members in June 2017 and for final approval by its members in July 2017. In addition, Education First provided additional input and feedback on implications for operationalizing the plan.