



Pre-SSLI Workshop for Team Leads
September 2020
Ohio Association of Community Colleges

Goals

Provide “adaptive” strategies, tips tools to help Team Leads support your institutions in protecting & advancing student success priorities amid current conditions.

--Strategies for resetting case-making for guided pathways reforms, and for focusing teams

--Tips for meeting people where they are, and for leading from the middle during the ongoing uncertainty

--Tools to strengthen facilitation of complex, collaborative work under current conditions



Let's play a game...

A) At this point in the semester, I'd say most faculty and staff at my college are feeling _____ and _____

B) When I think about protecting and advancing our student success priorities under current circumstances, I find myself thinking about _____

C) Overall, I'd say that right now working relationships between faculty, staff, and administrators are _____ but also _____

D) Of all the priorities/initiatives underway before the pandemic _____ seem(s) most important to prioritize now because _____



What We're Hearing...

“If we’re ever given the chance to go back to ‘normal,’ I hope we don’t. We can’t lose sight of the problems this crisis has exposed, and we can’t underestimate the power of what we’ve been able to accomplish for our students because the crisis forced us to... We have a revolutionary opportunity to transform ourselves to work better for students, and we have to take it.” –AVP, Georgia (May)

“We’re all exhausted. The early adrenaline is gone, and there’s no new normal in sight, not really. We’re worried about our jobs, our students, our families. We’re exhausted.”
–Faculty member, MA (Sept)

“It’s hard for me to imagine a time after COVID, and it’s hard for me to picture what it was like before COVID. What does that mean?”

– My daughter, age 10 (last night)

“People seem to understand more now than they did before about the depth of challenges facing our students and the need to rethink what we do in order to better meet the needs of our students who are, in every area of their lives, facing a huge array of obstacles. I think we may be more ready to reimagine how we do our work, how we serve our students.”

–Provost, TX (June)

“Everyone – administration, faculty, staff, and students alike -- is engaged in what feel like impossible balancing acts, professionally & personally. People are feeling overwhelmed, and that makes people less trustful, less flexible, less forgiving of each other...How do we create an environment to pull people out of survival mode to look up and ahead so that we can come out of this stronger?” –VP, Arizona (Aug)



Resetting Case-Making: Back to Basics & Leveling Up

Large-scale equity-focused student success work is deeply counter-cultural

Large-scale = moving beyond boutique programs to pursue evidence-based redesign of policies, practices, procedures at scale to lower artificial barriers to more equitable outcomes & to secure the future of the college

Equity-focused = a clear-eyed, evolving understanding of structural inequity/systemic racism, and the longstanding complicity of higher education in raising artificial barriers for students from historically marginalized and/or minoritized communities

Counter-cultural = embracing key ideas that are completely different from those that dominate both spoken and unspoken deeply held beliefs & norms of practice...

What Values Ground Your Work?

- From sorting to **supporting** (from goalie to guide)
- From the myth of meritocracy to meaningful **equity consciousness**
- From blame-game to honest **co-ownership**
- From best intentions to **data-informed decisions**
- From unspoken assumptions about students' abilities to **critical, individual self-reflection** about the impact of deep-seated uninterrogated assumptions about students on outcomes & equity gaps

The Forever Target: A Healthy Climate for Student-Focused Innovation

In healthy climates for continuous improvement in student success innovation, a critical mass of faculty, staff and administrators...

- ✓ see a strong connection between personal/professional goals and the student success priorities of the college
- ✓ believe that innovating for better student outcomes is both urgently important & expected
- ✓ feel respected & valued by colleagues and institutional leadership
- ✓ know how proposed changes will impact them
- ✓ understand how discrete initiatives align with broader institutional priorities & student success vision
- ✓ believe they have the support & guidance to be successful in their roles

Anger Iceberg

Icebergs are large pieces of ice found floating in the open ocean. What you can see from the surface can be misleading. Most of the iceberg is hidden below the water.

This is how anger works. Often when we are angry, there are other emotions hidden under the surface.



Strategies for Managing Difficult Behavior

- Set the right ground rules:
 - a. Stay Engaged
 - b. Speak Your Truth
 - c. Accept and Expect Non-closure
 - d. Experience Discomfort
 - e. Be Kind (apply grace) and Accountable
- Practice empathy: people (including you) are at our worst when we're scared, sad, or exhausted
- Thicken your skin: academic culture and American societal norms incentivize bad behavior
- Calm yourself: create emotional distance by remembering the "fundamental attribution error"
- Model the behavior: be respectful, tell it like it is, ask the hard questions, create space
- Empower the group: let others own the conversation, help people keep eyes up and forward

When it comes to difficult behavior that takes the form of passivity/disengagement, it is important to:

- Meet people where they are
- Push where you can
- Create space for disagreement
- Engage 1:1 before or after

Using Short Term Improvement Cycles to Reset, Protect, or Accelerate Work

Why an Improvement Approach?

- Insights of improvement science are relevant to most problems of practice, but may be especially salient in the age of COVID
- Complex, adaptive problems can (and must) be broken down into ‘bite-sized’ pieces
- Adopting key improvement strategies can accelerate progress & improve the quality of problem-solving

Which Tactics & Tools?

- Using “driver diagrams” to structure & summarize conversations can help groups go deeper faster into real work
- Using “90-day” plans to turn driver diagrams into action plans provides a structure & light project management ethos to push work forward and keep teams on the same page

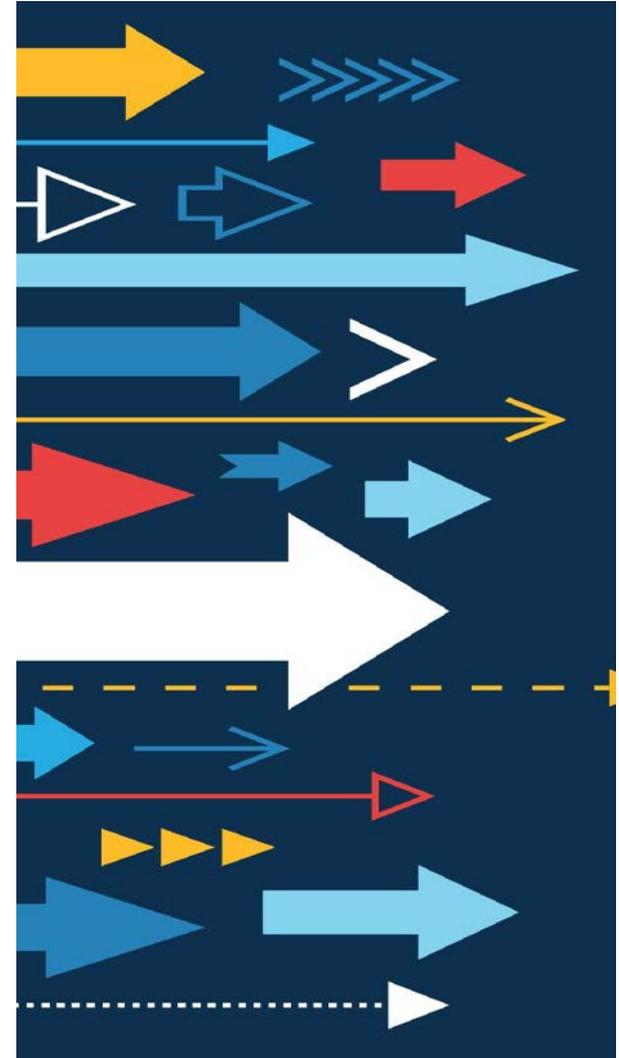
Core Elements of an Improvement Cycle

Creating a Driver Diagram

Collaboratively articulate the driving challenges, focusing on where there is room for action & co-ownership, and articulate a long-term goal, a S.M.A.R.T goal, and near-term action priorities.

Creating a 90-Day Plan

Clearly articulate the near-term goal (in relation to a longer-term goal), outline tasks, responsibilities, needs, dependencies, timeline, and cadence of collaboration on a 3-month workplan.



A Good Driver Diagram

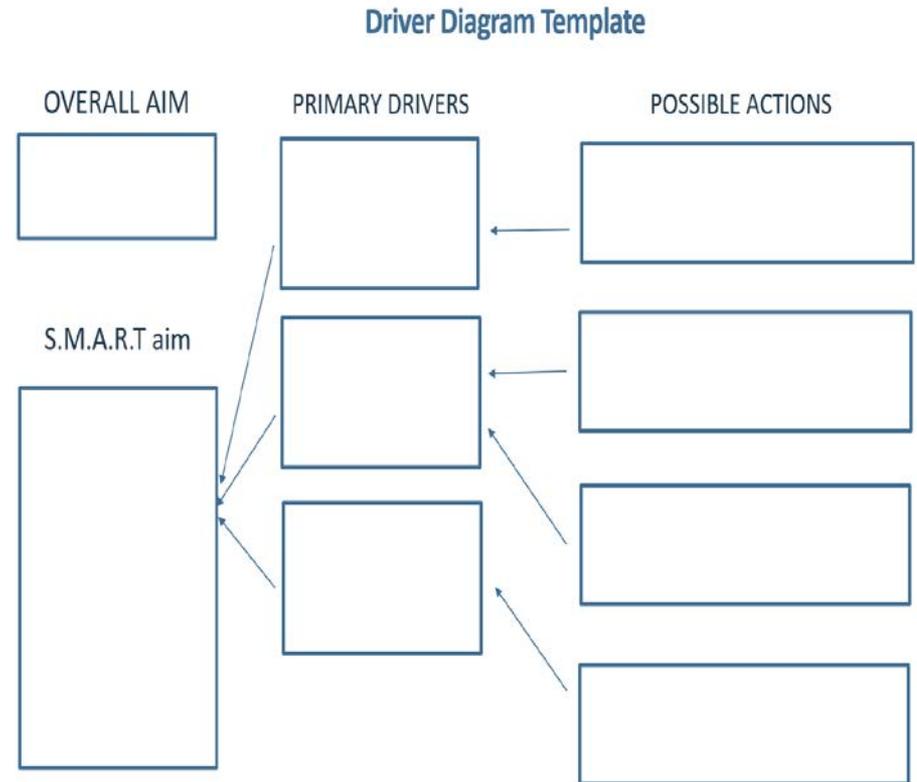
...forces delineated articulation of key challenges

...serves as the theory of action to guide the creation of an effective short-term (90-day) work plan

...helps translate a high-level goal into a logical set of underpinning activities or projects

...captures the scope of leading challenges in a snapshot

..helps teams establish shared understanding about the work to be done



A Good 90-Day Plan...

...forces articulation of the relationship between the S.M.A.R.T goal & the near-term goal (requires next steps)

...is clear-eyed but ambitious, grounded in data, focused on *the most important* work (not just good work)

...includes careful consideration of both technical & adaptive dimensions of improvement

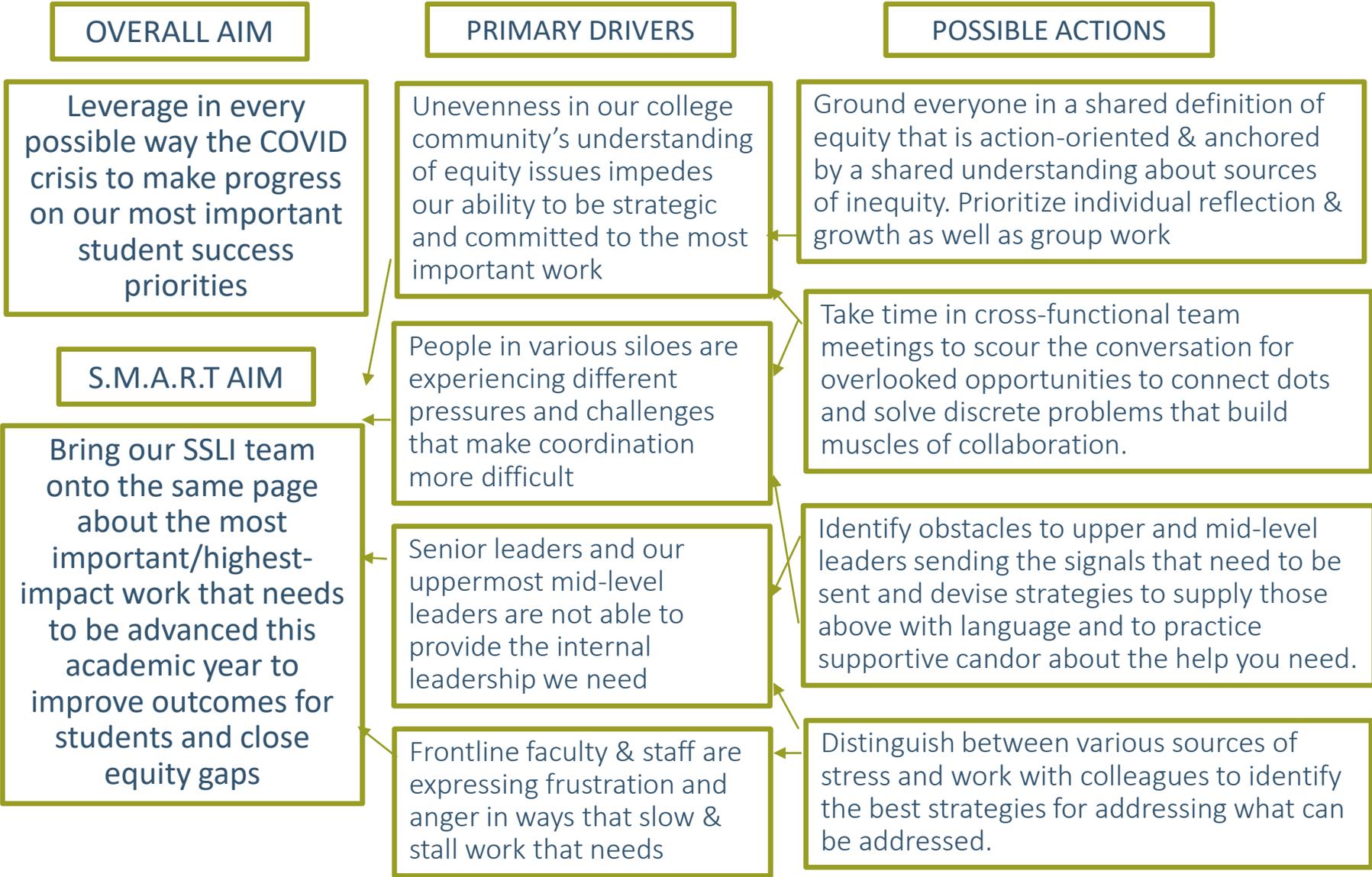
...includes deadlines, responsibilities, and owners of tasks

..helps teams establish shared understanding about the work to be done and hold each other accountable for progress

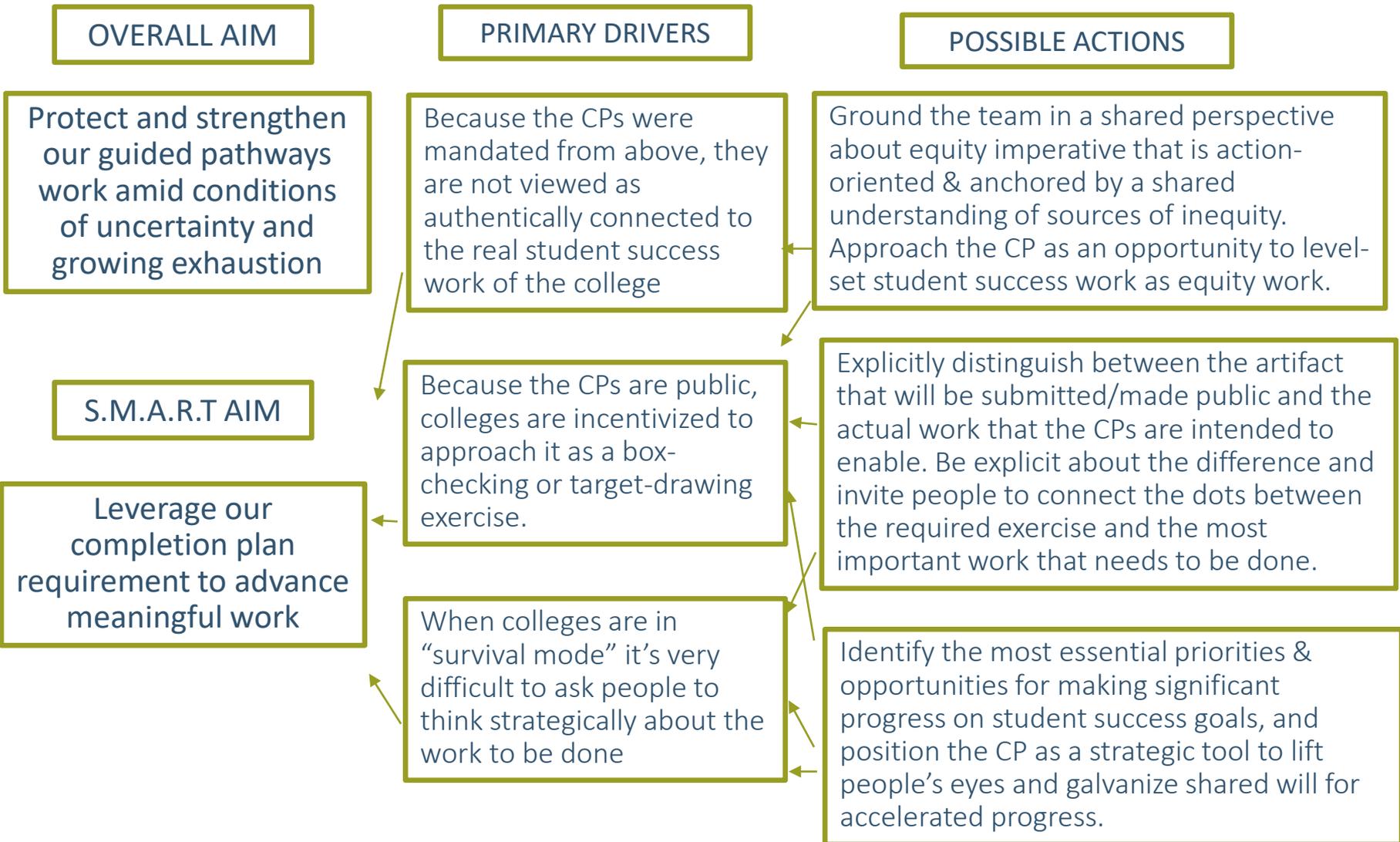
- 1) What do we want to accomplish in the next 3 months?
- 2) How will this contribute to our S.M.A.R.T goal?
- 3) How will we know if we're successful?

	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status
30						
60						
90						

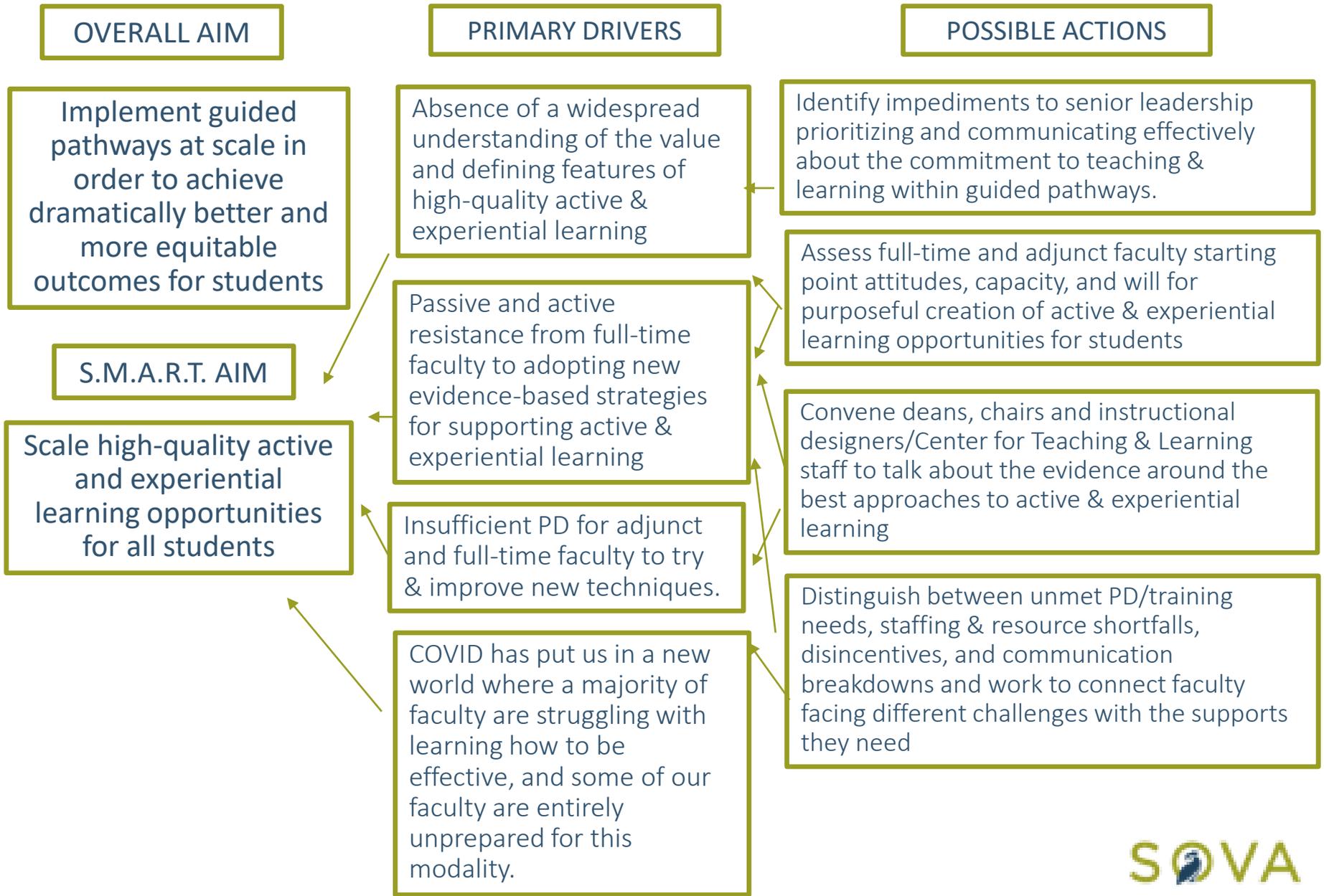
Driver Diagram Example: Strategically Advancing Key Student Success Priorities



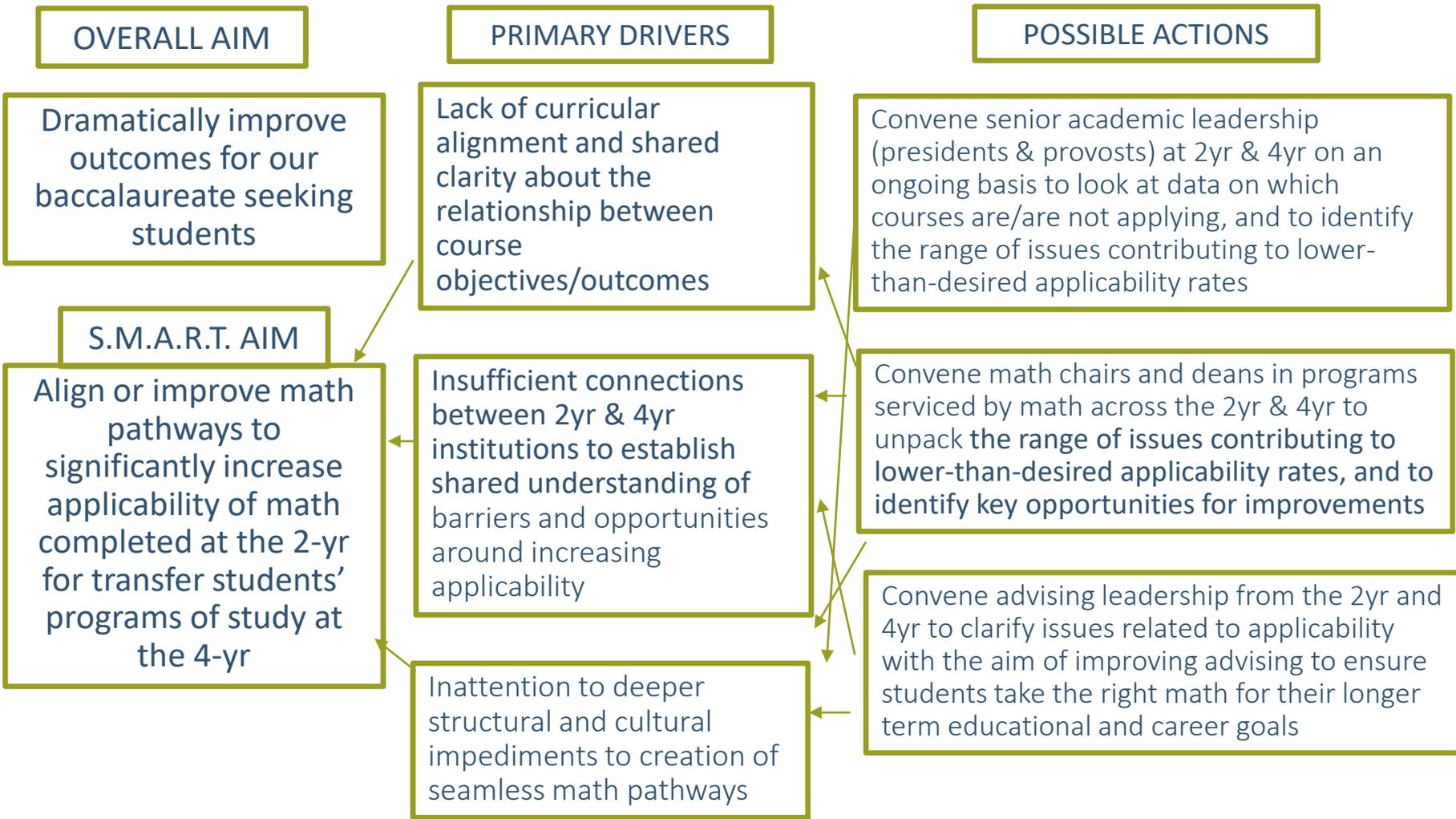
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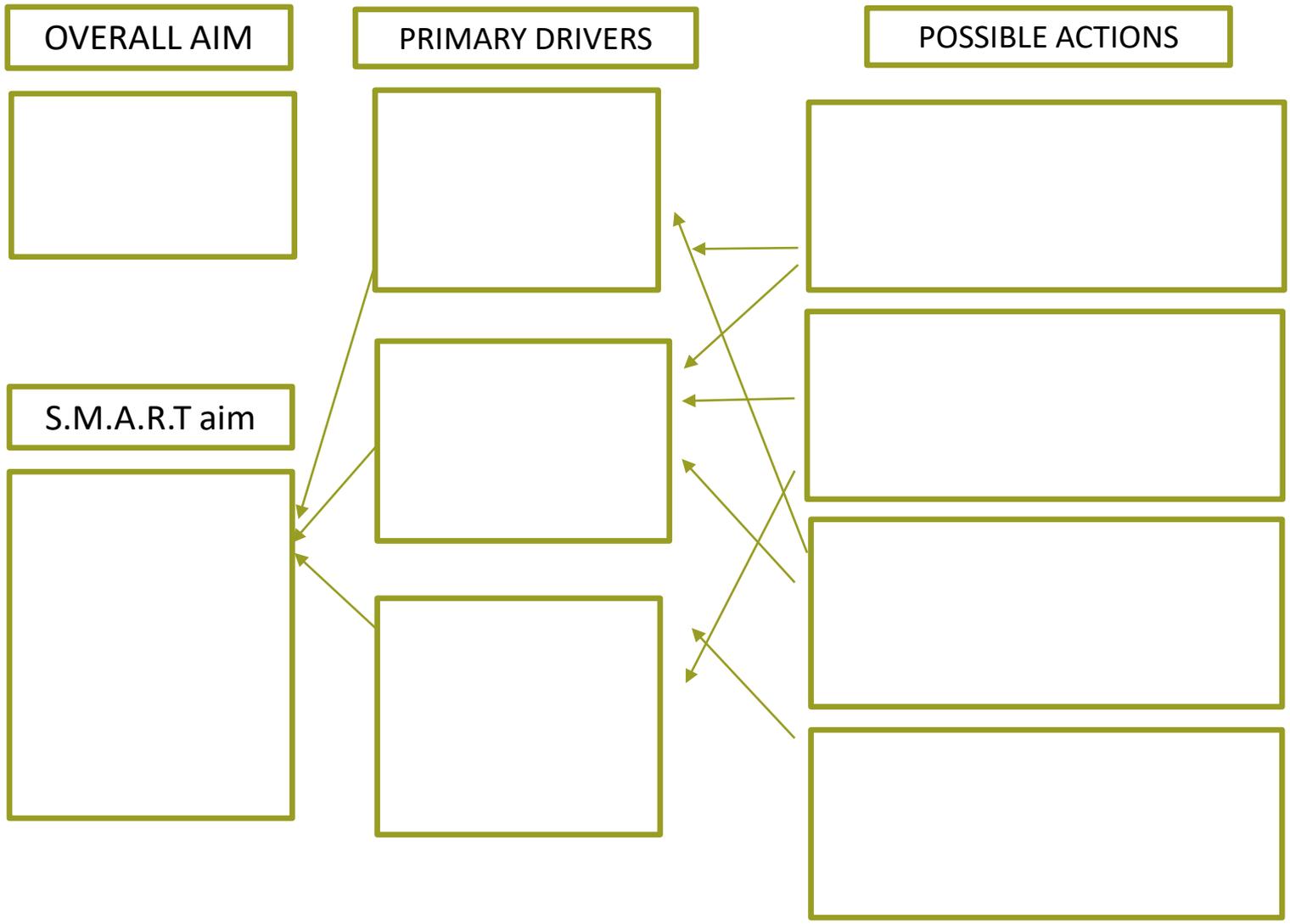
Driver Diagram Example: Improving Teaching & Learning



Driver Diagram Example: Math Pathways



Driver Diagram Template



- 1) What do we want to accomplish in the next 3 months?
- 2) How will this contribute to our S.M.A.R.T goal?
- 3) How will we know if we're successful?

30	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status	
60	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status	
90	Activities	Owners	Needs Dependencies	Communications & Engagement	Due Date	Status	

Unpacking Bad Meetings

Top 10 plagues of collaborative problem-solving (that skillful facilitation can mitigate against)

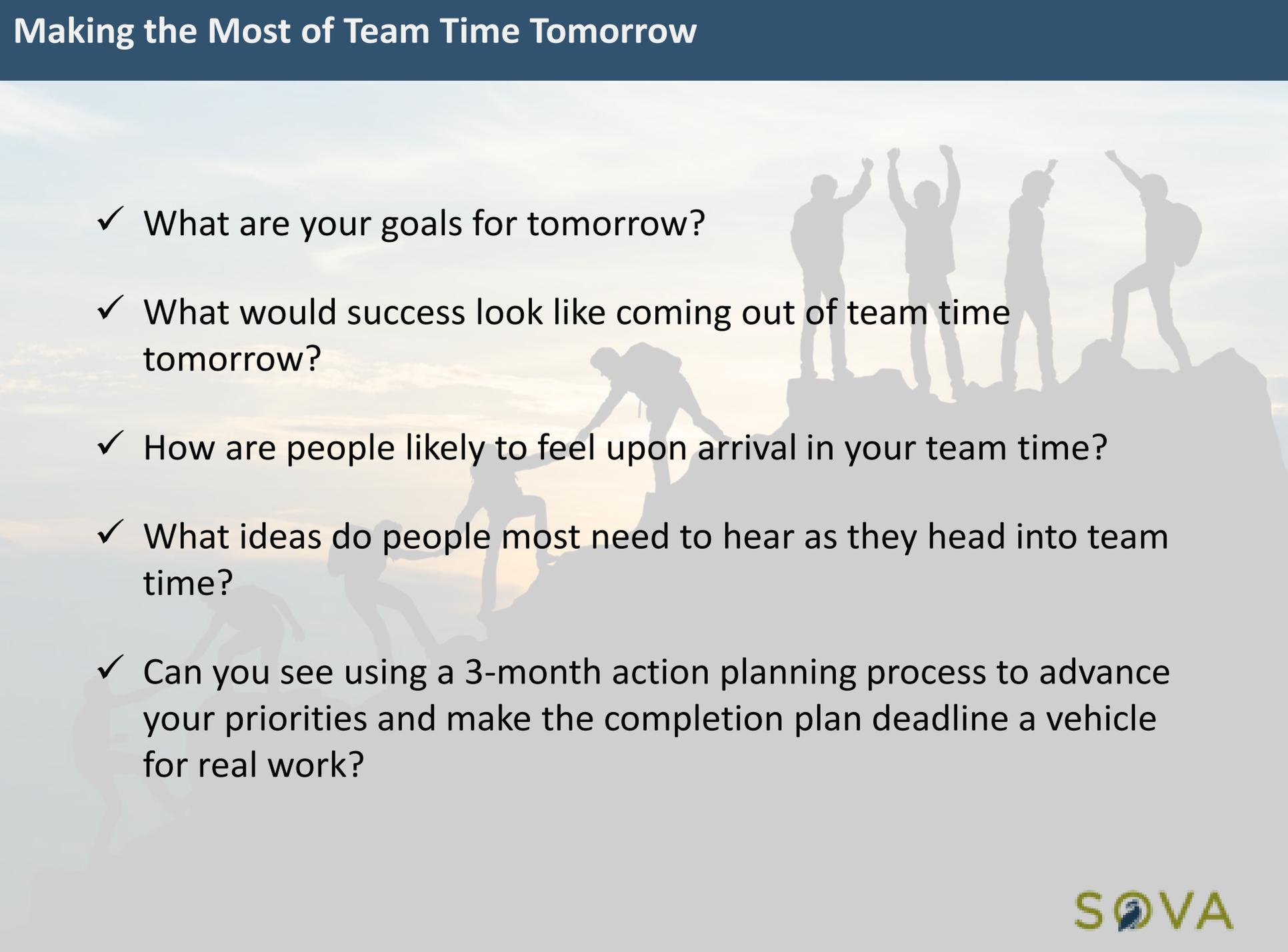
1. Misaligned expectations
2. No clear, achievable goals
3. No progress
4. Poor use of data
5. People don't feel heard, respected
6. Collaboration encouraged but not supported
7. Unmanaged/unacknowledged interests or power dynamics
8. Lack of authenticity
9. Bad behavior
10. No outcomes

10 Tips for Running Good Virtual Meetings

1. Collaboratively set norms for virtual teams and practice rigorous goal clarity for each meeting
2. Check in as humans first, create space to develop perspective-taking capacity & the ongoing development of equity consciousness
3. Send an agenda in advance of every meeting, and ask everyone to consider one question prior to the meeting
4. Don't assume that video is always best, reserve some topics for phone-only and walking meetings specifically
5. Keep video meetings short 30-60 minutes and/or provide frequent "brain breaks"
6. Experiment with different meeting lengths (15 min & 30 min meetings for specific goals), keep standing meetings tight & focused
7. Limit the number of participants in conversation pods (keep deep working meetings to >10 people or create breakout rooms)
8. Consider recording meetings to cascade information, and provide alternative input opportunities (collaborative documents)
9. Practicing community organizing skills to compensate for lack of connectors (anticipate hot spots, engage in shuttle-diplomacy)
10. Give everyone time on the agenda and/or assign specific roles (including a "Jedi" for harder conversations)



Making the Most of Team Time Tomorrow

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- ✓ What are your goals for tomorrow?
 - ✓ What would success look like coming out of team time tomorrow?
 - ✓ How are people likely to feel upon arrival in your team time?
 - ✓ What ideas do people most need to hear as they head into team time?
 - ✓ Can you see using a 3-month action planning process to advance your priorities and make the completion plan deadline a vehicle for real work?



Thank you!

Please don't hesitate to reach out
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