Organizational Safety Culture Self-Assessment for Transportation Agencies

Improvement Plan Template



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U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration

FHWA-SA-24-029



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16. Abstract Safety is the very foundation of every transportation agency's mission and enables the safe and efficient movement of road users across the country. While all transportation agencies (from State departments of transportation, to local, regional, and Tribal governments, to transit agencies) strive to guarantee safety for both their users and workers, their approaches to doing so vary widely. Agencies span a range of capability and maturity levels in building a strong safety culture within their agency, as well as levels of investment in their programs, technologies, and resources to enable safety policies and practices. The Federal Highway Administration is developing a toolkit specifically geared toward organizational road safety culture, including both road safety and programmatic safety. The goal of the toolkit will be to focus transportation agency resources and actions to systematically improve an agency's organizational road safety culture. This report contains a template for organizations to use when developing an improvement plan.								
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*SI is the symbol for the International System of Units. Appropriate rounding should be made to comply with Section 4 of ASTM E380. (Revised March 2003)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DOT Department of Transportation

FHWA Federal Highway Administration

INTRODUCTION

Although the transportation community has made significant safety improvements in the past decade, there is still much work to be done to keep the roads safe for all users of the transportation system. Thanks to the Safe System Approach, we remind ourselves that safety is a shared responsibility and safety commitment should start at "home"—within an organization.

Safety can be defined as the absence of risk or danger.¹ Road safety culture includes the shared values, actions, and behaviors that demonstrate a commitment to safety over competing goals and demands. Organizational road safety culture is one of two major aspects of road safety culture (the other aspect is public road safety culture). It is the extent to which an organization values and pursues road safety. In an organization that prioritizes organizational road safety culture, the organization emphasizes safety in its internal strategic plan and operation procedures and its employees make safe decisions when using the roads. Furthermore, in a transportation organization with a strong organizational road safety culture, employees understand safety as a priority and have safety in mind when planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining the road system. Employees regularly communicate the importance of road safety with colleagues. Leadership staff are vocal supporters of safety and empower employees to seek innovative approaches to improving safety even if safety is not explicitly a part of everyone's job title.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) developed a toolkit for transportation organizations like yours to determine the organization's maturity level (i.e., degree of capability or readiness) of organizational road safety culture and identify opportunities for improvements. The goal of the toolkit is to focus transportation agency resources and actions to systematically improve an agency's organizational road safety culture.

There are two parts of organizational road safety culture: **internal safety culture** and **programmatic safety integration**. With that in mind, the toolkit components are divided into these two focus areas.

Each focus area's self-assessment has three components:

- **Questionnaires:** Two questionnaires that organizations can use to determine their levels of maturity across a variety of areas.
- **Improvement Strategies:** Example improvement strategies that organizations can use to advance their level of maturity for each area.
- **Improvement Plan Template:** Template that organizations can use as a basis for developing a plan to implement their improvement strategies.

In addition, there are two companion documents: 1) a list of resources related to road safety culture; and 2) an instruction manual for using the toolkit.

This document contains the Improvement Plan Template only. See the full toolkit for the other components and companion documents.

¹ <u>https://rspcb.safety.fhwa.dot.gov/RSF/Unit1.aspx</u>

IMPROVEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

Now that your organization has completed the questionnaire and determined your maturity level for each question (see the Questionnaires document), as well as identified possible improvement strategies that your organization plans to implement to advance to the next highest or desired maturity level (see the Improvement Strategies document), it is time to develop an improvement plan that captures the selected strategies and implementation information. This document contains a template for the improvement plan that your organization can adapt and adjust to meet your needs. If your organization has a standard planning process or tool, it can be used instead of this template.

The template includes a cover page containing relevant information and introductory language about the improvement plan, separate Improvement Plan forms for capturing the selected Internal Safety Culture strategies and the selected Programmatic Safety Integration strategies, and a Maturity Level Summary to summarize questionnaire responses.

Using the Template

- 1. Complete the Maturity Level Summary by transferring the "Existing" maturity level for each question to the grid. Discuss and select a "Desired" maturity level for each question. This summary will serve as a quick reference guide as you complete the Improvement Plans.
- 2. Use the Improvement Plan form to document the improvement strategies selected by your organization for each question (duplicate the table for each question). Notate your organization's "Existing" and "Desired" maturity level for that question using the Maturity Level Summary as a reference. Identify a champion to drive implementation of improvements specific to the corresponding question.
- 3. List the improvement strategies your organization selected for each question in the table. For each strategy, identify the status; key staff; stakeholders that may serve as collaborators; a target completion date; a start date; metrics for measuring progress; and any additional notes relevant to implementation.

Examples of a completed first page of an Improvement Plan for one question and a Maturity Level Summary are provided in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

Next Steps

The purpose of the improvement planning process is to move your organization from assessment into action. Once the improvement plans are complete, coordinate with other groups in your organization to determine an approach for advancing each action. To foster accountability and maintain momentum, your organization may wish to establish regular check-ins to track progress toward advancing the maturity of each dimension.

Organizational Road Safety Culture Improvement Plan

[Fill out the information below]

Organization:		
Authors:		
Date:		

[Provide introductory language (i.e., a couple paragraphs) describing the current state of organizational road safety culture within your organization and the expectations for how advancing its maturity will benefit the organization.]

The remainder of this document details the organization's existing and desired maturity levels as well as specific improvement strategies that *[ABC Department of Transportation]* plans to implement to enhance its organizational road safety culture. Separate information is provided for the two types of organizational road safety culture: Internal Safety Culture and Programmatic Safety Integration.

Champions, key staff, and timelines are identified for the improvement strategies. It is important that all members of the organization contribute to the efforts, as well.

Internal Safety Culture Improvement Plan

INTERNAL SAFETY CULTURE

Improvement Plan

[Duplicate this page for each question for which your organization identified improvement strategies to implement.]

[Fill out the information below]
Dimension:
Question:
Existing Maturity Level:
Desired Maturity Level:
Champion:

#	Improvement Strategy	Status	Key Staff	Key Stakeholders or Collaborators	Target Completion Date	Start Date	Metrics	Notes
1								
2								
3								

Internal Safety Culture Maturity Level Summary

Maturity Level Summary

[Indicate your organization's existing and desired levels of maturity for each question by entering "Existing" and "Desired" in the appropriate columns.]

D'	Oracetica	Maturity Level						
Dimension	Question	None	Ad-hoc	Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized		
	1. To what degree does your							
	organization prioritize road safety							
	in its core values, strategic plan,							
	and actions?							
	2. To what degree do leaders (i.e.,							
	senior leaders, managers, and							
1. Leadership	supervisors) prioritize road safety							
	in their communication and							
	activities?							
	3. To what degree does your							
	organization include safety							
	elements in leadership							
	performance plans and reviews?							
2. Policy	4. To what degree does your							
	organization integrate road safety							
	into employee policies?							
2.1 0110y	5. To what degree do all employee							
	performance plans and reviews							
	include safety elements?							

Internal Safety Culture Maturity Level Summary

Dimension	Question	Maturity Level						
Dimension	Question	None	Ad-hoc	Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized		
	6. To what degree does <u>new</u> employee orientation/training address the state of road safety and current safety policies which reaches all new employees in a timely fashion?							
3. Capacity Building and Training	7. To what degree does <u>ongoing</u> training address road safety and road safety policies and reach all employees in a timely fashion?							
	8. To what degree does your organization have safety capacity building expertise to provide training, assist with safety policies, engage employees, etc.?							
	9. To what degree do employees (i.e., technical and non-technical staff, safety and non-safety disciplines) promote and actively improve safety?							
	10. To what degree do employees understand their role in promoting safety in their work programs?							
4. Employee Engagement	11. To what degree do employees embrace being a safe road user as part of their shared responsibility for roadway safety?							
	12. To what degree do employees (i.e., technical and non-technical staff, safety and non-safety disciplines) lead or are engaged in road safety efforts in their own communities outside of work?							

Internal Safety Culture Maturity Level Summary

Dimension	Question	Maturity Level						
Dimension	Question	None	Ad-hoc	Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized		
5. Organizational Commitment to Support	 13. To what degree does your organization set the expectation that road safety is elevated/advanced in all programs? 14. To what degree does your organization make road safety equipment available and to what degree do employees use it? 15. To what degree does your organization consider safety in equipment/vehicle purchasing (or leasing) decisions? 							
Road Safety	16. To what degree does your organization have an effective organization-wide road safety culture workgroup?							
	17. To what degree does your organization have committees or workgroups dedicated to road safety issues (pedestrians/ bicyclists, speed, Complete Streets, etc.)?							

Programmatic Safety Integration Improvement Plan

PROGRAMMATIC SAFETY INTEGRATION

Improvement Plan

[Duplicate this page for each question for which your organization identified improvement strategies to implement.]

[Fill out the information below]

Dimension:
Question:
Existing Maturity Level:
Desired Maturity Level:
Champion:

#	Improvement Strategy	Status	Key Staff	Key Stakeholders or Collaborators	Target Completion Date	Start Date	Metrics	Notes
1								
2								
3								

Maturity Level Summary

[Indicate your organization's existing and desired levels of maturity for each question by entering "Existing" and "Desired" in the appropriate columns.]

Dimension	Question	Maturity Level							
Dimension	Question	None	Ad-hoc	Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized			
	6. When making planning and programming decisions, to what degree does your organization assess and prioritize projects								
1. Planning and	based on their ability to improve system safety?								
Programming	7. For non-safety projects (e.g., non-HSIP projects), to what								
	degree does your organization allocate and prioritize funding for project components that have the potential to improve safety?								
	8. To what degree does your organization make safety a consideration at every step of the design and engineering phase?								
	9. To what degree does your organization encourage designers to optimize designs for safety and not focus solely on meeting design standards?								
2. Design and Engineering	10. To what degree do organizational policies and procedures encourage and enable designers and engineers to identify and implement effective, low-cost safety improvements?								
	11. To what degree does your organization use data-driven safety analysis methods to determine the current and future safety performance of a project?								

Dimension	Questian	Maturity Level							
Dimension	Question	None	Ad-hoc	Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized			
2 Design and	12. To what degree does your organization employ holistic approaches (e.g., Safe System Approach) when designing projects?								
2. Design and Engineering	13. To what degree does your organization use a process for evaluating and integrating new safety technologies and systems into project design or engineering?								
	 14. To what degree does your organization use Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) systematically to monitor safety conditions and enable real-time safety management? 15. To what degree do 								
3. Safety and Operations	organizational policies mandate routine evaluation and maintenance of roadway components that impact safety? 16. To what degree do accessible								
	processes exist to allow staff and the public to report safety concerns identified on the roadway or roadside?								
	17. To what degree is the public made aware of mechanisms to report safety concerns identified on the roadway or roadside?								

Dimension	Question	Maturity Level							
Dimension	Question	None	Ad-hoc	Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized			
	18. To what degree does your								
	organization implement safety								
	protocols, proven								
	countermeasures, and/or								
	noteworthy practices in the design								
3. Safety and	and operation of work zones?								
Operations	19. To what degree does your								
	organization use a process for								
	evaluating safety performance in								
	work zones following								
	construction or maintenance								
	projects?								
	20. To what degree does your								
	organization use metrics to								
	evaluate the safety performance of								
	the transportation system?								
	21. To what degree does your								
	organization document and								
	integrate lessons learned and								
4. Safety Assurance	noteworthy practices into future								
and Evaluations	projects as they relate to the								
	performance of safety strategies								
	and countermeasures?								
	22. To what degree does your								
	organization use a system to								
	identify areas of safety concern,								
	evaluate risk, and apply strategies								
	to improve system safety?								

Dimension	Question	Maturity Level							
Dimension			Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized				
5. Institutionalizing Safety	 23. To what degree do existing manuals and specifications across program areas integrate safety? 24. To what degree does your organization evaluate, fund, and promote access to safety trainings and certifications for staff? 25. To what degree does your organization have dedicated staff responsible for public outreach and relationship building around road safety challenges, safety initiatives, and community concerns? 								

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Dimension: <u>1. Planning and Programming</u>

Question: <u>1. To what degree does your organization engage external safety professionals and stakeholders to influence</u> planning and programming decisions?

Existing Maturity Level: <u>2. Recognized</u>

Desired Maturity Level: <u>3. Mainstreamed</u>

Champion: <u>E. Franklin</u>

#	Improvement Strategy	Status	Key Staff	Key Stakeholders or Collaborators	Target Completion Date	Start Date	Metrics	Notes
1	Integrate external stakeholder engagement activities or checkpoints at regular intervals throughout the planning and programming phase for all projects	Active	F. Hernandez/ O. Polk/ E. Franklin	Planning Dept./ Fire & EMS/ Elmwood Neighborhood Assoc.	06/06/25	05/02/25	Quarterly meetings	Currently have stakeholder engagement in early project stages and can expand throughout the project lifecycle.
2	Include a process and communication plan in the current planning and programming processes to integrate external stakeholder feedback.	Pending	L. Frost	Planning Dept. / Communications Dept.	08/01/25	06/13/25	N/A	Use the communications plan adopted by the sustainability team for their public outreach initiative
3	Establish a formal committee composed of representatives of diverse external stakeholder groups to be engaged on an on- going basis	On Hold until August 2023	D. Choi	Planning Dept. / Aville Neighborhood Collective	10/03/25	08/10/25	Committee comprised of 14 members; Committee meets bi- weekly	Currently meet informally with senior center and school district

#	Improvement Strategy	Status	Key Staff	Key Stakeholders or Collaborators	Target Completion Date	Start Date	Metrics	Notes
4*	Conduct outreach with Youth Leadership Council (YLC)	Active	M. Oppenheimer/ O. Polk	Planning Dept./ YLC	05/06/25	04/07/25	Project Lead attendance at YLC meetings for the project period	YLC has 14 members and meets once a month at City Hall; Planning Dept. personnel currently support YLC meetings

*This is an example of a unique improvement strategy (i.e., not one listed in the Improvement Strategies document)

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE MATURITY LEVEL SUMMARY

D'an an d'an	Question	Maturity Level							
Dimension	Question	None	Ad-hoc	Recognized	Mainstreamed	Optimized			
	1. To what degree does your organization engage external safety professionals and stakeholders to influence planning and programming decisions?			Existing	Desired				
	2. To what degree does your organization engage external safety professionals and stakeholders to influence planning and programming decisions?			Existing	Desired				
1. Planning and Programming	3. To what degree does your organization evaluate safety data and other safety considerations during the planning and programming phase?		Existing		Desired				
	4. To what degree does your organization apply holistic safety approaches to guide project planning and programming decisions and business processes?		Existing	Desired					
	5. To what degree does your organization does your organization coordinate with other jurisdictions/ organizations to identify and incorporate safety goals into other Tribal, Federal, State, regional, and local transportation plans?	Existing	Desired						

U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration Office of Safety 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20590

> Office of Safety Website https://highways.dot.gov/safety June 2024