



Proving it to Ourselves: Building an Organizational Learning Culture

National Partnership for Educational Access

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Alec Lee & Alexis Bayley

Agenda

1. Definition
2. Self-Assessment
3. The Aim High Story
4. Tools & Skill Building
5. Next Steps

Goals of the Session

By the end of the session we hope you will:

1. Understand how to create an organizational learning culture that **infuses your work and helps growth**
2. Not to be afraid of **numbers**
3. Commit to using **data** to build a culture of organizational learning
4. Use **data** to track progress towards your organization's strategic plan
5. Leave here with tools that **promote organizational learning**

Defining Organizational Learning

Torres & Preskill (2001)

“A process of continuous growth and improvement through the use of evaluation, embedded in the organization’s culture, systems, structure, and leadership, leading to alignment of values, attitudes, and perceptions”

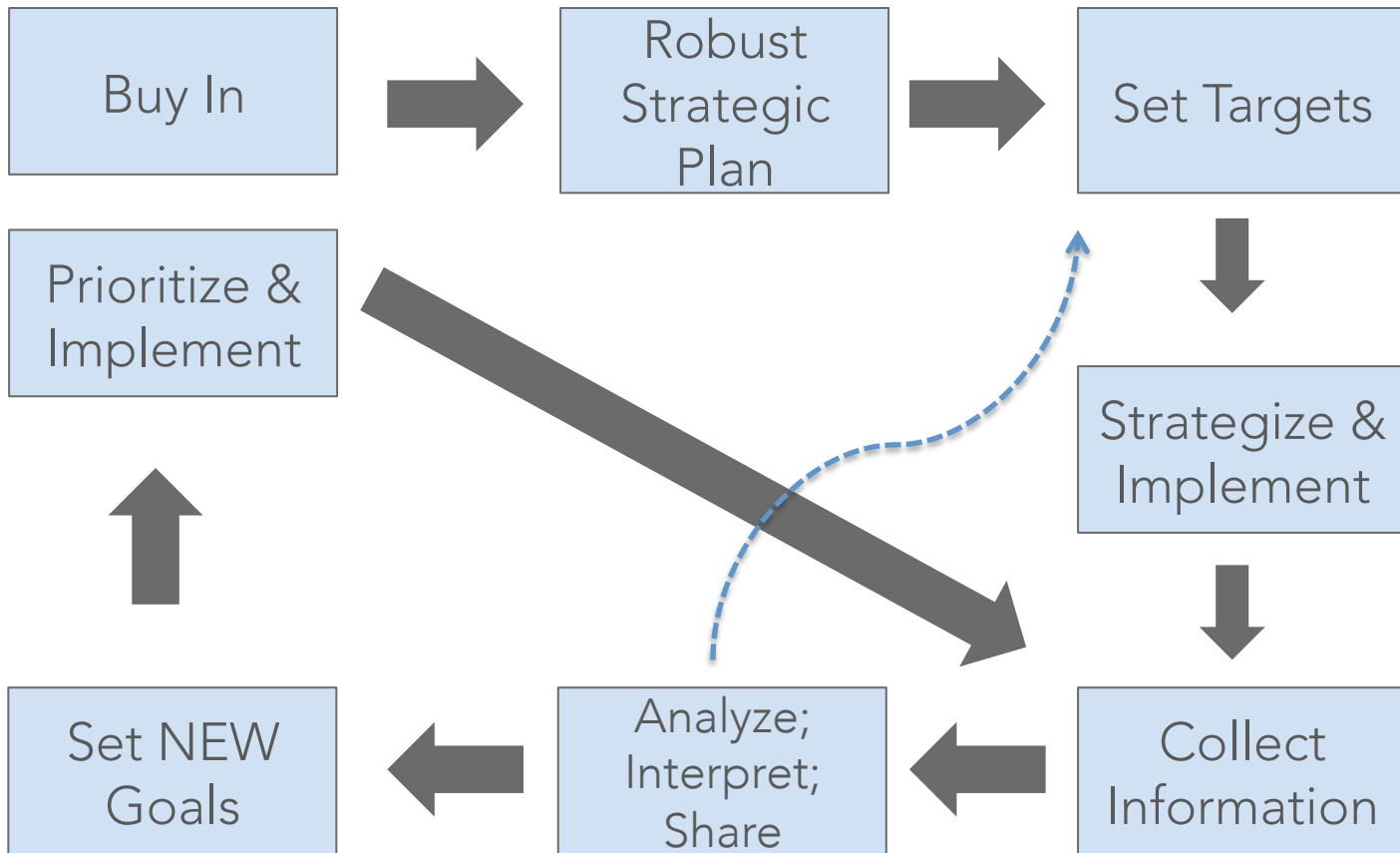
Use data to get **clear**. **Use data** for **improvement**.

→ There are many kinds of valuable data.

¹ Torres, R.T. & Preskill, H. (2001). Evaluation and organizational learning: past, present, ad future. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 22(3), 387-395

Components

Steps to Organizational Learning



Key



In progress



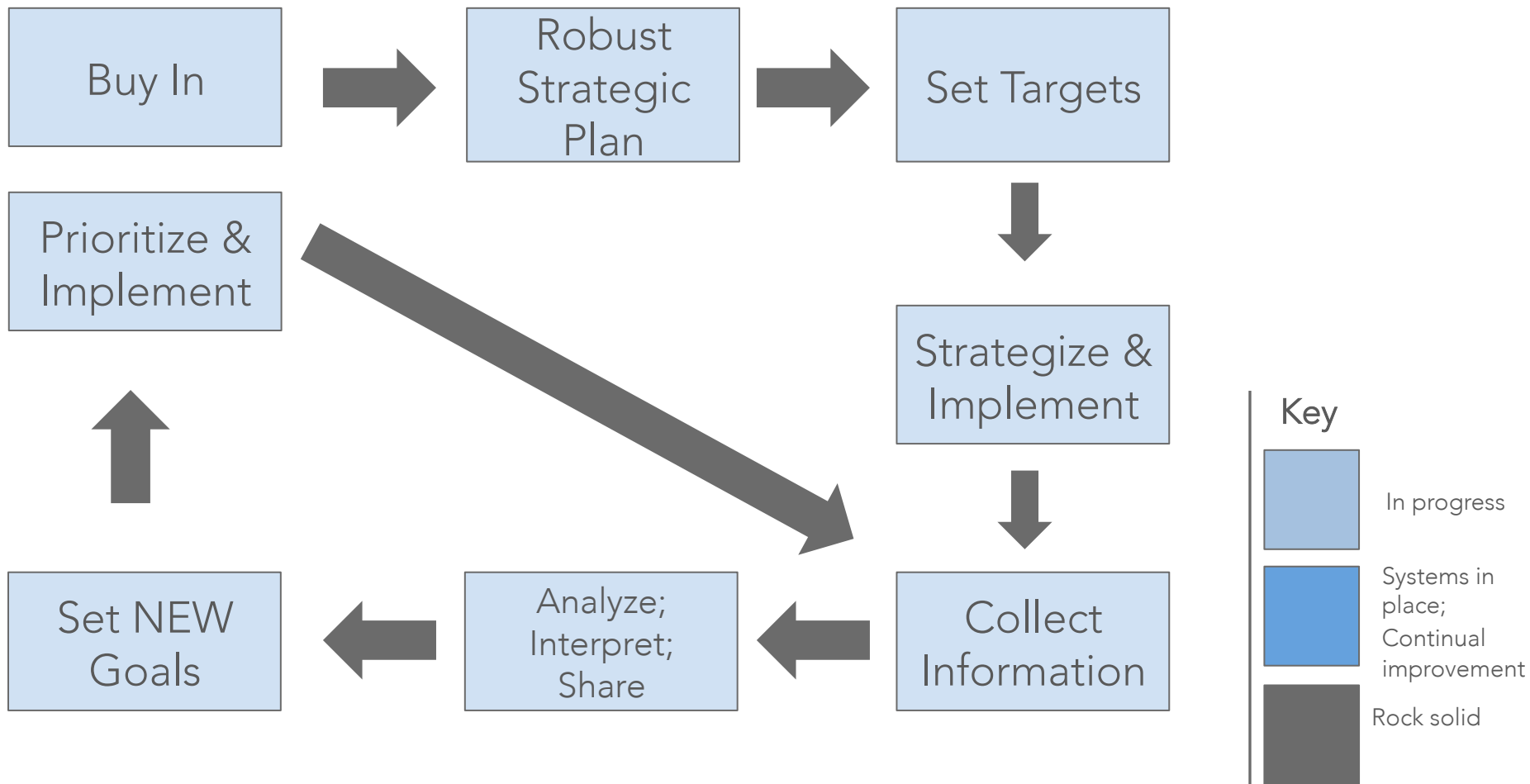
Systems in place;
Continual improvement



Rock solid

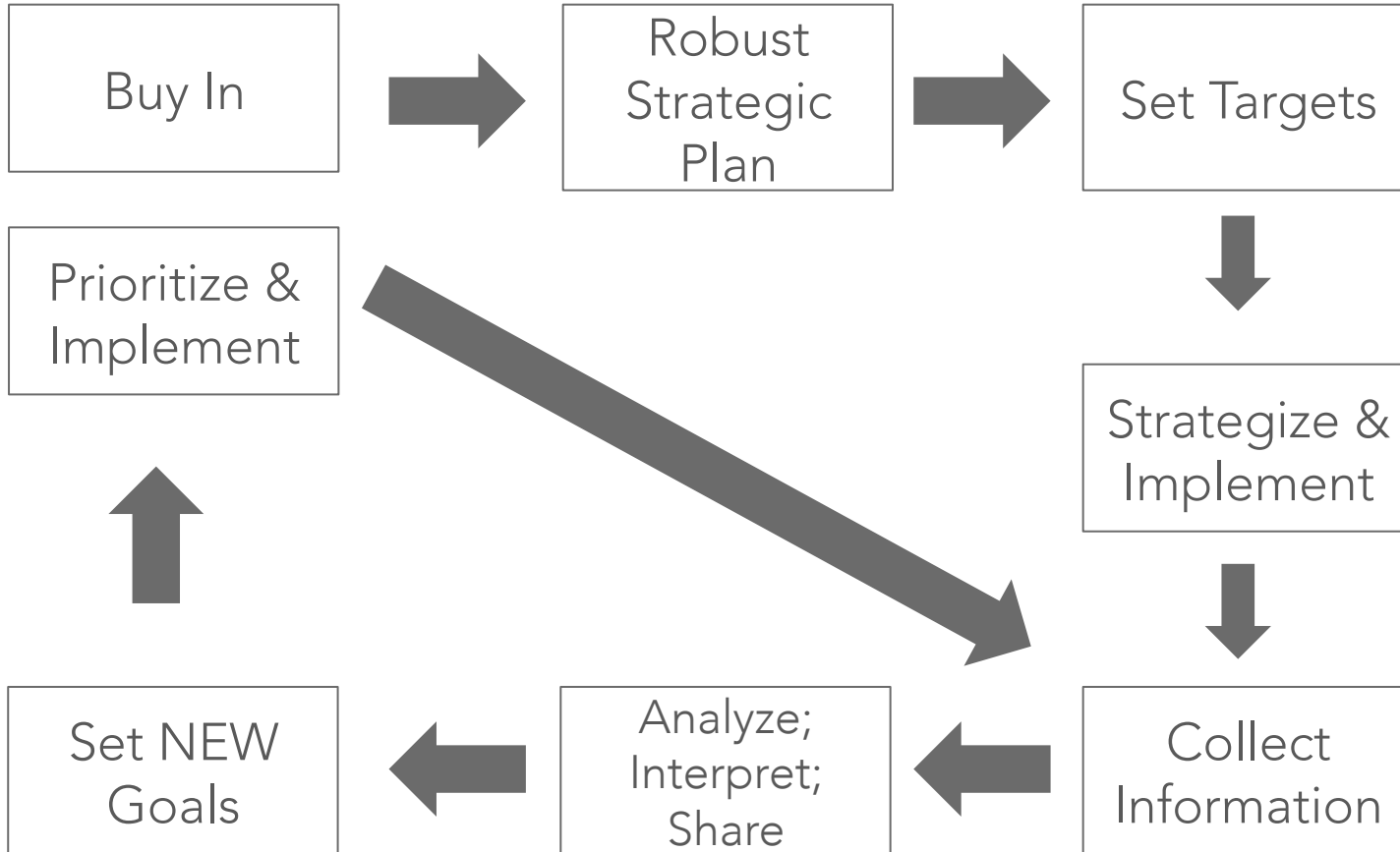
Self-Assessment

- **Where** are you in the process?
- **How** well are you doing?
- **What** are some barriers to progress?



Aim High's Journey—10 years

Not on spectrum



Key



Not started



In progress

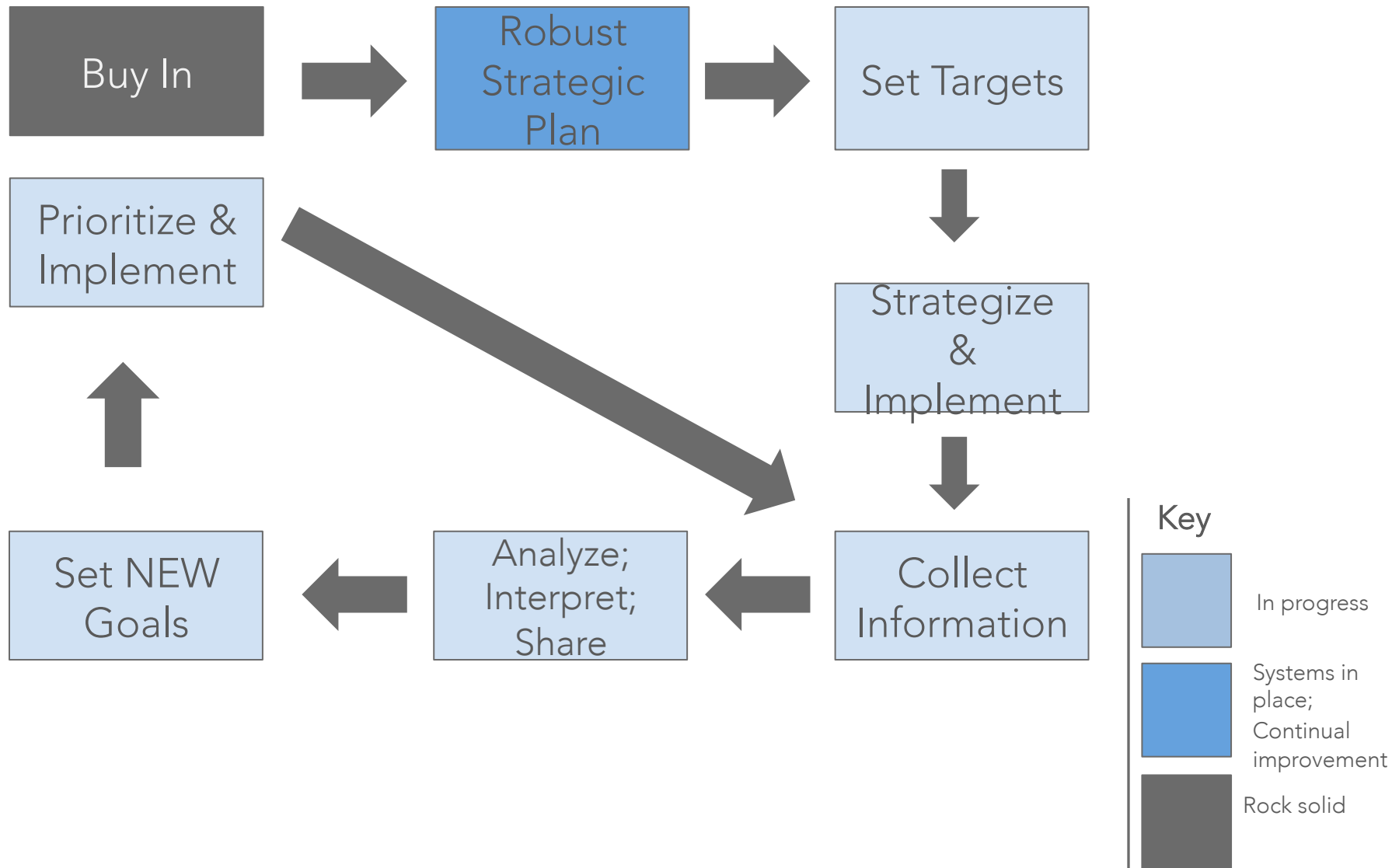


Systems in place;
Continual improvement



Rock solid

Aim High's Journey—20 years



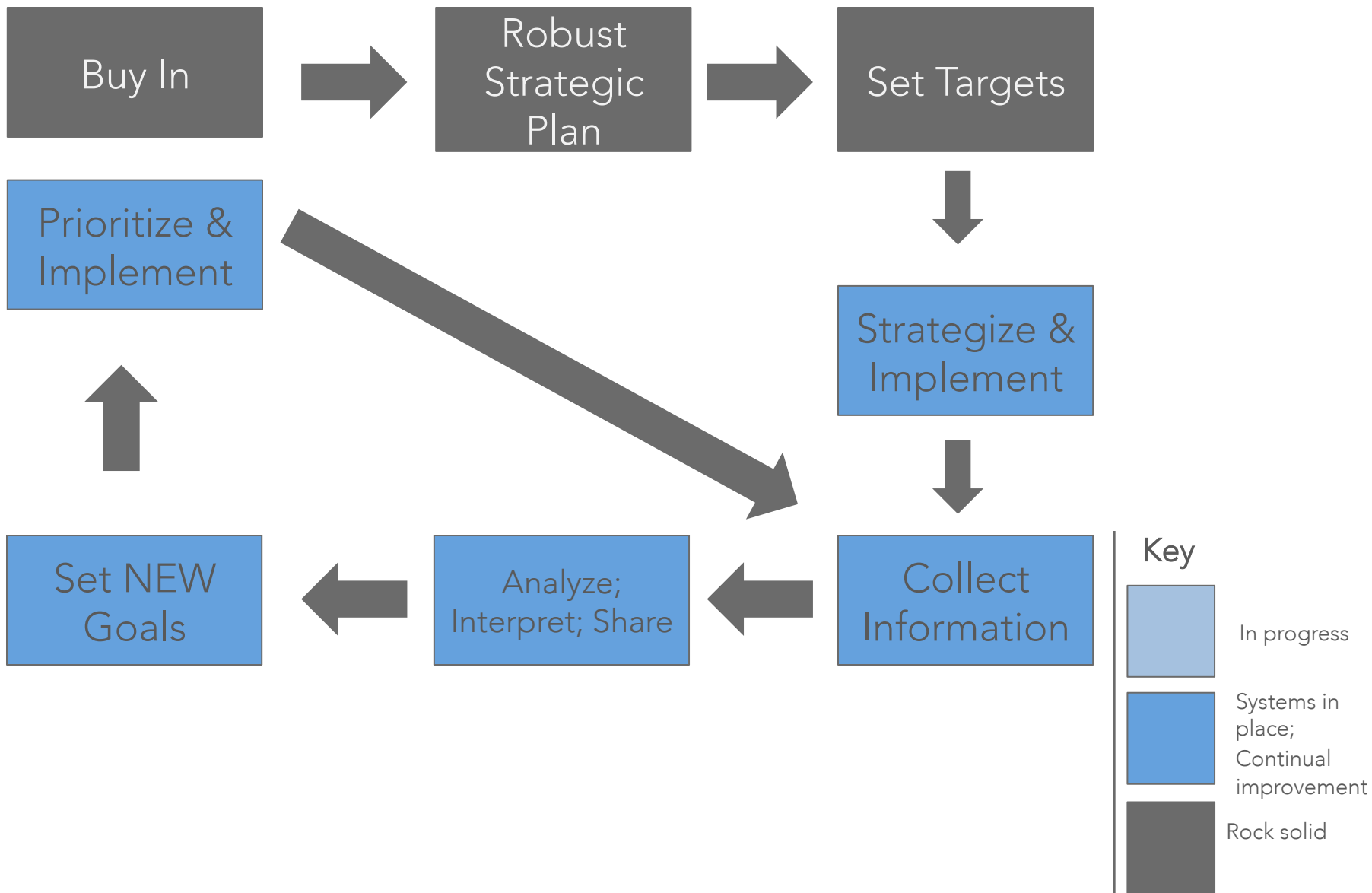
Aim High's Journey–20 years

Buy In

- Board Expertise
- Commitment to necessary resources
- Leadership Commitment
 - Board
 - Executive Director
- Investment of time

→ Willingness to **get better**

Aim High's Journey—25 years



What happened between years 20-25?

Barriers

Aim High Magic

Limited financial resources
"It's about the Kids"

Focus on doing more

Fear of numbers

Strong Community

- Culture
- Personnel
- "Founder's Syndrome"

Mitigating Strategies

Clearly Define Success

Invest in trade-offs

Have an economic downturn

Take small steps

Model

- Commitment to organizational learning
- "Making the case"
- Build systems to create cycle of inquiry

Questions: What resonates?
What are we missing?

Reviewing the Aim High Journey: 1st 25 years

Questions:

What resonates for you?

What are we missing?

Ah-Ha Moment?

Was there a **turning point** or **defining moment**?

Key Decisions and Investments

1. Director of Academics and Program Evaluation
2. BRIDGESPAN and Vision 2015 (3 Pillars)
 1. Strategic Plan Consultants
3. Rock solid about anchor and outcomes
4. Program and Evaluation Committee (Board)
5. LFA
 1. Evaluation Consultants
6. Director of Strategic Initiatives
7. Gardner Center and Organizational Learning Specialist
8. V2020 (Strategic Planning Committee)

Implementation Study

- What is an implementation study?
- Implementation vs. impact study
- Value for Aim High

Implementation Study Process

- Researchers from John W. Gardner Center
- Funded by Lurie Foundation
- Informed strategic plan and theory of change
- Two year process

Research Questions

- How is Aim High implemented relative to the intended program model? What are factors that influence program implementation?
- What are students', parents', and teaching staff's experiences with the program?
- To what extent is Aim High participation associated with shirts in students' and teachers outcomes?
- What elements of Aim High are essential to the program's desired results?

Study Design

- Surveys with students, teachers and parents
- Interviews with Site Directors
- Program observations at 5 sites
- Focus groups with students, parents and teaching staff

Key Findings

- Aim High offers a cohesive, high-quality program, implemented consistently across program sites
- Teachers, students, and parents consistently report positive experiences with the program
- Students and teachers reports positive shifts in knowledge and beliefs

Strengths (aligned with nationally recognized best practices)

- Consistent program implementation and positive student/staff experiences across sites
- Continuity of culture throughout Aim High network
- Positive showing on leading indicators of success (e.g. student attendance and engagement)

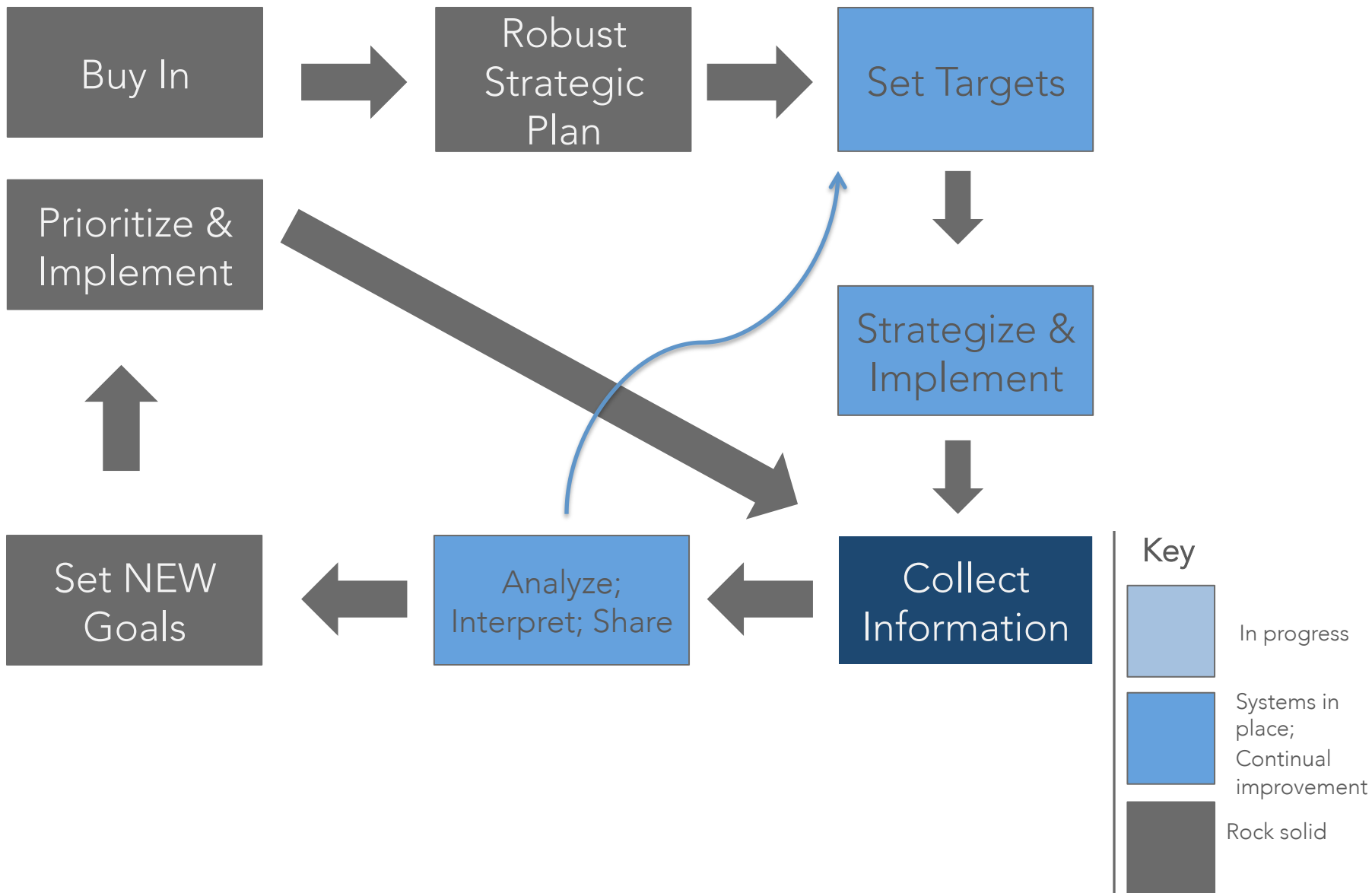
Challenges

- Student population needs sometimes overwhelm available resources and support
- Communication and coordination with host school varied across sites
- Difficulty hiring enough professional teachers
- Variability in instructional capacity

Examples of Data to Action

- ELL Specialist Job Description
- Tools and adaptations in curriculum for various student needs
- Regional Program Managers and RFP templates to alleviate facilities issues
- Increase Teacher Pay
- Developing Informal Partnerships with Teacher Training Programs

Aim High's Journey—30 years



V2020: The Next Step In Our Journey

Organizational Learning Toolkit

- **Organization Level**
- **Site Level**
- **Teacher Level**

V2020: Updated Mission

Our community:

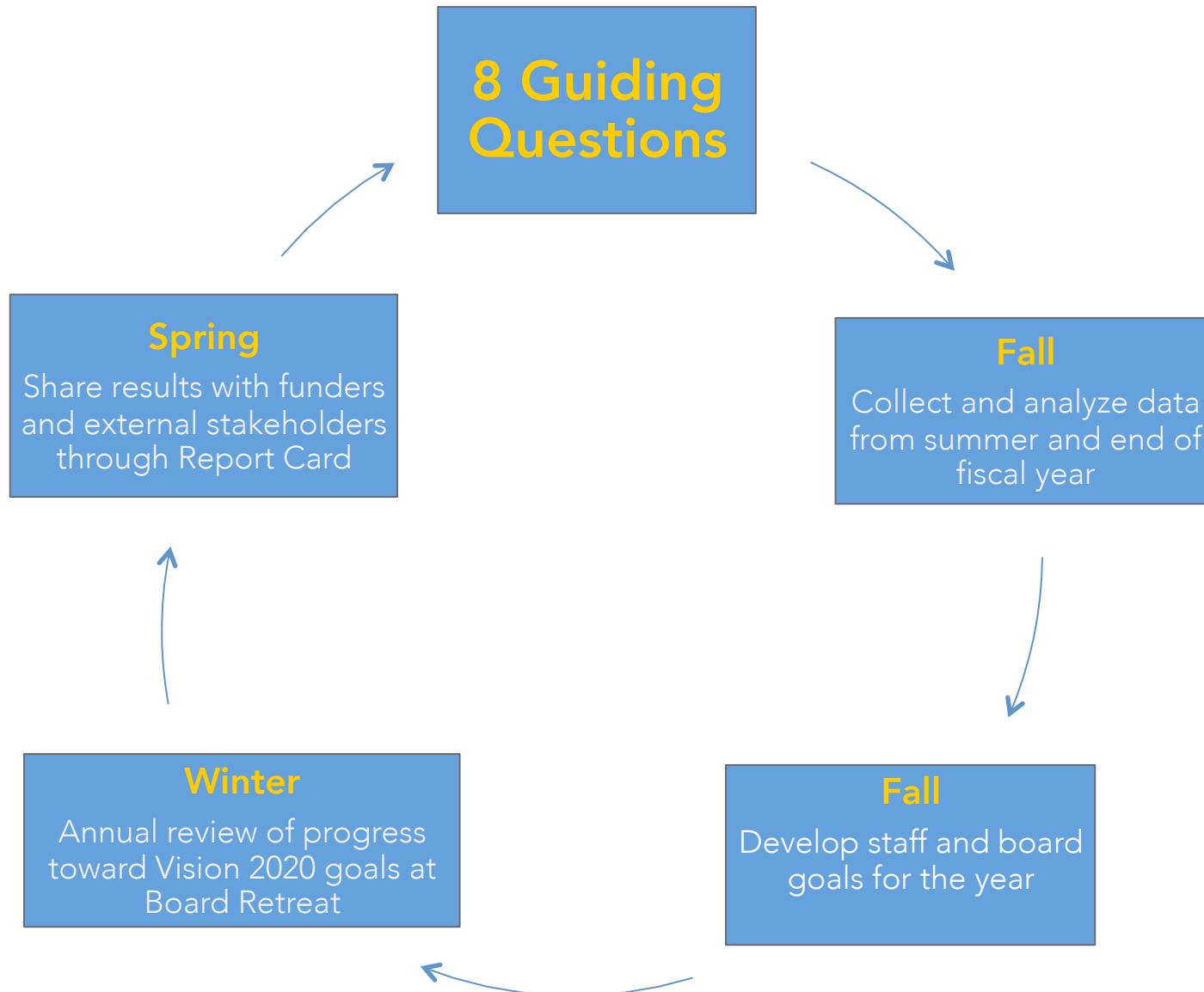
- Nurtures the promise and potential of middle school students from low-income neighborhoods
- Prepares students for high school, setting them on the path to college and future success
- Inspires the next generation of teachers and educational leaders

Vision 2020: Our 8 Guiding Questions



1. Are we serving the youth who need us?
2. Are our students prepared for high school?
3. Are our alumni on the path to college?
4. Do our teachers have the resources they need to be successful?
5. Are we building a pipeline into teaching and educational leadership?
6. Are we leveraging partnerships effectively?
7. Are we delivering a high quality, impactful and efficient model?
8. Are we building a sustainable organization?

Vision 2020: Annual Cycle of Inquiry



Board Retreat Report

<u>Guiding Question</u>	<u>Goal met</u>	<u>Notes:</u>
1. Are We Serving the Right Kids?	✓ Yes	Strong recruitment & retention. Opportunity to improve 3-4 year retention & retention of black & Latino students.
2. Are Our Students Prepared for HS?	✓ Yes	Preparing kids academically and socially & emotionally. Opportunity to improve data on high school success.
3. Are Our Alumni on the Path to College	✓ Yes	Students are learning about the path to college. Strong high school graduation & college enrollment data. Gap in data on our alums in HS.
4. Do Our Teachers Have the Resources They Need?	✓ Yes	Strong “embedded” professional development. Opportunity to improve prof development workshops.

Board Retreat Report Continued

<u>Guiding Question</u>	<u>Goal met</u>	<u>Notes:</u>
5. Are We Creating a Pipeline Into Teaching?	On Track	Pilot year in 2016. New programs being established & refined. Opportunity to improve messaging/marketing as well as more teacher data.
6. Are We Leveraging Partnerships Effectively?	On Track	Adjusting original targets based on lessons learned. Formalized 7 strategic partners and 7 more in pipeline. Opportunity for improved messaging/marketing.
7. Are We Delivering a High Quality Efficient Model?	✓ Yes	Meeting/exceeding growth goals. High quality implementation & return on investment.
8. Are We Building a Sustainable Org?	Needs Improvement	Need to strengthen & improve Board fundraising and restructure governance. Modest investment in central office infrastructure to support growth, but will need more.

Site Scorecard

Summer 2016 Site Health Scorecard Analysis

Key
85-100% of total points: Aim High site represents the highest level of quality
70-84% of total points: Aim High site is functioning well, but we need to follow up on areas of improvement, paying close attention to the areas of "1" or "2".
33-69% of total points or more than 5 #1s : Aim High site has major areas for improvement. Action steps for improvement are created and site closure may be considered.

	Green=Highest quality	Yellow=Functioning Well	Red=Major Areas For Improvement					
SF								
Site	CAT	Francisco	Gateway	Lick	Mission	MLK	Urban	Willie Brown
% of Total Points	87%	86%	90%	83%	86%	77%	77%	78%

East Bay

Site	UPA	Westlake	Lighthouse
% of Total Points	89%	77%	81%

South Bay

Site	Garfield	Roosevelt	Chavez
% of Total Points	89%	91%	77%

North Bay

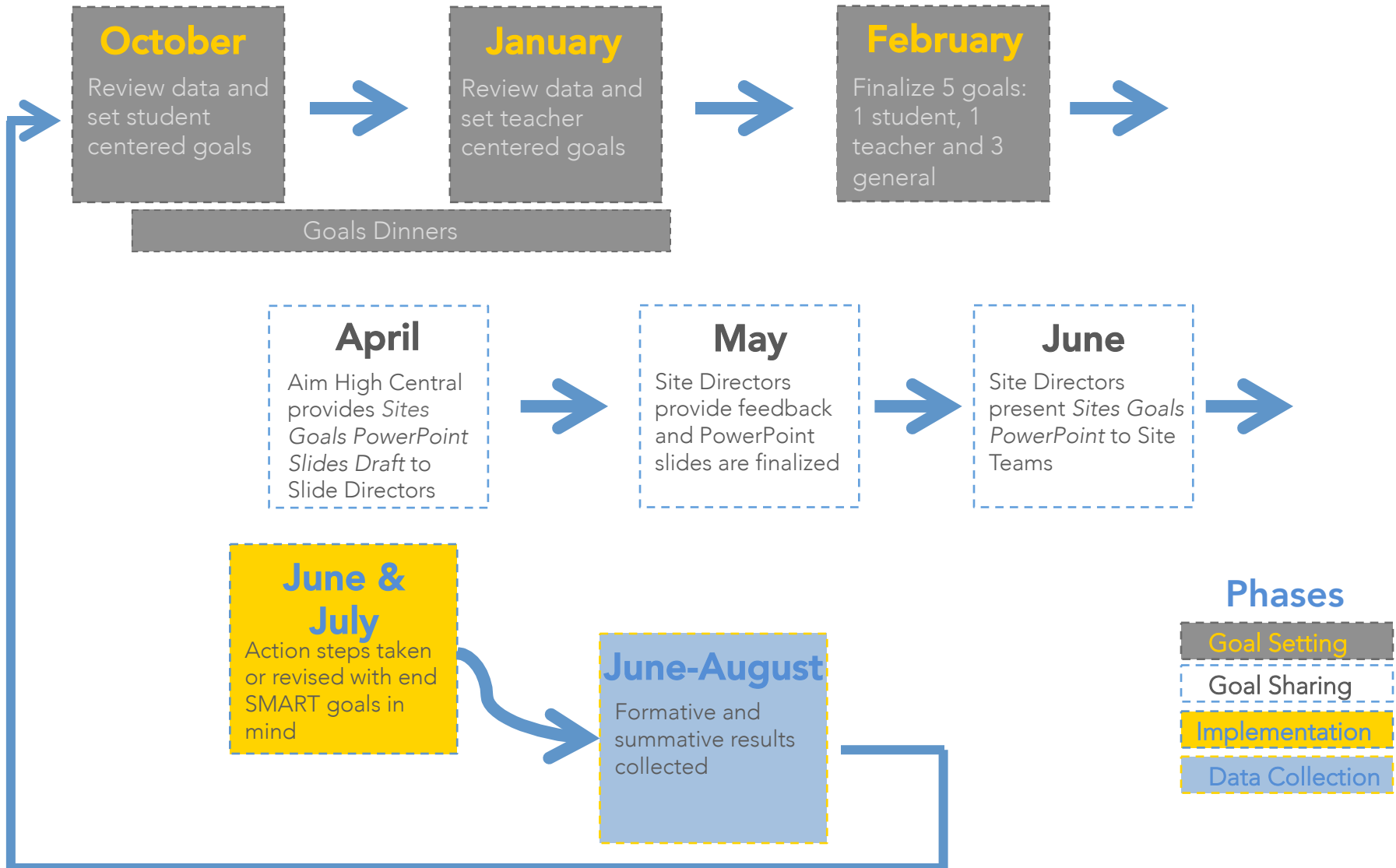
Site	MA	Napa
% of Total Points	90%	94%

Tahoe

Site	TTAH
% of Total Points	78%

A Site Director's Journey

Aim High Site Goal Setting Cycle



A Teacher's Journey

Summer Cycle

- **Faculty Week:** Teachers choose two goals
- **Week 1:** Observers do quick visits to classroom
- **Week 1-2:** Pre-observation meetings
- **Weeks 2-3:** Observations
- **Weeks 3-4:** Post-observation meetings
- **Weeks 4-5:** Quick revisit
- **Week 5:** End of Summer Reflections and quick conferences

A Teacher's Journey (cont).

Teacher Growth Toolkit

- **Aim High Teaching and Learning Goals (T&L Goals)**
- **Faculty and Staff CORE in Action Goals (CORE in Action Goals)**
- Aim High Pre-Observation Reflection form
- Aim High Post-Observation Reflection form (teacher)
- Aim High Post-Observation Reflection form (observer)
- End of Summer Reflection
- Collection of Observation Tools

Rules of the Road (How to be Successful)

- Model & Listen
- Flexible
 - Implementation plan
 - Δ s
- Transparent
- Personal Commitment
- Accept the bad with the good → Share everything
- Invest in evaluation
- Organizational learning means the **whole** organization learns

Wrapping Up: Part I

1. How has this work impacted Aim High?
 1. More **objective** understanding of strengths and opportunities for growth
 2. Make the case for funders
 3. Culture of sharing best practices
 4. Community: Everyone feels heard and that they matter

Wrapping Up: Part I (cont.)

2. What are key ongoing challenges?
 1. Some data are harder to get than others
 2. Capacity
 3. Focus on negative
 4. ~~Fidelity to model~~

Wrapping Up: Part II

- One idea/concept you'll bring back to your board/staff
- One area of progress you think you can make