



PlanningPoint – What are leading and lagging measures? Leading measures look ahead monitoring incremental accomplishments within a specified timeframe on the way to achieving the ultimate goal. Lagging measures are important overarching outcomes (ultimate goals) that capture past performance. By the time you see a lagging measure's results the performance that drove them has already passed.

Leading



- Forward looking
- Incorporate iterative time constrained milestones
- Influence future performance

Lagging

- Backward looking
- Analyze past performance
- Summative outcomes



What are some additional details about leading measures? Leading measures involve establishing timelines and maintaining the pace of activities and accomplishments to remain on track. Lead measures include actions and initiatives that should be monitored along the way toward goal achievement and help identify if mid-course corrections or interventions are needed. Lead measures deliver formative evaluation. For example, when analyzing class grades leading measures could include class attendance, class participation, and assignment grades (papers, quizzes, exams, etc.). Covey (2023) describes lead measures as critical activities or levers that can drive ultimate outcomes.

What should be considered when setting lead measures? Leading measures should be based on the ultimate goal(s) of a particular objective or task. Include milestones with timelines that build toward reaching the ultimate goal. For example, if eight short reports need to be completed in twelve months, a lead measure could include tracking the number of finished reports within a shorter specified timeframe. For example, conscientiously completing two reports every three months over time would combine to meet the ultimate twelve month goal of eight completed reports.



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Sample Leading Measures

- For students planning to complete a 30-hour college credit certificate within one academic year, a lead measure would be to successfully finish 15-credits in the program by the end of the Fall semester and then register for and complete last 15 required credits in the Spring term.
- On the road to elevating Fall credit enrollment, increase the number of Fall completed college credit applications by four percent, one month before the start of classes while maintaining the same applicant to enrollment conversion rate as the last Fall.

How can lead measures contribute to effective execution? A leading indicator allows for the change of behavior in the aspect of the organization being observed. By monitoring incremental progress, lead measures allow for mid-course corrections. Lead measures keep an initiative in line before it goes too far awry to be effectively reigned in.

What are lag measures and what should be considered when establishing them? Lag measures provide summative evaluation – ultimate goals. The main consideration when selecting lag measures is finding the best way to gauge the ultimate success of a project. Lag measures deliver a “final” evaluation of outcomes. They measure organizational output.

Sample Lagging Measures

- Placement in Employment or Continuing Education: The percentage of graduates who are employed and/or are pursuing further education.
- Student Satisfaction: The level of satisfaction reported by students regarding the quality of their education and the support services provided by the institution.
- Fall to Fall Retention Rates: Percent of first-time in college (FTIC) students in their initial Fall semester who return the next immediate Fall compared to the FTIC cohort. Completers of certificates in their initial year of enrollment are included in the positive outcome count.

Monitoring meaningful leading and lagging measures positions an institution for success as assessments of both progress and performance are made with an emphasis on acting to continuously improve.

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