

# The Strategic Learning Toolkit

## COMPETENCIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

The competencies outlined below will help you think about who on your team should help with the strategic learning process. They might be internal to your organization, in your partner organizations, or available as a contracted service. If you are working with outside partners, it is important to define their role clearly. They are resources to support the Learning Team, to be called upon as needed and be a partner when requested in implementing the strategic learning activities.

Competency for strategic learning	Description of the competency as used in the strategic learning process
<b>Leadership and access to resources</b>	As with any change effort implemented in an organization, having a passionate leader makes a tremendous difference. Take the time to identify an individual who is excited to engage in strategic learning and committed to helping your organization’s learning efforts move forward. This person does not have to be a leader in the organization, but they do need to be in a position to help secure resources for the strategic learning activities.
<b>Effective teams</b>	The Spark approach to strategic learning assumes a team process, called the <i>Learning Team</i> , with multiple staff (and stakeholders, where relevant) working together throughout the learning process. Knowing how to work in a team where everyone has an equal voice is helpful as you begin your learning process. Having a team that has worked together in the past is ideal, but not necessary. If the team is new, take time to develop it into a functional team with members who trust each other and are able to openly discuss their strategies and learning.
<b>Facilitation</b>	Ensuring that at least one team member (which can be an external learning coach) is an effective facilitator will help with developing your Learning Roadmap and collective interpretation of the findings to improve your strategies.
<b>In-depth knowledge of your strategies</b>	Without a clear understanding of the strategies you are implementing and why they are important (the long term goals of the strategy), it will be very difficult to design and implement learning related to them. The Learning Team needs the implementers involved, not just the managers.
<b>Research skills</b>	While the strategic learning model prioritizes the implementers, rather than an independent evaluator or other researcher, research skills are still important. They come in handy when you are using research to help develop the roadmap of your program (Step 2), focusing your learning (Step 3), systematically collecting data (Step 4), and collective interpretation of the findings to improve your strategies (Step 5).
<b>Computer skills</b>	Efficient data collection relies on knowledge of programs like word, excel, online survey programs, and other resources as needed. Having at least one staff person who is comfortable with these programs and/or learning new programs is critical for an efficient, effective learning process.

### Are you interested in more tips and tools for strategic learning?

Spark Policy Institute’s ([www.sparkpolicy.com](http://www.sparkpolicy.com)) interactive Strategic Learning Toolkit is available at [www.sparkpolicy.com/strategic-learning](http://www.sparkpolicy.com/strategic-learning). Please share your stories about and tools for strategic learning, as access tools and ideas from other organizations.



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