

Athena SWAN Action Planning

Action no.	Issue Identified	Action	Timescales	Responsibility	Success measures

General Tips to ensure you Action Plan is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound):

- = Action plans should be so specific, that you could hand the document to anyone in the institution, and they would know what steps to take to implement the plan. For example: “Build in formal career development mapping and tracking as part of a revised PMDS” should include more detail. What will this look like and what steps do you need to take to achieve it? How will changes be communicated to staff? Will line managers be trained on the new process? Enough information should be provided to demonstrate how you will meet targets and quotas.
- = The rationale for each action should be driven by quantitative and qualitative data and analysis from the application. Make use of staff consultation to evidence the need for specific actions. Survey data can then be used to establish a baseline for success measures. For example: “Only 40% of women and 52% of men agreed that they are encouraged to take up career development opportunities”.
- = Use of numerical targets are strongly encouraged and for it to be clear how achievement of these will be measured. Targets might be: an increase in the number of staff who report a good understanding/experience of something in a survey; an increase in the number of staff attending a workshop/training course; an increase in the number of applications from women (for courses, jobs, promotion) or an increased success rate for women.
- = Actions plans are not about completing actions, but addressing issues. Before implementing the action plan, the SAT could review all actions to ensure all “success measures” will also allow them to demonstrate positive impact; showing that by doing the action things have got better (if this is the case).
- = Panels will look for clear start and end dates, and milestones where appropriate. Although actions may become ongoing activity, panels will expect evaluation of activity. Think about what outcomes you are trying to achieve and how you will measure them. This will help you demonstrate impact as you work your way towards a silver award.
- = Avoid an inappropriate balance between HR policy and process, and proactive action, that manifests as too much emphasis on “reviewing”. Look again at any action where you have used words like “monitor”, “review” or “update”: could you have been more proactive here? For example, if you have identified that staff in the department who sit on recruitment panels have not undergone the recruitment and selection training provided by HR, your action could focus on increasing the percentage of staff who’ve undergone training; you could: “annually request data from HR for staff who have undergone training in the past three years; review staff involved in recruitment, contacting those who have not taken the training and asking them to complete this within three months; and subsequently checking that those contacted have completed training, or remove them from the list of those involved in recruitment (or a more severe penalty). An action that might sound complacent or as though an SAT are not taking responsibility for aspects of HR provision/policy that they can effect might be: “HR to review recruitment training” or “Monitor the number of staff who have undertaken training”.

- = Consider including people who are responsible for implementing an action, as well as named individuals on the SAT who can be accountable for reporting on progress.
- = Clearly link issues raised in the narrative to the action plan. A short description of the action can be referenced throughout the narrative in bold, and will not count in word limit.
- = Ensure there are gender specific actions and targets. Often actions will benefit everyone, but keep an eye on the data to see where women may be disproportionately impacted.