A Process for Implementation

From Assessment to Action

Once you've completed the initial conversations with your institutional team, identifying the places that deserve deeper attention, it's time to focus on implementing the specific changes that employer partners are seeking. This process is designed to help institutions move through that work deliberately over the course of a semester, rather than letting momentum from the initial assessment session dissipate before action begins.

This is a suggested structure. Some institutions will move faster. Others will need to adapt the cadence to accommodate leadership availability, board calendars, and academic calendars. What matters most is that the work has a beginning, a structure to follow, and a defined point of return to back the full group, so that efforts between sessions have somewhere to land.

Who Should Lead This

There is no single right answer to who convenes this process. What matters is that the convener has both the *authority* to bring people to the table and a *stake* in the outcome. At different institutions, this might be the President or Chancellor, the Vice President for Workforce or Continuing Education, or the Provost. Whoever convenes the group should also be prepared to keep the process moving between sessions, since semester-long initiatives are vulnerable to losing momentum without a clear owner.

A Proposed Structure: One Semester, Four Sessions

The process below assumes four full-group sessions across a typical semester (16 weeks), with small-group work happening between the sessions. Each corresponds to a stage of work, and the small-group assignments between sessions are designed to align with the three tiers of action used throughout this guide: Immediate next steps and quick wins, Medium-term activities, and Longer-term transformations.

Session 1: Assess and Organize (Month 1)

In the full-group session: Convene a cross-functional group that includes people working across the roles identified in this guide, complete the self-assessment together, and discuss any disagreement in scoring before finalizing domain scores. Identify which domains and sub-sections are most urgent, using the interpretation guidance above.

Form small groups. The most natural division is one small group per domain (Foundational, Business and Financial Practices, Academic Practices, Data, and Student Support), but some institutions may prefer to organize by department or role instead, especially if a single department touches multiple domains. Either approach works, as long as Red and high-priority Yellow items have an assigned owner by the end of this session.

Assign the between-session work. Each small group's first assignment is to review the "immediate next steps and quick wins" actions in their assigned sub-sections and identify which ones could realistically begin within the next four to six weeks.

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Between Sessions 1 and 2: Quick Wins (Weeks 2–6)

Small groups work independently to begin implementing quick win actions, using the detailed practice guide content for their assigned sub-sections, including the employer experience framing and discussion questions, to ground their work. Groups should document what they start, what they complete, and what they discover along the way, including any quick wins that turn out to be harder than expected.

Session 2: Report Back and Plan Medium-Term Work (Month 2)

In the full-group session: Each small group reports back: what was attempted, what worked, what didn't, and what they learned about the underlying causes of the gap. This is also the moment to surface cross-domain dependencies. For example, a Credit for Competencies and Skills group may discover that progress depends on data infrastructure owned by the Data domain group.

Assign the next round of work. Small groups continue to work on quick wins, or shift focus to the "Medium-term activities" in their sub-sections.

Between Sessions 2 and 3: Medium-Term Build (Weeks 8–16)

Small groups work on medium-term activities, which often require coordination with other departments or offices not represented in their group. Groups should identify early whether a medium-term action depends on a decision or resource outside their authority, and flag that for the convener rather than letting it stall quietly.

Session 3: Surface Structural Issues and Set Direction (Month 4)

In the full-group session: Review medium-term progress. This is the session where structural and policy-level issues are most likely to surface. Use this session to decide which longer-term transformations are worth pursuing this year versus tabling for a future cycle, since not every institution will be ready to act on every longer-term recommendation in a single year.

Assign final work. Groups working on viable longer-term transformations begin scoping what that work would require: governance approval, budget, staffing, or system changes, recognizing that most longer-term transformations will extend well beyond a single semester.

Session 4: Consolidate and Plan Forward (End of Semester)

In the full-group session: Review the semester's progress across all domains. Re-score any items where meaningful change occurred, and document what is still in progress for continued ownership into the next term. Decide on next steps for any longer-term transformations identified in Session 3, including who will own them going forward. Set the date for the next full self-assessment, per the "Revisit annually" guidance, recognizing that institutions further along in this work may benefit from revisiting sooner.

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What Makes This Work

Someone has to own the gaps between sessions. Small-group work tends to stall without a check-in point on the calendar. The convener's job between full-group sessions is less about doing the work and more about making sure each group knows their next deadline and has what they need to meet it.

Not every domain needs equal attention. An institution that scored well in Business and Financial Practices but poorly in Academic Practices should weigh its small-group time accordingly.

Cross-domain dependencies are common and should be expected, not treated as failures. Several of the actions in this guide depend on work in more than one domain. Surfacing those dependencies in Session 2 or 3, rather than discovering them in isolation, is part of what makes this a coordinated process rather than five separate projects.

This process produces real artifacts. By the end of a semester, an institution following this structure should have completed several quick wins, made visible progress on medium-term activities, and have a defined, scoped plan for at least one longer-term transformation. That is meaningful progress, even if it does not fully close every gap identified in the initial assessment.

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