

Quick Reference Guide: MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

Strategic, Tactical, and Operational Framework

For: VPs, Deans, Department Heads, Program Directors, Managers

Your Primary Role: TACTICAL PLANNING

You are the bridge between vision and execution.

You are responsible for:

- Translating strategic goals into actionable programs
 - Allocating resources within your department
 - Coordinating across teams and units
 - Managing implementation timelines
 - Ensuring operational excellence
-

Key Questions You Should Ask

Strategic Level (Understand and Align)

✓ **WHERE** is RCC going?

- What are the institutional priorities in Roxbury 2030?
- Which of the 5Ps does my department support?
- How does my work contribute to RCC's competitive positioning?

Tactical Level (Your Primary Focus)

✓ HOW will we get there?

- What programs and initiatives will achieve strategic goals?
- How do I allocate my budget and personnel effectively?
- What partnerships or resources do I need?
- What is my implementation timeline?

Operational Level (Support Your Team)

✓ WHAT needs to happen daily?

- Do my team members understand their roles?
 - Are processes efficient and student-centered?
 - What operational barriers need to be removed?
-

Your Tactical Responsibilities at RCC

1. Map Your Department to Strategic Goals

Exercise: Complete this table for your department:

Strategic Goal	My Tactical Initiative	Timeline	Resources Needed	Success Metrics
Example: Expand A2M pathways	Design IT A2M curriculum map	12 months	2 faculty, \$50K	20 students enrolled by Fall 2027

Every initiative you lead should connect to at least one Roxbury 2030 goal.

2. Translate the 5Ps into Programs

Your department should have concrete initiatives for relevant Ps:

Purpose (Economic Mobility):

- How does your department prepare students for high-wage careers?
- What career pathways do you support?

People (Student Success):

- How do you serve RCC's diverse student population?
- What support services does your department provide?

Place (Campus Environment):

- How does your physical space support learning?
- What improvements are needed?

Programs (Academic Excellence):

- How do your programs align with transfer requirements?
- What curriculum updates are needed?

Partnerships (External Relationships):

- What partnerships does your department maintain?
 - How do you leverage external resources?
-

3. Build and Manage A2M Pathways

If your department offers A2M-eligible programs:

- Tactical Checklist:**
- Curriculum map aligned with transfer institution requirements
 - Articulation agreement signed with partner university
 - Faculty trained on A2M advising and transfer protocols
 - Scholarship application process documented and communicated
 - Student information sessions scheduled each semester
 - Tracking system for A2M-eligible students established

- Partnership coordinator identified and empowered
- Success metrics defined and monitored

Common Tactical Challenges:

- **Challenge:** Faculty resistance to curriculum changes
Solution: Involve faculty in design; show data on transfer success
 - **Challenge:** Students unaware of A2M opportunities
Solution: Embed A2M information in first-year courses and advising
 - **Challenge:** Partnership coordination takes too much time
Solution: Assign a dedicated coordinator; create standard processes
-

4. Allocate Resources Strategically

Budget Allocation Framework:

Strategic Investments (30-40% of discretionary budget):

- New programs aligned with Roxbury 2030
- Faculty development for emerging fields
- Partnership development and coordination

Tactical Improvements (40-50% of discretionary budget):

- Curriculum updates and course development
- Technology and equipment upgrades
- Student support services expansion

Operational Maintenance (20-30% of discretionary budget):

- Routine supplies and materials
- Process improvements
- Staff training and development

Red Flag: If 80%+ of your budget goes to operational maintenance, you lack resources for strategic growth. Advocate for more funding or reprioritize.

Common Middle Management Pitfalls to Avoid

✗ **Tactical Chaos:** Launching programs without strategic alignment

Solution: Use the 5Ps Framework to evaluate every new initiative before approval.

✗ **Firefighting Mode:** Spending all time on urgent operational issues

Solution: Block calendar time for tactical planning; delegate operational decisions.

✗ **Siloed Thinking:** Working independently without coordination

Solution: Meet regularly with peer departments; share resources and best practices.

✗ **Upward Delegation:** Asking leadership to make tactical decisions

Solution: Present options with your recommendation; own the decision.

✗ **Ignoring Feedback:** Not listening to frontline employees about operational challenges

Solution: Create regular feedback loops; act on employee suggestions.

Your Communication Responsibilities

Communicate UP (to Leadership)

What: Progress on tactical initiatives, resource needs, barriers to success

How Often: Monthly updates, quarterly reviews

Format: Written reports, one-on-one meetings, leadership team presentations

Example: “We’re on track to launch the IT A2M pathway by Fall 2027. We need an additional \$30K for lab equipment and approval to hire one adjunct faculty member.”

Communicate ACROSS (to Peer Departments)

What: Coordination needs, shared resources, best practices

How Often: Bi-weekly or monthly coordination meetings

Format: Department head meetings, cross-functional teams, informal check-ins

Example: “Our IT department is developing transfer articulation agreements. Can we use your Healthcare A2M model as a template?”

Communicate DOWN (to Your Team)

What: Strategic context, tactical priorities, operational expectations

How Often: Weekly team meetings, one-on-one check-ins

Format: Department meetings, email updates, individual conversations

Example: “Our strategic goal is economic mobility. Our tactical priority this year is launching the IT A2M pathway. Your operational role is to ensure every IT student knows about this opportunity.”

Decision-Making Framework for Middle Managers

When evaluating a new program or initiative:

1. Strategic Alignment (Must Pass)

- Does this support at least one Roxbury 2030 goal?
- Does it align with the 5Ps Framework?

2. Resource Feasibility (Must Pass)

- Do I have the budget, personnel, and time?
- What is the total cost of ownership (not just startup costs)?

3. Operational Viability (Must Pass)

- Can my team actually execute this?
- What processes or systems need to change?

4. Impact Potential (Prioritization)

- How many students will benefit?
- What is the expected ROI (student outcomes, revenue, reputation)?

5. Risk Assessment (Mitigation)

- What could go wrong?

- Do I have contingency plans?

Decision Rule: If it doesn't pass all three "Must Pass" criteria, say no or revise the proposal.

Metrics You Should Monitor

Tactical KPIs (Your Primary Responsibility)

Review Monthly:

- Students enrolled in your programs
- Course completion rates by program
- Faculty professional development participation
- Partnership engagement metrics
- Budget utilization vs. plan

Review Quarterly:

- Program-level retention and completion rates
- Transfer rates to 4-year institutions
- Graduate employment outcomes
- Student satisfaction scores
- Progress toward annual goals

Strategic KPIs (Understand Your Contribution)

Review Annually:

- How does your department contribute to RCC's overall transfer rate?
- How does your department support economic mobility outcomes?
- What is your department's reputation externally?

Operational KPIs (Monitor for Quality)

Review Weekly or As Needed:

- Course fill rates and waitlists
 - Advising appointment availability
 - Equipment and facility issues
 - Staff workload and burnout indicators
-

Your Role in the Communication Plan

Phase 1: Leadership Alignment (Weeks 1-4)

Your Actions:

- Participate in executive retreat
- Understand strategic priorities deeply
- Commit to tactical planning

Phase 2: Middle Management Training (Weeks 5-8) — YOUR FOCUS

Your Actions:

- Attend department-level workshops
- Complete tactical planning exercises
- Map your initiatives to strategic goals
- Identify resource gaps and advocate for support
- Develop communication plan for your team

Phase 3: All-Staff Engagement (Weeks 9-12)

Your Actions:

- Lead department meetings explaining the framework
- Help your team understand how their work connects to strategy

- Create feedback mechanisms for operational insights
-

Immediate Action Checklist

- Map your department's initiatives** to Roxbury 2030 strategic goals
 - Identify 3 tactical priorities** for this year
 - Review your budget allocation** using the 30/40/30 framework
 - Meet with peer departments** to identify coordination opportunities
 - Create a tactical dashboard** to track your key metrics
 - Schedule monthly one-on-ones** with each direct report
 - Ask your team:** "What operational barriers prevent you from doing your best work?"
 - Develop a 12-month implementation timeline** for your top priority initiative
-

Tactical Planning Template

Use this template for every major initiative:

Initiative Name: _____

Strategic Alignment:

- Which Roxbury 2030 goal does this support?
- Which of the 5Ps does this advance?

Tactical Plan:

- What will we do? (Specific actions)
- Who is responsible? (Names and roles)
- When will it happen? (Timeline with milestones)
- What resources are needed? (Budget, personnel, technology)
- How will we measure success? (Specific metrics)

Operational Requirements:

- What processes need to change?

- What training is required?
- What communication is needed?

Risk Mitigation:

- What could go wrong?
 - What are our contingency plans?
-

Resources

Strategic Plan: Roxbury 2030 (available from Institutional Effectiveness)

Interactive Webpage: RCC Strategic Alignment Portal

Full Presentation: Available with speaker notes

Tactical Planning Support: Contact your VP or Institutional Effectiveness

Questions: Submit via online feedback form

Remember

You are the bridge. Without you, strategy remains a dream and operations become aimless.

- **Understand strategy:** Know WHERE RCC is going
- **Own tactics:** Figure out HOW to get there
- **Support operations:** Ensure your team has WHAT they need
- **Communicate constantly:** Connect the dots for everyone

The most important question you can ask:

“How does this program or initiative translate RCC’s strategic vision into concrete student outcomes?”

Prepared by Manus AI for Roxbury Community College

Last Updated: February 2026