

# **Strategic Focus Cities**

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*Evaluation Guide*

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# Strategic Focus Cities Evaluation Guide

## Introduction

Strategic Focus Cities (SFC) is a major emphasis of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and its partners that seeks to impact the cities of North America with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Given the substantial amounts of time, effort, and money being channeled into SFC, there must be accountability for end results. This evaluation guide provides suggested measures by which SFC can be evaluated.

A narrative report stating what happened during an SFC initiative may be useful, but a comparison of actual results to expectations is where any good evaluation should lead. Thus, the first step is a clear statement of what NAMB and its partners are trying to accomplish with the Strategic Focus Cities process, i.e., the desired outcomes.

There are six areas in which Strategic Focus Cities operates. These are 1) evangelism, 2) prayer, 3) church planting, 4) student ministries, 5) Christian ministries, and 6) church strengthening. These areas are referenced as strategic objectives in the document *Covenant for Partnering in the Strategic Focus Cities (SFC) Process*. As stated in this partnership agreement, these strategic objectives are “critical to the overall impact of SFC.” The partnership agreement also includes relational objectives and process objectives. Unlike strategic objectives (which deal with outcomes), relational and process objectives delineate how Strategic Focus Cities will approach its work. While relationships and processes are important, the end results are more important for evaluation of the entire SFC effort. Extensive participation, excellent cooperation, and strong working relationships among NAMB, denominational partners, and the larger evangelical community do not guarantee accomplishments in the six strategic areas. Thus, evaluation will focus on the six strategic objectives.

The second step is to develop specific criteria by which each of the six objectives can be measured. Two types of measurements—those that measure end results and those that measure effort—are included. Measures of end results, called primary indicators, include items such as baptisms, church plants, and conversions. Measures of the effort put into SFC strategies, called secondary indicators, include items such as number of volunteers, number of events, number of participants at events, and number of dollars spent. Strictly speaking, secondary indicators are not the focus of the evaluation process—they are means to an end. The rationale for collecting and tracking secondary indicators is to evaluate action plans (events, projects) that contribute to the overall end results. Thus, the primary indicators are most important for evaluating the Strategic Focus Cities process.

## Primary Evaluation Instrument

The measurements suggested are included in the attached data collection documents. The primary form for the evaluation process is titled *Strategic Focus Cities Evaluation Form Primary Indicators (Results Oriented)*, and is found in appendix A. The form is divided into the six areas of the strategic objectives. One or more primary indicators (measures) are proposed for each strategic objective, with the exception of prayer.

## *Evangelism*

For the evangelism strategic objective, three measures or indicators are proposed. The first indicator is total baptisms. The rationale behind this measure is that if Strategic Focus Cities has a significant impact in evangelism in a city, then congregations will experience an increase in baptisms. Churches and church-type missions report this information on the Annual Church Profile (ACP). A benchmark or baseline measurement should be made in a year (or years) prior to the implementation of SFC, then baptisms will be tracked for the implementation year and subsequent years. Once the benchmark has been determined and trends in baptisms have been analyzed, NAMB and the city team should develop a realistic goal for baptisms. Given the amount of effort and resources that go into SFC, one might expect a 50 to 100 percent increase in baptisms. This goal should be specified for the implementation year and four subsequent years. Tracking indicators over time will help in understanding the residual effect of SFC past the implementation year. The goal is recorded on the form under the column labeled "City Vision" and baptisms are tracked for the implementation year and subsequent years. The goal becomes the specific criteria by which baptism results are evaluated.

The second indicator of success for evangelism is number of conversions reported as the results of special events during the implementation year. Conversions are not tracked through any denominational process such as the Annual Church Profile. Therefore, a process would need to be developed for use during the SFC emphasis. The process might include the development of a standard decision card that could be used for all special events during the year. The card would contain contact information, name of the event, and decision made. The forms would be useful not only in accurately reporting conversions and other decisions, but also for follow-up so that new converts may be assigned to and incorporated into local churches. The cards could be directed to the city coordinator's office where they would be tallied by event and assigned to area churches for follow-up. It is assumed that conversions will be tracked only during the SFC implementation year when most of the special events occur. As with the first indicator, SFC would be judged against a pre-determined goal for conversions.

The third indicator is the percentage of the population converted. It is calculated by dividing the number of conversions (indicator 2) by the total population of the geographic area covered by SFC. This indicator is a measure of the extent that a city is impacted evangelistically. As with the other two indicators, a goal would be set for an acceptable percentage.<sup>1</sup> Since each city offers a unique context, goals for all three evangelism indicators should be determined on a city by city basis.

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<sup>1</sup> Since this indicator is so closely linked with indicator 2, population size could be taken into consideration in establishing the goal for the number of conversions, thus the third indicator becomes superfluous. If indicator 3 is used, it might be preferable to state it as number of baptisms per 1,000 or 10,000 population.

### *Prayer*

While the SFC initiative in each city must be bathed in prayer, it does not seem possible to measure primary indicators (end results) of prayer. The assumption is that prayer has succeeded when people are saved and churches are planted. Therefore, prayer is the only one of the six strategic areas of SFC that will be evaluated based on secondary indicators that measure effort. These indicators are discussed in the following section of this guide.

### *Church Planting*

Two indicators are proposed for church planting. The first is the total number of congregations—both churches and church-type missions. Trends can be studied and a benchmark can be established by accurately enumerating the number of congregations prior to the implementation year. A minimum level of performance can be established such as a 50 percent increase or a doubling of congregations. Special effort will need to be made by participating associations to enumerate all congregations in the ACP process throughout the SFC time frame.

The second indicator is number of church plants. Traditionally, church plants are either church-type missions or constituted churches. For SFC purposes, the definition of church plants might be expanded to include Bible studies or preaching points where the intent is to eventually organize a church. The ACP attempts to collect information on church-type missions and churches, but does not collect information on all types of units that might be considered SFC church plants. In order to supplement ACP data, a separate reporting process will need to be developed. Information needed includes name and location of the church plant, contact information, primary racial/ethnic group, number of participants, sponsors and partners, and description of the work. As with other indicators, a benchmark would be established, a goal set, and the information tracked for the implementation and subsequent years.

### *Student Ministries*

The seven primary indicators proposed for student ministries are broken down into two areas: colleges, and high schools and middle schools. Local research is needed to determine the number of colleges, high schools, and middle schools in the area, the number with Baptist Student Unions or Christian clubs, the number of Baptist Student Union (BSU)/Christian club participants, and total school enrollment.

Indicator 1 would be the percentage of college campuses with a Baptist Student Union. The second measure would be the total number of BSU participants. The third indicator would be the percentage of college students enrolled or participating in a Baptist Student Union. Benchmark measures would be established prior to implementation of SFC and criteria of success would be established. Indicators 4 through 6 are similar measures of evaluation for high schools and middle schools.

Indicator 7 is the total number of student conversions from all the educational institutions listed above. A special effort should be made during the implementation and subsequent years to report any conversion through a student ministry.

### *Christian Ministries*

Four primary indicators are proposed for the Christian ministries objective, requiring another reporting system. Churches, associations, and other sponsoring groups should complete a report form on each ministry sponsored. The form will include information on type of ministry, number of people served, and number of conversions. (Conversions should also be reported on individual decision forms.) This information would need to be compiled prior to SFC to establish a benchmark, criteria for success would need to be established, and data tracked for the implementation year and subsequent years.

### *Strengthen Churches*

Fourteen indicators are listed as potential measures of the strength of Southern Baptist congregations.<sup>2</sup> The first seven are aggregate numbers and indicate the strength of Southern Baptist congregations as a whole in the SFC area. The second seven deal with congregations as individual units and show the percentage of individual units making progress toward some specified goal. For example, the criteria for success might be that 75 percent of the congregations double in worship service attendance over a five-year period.<sup>3</sup> The numbers reported each year would be the percentage of congregations that double in membership as compared to the benchmark year. All of these indicators are reported on the ACP. As with other indicators based on ACP data, it is urgent that all congregations in the SFC area complete the ACP each year.

### **Secondary Evaluation Instrument**

Another evaluation form is provided in appendix B. *Strategic Focus Cities Evaluation Form Secondary Indicators (Efforts Oriented)* summarizes information related to events and efforts that occur primarily in the implementation year. Nearly all of the information from this form will need to be tracked by the local city coordinator (with the help of SFC partners).

### *Evangelism*

Four secondary indicators are proposed that measure effort expended. The indicators are number of evangelistic events, number of people attending events, number of volunteers involved in staging events, and the number of households receiving a gospel presentation. Each event coordinator should complete a separate form that includes name and description of the event, number in attendance, number of volunteers involved, description of the results, number of conversions (tallied from the individual decision cards), and a total cost. The information from this event form can then feed into the primary and secondary evaluation forms.

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<sup>2</sup> Indicator 3, baptisms, is a duplicate of indicator 1 under the evangelism strategic objective.

<sup>3</sup> In this instance the benchmark figure for each indicator is zero.

### *Prayer*

Six secondary indicators are proposed to measure the effort expended in the area of prayer. Indicator 1, the number of Lighthouses of Prayer established in the SFC area, will be determined by an analysis of a database of persons/families who have committed their homes as lighthouses. Indicator 2 is the number of people who commit to pray for a particular SFC city. Indicator 3, prayer walks, would be provided by the city coordinator. Indicator 4, calls to prayer line, would be provided by the NAMB prayer line database. Indicators 5 and 6 relate to training. The training events and number of people trained might relate specifically to people living in the SFC area or to people who are being trained to intercede on behalf of the people in an SFC area. These data will come from the city coordinator or from the Prayer Evangelism Unit at NAMB.

### *Church Planting*

In the area of church planting, an indicator of effort is the number of church planting partnerships established.

### *Christian Ministries*

The secondary indicators for ministries might be similar to those under the evangelism objective. The number of events, aggregate attendance, and number of volunteers could be collected in much the same manner as for evangelism events. Ongoing ministry volunteers should also be counted.

### *Strengthen Churches*

Two indicators are proposed to measure effort in this area—number of training events and number of people in attendance. These figures need to come from the city coordinator or the local participating associations.

### **Other Issues**

In order to do a complete evaluation, the financial costs to NAMB and/or its partners should be tabulated for each strategic objective. This information could be included on a separate evaluation form or on one of the existing evaluation forms. Even crude measures (like cost per conversion or cost per church plant) might be computed. These measures might help in the allocation of future funds among the more effective action plans (events). Decisions to be made include what costs need to be tracked, whether just NAMB money or the cost to all partners is to be included, and how the financial figures should be integrated into the overall evaluation.

Geography is a critical issue because the measures in the evaluation document are geographically based. Since the geographic area covered by an SFC does not often correspond to associational boundaries, it becomes imperative to identify congregations within the SFC area. Benchmarks and trend analysis should be based on these congregations, and their data will need to be tracked collectively throughout the evaluation period.

Definitions of the measurement items are given in list format in appendix C, *Item Definitions*.

**APPENDIX A**

**Strategic Focus Cities Evaluation Form  
Primary Indicators (Results Oriented)**

***Evangelism***

Indicator Number	Indicator	Year					City Vision
		Benchmark	Implementation	2	3	4	
1	Total baptisms						
2	Conversions						
3	Pct pop converted						

***Church planting***

Indicator Number	Indicator	Year					City Vision
		Benchmark	Implementation	2	3	4	
1	Total congregations						
2	New plants						

***Student ministries***

Indicator Number	Indicator	Year					City Vision
		Benchmark	Implementation	2	3	4	
1	Pct colleges with BSUs						
2	BSU participants						
3	Pct participating						
4	Pct HS & MS w/ clubs						
5	HS & MS participants						
6	Pct participating						
7	Student conversions						

**Christian ministries**

Indicator Number	Indicator	Year					City Vision
		Benchmark	Implementation	2	3	4	
1	Total ongoing ministries						
2	New ongoing ministries						
3	People served						
4	Ministry conversions						

**Strengthen churches**

Indicator Number	Indicator	Year					City Vision
		Benchmark	Implementation	2	3	4	
1	Worship attendance						
2	Resident membership						
3	Baptisms						
4	Bible study attendance						
5	Discipleship participation						
6	Prayer ministry participation						
7	On Mission volunteers						

\*\*Pct churches achieving X:

8	Worship attendance						
9	Resident membership						
10	Baptisms						
11	Bible study attendance						
12	Discipleship participation						
13	Prayer ministry participation						
14	On Mission volunteers						

**APPENDIX B**

**Strategic Focus Cities Evaluation Form  
Secondary Indicators (Efforts Oriented)**

***Evangelism***

<b>Indicator</b>			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>City Vision</b>
1	Events		
2	Event attendance		
3	Event volunteers		
4	Households with Gospel presented		

***Prayer***

<b>Indicator</b>			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>City Vision</b>
1	Lighthouses		
2	Personal commitments		
3	Prayer walks		
4	Calls to prayer line		
5	Intercessory training events		
6	Intercessors trained		

***Church Planting***

<b>Indicator</b>			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>City Vision</b>
1	Church planting partnerships		

***Christian ministries***

<b>Indicator</b>			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>City Vision</b>
1	Ministry events		
2	Event attendance		
3	Event volunteers		
4	Ongoing volunteers		

***Strengthen churches***

<b>Indicator</b>			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>City Vision</b>
1	Training events		
2	Event attendance		

**APPENDIX C**

## **Item Definitions**

### **Primary Evangelism Indicators**

1. Total baptisms  
Number of baptisms reported on the Annual Church Profile (ACP) by participating congregations.
2. Total conversions  
Number of conversions attributable to SFC during the implementation year. Includes conversions resulting from ministries, evangelistic events, student work, and etcetera.
3. Percent of the population converted  
Comparison of the number of conversions with the SFC area's current population estimate.

### **Primary Church Planting Indicators**

1. Total congregations  
Number of churches and church-type missions as measured by the ACP for the SFC area.
2. New plants  
New plants are newly formed churches and church-type missions. For SFC purposes, new plants also include newly formed Bible studies or preaching points that intend to become a church.

### **Primary Student Ministries Indicators**

1. Percent of colleges with BSUs  
Comparison of college campuses in the SFC area that have active BSUs with the total number of area colleges.
2. BSU participants  
Number of BSU participants on area college campuses.
3. Percent participating  
Comparison of the number of BSU participants to the total student enrollment of the area's colleges.
4. Percent of high schools and middle schools with Christian clubs  
Comparison of the number of schools that have active Christian clubs with the total number of schools in the area.
5. High school and middle school participants  
Number of Christian club participants in area schools.
6. Percent participating  
Comparison of the number of Christian club participants with the total enrollment of the area's schools.
7. Student conversions  
Number of conversions reported by all of the BSUs and Christian clubs in the area.

### **Primary Christian Ministries Indicators**

1. Total ongoing ministries  
Number of ministries sustained by churches or associations participating in SFC.
2. New ongoing ministries  
Number of ongoing ministries started as a result of SFC.
3. People served  
Number of persons served by the ministries of the area's churches and associations.
4. Ministry conversions  
Number of conversions resulting from ministries of the area's churches and associations.

### **Primary Strengthen Churches Indicators**

1. Worship attendance  
Total worship attendance reported on the Annual Church Profile (ACP) by participating congregations.
2. Resident membership  
Number of resident members reported on the ACP by participating congregations.
3. Total baptisms  
Number of baptisms reported on the ACP by participating congregations.
4. Bible study attendance  
Average attendance of Sunday school and other Bible studies reported on the ACP by participating congregations.
5. Discipleship participation  
Discipleship enrollment/participation reported on the ACP by participating congregations.
6. OnMission volunteers  
Number of persons involved in a mission project reported on the ACP by participating congregations.
7. Prayer ministry participation  
Number of participants in various prayer ministries and activities, as reported by participating congregations and associations.

### **Percent of congregations achieving growth goal—comparison of the number of congregations achieving stated goals with the total number of participating congregations.**

8. Worship attendance
9. Resident membership
10. Total baptisms
11. Bible study attendance
12. Discipleship participation
13. OnMission volunteers
14. Prayer ministry participation

### **Secondary Evangelism Indicators**

1. Evangelism events  
Number of evangelistic events scheduled during the SFC implementation year.
2. Event attendance  
Number of persons participating in evangelistic events (excludes volunteers) during the SFC implementation year.
3. Event volunteers  
Number of volunteers staffing evangelistic events sponsored during the SFC implementation year.
4. Households with Gospel presented  
Number of households receiving a Gospel presentation during the SFC implementation year.

### **Secondary Prayer Indicators**

1. Lighthouses  
Number of lighthouses of prayer established as a result of SFC.
2. Personal commitments  
Number of persons committed to pray for the city
3. Prayer walks  
Number of persons participating in prayer walks in support of SFC.
4. Calls to prayer line  
Number of telephone calls received and processed through SFC prayer lines.
5. Intercessory training events  
Number of events offering training to SFC prayer intercessors.
6. Intercessors trained  
Number of persons completing training at intercessory training events.

### **Secondary Church Planting Indicators**

1. Church planting partnerships  
Number of state conventions, associations, and churches recruited as partners to plant new churches as part of SFC.

### **Secondary Church Ministries Indicators**

1. Ministry events  
Number of ministry events scheduled during the SFC implementation year.
2. Event attendance  
Number of persons participating in ministry events (excludes volunteers) during the SFC implementation year.
3. Event volunteers  
Number of volunteers staffing ministry events sponsored during the SFC implementation year.
4. Ongoing volunteers  
Number of volunteers participating in ongoing ministries associated with SFC.

## **Secondary Strengthen Churches Indicators**

1. **Training events**  
Number of church strengthening training events scheduled during the SFC implementation year.
2. **Event attendance**  
Number of persons attending church strengthening training events during the SFC implementation year.