Are We the Champions? Determining How to Measure Effectiveness in Institutional Research

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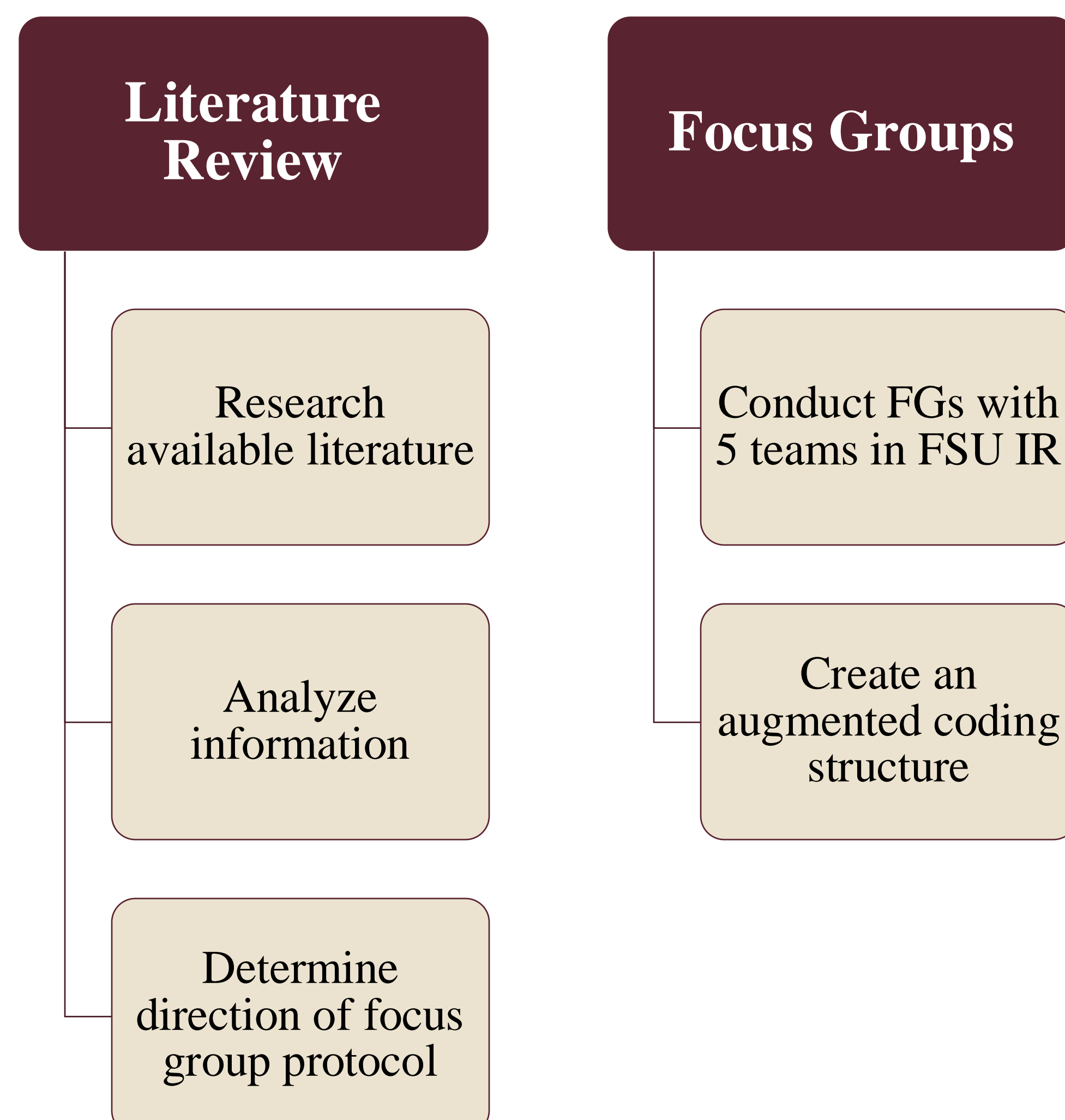
Introduction

Institutional Research (IR) oversees an educational institution's reporting and policy analysis, strategic planning, enrollment, financial management, and overall institutional effectiveness (Volkein 2012). Balancing these components and more necessitates planning and measurement to guarantee an efficient working environment. In this project, we look at how performance measurement, performance management, and strategic planning can be used in IR offices. This study contains two parts:
1) Literature review of Institutional Research for the development of background knowledge, and
2) Focus groups, answering questions about performance measurement in FSU's IR office.

Research Questions

1. What does the literature suggest to measure performance in IR offices?
2. What changes to performance measurement could be implemented in the FSU IR office?

Methodology

Literature Review	Focus Groups
Research available literature	Conduct FGs with 5 teams in FSU IR
Analyze information	Create an augmented coding structure
Determine direction of focus group protocol	

Literature Review - Results

According to the literature, qualitive methods are more effective than quantitative at measuring performance in Institutional research offices (Terenzini 1993 p.4). Not only is time management a big factor in promoting effectiveness, job collaboration and feedback can improve efficiency. Getting feedback from others in the office as well as clients allows one to enhance their skills as an employee. But one of the things that stood out the most when reviewing literature was the concept of implementing an employee feedback survey. Allowing offices to complete surveys gives management the opportunity see where improvement is needed. (Knight 2014 pg.25).

Focus Groups – Thematic Results

Broad Categories	Themes
Role Contributions and Performance	• Opportunities for teaching campus staff and interfacing with other units support growth and development. • Providing data to the public and local sources about student and institutional data. • Focus on balance between providing accurate information and high accessibility; strength and challenge.
Recommendations on Methods and Measure Success/Effectiveness	• Pairing frequent progress reports with annual evaluations. • Sharing calendars and utilizing project management software. • Engaging in loosely structured check-ins.
Perceptions of Performance Measurement	• Using resources and collaboration to measure the units and the department's success. • Evaluation of members to establish goals and discuss recommendations.
Professional Experience with Performance Measurement	• Qualitative methods used to understand consumers and their overall satisfaction with a product. • Keeping track of tasks around a unit and individually to measure success.
Perceptions of Qualitative Measures	• Work validation through external recognition (e.g., awards, conference engagement) and internal feedback mechanisms (e.g., discussions, meetings, and cross-team engagement) • Barriers to aligning feedback and cross-team collaboration.
General Recommendations	• Enhancing data usefulness and institutional impact. • Understanding user engagement though data driven insights. • Cross team engagement through communication and recognition.

Recommendations

Recommendations that should be implemented based on the results of the focus groups:

- More office collaboration
- Collecting client feedback about data products using a survey
- Adding performance check-ins on top of the current weekly one-on-ones to reflect on if goals were met that month.
- Keep up with project management lists/ task assignments.

Implications & Future Directions

Measuring performance gives an office the ability to operate smoothly efficiently. There is always room improvement in the office and that is best found through employee feedback. One of the ways that this study could be improved in through further employee analysis, asking them more question to further expand on the conclusion of improving the workspace.
We could also expand our focus group population to people outside our own IR office, namely IR staff at other universities. Doing so would enrich our focus group data with other perspectives. This would allow for broader recommendations to improve the effectiveness of IR across more institutions.

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References