



## ASSESSING STRATEGY

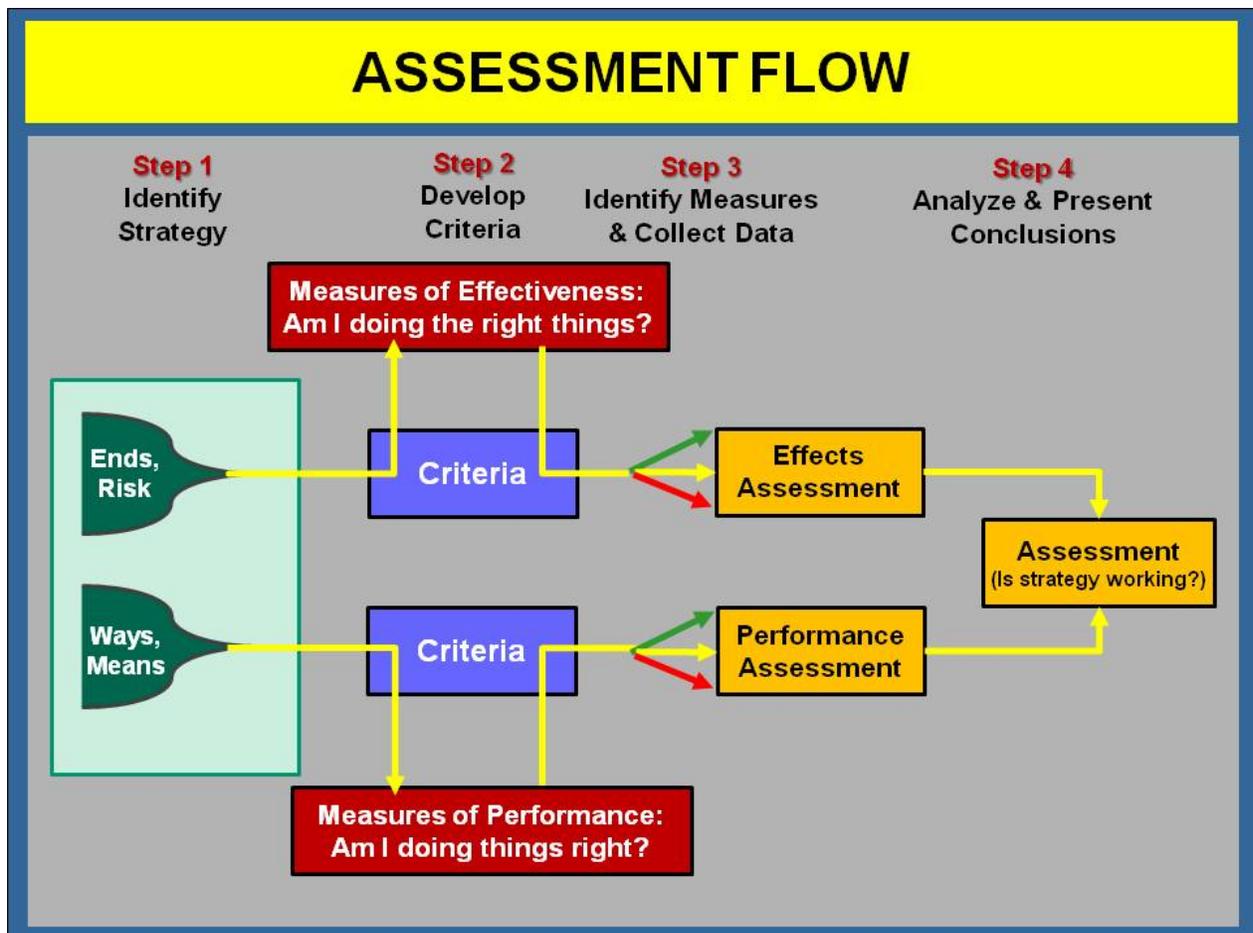
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The purpose of assessing [strategy](#) is to give commanders dependable insights into whether their strategy is effective and to measure progress toward the end state(s) that the commander is tasked to deliver. This type of [assessment](#) can be conducted for any commander from the [tactical](#) through the [strategic level](#) and should address the four main components of a strategy:

- ✦ **Ends**—The commander’s [end state](#) and the [objectives](#) required to obtain it. These are generally derived from the [commander’s intent](#) statement.
- ✦ **Ways**—The [tasks](#) or [actions](#) undertaken to help create the [effects](#) that achieve the ends, as generated during the detailed planning process.
- ✦ **Means**—The resources put toward accomplishing the ways. The doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) construct is often a useful source for examining and developing the means.
- ✦ **Risk**—The cost and amount of uncertainty and vulnerability the commander is willing to accept in executing the strategy.

Again, it is critical to integrate the assessment process with strategy and plan development. The assessment process begins with a review and analysis of lessons learned from previous operations, continues through [operational design](#) (where broad assessment criteria are often decided upon), detailed planning (where specific [measures and indicators](#) are usually selected to accompany objectives, effects, and tasks), and extends to evaluation of measures and indicators once tasks have been accomplished. Some forms of assessment continue long after the particular conflict or operation has concluded, supporting, for example, [munitions effectiveness assessment](#) and the lessons learned process.

Assessment considers all these components, with the goal of developing insights into whether a strategy is working and what areas may need to be re-evaluated if that strategy is not working. The figure, “Assessment Flow” depicts this strategy-centric approach to assessment.



**Assessment Flow**

Throughout the assessment process, the assessor's focus should remain on informing the relevant commander's decisions. Even though planners may document various forms of guidance, including [commander's intent](#), the assessment team should work to derive assessable effects from these statements. Often the commander's intent is written in terms of what operations the commander plans to undertake and not in terms of the conditions that they hope will result from these operations. *Thus, planning for assessment should begin in dialog with the commander during the design process. Assessment is also iterative, working to converge on a reasonably assessable commander's end state.* In addition, understanding the objectives and tasks of the commander's boss is crucial in forming a comprehensive assessment.

Given the fluid nature of complex military operations involving [higher-order effects](#), judgment should be an intrinsic part of any assessment. Instead of developing criteria or measures that take all judgment out of the process, the goal is to build a framework for the development of logically defensible judgments, which often involve qualitative (unquantifiable) and even subjective elements.