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STATE RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT UNDER THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

POLICY STUDIES ASSOCIATES

CCSSO
Council of Chief State School Officers

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Bureau of Indian Education, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

State Responsibilities and Opportunities for School Improvement Under the Every Student Succeeds Act

Council of Chief State School Officers
Pedro Rivera (Pennsylvania), President
Carissa Moffat Miller, Executive Director

One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-1431
Phone (202) 336-7000
Fax (202) 408-8072
www.ccsso.org

We are grateful to our partners at **Policy Studies Associates** for their help in developing this report.
Derek L. Riley
Julie Meredith
Alisha N. Butler
www.policystudies.com

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Introduction

Purpose of this report

States across the country are urgently building and initiating systems to improve schools, including those identified as low-performing under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). With their state ESSA plans approved by the U.S. Department of Education in 2017-2018, state education agencies (SEAs) are moving forward to carry out the vision, requirements, and opportunities put forth in the legislation. ESSA introduces new responsibilities and opportunities for SEAs, local education agencies (LEAs), and schools, especially in regard to school improvement. At the time of this report, SEAs are working closely with stakeholders at the local and state levels to innovate and learn as they go to do what is best for students.

State leaders recognize this is an important moment for students across this country, and SEAs are leading changes to drive improvement for all students, especially those in the lowest-performing schools and schools with the greatest achievement gaps. For years, states have worked to improve low-performing schools and close achievement gaps, but today, under ESSA, state leaders have the flexibility necessary to work in close partnership with districts, schools, educators, parents, students, and communities to design systems that will effectively improve schools for all students.

This report gathers timely comprehensive information across SEAs on how state leaders are working to implement their vision for school improvement under ESSA. Our goal is for SEA leaders to use the information, resources, and examples provided in this report to inform their school improvement efforts. This report is one resource in a broad portfolio of assistance and resources provided by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) on ESSA and school improvement. It focuses narrowly on school improvement and does not address SEA work around accountability or identification of schools.

How to use this report

This report is organized by 7 domains of SEA responsibility related to ESSA school improvement (see Exhibit 1). Each report section describes SEA responsibilities and opportunities for improving schools, along with state examples and resources. Curated resources appear in an appendix, ordered by the same 7 domains of SEA responsibility. The appendix includes resources published by the CCSSO, materials that states are using, and other documents relevant to school improvement under ESSA.

Background and data sources

This report was commissioned by CCSSO with support from The Wallace Foundation. CCSSO has been and is currently a partner and resource for SEAs on the topic of ESSA school improvement, providing technical assistance on ESSA plan development, resources to build ESSA-related capacity, and events for SEAs to learn from each other and experts. The report draws on:

- **State Plan Implementation Meeting discussion and resources.** In April 2018, the CCSSO convened states representatives and experts to support SEAs' implementation of the school improvement efforts expressed in their ESSA plans. Called the State Plan Implementation meeting (SPI), this two-day event involved highly interactive sessions in which states presented and discussed strategies, challenges, and plans related to improving schools. Discussion themes and resources from the SPI meeting are included in this document.

- **Survey of SEA leaders.** CCSSO contracted with Policy Studies Associates (PSA) to administer a 12-question survey on ESSA school improvement to each SEA in summer 2018. Forty-three of 52 SEAs responded to the survey (83% response rate across 50 states plus the District of Columbia and U.S. Virgin Islands). Each SEA provided a single set of responses, typically with input from directors of school improvement, deputy superintendents, and/or chiefs before submitting. Survey questions asked about state progress, strategies, and challenges in school improvement, as well as for links to relevant resources that SEAs developed and would be willing to share with others. Not all SEAs completed every question in the survey.

- **SEA websites and ESSA plans.** Following leads from SEA leaders, PSA reviewed SEA websites and state ESSA plans to identify relevant resources and strategies that are described in this report. Links to relevant resources are provided in the report.

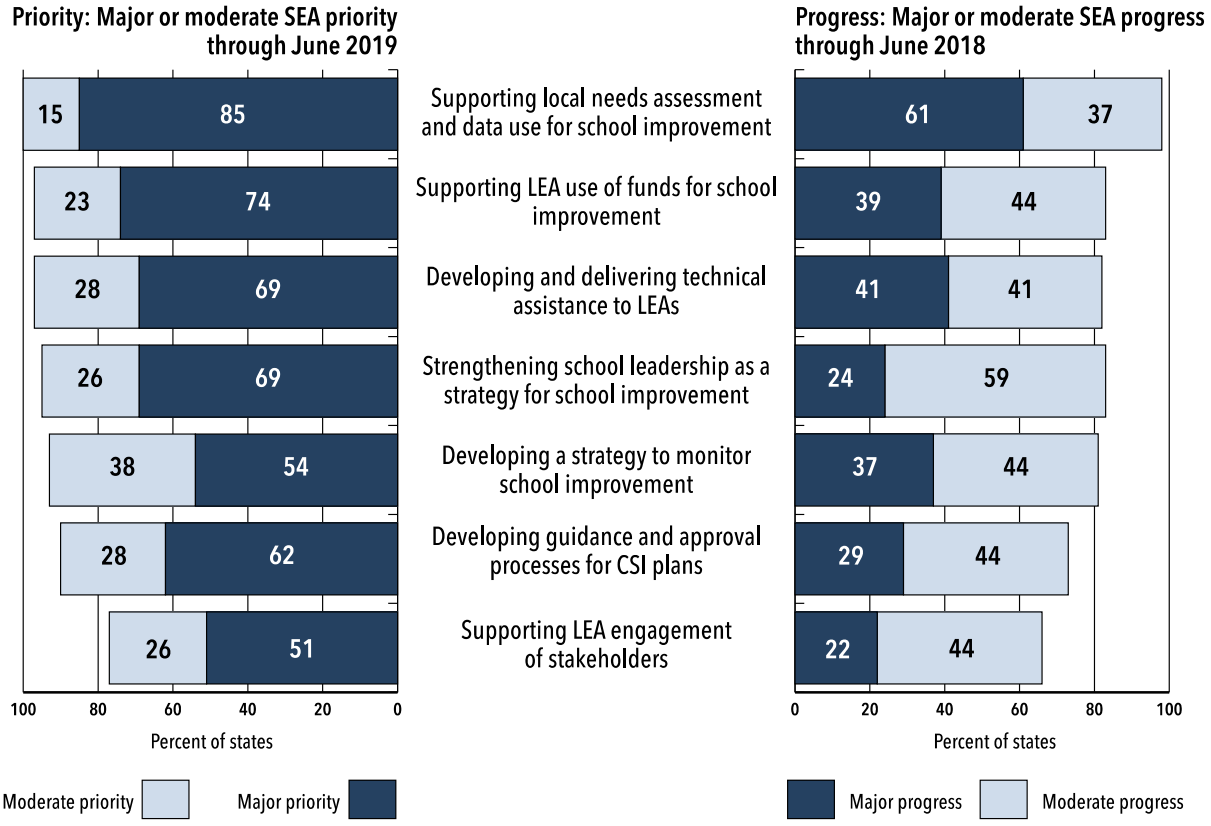
- **CCSSO and other thought leaders.** This report describes and links to resources published by the CCSSO and other organizations. We included documents that were mentioned by states or experts at the SPI meeting and other CCSSO events. For instance, we link to CCSSO's suite of resources on its 10 Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems, as well as resources from the Center for School Turnaround and the Education Commission of the States.

- **ESSA legislation.** Where relevant we provide references to ESSA sections. ESSA was signed in December 2015 as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. States were expected to submit state ESSA plans by September 2017, and all state plans were approved as of September 2018.

Summary of SEA progress and priorities in school improvement

Exhibit 1 presents 7 domains of SEA responsibility for school improvement specified in ESSA legislation. SEAs responded to a survey item asking the extent to which each domain was an area of progress or a priority through June 2019, using a four-point scale. Responses in the table show which domains were most frequently identified as major priorities for upcoming work or areas of past progress.

Exhibit 1: Domains of SEA Priority and Progress in School Improvement



Note: N=39 to 41

Exhibit reads: Eighty-five percent of responding SEAs reported that a major priority for SEA work through June 2019 is "supporting local needs assessment and data use for school improvement." Sixty-one percent of SEAs reported that they have made major progress in in this area.

SEA responses in Exhibit 1 provide some overarching findings that contextualize the sections of this report found below:

- **While they have made progress, SEAs indicated they have work to do this year on many areas of school improvement.** At least half of SEAs reported that each of the 7 domains were a major priority for their work through June 2019. With ESSA plans approved in the past year, many SEAs are still developing the tools, processes, and structures of their school improvement systems, as well as vetting them internally and with stakeholders. When respondents were asked to provide links to their own school improvement documents, about one-third responded along the lines of "not ready for sharing" or "work in progress."

- **SEAs are heavily focused on local needs assessment and data use as part of their school improvement agenda.** The vast majority (85%) of SEAs identified local needs assessment and data use as a major priority for the upcoming year, and every SEA said it was at least a moderate priority. Most SEAs also reported local needs assessment and data use as an area in which they have already made major progress (61%). Also, SEAs appear to regard data use as an area in which the can help LEAs improve, since 76% of SEAs reported that "Insufficient LEA capacity to collect, analyze, or use data" is a moderate or major challenge (Exhibit 6).

  Technical assistance is a major priority for many SEAs (69%), and reviews of some SEAs' technical assistance plans include supports for local needs assessment and data use, and more broadly, continuous improvement.

- **SEAs are poised to ramp up efforts to strengthen school leadership as school improvement strategy.** Many SEAs (69%) reported that strengthening school leadership was a major priority this year, while relatively few SEAs (24%) reported making major progress on this at the time of the survey. SEAs may be thinking in new ways about how they can strengthen leadership in Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and other low-performing schools, with new work planned. Discussion among SEAs suggest there is increasing interest in developing professional learning and networks explicitly for leaders in these schools.

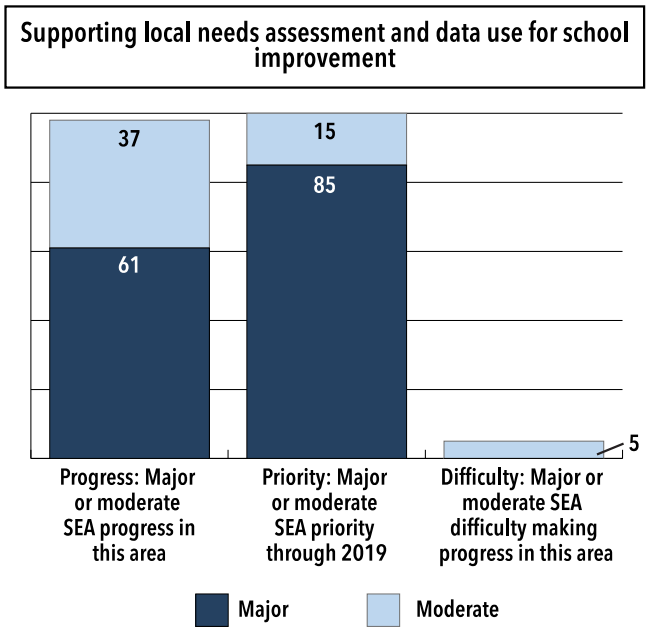
- **SEAs appear less focused on efforts to support LEA engagement of stakeholders, for the time being.** SEAs were least likely to report supporting LEA engagement of stakeholders as a major priority this year (51%) or as an area of major progress (22%). Other SEA responsibilities under ESSA may require more time and resources to carry out, and are thus regarded as bigger priorities. However, SEAs' second most often identified challenge (Exhibit 6) was "Insufficient LEA capacity to engage local stakeholders," suggesting that there could be worthwhile work in this area.

The following sections discuss these 7 domains of SEA school improvement work in greater detail.

Domain 1: Support of local needs assessment and data use for school improvement

ESSA requirements and opportunities

ESSA requires that CSI school improvement plans be based on a school-level needs assessment (Section 1111(d)(1)(B)(iii)) and identify resource inequities (Section 1111(d)(1)(B)(iv)). LEAs are required to approve and submit CSI school plans for SEA approval. As part of the plan approval process, SEAs may develop plan templates and guidance for school-level needs assessment. Under ESSA, the school-level needs assessment process can be led by the SEA, LEA, external partner, or a combination of these.



Opportunities for SEA action

In carrying out the above ESSA requirements, SEAs may consider a range of actions to support LEA needs assessment and data use, such as:

1. **SEAs can embed rigorous needs assessment within the CSI and TSI improvement planning process.** Many SEA's frameworks and templates for improvement planning are rooted in a continuous improvement model that begins with needs assessment. While a school-level needs assessment is required under ESSA, SEAs are striving to make the process meaningful for decision making. SEAs are providing tools that help LEAs and schools examine data and identify root causes of educational failure.

   At the SPI meeting, Results for America (RFA) discussed findings relevant to data use and continuous improvement, drawing on its review of state ESSA plans called ESSA Leverage Points. Results for America found 13 state ESSA plans included strong plans to leverage needs assessment to ensure school improvement plans addressed prominent needs. For instance, **Rhode Island**, among others, requires identified schools to connect the school improvement plan to a comprehensive needs assessment and be informed by community advisory boards. **Wyoming** is doing data retreats for struggling schools, wherein school leaders and faculty analyze state and local data to identify needs that can be addressed in their improvement plans.

CCSSO's Using Needs Assessments for School and District Improvement: A Tactical Guide (2017) provides practical information on needs assessment for CSI and TSI schools, as well as for SEAs and LEAs working with these schools. It describes several approaches to needs assessment and provides a process and tools that meet ESSA requirements. The tactical guide was developed with help from the Center on School Turnaround.

The Ohio Improvement Process includes a five-step continuous improvement model that begins with identifying critical needs through data analysis. The needs assessment process and data access is guided through Decision Framework resources, and teams from the district, school leadership, and teacher groups are each assigned specific roles and responsibilities. Teams examine various types of data: adult data (e.g., hiring, professional learning, climate, teacher attendance, educator equity), student data (e.g., subgroup performance, attendance, disproportionality, demographic), organizational data (e.g., classroom resources, collaboration time, course offerings, transportation), and community data (e.g., climate surveys, parent education, health, after-school offerings). After identifying needs, teams move next to researching interventions and planning for improvement.

Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement resources are easily accessible on its website, including a school-level comprehensive needs assessment guide and template. The state's comprehensive needs assessment process is built around the improvement domains of coherent instruction, leadership, professional capacity, family and community engagement, and supportive learning environment. The needs assessment process includes a team approach to collecting and analyzing data for the identification of root causes.

2. **SEAs can provide assistance to LEAs that explicitly links needs assessment with the identification of interventions.** SEA guidance and technical assistance (TA) around the development of improvement plans can require locals to provide data that justify the selection of particular interventions. RFA found that 14 states planned to offer "sophisticated supports" to connect needs assessment directly with the identification of interventions. **California** offers an organizational tool and vetting rubric for identifying evidence-based interventions as part of its continuous improvement process.

Kansas has formed the Kansas Learning Network (KLN) under its Technical Assistance System Network (TASN), which is intended to provide LEAs with coordinated evidence-based TA from multiple providers in the network. The KLN supports CSI school needs assessment focused on root cause analysis and improvement planning. Its website provides a suite of coaching resources, as well access to KansaSTAR, the state's Indistar-based performance management system for CSI schools.

3. **SEAs can build data literacy among LEA and school leaders, as well as throughout the SEA.** A **Maryland** representative described the SEAs approach for supporting data literacy, including customized support for principal supervisors and for school leaders. The state's principal evaluation rubric, which is aligned with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), specifies leader capacities for the effective use of data.

> **Wisconsin** partnered with a network of regional education service agencies to develop a common data inquiry process for schools, called WISExplore. WISExplore includes resources to take account of available data, assess leader capacities for data use, and lead data inquiry PLCs. WISE coaches are available to help build data-related capacities and design school improvement strategies based on data. WISExplore is a component of a larger WISE (Wisconsin Information System for Education) system that includes portals for dashboards and data output, the uploading of unique local data, and resources for learning about data.

4. **SEAs can develop coherent and rigorous systems that promote ongoing local use of data and continuous improvement. Oregon** built a continuous improvement system in partnership with LEAs that determines "readiness" for continuous improvement work based on a screening protocol. The state supports LEAs to work with local stakeholders on root cause analysis. The **Ohio** Improvement Process engages LEAs in a state-adapted continuous improvement process that is accessible through an interactive website.

> **Oregon** has worked with the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP) to help build cohesiveness in its work under ESSA. The state has piloted a system-oriented framework and process for its continuous improvement TA to LEAs and schools. BSCP contributed to a CCSSO resource that lays out an improvement cycle that brings the SEA, LEA, and school together as a network, called Utilizing Integrated Resources to Implement the School and District Improvement Cycle and Supports.

> **California's** Continuous Improvement Resources webpage provides a raft of SEA-developed and curated resources for LEA continuous improvement, needs assessment, and root cause analysis. The state's online school dashboard is an online tool that provides data for LEA continuous improvement processes, such as for pinpointing needs of student subgroups. The dashboard data includes both state and local indicators, and it provides equity and student group reports.

5. **SEAs can help LEAs look at human resource equity within and across schools.** ESSA calls for SEAs and LEAs to examine disproportionate distribution of ineffective, out-of-field, and inexperienced teachers. SEAs can advocate and provide supports for equitable access to excellent educators. Some are supporting LEAs by providing guidance, data tools, and assistance in assessing the distribution of educators. For instance, **Nevada** is analyzing teacher retention at different types and performance levels of schools in order to identify where turnover is an acute problem. **California's** Local Control and Accountability Plan process includes an educator equity gap analysis. Guidance and sample data tables are

provided to LEAs and school for data analysis. In looking at human resource equity, LEAs can dig below identified problems into the root causes of inequitable educator distribution, such as: school climate, preparation program quality, working conditions, turnover, teacher pipeline trends, school leadership, etc.

> **Arkansas** makes nearly all of its education data easily accessible on its MySchoolInfo site, including data on educators (e.g., salary schedule, licensure status, workforce stability, educational degree, percent of classes taught by highly qualified educators, attrition). Arkansas LEAs can develop reports to analyze human resource equity at the school and LEA levels, and website provides role-specific "use case" videos to help users understand how the system can be used.

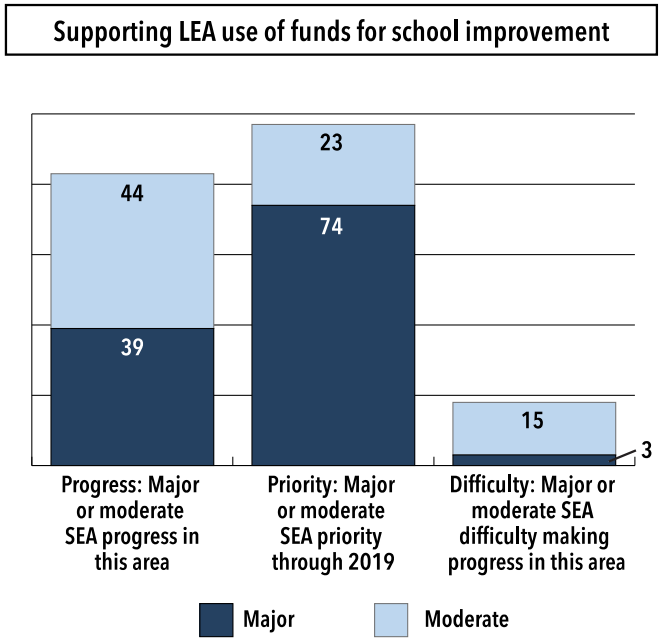
The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders' Moving Toward Equity Data Review Tool provides guidance to SEAs on identifying equitable access metrics, analyzing data and root causes, and informing policy decisions. Related resources include guidance for LEAs on developing equitable access plans.

6. **SEAs can focus on change in LEA systems in conjunction with change in CSI and TSI schools.** Schools operate within district systems, and some questioned whether sustainable change can happen if LEAs are not involved in meaningful change along schools. In the **Oregon** model, LEAs are empowered as change agents for school improvement and are expected to build capacity to lead continuous improvement. As one attendee at the SPI meeting said, "In the past we have seen identified schools that struggle be the ones with inconsistent or non-existent district support. Under ESSA, we still need to identify schools, but we are focusing on continuous improvement in district systems… Asking LEAs to treat each school in isolation doesn't work."

Domain 2: Support of LEA use of funds for school improvement

ESSA requirements and opportunities

SEAs must disburse and oversee ESSA and other federal funds to LEAs that can be used for school improvement purposes, ensuring that LEAs comply with federal requirements. SEAs must develop a consolidated LEA application for ESSA program funds, and they may design the application to promote strategies and coordination. LEAs may use Title I, Part A funds to support various school improvement activities, and can coordinate Title I, Part A with other programs to maximize resources (Sections 1114 and 1115, for example).



SEAs also may award school improvement grants to LEAs to support CSI and TSI schools in developing and implementing their improvement plans (Section 1003). These may be awarded on a formula or competitive basis for a period of not more than 4 years.

SEAs must also periodically review resource allocation for school improvement in LEAs with a significant number of CSI or TSI schools (Section 1111(d)(3)(A)).

Opportunities for SEA action

1. **SEAs can develop a strategic state method for distributing school improvement funds under Section 1003.** SEAs can distribute school improvement funds by competition, formula, or a combination of both approaches. **Nevada**, **Louisiana,** and **Arizona** all administer school improvement grants through competitive application processes. **Nevada** has a scoring process and decision tree that prioritizes awards first by the ESSA evidence tier of selected interventions, with award decisions cascading until all available funds are spent. **Louisiana** similarly awards grants to qualifying plans, and it allows LEAs and schools to revise their plans until funds are spent. **Arizona's** competitive process gives preference to evidence-based plans that target root causes identified in a comprehensive needs assessment.

Indiana CSI schools were eligible for formula planning grants for their first year with CSI status (2018-19), but the state also ran a competitive process for schools that wanted to apply for implementation grants at higher funding levels. In order to apply for the competitive implementation grants, districts submitted petitions to bypass the planning grants. If denied, they were automatically approved for a planning grant. Information, application forms, and review rubrics can be found on the state's SIG webpage.

One formulaic approach, which **Washington** employs, is to provide all CSI schools with a base amount of school improvement funds, and then issue supplemental grants based on student counts.

One SEA decided not to provide additional school improvement funds to otherwise eligible schools that lacked a plan for using evidence-based providers, although the SEA continues to provide support to these schools and expects they will write quality plans in the future. Another SEA did not fund any of its school applicants in the first round of review, and it worked with the schools to clarify what exactly each needed to do to qualify for school improvement funds.

SEAs can concentrate funds in LEAs with many CSI schools. In addition to its school-level funding, **Washington** provides supplemental grants to LEAs that have at least two-thirds of their schools identified under ESSA, so that the LEAs can provide prioritized support to the identified schools and the schools that feed into them.

Funding school improvement

SEAs and LEAs can coordinate federal funds for school improvement, including those from:

Every Student Succeeds Act
- Section 1003 (School Improvement)
- Title I, Part A (Improving Basic Programs)
- Title I, Part C (Migrant Education)
- Title I, Part D (Neglected and Delinquent)
- Title II, Part A (Supporting Effective Instruction)
- Title III, Part A (English Language Acquisition)
- Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment)
- Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers)
- Title V, Part B, subpart 2 (Rural and Low-Income Schools)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act

In some states, state-appropriated funds can also be coordinated for school improvement.

2. **SEAs can provide guidance and technical assistance to LEAs on how to coordinate federal and state funds for school improvement.** The Center for School Turnaround's Support for Rapid School Improvement (2018) details how federal dollars can be leveraged for improvement, with a focus on spending rules and opportunities for Title I Part A, Title II Part A, and IDEA Part B funds (but not Section 1003). Examples are provided of funding use in four domains of rapid school improvement. The Center for School Turnaround also provides

recommendations on braiding funds in Thought Leadership Forum Brief: Braiding Federal Funds Under ESSA.

Braiding funds has advantages, in that multiple funding sources can be coordinated to support an initiative while still maintaining their source identity and being allowable under regulations. However, braiding funds also requires detailed creative thinking about funding structures for an initiative.

> **Oregon** has provided LEAs with detailed guidance on how to maximize federal funds for their needs, discussing the reasons and tactics for braiding, blending, and transferring various fund from various grant programs (presentation slide deck). While the guidance is not limited to funding school improvement efforts, many of the examples could fit within LEA or school level plans and needs for CSI and TSI schools. An underlying theme of Oregon's guidance to "Plan first, then identify funding," with needs assessment and improvement planning being an integral part of and predecessor to developing a funding strategy.

> **Nevada** is braiding funds at the SEA and LEA level to support its school improvement approach. SEA staff provided individualized TA to LEAs with low-performing schools, helping them strategically coordinate funds and develop grant applications aligned to their improvement plans. The SEA provided technical assistance to district leaders and held office hours in which principals discussed promising strategies for moving their schools, as well as possible funding sources. LEAs funded various components of their improvement efforts by braiding funds from federal and state sources, including Title I, Section 1003a, state turnaround funds, remaining SIG funds, Title II, and Title IV A and B. The SEA found that LEA contexts varied and that this was a new approach for many of them. It also found that their TA required staff time, expertise, and creative thinking.

States have promoted LEA coordination of funds for improvement by creating consolidated applications, through which LEAs can apply for federal and states funding sources in one place. For instance, **Massachusetts'** LEA consolidated application encourages the "integration of funds to best meet district priorities" and reflects the SEA's intention to provide holistic support around federal grants (application workbook and slide deck guidance). **Colorado** drew on stakeholder input to redesign an LEA consolidated application and provided regional trainings and TA.

3. **SEAs can develop an approach for assessing resource equity within LEAs.** SEAs are required to ensure that LEAs conduct resource equity reviews with at least CSI and additional targeted support and improvement schools, and for LEAs with a significant number of these schools, the SEA must conduct a review. These requirements present an opportunity for SEAs to develop an approach that can be used throughout the state for reviewing school resource allocations. SEAs could provide guidance or establish requirements that steer LEAs into meaningful reviews that lead to school-level improvements.

The CCSSO's Deep Dive into Principle #7 of the Principles of Effective School Improvement discusses equitable use of resources and finding additional resources needed for school improvement. Issues and suggestions in the report are applicable for SEA decision-making, but they are relevant for LEA consideration as well.

Two resources, among others, are referenced in the CCSSO document above. A 2018 working paper called What is Resource Equity?, by Education Resource Strategies (ERS), specifies 11 dimensions of resource equity that LEAs and schools can assess and manage. Each dimension is discussed, with diagnostic questions that local leaders can use for self-assessment. Education Resource Strategies has also produced interactive games for LEA and school teams to use when making real world budgeting decisions—Budget Hold'em for Districts and Budget Hold'em for Schools. Facilitator guides are provided to help local leaders come to consensus on a budget and write a strategic plan.

> **Minnesota** has recently updated an Equitable Resource Distribution Guide intended to help LEAs take steps in analyzing resource equity, including in CSI schools. The guide draws on dimensions of resource equity described in the ERS white paper What is Resource Equity? (see above), and it provides actions steps and resources for analyses. The guide also references Equitable Access Support resources developed by the federally funded Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) for ensuring equitable access to excellent educators.

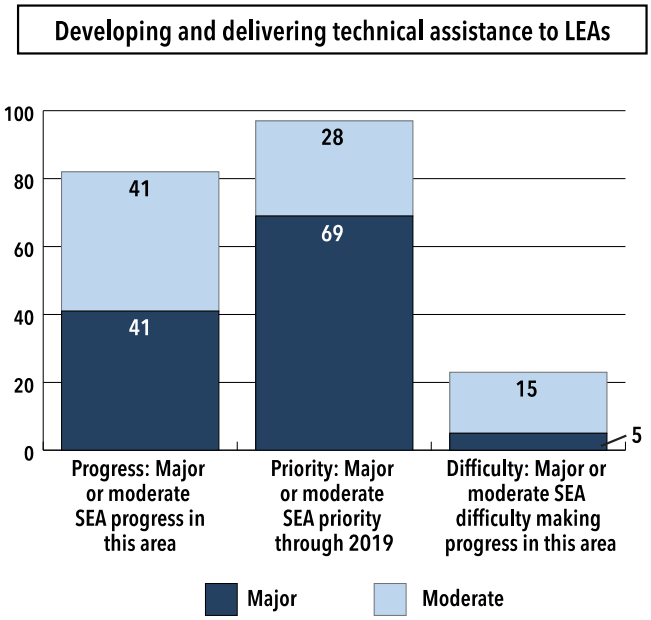
Making ESSA's Resource Equity Provisions Meaningful, written by a leader at The Education Trust and published in the journal of the National Association of State Boards of Education, provides a framework of questions that can drive states to develop or refine resource allocation reviews required by ESSA for school improvement.

The Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University provides research and resources on education finance, including analyses of **California's** 2013 shift to weighted student funding and local control of funding use. Among many, relevant resources include an analysis of whether California districts concentrated funds on the highest-need schools (here), guidance to states on mining data to guide finance policy on high-need students (here), and an introduction to student-based allocation models (here).

Domain 3: Development and delivery of technical assistance to LEAs on school improvement

ESSA requirements and opportunities

ESSA requires SEAs to "provide technical assistance to LEAs in the state serving a significant number of" CSI or TSI schools (Section 1111(d)(3)(A)(iii)). SEAs may take action to initiate additional improvement in LEAs with CSI schools that do not meet exit criteria within a state-specified timeline (Section 1111(d)(3)(B)(i)), and these SEA actions could include technical assistance. More generally, SEAs are required to provide technical assistance to LEAs to support effective program implementation (Section 1111(g)(C), for example).



Opportunities for SEA action

In carrying out the above ESSA requirements, SEAs may consider a range of actions that will strengthen its technical assistance to LEAs, such as:

1. **SEAs can build its capacity to provide technical assistance by partnering or contracting with other entities.** SEAs are limited in the number and expertise of internal staff, while ESSA gives greater responsibility to SEAs in supporting the improvement of LEAs and identified schools. One SEA reported "completely restructuring our statewide system of support model to pull together state employees and external partners." Another provided an example of how an external organization fits into the SEA's system of TA, with the state

> **Illinois** recently developed a new statewide system of support, called IL-EMPOWER, that replaced a single-provider model to one that incorporates differentiated supports from multiple sources. In addition to assistance from SEA school support managers, CSI and TSI schools can receive support from "learning partner" organizations that were selected through competition for their expertise in at least one of three priority areas—Governance & Management, Curriculum & Instruction, and Climate & Culture. IL-EMPOWER also provides resources for peer-to-peer partner learning among similar schools and districts. Illinois piloted IL-EMPOWER structures and processes in 2018 to collaboratively refine the system of support.

"partnering with several intermediate units that will serve as the hub of coordination and deployment."

Nevada assembled a pool of qualified technical assistance providers through an RFI and selection process. The SEA convened the providers and roughly 80 eligible low-performing schools for a networking event that included a "speed dating" type of experience, after which schools selected providers. **Idaho** has partnered with a university to hire about 45 "capacity builders," who are often former principals and superintendents who help the school leaders grow and maintain a focus on student outcomes.

Drawing on partners can also provide a measure of objectivity, along with expertise. **Maryland** is contracting with a third-party expert to provide TA in root-cause analysis with LEAs that have CSI schools.

> The Kansas Learning Network (KLN), housed at a regional education service agency, is a contracted partner of the SEA that supports CSI schools. The KLN works with the SEA and with schools on comprehensive needs assessment that addresses root causes, risk factors, and the expansion of previously successful practices, and it also guides the district and its school on improvement planning.

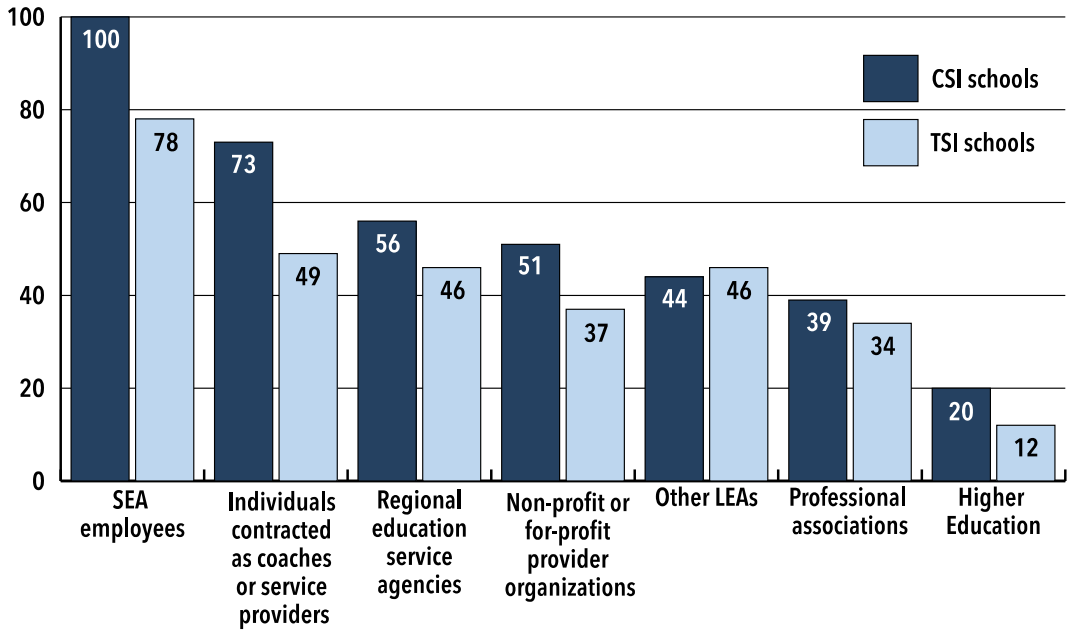
SEA survey responses provide insight on who will deliver TA on school improvement. When surveyed, 41 responding SEAs identified the entities they will deploy to provide direct technical assistance to LEAs for the improvement of CSI and TSI schools (see Exhibit 2). Findings include:

- ***SEAs will draw on other entities, such as individual contractors, to shore up state capacity to deliver TA on school improvement.*** As seen in Exhibit 2, SEAs reported SEA capacity to assist LEAs with school improvement as a moderate or major challenge (71%; 25% reporting a major challenge), and discussion at the SPI meeting reaffirms SEA plans to broaden their capacity through external partners. On average, SEAs identified 3 non-SEA entities as part of their system of TA to LEAs on CSI improvement, and more than half of SEAs plan to enlist individual contractors (73%), regional education service agencies (56%), and private provider organizations (51%) in working with CSI schools (Exhibit 2).

- ***A substantial number of SEAs plan to draw on expertise with LEAs as part of its TA plans in school improvement.*** While some may think of LEAs as solely TA recipients, many SEAs appear to regard LEAs as part of their portfolio of TA providers. SEAs reported that "Other LEAs (e.g., as networked partners)" would provide TA on CSI schools (44%) and TSI schools (46%). Discussions at the SPI meeting pointed to SEA plans to assemble district and school leaders from different LEAs to participate in networks and cohort programs.

Nevada, in collaboration with the state's largest district, has created several partnership networks for roughly 30 low-performing schools. While each network is supported by an evidence-based partner, schools and district staff are expected to learn collaboratively through communities of practice and hone a coherent set of best practices. The SEA plans to evaluate implementation in the networks in order to scale what works and make smarter decisions about supporting school improvement.

Exhibit 2: Entities Providing Technical Assistance to Improve CSI and TSI Schools



Note: N=41

Exhibit reads: All states reported that they expect SEA employees will provide technical assistance to CSI schools and 78 percent anticipate SEA employees will be involved in providing technical assistance to TSI schools.

2. **SEAs can regionalize support to LEAs to ensure it can develop lines of communication, build off existing relationships, and provide frequent face-to-face assistance.** To regionalize support, SEAs are employing strategies such as partnering with regional

Minnesota used a competitive process to create six Regional Centers of Excellence (RCEs) designed to provide targeted on-the-ground assistance to districts and charters with schools identified for improvement. Funded primarily through Title I and a state appropriation, the RCEs are intended to build implementation capacity and coherence. Staff are regionally based and specialize in math, reading, ELL, equity, etc. The state has developed a timeline for RCEs to guide the first year of ESSA school improvement, and it regularly meets with the RCEs, as often as weekly regarding CSI schools.

education service agencies, restructuring to develop regional SEA teams, and contracting with experts (whether individuals or organizations) who are assigned to regions. For instance, **Pennsylvania** is partnering with its regional Intermediate Units and other partners to help CSI and TSI schools plan, implement, and evaluate improvement efforts.

Regionalized support structures can help to ensure that schools and districts get contextualized support they need on a more consistent basis, particularly for rural locations or those far from the SEA and other resources. In one state, school improvement grants are designed to give more buying power to small rural districts so that they can influence the services avaliable from regional education service agencies, which traditionally have been beholden to larger districts.

3. **SEAs can coordinate internally among various SEA offices.** SEAs report that their systems of support involve the staff and capacities from multiple units within the SEA. The delivery of TA to LEAs through these systems of support may benefit from greater internal coordination and coherence than existed in previous years in which SEAs were more focused on the program administration and compliance. Several SEAs described cross-unit coordination as a strategy to bolster the capacity of the system of support. One respondent described its SEA staff as "working together across the agency and building support teams in a collaborative model with members from each division." Another explained, "We are coordinating between ESSA and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to have a consistent school improvement plan."

   SEAs will involve multiple internal units or division to provide direct TA to LEAs on school improvement. When surveyed, 41 responding SEAs identified which units[1] would provide the TA, as seen in Exhibit 3. Findings include:

   - ***SEAs are involving the school improvement unit along with other SEA units to deliver direct TA to LEAs on improving CSI and TSI schools.*** Well over half of SEAs reported involving units responsible for educator effectiveness (78%), students with disabilities (76%), C&I (68%), ELL (66%), and data/accountability (63%) in working with LEAs.

     Several SEAs described strategic efforts to bring staff from various divisions together to align school improvement plans, communication, and work. For instance, the **Mississippi** state chief has created monthly meetings across divisions to reinforce the message that school improvement is not just the work of the school improvement office.

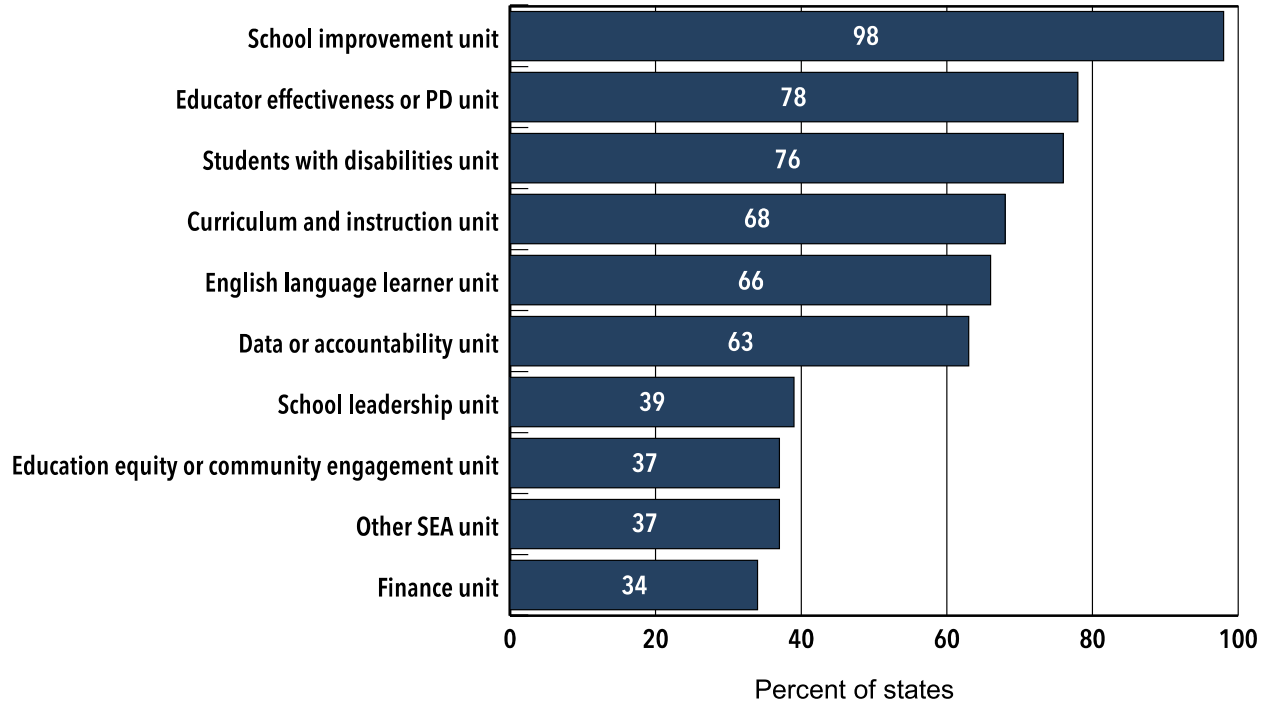
     Nevertheless, participants were frank that some offices are slow to embrace a new focus and way of doing their work, and there was not confidence that the information about school improvement was being shared with other staff in these offices. Some employees expected that "this too may pass" when state leadership changes, and others were focused narrowly on compliance issues for their specific program. SEA participant

[1] On the survey, SEA respondents were provided response options that used generic labels of SEA units or offices that were chosen to approximate currently predominant SEA nomenclature. Actual names of SEA offices vary from state to state.

comments suggested that a cross-divisional collaboration on school improvement may require a cultural shift within SEAs, along with new institutional routines, job expectations, and training.

- ***SEAs may be able to lean more on certain SEA units to provide TA on areas identified as challenges and priorities.*** SEAs may want to consider whether they have other internal human resources that can provide TA to LEAs with CSI schools. For instance, "Insufficient LEA capacity to collect, analyze, and use data" was identified as a top SEA challenge (Exhibit 6), yet one-third of states do not plan on having the data or accountability unit provide TA to LEAs. Similarly, LEA capacity to engage stakeholders was a leading challenge, yet most SEAs will not involve an equity or community engagement unit in TA. The finance unit in most states will not deliver TA, despite survey and anecdotal evidence that many LEAs struggle to braid or align funds.

Exhibit 3: SEA Units Providing Technical Assistance to Improve CSI and TSI Schools



Note: N=41
Exhibit reads: Ninety-eight percent of states anticipate that their school improvement units will provide direct technical assistance to LEAs to improve CSI and TSI schools.

4. **SEAs can take a systems perspective in which they work with districts in concert with schools on school improvement.** Approaches under No Child Left Behind sometimes focused on SEA administration of funds and monitoring of school-level interventions. SEA interactions around school improvement were more often with schools themselves and with insufficient attention paid to the local system under which it operated. ESSA requires SEAs to provide TA to LEAs with CSI and TSI schools, and SEAs at the SPI meeting were contemplating how to work with LEAs and schools. As one participant from **Minnesota** described, "The old model was to bring dollars and hope into a school, and now the model is to provide a coherent consistent state system of support to a district."

> **Oregon's** new approach to school improvement focuses on district continuous improvement processes that include district-level needs assessment, improvement planning, and routines to monitor implementation. Districts with significant numbers of CSI or TSI schools receive a liaison who assists with the coordination of supports. This approach to supporting CSI and TSI schools through district systems was tested and refined through pilots in 2018. A district needs assessment tool, district continuous improvement plan template, and other resources are available as part of the Oregon Integrated Systems Framework.

One challenge discussed at the meeting was that it is easier for both SEAs and LEAs to think of the SEA as directing compliance, rather than partnering in school improvement. Several participants anticipated schools' resistance to a new SEA role. Some suggested strategies for smoothing a shift in the SEAs role: be humble and take time to understand the sources and reasons for resistance; work alongside local educators to determine root causes; seek out exactly what SEA support could be helpful; and acknowledge where past SEA support and relationships were not helpful.

One promising strategy for promoting partnership—rather than compliance—between the SEA and LEAs is for the SEA to engage LEAs in the piloting and refining of the state's approach to supporting school improvement. States like **Maryland, Oregon**, and **Nebraska** have worked with partner districts to test out processes for needs assessment and support, which they would later expand statewide.

> **Maryland** has worked to engage district stakeholders by getting district input to its school improvement strategies and piloting implementation. In the process, the state practiced its role as a support provider and provided advance information regarding exiting improvement status, and celebrated early success on measurable milestones. District stakeholders provided feedback on aspects of the support, such as on the coordination of coaching from state and district sources. This work evolved into the 2018-19 Leading for School Improvement Institute for leaders of CSI and other low-performing schools.

5. **SEAs can deliver TA to teams within LEAs and identified schools.** Team membership tends to be broader than just the leadership, with strategic selection of roles and capacities. Involving local teams may improve grass root buy-in, deepen the institutionalization of change ideas, distribute responsibility, and invite additional perspectives needed for strategic thinking and planning. Many states, including **Georgia, Rhode Island,** and **Maryland**, require local teams—composed of a mix of LEA leaders and CSI school staff—to participate in school improvement capacity-building cohorts.

> The **Idaho** SEA began its technical assistance to LEAs with CSI schools through a two-day convening for district teams that may include the superintendent, CSI school principal, teachers, and others. Afterwards, LEAs were to receive support from a technical assistance team that helped them write CSI improvement plans for submission in early 2019. Technical assistance team processes were piloted in 2017-18 and grounded in a strength-based approach. State technical assistance teams will work with the local leadership teams over three years, and CSI schools will each receive a school improvement capacity builder from university partners.

6. **SEAs can allow LEAs and their CSI and TSI schools to make choices about the technical assistance they receive.** Local uptake of change ideas and processes are more likely to happen if LEAs and/or schools have a sense of agency and buy-in. SEAs may differentiate offerings based on the expressed interests and needs of the recipients, or they may allow for LEAs to choose providers or specific assistance offerings.

7. **SEAs can focus TA on foundational concepts that guide local strategy and processes, rather than on specific prescriptions.** Such an approach may help LEAs and schools change how they approach and carry out their work, while attending to local contexts. For instance, many SEA leaders at the SPI meeting talked about "shifting mindsets" around data analysis and continuous improvement. As discussed above, states have developed protocols and frameworks intended to help LEAs plan, implement, assess, and revise their efforts, irrespective of any specified intervention or strategy.

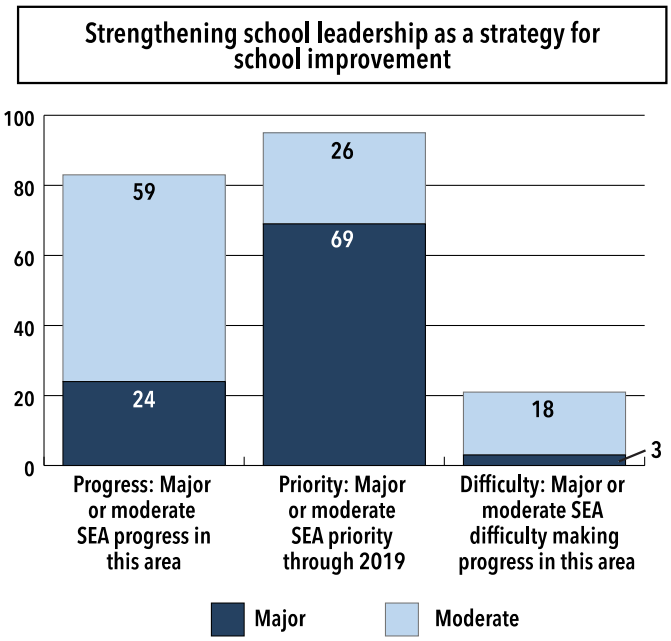
8. **SEAs can ensure that TA is meaningful and holds providers accountable.** Evaluation will offer lessons about how to improve the TA and can be undertaken in the spirit of continuous improvement. This requires that the SEA establishes a smart system for assessing the TA, and that it designates someone with authority to carry out and act on the assessment. A **Nevada** participant explained that the SEA role has shifted from focusing only on compliance to one of support and continuous improvement, while ensuring that contracted providers are accountable for their performance.

> **Massachusetts** has engaged in research and evaluation of its school turnaround program, with reports on implementation and impact. Partnering with research organizations, it has identified successful strategies for school turnaround, including practices specifically for high schools, English learners, and students with disabilities.

Domain 4: Strengthening school leadership as a strategy for school improvement

ESSA requirements and opportunities

SEAs plans must describe how low-income and minority students served in CSI and TSI schools are not disproportionally served by ineffective educators (ESSA, Section 1111(g)(1)(B)), which could include supporting LEAs in strengthening school leadership. Title II Part A includes requirements and opportunities related to school leadership and improvement. Funds under this Title can be used by the SEA to: develop school leader preparation and academy programs (Section 2101(c)(4)(B)(xi-xii)), develop school leader induction and mentoring programs (Section 2101(c)(4)(B)(vii)), assist LEAs and schools in training leaders and leadership teams (Section 2101(c)(4)(B)(v)), assist LEAs in developing principal professional development programs (Section 2101(c)(4)(B)(viii)), and ensure that school leader preparation program standards ensure leaders have instructional leadership skills (Section 2101(c)(4)(B)(i)).



Opportunities for SEA action

In carrying out the above ESSA requirements, SEAs may consider a range of actions to strengthen school leadership in CSI and TSI schools, such as:

1. **SEAs can provide support and development opportunities for current leaders of high-need schools.** In response to a survey question (Exhibit 4), SEAs were most likely to report that professional learning (88%) and networks (70%) for current school leaders were SEA strategies for strengthening school leadership. To a lesser extent, SEAs reported that school leader preparation or licensure was a strategy (20%). The SEAs' focus on current leaders may signal an urgency to address current conditions in CSI and TSI schools, but less attention on developing a leader pipeline for high-need schools. For instance, **Arizona** is administering a Systemic Leadership Development Grant for 2018-19 that provides funding to LEAs with CSI

and TSI schools. LEAs apply for funds to participate in a leader development program that they select from a state-approved list.

Maryland initiated the one-year Leading for School Improvement Institute in 2018. Designed for leaders of schools that are identified as CSI or that meet other low-performance criteria, the institute provides customized support and job-embedded professional learning through trained coaching, a three-day summer session, bi-monthly meetings, and state-supported mentorship from LEA staff. Content delivered by SEA leaders and experts include data analysis, instructional leadership, school culture, and school improvement planning, among other topics. Resources are publicly available.

New Mexico offers the Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE), a two-year program aimed at leveraging the expertise of educational leaders to support and empower school leaders as they work to improve student achievement. PPE was patterned after the University of Virginia Turnaround Specialist Program and is run through the state's priority schools bureau. The program began its 6th cohort in 2018 and is designed as job-embedded learning for current principals of "struggling schools." Support is intensive and multi-tiered, including: 7 multi-day executive education experiences, monthly coaching from Performance Coaches, and support from district Thought Partners (who attend events with the participant). Each school leader works with their core team to assess school needs and establish annual and 90-day plans containing turnaround strategies.

Wisconsin launched the Urban Leadership Institute in 2018 through a close partnership with **Wisconsin's** largest five districts and the Madison Urban League. With support from the New York City Leadership Academy, the program seeks to build the capacity of 30 district-selected leaders to close learning gaps and drive equitable outcomes in some of the state's most diverse and lowest performing schools. Participants receive professional development, coaching, and networking, organized around the state's leadership standards.

2. **SEAs can create networks of school leaders in which leaders can exchange knowledge and learn collaboratively.** Seventy percent of SEAs reported that school leader networks were a strategy for strengthening CSI and TSI school leadership. Networks can provide opportunities for facilitated peer-to-peer learning and build a shared knowledge base of challenges and promising strategies. Networks can also provide opportunities for SEAs to sustain leaders' learning and engagement with SEA priorities over time. This interest in leader networks is consistent with SEA reports that "Other LEAs" are part of states' systems of TA to CSI and TSI schools (Exhibit 2). **Nevada** has established a Partnership Network of CSI school leaders, support providers, and district and SEA staff that convene regularly to problem solve and share best practices.

Idaho leverages two networks to build leader capacity for school and district improvement. The Idaho Principals Network provides targeted support and collaborative growth opportunities for principals in schools identified for improvement. Activities focus on turnaround leadership competencies, instructional rounds, personal growth plans, and collegial networking. The Idaho Superintendents Network, developed in partnership with Boise State University's Center for School Improvement, brings superintendents together to learn from experts and each other on topics such as instructional improvement, stakeholder engagement, principal supervision and support, and data analysis.

3. **SEAs can improve principal supervision as a strategy to strengthen CSI and TSI schools.** Though SEAs are required to deliver TA to LEAs regarding the improvement of CSI schools, only 33% report prioritizing principal supervision as a strategy for strengthening CSI or TSI school leadership. As SEAs work with LEAs on the development and implementation of improvement plans, opportunities may emerge for strengthening the local supervision of principals. Changing supervision on a statewide scale would also likely require significant strategic planning and political support, as it would involve a multitude of superintendents and supervisors with a wide variety of roles in vastly different LEAs.

Arizona, in partnership with WestEd, provides a two-year program for LEA leadership teams that include the superintendent, principal supervisor, and principals of 25 CSI, TSI, and other high-need schools, among others. Called ELEVATE, the competitive program is in its third cohort in 2018-20, and participating LEAs can use school improvement funds to participate. The program is rooted in turnaround competencies and improvement science, with LEA and school leaders working side-by-side to improve school culture, data driven instruction, observational feedback, and talent management. Resources include 90-day plans, district self-reflection instruments, and root cause analysis tools.

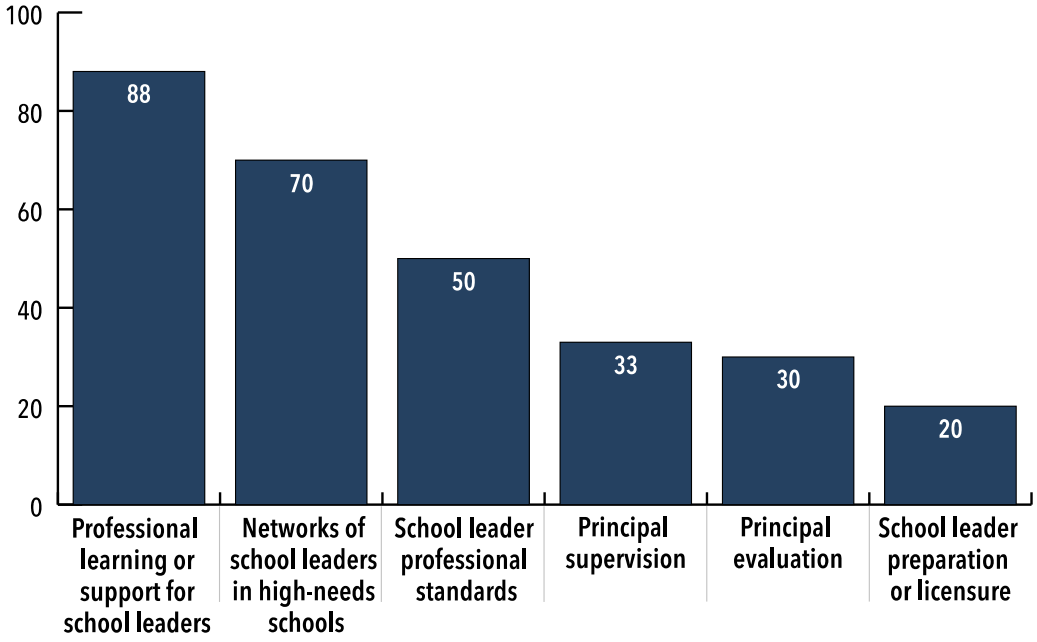
One Wallace Foundation effort may provide insights for improving principal supervision: The Principal Supervisor Initiative has supported six urban LEAs in transforming the supervisor role into one dedicated to developing principals as instructional leaders (implementation report). At the state level, one opportunity for progress is clearly defining the roles and competencies of principal supervisors, whether through the adoption of supervisor standards or guidance that can be used by school boards, LEAs, higher education, and supervisors themselves.

Pennsylvania began its Superintendent's Academy in 2016 as part of the SEA's Poverty and Student Achievement Initiative, with the first cohort of 73 superintendents completing the two-year program, and a two more cohorts currently underway. Developed in partnership with the National Institute of School Leadership, participants engage in collaborative, research-based professional development and carry out projects in their home districts.

4. **SEAs can build pipelines for leadership of low-performing schools through state preparation programs.** While relatively few states (20%) reported that leader preparation or licensure was a strategy for strengthening school leadership in CSI or TSI schools, there are examples of SEA efforts to deepen the pool of candidates with the competencies to lead low-performing schools. Programs for aspiring leaders can serve to not only identify candidates with the needed skills and desire, but also provide clinical experiences and training that are relevant for the most challenging schools.

   SEAs interested in developing programs to prepare leaders for low-performing schools may be able to draw lessons from groundbreaking work being carried out by LEAs and university partners. The Wallace Foundation, which has strategically funded efforts to strengthen school leadership, supports the University Principal Preparation Program project and has published lessons learned from LEA-driven redesign efforts. LEAs like Hillsborough County (**Florida**) have co-created turnaround leader licensure programs in partnership with universities.

Exhibit 4: SEA Strategies to Strengthen School Leadership in CSI or TSI Schools

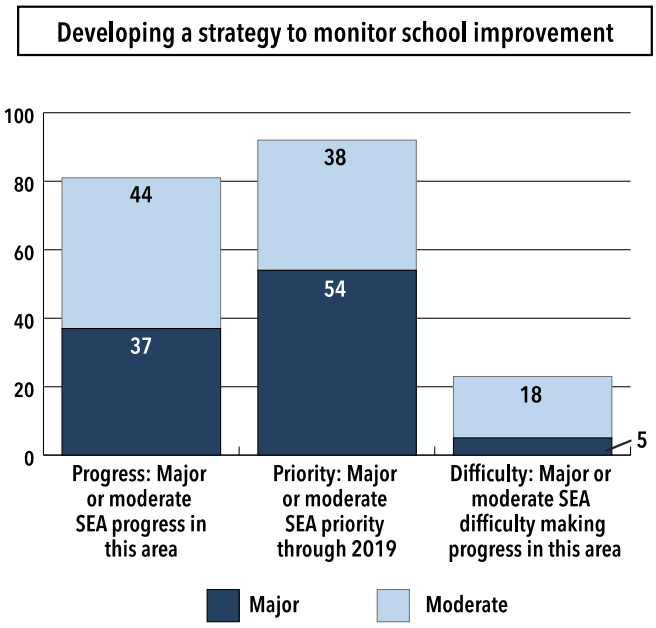


Note: N=40
Exhibit reads: Eighty-eight percent of states (or 35 of 40 states), reported that they will prioritize professional learning or support for school leaders as a strategy area to strengthen school leadership of CSI and/or TSI schools.

Domain 5: Development of a process to monitor school improvement

ESSA requirements and opportunities

Under ESSA, SEAs must monitor LEA technical compliance for federal program requirements and law, although monitoring can also address implementation and performance in CSI and TSI schools. Specifically, SEAs must approve and then monitor implementation of CSI school improvement plans (Section 1111(d)(1)(B)(vi)). LEAs must approve and then monitor implementation of TSI school improvement plans (Section 1111(d)(2)(B)(iv)). Under Section 1003, SEAs must monitor LEAs, CSI schools, and TSI schools receiving school improvement grants, including LEA responsibilities for monitoring plan implementation of TSI schools receiving these funds (Section 1003(e)(1)(C)).



SEAs must also establish exit criteria that CSI schools need to satisfy to be upgraded from CSI status, and the SEAs must determine if the exit criteria have been met within a state-specified timeframe that is no more than 4 years. For CSI schools that do not exit CSI status within the specified timeframe, SEAs must determine more rigorous action, such as the implementation of specified interventions. SEAs must also periodically review resource allocations for school improvement in LEAs with a significant number of CSI or TSI schools (Section 1111(d)(3)(A)).

Opportunities for SEA action

In carrying out the above ESSA requirements, SEAs may consider a range of actions to monitor and evaluate school improvement efforts in CSI or TSI schools, such as:

1. **SEAs can develop systems to monitor the implementation of CSI and TSI school improvement plans, including those schools and LEAs receiving school improvement grants.** The CCSSO's Deep Dive into Principle 9 of Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems provides guidance for SEAs on helping LEAs and schools set up systems for effective implementation of plans and continuous improvement. It provides state spotlights on work in **Minnesota**, **Iowa**, **Ohio**, **Rhode Island**, **Tennessee**,

Massachusetts, and **Oklahoma**, as well as links to relevant resources and advice regarding TSI schools.

At the SPI meeting, one point of discussion regarding monitoring was the need to clearly identify indicators of progress that are meaningful for the interventions being implemented. A standard set of indicators may not fully capture the facets of implementation that should be monitored. SEAs, along with LEAs and their schools, can give careful thought to the best "look-fors" and data to track in specific schools.

> **Tennessee** has a three-tier results-based monitoring framework that moves past a compliance orientation by engaging with LEA and school staff to ensure effective implementation and student outcomes. The most intensive tier of monitoring, on-site visits are conducted by a team who provides feedback about LEA needs that inform subsequent state TA. Other tiers of monitoring include desktop assessment and self-assessment. Districts are assessed on about 60 risk factors to determine the frequency and type of monitoring.

> **Minnesota** planned to commit a full-time SEA position for managing school improvement grants, including quarterly review of improvement plans and use of funds and periodic on-site visits. This position will provide direct TA based on monitoring reviews, serving as a component of the state's larger system of support for low-performing schools. The state also plans to renew school improvement grants annually based in part on evaluations of how effectively the funds have been used.

> **Arizona's** school improvement specialists visit all CSI schools at least twice a year. The visits include classroom walkthroughs, progress monitoring of action plans, data analysis, review of fund use, and collaborative planning of next steps. Quarterly, schools reflect on benchmark assessment to refine integrated action plans, with the state providing ongoing desktop support.

2. **SEAs can require that LEA improvement plans include plans for monitoring CSI school implementation.** Some states, such as **Maine** and **New Mexico**, require that school improvement plans specify a process and timeline for monitoring implementation of interventions, as well as how the results will be shared with the school and community.

> The **Ohio** Improvement Process includes guidance for LEAs and school teams for developing measures used for ongoing monitoring of improvement plan implementation and impact. School improvement plans include indicators, which are formally monitored by three local teams: a district team on a quarterly basis, a building level team monthly, and a teacher based team bi-monthly. Feedback from these monitoring teams is used to make revisions to the plan's strategies.

New Jersey includes progress monitoring as a formal activity in its annual needs assessment and planning cycle. School planning teams must set timelines to monitor progress toward SMART goals and review formative and summative data regarding interventions. A stakeholder team reviews evidence of effectiveness, determines mid-course corrections, and ensures the needed resources are allocated.

3. **SEAs can partner with researchers to evaluate school improvement efforts.** Some states have plans to enlist external research expertise to collect systematic evidence on progress and implementation of CSI and TSI school interventions. **Massachusetts** and its research partners have studied the state's turnaround strategy for several years, looking at impact, implementation, and scalable best practices. **Nevada** reported plans to set-aside funds for research of its school improvement and networking efforts. **Tennessee** has provided data to university partners to conduct evaluations of two models for improving its lowest performing schools—district-run Innovation Zones and the state-run Achievement School District. SEAs can promote research efforts that provide feedback to all levels of the system about intervention implementation and impact.

4. **SEAs can provide technical assistance for LEAs when monitoring efforts indicate CSI and TSI schools are not making progress toward exit criteria.** Progress monitoring can be integrated with SEA efforts to facilitate continuous improvement and provide ongoing targeted support. Some SEAs conduct quarterly or annual reviews of progress, which are used to inform subsequent support. Some states have multi-tiered TA systems that ramp up support as needed, including support in revising improvement plans or modifying selected interventions.

Massachusetts has developed a detailed system for monitoring the progress of LEAs and schools designated as low-performing. At the heart of the system is a protocol for on-site visits and indicators of turnaround practices. The monitoring visit process uses baseline and benchmark data established during an initial visit, which is revisited and revised through annual visits. Annual reports provide schools and districts with an external review and inform midcourse corrections. These reports also inform SEA and third-party supports for the schools and their districts. The visit protocol includes a detailed description of the process and individual roles, materials for a schoolwide instructional observation, rubrics that illustrate turnaround practice indicators, and an overview of reporting.

5. **SEAs can plan for rigorous action for CSI schools that do not exit CSI status.** SEAs presently have some latitude in determining which rigorous actions they will take and require of CSI schools that do not improve in a state-specified timeframe (maximum of 4 years); however, ESSA does require that SEAs follow through with rigorous action for these schools. While some states provided preliminary plans for rigorous action, many continue to work out details for implementation.

Oklahoma has planned rigorous interventions for schools that do not meet exit criteria in three years, which it will apply based on school data and needs assessment. Whereas CSI schools in their first three years have latitude in selecting interventions, those not exiting CSI status may be directed to state-approved supports and professional development. However, the state may provide additional supports. It may require participation in school leadership programs for aspiring and current principals (Moving UP and Lead to Succeed, respectively), and it is exploring Networked Improvement Communities for schools that do not exit. Oklahoma also proposed rigorous interventions that include shifting from 4-day school weeks to 5-day school weeks, supplemental child nutrition program, and increased capacity for school libraries.

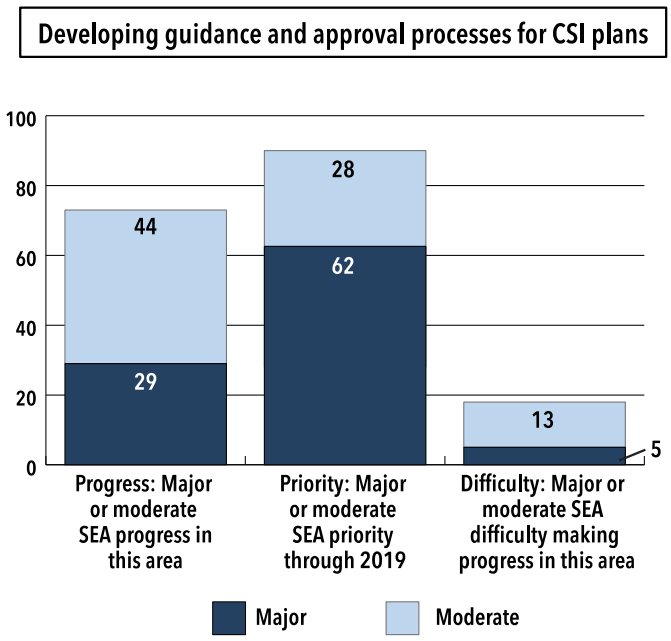
One approach is for states to modify governance structures for the CSI schools that do not meet exit criteria, such as by taking over governance or creating state-managed districts. Existing examples include **Louisiana's** Recovery School District, **Tennessee's** Achievement School District, and **Massachusetts'** chronically underperforming districts and schools. Other examples include converting schools to charter entities, replacing local school boards, or creating new oversight bodies with authority to hire leaders. A review of state ESSA plans by the Center for American Progress found that about half of states described plans for governance changes for schools that do not improve.

Another approach includes providing greater flexibility and support to LEAs and their CSI schools that do not meet exit criteria. **Tennessee's** iZones (Innovation Zones) are LEA-governed clusters of struggling schools that receive strong principals who have greater autonomy in staffing and programming decisions, along with additional funds, supports, and opportunities to collaborate.

Domain 6: Development of guidance and approval processes for CSI school plans

ESSA requirements and opportunities

ESSA requires that SEAs approve improvement plans submitted by LEAs for each of their CSI schools. LEAs must develop and implement a plan to improve student outcomes for CSI schools, and these plans must include evidence-based interventions among other requirements (Section 111(d)(1)(B)). Along with the SEA, the LEA and its CSI school must each approve the improvement plan (Section 1111(d)(1)(B)(v)).



LEAs—but not SEAs—are required to approve TSI school improvement plans (Section 1111(d)(2)(B)(iii)). Each TSI school must develop and implement a plan to improve the outcomes of the student subgroups that resulted in the school's identification as a TSI school. As with CSI improvement plans, TSI plans must include evidence-based interventions. (Section 1111(d)(2)(B)).

Opportunities for SEA action

In carrying out the above ESSA requirements, SEAs may consider several actions to help LEAs and their CSI and/or TSI schools develop improvement plans, such as:

1. **SEAs can design CSI planning templates or systems to promote strategies that are expected to facilitate school improvement.** SEAs provide LEA and schools with materials that structure the improvement plans that will be submitted and approved by the state. However, some SEAs are strategically designing these materials to trigger processes and content they believe will encourage good practice. As described in a preceding section, many states are situating plan development within a continuous improvement process that may include root cause analysis and the identification of measurable indicators that are specific to interventions. SEAs can require that plans include details about ongoing stakeholder engagement strategies and internal mechanisms to assess progress.

Some SEAs, like **Tennessee**, have online platforms for improvement planning that link directly to school-specific data and allow for dynamic evaluation of progress. SEAs like **Maine** and **Kansas** have used the Academic Development Institute's Indistar platform as part of improvement planning to promote reflective implementation, cross-school learning, and progress monitoring in its low-performing schools.

> **Tennessee** has streamlined its planning processes for districts and schools by moving its planning tool online. Within the ePlan platform is InformTN, which allows users to explore data, analyze needs, view data vizualizations, collaborate as a team, and be steered through the development of their plan. To support the use of InformTN and school planning, the state provides webinars and rubrics, as well as individualized support on topics such as data analysis

2. **SEAs can use CSI plan approval criteria and processes to ensure rigor and attention to the causes of poor student outcomes.** Some SEAs have developed approval criteria for improvement plans that require proof that interventions are driven by evidence of need or root cause. For instance, **Maryland's** plan approval rubric will include indicators for root cause analysis and development of SMART goals linked to interventions. States that have a competitive process for Section 1003 school improvement funds can use that process to promote rigor in improvement plans.

> In 2018, **Louisiana** launched the Super App, a new planning process which allows school systems to access federal grant and competitive dollars through one application, on one timeline. The Super App is structured around the School System Planning Framework, a planning tool grounded in evidence-based strategies and which organizes Louisiana's most important priorities across four domains: Core Academics, Students with Diverse Needs, Workforce Talent, and LEA Systems. SEA staff review answers to designated questions within the Super App, as aligned to the framework domains, to approve a school system's improvement strategy and disburse competitive funds.

> **Tennessee** has developed a process and rubric to evaluate the quality of District Priority School Improvement Plans, which serve as applications for improvement grants. Each application is evaluated by a three-person review team, with two SEA reviewers and one external reviewer completing a seven-page rubric broken out by needs assessment, improvement strategies, fund allocation structure, and evaluation/monitoring. The rubric, along with planning templates and samples, can be found on the state's "ePlan" site.

3. **SEAs can use CSI improvement planning as an opportunity to build capacity in school leaders and their teams.** A **Missouri** participant said, "Successful implementation of the plan sinks or swims on whether principals know their responsibility." Another, from **Idaho**, wanted to be sure that the responsibility was distributed throughout the school, saying, "We

want to counteract principal turnover by having a key group at the school, so there is stability around school improvement planning and implementation will be sustained."

> **Maryland** provides support to LEAs and CSI schools in their school improvement planning, but also uses the planning process to build the capacity of local leaders. For instance, the planning process occurs in tandem with a year-long Leading for School Improvement Institute for CSI principals, side-by-side learning walks, and expert third-party TA in root cause analysis.

4. **SEAs can provide resources that help LEAs and schools identify evidence-based interventions for school improvement.** On the survey, SEAs were asked to identify strategies they were employing to help LEAs identify evidence-based interventions for school improvement (Exhibit 5). Most often, SEAs reported developing resource guides for LEAs' selection of interventions (83%). States have developed materials that explain federal evidence tiers and provide actionable guidance for local decision-making about interventions. In some cases, state materials include processes or principles for decision-making, as well as frameworks or examples of interventions.

> **Tennessee** provides a guide for selecting evidence-based interventions for turnaround schools, which was produced by the Tennessee Education Research Alliance. This guide describes research and identifies specific interventions under the pillars of leadership, talent management, instruction, and student support.

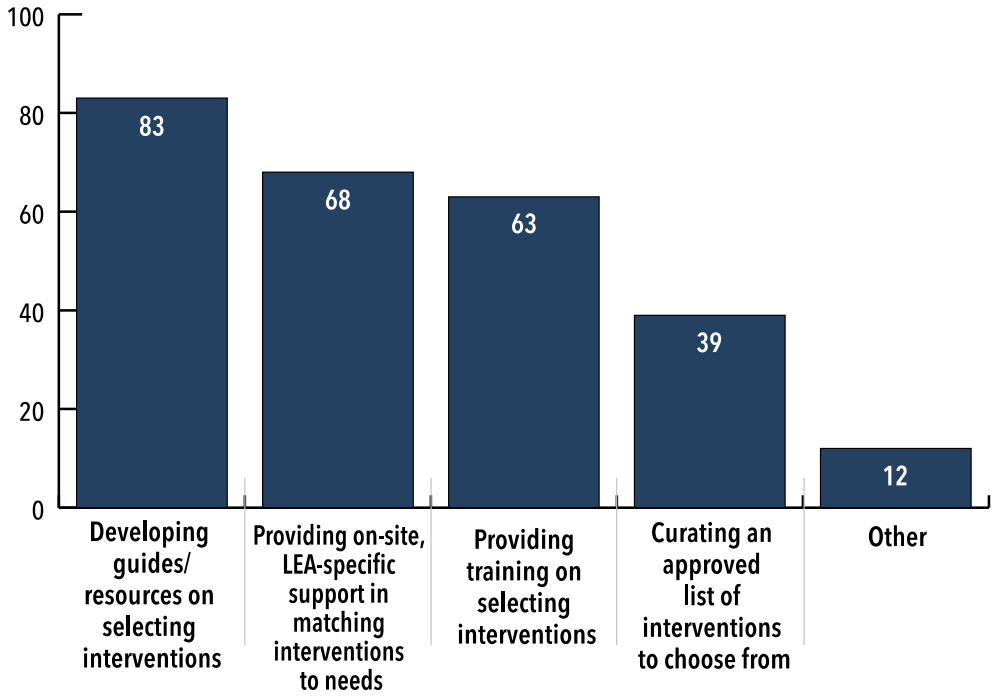
> **Georgia's** Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions is a guide for LEAs that is aligned with the state's newly adopted continuous improvement framework. Drawing on WestEd's tools for states, the guide situates decisions about interventions within the state's Systems of Continuous Improvement framework and aligns with ESSA evidence requirements. It provides a list of databases with research on interventions, along with links to many other vetted resources.

Several states refer to or use An LEA or School Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement, developed at Florida State University with input from SEAs in **Florida**, **South Carolina**, and **Mississippi.** This guide provides tools and processes for LEA self-study and consensus evaluation of interventions. A parallel document provides similar guidance to SEAs.

One resource for SEAs, LEAs, and schools is Evidence for ESSA, a periodically-updated searchable website dedicated to providing information about programs and practices that meet ESSA evidence standards. It was produced by the Center for Research and Reform in Education in collaboration with prominent education professional associations and international education researchers.

Arizona's guidance to LEAs and schools on ESSA evidence levels refers to the above two resources, but also encourages them to draw on another resource for SEAs and LEAS: Effective Practices: Research Briefs and Evidence Rating, developed by the federally funded Center on Innovation in Learning. This 208-page resource, updated in 2019, rates and describes the research evidence on a menu of effective practices.

Exhibit 5: SEA Strategies for LEA Identification of Evidence-Based Interventions



Note: N=41
Exhibit reads: Eighty-three percent of states reported that they are developing guides or resources to help LEAs identify evidence-based interventions for school improvement.

5. **SEAs can deliver tailored assistance and training to LEAs on the identification of interventions.** In addition to resources, survey respondents reported that about two-thirds of SEAs are also providing LEA-specific on-site support (68%) and training opportunities (63%) (Exhibit 5).

> The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) engages LEA teams—in all LEAs, not just those with schools identified for improvement—in a state-adapted continuous improvement process heavy on data analysis and collaborative analysis of implementation. Aligned with the broader OIP, the state has developed an online campaign entitled Empowered by Evidence, which provides guidance and resources for LEAs and schools regarding the selection and use of interventions. On this website, Ohio provides an Evidence-Based Clearinghouse that brings together resources from multiple clearinghouses and labels each strategy by ESSA's levels of evidence. Released in September 2018 and updated periodically, the Clearinghouse includes a search function allowing local teams to find strategies by domains of the OIP (e.g., curriculum, instruction, assessment, school climate).

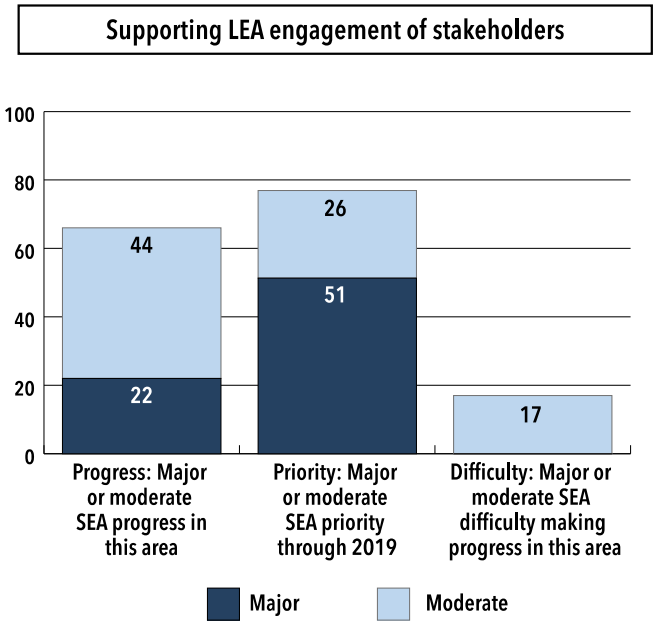
Fewer SEAs are curating an approved list of interventions from which LEAs can choose (39%). Exhibit 5 suggests the majority of SEAs may provide guidance and/or support without preemptively limiting the pool of interventions, although some are promoting specific providers or requiring LEAs and schools to select from a list.

> **Indiana** vetted a set of technical assistance providers that meet ESSA evidence requirements and that districts and CSI schools could partner with for school improvement. In summer 2018, the SEA hosted a School Improvement Summit in which there were structured opportunities for providers to share their evidence-based interventions and for local leaders to select providers to meet with. Two-page profiles of approximately 35 approved providers appear on the Summit webpage. In the first year of CSI status (2018-19), schools receive planning grants to develop improvement plans that can incorporate these providers.

Domain 7: Support of LEA engagement of stakeholders around school improvement

ESSA requirements and opportunities

ESSA requires that CSI and TSI school plans must be developed in partnership with stakeholders. For each of its CSI schools, LEAs must partner with stakeholders including school leaders, teachers, and parents to locally develop and implement improvement plans. Each TSI school must partner with stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, and parents, to develop and implement an improvement plan addressing student subgroups prompting the school's TSI identification. SEA approval processes for CSI plans are expected to ensure that these plans were developed with stakeholder input (Section 1111(d)(1)(B) and Section 1111(d)(2)(B)).



Reauthorization of ESSA continued previous legislative emphasis on family engagement as a necessary element for improving student outcomes. For example, Title I of ESSA continues to require parent and family engagement policies and programs (Section 1116), and Title III requires LEAs to strengthen parent, family, and community engagement in programs that serve English Learners (Section 3111 [b][2][D][iv]).

Opportunities for SEA action

Starting with the opening plenary of the SPI Meeting, there was discussion of state-level strategies related to LEA stakeholder engagement and partnerships. Participants expressed interest in opportunities for SEAs to guide and support LEAs in involving families and communities in school improvement planning processes.

In carrying out the above ESSA requirements, SEAs may consider a range of actions to support stakeholder engagement in LEAs and CSI or TSI planning, such as:

1. **SEAs can incorporate community engagement strategies into CSI/TSI planning guidance and templates.** ESSA requires the involvement of stakeholders in developing CSI and TSI school plans, but SEAs can do more than merely confirm that engagement occurred. They can promote strategies and be explicit about the types of individuals and organizations

that may comprise "stakeholders." An SEA theory of action for local community engagement could improve the coherence of guides, plan templates, and technical assistance that the SEA delivers to LEAs and schools.

The CCSSO's Deep Dive into Principle 3 of Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems provides guidance for SEAs on stakeholder engagement and partnerships, including guidance on SEA support for LEA and school engagement efforts. It provides spotlights on several states' efforts around stakeholder engagement. For instance, **Illinois'** Healthy Community Incentive Grant ($15 million allocation) provides funding to LEAs and organizations serving low-income students to develop cross-sector partnerships driven by state education goals. **Colorado's** District Accountability Handbook specifies stakeholder groups, roles, and processes for developing improvement plans.

> **California**, with assistance from the California Comprehensive Center and others, published the Family Engagement Toolkit: Continuous Improvement through an Equity Lens in 2017. The toolkit is a resource for LEAs in developing a family engagement strategy and working through a continuous improvement process. **California** also includes community engagement strategies as part of all LEA plans addressing the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which was established in 2013 and puts decision-making authority into the hands of parents, students, and community members. A 2018 report by Partners for Each and Every Child provides case studies of eight California LEAs that have meaningfully engaged their communities through the LCFF to develop local accountability plans.

2. **SEAs can promote partnering approaches and tools that enable LEAs to understand the values and interests of their communities.** Participants at the SPI meeting discussed the importance of the SEAs intentionally listening to and incorporating community feedback. In a session on supporting rural and small districts, a **Nebraska** representative of the Urban League proposed that this is a way for SEAs to understand the values of the community and engage with it authentically, whether rural, suburban, or urban, saying "The school community might not remember who you are, will remember half of what you do, and will remember all of how you made them feel." SEAs should be thoughtful in clarifying its role facing outward to school communities.

> **Ohio** has developed a Framework for Building Partnerships Among Schools, Families, and Communities that provides districts and schools with guidance on incorporating engagement strategies within local continuous improvement plans. The state specifies roles and strategies at the state, LEA, and school building levels, as well as for early childhood and community groups. It includes resources such as a family involvement survey and needs assessment, focus group protocols, models for community engagement, and sample best practices drawn from Joyce Epstein's work.

Resources exist that can help states promote community and family engagement. Hosted on the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences website, McREL's four-part Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education provides research, tools, and examples drawn from multiple states and organizations.

> **Massachusetts** highlights stakeholder engagement as a major component of its guidance to low-performing schools and LEAs on creating a turnaround plan. The state is explicit in saying that a high-quality turnaround plan is informed by an array of stakeholders, with whom progress is shared regularly throughout implementation. The state provides guidance on the composition and structure of stakeholder groups, as well as on processes for gathering input. A Stakeholder Engagement Worksheet provides a starter on topics for discussion that results in specific recommendations.

Community School models can provide insights for SEAs on how LEAs can engage communities in schooling. For instance, Des Moines Public Schools in **Iowa** specifies how internal and community supports have worked together as a comprehensive continuum for students, codified criteria and processes for assessing partnerships, and created community school coordinator positions for each high school feeder pattern plus several elementary schools. The Coalition of Community Schools provides resources that may be of interest, including Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools.

> **New York** has invested state dollars in grants to support Community Schools, and SEA leadership regards Community Schools as a promising driver of school culture and equity. New York's Community Schools model incorporates a needs assessment, family engagement, strong partnerships with local stakeholders and resources, rigorous academics, and additional supports for students. The 2017-18 state budget included $150 million to support Community Schools in up to 233 high-need districts. The state has partnered with the National Center for Community Schools at the Children's Aid Society for technical assistance for districts and schools.

The Strive Together network situates community engagement as a pillar of its collective impact efforts among 70 member communities. The Strive Together Theory of Action provides a framework for thinking about community engagement, developing common goals, and effective collaborative action.

3. **SEAs can explore the right balance of providing guidance without being overly prescriptive.** Some states discussed emerging efforts to help local systems engage their communities in ways that fit unique local contexts. Each LEA and CSI/TSI school community has a different array of interests, values, players, and relationships. A **Wisconsin** participant shared that the state was exploring parameters and guidance that could promote a consistent engagement strategy across LEAs and schools. One helpful tack was to get input from a new statewide equity council, which called for community engagement but cautioned that locals know best about who should be "at the table" and how. An underlying challenge for SEAs is to provide a structure for local engagement without prescribing processes or membership. Such a prescription risks misaligning with contextual features.

The CCSSO's Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook for LEA and School Leaders, which was published in partnership with Partners for Each and Every Child, provides guidance for states and districts on how to effectively engage stakeholders in improvement planning. Recommendations are provided regarding the most effective engagement strategies and tools that LEAs can implement all types of stakeholders, including students, families, educators, rural communities, tribal leadership, policymakers, the business community, and others.

4. **SEAs can become more intentional in assisting rural and small LEAs engage their communities.** Several SEAs suggested that rural and small LEAs receive less assistance than do larger LEAs that are geographically closer and have greater numbers of low-performing schools. Community support in rural communities can be particularly important, since the education-related resources and human capital are often thin. Some suggestions have come forth for improving understanding and connections with small, rural LEAs. **Maryland** has intentionally hired staff from rural communities and encouraged them to work from within those communities, where they can build relationships, sense the educational environment, and serve as SEA liaisons. The SEA is also holding more meetings in these regions that are far from its central office. **Montana** has formed case study teams around high-priority districts on tribal reservations, hence facilitating school-community connections.

5. **SEAs can build off of engagement processes and relationships established during state ESSA plan development, translating them for LEA stakeholder engagement and ongoing SEA outreach.** For some participants, the hard work of getting community input on draft ESSA plans was fresh in their minds. An Indiana representative suggested there are opportunities for building off of the ESSA planning process. **Arkansas** and **Georgia** representatives proposed having states model community engagement for LEAs, such as by having SEA leaders and state board members go out into the communities.

   Coming off of rigorous efforts to engage stakeholders in ESSA plan development, SEA representatives at the SPI meeting expressed interest in promoting stakeholder engagement statewide through an SEA communication plan. An SEA communication plan can be used to engage internal (across SEA divisions) and external audiences (including LEAs, schools, parents, community groups), and can serve as a model for LEAs to use with local stakeholders.

6. **SEAs can help LEAs recruit and retain community partners by promoting strategies to demonstrate that community input is meaningful.** Participants at the SPI Meeting pointed to the difficulty of recruiting local stakeholders who can provide the time required for engagement improvement efforts. Meaningful stakeholder engagement requires substantial time with minimal or no compensation.

Recruiting stakeholders may be easier if they believe their input may result in action. As one participant from **Pennsylvania** explained, "Relationships can improve if there is a sense that the school is here for the community, rather than the community is here for the school." One suggestion was to carefully document stakeholder input and comments in order to later show the community how they were used. Taking this further, communities can be engaged at critical points—including at early stages of strategy development—so their input really is meaningful and not a rubber stamp process. Along the way, as **Montana** has, LEAs (as well as the state) can openly share important local data and strategic documents with communities.

New Mexico has a long-standing toolkit for schools to strengthen connections with families and communities, called Working Together: School, Family, and Community Partnerships. It includes a self-assessment, as well as other resources and tips for community partnerships that can support school decision-making and improve student learning, among other topics.

State challenges in school improvement

SEAs identified challenges in their efforts to implement school improvement under ESSA, including areas where state or local capacity could be increased. These SEA reports suggest there are areas that warrant focused strategic action on the parts of SEAs and organizations that support SEAs. In responding to this four-point scale survey item, SEAs identified an average of roughly 2 of 11 challenges as major challenges and 6 of 11 as moderate or major (Exhibit 6). Some findings include:

- **SEAs are addressing limitations in their capacity to assist LEAs with CSI or TSI schools.** A large majority of SEAs reported that SEA capacity to assist LEAs as a moderate or major challenge (71%). To address this, SEAs were expanding their capacity through partners or contractors, as well as developing internal staff to deliver TA. At the time of the survey, many states were building up their systems of support for LEAs. As Exhibit 2 reports, over 50% of responding states said they had plans to draw on consultants, regional education service agencies, and provider organizations to expand state TA capacity. Also, with many state ESSA plans recently approved, SEAs were still fleshing out proposed systems for TA and had yet to hire and train SEA employees.

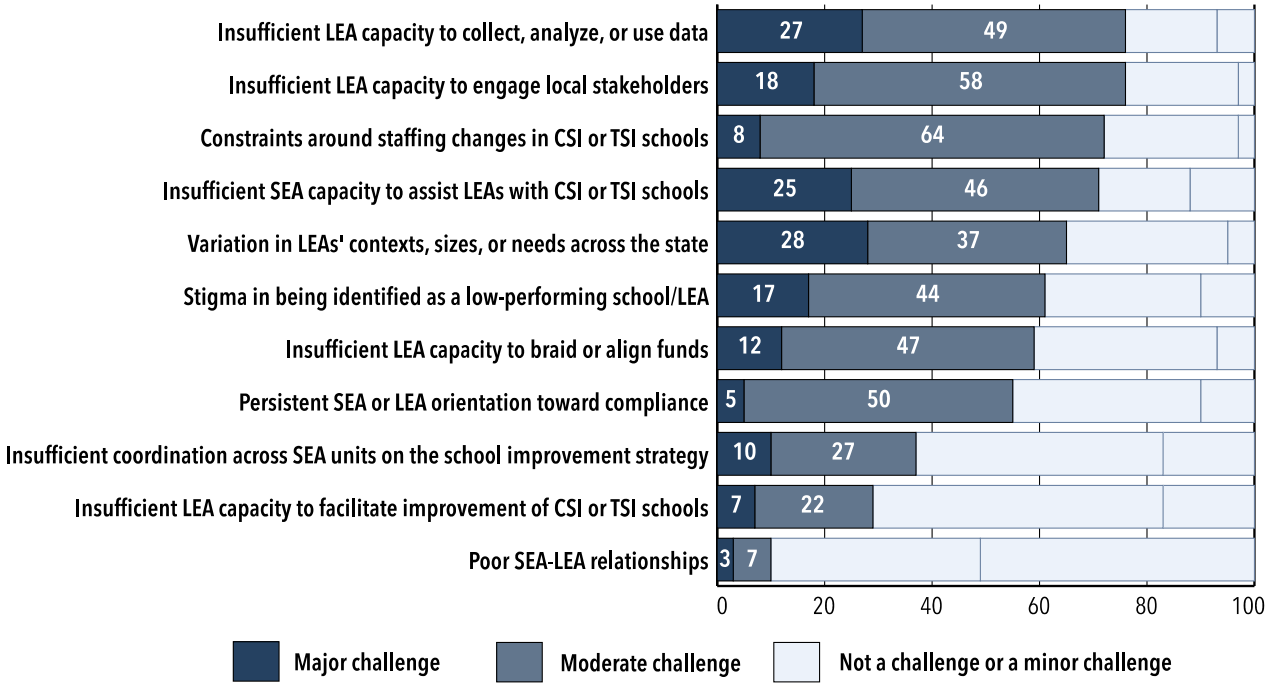
  Nevertheless, SEA responses about their capacity speak to a perceived challenge of needing to do a lot, in a relatively short amount of time and with limited staff.

- **SEAs are prioritizing their upcoming work around the top challenge of LEA capacity to use data.** SEAs were most likely to report "Insufficient LEA capacity to collect, analyze, or use data" as a moderate or major challenge (76%). As seen in Exhibit 1, local data use has also been a top area of SEA progress and is a major SEA priority for work through June 2019. Examples earlier in the report suggest that many SEAs currently have local needs assessment processes founded on data analysis and the use of data for improvement planning. Some are planning state TA specifically around data analysis, such as providing coaching or professional development for district and schools identified under ESSA.

- **While LEA capacity for stakeholder engagement is a big SEA challenge, many SEAs were less focused on it as a pressing priority in the current year.** Despite being a top challenge (76% reported it a moderate or major challenge), SEAs were least likely to report making progress on local stakeholder engagement and about half saw it as a major priority through June 2019 (see Exhibit 1). This may be an area of work that SEAs will turn to after implementing other state responsibilities, such as approving CSI plans and building TA infrastructure. SEAs may also have near-term opportunities to work with districts and stakeholders to identify promising strategies for stakeholder engagement. For instance, SEAs that are providing TA to districts on needs assessment may be able to promote and learn about stakeholder engagement.

- **Most SEAs do not regard internal coordination across "silos" as a challenge for school improvement.** Coordination across an SEA's units can be important to carry out cross-cutting agendas such as school improvement. Relatively few SEAs reported insufficient coordination across SEA units as a moderate or major challenge (37%). In fact, several SEAs are known to be actively working to build coherence across units (e.g., school improvement, special education, educator effectiveness) to improve a system of support for CSI and TSI schools. **Maryland**, for example, restructured SEA offices to create a single Office of Leadership Development and School Improvement. **Mississippi** has monthly meetings across divisions to address school improvement issues. States interested in improving internal communication across SEA divisions may want to look at CCSSO's 2018 resource on strategies for building strong communications within the SEA.

Exhibit 6: SEA Challenges in Implementing ESSA School Improvement



Note: N=41
Exhibit reads: Of the 41 states responding, 27 percent identified insufficient LEA capacity to collect, analyze, or use data as a major challenge in implementing the state's school improvement plan. Forty-nine percent of states reported this as a moderate challenge.

Conclusion

State progress. Within a year of having their state ESSA plans approved by the federal government, SEAs reported making progress on ESSA-driven responsibilities related to school improvement. For each of 7 areas of SEA responsibility, at least two-thirds of reporting SEAs indicated that they have made major or moderate progress (Exhibit 1). SEAs most often reported progress in supporting local needs assessment and data use, and it is easy to find examples of state tools and training that schools and LEAs can use to plan for continuous improvement. Many SEAs also reported major progress in developing systems of assistance for LEAs and guidance for LEA use of funds, taking steps to establish support infrastructure for local improvement.

SEA progress will likely continue in the coming months, as there will be increasing opportunities for states to operationalize their systems of support for CSI and TSI schools. As they work with LEAs and schools, SEAs will be able to develop and refine their supports. In fact, many SEAs have taken a continuous improvement approach to their own work and regard their current support to LEAs and schools as "pilots."

Emerging state priorities. SEA survey responses suggest that many aspects of school improvement will be big priorities through June 2019. At least half of SEAs reported that each of the 7 areas of school improvement responsibility was a major priority for their upcoming work (Exhibit 1). Supporting local needs assessment and data use was expected to continue as a top SEA focus, building off the substantial progress already made on this lever for school improvement. Every SEA reported that this would be a major (85%) or moderate (15%) priority, and many SEA plans indicate that this work would be a hands-on, deep, ongoing effort.

School leadership stands out as an emerging priority for SEAs, which were less likely to report leadership as an area of major past progress. Anecdotal evidence from CCSSO-hosted events supports the notion that SEAs are thinking strategically about how to leverage improvement through school leaders. SEAs are interested in each other's efforts to strengthen school leadership and integrate it with school improvement supports.

While SEAs reported making progress on supporting LEA use of funds for school improvement, survey responses and discussions at CCSSO-hosted events made clear that this would be a major priority area for SEA work this year. Braiding fund streams and targeting funds toward root causes is difficult work that was not common in past practice. SEAs are looking at how to deliver the needed technical expertise and help LEAs and schools identify evidence-based interventions that most warrant funding. LEAs' use of funds will be evident in CSI plans, and SEA responses indicate they will also be ramping up efforts to develop guidance and approval processes for these plans.

Next steps. As SEAs build out their systems to support school improvement, they may benefit from sharing and staying abreast of each other's efforts. Some states are further along in their implementation timelines or in specific areas of school improvement. This document provides

snapshots of state examples that may be informative to others, though these represent a narrow slice of promising state work and SEA school improvement efforts are evolving at a rapid pace.

The appendix at the end of this document provides resources organized roughly around the 7 domains of SEA responsibility. Many of these resources include examples from states and districts, as well as research, that may provoke strategic SEA thinking.

As SEAs move forward in carrying out their responsibilities for school improvement under ESSA, there will be much to learn about how SEAs' theories of action are implemented across varied local contexts, and to what effect. SEAs and the broader field will have the opportunity to examine and learn from this work, diving into questions such as:

- What lessons are SEAs learning as they support LEAs and schools in needs assessment and improvement planning, and do these lessons have implications for improving non-identified schools?

- What approaches and interventions comprise CSI and TSI improvement plans, and how is local implementation proceeding?

- What practical lessons have been learned about local braiding and use of funds to support school improvement and equitable education?

- What are critical features of SEA systems of support, including from the perspective of LEAs and their CSI and TSI schools? How do SEA divisions and partners coordinate within these systems?

- How can SEAs strengthen school leadership that supports school improvement and equitable education?

- What strategies can SEAs use to effectively monitor and assess improvement efforts at the SEA, LEA, and school levels? Are school improvement efforts resulting in positive outcomes for students?

The Every Student Succeeds Act has introduced new responsibilities and opportunities for SEAs, LEAs, and schools related to school improvement. SEAs have responded by developing new systems and strategies that hold promise for transforming struggling schools and improving educational opportunities for students.

Appendix A:
Resources for SEAs Organized by SEA Responsibility

This appendix is intended to collect in one place a variety of resources relevant to SEA school improvement responsibilities under ESSA.

This appendix is organized by:

A. Needs Assessment & Data Use
B. Funds for School Improvement
C. Technical Assistance (TA) to LEAs
D. School Leadership
E. Monitoring School Improvement
F. Guidance and Approval for CSI Plans
G. Stakeholder Engagement by LEAs
H. Cross-cutting Resources

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
Needs Assessment & Data Use			
Needs assessment & data use	Corbett, J. & Redding, S. (2017). Using Needs Assessments for School and District Improvement: a Tactical Guide. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.	This tactical guide provides information to support LEAs and SEAs as they design and complete needs assessments to support improvement.	Implementation guide
Needs assessment & data use	Layland, A. & Corbett, J. (2017). Utilizing Integrated Resources to Implement the School and District Improvement Cycle and Supports. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.	This guide provides guidance to construct a Strategic Performance Network, a performance management-approach that links SEAs, LEAs, and schools to address improvements. It includes a school improvement planning template, root cause analysis tool, and LEA self-reflection tool.	Implementation guide
Needs assessment & data use	Hitt, D., Robinson, W., & Player, D. (2018). District Readiness to Support School Turnaround: A Guide for SEAs and Districts. San Francisco, CA: Center on School Turnaround at WestEd.	This guide is a companion to the Center for School Turnaround's *Four Domains of for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework.* It provides indicators and a process for assessing district readiness to support school improvement.	Implementation guide
Needs assessment & data use	Center on Great Teachers and Leaders. (2015). The Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Guidance for Districts. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.	This toolkit provides a process and templates for LEAs to assess and plan for equitable access to excellent educators.	Tool
Funds for School Improvement			
Funds for school improvement	Jung, M., & Krvaric, S. (2018). Support for Rapid School Improvement: How Federal Dollars Can Be Leveraged for Systemic Improvement. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.	This guide describes strategies SEAs can use to leverage federal funds to support a coherent strategy for school improvement. The authors also wrote a predecessor guide, Using Federal Education Formula Funds for School Turnaround Initiatives.	Implementation guide
Funds for school improvement	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #7 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 7 of effective school improvement systems focuses on funding improvement efforts.	Implementation guide
Funds for school improvement; School leadership	Education First. (2017). Investing in Title II-A: Strengthening School and Teacher Leadership. Seattle, WA.	This resource provides guidance to inform state and district leaders' on the use of Title II-A funding. The resource draws on examples from states' draft ESSA plans, and it includes discussion of using these funds to strengthen school leadership.	Implementation guide

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
Funds for school improvement	Chiefs for Change. (2016). Implementing Change: Rethinking School Improvement Strategies and Funding Under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Washington, DC.	This policy guide provides information designed to guide states' efforts to leverage ESSA funding to support school improvement.	Policy guide
Funds for school improvement	Education Resource Strategies. (2017). Budget Hold'em for Schools. Watertown, MA.	This tool is an interactive game for school teams making real-world decisions about budgeting and school planning. ERS also offers a version for district leaders, as well as a facilitator guide.	Tool
Funds for school improvement	Education Resource Strategies. (2018). Transforming School Funding for Equity, Transparency, and Flexibility: An Introduction to Student-Based Budgeting. Watertown, MA.	This report is a part of a larger toolkit that provides information and practical tools for districts on implementing equity-focused school funding models.	Tool
Funds for school improvement	Travers, J. (2018). What is Resource Equity? Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies.	This working paper identifies dimensions of resource equity and describes how each links to student outcomes. Districts and school communities can assess these dimensions to improve equitable education.	Report
Funds for school improvement	Roza, M., Coughlin, T., & Anderson, L. (2017). Taking Stock of California's Weighted Student Funding Overhaul: What Have Districts Done with their Spending Flexibility? Washington, DC: Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University.	This report analyzes the early impacts of California's shift of spending decisions from the state to local districts. It provides insights on implementation of weighted student funding models. A companion document focuses on whether districts allocated a larger share of funds to high-need schools.	Report
Technical Assistance (TA) to LEAs			
TA to LEAs	Center on School Turnaround. (2017). Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework. San Francisco, CA: Center on School Turnaround at WestEd.	This report draws on research to describe four domains of rapid school improvement: turnaround leadership, talent development, instructional transformation, and culture shift. The report provides the framework that informs other CST tools and reports that can be useful for states.	Report
TA to LEAs	Kutash, J., Nico, E., Gorin, E., Rahmatullah, S., & Tallant, K. (2010). The School Turnaround Field Guide. Washington, DC: FSG.	This report includes an overview of the school turnaround landscape at the time, a description of improvement measures and key stakeholders, and an assessment of strategies. Findings suggest state and district supports must be improved.	Report
TA to LEAs	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #4 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 4 of effective school improvement systems focuses on developing a system of support that is sensitive to unique local contexts.	Implementation guide

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
TA to LEAs	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Turnaround practices research and evaluation reports.	This webpage links to research reports on Massachusetts's efforts to promote continuous improvement in its turnaround program.	Report
TA to LEAs	Redding, S. & Layland, A. (2017). Casting a Statewide Strategic Performance Net: Interlaced Data and Responsive Supports. San Antonio, TX: Edvance Research.	This technical assistance manual includes information and resources to help SEAs and LEAs develop a strategic performance management system that draws on data to activate responsive supports.	Implementation guide
TA to LEAs	Woods, J., & Rafa, A. (2018). Guiding Questions for State School Improvement Efforts. Education Commission of the States.	This brief presents thought provoking questions that may inform states working on developing, measuring, and sustaining school improvement efforts. The brief also includes examples from states to illustrate how states have addressed each of the key areas.	Report
TA to LEAs	Scott, C., & Ostler, N. (2016). Reshaping Rural Schools in the Northwest Region: Lessons from Federal School Improvement Grant Implementation. Washington, DC: Institute for Education Sciences.	This report presents findings from a study examining rural schools' use of the transformation model, including challenges experienced and technical assistance received.	Report
School Leadership			
School leadership	Manna, P. (2015). Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and Learning: Considerations for State Policy. New York, NY: Wallace Foundation.	This report describes strategies state policymakers can use to ensure that schools have excellent leaders. The report focuses on state policy agendas, policy levels, and the contextual factors that influence how policies or initiatives for principals unfold.	Report
School leadership	Riley, D.L. & Meredith, J. (2017). State Efforts to Strengthen School Leadership: Insights from CCSSO Action Groups. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.	This report draws on findings from CCSSO state action groups and describes states' efforts to strengthen the recruitment, preparation, support, and supervision of school leaders.	Report
School leadership	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #6 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 6 of effective school improvement systems focuses on developing the talent of leaders and teachers.	Implementation guide
School leadership	Syed, S. (2015). Building Principal Pipeline: a Strategy to Strengthen Education Leadership. New York, NY: Wallace Foundation.	This document provides an overview of the Principal Pipeline Initiative and highlights select Wallace reports on school leadership.	Report

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
School leadership	New Leaders (2018). Prioritizing Leadership: An Analysis of State ESSA Plans. Washington, DC.	The report summarizes New Leaders' analysis of state ESSA plans with a focus on: 1) prioritizing instructional leadership, 2) advancing equity-focused leadership, 3) building a leadership pipeline, 4) strengthening principal preparation, and 5) reimagining principal support.	Policy guide
School leadership	Turnbull, B.J., Anderson, L.M., Riley, D.L., MacFarlane, J.R., & Aladjem, D.K. (2016). The Principal Pipeline Initiative in Action. Building a Stronger Principalship. Vol 5. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.	This report, the fifth in a series, summarizes findings from an evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative and includes a discussion of implementation approaches, accomplishments, and challenges.	Report
School Leadership	Kaufman, J.H., Gates, S.M., Harvey, M., Wang, Y., & Barrett, M. (2017). What It Takes to Operate and Maintain Principal Pipelines: Costs and Other Resources. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.	This report describes the resources and expenditures devoted to principal pipelines in the districts participating in an initiative to reshape principal preparation, selection, evaluation, and support.	Report
School leadership	Redding, S. (2019). Jump Starting Instructional Transformation for Rapid School Improvement: A Guide for Principals. San Francisco, CA: Center on School Turnaround at WestEd.	This guide for principals is presents a process for transforming instruction and is based on the Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement. It includes tools and practical resources.	Implementation guide
School leadership	Anderson, L.M., Turnbull, B.J., & Arcaira, E.R. (2017). Leader Tracking Systems: Turning Data into Information for School Leadership. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates	This report describes strategies to build and use Leader Tracking Systems. Leader Tracking Systems enable districts, and potentially states, to collect data that helps them recruit, prepare, select, place, and support school leaders.	Report
School leadership	Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. (2013). Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors. Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools.	This report summarizes findings from the Council of Great City Schools' study of principal supervisors and provides recommendations for building more effective principal supervisory systems.	Report
School leadership	Goldring, E., Grissom, J., Rubin, M., Rogers, L., Neel, M., & Clark, M. (2018). A New Role Emerges for Principal Supervisors. New York, NY: Wallace Foundation.	This report summarizes the findings from an evaluation of the Principal Supervisor Initiative, in which six large districts demonstrate the feasibility of substantially changing the principal supervisor role toward principal support.	Report
School leadership	Council of Chief State School Officers. (2015). Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards. Washington, DC.	This set of standards provides a model for professional standards for principal supervisors.	Standards

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
School leadership	National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2015). Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). Reston, VA.	Professional learning standards organized around the domains, qualities, and values of leadership work hypothesized to support students' academic success and well-being (developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration)	Standards
School leadership	Center on Great Teachers & Leaders. (2016). The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) 2015 and the Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards 2008: A Crosswalk. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.	This provides a side-by-side comparison of the 2015 PSEL standards with the 2008 ISLLC standards. It may serve as a tool for examining existing state standards aligned with ISLLC. GTL also provides a companion resource, Aligning Leadership Standards Toolkit.	Standards
Monitoring School Improvement			
Guidance on CSI plans; School leadership	Hitt, D. (2015). "What it Takes" for a Turnaround: Principal Competencies that Matter for Student Achievement. San Francisco, CA: Center on School Turnaround at WestEd.	This implementation guide provides insights for districts and states to districts involved in school turnaround leadership. It describes principal competencies and draws on lessons from Partnership for Leaders in Education program.	Implementation guide
School leadership	National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2018). The National Educational Leadership Preparation Program (NELP) Standards. Reston, VA.	The NELP standards guide the design and approval of programs that prepare school and district leaders. They are aligned with PSEL standards and will be used for program accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).	Standards
Monitoring school improvement	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #9 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 9 of effective school improvement systems focuses on monitoring implementation of school improvement efforts.	Implementation guide
Monitoring school improvement; TA to LEAs	Redding, S., McCauley, C., Jackson, K., & Dunn, L. (2018). Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: Indicators of Effective Practice. San Francisco, CA: Center on School Turnaround at WestEd	This tool is a companion to the Center for School Turnaround's *Four Domains of for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework.* The tool includes indicators of practice and can help states track progress in each domain of the framework.	Tool
Monitoring school improvement	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #8 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 8 of effective school improvement systems focuses on measuring progress toward improvement benchmarks.	Implementation guide

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
Monitoring school improvement; Guidance on CSI plans	Council of Chief State School Officers. (2017). The Role of the State in the Local Implementation of ESSA Programs. Washington, DC.	This guide provides an overview of the SEA's role in implementing ESSA programs, discusses SEA's oversight responsibilities, and provides examples of possible SEA activities as they carry out their oversight responsibilities.	Policy guide
Guidance and Approval for CSI Plans			
Guidance on CSI plans	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #5 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 5 of effective school improvement systems focuses on developing improvement plans.	Implementation guide
Guidance on CSI plans	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #10 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 10 of effective school improvement systems focuses on planning for the sustainability of improvement.	Implementation guide
Guidance on CSI plans	Council of Chief State School Officers. (2016). Decision Guide for Implementing ESSA: State Considerations for Effective Grant Programs. Washington, DC.	This guide provides guidance to inform the implementation of ESSA's non-accountability requirements.	Implementation guide
Guidance on CSI plans	Lee, L., Hughes, J., Smith, K., Foorman, B. (2016). An SEA Guide for Identifying Evidence-based Interventions for School Improvement. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Center for Reading Research.	This self-study guide is designed to help SEAs (and their LEAs and schools) evaluate the appropriateness of school improvement interventions. It provides a process and tools for teams engage in continuous improvement and intervention selection.	Implementation guide
Guidance on CSI plans; School leadership	Herman, R. Gates, S.M., Arifkhanova, A. Barrett, M., Bega, A., Chavez-Herrerias, E.R., Han, E., Harris, M., Migacheva, K., Ross, R., Leschitz, J.T., & Wrabel, S.L. (2017). School Leadership Interventions under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence Review. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.	This report presents findings from a synthesis of school leadership interventions and opportunities to support school leadership under ESSA. It identifies specific interventions, along with their levels of evidence.	Report
Guidance on CSI plans	Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. (2019, regularly updated). What Works Clearinghouse.	This web-based tool is hosted by the U.S. Department of Education reviews research on education programs, practices, and policies to determine what works.	Tool

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
Guidance on CSI plans	Center for Research and Reform at Johns Hopkins University. (2019; regularly updated). Evidence for ESSA Website.	This web-based tool provides up-to-date information on math and reading programs that meet ESSA evidence standards.	Tool
Stakeholder Engagement by LEAs			
Stakeholder engagement by LEAs	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #3 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 3 of effective school improvement systems focuses on stakeholder engagement.	Implementation guide
Stakeholder engagement by LEAs	The Leadership Conference Education Fund. (2017). ESSA Guide for Advocates: How You Can Ensure ESSA Implementation Helps Build More Equitable Schools. Washington, DC.	This policy guide includes information about ESSA's requirements and guidance to help states ensure all students receive a high-quality education.	Policy Guide
Stakeholder engagement by LEAs	Partners for Each and Every Child & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2017). Meaningful Local Engagement under ESSA: A Handbook for LEA and School Leaders. Berkeley, CA.	This handbook, a collaborative effort, provides practical advice and tools for LEAs and schools to engage their communities, as well as for SEAs seeking to support local engagement.	Tool
Stakeholder engagement by LEAs	McCauley, C. & Cashman, J. (2018). The Engagement Playbook: A Toolkit for Engaging Stakeholders around the Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.	This tool is a companion to the Center for School Turnaround's *Four Domains of for Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework.* The guide provides practical strategies for engaging stakeholders, including staff and community members.	Implementation guide
Stakeholder engagement by LEAs	The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, & Southern Education Foundation. (2016). Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools. Washington, DC.	This report provides profiles of community schools that have demonstrated student success. The report includes a discussion of strategies that community schools can use to support student improvement.	Report
Stakeholder engagement by LEAs	Garcia, M., Frunzi, K., Dean, C., Flores, N., & Miller, K. (2016). Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education. Washington, DC: Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific for U.S. Department of Education.	This four-part toolkit of resources to help schools and districts build relationships with families and community members. The toolkit provide activities, templates, and frameworks.	Tool

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
Stakeholder engagement by LEAs	Strive Together. (n.d.). Strive Together Theory of Action. Cincinnati, OH.	This theory of action acts as a guide for communities and schools to partner around building civic infrastructure that support student outcomes. It includes benchmarks for progress, and accompanies other resources local partnerships.	Tool
Cross-cutting resource	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Every Student Succeeds Act). (Enacted 2018)	The Every Student Succeeds Act (formally named the "Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965") is federal legislation that establishes responsibilities and opportunities for SEAs, LEAs, and schools related to school improvement.	Legislation
Cross-cutting Resources			
Cross-cutting resource	Council of Chief State School Officers. (2018). Roadmap to Implementing the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This document presents CCSSO's 10 principles for the design and management of effective systems to improve low-performing schools, and it provides an overview of their implementation. In 10 ancillary "deep dive" documents, each principle is discussed further with state examples.	Implementation guide
Cross-cutting resource	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #1 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems." Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 1 of effective school improvement systems focuses on systemic prioritization of school improvement.	Implementation guide
Cross-cutting resource	McGrath, M., Young, K., & Webb, E. (2018). ESSA Implementation Timeline: A Guide to Key State and Local Processes. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.	This document outlines state and local actions and planning processes to guide the first years of ESSA implementation. It provides a timeline of state ESSA-driven responsibilities through 2021, and it describes key terms in the legislation related to school improvement.	Implementation guide
Cross-cutting resource	Kostyo, S., Chardlchon, J., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2018). Making ESSA's Equity Promise Real: State Strategies to Close the Opportunity Gap. Washington, DC: Learning Policy Institute.	This report describes state strategies used to advance ESSA's equity agenda. It describes the use of data in state accountability systems to inform the improvement of opportunities for all students.	Report
Cross-cutting resource	Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Counsel. (2018). Deep Dive into Principle #2 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems. Washington, DC.	This deep dive into CCSSO's Principle 2 of effective school improvement systems focuses on building a system that keeps students at the center and expects each to be successful.	Implementation guide
Cross-cutting resource	Council of Chief State School Officers. (2017). Advancing School Improvement in SEAs through Research Practice Partnerships. Washington, DC.	This resource provides an overview of research practice partnerships and describes how states can use these partnerships to support school improvement.	Implementation guide

Domain(s)	Resource	Description	Type
Cross-cutting resources	Results for America. (2018). ESSA Leverage Points: 50-state Report on Promising Practices for Using Evidence to Improve Student Outcomes. Washington, DC.	This report presents findings from a 50-state review of state ESSA plans. It describes what states planned to do across 13 leverage points described in a May 2017 report, particularly as related to supporting the use of evidence, evaluation, and continuous improvement.	Report
Cross-cutting resource	Aldeman, C., Hyslop, A., Marchitello, M., Schiess, J., Pennington, K., (2017) An Independent Review of ESSA State Plans. Washington, DC: Bellwether Partners.	This report presents areas of progress and improvement present in states' submitted ESSA plans.	Report

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Policy Studies Associates developed this report with support from the Council of Chief State School Officers. The authors are thankful for guidance and feedback provided by Monica Taylor, Melissa McGrath, and Rosalyn Rice-Harris. We would also like to thank senior leaders from 43 state education agencies who responded to a brief survey about their progress related to school improvement.

POLICY STUDIES ASSOCIATES

1120 20th Street NW
Suite 200 N
Washington, DC 20036
Policystudies.com | 202.939.9780

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Council of Chief State School Officers