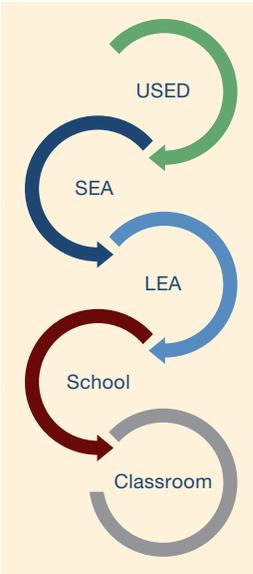


Defining the SEA Capacity Building Work Stream



The Reform Support Network has facilitated the development of practice areas to support the exchange of information and sharing of successful practices among Race to the Top State grantees. The purpose of the State Education Agency (SEA) Capacity Building work stream is to strengthen the organizational capacity of SEAs by supporting their ability to implement and sustain their proposed Race to the Top reforms over time.

To accomplish its purpose, the SEA Capacity Building work stream seeks to support SEAs in:

- Sharpening and defining their roles as they move from compliance to support;
- Building system capacity and alignment, specifically in the SEA and local educational agency (LEA) relationship, ensuring that resources such as finances, data systems and personnel support reform goals; and
- Delivering on their reform goals over time, ensuring that priorities such as equitable distribution of teachers, development and/or choice of high quality instructional materials and closing of the student achievement gap are realized.

The work stream will produce tools, case studies and papers that will ultimately be broadly distributed to benefit all 50 States.

The SEA Capacity Building work stream pursues its work through three interconnected topics:

1. Performance Management

Performance Management is a leadership strategy that focuses on excellence, driving individual and organizational efforts to attain goals. Performance management uses structures, processes and routines on an ongoing basis that enable an SEA to reach its goals by:

- Using data to inform decisions;
- Directing its resources (time, money and people) to efforts that produce results; and
- Adapting or ending practices that are unsuccessful.

Performance Management is distinguished from project management, which is primarily used to track tasks and deadlines of projects across the system.

2. Expanded System Capacity

In order to build system capacity, SEAs strategically align with LEAs and with other partners to ensure successful implementation and sustainable reform. These partnerships often play key communication and resource roles and may encourage collaborative relationships across the layers of educational administration within a State. A collaborative process may be highly interdependent, creating participatory decision-making structures through which organizations and individuals work across SEA and LEA boundaries to achieve common goals. Such partnerships are characterized by high accountability, high expectations and high support and are designed to leverage and maximize the capacity of partners best suited to support the State's reform strategies. Regional delivery structures are key partners in driving education initiatives for both SEAs and LEAs, especially as SEAs transition from oversight to capacity-building agencies.

3. Sustainability

Sustainable reforms are durable, adaptive and persistently focused on goals for improved student growth in the face of changing conditions. To achieve sustainable systems and/or results, SEAs and LEAs use evidence from implementation to continually improve within an evolving state context, adapting systems, resources and structures to better achieve student and system outcomes over time.

The SEA Capacity Building work stream conducts a variety of activities, individually and in cooperation with communities of practice such as:

Working Groups

Working groups consist of two to four States that focus on the topics of regional delivery structures, feedback loops, innovative resource alignment tools and sustainability. The working groups will produce products for grantees, which in due course may be disseminated to all States.

Individualized Technical Assistance

Because Race to the Top grantees bring to reform widely different histories, resources and approaches, they may request individualized technical assistance, including coaching, to address issues that arise during implementation. The work stream offers individualized technical assistance across its topic areas.

Webinars

The work stream leverages webinar technology to convey knowledge efficiently among grantees, by featuring State and expert moderators. Webinars proposed for this work stream include regional delivery structures, performance management and feedback loops designed to support effective implementation and sustainability of reform strategies.

Print and Communications

The work stream contemplates a variety of publications, ranging from a case study of a State performance management model, to a toolkit for resource alignment assessment, to a primer defining the knowledge and skills essential to SEA/LEA leadership.

For further information about the SEA Capacity Building work stream, contact: Jamila Smith, U.S. Department of Education, (202) 453-6360.

This document was developed by the Reform Support Network with funding from the U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. GS-23F-8182H. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.