



***EVALUATING STATE ACCOUNTABILITY  
SYSTEMS: REFINING APPROACHES THROUGH  
REFLECTION***

**COMBINED FEDERAL PROGRAMS MEETING**

DECEMBER 6 – 7, 2018 | WASHINGTON, DC

# AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Why Reflect on How State Accountability Systems Are Functioning?
- *Evaluating State Accountability Systems Under ESEA* tool overview
- Activity: State Accountability System Theories of Action
- Pilot Opportunities Overview



# OBJECTIVES

As a result of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe a process through which states can reflect on the technical quality of their state accountability system and alignment with policy priorities;
- Identify where evidence may be beneficial to maximize confidence and minimize risk associated with accountability system design; and
- Recognize opportunities for state education agency staff to pilot the forthcoming *Evaluating State Accountability Systems* tool.



# PRESENTERS

## *State Support Network*

- Kerstin Carlson Le Floch, American Institutes for Research
- Juan D'Brot, Center for Assessment





# Why Reflect on How State Accountability Systems Are Functioning?



# WHY REFLECT ON HOW ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS ARE FUNCTIONING?

- School-level accountability touches all schools—but most implications impact struggling schools and vulnerable students.
- States should model the self-reflective behavior that we would expect at the local level.
- Engaging in reflection and evaluation enables state education agencies (SEAs) to:
  - Engage in mid-course corrections, if necessary
  - Be one step ahead of critics
  - Explain the rationale and justify the quality of the system
  - Avoid public relations challenges
  - Ensure the policy is playing out as anticipated



# THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT CYCLE



Source: D'Brot, J., Keng, L., & Landl, E. (2018). Accountability Identification is only the Beginning: Monitoring and Evaluating Accountability Results and Implementation. Washington, D.C.: CCSSO.





# *Evaluating State Accountability Systems Under ESEA Tool Overview*



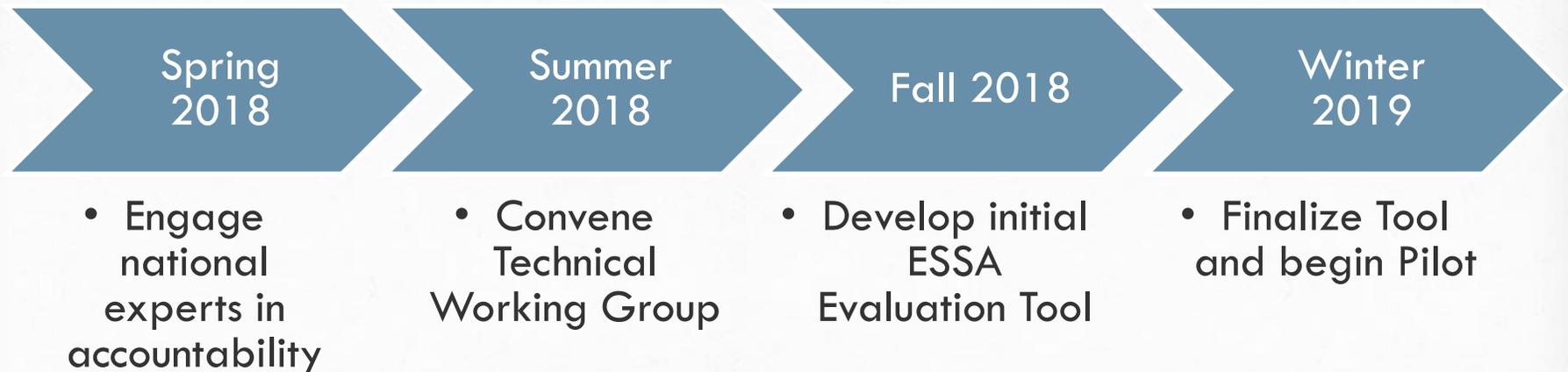
# ***EVALUATING STATE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS UNDER ESEA TOOL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS***

- Tool conceptualization began in Fall 2017
- Designed to support states as they implement new accountability systems
  - Consider how changes in accountability system design affect how accountability systems function in practice
  - Consider how the SEA can support accountability system implementation and communications over time



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# TOOL OBJECTIVES

- Self-reflection tool for accountability specialists at SEAs
- Modules designed to help SEA staff reflect on:
  - Articulating a theory of action for the overall accountability system and its components
  - Identifying schools fairly and accurately as part of annual meaningful differentiation
  - Supporting refinements to design and implementation of state accountability systems
  - Using accountability identification decisions to inform the support provided to struggling schools



# TOOL OUTLINE

- **Module 1:** Overall theory of action
- **Module 2:** System of annual meaningful differentiation (AMD)
- **Module 3:** Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Designations
- **Module 4:** Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) Designations and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) Designations
- **Module 5:** Reporting
- **Module 6:** Indicators (with sub-modules for each indicator)
- **Module 7:** State Support



# EACH MODULE INCLUDES:

1. Reflections on the component's “mini-theory of action” or **rationale**.
2. Reflections on the **strength of rationale and public perceptions** associated with each component.
3. Reflections on “**confidence claims**” regarding the soundness of the accountability system.



# EACH MODULE INCLUDES:

## RATIONALE

- Reflections on the component’s “mini-theory of action” or **rationale**. That is, what are the primary expectations associated with the design of a given component of the system (e.g., system of Annual Meaningful Differentiation (AMD), specific indicators, communication and outreach)?
- The rationale includes the following clarification areas:
  - Policy intent
  - Policy mechanisms
  - Behavioral intent
  - Data/technical characteristics



# SAMPLE RATIONALE QUESTIONS: AMD

Rationale Focus	Reflection questions	Notes
<i>Policy Intent</i>		
<i>Policy Mechanisms</i>		
<i>Behavioral Intent</i>		
<i>Technical Characteristics</i>		



# SAMPLE RATIONALE QUESTIONS: AMD

Rationale Focus	Reflection questions	Notes
<i>Policy Intent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What policy goal are you trying to achieve through the AMD?</li> <li>• How does this policy intent drive the larger theory of action (TOA) policy intent supporting intended differentiation, school improvement, and public outreach?</li> </ul>	
<i>Policy Mechanisms</i>		
<i>Behavioral Intent</i>		
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<i>Behavioral Intent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What behaviors are you trying to incentivize through the AMD? This may include behaviors for policy makers, state staff, district leaders, principals, educators, and the public.</li> <li>• What do you expect people to do with this information?</li> </ul>	
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<i>Technical Characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the AMD, what data-based findings or trends do you expect to observe?</li> <li>• How do these characteristics relate to how indicators interact?</li> </ul>	



# EXAMPLE RESPONSES: AMD

Focus	Reflection
<i>Policy Intent</i>	
<i>Policy Mechanisms</i>	
<i>Behavioral Intent</i>	
<i>Results</i>	

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<i>Results</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School rankings should differ from previous accountability systems because of the high weighting for growth. Schools will be ordered differently.</li> <li>• Our state will examine AMD results to determine how much of an effect growth has on school ratings.</li> </ul>

# SAMPLE SET OF RISK QUESTIONS: CSI

Risk Area	Reflection questions	Notes
<i>Strength of Rationale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States are required to identify CSI schools as described in statute. However, CSI identification should support the signals the AMD is intended to send. Can you easily explain the rationale for how the identification of CSI schools is coherent with your overall differentiation strategy?</li> <li>• Have you identified key data and behavior check-ins that can help you monitor progress against exit criteria?</li> <li>• Does the rationale for the CSI identification methodology support the accountability system’s intended purpose and use?</li> </ul>	
<i>Public Perceptions</i>		



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<i>Public Perceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which policy mechanisms or levers of the methodology for CSI identification are most likely to receive public attention?</li> <li>• Would various constituencies understand or question the rationale for the methodology?</li> <li>• Is the resulting list of CSI schools consistent with public perceptions of schools that need support? If not, why and what are appropriate explanations or responses?</li> <li>• Is the threshold for CSI exit attainable?</li> </ul>	



# EACH MODULE INCLUDES:

## CONFIDENCE CLAIMS

- Reflections on “**confidence claims**” regarding the soundness of the accountability system. Includes:
  - Statements (claims) about the system component
  - Examples of evidence to support the claim
  - A self-reflection on state’s level of confidence across the claims
- **Confidence claims** are developed around the components of the accountability system specified in each module
  - Multiple claims are made that are common to ESEA accountability systems
  - Not all claims are necessarily relevant for every state (e.g., index vs. decision-rule vs. non-summative systems)



# SAMPLE CONFIDENCE CLAIMS: AMD

**Claim 1: School rankings and groupings created via the System of Annual Meaningful Differentiation reflect data as intended and expected.**

Considerations		Evidence Examples
1.1	School Annual Meaningful Differentiation score rankings reflect expectations based on simulations and the importance of indicators based on weights.	
1.2	School rating <i>groupings</i> align with outcome data exhibited by schools.	



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Considerations		Evidence Examples
1.1	School Annual Meaningful Differentiation score rankings reflect expectations based on simulations and the importance of indicators based on weights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compare actual Annual Meaningful Differentiation output to simulation runs of Annual Meaningful Differentiation outputs.</li><li>• Compare predictive analysis scores (e.g., regression) to determine predictive power of measures based on policy weightings</li><li>• Need to reduce the number of evidence pieces to make it more focused</li></ul>
1.2	School rating <i>groupings</i> align with outcome data exhibited by schools.	



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1.2	School rating <i>groupings</i> align with outcome data exhibited by schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct categorical analyses of schools (e.g., k-cluster, discriminant analyses) to determine whether school groupings reflect school performance categories.</li><li>• Compare simulations using cut scores for school ratings to actual results.</li></ul>



# SAMPLE CONFIDENCE CLAIMS: AMD

**Claim 2: Results from the System of Annual Meaningful Differentiation reflect meaningful differentiation among schools.**

Consideration		Evidence Examples
2.1	School/measure scores are distributed at intervals that reflect meaningful differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine the intervals between school/measure scores in the middle of the score distribution compared to the lower- and higher-performing schools (i.e., interquartile range vs. the lower and upper quartiles).</li><li>• Identify whether schools are “clustering” around a given school/measure score (i.e., identify any multi-modal tendencies in the school distribution).</li></ul>
2.2	The scores of schools at the lower and higher thresholds of each rating are reasonable and defensible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct categorical analyses of schools (e.g., k-cluster, discriminant analyses) to determine whether school groupings reflect school performance categories.</li><li>• Compare simulations using alternative cut scores for school ratings to actual results.</li></ul>



# SAMPLE CONFIDENCE CLAIMS: CSI

**Claim 1: School rankings created via methodology for identifying the bottom 5% of schools seem reasonable based on historical data.**

Consideration		Evidence
1.1	CSI identification status reflects the importance assigned to measures as reflected in measure weightings.	
1.2	CSI identification status aligns with outcome data exhibited by schools.	
1.3	CSI identification status aligns with ratings/performance levels assigned to schools or measures.	

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**Claim 1: School rankings created via methodology for identifying the bottom 5% of schools seem reasonable based on historical data.**

Consideration		Evidence
1.1	CSI identification status reflects the importance assigned to measures as reflected in measure weightings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine whether the relationship between CSI status and indicator score is stronger when the indicator has a higher weighting.</li> <li>• If applicable, examine composite index score distributions (e.g., range, mean, median, shape, standard deviation).</li> <li>• Compare actual CSI status to simulation runs of CSI status.</li> </ul>
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1.2	CSI identification status aligns with outcome data exhibited by schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine whether the relationship between CSI identification status and indicator score is stronger when indicators have higher weighting.</li> </ul>
1.3	CSI identification status aligns with ratings/performance levels assigned to schools or measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure no schools identified for CSI receive an “A” rating overall or for the highest weighted measure.</li> </ul>

# EACH MODULE CONCLUDES WITH...

- Upon completion of “**confidence claims,**” states will be asked to self-reflect on whether they believe they have
  - Sufficiently explored the confidence claims and evidence presented, and
  - Collected enough evidence that claims can be confirmed
- **Additional resources** will also be provided to support state teams
  - Some of the more nuanced confidence claims may benefit from additional detail
  - Suggested evidence that is somewhat technical or specialized in nature will point to other resources or recommended contacts





# Activity: Rationale for Accountability Indicators



# STATE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM THEORY OF ACTION

- Underlying all public policy is a *theory of action*, or rationale of how the policy components will help achieve system goals.
- A theory of action should provide a picture of how your policy works: what activities need to happen, how behaviors will change, and how outcomes will be achieved.
- Likewise, each component of the accountability system has an embedded rationale.
- Let's consider the rationale in your state for specific indicators in your accountability system.



# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER: INDICATOR RATIONALE (ACHIEVEMENT)

Reflection Section	Reflection Question
<b>Specific policy goal for Achievement:</b>	What policy goal does the Achievement indicator serve? This can be very general.
<b>Policy mechanisms or levers:</b>	What measures are you using to calculate the Achievement indicator? Are there any challenges with calculating, including, or aggregating these measures for the indicator?
<b>Behavioral intent:</b>	What behaviors are you trying to incentivize through the way in which the Achievement indicator is operationalized? Are you trying to focus people's attention on a specific aspect of school performance?
<b>Expected Results (and high-level next steps):</b>	For the Achievement indicator, what data-based findings or trends do you expect to observe? This may include trend data, challenges associated with changes in programs or policies, or how this indicator is expected to influence the overall AMD.



# SAMPLE RESPONSES: INDICATOR RATIONALE (ACHIEVEMENT)

Reflection Section	Example Response
Specific policy goal for Achievement:	
Policy mechanisms or levers:	
Behavioral intent:	
Expected Results (and high-level next steps):	



# SAMPLE RESPONSES: INDICATOR RATIONALE (ACHIEVEMENT)

Reflection Section	Example Response
<b>Specific policy goal for Achievement:</b>	Achievement is intended to communicate the college- and career-ready nature of our standards and that the performance standard is an appropriately high bar.
<b>Policy mechanisms or levers:</b>	
<b>Behavioral intent:</b>	
<b>Expected Results (and high-level next steps):</b>	



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<b>Behavioral intent:</b>	
<b>Expected Results (and high-level next steps):</b>	



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<b>Expected Results (and high-level next steps):</b>	

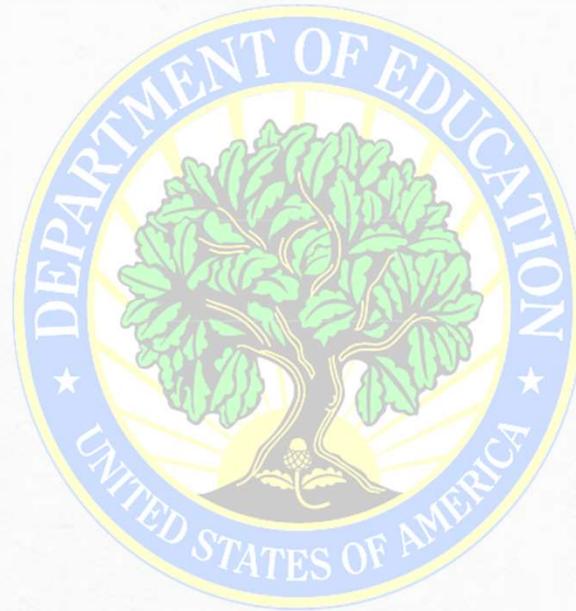


# SAMPLE RESPONSES:

## INDICATOR RATIONALE (ACHIEVEMENT)

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<b>Expected Results (and high-level next steps):</b>	<p>We have recently changed assessments, which not allowed to establish a trend line. As a result, we do not know how much movement we should expect from one year to the next. We will be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing trends and performance across schools compared to last year’s administration as well as the prior assessment trends</li> <li>• Examining the relative impact that achievement has in comparison to growth or graduation rate (we expect these two indicators will have the most influence on school ratings)</li> </ul>





# Pilot Opportunities



# PILOT OPPORTUNITIES

The State Support Network is looking to work with 2-6 states to “pilot” this tool.

Why pilot?

- Accountability systems are complex policies and developing this tool is a complex task
  - *We need your feedback to get it right*
- SEAs can use the pilot opportunity to:
  - *Engage in dialogue with accountability experts*
  - *Learn from other states engaged in similar work*



# PILOT OPPORTUNITIES

- Who?
  - SEAs
- When?
  - January through March 2019
- How?
  - Interested states should contact the State Support Network at [statesupportnetwork@air.org](mailto:statesupportnetwork@air.org)
  - Pilot activities will include a pre-work reflection activity, a one-day in-person team reflection meeting, and a brief debrief call.
  - The work of state teams during the pilot will be supported by national accountability experts





# Questions?

# RESOURCES & NEXT STEPS

The State Support Network collaborate with states, districts & technical assistance providers to:

- Improve student outcomes
- Scale systemic solutions
- Share learning and leverage effective evidence-based practices
- Build sustainable partnerships

To learn more about the forthcoming tool or pilot opportunities, contact the State Support Network at [statesupportnetwork@air.org](mailto:statesupportnetwork@air.org)



# SESSION EVALUATION

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK!

As a result of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe a process through which states can reflect on the technical quality of their state accountability system and alignment with policy priorities; and
- Identify where evidence may be beneficial to maximize confidence and minimize risk associated with accountability system design.



