EVIDENCE-BASED IMPROVEMENT

A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA

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Feedback

We welcome your feedback. This is a first generation of tools to help states and districts implement ESSA; we hope to revise and improve them based on use in the field. Suggestions of other resources are welcome, as are requests to develop new tools to fill gaps in the field. Access the full guide at: http://www.wested.org/resources/evidence-based-improvement-essa-guide-for-states

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Section 1: Overview

One of the broad intents of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is to encourage evidence-based decision-making as a way of doing business. Nonregulatory guidance issued in September 2016 by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) clarifies and expands on both the nature of evidence-based improvement and the levels of evidence that are specified in the law. This guide builds on that ED guidance and provides an initial set of tools to help states and districts understand and plan for implementing evidence-based improvement strategies.

This guide recognizes school and district improvement as a continuous, systemic, and cyclical process, and emphasizes the use of evidence in decision-making throughout continuous improvement. In other words, the guide is not aimed at isolated decisions; rather, it is meant to support evidence-based decision-making (especially selection of interventions) that is nested within a larger improvement process. See section 2 for more on this important point.

Audience

The primary audience for this guide is state education agency (SEA) staff who are responsible for understanding and implementing the evidence-based provisions of ESSA. Because SEAs vary widely in their organizational structures and in the titles of different positions, this guide refers generally to SEAs or SEA staff, leaving to each state and its technical assistance providers, such as Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs) and Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), the determination of who should be engaged.

While the guide may be used within a single SEA department or program, it can also contribute to alignment of cross-agency interventions, consistent messaging, and a unified approach to supporting school improvement efforts across the SEA. The ideal audience is a team of SEA staff representing multiple programs or departments. SEAs may also want to engage their intermediary networks, and technical assistance providers charged with directing, guiding, supporting, and monitoring districts, to select and implement evidence-based practices as defined in ESSA.

Additionally, some of the tools in this guide have been designed to be used by local education agencies (LEAs), either directly or with facilitation by SEAs or technical assistance providers. Therefore, a secondary audience consists of the LEAs within a given state, including district leadership teams and/or district department heads.

Purpose

The purpose of the guide is to build capacity of SEAs and their intermediaries to support LEAs in understanding the evidence-related requirements of ESSA and, consequently, selecting and implementing interventions that are evidence-based and that have strong potential to improve student outcomes. Specifically, the guide is intended to:

1) increase readers' understanding of the expectations and opportunities for evidence-based school and district improvement in the context of ESSA;

2) encourage a broad understanding of the elements of evidence-based decision-making, including how needs, context, implementation strategies, desired outcomes, and sustainability considerations inform choices of evidence-based interventions, and how formative and summative evaluation are integral to an evidence-based improvement cycle; and

3) offer guiding information and a starter set of six tools to support this work, with an emphasis on the process of selecting evidence-based interventions.

The materials presented in the guide offer SEAs and their LEAs opportunities to conduct a review of their approach to school and district improvement, including selection of evidence-based interventions, and to develop action steps for strengthening the guidance and supports that SEAs offer to their LEAs and that LEAs offer to their schools.

Contents

In addition to this section, the following four sections provide further background, tools, and additional resources.

- Section 2 includes further discussion of the *context* and requirements of ESSA in relation to evidence-based decision-making, and describes a *framework* for a continuous improvement process grounded in evidence-based decision-making.

- Section 3 gives suggestions on *how to use* the tools in the guide, including information about facilitation strategies and options for modifying the tools to fit state and local contexts. This section also emphasizes the importance of preparing for using the tools.

- Section 4 provides six *tools,* each designed to encourage focused conversations and support cross-agency collaboration. The first two tools guide examination of state and district improvement and decision-making frameworks. The second two tools help SEAs and LEAs explore strategies for providing guidance on selecting evidence-based interventions. The last two tools support selection of evidence-based interventions.

- Section 5 offers a list of *additional resources* to further the conversation, and enhance the work, initiated by this guide. This section includes examples of publicly available tools for evidence-based improvement, and sources for research and information on evidence-based interventions.

This guide was specifically designed to be a starting point for making evidence-based decisions, and is not intended to be comprehensive. It contains initial information and tools to guide conversations and foster deeper thinking around evidence-based decision-making, especially within an improvement process. Therefore, we encourage the use of this guide as an organizer for collecting or developing other tools and resources that more deeply explore particular steps that are not explicitly covered in this guide. For example, tools 3–6 in this guide focus on a portion of the second step of the continuous improvement process (examining evidence to select an intervention). This is largely due to the fact that this step is more closely informed than the other steps by the ESSA evidence-based provisions and ED guidance; thus, it is the main focus of this guide. However, additional tools that focus on other steps in the process exist and could be added to complement this guide. One way this might be accomplished is through tools 1 and 2. SEAs can use tool 1 to reflect on a state's frameworks and tools related to the entire continuous improvement cycle and on what might need to be refined or added to best reflect that cycle. Where gaps exist, RCCs, RELs, or others can develop new tools, in the future, to round out the existing set of tools. See table 1 for a list of tools included in the guide, as well as their respective audiences and linkages to stages in the improvement cycle.

This guide will be revised based on feedback from initial users. Not only do we espouse continuous improvement, but we intend to practice it. Examples of how SEAs and LEAs have used, adapted, and refined the tools can enrich subsequent versions of the guide and can support an exchange of strategies across states. We invite your participation.

Table 1. Initial Set of Tools Provided in This Guide

#	Tool Title	Primary Audience	Improvement Cycle Step[1]
1	SEA Inventory of Current Practice	SEA	All
2	LEA Inventory of Current Practice	LEA	All
3	SEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions	SEA	Select
4	LEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions	LEA	Select
5	Intervention Evidence Review	SEA or LEA	Select
6	Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions	SEA or LEA	Select

[1] See figure 1 on page 8 for improvement cycle steps.

Section 2: Context and Framework

Context for This Guide

Evidence-based decision-making has a long history in fields outside of education, such as medicine. More recently, recipients of federal funding in other fields have been required to adopt interventions that are evidence-based. Federal education funding is no exception.[i] The term "evidence-based" is used repeatedly in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).[ii] ESEA previously referred to "scientifically based research"; the term "evidence-based" is more strictly defined. ESSA calls on states, districts, and schools to select evidence-based activities, strategies, or interventions (collectively referred to in this guide as "interventions"). ESSA defines four levels of evidence, which are further described in the nonregulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in September 2016.

- *Strong evidence*—demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study.
- *Moderate evidence*—demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study.
- *Promising evidence*—demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias.
- *Demonstrates a rationale*—demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of the intervention.

Some programs and funding streams allow the use of all four levels; others, notably the set-aside for low-performing schools in Title I, do not allow the use of the fourth level of evidence. See ESSA and other resource documents listed in section 5 for additional information on these levels of evidence.

Beyond defining four levels of acceptable evidence, the law provides states with more flexibility and authority, compared to what was allowed under No Child Left Behind.[iii] Regarding how states and districts handle selecting and implementing interventions, §200.21 of ESSA requires a state to review and approve each comprehensive support and improvement plan in a timely manner. Further, the regulations require the state education agency (SEA) to monitor and periodically review each local education agency (LEA)'s implementation of its plan. §200.23(c)(2) allows a state to establish an exhaustive or non-exhaustive list of state-approved, evidence-based interventions for use in schools implementing comprehensive or targeted support and improvement plans.

The provisions in ESSA also lend themselves to the use of an iterative, continuous improvement process. The law specifies that states are to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of interventions carried out under several federal grant programs (e.g., ESSA, 2015, Section 4624[10]). Finally, regulations of ESSA (24 C.F.R. § 200.23, 2016) require states to evaluate the effects of evidence-based interventions on student achievement and other outcomes, and to disseminate the results of those evaluations to LEAs. The intention of these requirements is to expand the evidence base for interventions, including studies in a variety of contexts.

Section 5 of this guide includes sources of further information about ESSA and its evidence provisions.

Framework for Using Evidence in a Continuous Improvement Process

The five-part continuous improvement framework described in this guide (see figure 1 on page 8) brings together two important ideas: (1) decisions should be based on data and evidence, and (2) a continuous improvement process is fundamental to engaging in and sustaining improvements in school and district practice. ESSA provides SEAs with opportunities to establish and support authentic continuous improvement processes.[iv] Accordingly, the framework deliberately outlines school and district improvement as a continuous, systemic, and cyclical process. This guide is meant to support the use of evidence in making decisions that are nested within this framework of a continuous improvement process, an ongoing process that is larger than any isolated decisions that schools or districts make to improve their practice.

> "A continuous improvement process starts with the problem, rather than the solution."

The literature on decision-making in education reveals an array of factors that often influence decisions, including popular trends, political considerations, and the networks and information sources with which decisionmakers are connected.[v] ESSA and, more generally, the evidence-based decision-making movement emphasize the importance of evidence in informing decisions. Knowing and building on what has worked in the past, and specifically for whom and in what circumstances, offers a better chance of success in the future.

However, overfocusing on the decision itself can perpetuate a “magic bullet” concept of improvement: the fact that a program produces positive outcomes on average does not mean that it will do so in every case. Deciding to implement a particular approach must be preceded by a thorough assessment of needs and hypotheses about the causes of issues and problems, to determine if a proposed program or practice is really appropriate and what adaptations may be necessary, and it must be followed by careful implementation and analysis of local outcomes.

> “Using data and evidence keeps the improvement process guided toward the desired outcomes.”

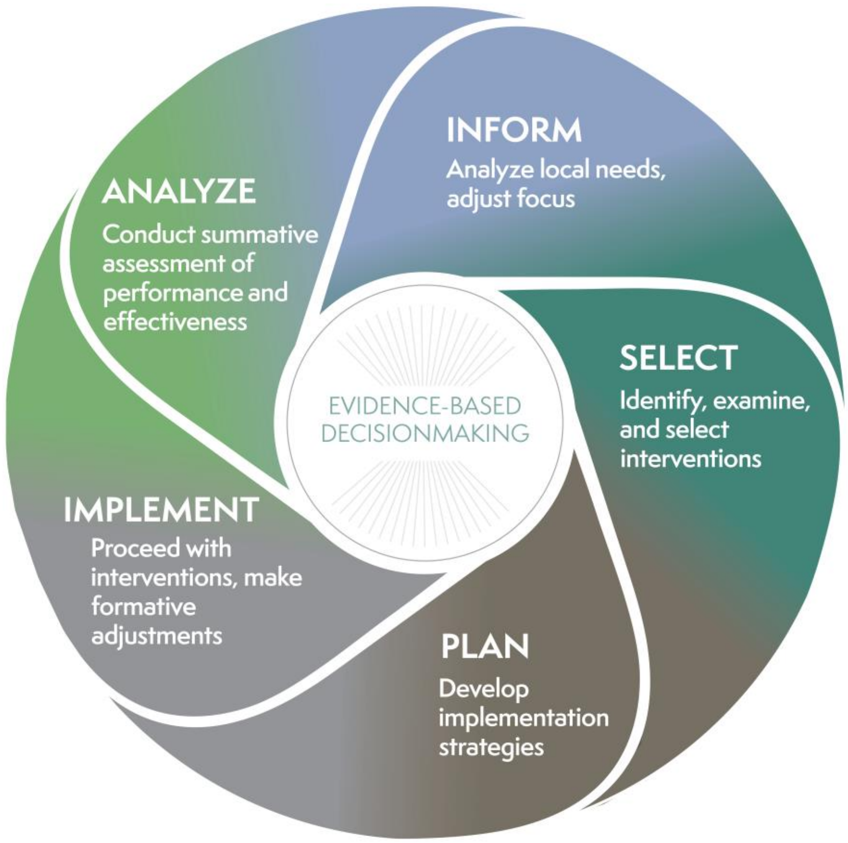
A continuous improvement process starts with the problem, rather than the solution.[vi] It includes addressing a discrete issue or problem by systematically testing potential solutions while tracking well-defined and measurable goals. The process is meant to be iterative—data are collected, analyzed, and discussed frequently so that adjustments can be made to the intervention or program, and then data are collected and analyzed once again. In addition, the scale of the initial effort often begins small and expands over time as the intervention is refined. Using this process, schools and districts often start with a pilot intervention or activity and expand it as the fit to local conditions is better understood.

Continuous improvement cultivates a problem-solving orientation and close observation of the system that is producing the outcomes.[vii] This orientation is important to sustained improvement, especially when more than one change may be needed. Using data and evidence keeps the improvement process guided toward the desired outcomes.

> “Evidence-based decision-making and reflection are the core of the entire continuous improvement process and are used in each step.”

The framework of five fundamental steps shown in figure 1 conveys the elements that are present in every strong continuous improvement process. These steps mirror those in the ED guidance of September 2016, with some differences in terminology. It is not our intent to suggest that all models must use these same five steps—some versions of continuous improvement processes include more or fewer steps—but the five steps shown in figure 1 convey the intent of a full cycle. Resources for more information about continuous improvement processes can be found in section 5 of this guide.

Figure 1. Evidence-Based Improvement



Evidence-based decision-making and reflection are the core of the entire continuous improvement process and are used in each step. The steps overlap, with each leading into the next, so that, for example, the Analyze step begins before the Implement step is completed; the color shading in figure 1 is intended to communicate this point.

The remainder of this section briefly summarizes each step. The descriptions and guiding questions in the ED guidance of September 2016 are another source of input. Tools 1 and 2 (in section 4 of this guide) are designed for SEAs and LEAS to reflect on how these steps may occur in their respective models.

Step 1: Inform—The first step is to analyze the needs of the education setting, in order to inform subsequent steps, particularly decisions that are made in step 2. Needs are analyzed by using input from as many stakeholders as possible: leadership, staff, parents and other community members, and students. The needs assessment data are used to identify and prioritize gaps in the educational setting, whether they are programmatic or service- or staff-related. Well-defined and measurable goals are developed from a careful analysis of these needs and gaps, and from hypotheses about which factors in the current situation might be causing problems and impeding attainment of desired outcomes.

Step 2: Select—This step involves identifying, examining, and selecting effective programs or practices for the intended setting and population(s). The step might start with searching clearinghouses of evidence-based interventions, such as the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), which has reviewed the research on many interventions (see section 5 for additional clearinghouses to consider). States may then suggest or require specific interventions, depending on local policies, from lists of evidence-based interventions. In addition, states may want to disseminate research on local interventions that has not yet been included in national clearinghouses, but they should first obtain an assessment of the rigor of the research. RELs can help provide these assessments. See section 5 for REL contact information. Careful attention to the quality of both individual research studies and the body of evidence on an intervention is needed.

Selection also includes taking stock of the specific context and educational environment(s) in which an intervention will be implemented, including the student population and the local capacity, resources, and strategic plans. What works in one place will not necessarily work in another. The results of this step provide the specifics needed to develop detailed implementation plans.

Step 3: Plan—In this step, a detailed implementation plan is developed for the selected interventions, to specify who will implement the interventions, when, and with what support. Planners determine what core features are needed for implementation with fidelity, and what adaptations may be needed. Also, necessary materials, technical assistance, and professional development for the actual implementation are either developed or contracted. Plans for analysis and/or evaluation are drafted, and data are collected to monitor progress.

Step 4: Implement—This step involves carrying out the intervention on a small or large scale, depending on the maturity of the intervention. Educators might start small (e.g., a single class in a grade; one grade in a school; one school in a district) and then expand later. It is important for this step to include the collection and examination of implementation data for formative feedback and improvement. Educators will need to ensure that the interventions are being implemented as was planned in the previous step, and will need to correct problems (e.g., teachers not participating in the intended level of professional development) and document any promising adaptations that might be informative to others. Implementation is continually assessed in this step, through an iterative process, until the intervention is being delivered in a stable way.

Step 5: Analyze—In this step, data are collected about longer-term changes in primary outcomes. If there is progress toward the goals, the intervention can be continued and expanded when appropriate. If not, a new or additional strategy may be needed. As laid out in the ED guidance of September 2016, this step may involve progress monitoring—tracking trends in outcomes over time. Or, if an intervention is stable enough, a rigorous evaluation of impact may be appropriate. Finally, the findings from this step can be communicated outward; therefore, the entire community can benefit, as reflected in the ESSA requirement that states share evaluation information.

Section 3: Making the Most of This Guide

Overall Use

This guide includes initial considerations and a starter set of tools to help state education agencies (SEAs) as they:

1) make explicit how they currently support local education agencies (LEAs) in evidence-based improvement;
2) reflect on that support to ensure that it is appropriately aligned with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) expectations and opportunities; and
3) consider actions to enhance their support.

Some tools in the guide are designed for LEAs, with similar purposes of explication, reflection, and enhancement.

Completion of the tools should not be a goal in and of itself; use of this guide is not a checklist exercise. Instead, we encourage using the tools as conversation starters. Working through the various prompts in the tools creates artifacts or documentation of these conversations, which can lead to further discussion.

"Completion of the tools should not be a goal in and of itself; use of this guide is not a checklist exercise. Instead, we encourage using the tools as conversation starters."

The set of tools provided in this guide does not address every step of the improvement process outlined in section 2. The first two tools support examination of the whole evidence-based improvement cycle; the other four tools focus on the second step of the improvement process shown in figure 1 on page 8 (Select). Several ESSA-derived considerations are particularly relevant to this second step. An SEA may want to start with tool 1, the inventory of current practice in evidence-based improvement, and then consider when and how to use the other tools, either as an SEA or with LEAs. The tools are designed so that each may be used as a stand-alone activity. However, greater benefit can likely be derived by using the tools in combination.

We encourage cross-agency teams of SEA staff to work through this guide together, so that the state's approach includes the different perspectives, needs, and roles across all of the SEA programs or departments that are involved in school improvement efforts. This approach is an opportunity to invite and engage multiple staff who can move the work forward.[viii] Each SEA will likely have a leadership team or designated lead for ESSA planning, including planning around the evidence-based provisions. This leadership group may want to identify key stakeholders across the agency, share this guide with them, and identify a first tool for the group to work with together.

Additionally, several of the tools (tools 2, 4, 5, and 6) are designed so that they may be used by LEAs. Therefore, similar to the SEA process, LEAs may want to identify a cross-district team to work with the tools and, if appropriate, engage with their SEA or intermediary service provider.

The tools are available as Word documents so that they can be modified to fit local needs and contexts. For example, an SEA may want to engage LEAs in reviewing the evidence-based improvement process at the local level (tool 2), but may want to first make changes in the tool 2 form to reflect the state's own framework and terminology. The tools are intended to encourage evidence-based improvement, not to require the particular language or structure used in the framework in this guide. To access the Word versions of the tools go to: http://www.wested.org/evidence-based-improvement-essa-guide-tools-for-states.

Overview of Tools

This section provides a brief description of each tool and expected outcomes of using each tool. Each tool provided in section 4 includes a description of purpose, intended outcome (also listed in table 2 below), materials needed, recommended participants, time commitment, detailed instructions, guidelines for leading conversations, and possible modifications or variations.

Tool 1: SEA Inventory of Current Practice—This tool is designed to guide an SEA team to make explicit the state's framework for improvement planning and how the SEA currently supports LEAs in making evidence-based decisions within that framework, and to reflect on whether this support meets the ESSA requirements and expectations. This tool can help SEAs to identify needed changes or adjustments to the structure of an SEA's evidence-based continuous improvement process, in order to ensure that the process is comprehensive and incorporates research or data throughout. The tool can aid in identifying priorities and necessary resources (time, funding, personnel), as well as methods of communicating with LEAs and stakeholders about needed changes.

Tool 2: LEA Inventory of Current Practice—Similar to tool 1, this tool is designed to help SEAs and their intermediary technical assistance networks to guide LEA teams to make explicit the LEA's framework for improvement planning and how the LEA currently supports its schools in making evidence-based decisions within that framework, and to reflect on whether this support meets the ESSA requirements and expectations. An LEA may decide to work independently on this tool after the SEA has provided initial direction. This tool can help identify needed changes or adjustments to the structure of an LEA's evidence-based continuous improvement process, in order to ensure that the process is comprehensive and incorporates research or data throughout. The tool can aid in identifying priorities and necessary resources (time, funding, personnel), as well as methods of communicating with schools and stakeholders about needed changes.

Tool 3: SEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions—This tool will assist SEAs in defining or delineating their approaches to guiding LEAs in selecting evidence-based interventions. The SEA's approach may include selecting specific interventions (e.g., a list that LEAs might choose from) or compiling resources (e.g., a list of resources that LEAs may explore to identify interventions).

Tool 4: LEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions—Similar to tool 3, this tool focuses on specific guidance from the district to its schools with regard to selecting evidence-based interventions.

Tool 5: Intervention Evidence Review—This tool is designed to assist SEAs, LEAs, or schools as they review research on interventions that target a specific issue, problem, or outcome. By completing this tool, the user can assess the levels of evidence for a specific intervention under consideration for selection (based on the evidence definitions in ESSA and nonregulatory guidance).

Tool 6: Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions—This tool is designed for SEAs, LEAs, or schools to compare how different evidence-based interventions align with the context of a specific district or school. This tool can be used after completing tool 5, or without completing tool 5 if users already have sufficient information about the levels of evidence for specific interventions under consideration for selection. Completing this tool provides the user with this information across different interventions that target the same problem, issue, or outcome. Reviewing the information in the inventory will help in selecting an evidence-based intervention appropriate for the user's context. This tool should be thought of as a guide, and, as such, the importance of the questions in this tool may vary for different users.

Table 2. Expected Outcomes of Tools

#	Tool Title	Outcome
1	SEA Inventory of Current Practice	Identification of gaps in the SEA continuous improvement process
2	LEA Inventory of Current Practice	Identification of gaps in the LEA continuous improvement process
3	SEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions	Guidance for LEAs on selecting interventions (e.g., from a list or vetting process)

#	Tool Title	Outcome
4	LEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions	Guidance for schools on selecting interventions (e.g., from a list or vetting process)
5	Intervention Evidence Review	A summary of the body of evidence for an intervention
6	Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions	A summary of the feasibility of implementing an intervention in the local context

Examples of Uses

SEAs and/or LEAs can use many potential combinations of tools, depending on the SEA's and/or LEA's goals and context. This section provides a few examples of possible scenarios for using the tools in this guide.

SEAs and LEAs Partner on Using Tools 1-6 to Build Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision-making—An SEA wants to help build the capacity of its lowest-performing LEAs in using evidence for decision-making. The SEA's School Improvement division works with a group of the 10 lowest-performing LEAs in a cohort improvement academy. After using tool 1 to document its overall continuous improvement framework and tool 3 to draft its approach to selecting interventions, the School Improvement team shares the results of these tools with the LEAs in the academy. During an academy session, the SEA introduces tools 2 and 4. Before their next academy session, LEAs will work through tools 2 and 4 on their own and submit the results to the SEA for feedback. In subsequent academy sessions, teams of LEAs will work together to complete tools 5 and 6 for a set of interventions that they are interested in assessing. The LEAs share the results of their inquiry with schools and encourage them to use some combination of identified interventions that meet the school's particular context and needs.

SEA Uses Tools 3, 5, and 6 to Update Intervention List—An SEA with a previously devised list of interventions would like to update and revise its list in light of ESSA requirements. After using tool 3 and reaffirming that the SEA wants to provide a list of interventions to LEAs, the SEA research team uses tools 5 and 6 to assess existing and possible interventions and shares the updated intervention list with LEAs and schools.

SEA Cross-Agency Collaboration on Using Tools 1 and 3 to Inform LEA Plan Submission—A cross-agency team of SEA leaders who work with Title I, Title II, and Title IV funds wants to devise an agencywide approach to evidence-based interventions, to inform LEA plan submission. Each department leader completes tool 1 for his or her department, and, with the support of the SEA's Regional Comprehensive Center, all of the department leaders come together to compare their tool 1 results and collectively complete tool 3. This cross-agency team shares the resulting framework from tool 1, and the approach defined in tool 3, with LEAs in a webinar. The SEA invites LEAs to complete the remaining tools in this guide (tools 2, 4, 5, and 6) on their own as preparation for their LEA plan submission.

SEA Uses Tools 1 and 3 to Devise Vetting Process for LEA Title I Plans—An SEA is unsure if it wants to create a list or a vetting process for LEA plans related to the use of Title I funds. The SEA team completes tool 1 and tool 3, deciding that it will not provide a list of interventions. Instead, the SEA will share a vetting process with LEAs, outlining the criteria that the SEA will use to approve LEA plans. To support LEAs in its region, a county office of education creates a working group of LEAs who are interested in using tools 5 and 6 to assess the body of evidence for a set of interventions. The county office contacts its local REL for assistance. Some of the LEAs in this group use tool 2 and tool 4 and, as a result, decide to share a list of interventions with their schools. Other LEAs share resources for vetting possible interventions at the school level; they are particularly interested in tool 6, which guides thinking about implementation in the local context.

Preparation

For this guide to be most useful, we recommend that you begin by building deep understanding, not only of the new ESSA legislation but also of the implications of ESSA for your state agency. Specifically, consider what changes may need to be made to your state's theory of action around school improvement and related systems of support. Therefore, before delving into the tools, spend some time becoming familiar with the evidence guidance provided for ESSA and with the specific requirements of your state's programs and funding sources. Section 5 contains a number of references and links for more information on this guidance and requirements.

The state context is also an important consideration. State policies may set requirements for evidence use, or for school improvement and accountability, that shape the state's framework, or that use particular language that local educators will find familiar. Preparation for using the tools in this guide should include gathering materials or including SEA participants in the process who are well versed in the relevant state context.

General Facilitation

Although it is not required, a skilled facilitator should be engaged to help guide an SEA team through the tools and resulting next steps. A facilitator can help participants examine assumptions, resolve differing viewpoints, and allow all team members to participate. SEAs may turn to the Regional Comprehensive Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories to engage a facilitator. The tools are not intended to be completed in a lock-step manner. Rather, they are designed to prompt and guide substantive conversations. Note, however, that if LEAs will be using some of the tools, it may be necessary to complete the SEA process before LEAs can begin. For example, an SEA may want to modify tool 2 to reflect the state's specific improvement framework before LEAs use it.

Working through the prompts in the tools should result in artifacts that inform next steps in a continuous improvement process. While each tool includes specific details for facilitating conversations, following is a set of general facilitation recommendations to guide the use of all of the tools:

- Engage a facilitator.
- Gather and organize materials and other documentation to inform and support the process of using the tools; consider a central filing system (electronic and/or hard copy as appropriate).
- Develop a reasonable timeline for working through the tools and follow-up activities (e.g., weekly sessions over a two-month period, or two full-day sessions over the course of two weeks) as well as for conducting progress reviews.
- Set norms and expectations for how the group will interact, including in consensus building and decision-making.
- Ensure common understanding of the purpose and outcome of each of the tools. Allow adequate time for preparation before moving forward with the tools.
- Develop a common understanding of key words or phrases used in the tools.
- Focus on guiding meaningful dialogue by using the questions provided in each tool.
- Establish a comfortable space and work environment (e.g., room size, adequate supplies).
- Set manageable priorities, rather than “pie in the sky” ideals.
- Facilitate task management by identifying roles and responsibilities.
- Specify how the outcomes or products of a tool will be captured in an artifact; consider an online, editable document that group members can work on together.
- Determine what communication practices are needed to keep relevant stakeholders informed of progress and recommendations.

General Modifications or Variations

The tools can be used individually or in different combinations, as well as adapted to a state or local context. Examples of how states have used these tools will be collected and shared in the future. Following are some additional considerations for modifications or variations:

- For tools designed for LEAs, SEAs might provide guidance or training for LEA staff to use the tool on their own, or might identify organizations in the state system of support, or intermediate agencies such as counties or regional offices, that might work with the SEA to facilitate local discussions.
- Smaller LEAs with fewer department-level staff may need to think differently about who should participate. Because these tools are designed to be a structured conversation, having a team increases the diversity of ideas and, thus, the value of the tool. Smaller or rural LEAs could include site administrators and/or teacher leaders. LEAs could collaborate with other districts or county office staff to build teams that reflect different experiences and expertise.

- Consider the value of accessing and reviewing graphics/models and other information from multiple departments, states, or organizations to inform the work.
- If multiple programs or departments are working together on a given tool, consider having each program or department complete the tool separately and then using a consensus-building process to share, compare, and come to agreement.
- Questions in a given tool may be skipped or refined, or questions may be added, to fit a specific context. In other words, modify the tool(s) to fit the context.

Section 4: Tools

This section includes six tools, as follows:

- **Tool 1: SEA Inventory of Current Practice**
- **Tool 2: LEA Inventory of Current Practice**
- **Tool 3: SEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions**
- **Tool 4: LEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions**
- **Tool 5: Intervention Evidence Review**
- **Tool 6: Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions**

Tool 1: SEA Inventory of Current Practice

Purpose

To help state education agency (SEA) staff members be explicit about the SEA's process for engaging with local education agencies (LEAs) in evidence-based improvement planning and decision-making, and the support the SEA provides for effective use of the process; identify gaps or needed changes to strengthen the model or framework; and prioritize next steps.

Outcome

The discussions prompted by this tool will lead to a plan of action to address gaps and ensure that the state's process for supporting LEAs is evidence-based and is aligned with ESSA requirements. The completed tool will also serve as an artifact of discussions and decisions.

Materials

In preparation, gather guides, graphics, and other documentation that describe your state's processes for improvement planning, monitoring, decision-making, and related activities.

Who Should Be Involved

Staff who oversee the state's improvement efforts are key participants in working through this tool. Those involved should have substantive knowledge of the relevant federal programs and requirements. Participants may include multiple staff from one program or department, or, ideally, staff from multiple programs and offices, in order to support alignment across the agency.

Time

Set aside 1–2 hours for each step, or longer (3 or more hours) if multiple programs or departments are working together. This time can be spaced out over several weeks, with breaks between steps to reflect or to gather additional information to inform the subsequent step(s).

Instructions Overview (detailed instructions are provided with each step)

- ❖ Step 1: Get organized, including identifying roles and responsibilities, gathering materials, establishing a schedule, and reviewing documentation.
- ❖ Step 2: Describe the context of your SEA's process for engaging with LEAs in evidence-based improvement planning and decision-making, and for providing support to the LEAs in this process.
- ❖ Step 3: Map the steps of your improvement process to the steps of the recommended process (described in section 2 of this guide) and identify any gaps or needed changes in order for your state's process to incorporate the elements of the recommended process.
- ❖ Step 4: Identify the supports offered to LEAs (e.g., webinar, guidebook, training, side-by-side coaching, regional forums); the timing or sequence (e.g., specific dates, or times of the year, such as fall or spring); and any gaps or needed changes (e.g., redundancies, timing issues, lack of resources) in order for the SEA's process to incorporate the elements of the recommended process.
- ❖ Step 5: Review your inventory of current practice (steps 2–4), select priority areas to address, and describe next steps. Develop an action plan.

Leading the Conversation

- ❖ One outcome of this conversation is to build a common understanding of an evidence-based framework that will drive improvement work. Especially in steps 2, 3, and 4, be aware that participants will likely have different backgrounds and experiences through which they view the framework and how it is implemented. While participants may seem to agree, it will be important to regularly check for understanding. Ask participants to repeat what they heard. Paraphrase contributions to ensure that your understanding is accurate. Regularly ask participants if they have questions.
- ❖ For step 3, consider having copies of the continuous improvement framework from section 2 of this guide, including the descriptions of each element of the process, available. Being able to compare the state's recommended framework with this guide's framework will inform the conversation about alignment and possible gaps.

Modifications or Variations

- ❖ For step 3, consider using this tool in two phases. In the first phase, focus exclusively on the model or framework for improvement planning for your state and on identifying its strengths and areas for needed adjustments. In the second phase, revisit each of your steps and delve deeper into how the use of evidence and data is infused in your planning framework. Is this use of evidence an explicit activity, such as requiring certain data in a needs assessment or requiring an evidence base for interventions? What decisions does it inform? Are relevant data readily available? Are there adequate supports built in? You might consider modifying the provided table by adding a column to capture details about the use of evidence or data.

STEP 1: Get Organized

Take time to get organized and build your knowledge base by gathering necessary materials and building a well-informed team to complete subsequent steps. Things to consider:

Who is involved? Identify which departments or programs should be represented; then identify the individuals who will participate in this work. What are their respective roles and responsibilities in the group (e.g., note taker, facilitator)?

Department or Program	Name	Contact Information	Role/Responsibility

What do we need to know? Gather and organize documents and other materials that describe the planning and related support processes to LEAs. Consider the value of having graphics or models from sources other than your own department or program. Review documentation and ensure that all participants have strong foundational knowledge of the information. Does everyone have a common understanding of the subject matter (e.g., state improvement framework, ESSA requirements, evidence-based interventions)?

Document or Material (title, description, source)	Why It Is Important (what everyone should know)

Attend to logistics. What will the meeting schedule be? Where will you meet? What materials do you need (e.g., chart paper, sticky notes)?

Notes

STEP 2: Describe Context

Briefly describe the context of your SEA's process for engaging with LEAs in evidence-based improvement planning and decision-making, and for providing support to the LEAs in this process. Questions to consider:

- What model or framework have you defined that guides this work with LEAs?
- What services, resources, or other supports are you required to provide to LEAs (e.g., based on funding or other programmatic requirements)?
- How is evidence-based decision-making part of this process? Where does it fit in?
- What is produced as a result of going through the improvement planning process?

Briefly Describe Your Improvement Planning and Decision-making Processes

STEP 3: Map Current Process

The first column of the table below outlines the five steps of a recommended evidence-based improvement process, including key decision-making elements (full descriptions of each step are provided in section 2 of this guide). In the second column, map the steps in your state's improvement process for LEAs to the steps in the recommended process. Be sure to include how each step uses evidence. Note that there may be more than one step in your process for each step in the recommended process (e.g., the Inform step of the recommended process might include both "Needs Assessment" and "Goal Development" from your state's process). In the third column, identify any gaps or needed changes in order for your state's process to incorporate the elements of the recommended process. Questions to consider:

- Does your state's process address all of the steps in the recommended process? If not, what are the gaps?
- How is the use of research or data integral to each step of the continuous improvement process? That is, how is each step designed so that it must be successfully completed by incorporating research or data?
- How does your model reinforce a continuous (cyclical) process?

Continuous Improvement Steps	Your Improvement Process Steps	Gaps or Possible Changes
Inform: Analyze local needs; adjust focus.		
Select: Identify, examine, and select evidence-based interventions.		
Plan: Develop implementation strategies, adjust for local context.		
Implement: Proceed with improvement interventions; make formative adjustments.		
Analyze: Conduct summative assessment of performance and effectiveness.		

STEP 4: Identify Current Supports

In the table below, identify the supports that your SEA offers (e.g., webinar, guidebook, training, side-by-side coaching, regional forums) to build LEA capacity in each of the five steps of a continuous improvement process. List the supports in chronological or sequential order and indicate which of the steps each support relates to. In the last column, indicate whether the resource supports or incorporates the use of evidence or data to inform decisions. After filling in the table, review what you have listed and identify gaps or needed changes (e.g., redundancies, timing issues, lack of resources). Questions to consider:

- Do the supports that you provide address all of the steps? Is the timing or sequence appropriate?
- Are the supports strong enough to allow LEAs to navigate the process independently, or is additional direct support from the SEA or from intermediaries still required?
- How effective are the supports, and what seems to make them effective? How do you know?
- Does everyone who needs support receive it?
- Are there adequate supports for the use of evidence or data to inform decisions?

Timing or Sequence	Specific Support Provided	Inform	Select	Plan	Implement	Analyze	Evidence?

Gaps or Needed Changes

STEP 5: Identify Priorities and Next Steps

Review the results of your inventory of current practice (steps 2–4), select priority areas to address, and describe next steps, including action items, persons responsible, and due dates. Questions to consider:

- What changes in the structure of your evidence-based continuous improvement process need to be made in order to include each step of the recommended continuous improvement process, and to incorporate research or data throughout the process? (See the results captured in the step 3 chart.)
- What can you change, add, or remove in order to have the biggest impact?
- What changes in support might be most beneficial? (See the results captured in the step 4 chart.)
- What resources (time, funding, personnel) will you need?
- How will you communicate any changes to others in the SEA, to state support providers, and to LEAs?

Priority Areas to Address

Next Steps

Tool 2: LEA Inventory of Current Practice

Purpose

To help local education agency (LEA) staff members be explicit about the LEA's process for engaging with its schools in evidence-based improvement planning and decision-making, and the support the LEA provides for effective use of the process; identify gaps or needed changes to strengthen the LEA's model or framework; and prioritize next steps.

Outcome

The discussions prompted by this tool will lead to a plan of action to address gaps and ensure the LEA's process is evidence-based and is aligned with ESSA requirements and with the state's process. The completed tool will also serve as an artifact of discussions and decisions.

Materials

In preparation, gather guides, graphics, and other documentation that describe and provide support for your district's processes for improvement planning, monitoring, decision-making, and related activities.

Who Should Be Involved

Staff who oversee the district's improvement efforts should be involved in working through this tool. Those involved should have substantive knowledge of the relevant federal programs and requirements. Participants may include multiple staff from one program or department, or, ideally, staff from multiple programs and offices, in order to support alignment across the LEA.

Time

Set aside 1–2 hours for each step, or longer (3 or more hours) if multiple programs or departments are working together. This time can be spaced out over several weeks, with breaks between steps to reflect or to gather additional information to inform the subsequent step(s).

Instructions Overview (detailed instructions are provided with each step)

- Step 1: Get organized, including identifying roles and responsibilities, gathering materials, establishing a schedule, and reviewing documentation.
- Step 2: Describe the context of your LEA's process for engaging with schools in evidence-based improvement planning and decision-making, and for providing support to the schools in this process.
- Step 3: Map the steps of your improvement process to the steps of the recommended process (described in section 2 of this guide) and identify any gaps or needed changes in order for your district's process to incorporate the elements of the recommended process.
- Step 4: Identify the supports offered to schools (e.g., webinar, guidebook, training, side-by-side coaching, regional forums); the timing or sequence (e.g., specific dates or times of the year, such as fall or spring); and any gaps or needed changes (e.g., redundancies, timing issues, lack of resources) in order for your district's process to incorporate the elements of the recommended process.
- Step 5: Review your inventory of current practice (steps 2–4), select priority areas to address, and describe next steps. Develop an action plan.

Leading the Conversation

- One outcome of this conversation is to build a common understanding of an evidence-based framework that will drive improvement work. Especially in steps 2, 3, and 4, be aware that participants will likely have different backgrounds and experiences through which they view the framework and how it is implemented. While participants may seem to agree, it will be important to regularly check for understanding. Ask participants to repeat what they heard. Paraphrase contributions to ensure that your understanding is accurate. Encourage participant questions.
- For step 3, consider having copies of the continuous improvement framework from section 2 of this guide, including the descriptions of each element of the process, available. Being able to compare the district's recommended framework with this guide's framework will inform the conversation about alignment and possible gaps.

Modifications or Variations

- For step 3, consider using this tool in two phases. In the first phase, focus exclusively on your LEA framework for improvement planning and on identifying strengths and areas for needed adjustments. In the second phase, revisit your framework and delve deeper into how the use of evidence and data is infused throughout. Is this use of evidence an explicit activity such as requiring certain data in a needs assessment or requiring an evidence base for interventions? Are relevant data readily available? Are there adequate supports built in? You might consider modifying the provided table by adding a column to capture details about the use of evidence or data.

STEP 1: Get Organized

Take time to get organized and build your knowledge base by gathering necessary materials and building a well-informed team to complete subsequent steps. Things to consider:

Who is involved? Identify which departments or programs should be represented; then identify the individuals who will participate in this work. What are their respective roles and responsibilities in the group (e.g., note taker, facilitator)?

Department or Program	Name	Contact Information	Role/Responsibility

What do we need to know? Gather and organize documents and other materials that describe the planning and related support processes to schools in your district. Consider the value of having graphics or models from sources other than your own department or program. Review documentation and ensure that all participants have strong foundational knowledge of the information. Does everyone have a common understanding of the subject matter (e.g., SEA and LEA improvement frameworks, ESSA requirements, evidence-based interventions)?

Document or Material (title, description, source)	Why It Is Important (what everyone should know)

Attend to logistics. What will the meeting schedule be? Where will you meet? What materials do you need (e.g., chart paper, sticky notes)?

Notes

STEP 2: Describe Context

Briefly describe the context of your process for engaging with schools in evidence-based improvement planning and decision-making, and for providing support to schools. Questions to consider:

- What model or framework have you defined that guides this work with schools?
- What services, resources, or other supports are you required to provide to schools (e.g., based on funding or other programmatic requirements)?
- How is evidence-based decision-making part of this process? Where does it fit in?
- What is produced as a result of going through the improvement planning process?

Briefly Describe Your Improvement Planning and Decision-making Processes

STEP 3: Map Current Process

The first column of the table below outlines the five steps of a recommended evidence-based improvement process, including key decision-making elements (full descriptions of each step are provided in section 2 of this guide). In the second column, map the steps in your district's improvement process for schools to steps in the recommended process. Be sure to include how each step uses evidence. Note that there may be more than one step in your process for each step in the recommended process (e.g., the Inform step of the recommended process might include both "Needs Assessment" and "Goal Development" from your district's process). In the third column, identify any gaps or needed changes in order for your district's process to incorporate the elements of the recommended process. Questions to consider:

- Does your district's process address all of the steps in the recommended process? If not, what are the gaps?
- Does your district's process address all of the steps in your state's process, if applicable? If not, what are the gaps?
- How is the use of research or data integral to each step of the continuous improvement process? That is, how is each step designed so that it must be successfully completed by incorporating research or data?
- How does your model reinforce a continuous (cyclical) process?

Continuous Improvement Steps	Your Improvement Process Steps	Gaps or Possible Changes
Inform: Analyze local needs; adjust focus.		
Select: Identify, examine, and select evidence-based interventions.		
Plan: Develop implementation strategies, adjust for local context.		
Implement: Proceed with improvement interventions; make formative adjustments.		
Analyze: Conduct summative assessment of performance and effectiveness.		

STEP 4: Identify Current Supports

In the table below, identify the supports that your LEA offers (e.g., webinar, guidebook, training, side-by-side coaching, regional forums) to build school capacity in each of the five steps of a continuous improvement process. List the supports in chronological or sequential order and indicate which of the steps each support relates to. Include any supports provided by the state or by intermediary organizations. In the last column, indicate whether the resource supports or incorporates the use of evidence or data to inform decisions. After filling in the table, review what you have listed and identify gaps or needed changes (e.g., redundancies, timing issues, lack of resources). Questions to consider:

- Do the supports that you provide address all of the steps? Is the timing or sequence appropriate?
- How do your supports leverage state supports?
- Are the supports strong enough to allow schools to navigate the process independently, or is additional direct support from the district or from intermediaries still required?
- How effective are the supports, and what seems to make them effective? How do you know?
- Does everyone who needs support receive it?
- Are there adequate supports for the use of evidence or data to inform decisions?

Timing or Sequence	Specific Support Provided	Inform	Select	Plan	Implement	Analyze	Evidence?

Gaps or Needed Changes

STEP 5: Identify Priorities and Next Steps

Review the results of your inventory of current practice (steps 2–4), select priority areas to address, and describe next steps, including action items, persons responsible, and due dates. Questions to consider:

- What changes in the structure of your evidence-based continuous improvement process need to be made in order to include each step of the recommended continuous improvement process (or, alternatively, align with the state's process), and to incorporate research or data throughout the process? (See the results capture in the step 3 chart.)
- What can you change, add, or remove in order to have the biggest impact?
- What changes in support might be most beneficial? (See the step 4 chart.)
- What resources (time, funding, personnel) will you need?
- How will you communicate any changes to others in the district, to support providers (e.g., intermediaries, state support providers), and to schools?

Priority Areas to Address

Next Steps

Tool 3: SEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions

Purpose

To help state education agencies (SEAs) define its approach to guiding local education agencies (LEAs) in selecting evidence-based interventions.

Outcome

Completing this tool will result in a clearly defined and well-delineated approach to working with LEAs to select evidence-based interventions.

Materials

In preparation, gather ESSA requirements and resources that help interpret ESSA requirements that are relevant to your program or department (see section 5 of this guide for suggested resources); relevant policy, guidance, and feedback on your SEA's role in school and district improvement decision-making; and information on capacity and staff availability.

Who Should Be Involved

SEA staff who oversee school and district support efforts, and those who administer or oversee the interventions that are relevant to your program/department, should be involved in working through this tool. Those involved should have substantive knowledge of SEA support efforts and requirements. Participants may include staff from one program or department, or, ideally, staff from multiple programs and offices, to support alignment across the agency. SEA research and evaluation staff would also help inform the approach to supporting schools and districts in selecting evidence-based interventions. It would be difficult to complete this tool without the input of individuals with strong quantitative research expertise, particularly with regard to how an SEA's research capacity may influence the SEA's approach.

Time

Set aside 1–2 hours for each step, or longer (3 or more hours) if multiple programs or departments are working together. This time can be spaced out over several weeks, with breaks between steps to reflect or to gather additional information to inform the subsequent step(s).

Instructions Overview (detailed instructions are provided with each step)

- Step 1: Prepare for engaging in this activity with a cross-functional SEA team by organizing the team and materials.
- Step 2: Review the ESSA requirements for your specific program or funding stream, and summarize the main points.
- Step 3: Reflect on the role and capacity of your SEA in guiding LEAs to select evidence-based interventions.
- Step 4: Using the information that you summarized in previous steps, and some additional considerations, define your SEA's approach to guiding LEAs in selecting evidence-based interventions.
- Step 5: Begin planning by reviewing the results of your discussions and reflections, selecting implementation priorities, and describing next steps.

Leading the Conversation

- This tool is designed to help an SEA define only the guidance and support offered to LEAs in selecting evidence-based interventions – not guidance and support in how to implement and monitor those interventions. Step 2 is a good time to clarify this purpose, so that participants understand the scope of the conversation. Team members may become frustrated if they expect to do more but do not have sufficient time or prompts to accomplish these additional tasks.
- Especially if a more prescriptive approach to selecting interventions is chosen, it will be critical to communicate with LEAs early and often, so that they understand how and why decisions have been made. As part of steps 4 and 5, carefully consider what needs to be communicated, and when and how that information is best shared.

Modifications or Variations

- It may not be practical or appropriate for all team members to participate in each step or in all parts of a step. In step 1, for example, the organizers or facilitators might determine who will be involved and develop the meeting schedule, but the entire team might work together on gathering and reviewing documentation. Organizers and facilitators will have to determine what works best for their participants in their setting.
- Some SEA departments may choose different approaches than other departments, due to variations in ESSA requirements for their funding streams. If so, consider bringing the departments together, after completing this tool, to describe the overall SEA approach to supporting LEAs in selecting evidence-based interventions, and to determine how the overall and department-specific approaches will be communicated to LEAs.

STEP 1: Get Organized

Take time to get organized and build your knowledge base by gathering necessary materials and building a well-informed team to complete subsequent steps. Things to consider:

Who is involved? Identify which departments or programs should be represented; then identify the individuals who will participate in this work. What are their respective roles and responsibilities in the group (e.g., note taker, facilitator)?

Department or Program	Name	Contact Information	Role/Responsibility

What do we need to know? Gather and organize documents and other materials related to your SEA's current approach to supporting LEAs in selecting evidence-based interventions. Review policy guidance, feedback reports, or evaluations on the role and capacity of your SEA and/or department.

Document or Material (title, description, source)	Why It Is Important (what everyone should know)

Attend to logistics. What will the meeting schedule be? Where will you meet? What materials do you need (e.g., chart paper, sticky notes)?

Notes

STEP 2: Review ESSA Requirements

ESSA calls on SEAs to take an increased role in supporting, managing, and monitoring the implementation of evidence-based decision-making at the local level. This tool is focused on defining an SEA approach to guiding LEA selection of evidence-based interventions. This includes defining the level of specificity and prescriptiveness for how LEAs select these interventions. For example, the SEA might provide a specific list of interventions from which LEAs must choose, or develop a process for approving LEAs' decisions, or support an open-ended process to review LEAs' choices. For additional information related to ESSA provisions, see section 2, and the resources listed in section 5, of this guide.

As you review the ESSA requirements for your specific program or funding stream, consider the following questions:

- What element of your program or funding stream requires evidence-based interventions?
- What are the situations (e.g., high schools with low graduation rates) that trigger evidence-based interventions?
- What level of evidence is required for interventions in your program or funding stream?
- What is required in terms of SEA review and approval of plans for your program or funding stream? What are the implications for your SEA's role and capacity?

Notes: Review and Summarize the ESSA Requirements

STEP 3: Reflect on Your SEA's Role and Capacity to Engage with LEAs

What skills or knowledge do your SEA staff possess to guide LEAs in the process of selecting evidence-based interventions? What does your team need to consider about roles and capacity before defining an approach for selecting evidence-based interventions? Note that capacity encompasses a number of dimensions, from human capacity (Do you have the people to do it?) to organizational capacity (Do you have the processes and structures to guide this work?) and material capacity (Do you have the technology and necessary materials to support the work?). The following questions are intended to help guide your conversations with your SEA colleagues to determine your approach.

SEA Role

- How does our SEA's past practice or policy regarding the degree of centralized or local control impact how we choose to work with LEAs to select evidence-based interventions?
- How prescriptive do we want to be as a state agency?
- What authority does our SEA have under state laws, policies, and regulations?
- What have our past approaches to providing guidance to LEAs in other programs or funding streams been? What would we like to keep or change about how we approach providing guidance to LEAs? What changes do we need to make to align with ESSA requirements?

SEA Capacity

- What is our SEA's capacity to conduct or review and summarize research on the effectiveness of interventions? What resources outside of the SEA, such as our Regional Educational Laboratory, can assist us?
- What is our SEA's capacity to approve LEAs' approaches?
- What is our SEA's capacity to provide technical assistance to LEAs on selecting evidence-based interventions?
- What is our SEA's capacity to monitor LEAs' evidence-based intervention selection processes?

Summarize and Reflect on the Role and Capacity of Your SEA.

STEP 4: Define Your SEA's Approach

Considering the role and capacity of your SEA in selecting evidence-based interventions, what will your approach be under ESSA? Consider the following questions:

Clarify Your Approach

- Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind, what was our state's approach to guidance on selecting evidence-based interventions? What lessons did we learn about that approach that can be applied to our ESSA approach?
- How does our specific program or funding stream shape our approach?
- How does the timeline for planning or implementation within our specific program or funding stream affect our approach?
- Can additional information from our summaries in previous steps of this tool be used to influence how we will design our approach?
- Under what conditions would we differentiate our approach for LEAs?

Clarify Your Support

- What kinds of support will our SEA provide to help LEAs make local decisions around evidence-based interventions?
- How will we describe our approach to LEAs? How will we describe it to other departments within the SEA?
- What will our SEA produce to guide LEAs? A list of interventions to choose from, a guidance document that shares the criteria that the SEA will use to vet LEA plans, or something else?
- What resources—staffing, funding, and training—will be needed for following through on and sustaining our proposed approach?
- What are our immediate next steps?

Summarize your SEA's approach and the support that you will offer to LEAs in selecting evidence-based interventions.

STEP 5: Plan Next Steps

Review the results of your discussions and reflections, select implementation priorities, and describe next steps.

Implementation Priorities

Next Steps

Tool 4: LEA Guidance for Evidence-Based Interventions

Purpose

To help a local education agency (LEA) define its approach to guiding schools in selecting evidence-based interventions.

Outcome

Completing this tool will result in a clearly defined and well-delineated approach to working with schools to select evidence-based interventions.

Materials

In preparation, gather ESSA requirements and resources that help interpret ESSA requirements that are relevant to your program or department (see section 5 of this guide for some suggested resources); SEA guidance on evidence-based interventions; relevant policy, guidance, and feedback on your LEA's role in school improvement decision-making; and information on capacity and staffing availability.

Who Should Be Involved

LEA staff who oversee school support efforts and interventions should be involved in working through this tool. Those involved should have substantive knowledge of LEA support efforts and requirements. Participants may include multiple staff from one program or department, or, ideally, staff from multiple programs and offices, to support alignment across the LEA. If available, LEA research and evaluation staff with strong quantitative skills would also help inform the approach to selecting evidence-based interventions.

Time

Set aside 1–2 hours for each step, or longer (e.g., 3 or more hours) if multiple programs or departments are working together. This time can be spaced over several weeks, with breaks between steps to reflect or to gather additional information to inform subsequent steps.

Instructions Overview (detailed instructions are provided with each step)

- Step 1: Prepare for engaging in this activity with a cross-functional LEA team by organizing the team and materials.
- Step 2: Review the ESSA requirements for your specific program or funding stream, and summarize the main points.
- Step 3: Reflect on the role and capacity of your LEA in guiding schools to select evidence-based interventions.
- Step 4: Using the information that you summarized in previous steps, and some additional considerations, define your LEA's approach to guiding schools in selecting evidence-based interventions.
- Step 5: Begin planning by reviewing the results of your discussions and reflections, selecting implementation priorities, and describing next steps.

Leading the Conversation

- This tool is designed to help an LEA define only the guidance and support offered to schools in selecting evidence-based interventions—not guidance and support in how to implement and monitor those interventions. Step 2 is a good time to clarify this purpose, so that participants understand the scope of the conversation. Team members may become frustrated if they expect to do more but do not have sufficient time or prompts to accomplish these additional tasks.
- Especially if a more prescriptive approach to selecting interventions is chosen, it will be critical to communicate with schools early and often, so that they understand how and why decisions have been made. As part of steps 4 and 5, carefully consider what needs to be communicated, and when and how that information is best shared.

Modifications or Variations

- Depending on needs, capacity, and logistical considerations, this tool can be completed by an LEA independently or with SEA support.
- It may not be practical or appropriate for all team members to participate in each step or in all parts of a step. In step 1, for example, the organizers or facilitators might determine who will be involved and develop the meeting schedule, but the entire team might work together on gathering and reviewing documentation. Organizers and facilitators will have to determine what works best for their participants in their setting.
- Some LEA departments may choose different approaches than other departments, due to variations in ESSA requirements for their funding streams. If so, consider bringing departments together, after completing this tool, to describe the overall LEA approach to supporting schools in selecting evidence-based interventions, and to determine how the overall and department-specific approaches will be communicated to schools.

STEP 1: Get Organized

Take time to get organized and build your knowledge base by gathering necessary materials and building a well-informed team to complete subsequent steps. Things to consider:

Who is involved? Identify which departments or programs should be represented; then identify the individuals who will participate in this work. What are their respective roles and responsibilities in the group (e.g., note taker, facilitator)?

Department or Program	Name	Contact Information	Role/Responsibility

What do we need to know? Gather and organize documents and other materials related to your LEA's current approach to supporting schools in selecting evidence-based interventions. Review policy guidance, feedback reports, or evaluations on the role and capacity of your LEA and/or department.

Document or Material (title, description, source)	Why It Is Important (what everyone should know)

Attend to logistics. What will the meeting schedule be? Where will you meet? What materials do you need (e.g., chart paper, sticky notes)?

Notes

STEP 2: Review ESSA Requirements

ESSA calls on LEAs to take an increased role in supporting, managing, and monitoring the implementation of evidence-based decision-making at the local level. This tool is focused on defining an LEA approach to guiding schools' selection of evidence-based interventions. Under SEA guidance, and in alignment with SEA approaches, LEAs can define the level of specificity and prescriptiveness for how schools select these interventions. For example, the LEA might provide a specific list of interventions from which schools must choose, or develop a process for approving schools' decisions, or support an open-ended process to review schools' choices. For additional information related to ESSA provisions, see section 2, and the resources listed in section 5, of this guide.

As you review the ESSA requirements for your specific program or funding stream, consider the following questions:

- What element of your program or funding stream requires evidence-based interventions?
- What are the situations (e.g., high schools with low graduation rates) that trigger evidence-based interventions?
- What level of evidence is required for interventions in your program or funding stream?
- What is required in terms of SEA review and approval of plans for your program or funding stream? What are the implications for your LEA's role and capacity?

Review and Summarize the ESSA Requirements and SEA Guidance

STEP 3: Reflect on Your LEA's Role and Capacity to Engage with Schools

What skills or knowledge do your LEA staff possess to guide schools, with SEA support, in the process of selecting evidence-based interventions? What does your team need to consider about roles and capacity before defining an approach for selecting evidence-based interventions? Note that capacity encompasses a number of dimensions, from human capacity (Do you have the people to do it?) to organizational capacity (Do you have the processes and structures to guide this work?) and material capacity (Do you have the technology and necessary materials to support the work?). The following questions are intended to help guide your conversation with your SEA and LEA colleagues to determine your approach.

LEA Role

- How does our LEA's past practice or policy regarding the degree of centralized or local control impact how we choose to work with schools to select evidence-based interventions?
- How prescriptive do we want to be as a district? How prescriptive is our SEA?
- What authority does our LEA have under state laws, policies, and regulations?
- What have our past approaches to providing guidance to schools been? What would we like to keep or change about how we approach providing guidance to schools? What changes do we need to make to align with ESSA requirements?

LEA Capacity

- What is our LEA's capacity to conduct or review research on, and to assess evidence-based interventions? What resources outside of the LEA (e.g., SEA, Regional Educational Laboratory, county office of education, outside organizations) can support these efforts?
- What is our LEA's capacity to approve schools' approaches and to determine how those approaches fit within SEA guidelines?
- What is our LEA's capacity to provide technical assistance to schools on selecting evidence-based interventions? How is our capacity influenced by SEA processes?
- What is our LEA's capacity to monitor schools' evidence-based intervention selection processes? How is our capacity influenced by SEA processes?

Summarize Your Reflection on the Role and Capacity of Your LEA.

STEP 4: Define Your LEA's Approach

Considering the role and capacity of your LEA in selecting evidence-based interventions, what will your approach be under ESSA? Consider the following questions:

Clarify Your Approach

- Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind, what was our approach to guidance on selecting research-based or evidence-based interventions? What lessons did we learn about that approach that can be applied to our ESSA approach?
- How does our specific program or funding stream shape our approach?
- How does the timeline for planning or implementation within our specific program or funding stream affect our approach?
- Can additional information from our summaries in previous steps of this tool be used to influence how we will design our approach?
- How does the SEA approach influence our LEA approach?
- Under what conditions would we differentiate our approach for schools?

Clarify your support

- What kinds of support will our LEA provide to help schools make local decisions around evidence-based interventions?
- How will we describe our approach to schools? How will we describe it to other departments within the LEA? How will we describe it to the SEA?
- What will our LEA produce to guide schools? A list of interventions to choose from, a guidance document that shares the criteria that the LEA will use to vet schools' plans, or something else? How will SEA guidance and/or materials shape our guidance materials?
- What kinds of support will our LEA provide to help schools make local decisions around evidence-based interventions? How does this support reflect SEA support and guidance?
- What resources—staffing, funding, and training—will be needed for following through on and sustaining our proposed approach?
- What are our immediate next steps?

Summarize Your LEA's Approach to Guiding Schools in Selecting Evidence-based Interventions.

STEP 5: Plan Next Steps

Review the results of your discussions and reflections, select implementation priorities, and describe next steps.

Implementation Priorities

Next Steps

Tool 5: Intervention Evidence Review

Purpose

To help a state education agency (SEA), local education agency (LEA), or school review research on interventions, strategies, policies, practices, programs, or activities (collectively referred to, in this tool, as interventions) that target a specific issue, problem, or outcome.

Outcome

By completing this tool, the user can assess the entire body of evidence (based on the evidence definitions in ESSA and nonregulatory guidance from the U.S. Department of Education [ED]) for particular interventions that target the outcome of interest.

Materials

Gather results from completed needs assessments, or root-cause or gap analyses; statements or summaries of problems or issues that require attention; lists of interventions that you currently use; and research on potential interventions. Also, gather any relevant information about the setting of your state, district, or school (e.g., populations served).

Who Should Be Involved

Staff who are charged with selecting evidence-based interventions for states, districts, or schools should work together to use this tool. Those involved should have substantive knowledge of the issues and outcomes that potential interventions are intended to address, including the educational setting(s) where the intervention would be implemented (e.g., knowledge of the targeted grade levels and student populations). Staff, consultants, or providers of technical assistance (e.g., staff from your Regional Educational Laboratory) who have a background in quantitative research methods should assist with the review of the research literature and completion of the tool.

Time

Completing the first two questions and the last two rows of the tool—tasks in which the entire team is engaged—requires approximately one hour. In addition, 45 to 90 minutes per study, depending on the length and complexity of the study, are required for reviewing each research study.

Instructions Overview (detailed instructions are provided with each step)

- Step 1: Get organized, including identifying roles and responsibilities, gathering materials, establishing a schedule, and reviewing documentation.
- Step 2: Take stock of the most pressing problems or issues in your education setting, the outcomes that you would like to achieve, and possible interventions to help achieve those outcomes.
- Step 3: Review available research studies on a single intervention and determine whether each study demonstrates strong, moderate, or promising evidence for the intervention (or demonstrates a rationale for using the intervention), based on ESSA standards and nonregulatory guidance from ED.
- Step 4: Examine the context of the research and determine the extent to which the evidence for each study on the intervention was gathered in educational settings and populations similar to yours.
- Step 5: Assess the cumulative body of evidence on the intervention, both in general and specifically for your educational setting.

Leading the Conversation

- The goal of this exercise is to examine the entire body of research that exists for an intervention. Although ESSA stipulates that a single study may be used to provide strong, moderate, or promising evidence, subsequent nonregulatory guidance from ED encourages stakeholders to examine the body of research on an intervention.
- The facilitator of the activity might want to begin the activity by clarifying differences in how evidence is used in decision-making in ESSA, compared to No Child Left Behind to help team members understand the importance of their work. See section 2 of this guide for an explanation of the role of research and evidence in decision-making in ESSA and for a graphic showing a recommended evidence-based decision-making process.

Modifications or Variations

- It may not be practical or appropriate for all team members to participate in each step or in all parts of a step. In step 1, for example, the organizers or facilitators might determine who will be involved and develop the meeting schedule, but the entire team might work together on gathering and reviewing documentation. Organizers and facilitators will have to determine what works best for their participants in their setting.
- Multiple experts in quantitative research methods can be called upon to find the relevant research and to review the research. If multiple experts are used, they should first complete the tool independently and then meet as a group to discuss and compare results and to note discrepancies among their results.

- This tool can be used in at least two ways. It is designed to help compare the evidence bases for more than one intervention, to identify what has the best likelihood of addressing a well-defined problem or outcome. In certain cases, there may be a large number of interventions that target the outcome of interest, whereas, in other cases, there may be fewer such interventions. In situations where there are many interventions, users of this tool may want to first group the interventions into different categories (e.g., classroom-focused versus whole-school, or delivered by an instructor versus delivered online) in order to facilitate decision-making. The tool can also be used to understand what research shows about the success of a single intervention in different contexts, so that the intervention can be intentionally adapted to local context.

STEP 1: Get Organized

Take time to get organized and build your knowledge base by gathering necessary materials and building a well-informed team to complete subsequent steps. Things to consider:

Who is involved? Identify which departments or programs should be represented; then identify the individuals who will participate in this work. What are their respective roles and responsibilities in the group (e.g., note taker, facilitator)? The team should include individuals who have input into selecting the evidence-based interventions; stakeholders who have knowledge of the problems, issues, and context of the educational setting; and one or more experts in quantitative research methods.

Department or Program	Name	Contact Information	Role/Responsibility

What do we need to know? Gather and organize documents and other materials that provide data about or describe the most pressing problems or issues in your state, district, or school. These materials could include results from completed needs assessments or gap analyses and from logic models, as well as graphics that depict problems or issues along with their effects and possible causes. You may also want to develop a list of interventions that are currently in place at the state, district, and school levels.

Document or Material (title, description, source)	Why It Is Important (what everyone should know)

Attend to logistics. What will the meeting schedule be? Where will you meet? What materials do you need (e.g., chart paper, sticky notes)? Who will be involved in step 3 (reviewing the research)?

Notes

STEP 2: Take Stock of Problems or Issues

Convene the entire team, review the materials, and decide what the most pressing problems, issues, or questions in your education setting are, in relation to the program or funding stream under consideration; the outcomes that you would like to achieve; and possible interventions to help achieve those outcomes.

Question 1. Think about your educational setting (state, district, or school). Based on a needs assessment or other analysis, what are the two or three most pressing problems, issues, or questions that you would like addressed in relation to the program or funding stream under consideration?

Question 2. Based on the pressing problems, issues, or questions that you would like addressed (e.g., improving the high school graduation rate), what specific outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve, and for whom?

Question 3. What are some of the interventions currently in place in your state or district, and/or that you might consider for implementation, that focus on improving the specific outcome(s) that you are hoping to change for your population?

Select **one** of the interventions that attempts to address the problem or issue and to achieve the targeted outcomes, and write the intervention in the space below. Carry over the intervention to Step 3 (Repeat this step for each intervention under consideration.)

STEP 3: Review the Research

Before beginning this step, the team should consult the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), which contains extensive information on a number of education-focused interventions. If there are no available evidence reviews on the intervention, primary research on the intervention can be obtained from academic databases such as the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Consult section 5 for other sources of evidence reviews of social programs, including those that are focused on education.

The researcher(s) on the team should obtain and review all of the available research on the intervention under study, and determine whether each study provides strong, moderate, or promising evidence for the intervention (or demonstrates a rationale for adoption), based on ESSA standards and guidance from ED, as well as on the nonregulatory guidance that applies to evidence standards in education. The ESSA standards and guidance from ED will also provide definitions of randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental design, and correlational study. These resources should also be consulted for definitions of "well-implemented" and "well-designed" research. If more than one researcher is completing these questions, they should consult each other regarding their responses and resolve any discrepancies.

Transfer the intervention you selected at the end of the previous step here.

Question	In each column, address the question for each study, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
4	**List the source of the evidence review (e.g., WWC), or author(s) and year of the study**			
5a	**Was this study a well-designed and well-implemented randomized controlled trial (RCT), as defined by ESSA?** Response options: Yes, No, or Not enough information If "Yes," go to 5b. If "No" or "Not enough information," go to 6a.			

Question	In each column, address the question for each study, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
5b	**For this RCT, is there a statistically significant *favorable* effect of the intervention on the relevant outcome(s)?** Response options: Yes or No			
5c	**For this RCT, is there a statistically significant and overriding *unfavorable* effect on the relevant outcome(s)?** Response options: Yes or No			
5d	**Does this RCT provide STRONG EVIDENCE for the intervention?** Response options: Yes or No If the response to row 5b is "Yes" and the response to 5c is "No," mark "Yes" in this row, then proceed to question 9. If the response to row 5b is "No" and the response to row 5c is "Yes," mark "No" in this row, then proceed to question 6a.			
6a	**Was this study a well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental design (QED), as defined by ESSA?** Response options: Yes, No, or Not enough information If "Yes," go to 6b. If "No" or "Not enough information," go to 7a.			
6b	**For this QED study, is there a statistically significant *favorable* impact of the intervention on the relevant outcome(s)?** Response options: Yes or No			

Question	In each column, address the question for each study, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
6c	**For this QED study, is there a statistically significant and overriding *unfavorable* effect on the relevant outcome(s)?** Response options: Yes or No			
6d	**Does this QED study provide MODERATE EVIDENCE for the intervention?** Response options: Yes or No If the response to row 6b is “Yes” and the response to 6c is “No,” mark “Yes” in this row, then proceed to question 9. If the response to row 6b is “No” and the response to row 6c is “Yes,” mark “No” in this row, then proceed to question 7a.			
7a	**Was this study a well-designed and well-implemented correlational study, as defined by ESSA?** Response options: Yes, No, or Not enough information If “Yes,” go to 7b. If “No” or “Not enough information,” go to 8.			
7b	**For this correlational study, is there a statistically significant *favorable* impact of the intervention on the relevant outcome(s)?** Response options: Yes or No			
7c	**For this correlational study, is there a statistically significant and overriding *unfavorable* effect on the relevant outcome(s)?** Response options: Yes or No			

Question	In each column, address the question for each study, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
7d	**Does this correlational study provide PROMISING EVIDENCE for the intervention?** Response options: Yes or No If the response to 7b is “Yes” and the response to 7c is “No,” mark “Yes” in this row, then proceed to question 9 under step 4. If the response to 7b is “No” and the response to 7c is “Yes,” mark “No” in this row, then proceed to question 8.			
8	**Does this study DEMONSTRATE A RATIONALE for using the intervention? In other words, does this study suggest that the intervention is likely to improve a relevant outcome?** Response options: Yes, No, or Not enough information			

STEP 4: Examine the Research and Educational Context

Convene the entire team to review the studies of this intervention. Then, assess the similarity of your educational setting, and of the population(s) of interest, to those used in the studies of the intervention.

Transfer the intervention you selected at the end of step 2 here.

Question	In each column, address the question for each study, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
9	**Examining the information for questions 5d, 6d, 7d, and 8, what is the highest level of evidence provided by each study for the intervention?** Response options: Strong, Moderate, Promising, or Demonstrates a rationale			
10	**In each study, was the intervention implemented in a setting similar to yours (e.g., rural, urban, grade span)?** Response options: Very much, Somewhat, A little, Not at all			
11	**In each study, was the intervention implemented with populations similar to yours (e.g., limited language proficient, low socio-economic status, specific ethnicity)?** Response options: Very much, Somewhat, A little, Not at all			

STEP 5: Assess the Cumulative Evidence for the Intervention

Based on the responses to previous questions in this tool, the entire team can assess the cumulative evidence for the intervention, both in general and specifically for your particular educational setting. This information can be used when completing tool 6 (Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions).

12	**Looking across the information for question 9 only, which of the following designations best describes the *cumulative evidence* for this intervention?** **Strong ________ Moderate ________ Promising ________ Demonstrates a rationale ________**

13	**Looking across information for questions 9, 10, and 11, which of the following designations best describes the *cumulative evidence* for this intervention, specifically for the settings and populations that are similar to yours?** **Strong ________ Moderate ________ Promising ________ Demonstrates a rationale ________**

Tool 6: Comparing Evidence-Based Interventions

Purpose

This tool is to be used to compare how well different evidence-based interventions, strategies, policies, practices, or programs (collectively referred to, in this tool, as interventions) that target the same problem or issue are aligned with the context of a specific state, district, or school.

This tool can be used after completing tool 5, or without completing tool 5 if users already have sufficient information about the levels of evidence for specific interventions under consideration for selection.

Outcome

Completing the tool provides an indication of the degree to which a given intervention aligns with the state's, district's, or school's specific context. Reviewing this information will help in the selection of an evidence-based intervention.

Materials

Gather the results from tool 5 (Intervention Evidence Review), as well as information about each intervention's training and implementation requirements and costs. Also, gather any information about the context of your educational setting (e.g., the nature of any currently implemented school-improvement interventions; numbers of district or school staff).

Who Should Be Involved

Staff who are charged with selecting evidence-based interventions for districts or schools should work together to use this tool. Those involved should have substantive knowledge of the issues and outcomes that potential interventions are intended to address, including the educational setting(s) where the interventions would be implemented (e.g., knowledge of the targeted grade levels and student populations). Staff, consultants, or technical assistance providers who have a background in quantitative research methods should assist with completion of the tool. Ideally, those who participated in reviewing the research studies on the interventions (using tool 5) should participate in this discussion.

Time

If the user is comparing three different interventions, set aside at least 2 hours for an individual or a small group to complete the tool for a given intervention. Provide an additional 3 to 4 hours for the full group to discuss and compare the different interventions, based on their completion of the tool. The time required for both the individual intervention reviews and the group discussion will increase if more than three interventions are being compared.

Instructions Overview (detailed instructions are provided with each step)

- Step 1: Get organized, including identifying roles and responsibilities, gathering materials, establishing a schedule, and reviewing documentation.
- Step 2: Take stock of the most pressing problems or issues in your education setting, the outcomes that you would like to achieve, and possible interventions to help achieve those outcomes.
- Step 3: Review available information to better understand how well each evidence-based intervention under consideration would fit into the context of your educational setting
- Step 4: Review available information to determine the costs of implementing the interventions under consideration in your educational setting.
- Step 5: Discuss the feasibility of selecting and implementing each intervention in your educational setting, and the advantages and disadvantages of each intervention as it pertains to your educational context.

Leading the Conversation

- The conversation among stakeholders using this tool should revolve around which evidence-based interventions best fit the contexts of their particular education environments. After the tool is completed, the group may not yet have decided on which intervention(s) to implement, but it should have narrowed down the options.

Modifications or Variations

- If your team has used tool 5, it may be possible to skip parts of steps 1 and 2. Review these steps carefully to see what should be repeated, reviewed, or possibly skipped.
- In certain cases, there may be a large number of interventions that target the outcome of interest, whereas, in other cases, there may be fewer such interventions. In situation where there are many interventions, users of this tool may want to first group the interventions into different categories (e.g., classroom-focused versus whole-school, or delivered by an instructor versus delivered online) in order to facilitate decision-making.

- Questions in this tool are designed to be appropriate for a broad array of educational contexts. Some may be skipped or refined, or questions may be added, to fit a specific context.
- It may not be practical or appropriate for all team members to participate in each step or in all parts of a step. In step 1, for example, the organizers or facilitators might determine who will be involved and develop the meeting schedule, but the entire team might work together on gathering and reviewing documentation. Organizers and facilitators will have to determine what works best for their participants in their setting.

STEP 1: Get Organized

Take time to get organized and build your knowledge base by gathering necessary materials and building a well-informed team to complete subsequent steps. Things to consider:

Who is involved? Identify which departments or programs should be represented; then identify the individuals who will participate in this work. What are their respective roles and responsibilities in the group (e.g., note taker, facilitator)? The team should include individuals who have input into selecting the evidence-based interventions, and stakeholders who have knowledge of the problems, issues, and context of the educational setting; other interventions being implemented in the educational setting; the current professional development requirements placed on the staff in the educational setting; and any funding available for (where applicable) purchasing and implementing a new intervention. The team should also include one or more experts in quantitative research methods.

Department or Program	Name	Contact Information	Role/Responsibility

What do we need to know? Gather and organize documents and other materials that provide data about or describe the most pressing problems or issues in your state, district, or school. These materials could include results from completed needs assessments or gap analyses and from logic models, as well as graphics that depict problems or issues along with their effects and possible causes. Also, include documentation that summarizes other interventions that are currently being implemented in the educational setting and the current professional development requirements placed on staff. Reviewing this documentation will ensure that all participants have strong foundational knowledge of the problems, desired outcomes, and interventions under consideration.

Document or Material (title, description, source)	Why It Is Important (what everyone should know)

Attend to logistics. What will the meeting schedule be? Where will you meet? What materials do you need (e.g., chart paper, sticky notes)?

Notes

STEP 2: Take Stock of Problems or Issues

Convene the entire team, review the materials, and decide what the most pressing problems in your education setting are, in relation to the program or funding stream under consideration; the outcomes that you would like to achieve; and possible interventions to help achieve those outcomes.

Question 1. Think about your educational setting (state, district, or school). Based on a needs assessment or other analysis, what are the two or three most pressing problems, issues, or questions that you would like addressed in relation to the program or funding stream under consideration?

Question 2. Based on the pressing problems, issues, or questions that you would like addressed (e.g., improving school engagement among middle school students), what specific outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve, and for whom?

Question 3. What are some of the interventions currently in place in your state or district, and/or that you might consider for implementation, that focus on improving the specific outcome(s) that you are hoping to change for your population?

Select one or more possible interventions that attempt to address the problem or issue and to achieve the targeted outcomes, and write the intervention(s) in the space below. Transfer the interventions to the table in step 3

STEP 3: Determine Level of Evidence and Alignment with Context

Convene the entire team to assess the similarity of your educational setting, and of the population(s) of interest, to those used in the research on the intervention(s) selected in step 2. Also, consider if the intervention(s) have already been adapted to your setting. If the team has completed tool 5, the team should refer to the completed tool as well as any other documentation on the interventions.

Convene members of the team who have the most knowledge about the context of the state, district, or school where the intervention(s) would be adopted. Contextual factors include the nature of any other interventions currently being implemented in the state, district, or school, and staff capacity (in terms of both knowledge and time). In this step, address as many questions as possible that are relevant to the interventions under consideration and to your educational setting. You may not be able to address all of the questions with the information that you have at this point. The importance of the questions in this section may vary across states, districts, or schools. Individual questions in this section may be skipped or refined as needed, or questions may be added, to fit each context.

Question	In each column, address the question for each intervention, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Intervention 1	Intervention 2	Intervention 3
4	**Name of intervention**			
5	**Which of the following designations best describes the cumulative evidence for this intervention?** (Information from tool 5 can be used to answer this question.) Response options: Strong, Moderate, Promising, or Demonstrates a rationale			
6	**Which of the following designations best describes the cumulative evidence across studies for this intervention *for settings and populations that are similar to yours*?** (Information from tool 5 can be used to answer this question.) Response options: Strong, Moderate, Promising, or Demonstrates a rationale			

Question	In each column, address the question for each intervention, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Intervention 1	Intervention 2	Intervention 3
7	**Given the information you have, has the intervention already been adapted for your population and/or setting?** Response options: Yes or No If "Yes," go to question 9 in step 4. If "No," go to question 8.			
8	**Do you have staff or consultants who will be able to adapt the intervention while preserving the core components?** Response options: Yes or No			
9	**What existing interventions might the proposed intervention be in direct conflict with or need to be integrated with (e.g., in terms of staffing, resources, facilities, scheduling)?**			
10	**To what extent would the intervention fit within the known climate or culture of the state, district, or school?** Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little			
11	**To what extent would there be leadership support at the district or school level to ensure that the intervention would be implemented with fidelity?** Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little			

Question	In each column, address the question for each intervention, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Intervention 1	Intervention 2	Intervention 3
12	**To what extent would there be buy-in from the necessary constituents (e.g., staff, community, students, and parents) for the intervention to be implemented with fidelity?** Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little			
13	**To what extent does the state, district, or school have the physical infrastructure (e.g., space, technology, data systems) to fully implement, support, and sustain the intervention after funding ends?** Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little			
14	**To what extent does the state, district, or school have the organizational structure to fully implement, support, and sustain the intervention after funding ends?** Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little			
15	**To what extent would staff have the capacity and time required to successfully deliver and implement the intervention?** Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little			
16	**To what extent would staff have the time required and capacity to continually monitor and collect data on implementation and outcomes of the intervention?** Response options: A lot, Somewhat, A little			

Question	In each column, address the question for each intervention, using the response options listed; make notes in the columns if needed.	Intervention 1	Intervention 2	Intervention 3
17	**If applicable, will the partners or other outside supports that are necessary for implementation of the intervention be committed and available for the duration?** Response options: Yes, No, N/A			

STEP 4: Estimate Needed Resources

Convene members of the team who have the most knowledge about the costs of the given intervention(s) as well as knowledge of the time required to implement the intervention(s)—both in the start-up phase and in the long term, including requirements for staff training. In this step, address as many questions as possible that are relevant to the intervention(s) under consideration and to your educational setting. You may not be able to address all of the questions with the information that you have at this point. The importance of the questions in this section may vary across states, districts, or schools. Individual questions in this section may be skipped or refined as needed, or questions may be added, to fit each context.

Question	In each column, address the question for each intervention, make notes in the columns if needed.	Intervention 1	Intervention 2	Intervention 3
18	How much time would be required for staff training, in terms of hours or days?			
19	What is the cost (in dollars) of start-up materials?			
20	What is the cost (in dollars) of start-up equipment?			
21	What is the cost (in dollars) of start-up (initial) training?			
22	What are other start-up (initial) implementation costs (in dollars)?			
23	Add values in rows 19 through 22. These are the total start-up implementation costs.			
24	What are the estimated annual costs of the intervention after start-up?			

STEP 5: Summarize

Convene the entire team and discuss the feasibility of selecting and implementing each intervention in your educational setting. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each intervention? What have you learned about the targeted interventions, based on the use of this tool? The response can include summarizing the evidence base and the degree to which the interventions align with the specific context of your state, district, or school.

Notes

Section 5: Additional Resources

This section identifies additional materials and background information to build knowledge, understanding, and capacity to use evidence for improvement. The resources referenced in this section were selected using a rubric (included at the end of this section) to ensure the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the materials. The types of resources include:

- Samples of publicly available tools to support evidence-based improvement;
- Examples of directories that list evidence-based interventions; and
- Reports, research and case studies, and other publications.

Each resource includes a brief description and details for accessing it. Nearly all the resources are publicly available and represent an initial set of materials to get you started. Over time, additional resources may be added, especially those that address the other steps in the continuous improvement cycle. Resources are organized around the following topics:

- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) guidance;
- Evidence-based improvement (General information);
- Examining and selecting evidence-based interventions (Step 2: Select); and
- Clearinghouses of evidence-based interventions.

Additionally, we encourage accessing technical assistance resources through Regional Educational Laboratories, Comprehensive Centers, or the State Support Network. More information and contact information may be found at these links:

- Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). The REL program, sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S. Department of Education, serves the education needs of designated regions, using applied research, development, dissemination, and training and technical assistance, to bring the latest and best research and proven practices into school improvement efforts. (www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/edLabs/regions/)
- Comprehensive Centers (CCs). The CCs include 15 regional centers that provide services primarily to state education agencies (SEAs) to enable them to assist school

districts and schools, especially low-performing schools. The CC network also includes seven content centers focused on specific areas of expertise such as turnaround, accountability, and early learning. (www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/gen/othersites/compcenters.html)

- State Support Network (SSN). The SSN is a technical assistance initiative of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of State Support, designed to support state and district school improvement efforts. (www.air.org/project/state-support-network-ssn)

❖ TOPIC: ESSA Guidance and Information

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965

U.S. Department of Education, 2015

This is the legislation passed by Congress and signed by President Obama in December 2015 that reauthorizes ESEA.

Available at: http://www2.ed.gov/documents/essa-act-of-1965.pdf

Non-Regulatory Guidance: Student Supports and Academic Enrichment Grants

U.S. Department of Education, October 2016

This guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education offers information to state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), schools, educators, and partner organizations information on the provisions of Title IV, Part A of ESEA, as amended by ESSA and how to best use funds based on these provisions.

Available at: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essassaegrantguid10212016.pdf

Non-Regulatory Guidance for Title II, Part A: Building Systems of Support for Excellent Teaching and Leading

U.S. Department of Education, September 27, 2016

This guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education offers information to SEAs, LEAs, schools, educators, and partner organizations about how to best use funds from Title II, Part A of ESEA, as amended by ESSA.

Available at: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiipartaguidance.pdf

Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments

U.S. Department of Education, September 16, 2016

This guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education offers information to SEAs, LEAs, schools, educators, and partner organizations about how to select and use "evidence-based" interventions, as defined in Title VIII of ESEA, as amended by ESSA.

Available at: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceuseseinvestment.pdf

Supporting School Reform by Leveraging Federal Funds in a Schoolwide Program: Non-Regulatory Guidance

U.S. Department of Education, September 2016

This guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education explains how operating a schoolwide program under Title I, Part A of ESEA, as amended by ESSA can be beneficial to LEAs and schools.

Available at: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaswpguidance9192016.pdf

Better Evidence, Better Choices, Better Schools

Steve Fleischman, Caitlin Scott, and Scott Sargrad

American Progress, August 2016

This report clarifies the definition of "evidence-based" that ESSA uses, distinguishing it from the "scientifically based research" provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and providing a framework for how SEAs can maximize collaborative efforts to implement evidence-based school improvement practices.

Available at:
https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2016/08/31/143223/better-evidence-better-choices-better-schools

Resources Page, Evidence in Education Lab

Results for America

These resources outline the potential and promise of ESSA's evidence provisions to help state and local leaders improve K-12 education.

Available at: http://results4america.org/ed-lab-resources/

❖ TOPIC: Evidence-based Improvement

Continuous Improvement In Education

Sandra Park, Stephanie Hironaka, Penny Carver, and Lee Nordstrum

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, May 2013

This white paper provides a preliminary view into how three educational organizations have undertaken continuous improvement. The paper describes the tools and methodology used by these organizations in their efforts.

Available at: http://archive.carnegiefoundation.org/pdfs/elibrary/carnegie-foundation_continuous-improvement_2013.05.pdf

Developing a Coherent Research Agenda Workshop

Julie R. Kochanek, Natalie Lacireno-Paquet, and Rebecca Carey

Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands, July 2014

The workshop serves as a resource for teams or groups seeking to establish a research focus in specific education topics. The materials include an agenda, participant workbook, facilitator's guide, and slide deck and are complemented by a 10-minute multimedia presentation—Developing a Research Agenda: Experiences of REL Northeast & Islands.

Available at: www.relnei.org/publications/workshop-materials-for-setting-a-coherent-research-agenda.html

Education Logic Model Application (ELM)

REL Pacific

The ELM is a downloadable application that guides the user to create a logic model through a series of questions and entry of program details.

Available at: http://relpacific.mcrel.org/resources/elm-app

Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better

Anthony S. Bryk, Louis M. Gomez, Alicia Grunow, and Paul G. LeMahieu

Harvard Education Press, 2015

This book, organized around six principles, shows how a process of disciplined inquiry coupled with the use of networks can successfully scale up promising interventions. It emphasizes how "networked communities" can bring together researchers and practitioners to accelerate learning in key areas of education.

Available at: www.carnegiefoundation.org/resources/publications/learning-to-improve

Logic Models for Program Design, Implementation, and Evaluation: Workshop Toolkit

Karen Shakman and Sheila M. Rodriguez

Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands, May 2015

This toolkit is designed to help practitioners learn the purpose of logic models, the different elements of a logic model, and the appropriate steps for developing and using a logic model for program evaluation.

Available at: http://www.relnei.org/publications/program-policy-evaluation-toolkit.html

Toolkit for a Workshop on Building a Culture of Data Use

Nancy Gerzon and Sarah Guckenburg

Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands, April 2015

This field-tested workshop toolkit guides facilitators through a set of structured activities to develop an understanding of how to foster a culture of data use in districts and schools. Supporting materials—a facilitator guide and agenda, a slide deck, and participant handouts—provide workshop facilitators with all the materials needed to lead this process in their own setting.

Available at: http://www.relnei.org/publications/culture-data-use-toolkit.html

Understanding Evidence

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

This is a website designed to support evidence-based decision-making. The site offers training to learn more about the different types of evidence, provides resources to help gather evidence, and presents a Continuum to discover the evidence behind an existing program, practice, or policy.

Available at: http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/evidence/

❖ TOPIC: Examining and Selecting Evidence-Based Interventions

What does it mean when a study finds no effects?

Neil Seftor

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, October 2016

This short brief for education decisionmakers discusses three main factors that may contribute to a finding of no effects: failure of theory, failure of implementation, and failure of research design. It provides readers with questions to ask themselves to better understand 'no effects' findings, and describes other contextual factors to consider when deciding what to do next.

Available at: http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL2017265

Discussion Tree Template

REL Northeast & Islands

The Discussion Tree Template is designed to help education practitioners and policymakers think about the implications of research findings in their own contexts. The tool can be customized for the appropriate state, district, or school context.

Available at: http://www.relnei.org/tools-resources/discussion-tree-tool-template.html

Evidence-Based Interventions: A Guide for States

Livia Lam, Charmaine Mercer, Anne Podolsky, and Linda Darling-Hammond

Learning Policy Institute, 2016

This brief presents the research base and related conditions under which four commonly used interventions have been found to be effective when well-implemented. Specifically, these four areas are: high-quality professional development, class-size reduction, community schools and wraparound services, and high school redesign.

Available at: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/evidence-based-interventions

Evidence-Based Policymaking: A Guide for Effective Government

The Pew Charitable Trusts and MacArthur Foundation, November 2014

The report presents a framework for governments to build and support a system of evidence-based policymaking. Based on an extensive review of research and in-depth interviews with government officials, practitioners, and academic experts, the framework identifies steps that both the executive and legislative branches can take to drive the development, funding, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programs.

Available at: http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2014/11/evidence-based-policymaking-a-guide-for-effective-government

School Leadership Interventions Under the Every Student Succeeds Act

Rebecca Herman, Susan M. Gates, Emilio R. Chavez-Herrerias, and Mark Harris

Rand Corporation, April 2016

This report describes the levels of evidence under ESSA, and offers a synthesis of the research base related to those levels. The information is intended to guide policymakers at all levels of the education system (federal, state, and district) to use research-based interventions; help identify improvement activities; and support implementation of chosen interventions.

Available at: www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/School-Leadership-Interventions-Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-Volume-1.aspx

An SEA Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement

Laurie Lee, John Hughes, Kevin Smith, and Barbara Foorman

Florida Center for Reading Research, Florida State University, November 2016

This guide helps SEAs to review evidence that supports the interventions that they will require or recommend in their state ESSA plan and funding applications. The guide also assists with determining levels or strength of evidence and planning for providing resources to LEAs.

Available at: www.aypf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Study-Guide-John-and-Laurie-Florida.pdf

A Survey Tool for Measuring Evidence-Based Decision-Making Capacity in Public Health Agencies

Julie A. Jacobs et al.

BMC Health Services Research, 2012

This tool provides a research-based methodology for assessing the current evidence-based decision-making capacity of the public health workforce. Public health agencies serve a wide range of populations with varying levels of resources. This survey tool allows an individual agency to collect data that reflects its unique workforce. This tool could inform a similar approach in education.

Available at: http://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6963-12-57

Understanding Evidence: A Guide for Educators

Gregory Chojnacki, Alexandra Resch, Alma Vigil, Ignacio Martinez, and Steve Bates

Mathematica, Center for Improving Research Evidence, November 9, 2016

This guide, focused on educational technologies, highlights four key types of evidence that educators are likely to encounter. It describes how to review claims about effectiveness and includes information about types of evidence ordered from weakest to strongest. The guide includes descriptions accompanied by examples of information sources containing that type of evidence.

Available at: https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/publications/understanding-types-of-evidence-a-guide-for-educators

❖ TOPIC: Clearinghouses of Evidence-Based Interventions

What Works Clearinghouse

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) is an initiative of the Institute of Education Sciences, the independent, nonpartisan statistics, research, and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education. The WWC provides educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a free, centralized source of scientific evidence on what works, in education, to improve student outcomes. Its goal is to provide educators and decisionmakers with the evidence that they need in order to make evidence-based decisions. The WWC focuses on the results from high-quality research to answer the question “What works in education?”

Specific WWC website sections or tools that may be of particular interest to decisionmakers include:

- *Find What Works*, a comprehensive source for information about what the WWC’s systematic reviews of the research say about education programs, products, practices, and policies, with special tools that allow users to compare interventions. Also, a new tool allows users to seek out information on whether research on an intervention has been conducted with students similar to theirs.
- *Intervention Reports*, which summarize existing research on a specific program, product, policy, or practice, and *Intervention Snapshots*, which present an intervention in an easy-to-access format.
- *Practice Guides* with recommended practices, based on an expert panel’s synthesis of reviews.
- *Reviews of Individual Studies,* with a search tool that allows users to find individual studies that have been reviewed by the WWC. Search filters allow users to screen by topic area, study design, and WWC study rating, to create more precise evidence searches.

Available at: http://www.whatworks.ed.gov

Best Evidence Encyclopedia (BEE)

The Best Evidence Encyclopedia is a free website created by the Johns Hopkins University School of Education's Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE). It provides summaries of scientific reviews of education interventions as well as links to the full text of each review.

Available at: http://www.bestevidence.org/index.cfm

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development is a registry of evidence-based youth development programs designed to promote the health and well-being of children and teens. Programs in the registry are family-, school-, and/or community-based.

Available at: http://www.blueprintsprograms.com

Campbell Collaboration

This website provides access to reviews and research syntheses to support evidence-based decision and policymaking.

Available at: www.campbellcollaboration.org/

Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC is a free, online library of education research, sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. It includes abstracts of research studies and some full-text documents.

Available at: https://eric.ed.gov/

Results First Clearinghouse Database

This database, sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts, contains information from eight national clearinghouses that conduct systematic research reviews to identify what works in several areas of social programs and education.

Available at: http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2014/09/results-first-clearinghouse-database

Evidence-Based Improvement Resources Vetting Rubric

Each numbered element (1, 2, 3) below the *Quality*, *Relevance* and *Usefulness* headings is worth up to three points (0=not at all, 1=slightly, 2=moderately, 3=to a great extent). To be considered for inclusion in the resources section of this guide, a resource must have a score of at least 15, with at least five points, in each of Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness, and minimally a rating of 1 for each numbered element. Not all sub-bullets (a, b, c) apply to all resources. These are marked as “NA”.

Quality (well designed/developed)	Relevance (is realistic and contextual)	Usefulness (supports implementation/use)
1) Aligned with legal or regulatory guidance a) Utilizes or references ESSA levels of evidence b) References or is consistent with ESSA program guidance c) References evidence-based improvement cycle	1) Addresses needs a) Addresses common needs or frequently asked questions b) Aligned with SEA or LEA required tasks under ESSA c) Appropriate for ESSA programs or processes	1) Knowledge transfer a) Provides clear and comprehensive information to inform decisions or practice b) Uses comprehensible language appropriate to audience
2) Grounded in current research and practice a) Clearly applies and aligns with ESSA evidence standards b) Describes evidence of effectiveness with appropriate attention to research c) Describes emerging and promising practices with appropriate reservations	2) Potential for application a) Content aligned with target audience knowledge and skills b) Applies to or is appropriate for a fairly broad audience c) Feasible for the intended audience	2) Usability a) Clearly describes necessary steps, conditions and resources for implementation b) Comprehensive coverage of topic or refers to other resources
3) Complete and purposeful a) Clearly and thoroughly communicates purpose of resource b) Structure and content are consistent with the purpose c) Specifies necessary expertise, experience and resources required	3) Addresses contextual factors a) Applicable to a variety of contexts (e.g., rural, urban, grade spans, English learner students) b) Adequately, describes potential barriers c) Includes sufficient options for variations	3) Applicability a) Includes sufficient case studies, examples, or possible variations b) Includes specific information about or considerations for how to plan, implement and monitor activity

Endnotes

[i] Claridge, J. A., & Fabian, T. C. (2005). History and development of evidence based medicine. *World Journal of Surgery*, *29*, 547–553.

Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative. (2014). *Evidence-based policymaking: A guide for effective government*. Washington, DC: Pew Charitable Trusts and MacArthur Foundation.

[ii] Every Student Succeeds Act, Public Law 95, 114th Cong., 1st Sess. (December 10, 2015). https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177/text

[iii] Gross, B., & Hill, P. T. (2016). The state role in K–12 education: From issuing mandates to experimentation. *Harvard Law and Policy Review*, *10*, 299–326.

[iv] Elgart, M. A. (2016). Designing state accountability systems for continuous school improvement: A call to action. Unpublished paper, AdvancED. Retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://www.advanc-ed.org/sites/default/files/ESSA%20Call%20to%20Action%20Whitepaper.pdf

[v] See, for example:

- Cohen, M. D., March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1972). A garbage can model of organizational choice. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *17*, 1–25.
- Goertz, M. E., Barnes, C., Massell, D., Fink, R. E., & Francis, A. (2013). *State education agencies' acquisition and use of research knowledge in school improvement strategies*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Hess, F. M. (Ed.). (2008). *When research matters: How scholarship influences education policy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Penuel, W. R., Briggs, D. C., Davidson, K. L., Herlihy, C., Sherer, D., Hill, H. C., Farrell, C. C., & Allen, A.-R. (2016). Findings from a national study on research use among school and district leaders. Boulder, CO: National Center for Research in Policy and Practice. Retrieved November 17, 2016, from

http://ncrpp.org/assets/documents/NCRPP_Technical-Report-1_National-Survey-of-Research-Use.pdf

[vi] See writings by the Carnegie Foundation; for example, Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2015). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

[vii] See Bryk et al. (2015) for a discussion of "seeing the system" as a key to improvement.

[viii] Additional ideas about how states can maximize collaborative efforts can be found in Fleshman, S., Scott, C., & Sargrad, S. (2016). *Better evidence, better choices, better schools: State supports for evidence-based school improvement and the Every Student Succeeds Act*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress and Knowledge Alliance.