Tools to Support the Development of a Coherent and Aligned System

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The State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP)
Based on the work of
The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)

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State Implementation
&Scaling-up
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Effective implementation capacity is essential to improving education. The State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center supports education systems in creating implementation capacity for evidence-based practices benefitting students, especially those with disabilities.

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The mission of the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) is to contribute to the best practices and science of implementation, organization change, and system reinvention to improve outcomes across the spectrum of human services.

Creating a detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) is a critical part of any project. Terms of Reference outline the purpose of the project or group, how the group will be structured, and how the work will be done. Likewise, communication is important for any program or innovation. Intentionally linking communication protocols for new or existing programs and innovations establishes a transparent feedback process and furthers the development of a hospitable environment. This document provides an overview and templates for Terms of Reference and Communication Protocols.

Description of Terms of Reference

Creating a detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) is a critical part of any project. TOR is quite frequently used in business and any planning endeavor. Terms of Reference (TOR) are detailed in a document outlining the purpose of the project or group, how the group will be structured, and how the work will be done. It functions as an a) an internal memorandum of understanding for the group or project team b) links the group or project team to broader systems work (e.g. collaborative work, policy change, regulatory revisions).

TOR can facilitate the work of the project team or work group, because it establishes common ground and a common understanding of why a group has been formed and what is expected. It is a proactive way to ensure that there is agreement about important dimensions of both the work to be done and the processes for doing the work. Such agreement creation through the development of the TOR and in the absence of actual work or issues, helps the group raise difficult issues in the abstract and talk more openly about diverse opinions to reach consensus.

If the document is actively used and referenced throughout the life of the project or the work of the team it can:

- Help keep the project or group on track or on "mission" (e.g. "I don't think that's in our scope of work, let's see what we said in the TOR. Do we want to change the TOR?").
- Serve as an aid to troubleshooting a project (e.g. "Are we still aligned on values and way of work, do we have the authority, people, resources we need.")
- Serve as a point of reference when group dynamics are bumpy (e.g. "I wonder if we should revisit our agreed upon way of work, we said…..now I see…So have we changed our way of work or scope of work or have we strayed from our roles/responsibilities, values.").
- Ensure continuity and focus of the work as project or team membership changes over time and across administrations (e.g. "Welcome to the group, here is some orientation material that will help you join us.")

The following components are often addressed:

- Vision
- Goals and Objectives
- Scope and Boundaries (what the work is and is not, when are we done)
- Roles and Responsibilities of individuals (who participates in what ways)
- Linking Communication Protocols to accomplish service and policy alignment (with whom do we communicate, how, and how often and for what purpose)
- Resources available to the project
- Authority
- Deliverables
- Implementation Plans

Not always addressed, but useful:

- Values and ways of work that the group will abide by throughout the project (e.g. consensus, respect, embracing of diverse opinions, agreement on how conflicts will be resolved, requirements of who may substitute on the team)

ToR Template and Example

Terms of Reference Template

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Vision and Mission for the Work Together

Scope and Objectives

- Expected Outcomes and Deliverables

Boundaries and Limitations
(what the work is and is not, when and “if” we are done)

Authority, Accountability and Reporting Requirements

Linking Communication Protocols for Alignment
(with whom do we communicate, how, and how often and for what purpose)

Roles and Functions of individuals
(who participates in what ways)

- Leadership
- Term
- Membership
- Orientation for New Members

Resources available to the group or project
(e.g., administrative support, time, funding)

Decision-making process
(e.g., consensus, majority, unanimous, X members must be present to make a decision)

Values and Ways of Work
(e.g., decisions will or will not be revisited, participants can or cannot send a representative in their place)

Terms of Reference - State Leadership Team

The purpose of the State Leadership Team's "Terms of Reference" is to establish common ground and understanding of why the group has been formed and what is expected. It is this protocol that will be used to ensure that there is agreement about important dimensions of the project. The Terms of Reference will build Practice-Policy feedback loops and help groups talk more openly about diverse opinions and reach consensus. The Terms of Reference will help the State Leadership Team address alignment issues and allocation of resources (time, personnel, funding). It will be used to introduce new group members and new directors and staff to the roles and functions of the State Leadership Team. This document will be referenced on a quarterly basis and will be revised as more efficient ways of functioning emerge.

A. Vision

The vision of the State Leadership Team is to create a statewide infrastructure that will support a common, coherent implementation of teaching and learning practices that will accelerate the learning of ALL students and staff. The state will rely on the Practice (the "What") and Key Components of Implementation (the "How") to support this infrastructure.

The What…

- Defined and Measurable Goals and Outcomes
- Data Driven Decision-making Evidence Based Practices
- Tiered Levels of Support that Accelerates the Learning of ALL Students
- Implementation of Instruction / Intervention as Intended
- Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning
- Aligned with PreK-12 Academic State and Local Academic Standards
- Parent and Community Engagement

The How…

- Stages of Implementation
- Core Implementation Components
- Leadership at ALL Levels
- Coherent Alignment of Policies and
- Procedures to Support Implementation

B. Goals and Objectives

The State Leadership Team will work toward meeting the following goals and objectives:

- Communicate with all stakeholders to gather and disseminate information regarding the Practice and the Key Components of Implementation
- Support cross-divisional collaboration among all divisions of the Department of Education and among all education stakeholder groups
- Build capacity of school districts on the Science of Implementation
- Assist school districts in developing and sustaining multi-level communication feedback loops by appropriately modeling the types of conversations that will support and move forward the effective implementation of an evidence-based practice.
- Support school districts as they implement evidence-based practices with fidelity

C. Scope and Boundaries

The State Leadership Team is considered to be:

- an active working group
- a teaching and learning group
- a multi-disciplinary group with members from a variety of education entities inside and outside of the Department of Education
- a team that will link and reciprocate with other education advocacy groups, and
- will communicate and disseminate information within the education group they represent

Members of the State Leadership team can be characterized as:

- Change agents
- Individuals from across various educational organizations and entities with a common focus on improving outcomes for ALL state youth

The State Leadership Team will:

- Acknowledge the evolution of change that may occur as the journey to scale-up and
- build capacity occurs
- Document a historical account of the journey
- Maintain a focus on systemic change (e.g., at the district, state and regional levels)
- Maintain a focus on evidence-based practices that are scalable (practices that have sufficient scientific validation and practical verification to warrant the large-scale investment needed to transform these practices into standard practice)
- Foster connections and collaborative efforts among statewide educational stakeholders

- Make decisions based on data and models the use of effective and efficient use of data in order to make informed instructional decisions
- Function as a conduit to communicate information to others who are not on the State Leadership Team
- Maintain a problem – solving, solution –oriented focus
- Function as a link in the feedback cycle to facilitate Policy Enhanced Practice (PEP) and Practice Informed Policy (PIP)

The State Leadership Team does not:

- Participate in functions outside the purview of the state Department of Education vision/mission
- Engage in, intentional or inadvertently, efforts to subvert, sabotage, undermine effective projects and efforts
- Purport to doing it all or have the answer to everything
- Act with unilateral authority
- Act as a gatekeeper, compliance monitor or sole expert
- Endorse or advocate or mandate various practices

The State Leadership Team values:

- School and district time and efforts
- A harmonious message as evidenced by ascribing to the Practice and Key Components of Implementation
- Active participation and efficient utilization of the partnership with the National SISEP
- Center
- An emphasis on building capacity for statewide implementation of effective
- practices
- The perceptions of multiple stakeholders including parents, district and school staff, community and state level organizations and members of diverse cultural and disability groups
- Expertise of those who may provide guidance based on research and experience

D. Roles and Responsibilities

The State Leadership Team will:

- Stay current with any new or impending state policy change and implications with respect to the scalability to align them with the state's Practice and the Key Components of Implementation
- Take PEP (Policy Enhanced Practice) – PIP (Policy Informed Practice) issues "back" to various constituencies/departments to create broader understanding and "forward" to other decision-makers for review and resolution
- Move from parallel work to integration – how to build coherence across and among initiatives (finding points of overlap or intersection)
- Prioritize the PIP (Practice Informed Policy) issues for resolution – and aligning issues and solutions to appropriate levels
- Be vigilant about sustaining Practice-Policy feedback loops
- Work to align multiple initiatives
- Identify and work to solve adaptive challenges
- Support member organizations as they work toward the delivery of a common message. Member organizations may include:
    - Department of Education
    - Nonprofits focused on education
    - The State's Association of School Administrators
    - Educational Cooperative Service Units
    - National Association of Elementary School Principals
    - The state university systems
    - The State's Staff Development Council
    - The State's Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

E. Communication Protocols and Pathways

The following protocol will be used regarding referral of issues that are not within the purview of the State Leadership Team or individuals on the State Leadership Team:

- Refer issues to relevant Deputy Commissioner(s) via State Leadership Team for resolution at Deputy Commissioner level
- Develop guidelines for ‘filtering’ types of issues requiring Deputy Commissioner and/or Executive Leadership Team attention
- State Transformation Specialists:
    - Explore and get Deputy Commissioner agreement about bringing issues to the Executive Leadership Team when they are not able to be resolved at the division Director level
    - Document information about issues and the process followed
    - Facilitate communication across levels
    - Report progress to State Leadership Team as appropriate as well as back to District level (e.g. ensure that the various ‘levels’ are aware of the ongoing work and/or timeframes).
    - Provide information and support to the Deputy Commissioner and Executive Leadership Team (e.g. context, additional information, meetings, research

F. Resources Available to the Project

- Time for the State Leadership and Regional Implementation Team members to attend meetings, engage in communication outside the meetings, take on tasks, vet material
- Time from the SISEP Center

G. Deliverables

The following resources and tools are being developed to support district efforts in effective implementation of an evidence-based practice.

- Resource Mapping Tool
- Needs Assessment Tool
- Implementation Checklists
- Selecting An Evidence-Based Practice Tool

Communication Protocol Worksheet and Example

Communication Protocol Worksheet

Communication is important for any program or innovation. Intentionally developing and using *linking* communication protocols for *new* or existing programs and innovations establishes a transparent feedback process and furthers the development of a hospitable policy, funding, and operational environment.

The specific purposes of linking communication protocols are to:

- Communicate progress and celebrate success throughout the system
- Report systemic barriers that are preventing or hindering implementation and
  - Should be resolved by one of the groups
  - Need to be moved 'up the line' to the group that can best address the barrier
- Report on actions taken related to resolve or address past issues
- Revisit past decisions and agreements periodically to ensure that solutions are still functional

In promoting system alignment, you may be developing a 'chain' of protocols from the practice level to the state level or you may be developing protocols between and among partners in a collaborative group. Depending on a number of factors (e.g. how new the relationships are, how cohesive the groups are, how much a common purpose is shared), it may take one or several meetings to work out the first draft of the protocols. After the protocols have been tried out a couple of times, the process should be evaluated for satisfaction and functionality and then adjusted.

Communication Protocol Worksheet

State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices

From: ______________________________

To: ______________________________

Rationale	
Issues to Communicate	
Responsible Individual(s)	
Schedule, Time Allotted	
Format	
Response Timeline	
Response Format	

Communication Protocol Worksheet

State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices

From: State Design Team

To: Superintendent's Cabinet

Rationale	• Promote sustainability of initiatives • Proactively problem solve • Identify barriers • Communicate issues from other levels	• Create new and revise existing policy and/or guidance as needed • Establish feedback loops to adaptive and technical leaders • Celebrations
Issues to Communicate	• Identify barriers/challenges that impact effective implementation, and propose options for resolution – including suggested action timelines. • Issues that might need a change in resources (time, personnel, materials, funding, etc.)	• Issues that might require policy changes and/or systems change • Updates and information regarding implementation alignment with achievement of Board goals
Responsible Individual(s)	• State Transformation Specialist and contributing members as needed	
Schedule, Time Allotted	• Monthly – 30 minutes	
Format	• Face---to---face with written communication that follows consistent format	
Response Timeline	• 10 day response, 20 day action time	
Response Format		