

LEA Public Meeting Materials and Guidance

Determining Meeting Format/Schedule

Meeting formats may vary slightly depending upon the needs of the LEA. The public meeting generally will begin in a general session with introductions and opening remarks made by representatives of the LEA. It is important to make clear that the meeting is being conducted as part of the state system for monitoring special education programs and that the efforts are a partnership between LEAs and the TEA. The TEA encourages the LEA to open the meeting by sharing the LEA's commitment to the process and its desire to improve LEA programs based on community feedback.

In opening remarks, the LEA will briefly describe the purpose of the meeting and how comments are used in the continuous improvement process. Explain that the request for information will be focused around predetermined topics/questions and comments, and feedback should concentrate on areas in need of improvement. It will be important to emphasize that the purpose of the meeting is to gather system-level input, rather than feedback on individual concerns related to specific students. A public meeting script for use by the facilitator is available on the TEA website as provided above. To facilitate input, discussion groups should contain no more than 20–25 participants. If more participants show up for a public meeting, it is strongly suggested that the larger group be broken into smaller subgroups. When a large number of participants are expected, a number of breakout rooms should be available. Once broken out, each subgroup should contain a diverse group of community stakeholders. The LEA should allow ample time to sufficiently discuss all of the issues. Public meetings generally last approximately 2 hours, with at least 15–20 minutes per question for discussion.

Identifying Public Meeting Participants

To achieve diverse representation among participants, LEAs are encouraged to reach out to traditionally underrepresented populations to ensure that all interested parties have the opportunity to participate in the meeting. The LEA **may not** limit participation in the public meeting. The *Public Meeting Participants* resource provides a list of participants that should be invited to the public meeting. The LEA is required to receive parental input; the parents in attendance must represent at least 2% of the parents of students with disabilities. If the 2% parent participation requirement is not met through one meeting, the LEA may conduct additional focus group meetings specifically for the parents.

Determining Methods of Disseminating Meeting Invitations

Public Meeting Invitation and RSVP forms are available for LEA use in inviting stakeholders to the public meeting. Invitations should be disseminated in a variety of ways, including direct mail to families, posting to the LEA website, utilizing existing LEA mailing lists, and sharing of information through any existing list serves or established newsletters. Additionally, the LEA may wish to coordinate posting of information to ESC websites or list serves. It also is suggested that local or regional education groups and advocacy organizations be utilized to assist in disseminating the information. It is important that invitations reach a diverse population within the LEA, including groups that generally are underrepresented. Dissemination methods must attempt to reach a broad spectrum of parents of students with disabilities, and at least one method of LEA dissemination

must be broad-based and widely accessible, such as posting to a website or inclusion in an LEA newsletter. LEAs must document their efforts to invite stakeholders and to enhance meeting participation. This documentation is subject to review through TEA verification processes. Additionally, the information will be useful to the LEA in evaluating future stakeholder activities.

The LEA may adjust the sample invitation template provided by the TEA to meet the needs of local constituents; however, the content of the meeting invitation must include the purpose, date, location, time, and how to request or access special accommodations. It is recommended that LEAs utilize the RSVP form template found on the TEA website and request responses from those planning to attend the public meeting. This will allow the LEA to plan in advance for the appropriate amount of space and the appropriate number of facilitators, note-takers, and timekeepers. Requesting an RSVP also allows LEAs to ensure that the language and physical accessibility needs of people who attend will be accommodated.

Determining Meeting Facilitators

The LEA will determine who will serve as facilitator(s) for the public meeting(s). ESC personnel may serve as technical assistance providers in regard to the meeting, but it is expected that the LEA staff will conduct and facilitate the meeting(s). LEAs should be thoughtful in determining who will serve in the role of facilitator. It is recommended that a person with proven facilitation skills be utilized, and that the LEA emphasize the need for neutral meeting facilitation. It is further recommended that the LEA avoid designating as facilitator anyone who might be perceived by meeting participants as biased regarding input that may be received during the process.

Determining the Focus Group Topics/Questions to be Addressed During the Public Meeting

During the LEA public meeting, each LEA is required to address, at minimum, four of the six topics/questions developed by the state. Determinations regarding which topics/questions to address must be data-driven and should be based on data (*Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis Summary Report*), and findings, and areas for improvement identified as a result of the data analysis process. LEAs who offer a secondary program are required to address topic/question #6 in the public meeting. The topics/questions provided in the Public Meeting Agenda have been designed to elicit comprehensive, in-depth discussion on the topics/questions presented. The script includes a chart detailing the desired information to be elicited from each question and probes correlated with each topic. It is important to understand that the initial question will need to be followed by a probe to thoroughly obtain the required information. The LEA will need to exercise judgment based on the focused data analysis in determining which probes need to be presented to participants. In addition, if the predetermined topic questions and probes do not sufficiently address the issues identified through the data analysis process, the LEA may develop additional pertinent relevant questions to be used at the public meeting. Identify the topics/questions to be addressed and complete an *Agenda* form to be distributed to participant at the beginning of the public meeting. Document all topics/questions used. A on the *Public Meeting Response* template is available for LEA use.

The LEA public meeting is expected to be a systems-level review, which should limit potential confidentiality concerns. However, personally identifiable information must be protected in compliance with the confidentiality requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and LEAs must take steps to ensure that confidentiality requirements are met. Facilitators may need to focus or redirect discussions to prevent the sharing of confidential information.

The Day of the Public Meeting

It is anticipated that the public meeting will last approximately 2 hours. In addition to facilitators, note-takers, and LEA participants, adequate LEA personnel should be on hand available to register

participants, direct participants to appropriate locations, answer any questions that might arise, and take accurate notes on participants' comments (using flip charts, note-takers, and other methods to track and record comments). Also, a *Public Meeting Feedback* form will be provided for participants to use in evaluating the LEA public meeting. For each question/topic addressed, the LEA is required to record accurate and complete individual comments along with the role of the contributor. A on the *Public Meeting Response* form is available for LEA use.

Analyzing Input from the Public Meeting

Comments received during the public meeting must be analyzed by the core analysis team to determine consistencies, inconsistencies, trends, and areas needing improvement. Consider the degree to which data vary across campuses and by grade levels, areas of disability, ethnicity/race, economic disadvantage, limited English proficiency, gender, and/or other factors relevant to the discussion. Identify any patterns or trends discovered in the analysis, including strengths and areas for improvement. Document the findings. A on the *Public Meeting Findings* template is available for LEA use. LEAs must focus on identified areas needing improvement. Evaluate the information from the Areas for Program Improvement (and other findings collected through the data analysis process) and address those issues in the District Improvement Plan, as necessary; address any noncompliance identified in the CAP.

Submitting Response Documents to the TEA

The LEA will be required to submit documentation of the *Public Meeting Participants*, *Public Meeting Responses*, and *Public Meeting Findings* to the TEA. Specific documentation related to the public meeting, such as a list of participant names, an agenda, materials and handouts will not be submitted to the TEA. However, all public meeting documents must be maintained at the LEA subject to a request for submission at a later time as part of a verification process.