DISTRICT NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

Process Guidance

PURPOSE

This document provides guidance on conducting a needs assessment and developing a plan aligned to the Effective Schools Framework for districts with a state accountability identification that requires the district to develop, implement, and retain a Targeted Improvement Plan locally (Overall D if it is the district's initial Overall D or D in a Domain).

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to guide districts with one of the following designations through required interventions:

- Districts with an overall D under state accountability if it is the initial overall D rating
- Districts with a D in any Domain under state accountability

Districts with an F in any Domain are strongly encouraged to engage in this process. Districts with an overall F rating or with a second/subsequent overall D will attend in-person training on intervention processes at their local region Education Service Center (ESC).

Intervention Requirements

Districts that are required to engage in interventions:

- conduct a needs assessment,
- develop a Targeted Improvement Plan, and
- implement and monitor the Targeted Improvement Plan.

This process document provides step-by-step instructions for each of these intervention activities. All intervention activities are aligned to the Effective Schools Framework, the Texas Education Agency's framework for continuous improvement.

Specific intervention requirements based on your district's designation can be found on the District Accountability Interventions and Guidance page on the Division of School Improvement website.

The activities described in this guidance are conducted by the District Leadership Team. The District Coordinator of School Improvement (DCSI) oversees the process and plan implementation in the district. The needs assessment and planning process should be conducted in partnership, with the DCSI/Principal Supervisor(s) working collaboratively with campus principals, campus leadership teams, and the district leadership team to facilitate the steps in the process. To build the strongest possible improvement plan based on the results of the needs assessment, it is critical to have all members actively participate in the needs assessment to ensure that all team members share a common understanding of the results.

How to use this document

This guidance document is divided into four sections. Each section provides step-by-step guidance for that part of the process. First, districts will become familiar with the Effective Schools Framework (ESF), as this is the anchor for the needs assessment and planning process. In the second section, the district team will conduct the needs assessment by looking at state accountability data, as well as campus and district practices in relation to the ESF. The third section of this document provides guidance on developing the Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP) based on the results of the needs assessment, and the final section includes guidance on monitoring the implementation of the plan.

Some sections of this document include a note taking guide (found at the end of this document) to support the team's learning. Through the reflection document, district teams will have an opportunity to review an exemplar document, which is a tool or template that has been completed based on a sample district, to learn more about the process and the outcomes of the needs assessment and planning processes.

Timeline

The time it takes each district to conduct the needs assessment and develop the Targeted Improvement Plan will vary. Each section of this process guidance includes the general timeframe when the activities in that section should occur.

Intervention Process Overview

Section Purpose

This section provides a high-level overview of the actions the district team will take to assess their needs, develop a plan for the year, and implement and monitor the plan.

Materials Needed

No additional materials are needed for this section.

Section Timeframe

Review prior to starting the needs assessment; no later than end of August

Process Overview

In this section, you will review the overall steps that the district team, led by the DCSI, will take to conduct the needs assessment and develop the Targeted Improvement Plan. Each of these steps is described in detail in the following sections of this guidance document. Click on each section header to go to the corresponding section of this guidance document.

Part 1: Introduction to the Effective Schools Framework

In this step, you will review and reflect on the content and organization of the Effective Schools Framework (ESF).

Part 2: District Needs Assessment

In this step, you will become familiar with the two components of the district needs assessment and the tools you will use to support this needs assessment. In the needs assessment, districts will review data, any needs assessments done for campuses within their district, and their own practices in relation to the district commitments in the ESF. The two components of the needs assessment and associated tools are:

District Data Reflection

- The District will gain an understanding of overall performance before digging into the practices that led to these results.
- The DCSI and district team will use the District Data Reflection Tool and the A-F Estimator to complete this step.

District Commitments Needs Assessment

- This step supports districts in reflecting on current practice in relation to the district commitments described in the ESF in order to determine the highest leverage focus areas for improvement.
- The DCSI and district team will use the District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool to complete this step.

Part 3: Developing a Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP)

In this step, you will develop a plan for the district to address the gaps identified in the needs assessment.

- There are 4 steps in the TIP development process, and each step aligns to one or two tabs in the template.
    - Record the findings from the needs assessment
    - Set the vision/desired outcome for the year, including student outcome goals
    - Identify 90-day outcomes based on annual outcomes
    - Create the detailed action plan, with milestones and metrics, for each 90-day cycle that describes the specific steps you will take to achieve the desired outcome.
- The DCSI and district team will use the District Targeted Improvement Plan to complete this step.

Part 4: TIP Implementation and Monitoring

In this ongoing step, you will implement the actions in the plan and track your progress towards milestones.

- At the end of each 90-day cycle, you will reflect on the activities from that cycle and make any necessary planning updates.
- At the end of the third 90-day cycle, you will reflect on progress through the school year and develop a plan for the summer (June through August) to set the district up for success in the next school year.
- The DCSI and district team will use their own Targeted Improvement Plan in this step.

Part 1: Introduction to the Effective Schools Framework

Section Purpose

In this section, you will review the content and organization of the Effective Schools Framework.

Materials Needed

Computer or other device to access TexasESF.org
ESF Introduction Reflection

Section Timeframe

Review prior to starting the needs assessment; no later than end of August

Steps:

1. Using the links provided, answer the questions in the ESF Introduction Reflection.
    - Your team can do this work individually (before you meet). Make sure to plan time to debrief your individual responses as a group.

Part 2: District Needs Assessment

Section Purpose

This section provides step-by-step guidance for conducting the two components of the District Needs Assessment:

1. District Data Reflection
    - In this subsection, you will learn the steps in the data reflection process and how to use the District Data Reflection tool to identify goals for the year.
2. District Commitments Needs Assessment
    - In this subsection, you will learn how to build an evidence collection plan, how to determine the district's highest leverage focus areas for improvement, and how to facilitate a barrier analysis conversation.

The results of the Needs Assessment will be used as the foundation of the Targeted Improvement Plan.

Materials Needed

Additional materials are referenced within each tool.

Needs Assessment Process Reflection
District Data Reflection Tool
Exemplar District Data Reflection Tool
A-F Estimator
District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool
Exemplar District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool

Section Timeframe

Complete prior to developing the Targeted Improvement Plan; no later than end of September

Steps:

Process note: districts can review all the exemplars and answer the reflective questions (steps 1 and 4) for both components prior to beginning the needs assessment work.

Component 1: District Data Reflection

1. Open the Exemplar District Data Reflection Tool, and answer question 1 in the Needs Assessment Process Reflection.
2. Download the District Data Reflection Tool.
3. Review the **Domain Reflection** tab. This tab has guiding questions to support the district team in developing accountability goals for the year, and it provides a space to record the values you enter into the A-F Estimator.
    a. Click on the A-F Estimator link, select district report, and enter your district name or number. Click View Report, and the tool will be populated with your district's data.
    b. Answer the questions in the **Domain Reflection** tab by changing values in the Estimator tool.

Component 2: District Commitments Needs Assessment

4. Open the Exemplar District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool. Review **all tabs**, and answer questions 2 and 3 in the Needs Assessment Process Reflection.
5. Download the ESF Self-Assessment Tool.
6. Create your evidence collection plan in the **Evidence Collection Plan** tab:
    a. For each of the five Prioritized Levers, you will identify what you will observe and what artifacts you will gather that will help you determine the district's current level of implementation of the district commitments in that Lever. Review the District Commitments in the ESF to support your planning.
    b. For each Prioritized Lever, identify the following:
        i. Identify potential observations and artifacts to conduct/collect to gather evidence on current practices. Enter what you will observe/artifact sources in **column A**.
        ii. Determine when the observations will be conducted and artifacts collected. Indicate the timeline in **column B**. Keep in mind that you should have your evidence collection completed by the end of September to allow time to analyze the evidence, select focus areas for improvement, and to write the Targeted Improvement Plan before mid-October.
        iii. Determine who will be responsible for conducting the observations, collecting the artifacts, and reviewing the evidence. Indicate the owner in **column C**.
7. Collect the artifacts and make the observations as indicated in your evidence collection plan.
8. To ensure that the district prioritizes the district commitments made to campuses in their needs assessments, collect the District Commitments Theories of Action in the **Theory of Action Collection** tab.
    a. Enter the campus name for each campus in your district that has completed the ESF self-assessment or had an ESF diagnostic in **column AB**.
        i. Campuses are required to conduct the ESF self-assessment and/or diagnostic if they have any of the following designations under state or federal accountability (see the Campus Accountability Interventions and Guidance page for more information on campus requirements): F overall, D overall, D in a domain, Comprehensive, Targeted, and/or Additional Targeted.
        ii. If none of the campuses in your district are completing an ESF self-assessment or diagnostic (none have the identifications listed above), you can skip this tab.
    b. Use the dropdown menu in **columns CDE and FGH** under state and federal accountability to indicate each campus' rating.
    c. Copy the theory of action for that campus into the last column; you can find this either in the campus' district theory of action tool or the campus' targeted improvement plan.
9. For each **Prioritized Lever** tab **(PL 1, PL 2, PL 3, PL 4, and PL 5):**
    a. Gather the evidence collected in relation to that Prioritized Lever and reflect on current district practice and systems in relation to relevant District Commitments. Enter your notes about the evidence you collected in **column B**.
    b. Using the Guiding Questions for Evidence Analysis listed in **column C** as a guide, determine your districts current implementation of each District Commitment. Select the descriptive statement which best describes the current implementation: "substantially in place and functioning," "work is underway," or "not yet started" from the drop-down menu in **column D**.

   c. Use the information entered in the **Theory of Action Collection** tab to answer the question in **column E**: How many Theories of Action does this District Commitment appear in?
   d. Once you have given each District Commitment a current implementation level, determine the overall implementation level of the Prioritized, answering the guiding question in the Prioritized Lever Reflection box at the bottom of each tab. Select an implementation level from 1 (Not Yet Started) to 5 (Fully Implemented) in **column E** of the box, using your current implementation levels for each District Commitment as a guide.
   e. Finally, in the District Commitment Prioritization box at the end of each tab select the three highest priority District Commitments for the Prioritized Lever from the drop-down menus. Use the current implementation levels of the district commitments in **column D** and how frequently they appear in the campus-based theory of actions in **column E** as a guide.
10. Use the **Focus Area Identification** tab to identify 3-5 areas for improvement. These will serve as the foundation for your Targeted Improvement Plan.
   a. Review the Prioritized Lever Implementation Summary in **Row 8**. The document will automatically populate the implementation levels indicated in each PL's analysis page.
   b. Sort the Prioritized Levers by their implementation levels. Under each implementation level number, use the drop-down menus in **Rows 12-16** to indicate the PLs at that implementation level. This allows the district to have a clearer view of the distribution of PLs across implementation levels.
   c. Review the District Commitment Prioritization Summary. The District Commitments are divided by PL and are found in **Rows 18-37**. The document will automatically populate the District Commitments indicated in each PL's analysis page. This allows you to see the most pressing needs for the district in one place.
   d. PLs at an Implementation Level of 1-3 may be considered "bigger" or more significant gaps in current district practice. Reflect upon which Prioritized Levers fall under each category.
   e. Based on the reflection on Prioritized Levers, identify the specific 3-5 District Commitments the district will address in the Targeted Improvement Plan as focus areas for improvement. Indicate the 3-5 focus areas and the rationale for their selection in **Rows 41-45**.
11. Conduct the Barrier Analysis and record your findings in the **Barrier Analysis** tab. The purpose of the Barrier Analysis Tool is to name the specific barriers that may arise or may have arisen in the past when working to implement a given District Commitment with fidelity. By naming these barriers proactively, the district can effectively build structures and actions into their Targeted Improvement Plan to address them.
   a. The focus areas the district identified will automatically populate in **column A**.
   b. Gather relevant stakeholders to discuss potential barriers. For each focus area, consider:
      i. What mindsets (beliefs/opinions) may have contributed the gap between current practice and strong implementation? What mindset shift needs to occur for strong implementation to occur?
      ii. What behaviors (actions or lack of action) may have contributed the gap between current practice and strong implementation? What behaviors have to change for strong implementation to occur?
      iii. What resources was the campus/district lacking that may have contributed the gap between current practice and strong implementation? What resources are needed to implement this action?
   c. Indicate the barriers surfaced for each Focus Area in **columns B, C, and D**.

Part 3: Developing a Targeted Improvement Plan

Section Purpose

In this section, you will review the purpose and major components of the Targeted Improvement Plan and understand the process for the completion of each component so the team can develop a strong Targeted Improvement Plan for the current school year.

Materials Needed

The district's completed Data Reflection tool
The district's completed District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool
District Targeted Improvement Plan Template
Exemplar District Targeted Improvement Plan (*link coming August 2019)*

Section Timeframe

Complete after conducting the needs assessment; no later than mid-October

Steps:

1. Open the Exemplar District Targeted Improvement Plan and complete the TIP Development Reflection.
2. Download the District Targeted Improvement Plan Template and complete the district information at the top (**Rows 2-3**). Do not complete the Assurances section (**Rows 5-7)** until the entire plan is complete.
3. Record the findings from the needs assessment the district team conducted in the **Foundations** tab:
    a. Use the district's completed District Data Reflection Tool to answer the Data Analysis questions in **Rows 9-11**.
    b. Use the district's completed District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool to complete the section titled "District Needs Assessment Results."
        i. Use the drop-down menus in **Row 14** to select the 3-5 District Commitments the district has chosen to focus on. You can find these in the District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool, Focus Area identification tab, Rows 41-45. If you selected three or four focus areas for improvement, you can leave the fourth and/or fifth columns, Prioritized Focus Area #4 and #5, blank.
        ii. For each Prioritized Focus area:
            1. Enter the rationale for selecting that Essential Action in **Row 15**. You can find the rationale you have already identified in the District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool, Focus Area identification tab, Rows 41-45.
            2. Enter the summary of the barriers you identified in your barrier analysis in **Row 17**. You can find these barriers in the District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool, Barrier Analysis tab, Rows 7-9.

4. Set the vision/desired outcome for the year, including student outcome goals, in the **Foundations** and **Student Data** tabs:
    a. In the **Foundations** tab, identify your desired annual outcome for each Prioritized Focus Area and enter that into **Row 16**. This will be the vision that will drive the development of the rest of your Targeted Improvement Plan.
        i. The desired annual outcome describes the vision or goal for what district practices and systems, relative to this district commitment, will look like after this Targeted Improvement Plan is implemented with fidelity.
        ii. As a team, consider what practices and systems in the district will look and sound like by the end of the year if the District Commitments are being implemented with fidelity. You can describe this outcome in quantitatively or qualitatively.
    b. The **Student Data** tab is where you track high level student performance goals and progress. At a minimum, you will track STAAR tested subject and grade levels.
        i. In **columns A and B**, enter the pertinent subject areas and grade levels.
        ii. In Cycles 1 through 3 (which covers September through May), for each grade level/ subject area, you'll enter a data source using the drop-down menu in **columns C, F, and I** and a goal for that group of students on that particular assessment in **columns D, G, and J**.
            1. Goals for cycles 1-3 can be changed throughout the year.
            2. The data sources do not have to align across the year, but you will be able to draw better conclusions from the data if they do.
            3. If you do not have a district-wide data point for a subject area and grade level in a cycle, leave the cells blank.
        iii. In the summative section, select STAAR for STAAR tested grades and Other for non-tested grades in **column L** and an annual goal in **column M**. The goals entered in this column should align to the Domain goals you entered in the **Foundations** tab.
        iv. The columns titled "Actual" will be populated throughout the school year.
5. Identify 90-day outcomes for Cycles 1-3. In the top section (**Rows 1-6**) of the **Cycle 1, Cycle 2,** and **Cycle 3** tabs:
    a. The District Commitment and Desired Annual Outcome (**Rows 3 and 4**) will be prepopulated from the **Foundations** tab.
    b. With your team, consider:
        i. What will you need to accomplish *by the end of this cycle* to be on track to meet the Desired Annual Outcome for this Prioritized Focus Area?
        ii. What will the practices and systems in your district look and sound like at the end of the 90-day cycle (in November, February, and May)?
    c. Enter the 90-day outcome for each prioritized Focus Area in **Row 5**. This outcome can be described qualitatively or quantitatively.
    d. Using the barrier analysis summary in the Foundations tab, list barriers to implementation the district may face during that specific 90-day cycle as they take the necessary steps to improve the prioritized focus area(s) in **Row 6**. Barriers may stay the same or change from cycle to cycle.

   e. Once you have completed this for all three cycles, review the 90-day outcomes across the year to ensure that they lead to the district achieving the Desired Annual Outcomes. Make any necessary adjustments to each cycle's outcome.
6. Now that an outcome has been identified for each cycle, create the detailed action plan (**Row 7**), with milestones and metrics, in the **Cycle 1, Cycle 2,** and **Cycle 3** tabs. This plan will describe the specific steps you will take to achieve the desired outcome.
   a. In **column AB**, add your milestones, the critical actions you will complete during the 90-day cycle. These are specific points in time and can represent the sum of several smaller actions. Achieving the milestones in a cycle should lead to the district achieving their 90-day cycle outcome. Also consider the barriers that need to be addressed this cycle when identifying milestones.
   b. In **column C**, indicate which of your 3-5 focus areas this milestone falls under. A milestone can align to multiple focus areas, and you do not have to have milestones for every focus area in every cycle.
   c. In **columns D, E, and F** enter the timeline, resources needed, and to assign team members to the milestone. By completing these columns, you ensure that all tasks are assigned, that they have a timeline, and that you have the necessary resources to complete them.
   d. In **columns GH and I**, indicate the date that you will collect evidence that demonstrates your progress toward the milestone and the evidence you will use to measure your progress. This can be qualitative or quantitative.
   e. The final two columns (**J and KL**) and the last section of the tab (Reflection and Planning for Next 90-day Cycle) are completed during Implementation and Monitoring.
   f. Add rows as needed.
7. Once you have completed the **Foundations** tab and the sections of the **Cycle 1, Cycle 2,** and **Cycle 3** tabs referenced above, complete the Assurances section on the **Foundations** tab. The plan can then be submitted to the board of trustees for approval.
   a. Implementation of the plan should begin as soon as possible, but no later than mid-October.
   b. The plan should be approved by the board by mid-November.

Part 4: TIP Implementation and Monitoring

Section Purpose

In this section, you will review the process for tracking progress towards your 90-day cycle goals and your annual goals and for making adjustment to plan implementation to ensure your plan stays on track.

Materials Needed

District's completed Targeted Improvement Plan

Section Timeframe

Throughout the school year; end-of-cycle reflection takes place approximately the last two weeks of each cycle (last 2 weeks in November for Cycle 1, last 2 weeks in February for Cycle 2, and last 2 weeks in May for Cycle 3)

Steps:

1. At regular intervals (ex. once a week), the team should review the Targeted Improvement Plan to identify what milestones district staff will be working on that week.
2. Throughout the year, the DCSI, in collaboration with the district team, will ensure that the staff assigned to tasks in the plan are completing the tasks on the timelines indicated in the plan.
3. At the end of each cycle, the DCSI will ensure that student outcome data and the evidence used to determine progress toward each milestone (indicated in **column GH** in the action plan in that cycle's tab) is collected. The DCSI and district team will use the evidence collected to determine success and next steps.
   a. In the **Student Data** tab, enter the percent of students that reached the district-determined proficiency level for that cycle in the "actual" column (**column E, H, or K**).
   b. In each **Cycle** tab, for each milestone, select the appropriate descriptor in **column J**, Progress toward Milestone.
   c. In **column KL**, indicate any adjustments or next steps that need to be taken in the next cycle. If no adjustments are needed, type "none needed" into the cell.
4. In the last 2 weeks of each cycle, complete the section titled "Reflection and Planning for Next 90-day Cycle."
   a. With the district team, reflect on what went well that cycle and what did not; enter the responses in the cells.
   b. Any milestones indicated for carryover or as new milestones should be added to the next cycle's action plan.
5. At the end of Cycle 3 (end of May), the team will:
   a. answer additional questions about progress toward the Desired Annual Outcome at the bottom of the **Cycle 3** tab, and

b. complete the **Cycle 4** tab. The purpose of Cycle 4 (June-August) planning is to ensure that the district is putting systems and processes in place for the next school year. Depending on the progress made during the year, the district may select new prioritized focus areas at this point, or they may continue to work on the current prioritized focus areas.

Appendix A: ESF Introduction Reflection

Use this note taking guide in Part 1: Introduction to the Effective Schools Framework to record your reflections on the Effective Schools Framework.

1. In 1-2 sentences, how would you summarize the Effective Schools Framework (ESF)?
    - Use the 1 minute video and section titled "Purpose of the ESF" to answer this question.

2. What is the goal of the ESF?
    - Use the Framework Overview to answer this question.

3. In general, what are the… (Use the Framework Overview to answer this question.)
    - …district commitments?
    - …essential actions?
    - …foundational essential actions?
    - …key practices?

4. Click through each Lever on the website and complete the table:

What is the title of the Lever?	What is the foundational Essential Action for this Lever?	How would having this foundational Essential Action in place impact the other Essential Actions in this Lever?	How would implementing the district commitments in this Lever support a campus' implementation of the foundational Essential Actions?
Prioritized Lever 1:			
Prioritized Lever 2:			
Prioritized Lever 3:			
Prioritized Lever 4:			
Prioritized Lever 5:			

Appendix B: Needs Assessment Process Reflection

Use this note taking guide in Part 2: District Needs Assessment to record your reflections on the needs assessment process.

District Data Reflection

Review the Exemplar District Data Reflection Tool and answer the following questions:

1. What can you tell about student performance at this district?

District Commitments Needs Assessment

Review the Exemplar District Commitments Needs Assessment Tool and answer the following questions:

2. What will the district focus on improving in their Targeted Improvement Plan this year? How did they make this decision?

3. What would be the benefit of having this clarity around current campus and district practice and focus areas for improvement prior to developing a Targeted Improvement Plan?

Appendix C: TIP Development Reflection

Use this note taking guide in Part 3: Developing the Targeted Improvement Plan to record your reflections on the TIP development process.

Plan Overview

Take a few minutes to review all tabs of the Exemplar District Targeted Improvement Plan (*link coming August 2019)*. (You will look at each tab in more depth in the next sections.)

1. How would the district's needs assessment set them up to develop a plan with this level of specificity?

2. What would be the impact on district systems, campus practice, and student outcomes if this plan was executed with fidelity?

Foundations

Use the foundations tab of the Exemplar District Targeted Improvement Plan (*link coming August 2019)* to answer the following:

3. How are the completed District Data Tool and District Commitments Needs Assessment used to complete the Foundations tab?

4. How does the Foundations tab set the district up for success throughout the rest of the improvement planning process?

Student Data

Use the Student Data tab of the Exemplar District Targeted Improvement Plan (*link coming August 2019)* to answer the following:

5. How will completing the District Data Tool support the completion of the Student Data Tab?

6. How does the Student Data tab create a common understanding of student outcomes throughout the year?

90-day Cycle Planning

Use the Cycle tabs (Cycles 1-3) of the Exemplar District Targeted Improvement Plan (*link coming August 2019)* to answer the following:

7. How does the information in the Foundations tab support the district in developing a strong vision and goal for each cycle (Desired 90-day Outcome)?

8. How does information in the 90-day Outcomes section (Rows 1-8) set the district up to create a strong action plan for that cycle?

9. How did the district use the 90-day Outcomes section (Rows 1-8) to complete the action plan in that cycle?

10. How does the action plan in each cycle set the district up to achieve the cycle and annual goals?