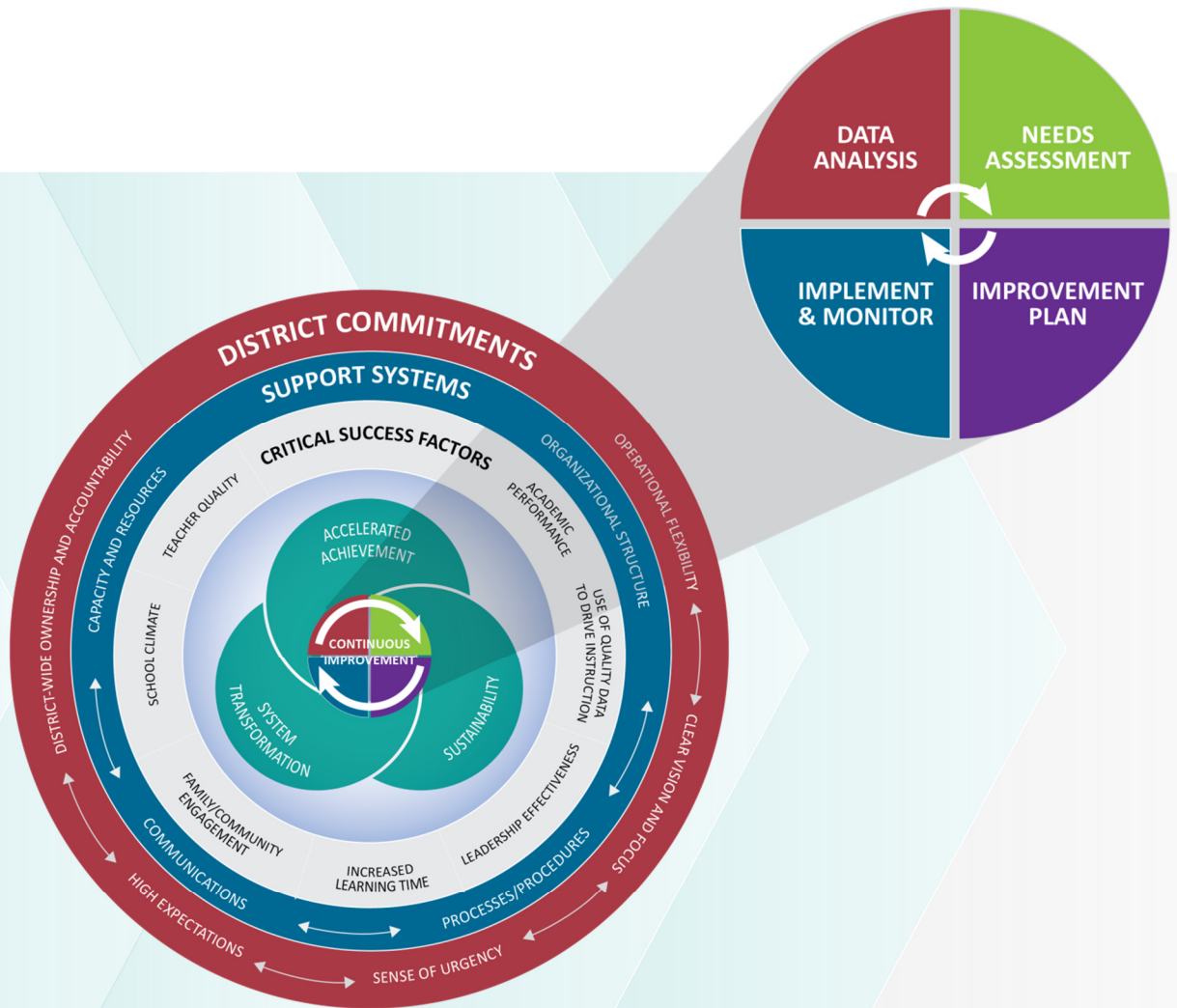


Guidance for the Texas Accountability Intervention System

Needs Assessment Guidance



Needs Assessment

Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) Needs Assessment Guidance

Needs Assessment Overall Purpose

The intent of this document is to provide support for the performance of needs assessment work of campuses and LEAs. The process set forth is aligned to the State Framework, which includes the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process. As a result, the following process is intended to bring clarity to the needs of the LEA/campus in order to effectively plan actions and make evidence-based decisions. Finally, all accountability systems require a thorough needs assessment be completed to inform the improvement planning process (TEC §39.106 and P.L.1114 (b)).



Design and Framework:

This guidance document is designed to walk an LEA/ campus intervention team through a needs assessment process by engaging in five steps. Each step includes an overview of the purpose of the step and critical actions to be taken during that step. In addition, tips for success are included to enhance the needs assessment work. Some steps also include additional suggestions or examples to help facilitate the process. Although parts of the document may be useful in isolation, the document is designed to be used as a process. After the five steps of the needs assessment, there is a section dedicated to transitioning into the development of a targeted improvement plan. Whenever actions or steps in this guidance satisfy requirements in the Texas Education Code for LEAs/campuses in accountability, it will be noted with the appropriate code citation.

Needs Assessment Process Overview

- Step 1:** Clarify and Prioritize Problem Statements
- Step 2:** Establish Purpose of the Needs Assessment and Establish the Team
- Step 3:** Gather Data
- Step 4:** Data Analysis Review
- Step 5:** Root Cause Analysis

Step 1: Clarifying and Prioritizing Problem Statements

Purpose: As a result of the data analysis process, the problems that need to be addressed should be clearly defined. These problem statements synthesize the data analysis process into objective statements that bring clarity to the areas that should be included in the improvement plan. A problem statement is also used to pinpoint the gap in the data that is to be further examined through a root cause analysis.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING PROBLEM STATEMENTS:

1. Has a general problem been identified?
2. Do we collectively agree it is a problem?
3. How is the problem relevant to our campus?
4. Is the problem based on real data?

Problem statements are concise and objective statements that reflect the current state according to the data. These statements do not assign causation as to why a gap in the data exists or provide solutions to the problems. Essentially problem statements capture the “where you are” compared to “where you want to be.” These statements articulate the gaps in data in order to create the starting point for a needs assessment process that includes a root cause analysis.

NOTE: Before beginning any planning or needs assessment, it is important to have a true picture of what the problems are as the foundation for your planning. Well written problem statements set the stage for a solid improvement plan.

Actions:

Reviewing problem statements

Effective problem statements meet the following criteria:

- Substantiated by facts and data
- Written objectively
- Use concise language
- Include specific details (who, what, when..)
- Focus on a single, manageable issue
- Has relevance
- Avoids causation or assigning solutions

Prioritizing problem statement

Prioritizing problem statements is a critical step when identifying areas to target in an improvement plan. Consider the following questions:

1. Which problem statement(s) address our areas of low performance/need?
2. Which problem statement(s) impact the greatest numbers of students?
3. Which problem statement(s) focus on student achievement?
4. Which problem statement(s) are manageable, relevant and focus efforts on core issues?



Tips for Step 1:

- Make sure the team understands and agrees on the problem statements created
- Use a prioritization process to hone in on the greatest areas of need and the greatest areas of impact
- Ensure you have a clear list of problem statements before moving onto Step 2

Step 2: Establish Purpose of Needs Assessment and Establish the Team

Purpose: The purpose of the needs assessment should be understood and aligned to the shared vision and mission for the LEA/campus and helps identify the root cause of identified problems. A clear purpose helps safeguard against assumptions and keeps the work focused on clear and targeted outcomes and answers the question WHY. Understanding the purpose and objectives ensures all stakeholders are able to provide input using a collaborative approach. The needs assessment is not a one-time annual event; it is a continuous process.

Actions:

Establish the criteria for the team and other stakeholders needed (TEC §39.106 and P.L. 1114(b)).

Having the right voices at the table is essential. Be sure to identify the key players who are vested in the needs assessment process and understand the vision and mission as well as the purpose of the needs assessment.

- Who are the stakeholders that may not have had adequate representation in the past? What will be the process for ensuring that all opinions and ideas are able to be shared within the norms established by the group?
- For LEAs/campuses in improvement due to accountability, the intervention team (TEC§39.106(a)) would be members of the needs assessment team

Review the current LEA/campus vision and mission statements.

- Determine whether the vision and mission statements still reflect shared goals and values. If they require updating, proceed with revision BEFORE beginning the needs assessment process. A review of the vision and mission is critical to the success of the needs assessment. This step ensures that everyone understands the shared vision and that all stakeholders feel vested in the needs assessment process. Having a clear and universal understanding of the vision and mission is foundational and essential to improvement efforts.
- Once the vision is agreed upon, develop logistics and a plan for conducting the needs assessment. During this activity establish a timeline, a calendar for needs assessment meetings, which include target dates for completion of activities, and a communication plan for sharing the outcome of each session.
- An important part of this action step is to establish norms for the needs assessment working group so that the work remains focused and moves forward smoothly and collaboratively.

Reach common understanding of the intended goals for the needs assessment based on the LEA/campus vision.

- Revisit the vision and mission to check for alignment. The team should be able to articulate what the ideal LEA/campus would look like so that planning and goals can guide the organization to that outcome.
- Having a clear idea of the desired goal will guide the needs assessment work.
- Once the team has established the goals, refer to them frequently to make sure that the work remains on track.

Begin with the end in mind:

- What does the organization want to learn as a result of this process?
- What information does the LEA/campus want to uncover?
- What are the objectives of the needs assessment?
- How will the LEA/campus measure success toward identified objectives?
- How will the LEA/campus use the information to drive planning and improvement efforts continuously?
- How will the LEA/campus know it has achieved the goals?



**Tips for
Step 2:**

- Adopt a process approach rather than needs assessment as a single event.
- Avoid communicating the process as a compliance driven activity.
- Represent a cross-section of all stakeholders on the needs assessment team.
- Be transparent and share the work of the needs assessment team.

Step 3: Gather Data

Purpose: The extensive nature of the needs assessment process provides the information and insight necessary for evidence-based decision making. In order to make informed discoveries to drive decisions, the use of multiple data sources is imperative. The designation of a specific step for gathering data ensures that all data essential for the completion of a thorough profile of the LEA/campus have been retrieved. This step provides an opportunity to collect additional data sources that enhance the team’s ability to see all the factors that are impacting student achievement. It is important to stay focused on gathering data and organizing that data into user-friendly arrangements and documents without jumping to analysis. This step ensures the best information has been gathered before moving forward.

NOTE: The LEA/campus may have gathered data previously by using the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) Data Analysis Guidance or an LEA designed process; however, this step looks at additional data sources and approaches to collecting data. The importance of collecting varied data sources is paramount to an effective needs assessment so revisiting the action of gathering data action is prudent.

Actions:

Determine data sources necessary to address the stated objectives and purpose.

- Once the purpose, vision and mission, and desired outcome of the needs assessment are established, the team can start to gather and organize data. Staying focused on the purpose and vision can ensure alignment of efforts.
- In order for the needs assessment team to achieve their goals, gathering the necessary data is critical in having all of the right information and data available to get the whole picture of the LEA/campus.

Establish a lead from the needs assessment team to manage data collection.

- Gathering data takes time, so dedicating a lead can help to facilitate this step and keep the team working in a timely fashion.
- A data lead is also aware of the data that has been collected and can ensure there are not gaps in the data.

Identify relevant data sources which already exist that are currently available for use such as:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 1) AEIS | 8) TELPAS | 13) PBMAS reports |
| 2) Discipline referrals | 9) Previously conducted surveys or snapshots | 14) Compliance reviews |
| 3) OSS/ISS reports | 10) PEIMS | 15) Student Level Information |
| 4) Report card grades | 11) Data by Critical Success Factor (CSF) | 16) Other |
| 5) CBAs | 12) Short term and long term data | |
| 6) Attendance reports | | |
| 7) Demographics | | |

Gather and review existing data sources.

- Are the data in a format that is easy to use?
- Are they accurate and current?
- Are there gaps in the data that prevent the team from seeing the whole picture?

Determine if other information is needed to meet the purpose of the needs assessment, so that the process represents the entire landscape of the LEA/campus.

- The LEA/campus may need to revisit this action after completing Step 4 since data analysis may reveal gaps in the data gathered, which will mean going back to step 3 to gather more data before moving forward.

Collect additional data (teacher, student, community, other) such as:

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- School climate data

NOTE: Campuses have easy access to student performance and demographic data, but often need more perception data. Collecting additional data in the form of surveys and interviews is intended to secure perception data and ensures stakeholder perspectives are considered in the needs assessment process.



Tips for Step 3:

- Appoint a designated lead for data review and collection.
- Remain objective and avoid jumping to analysis.
- Understand data collection takes time.
- Ensure adequate resources (time, personnel, materials and technology).
- Organize and display data so that it is easy to interpret and “see”.
- Encourage honest and open feedback.

Step 4: Analyze and Organize Data (TEC §39.106 and P.L. 1114 (b))

Purpose: In order to gain insight into what the data are saying about the work at the LEA/campus, this step is focused on sets of data, which will help identify trends and reveal the big picture through comparisons of the data. The intent is not to apply causal factors or begin to identify reasons for the data, but to remain objective and reveal the facts of the data. By remaining objective, this step focuses the team on looking for both trends and patterns over time. This step entails a final look at the problem statements before beginning the root cause analysis process.

Before beginning step 5, which digs deeper into the meaning of the data and the causal factors, it is important to look for the objective facts the data reveal. Doing so will both establish the data foundation on which to build a comprehensive portrait of the LEA/campus and drive the needs assessment and planning processes.

NOTE: As previously mentioned in step 3, the LEA/campus may have analyzed data by using the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) Data Analysis Guidance or LEA designed process; however, this step looks at additional data sources and approaches to analyzing data aligned to the state framework. The importance of analyzing data is critical to an effective needs assessment. This step will help the LEA/campus align the data and identified needs to the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) Framework.

For LEAs/campuses in improvement due to accountability, particular data must be analyzed during the needs assessment process. (TEC § 39.106 (b)) See Appendix A for a complete list.

Actions:

Determine what data need to be kept on the table and what data need to be reserved for reference.

- Although all data collected in step 3 are important, some data will be consistently utilized. Other data sources are best used for reference when questions arise through the needs assessment process.
- This additional reference data will likely be needed when the team begins the more in-depth look at the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and/or support systems questions. Part of the balance is having all of the

data necessary to uncover the core areas of need, while not overwhelming the process with too much information.

Establish the data facts.

The goal of this action is for the LEA/campus to uncover the facts. Only state what the data are saying without assigning any perception or assumption. It is important to read the data without trying to explain the data. This can most easily be done by asking some simple questions, including but not limited to:

- What is increasing?
- What is decreasing?
- Are any trends evident from quarter to quarter or year to year?
- Are there new areas that have not been a priority before that are being revealed in the numbers (e.g. student groups, CTE, subject areas)?

Determine strengths and areas for improvement or focus.

To guide the discussion on strengths and areas for improvement or focus, begin the conversation with the following questions:

- What do these data seem to reveal?
- What do they not reveal? What else needs to be known?
- What good news can be celebrated?
- What needs for school improvement might arise from these data?
- What are the gaps and the problem statements that have been developed to address the gaps?

Utilize the Critical Success Factors (CSF) and/or support system questions in *Appendix B and C* to target specific areas of focus. LEAs will also want to analyze the district commitment questions. All of these questions can be referenced in the appendices.

Tips for Step 4:

- Appoint a designated lead for data discussions and a lead for keeping the needs assessment team focused on this organizing data.
- Understand that data discussion takes time.
- Encourage honest and open feedback while avoiding causation.
- Remain objective and avoid jumping to analysis.

Step 5: Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

Purpose: Step 5 helps to identify WHY a problem has occurred. Often times when a problem is discovered, an action or intervention is immediately applied to the problem in an attempt to resolve it. The danger in action planning before drilling down to the root cause may only allow for the treatment of the symptoms of a bigger problem. Recall that the data analysis process is an attempt to identify WHAT the problem is. The jump from WHAT the problem is to HOW it can be fixed overlooks the most important step which is determining WHY the problem exists. In order to align actions with areas of need, the root cause must be identified.

Actions:

Begin with problem statements from the data analysis process that have been prioritized (TEC §39.106)

Problem statements are concise and objective statements that reflect the current state according to the data.

Conduct a “10, 5, 5” process with each problem statement

The purpose of this protocol is to perform an initial brainstorm of the possible reasons why a problem might be occurring. Start by thinking of 10 reasons why a problem might be occurring. There are no right or wrong answers during this brainstorming process. The objective of this exercise is to generate possible ideas. Next, think of 5 more possible reasons. When a team is stretched to think beyond the initial 5-10 reasons, reasons with greater depth tend to emerge. Usually initial ideas focus on external factors such as students, parents or the community. When forced to think more deeply by generating a longer list, additional connections and potential reasons for a problem can be revealed. Next, generate 5 more possible reasons to stretch the thinking even further.

Once the team has brainstormed a list of 20 possible reasons, there is a need to pare down these responses. For example, look for duplicated or very similar responses. The next protocol is another approach to narrowing the responses.

Narrow the list of possible reasons a problem is occurring

During this step the team reviews the brainstorm list and removes any items that the team agrees can be eliminated in order to fine tune the list.

Identify the sphere of control of the campus or district

The circle of control and circle of influence is an adaptation of Stephen Covey's Circle of Influence and Circle of Concern (Covey, S. R. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. 1989, NY: Free Press).

The purpose of this protocol is to decide which reasons generated from 10,5,5 can be directly controlled by a campus' action(s), or influenced. It is in the best interest of the group to direct energy toward reasons that can be directly controlled, allowing for greater impact of desired results. By looking at the list generated from the 10,5,5 activity, sort items by what can be directly controlled by the campus or district and those items that can only be influenced. A T-chart is an easy format to use for the sorting activity. Once you have sorted your list, you will want to focus your efforts on the possible reasons for the problem (root causes) that are in the list of items under your control.

The 5 Whys

Once you have sorted your brainstormed list, select one of the items from the circle of control list. Although we have generated possibilities, we still have not identified **WHY** this might be the cause of the problem or established the connection to the problem statement. The 5 Whys protocol will help dig even deeper into the potential root causes and connect to our problem statement.

Using the 5 Whys, conduct a deep dialogue around processes surrounding the identified problems and gaps. (See the examples below on how to use the 5 Whys process.)

Example 1: Problem statement: Discipline referrals are increasing

Why 1: Why do we have so many discipline referrals?

- *Because a lot of students act inappropriately.*

Why 2: Why do they act inappropriately?

- *Because they don't know the rules.*

Why 3: Why don't they know the rules?

- *Because we haven't explained and enforced the rules consistently.*

Why 4: Why haven't we explained and enforced the rules consistently?

- *Because we haven't agreed on a common set of expectations.*

Why 5: Why haven't we agreed on common expectations?

- *Because we haven't spent time together defining our philosophy.* (Source: The handbook for SMART School Teams: Conzemius and O'Neill, 2002)

Example 2: Problem statement: Teacher turnover rates are consistently high

Why 1: Why is teacher turnover so high?

- *Because many teachers feel this job is too hard.*

Why 2: Why do they feel this job is too hard?

- *Because they don't feel supported in the classroom.*

Why 3: Why don't they feel supported in the classroom?

- *Because they don't have a mentor teacher to turn to for support.*

Why 4: Why don't they have a mentor teacher to turn to for support?

- *Because the campus has not implemented a mentoring program to assist struggling teachers.*

Why 5: Why hasn't the campus implemented a mentoring program to assist struggling teachers?

- *Because we had concerns about time and resources.*

Note: At this point, the needs assessment team would want to discuss how time and resources are currently allocated and prioritized. It is a possibility that a mentoring program is a high priority and needs to be considered.

Example 3: Problem statement: The wrong materials for training courses have been delivered to training venues on several occasions.

Why 1: Why did this happen?

- *The person packing and dispatching them for delivery made some mistakes. She was packing materials for three different courses at the time, was in a hurry and didn't notice. (Symptom)*

Why 2: Why was it overlooked?

- *She's quite new to the job and there hadn't been enough time for training. (Symptom)*

Why 3: Why was a new person doing this job without apparent back up?

- *The person who used to do that job had left and everyone else was busy also. And there is nothing written down, such as a checklist of materials to pack, nor any procedure. (Symptom)*

Why 4: Why is there no procedure or guideline?

- *We've just had so many new staff lately (turnover has been very high) that there has been no time for training or writing procedures. (Symptom)*

Why is that? Root Causes:

- *There is no effective training system in place. And no priority or importance has been placed on having some basic documentation in place: writing down essential information to make sure that things are done consistently, despite changes of personnel.*

Note: The 5 Whys is often done by restating the previous answer as a question. Example 3 illustrates that this does not always have to be the case. The intent is to ask questions that will reveal the true causal factors.

Tips for Step 5:

- Avoid treating the symptom rather than the problem.
- Keep problem statements factual.
- Remember that schools are complex systems. Continue to ask “Why?”
- Avoid passing judgment and focus on how to address the root causes.
- Develop collective ownership of the identified gaps and problems.
- Five is not the magic number for 5 Why’s analysis; there may be a need to dig further and ask more questions.

Closing and Next Steps:

After a needs assessment is conducted and the root causes have been identified, the next step is to develop an improvement plan. For LEA/campus interventions due to accountability, the improvement plan should be targeted and address the reasons for low performance [TEC §39.106 (a) and 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §97.1071] or ESEA flexibility waiver requirements. There are many resources to help support the LEA/campus in this step.

When beginning the improvement plan, the team will want to look at all resources available, technical assistance options, as well as other factors such as timelines and school improvement requirements.

Many resources can be found at www.tcdss.net and at www.tea.state.tx.us/pmi.

If you need assistance developing an improvement plan, please see the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) Guidance Document on Improvement Planning. This guidance document has information on the research to support targeted plans as well as specific instructions on how to develop a plan to be submitted into ISAM if you are a LEA/campus designated for required improvement.

Tips for Improvement Planning:

- Set annual goals and quarterly checkpoints to track progress.
- Review the needs assessment findings and continue to dialogue around the problem statements and root causes.
- Consider the data that will need to be collected to track the progress of the improvement plan as well as data to enhance the needs assessment process.
- Communicate the plan with all stakeholders.
- Utilize all available resources to support this process.

Appendix A:

Needs Assessment Requirements in Texas Education Code

LEAs and campuses in improvement due to accountability are required under TEC §39.106 (b) to analyze the following in the needs assessment process.

TEC §39.106 (b)

(b) An on-site needs assessment of the campus under Subsection (a) must determine the contributing education-related and other factors resulting in the campus's low performance and lack of progress. The team shall use all of the following guidelines and procedures relevant to each area of insufficient performance in conducting a targeted on-site needs assessment and shall use each of the following guidelines and procedures in conducting a comprehensive on-site needs assessment:

- (1) an assessment of the staff to determine the percentage of certified teachers who are teaching in their field, the percentage of teachers who are fully certified, the number of teachers with more than three years of experience, and teacher retention rates;
- (2) compliance with the appropriate class-size rules and number of class-size waivers received;
- (3) an assessment of the quality, quantity, and appropriateness of instructional materials, including the availability of technology-based instructional materials;
- (4) a report on the parental involvement strategies and the effectiveness of the strategies;
- (5) an assessment of the extent and quality of the mentoring program provided for new teachers on the campus and provided for experienced teachers on the campus who have less than two years of teaching experience in the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned;
- (6) an assessment of the type and quality of the professional development provided to the staff;
- (7) a demographic analysis of the student population, including student demographics, at-risk populations, and special education percentages;
- (8) a report of disciplinary incidents and school safety information;
- (9) financial and accounting practices;
- (10) an assessment of the appropriateness of the curriculum and teaching strategies;
- (11) a comparison of the findings from Subdivisions (1) through (10) to other campuses serving the same grade levels within the district or to other campuses within the campus's comparison group if there are no other campuses within the district serving the same grade levels as the campus; and
- (12) any other research-based data or information obtained from a data collection process that would assist the campus intervention team in:
 - (A) recommending an action under Subsection (c); and
 - (B) executing a targeted improvement plan under Subsection (d-3).

Appendix B:

Critical Success Factor Questions to Consider

Appendix B includes additional questions to consider for each Critical Success Factor (CSF). These are optional questions provided as a resource.

CSF 1: Improve Academic Performance

1. What systems are in place to ensure that students are being assessed at the level of rigor that is established in the state standards and assessment?
2. Which student interventions are having the greatest impact on student performance?
3. Which interventions are not achieving desired results?
4. Which students are benefiting? Why? Why Not?
5. What is the process for monitoring and communicating student progress?
6. What is the process for identifying essential knowledge and skills attainment by individual students?
7. How are gaps in the curriculum and instruction identified?
8. What is the process for monitoring, evaluating, and revising the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners?
9. How does the LEA/campus monitor whether the scope and sequence allows adequate time for students to learn the essential knowledge and skills?
10. How does the LEA/campus ensure that the assessed curriculum is being taught and monitored?
11. How does the LEA/campus ensure that vocabulary used in the assessment is being taught?
12. How does the LEA/campus ensure that written, taught, and assessed curricula are implemented consistently by all teachers?
13. What feedback are teachers receiving and how often?
14. How does the LEA/campus ensure that action is taken with the feedback that is provided?
15. What percentage of the campus administrator's time is spent on actions aimed at directly improving academic performance?
16. What are the particular strengths in the process that can be attributed to the gains discovered in the data analysis?
17. What areas will need continued focus in order to have a positive impact on academic performance?
18. What are the particular weaknesses in the process that could be attributed to the identified areas of need?
19. Are the processes in place based on data driven decisions versus unsubstantiated "hunches"?

CSF 2 Increase the Use of Quality Data to Drive Instruction:

1. How are formative assessment data used to inform decisions about classroom instruction and student interventions?
2. How are interim assessment data (e.g. benchmarks) used to inform decisions about classroom instruction, curriculum and programmatic adjustments?
3. How are summative assessment data used to identify and inform future instructional needs, revisions to curriculum, programmatic improvements, and professional development?
4. Which students are making annual growth?
5. Which students are making projected growth?
6. How does this compare across content areas?

7. What systems are in place to ensure the transparent communication of data to the appropriate stakeholders?
8. What is the process for teachers to track and utilize data for targeted instruction?
9. How often are teachers reviewing student-level data to determine necessary interventions?
10. What is the process for reviewing campus-wide performance level data by content area and

CSF 3 Increase Leadership Effectiveness:

1. What specific actions are taken to build leadership potential in all employees in the district?
2. To what degree does the LEA/campus practice distributive leadership?
3. What is the system/process for identifying and developing potential leaders?
4. What is the process for succession planning (e.g. How does the LEA/campus identify and develop successors for critical leadership positions?)
5. What resources are allocated toward the development of leaders at the LEA/campus?
6. What specific professional development opportunities are provided at the LEA/campus to leaders?
7. What is the LEA/campus process for monitoring leadership effectiveness and providing targeted professional development opportunities?
8. What is the system/process for providing career growth and opportunities at the LEA/campus?
9. What is the system/process for providing job-embedded professional development?
10. What types of job-embedded professional development opportunities are provided to the LEA/campus?
11. What systems are in place to ensure effective, systemic and consistent professional development for teachers, administrators, and other staff?
12. How is common language developed within these systems?
13. What are the LEA/campus non-negotiable items?
14. What degree of flexibility does the LEA provide to campuses in regards to budgets?
15. What degree of flexibility does the LEA provide to campuses to establish schedules?
16. What degree of flexibility does the LEA provide to campuses with regard to recruiting and retaining staff?
17. What degree of flexibility does the LEA provide to campuses with regard to implementing interventions?
18. What are the particular strengths in the process that can be attributed to the gains discovered?
19. What areas will need continued focus in order to have a positive impact on leadership effectiveness?
20. What are the particular weaknesses in the process that could be attributed to the identified areas of need?
21. Are the processes in place based on data driven decisions verses unsubstantiated "hunches"?

CSF 4 Increase Learning Time:

1. What is the process for ensuring that all students arrive in the morning on time? Which students consistently arrive late in the morning? What interventions are in place to support these students?
2. How does the LEA/campus ensure that minimal time is wasted taking attendance?
3. What is the process for ensuring that transitions between classes are well-supervised and orderly?
4. What is the process for ensuring that all teachers have efficient procedures and expectations for beginning and ending class?
5. What is the process for ensuring that all teachers are utilizing effective pacing strategies?
6. How have schedules been modified to maximize instructional time and eliminate down time within the school day?

7. How is time being allotted for enrichment activities, teacher planning, and professional development?
8. What is the time allocated for instruction, advisory periods, enrichment, and collaborative planning periods?
9. How are school activities, the bell schedule, attendance, and other factors impacting instructional minutes?
10. How are data used to inform decisions around learning time, planning, and enrichment activities?
What data are collected?
11. How does the LEA/campus ensure enrichment programming supports LEA/campus goals and enhances student learning?
12. How does the LEA/campus ensure that enrichment activities build knowledge and skills in areas beyond core academic subjects to deepen student skills and interests?
13. How does the LEA/campus ensure that school-wide expectations and norms are maintained within enrichment activities?
14. Which students are participating in enrichment activities? Does data reveal a correlation to student achievement?
15. How does the LEA/campus ensure that sufficient time is provided to teachers to discuss student learning needs, share and review student data, and receive and provide feedback on instructional practices?
16. How does the LEA/campus ensure that staff collaborative planning time is utilized to improve instruction and build the knowledge and skills of teachers?
17. What are the particular strengths in the process that can be attributed to the gains discovered?
18. What areas will need continued focus in order to have a positive impact on learning time?
19. What are the particular weaknesses in the process that could be attributed to the identified areas of need?
20. Are the processes in place based on data driven decisions verses unsubstantiated "hunches"?

CSF 5 Increase Family and Community Engagement:

1. How does the LEA/campus convey their vision and mission to the community? Is it effective? Why or why not?
2. What type of communication exists for families and community stakeholders and how can its effectiveness be evaluated? What data are being collected to inform these decisions?
3. What information is provided to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning?
4. What is the system/processes for school-to-home and home-to-school communication about programs and student progress?
5. What is the LEA/campus process for developing a comprehensive Family/Community Engagement plan?
How are representative stakeholders included?
6. What systems are in place to support varying methods and/or flexible scheduling to meet the needs of families and community members?
7. What is the system/process for recruiting and organizing families to support the campus?
8. What degree of participation does the LEA/campus receive from families? How engaged are families and community stakeholders in academic and extracurricular activities?

9. What is the system/process for identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family needs, and student learning? How effective are community partnerships at supporting identified needs?
10. How aware are students, families, and faculty/staff of the services offered in the community?
11. What are the particular strengths in the process that can be attributed to the gains discovered?
12. What areas will need continued focus in order to have a positive impact on family and community engagement?
13. What are the particular weaknesses in the process that could be attributed to the identified areas of need?
14. Are the processes in place based on data driven decisions verses unsubstantiated “hunches”?

CSF 6 Improve School Climate:

1. How does the LEA/campus ensure that classroom management strategies are linked to a positive and proactive school-wide behavioral support system?
2. What behavioral strategies are utilized to create a positive climate?
3. What secondary and tertiary level behavioral strategies are utilized to create a positive climate?
4. What systems are in place to monitor and adjust attendance and discipline procedures based on data?
5. When was the LEA/campus vision and mission last revised?
6. What actions were taken to solicit the input of stakeholders in developing and/or revising the vision/mission?
7. What is the process for defining and communicating core values and expectations to students, staff, family, and community members?
8. How does the LEA/campus ensure that the expectations conveyed to students, staff, family, and community members is aligned to the vision/mission?
9. What level of participation do students have in developing a positive climate?
10. Does the LEA/campus understand and promote social-emotional learning?
11. How often does the LEA/campus collect student, staff, family, and community perception data?
12. How often does the LEA/campus celebrate the success of staff and students?
13. How does the LEA/campus ensure that all student groups are equally supported?
14. What systems are in place to provide support for staff in building relationships and connections to families and the community?
15. What are the particular strengths in the process that can be attributed to the gains discovered?
16. What areas will need continued focus in order to have a positive impact on climate?
17. What are the particular weaknesses in the process that could be attributed to the identified areas of need?
18. Are the processes in place based on data driven decisions verses unsubstantiated “hunches”?

CSF 7 Increase Teacher Quality:

1. What systems are in place to support consistent appraisal and walk-through instruments with feedback and follow up for all staff?
2. What is the process for ensuring timely and specific feedback?

3. How does the LEA/campus ensure that all teachers are receiving the support necessary to continue to improve their professional practice?
4. What is the process for providing differentiated support to teachers based on experience level and individual needs?
5. What systems are in place to help provide, track, and monitor professional development?
6. What systems are in place to assess the impact of professional development on instruction?
7. What additional professional development and enrichment is offered or available for teachers?
8. How are teachers part of decision making at the LEA/campus? How is the teacher perspective utilized in planning?
9. What opportunities are available for teachers to advance their craft and develop new knowledge and skills?
10. What systems are in place to foster a positive, collaborative, and team-oriented culture?
11. What actions are taken to create a school atmosphere built upon trust, professionalism, and distributive leadership?
12. What are the faculty attendance, retention, and turnover rate?
13. What are the particular strengths in the process that can be attributed to the gains discovered?
14. What areas will need continued focus in order to have a positive impact on teacher quality?
15. What are the particular weaknesses in the process that could be attributed to the identified areas of need?
16. Are the processes in place based on data driven decisions verses unsubstantiated "hunches"?

Appendix C: Support System Questions to Consider

Appendix C includes questions to assist the LEA/campus with evaluation of support systems according to the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) Framework. These are optional questions provided as a resource.

Organizational Structure:

The organizational structure has clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for personnel that focus on teaching and learning with accountability and impact on student achievement. District and campus leaders eliminate barriers to improvement, redefine staff roles and responsibilities as necessary, and empower staff to be responsive in support of improvement. (Dufour & Marzano, 2011); (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010); (Fullan, 2010); (Honig, Copeland, Rainey, Lorton & Newton, 2010)

What priorities and responsibilities are communicated through the district's organizational chart?

1. How have roles and responsibilities of district level staff evolved or changed in response to changing campus needs?
2. How are chains of authority and responsibility defined and communicated at campus levels?
3. When barriers to campus success are encountered, what interaction with central office staff occurs?
4. In what ways do central office administrators work with campus staff to improve student performance?
5. How do central office departments align their work to support campus goals?
6. What process is in place to ensure equitable workloads and levels of responsibility across horizontal positions within the district?
7. What structures exist to provide support to campuses based upon the campus' needs?

Processes and Procedures:

Priority is placed upon teaching and learning when establishing and implementing systemic operational protocols that guarantee accountability, availability of resources and their effective use. (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010); (Levine, 2013)

1. How are district procedures determined, articulated, and monitored for adherence?
2. How do campus and district personnel contribute to the development of systemic processes?
3. What process is used to identify and expedite resources needed at specific campuses?
4. What is the district's response to a campus need to operate outside of defined district-wide processes and procedures?
5. How often are data used to inform the development or revision of processes and procedures?
6. How are district wide processes evaluated and tailored to support timeliness and ease of use?
7. How do all formally defined procedures support the district vision?
8. How do all formally defined procedures support student learning?

Communications:

A clearly defined process that ensures a consistent message is being sent, received and acted upon using multiple, effective delivery systems. Proactive efforts are engaged by district level staff to establish effective internal communication systems and transparent external communication practices. Communication is focused on a shared and clear vision for continuous improvement which streamlines collaborative efforts toward student success. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Dufour & Marzano, 2011)

1. What are the defined processes for delivering various types of information (emergency, special announcement, periodic communications, etc.) to particular audiences?
2. How do district and campus leaders manage the potential for misperceived and inaccurate organizational information?
3. How do district and campus communication protocols demonstrate support for student success?
4. How do district and campus communication protocols demonstrate a district culture of high expectations?
5. What steps are taken at all levels to ensure consistency of the leadership message?
6. What two-way avenues exist for parents, community, and business members to dialogue with district and campus staff?
7. How are all members of the organization, including the Board of Trustees, held accountable in their use of established communication protocols?
8. What informal communication networks exist and how are they utilized productively?

Capacity and Resources:

The district organization utilizes internal and external human capital and necessary resources to meet all needs for a successful learning environment. Expertise is purposefully cultivated and sustained through targeted recruitment, retention and succession planning. (Hargreaves, 2013); (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2011)

1. What steps is the district taking to cultivate new leaders from within the organization?
2. What processes does the district have in place to ensure that exceptional professionals at all levels have a viable career ladder?
3. How is professional development for staff determined, obtained, and evaluated for effectiveness?
4. What plans and actions are in place to motivate effective staff members to remain employed with the district?
5. How does the district support campus leadership in implementing authentic and meaningful evaluation processes that reflect employee performance levels relative to student success?
6. How are leaders empowered to hire high-performing staff members and expeditiously remove nonperformers?
7. What process is used to determine staffing at campuses and district offices? Is this staffing based on student achievement and needs regarding school improvement?
8. What strategies are in place to support and ensure new staff members have ample opportunities for initial and long term success?
9. What processes are in place to ensure that the district is recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, administrators, and district-level leaders?
10. How does the district ensure that all resources (i.e., financial, personnel, etc.) are distributed based upon need?

Appendix D: District Commitments Questions to Consider

Appendix D includes questions to assist LEAs with evaluation of commitments at the district level. These are optional questions provided as a resource.

District-wide Ownership and Accountability:

Leadership recognizes and accepts responsibility for all current levels of performance and transparently interacts with stakeholders to plan and implement improvement initiatives. The district is engaged in continuous review of systemic, district-wide practices to ensure effective impact on critical need areas, such as low performing campuses. (Zavadsky, 2012); (Fullan, 2010)

1. What is the process for district-level leadership to conduct ongoing meetings with campus leadership for the purpose of reviewing current levels of performance and progress aligned with campus and LEA goals?
2. What actions do district leaders take to support campuses in identifying campus needs?
3. What actions do district leaders take to assist campus leaders in planning and implementing targeted improvement strategies?
4. What is the district's process for communicating campus level performance, progress, and goals to stakeholders?
5. How is central office directly or indirectly involved in annual campus planning?
6. What differentiated or targeted support systems are provided from district-level staff to support campuses with varied needs?
7. What district-wide policies and procedures exist to guide campus operations?
8. How do central office departments interact and collaborate with each other to support individual campus needs?
9. What is the process for prioritizing district-level intervention and support to campuses?
10. How are district level systems responsive to campus leaders' needs and requests?
11. What processes are in place for a continuous review of district-wide practices?

High Expectations:

Explicit, rigorous standards are in place for student learning with adult and student confidence that success is attainable. These expectations are pervasively evident and understood by all with a commitment to providing a timely response and/or adjustment when goals are not met. (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012); (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Dufour & Marzano, 2011)

1. How does the district promote the belief that all campuses and students are capable of attaining high levels of success?
2. How are ambitious goals actively promoted by all district level staff?
3. What processes occur throughout the school year for periodic review of student performance data by district leadership?
4. How are expectations for employee performance communicated and monitored?

5. What district-level support is provided to campuses when campus performance falls short of predetermined goals?
6. How does the district provide support to each campus for student interventions that promote high achievement?
7. How does the district build the capacity and learning of their campus leaders?
8. What actions do district leaders take to model the pursuit of rigorous goals?

Sense of Urgency:

District staff, compelled by an intolerance of failure and dissatisfaction with deficits of the current state, set a priority and press for rapid action to change ineffective practices and processes that impede student success. (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012); (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Dufour & Marzano, 2011)

1. How are district-identified priorities emphasized and communicated with all stakeholders?
2. How do district leaders communicate to all stakeholders the need to ensure success across all student groups?
3. What actions have central office leaders taken to improve performance at campuses and the district?
4. How do central office leaders systematically evaluate current district practices in order to improve support to campuses?
5. In what ways does the superintendent work in tandem with the board of trustees to ensure a shared vision of support for significant transformation to address ineffective practices and processes?
6. How does the district recognize, encourage, and support innovative solutions?
7. What does the district do to support a culture which encourages action research, experimentation of methodologies, and the abandonment of ineffective practices?
8. How do central office leaders communicate and model expectations for staff and student in regards to behavior and performance?
9. How does the district manage employees who do not demonstrate a willingness to change their current practices in accordance with improvement initiatives?
10. How does the district interact and collaborate with the community to build support for progressive, research based practices in the local educational system?

Clear Vision and Focus:

The district strongly articulates a focus on student achievement as its primary work. Clear plans across the district are developed to address increasing performance for all students on all campuses. This vision is embraced and embedded in daily practice by all staff members. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007); (Hargreaves, 2013)

1. How does the district establish goals to guide the determination of initiatives and strategies?
2. What district-wide planning process is used to evaluate current performance and set district wide priorities?
3. What actions are taken at the district level to ensure that all campuses and stakeholders understand, support, and live the vision and mission of the district?
4. What processes are in place to align district goals and priorities with the goals of each campus?
5. How do budgets align with and support the academic priorities of each campus?

6. What activities are conducted across the district to periodically review and calibrate staff beliefs and behaviors with the district's vision and mission?
7. How does the district's academic calendar reflect a focus on student achievement?
8. What steps have been taken with regard to central office staffing and responsibilities to ensure the focus on supporting each campus in meeting district goals?
9. How are professional development activities aligned with the district vision and specific campus needs?
10. How is the district building the capacity of visionary leaders at all levels?

Operational Flexibility:

The district permits the agility to shift resources, processes, and practices in response to critical needs identified. The district's ability to address the needs of all students is contingent upon allowing customized approaches, expedition of resources, and departures from standard practice when the need is substantiated. (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010); (Fullan, 2010)

1. How does the district leadership support campus leaders in the implementation of newly identified campus-based initiatives?
2. How are needed resources expedited to campuses with significant need?
3. How is professional development differentiated for priorities and identified needs?
4. What exceptions to district procedures are permitted when requested by campus principals who present evidence and rationale to support their exception?
5. How does the central office leadership advocate for differentiated resources and support for underperforming campuses and student populations?
6. How do campus master schedules and calendars reflect identified campus priorities?
7. How does district leadership encourage innovation and new ideas in campus management?
8. What process does the district utilize to project staffing needs for the future of each campus?
9. How are district decisions made regarding the delivery of district services to meet the needs of various student populations and specialized academic opportunities?

Appendix E: Cost – Benefit Analysis

Purpose

A **cost – benefit analysis** is a systematic process utilized to compare the cost of a strategy/intervention to its overall impact. This process has two purposes:

1. To determine if a strategy/intervention should be continued or discontinued.
2. To provide a basis for comparing strategy/interventions. By comparing the anticipated cost and impact a LEA/campus can select between potential strategies/interventions.

Target Audience

All staff (This activity can be conducted campus-wide or by department)

Time

Minimum of thirty minutes– the time needed for this activity is contingent upon the number of strategies/interventions analyzed.

Materials

- List of strategies/interventions to be analyzed (including cost, data to indicate the impact of the activity if the activity is currently being implemented, or an explanation of the expected impact)
- The ***Cost – Benefit Analysis template***
- The ***Cost – Benefit Analysis Questions to Consider***
- Poster size line graph with COST and IMPACT labeled on the X & Y axis
 - Chart paper or butcher paper with the line graph with a hand drawn line graph will suffice
- Markers
- Tape

Process Protocol

1. Compile the materials needed to conduct the activity and hang the line graph on a wall in the meeting space or place on an easel.
2. On the ***Cost – Benefit Analysis Template***, in the “strategy/intervention column”, list all strategies/intervention currently being implemented and/or proposed strategies/interventions.
 - a. **NOTE: Please inform the participants to refrain from completing other sections.**
3. Using the data that the campus staff has on hand and ***Cost – Benefit Analysis Questions to Consider*** as a guide, begin to rank the level of implementation (if applicable), cost, and current or expected impact of each strategy/intervention.

- a. In the “Data” column include any concrete data that the campus staff has to provide rationale for the impact of each strategy/intervention.
 - b. If the strategy/intervention is being considered for future implementation, include data that would be collected to indicate impact.
4. After the campus staff has ranked the level of implementation (if applicable), cost, and impact of each activity, plot each activity on the line graph in the relative intersection of the COST and IMPACT.
 - a. **NOTE: Activities that the campus staff has ranked as LOW IMPLEMENTATION may be ranked as LOW IMPACT. If campus staff believes these activities have the potential to yield high impact thus decide to continue implementing these activities, identify these activities and continue to monitor the impact.**
 5. Once campus staff has graphed each strategy/intervention, come to a consensus on which activities should be continued, discontinued, or selected to integrate in future planning.
 6. Using *Analysis of Grant Activity Questions to Consider* develop immediate actions steps needed proceed
 - a. **NOTE: The immediate action steps are not intending to be a detailed action plan, but rather one-to-three actions needed to set things in motion.**

Comments to the Facilitator

Rather than following the steps, participants may attempt rank the implementation, cost, and impact as they list each activity. Completing this task in the order it is designed ensures that the activity is completed in a timely manner. Additionally, though graphing the activities may seem unnecessary, this step will spark a deeper dialogue around the strategies/interventions as a whole.

Cost – Benefit Analysis: Questions to Consider

Implementation	Impact	Cost	Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When did the campus begin implementing this strategy/intervention? OR When does the campus plan to begin implementation of this strategy/intervention? Does the campus have a clear vision for the future of this strategy/intervention? Does the campus have a concrete system/process for this strategy/intervention? Do the key contributors to this system/process know their roles? Do the key contributors have the skills needed to successfully implement the strategy/intervention? Does the campus have a protocol for replacing key contributors (i.e, succession plan)? 	<p>HIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has this activity positively impacted more than one of the Critical Success Factors, including Academic Performance? Will this strategy/intervention impact more than one of the Critical Success Factors , including Academic Performance, Will this strategy/intervention positively impact all of the Index/Indices or System Safeguards? 	<p>LOW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this strategy/intervention have NO to low financial cost associated with it? Does this strategy/intervention have low time investment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence does the campus have to show that this strategy/intervention has made an impact? OR What data will the campus collect to indicate the impact of the strategy/intervention? Does the campus have baseline data to compare the impact against? Is the campus lacking significant data due to the level of implementation? What additional data does the campus need to collect?
	<p>MEDIUM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has this strategy/intervention positively impacted more than one of the Critical Success Factors? Will this strategy/intervention impact more than one of the Critical Success Factors? Will this strategy/intervention impact at least one Index or System Safeguard? 	<p>MEDIUM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this strategy/intervention have Medium financial cost and low time investment? Does this strategy/intervention have low financial cost and Medium time involvement? 	
	<p>LOW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has this strategy/intervention positively impacted one of the Critical Success Factors? Will this strategy/intervention positively impact on Critical Success Factor? 	<p>HIGH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this strategy/intervention have High financial cost and medium time involvement? Does this strategy/intervention have medium financial cost and High time involvement? Does this strategy/intervention have High financial cost and High time involvement? 	
	Action Plan		
<p style="text-align: center;">Immediate Questions for Consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the campus have a compelling vision for the future of this activity? What is the campus' long-range goal for this strategy/intervention? What is the campus' short-range goal for this strategy/intervention (i.e., 90 days, 180 days, 270 days, 360 days)? What are the campus' immediate actions for ensuring sustainability? Who will be responsible for implementing these strategies/interventions, and by when? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Future Questions for Consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the campus monitor progress of implementation? How will the campus measure the impact of the strategy/intervention? Does the campus need to seek approval from the district/board to implement? What resources will the campus need to implement this strategy/intervention? What professional development or support is needed for all staff? How will the campus ensure that this strategy/intervention will continue if the leadership changes? 		

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
1.										
NEXT STEPS:										
2.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
3.										
NEXT STEPS:										
4.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
5.										
NEXT STEPS:										
6.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
7.										
NEXT STEPS:										
8.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
9.										
NEXT STEPS:										
10.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
11.										
NEXT STEPS:										
12.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
13.										
NEXT STEPS:										
14.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Strategy/Intervention	Level of Implementation			Impact			Cost			Data
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
15.										
NEXT STEPS:										
16.										
NEXT STEPS:										

Cost – Benefit Analysis

