

Tools to Improve SEA Performance



Improving the performance of a State Education Agency (SEA) requires an interplay of three considerations: (1) What does the SEA want to accomplish? (2) How effective are current SEA operations when assessed against external standards? (3) How does the SEA manage the process of improvement?

1. What does the SEA want to accomplish?

The Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center provides consultancies to Chief State School Officers and their leadership teams to help them clarify goals and consider ways to improve productivity and performance.

The BSCP Center is developing Strategic Performance Management (SPM), a multi-step process that guides SEA leadership in designing and revising a system of strategic performance management. SPM combines strategic planning with performance management by creating an organizational structure based on strategic functions, aligning resources to structure, addressing human capital and productivity, and establishing performance measures. The SPM will become an Internet-based tool for SEAs, with training and assistance from the BSCP Center and regional comprehensive centers.

2. How effective are current SEA operations when assessed against external standards?

The BSCP Center has published two rubrics that establish external standards by which an SEA leadership team can assess the quality of its current operations within a functional area of the SEA. The two rubrics are:

- *Managing Performance in the System of Support* (rubric with 52 indicators and exemplars)
- *Systemic Improvement in the State Education Agency* (SPED) (rubric with 42 indicators)

The Reform Support Network, funded by the U. S. Department of Education to assist Race to the Top grant recipients and sustain their work, has published two rubrics for SEAs:

- *Sustainability Rubric* (to sustain reforms)
- *Strategic Communication Rubric*

3. How does the SEA manage the process of improvement?

Setting goals and assessing current operations are essential steps in continuous improvement, but establishing objectives for change, assigning responsibilities, creating timelines and tasks, monitoring progress, and adjusting course are all aspects of project management that too often fall by the wayside in busy SEAs.

The BSCP Center provides SEA leadership teams with IndiSEA™, an Internet-based tool, aligned to indicators and rubrics, that structures and documents the process of implementing change. IndiSEA™ documents and reports the team's agendas and minutes; rating of each indicator in a rubric; determination of the priority of the indicator; conversion of indicators into objectives; assignment of responsibilities, tasks, and target dates; and evidence of full implementation of indicators/objectives. IndiSEA™ also includes research briefs and examples of effective practice relative to the indicators to guide the SEA team in its work.

IndiSEA™ can utilize the indicators in the two rubrics the BSCP Center has created, those in the Reform Support Network rubrics, and those in additional rubrics developed by the BSCP Center in the future.