ECTA Center
The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

DaSy

RRCP
Regional Resource Center Program

Quick Reference Guide:
Working with Stakeholders to **Identify Potential Improvement Strategies** for **Program Improvement** (Including the SSIP)

This quick reference guide is designed to assist states in understanding what information needs to be available in order for stakeholders to assist in selecting potential improvement strategies that will increase capacity of LEAs, EIS programs, and practitioners to improve results for infants, toddlers and their families or for young children with disabilities. This guide can be used for program improvement as well as for developing the SSIP.

Background

Before identifying potential improvement strategies, states should be in the process of:

- Finalizing data and infrastructure analysis.
- Identifying root causes or obstacles that hinder achieving improved results.
- Selecting the expected result for program improvement or the State-identified Measureable Result (SIMR) for the SSIP.
- Identifying stakeholders from different levels who have differing roles (e.g. parents, practitioners, program administrators, professional development representatives, state agency staff) to be involved in identifying improvement strategies. These individuals are those that will be impacted by implementation.

Purpose

The overall purpose of this resource is to help states involve stakeholders in:

- Identifying possible improvement strategies that address the root causes and lead to improving the expected result for program improvement and the SIMR in Phase I of the SSIP.
- Identifying potential steps that will need to be taken to implement the improvement strategies (for SSIP Phase II).

Prerequisites

Stakeholders will need to understand:

1. The expected result/SIMR including the target population being addressed (e.g. whole state, geographic regions, disability group, subset of local programs/districts).
2. The root causes impacting the expected result/SIMR.
3. How the expected result/SIMR is aligned with current agency and/or state initiatives or priorities.
4. How the expected result/SIMR was selected including who was involved.
5. How existing state level improvement plan activities (e.g. SPP/APR improvement activities) can be used to build local capacity and improve results (e.g., SIMR).

Steps for Identifying Potential Improvement Strategies and Suggestions for Process

Stakeholders will provide input into:

1. The results the state would need to see at the state and local levels for administrators, practitioners and families to improve the expected result/SIMR.
2. The improvement strategies the state would need to undertake to achieve those results, address the root causes impacting the expected result/SIMR, and leverage existing initiatives. Strategies may include:
   a. practices needed to improve results for children and/or families;
   b. changes to the infrastructure that support effective and sustained implementation of the practices; and
   c. linkages with the broader early care and education system to support the expected result/SIMR.
3. The prioritization of improvement strategies based on the level of impact, level of effort, their alignment with each other and considerations of time, resources and commitment from LEAs/programs and other state initiatives.
4. A logical sequence for the prioritized improvement strategies.
5. The implementation of the prioritized improvement strategies, including:
   d. Who should be involved?
   e. How to engage/inform partners, and staff in upcoming systems change?
   f. What are the important steps?
   g. What resources are needed?
   h. What are the timelines?

Next Steps

The state:

1. Uses stakeholder input in determining final improvement strategies that are logical, coherent and aligned.
2. Considers how the improvement strategies might be measured to ensure they are feasible and doable.
3. Identifies the evidence for the improvement strategies related to practices and the rationale for infrastructure improvement strategies.
4. Graphically represents improvement strategies, their relation to one another, and their theorized path of influence on the expected result/SIMR in a Theory of Action with stakeholder input,
5. Uses this information in drafting a description of their improvement initiative or the narrative of the SSIP for Phase I and in developing the Improvement Plan in Phase II.

Process Suggestions for Completing the Steps

for Identifying Potential Improvement Strategies with Stakeholders

There are numerous strategies that states can use with stakeholders for identifying potential improvement strategies for program improvement or as part of the SSIP. The following table includes some suggested processes that states might use. These suggestions are based on some processes used with NECTAC State Work Plan development and have been adapted.

Steps for Identifying Potential Improvement Strategies	Suggested Process
STEP 1 What would we need to see at the state and local levels for administrators, practitioners to improve the expected result/SIMR in five years?	**Sticky wall w/ cards & markers** This is a full group activity where individual participants will be provided an opportunity to individually identify what outcomes they would expect to see at each level of the system if the expected result/SIMR is achieved in 5 years. Start at the child & family level, requesting that each participant identify broad outcome statements for children and families by writing one outcome on a half-sheet of paper (using 3-5 words). Collect and organize the outcomes for each question by like concepts. Finish one question (i.e., level of the system) before proceeding to the next question. 1. What would be the outcomes for children and families if the expected result/SIMR is achieve in 5 years? 2. What would service providers know, do, and believe to achieve those outcomes? 3. What would programs have in place to support the providers in implementing effective practices? 4. What personnel development mechanisms would support and sustain effective practice? 5. What regional/local agency and state infrastructure (policy, guidelines, data system, funding, procedures, monitoring, etc.) will we need to assure quality statewide?

Steps for Identifying Potential Improvement Strategies	Suggested Process
STEP 2 What strategies would we need to undertake to achieve those results, address the root causes of the expected result/SIMR, and leverage existing initiatives? Strategies include: a. practices needed to improve results for children and/or families; b. changes to the system that support effective and sustained implementation of the practices; c. linkages with the broader early care and education system to support the expected result/SIMR.	***Small group discussion*** Small groups discuss strategies needed to achieve results, address root causes, and leverage exiting initiatives. Groups record their best ideas on half sheets of paper. ***Whole group*** Take ideas from small groups one at a time, asking for like ideas from others groups & cluster on sticky wall. Review similar ideas and create wording that summarizes the main point of the proposed strategy.
STEP 3 What improvement strategies should be prioritized based on level of impact and effort?	***Whole group and individual activities*** Whole group considers additional strategies (if any dramatic omissions) and then evaluates the strategies with respect to impact and effort. This is accomplished by deciding as a whole group where to place each strategy on a sticky wall, which is divided into the 4 quadrants (high and low impact and high and low effort). The whole group decides which of the strategies are core, essential strategies to undertake by providing each individual with several dots to vote on their top choices.
STEP 4 What would be a logical sequence for the prioritized improvement strategies?	***Sticky wall w/ cards & markers - Full group activity*** Facilitators write the prioritized improvement strategies on a half sheet of 8.5 x 11 paper. The whole group discusses the sequence of where each activity should go on the sticky wall based on a timeline across the top, and then determines if the ordering of the strategies are logical, coherent and aligned.

Steps for Identifying Potential Improvement Strategies	Suggested Process
STEP 5 What will it take to implement the prioritized improvement strategies? Including: a. Who should be involved? b. What are the important steps, outcomes, resources needed, timelines, etc.?	*Individual and small group activity* Facilitators quickly create headers on flip chart paper representing the prioritized strategies (one activity per sheet) and post around the room. Each flip chart paper includes the following (prepared in advance of the activity): • Who should be involved in planning and implementing the strategy? How can they be engaged? • What are the important steps necessary to carry out the strategy? • What resources are needed (e.g., staffing, funding, resources leveraged from other initiatives)? • What are the timelines? Make note of any important dates that need to be considered. Participants circulate around the room and fill in information on the posted flip chart strategy pages. Small groups are assigned one or more improvement strategies to review the information recorded on the flip chart paper, and to organize and summarize for reporting to whole group.
STEP 6 What are the next steps for finalizing the plan and getting it approved for implementation?	*Follow-up meeting* The state planning team responsible for achieving the expected results/SIMR reviews the information generated by stakeholders, organizes it, adds in missing information, and produces a draft implementation plan. The draft plan is sent to key stakeholders for their review and comment (optional) and the state planning team refines the plan as appropriate. The draft plan is presented to higher level management for approval.