



# Sustainability Rubric for Local Educational Agencies

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The Reform Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms, while sharing these promising practices and lessons learned with other States attempting to implement similarly bold education reform initiatives.

## Introduction to Sustainability

Local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools are critical to any successful education reform effort. To produce transformative, sustainable improvement in student achievement, LEAs and schools, with the support of State education agencies (SEAs), will have to focus on and commit to improving student outcomes in ways that go beyond any particular program or funding stream. Transformative changes resulting in improved student achievement are bigger than any one initiative, program or project.

So how can local-level education leaders make sure the changes they are making work for students and endure in the face of changing conditions? Schools must successfully implement reforms and LEAs must play a leading role to support them, providing direction, offering critical assistance and building capacity, all at a community-wide scale. This will require that LEAs play a leadership role toward their goals for student growth. That includes providing targeted support to schools and managing the performance of community-wide activities. In the course of this change, the role of the LEA will evolve from one focused largely on monitoring and compliance to one that includes leadership toward community-wide goals for improved student growth, targeted support to schools and performance management of LEA activities.

Sustainable reforms are durable, adaptive and persistently focused on priority goals for improved student growth in the face of changing conditions. In order to think clearly about sustainability, we must start by asking two questions:

- What goals are we trying to achieve for students? A **priority goal** is a commitment by the LEA to achieve an improved level of performance for a particular student outcome measure (for example, increase the number of students that are college and career ready or improve proficiency or graduation rates).
- What are the specific reforms that we must sustain to achieve those goals? A **priority reform** is a body of work that an LEA is undertaking to achieve one or more of its priority goals (for example, implementing college- and career-ready standards, ensuring quality data systems, implementing new educator evaluation systems).

Clearly identified priority goals and priority reforms are central to any effort to improve sustainability.

### How Was This Rubric Developed?

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education began to work with the Race to the Top States to develop a framework to help them plan for the sustainability of their education reforms. The Reform Support Network (RSN) convened a workgroup to address that need. Six States participated in the workgroup to develop tools for assessing, planning and monitoring of the sustainability of priority reforms. They outlined a framework of sustainability that became the foundation for this rubric, which was used by the participating States to reflect on and plan for the sustainability of their reforms.

The States shared feedback that it would be useful for their LEAs to have a similar tool to reflect on the sustainability of their own reforms. Thus, the RSN adapted the rubric and associated tools for use in the local context. The draft LEA Sustainability Rubric was piloted and reviewed by more than 20 leaders from LEAs and LEA-serving organizations around the country, and feedback from those representatives informed this final version of the rubric.

When planning for sustainability, reform leaders must keep in mind the following realities:

- **Implementation is just the beginning.** Sustainable reform outlives the completion of specific projects or initiatives and often calls for substantial course corrections that may not have been anticipated in early phases of implementation. By definition, a project is not sustainable, as it has a defined beginning and an end. The long-term success of a reform depends on how sustainable the goals of the initiative are beyond its launch, regardless of how well the LEA implements the reform and the associated strategies. Its success depends on responsiveness to the needs of students.
- **Today's context will change.** Sustainable reform cannot be solely dependent on the conditions in place when it started. Organizations and resources, including people, time and money, will change over time; so will the context in which they operate. Sustaining reform does not mean simply maintaining

or replicating a specific program or policy innovation. It requires clear goals grounded in a theory of action, data to track and evaluate progress toward them and commitment by reform leaders to adapt to changes—including those in policies, funding streams, organizational structures and work routines—as the reform moves forward.

- **Sustainability planning begins early.** LEAs realize the full benefits of education reform years after the initial enthusiasm, commitment and program investments. LEA leadership has to intentionally work to keep supports in place as part of a continuous improvement process. Managing sustainability is an ongoing process that begins at the start of the reform and evolves as circumstances change and lessons are learned.

## How the Sustainability Rubric is Organized

There is no single right way to approach sustainability, and there is considerable variation among LEAs that have successfully sustained reforms. It is not possible, therefore, to create a “template” or a “blueprint” outlining the best way to approach the topic. But there are common factors that LEA leaders can consider when planning for sustainability. In this rubric, these common factors are called variables because they are neither constant over time nor consistent across LEAs. These variables are present in all organizations and reforms, but some may be more important than others depending on the specific context and time. For the purpose of organizing this rubric, we have placed them in three categories:

### Sustainability Rubric Structure

*Category*  
(1, 2, 3)

#### 1. Context for Sustaining Reform

- A. Alignment of the Community-Wide System
  - i. Align the policy agenda and implementation with priority reforms
- B. Public Value
  - i. Build education stakeholder support for priority goals and reforms
  - ii. Build broad public support for priority goals and reforms

*Variable*  
(A, B...)

#### 2. System Capacity

- A. LEA Capacity
  - i. Align human capital decisions with priority goals and reforms
  - ii. Build a culture of continuous improvement toward priority goals
  - iii. Align organizational structure with priority goals and reforms
- B. Community Capacity
  - i. Extend capacity through partnerships
  - ii. Extend capacity in the field

*Element*  
(i, ii...)

#### 3. Performance Management

- A. Clarity of Outcomes and Theory of Action
  - i. Set student outcome targets to achieve priority goals
  - ii. Establish a theory of action and strategies for implementing priority reforms
  - iii. Develop plans that align strategies with priority goals
- B. Alignment of Resources (People, Time, Technology and Money)
  - i. Direct resources to priority reforms
  - ii. Establish clear leadership of priority goals and reforms
- C. Collection and Use of Data
  - i. Ensure quality data on performance
  - ii. Ensure quality data on implementation
  - iii. Use data to review progress and make mid-course corrections
- D. Accountability for Results
  - i. Link internal accountability to results
  - ii. Link external accountability to results
  - iii. Engage stakeholders about results

context, system capacity and performance management. The rubric breaks down each variable into elements, or constituent parts, that enable thoughtful analysis of conditions for sustainable reform. Taken together, the categories, variables and elements create a framework of sustainability, as outlined in the following figure.

The Sustainability Rubric is not absolute in its definition; its utility comes from the thinking it prompts. While the original tool was developed for use by States, this version has been adapted to focus specifically on the LEA context. The tool is intended to help LEAs consider their own capacity to sustain priority reforms, on their own or in partnership with their States.

## Using the Rubric

The rubric provides descriptions for four-scale ratings for each of the elements of the rubric:

- Inadequate
- Emerging
- Strong
- Exemplary

The “exemplary” descriptions are truly meant to be just that, and strong should be a perfectly satisfactory rating. The exemplary ratings describe next level progress or an LEA that has gone above and beyond. Each element also

has a set of “look fors” provided. These are meant to be just that: evidence to look for when deciding on a rating. These elements will not necessarily be present in every “strong” or “exemplary” LEA; they are just potential places to look for evidence.

Users may choose to go through each element and rate them on the four-point scale. Once these ratings are put together, they will show clear strengths and challenges in LEA preparedness for sustainability and will give a clear picture of where LEA leaders should focus moving forward. It is not necessary to complete the full rubric, however. Users may also choose to skim the overall rubric and just complete the assessment for certain sections that seem to be the highest need areas for the LEA (for example, if LEA leaders know they struggle with performance management, they may choose to just use that section of the rubric).

The rubric can also be used by a number of LEA leaders to reflect on sustainability. A superintendent may choose to read through it on his or her own to determine the extent to which the LEA is prepared to sustain reforms and where further focus should be given. A program manager within the LEA could also use the rubric independently to think about sustainability specifically for the program that he or she is responsible for. Finally, the rubric could also be used by an LEA leadership team to take a more LEA or community-wide approach to the assessment.



# 1. Context for Sustaining Reform

## Description of Category

LEAs operate in a complex context. They work and collaborate with a wide range of jurisdictions, agencies and organizations that hold different authorities, positions and interests within a K–12 structure that is at once hierarchical and decentralized. The context for reform is complex and dynamic. LEAs do not operate in a political, cultural or economic vacuum. In carrying out their operations, LEA administrators are guided by board policies, the law, the needs of students and the wishes of the citizens in the local community. Therefore, LEAs need to be prepared for the context to change over time. The sustainability of reform requires constant attention to changing circumstances to manage a balance between persistent adherence to attaining goals and responsive adaptation to address the real challenges of implementation. Although context is largely external to LEAs as organizations and something over which they do not have direct control, it should not be beyond their considerations. As they pursue the goals of their reform initiatives, LEAs should take the complex and changing environment into account, reacting to it and actively shaping it and leveraging its strengths.

## Key Variables

When developing the context for sustainable reform, SEAs will want to consider two variables:

### A. Alignment of the Community-Wide System.

Sustainable reform takes place across multiple public jurisdictions and different agencies and organizations

that serve a wide range of functions, hold different interests and act independently of one another; this is often done intentionally. Local and municipal governments and school boards all play a role, as do local schools and other community organizations. Further, LEAs are likely influenced by decisions made at the State level. In pursuit of transformative and lasting outcomes for students, LEAs must map this complex environment, identify the policies and practices that can accelerate or impede progress, align local education organizations and others around these policies and practices and, to the extent possible, anticipate changes. Common requirements for transparent reporting, similar performance measures and aligned policy to shared outcomes are all methods for developing a coherence that can support sustainable reforms.

- B. **Public Value.** Reform faces many public audiences: the broader community, parents and students and a wide range of stakeholder groups. The value placed on reform by these audiences—their opinions, attitudes, perceptions and active participation—is a variable affecting sustainability that LEAs can measure and act upon. LEAs can also use communication and other engagement strategies to increase the focus and clarity for reforms over time. Sustainable reforms are adaptive in shifting landscapes.

# A. Alignment of the Community-Wide System

## 1. Context for Sustaining Reform > A. Alignment of the Community-Wide System

### i. Align the policy agenda and implementation with priority reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the right policies in place across the LEA to facilitate and enable priority reforms and goals?</li> <li>Is this policy agenda reflected in school board policy and, where applicable, in collective bargaining agreements and school-level policy?</li> <li>Is this policy agenda aligned across critical local education organizations—central office, schools, local school board, higher education or early childhood, and third party advocacy and support groups—to support priority reforms and goals?</li> <li>Do the critical education organizations—the LEA, the local school board, the schools, the unions and the professional associations—work together to coordinate implementation of priority reforms?</li> <li>Is this alignment reflected in resource allocation and in budgeting across these local education organizations?</li> <li>Is the policy agenda aligned with expectations, requirements and supports coming from State and regional entities?</li> </ul>	<p>LEA leaders view their work in relative isolation from other local education organizations, and policies pursued by local education organizations are often at cross-purposes.</p> <p>School board policies and school policies do not form a coherent agenda with LEA efforts.</p> <p>Local education organizations do not collaborate or coordinate implementation efforts. Programs are sometimes duplicative or work against each other.</p> <p>Budgets for the LEA and schools reflect political bargaining rather than what is necessary to carry out priority reforms.</p> <p>Local leaders are unaware of State and regional priorities and policies and local policy to enable reforms is minimally influenced by decisions undertaken at the State or regional level.</p>	<p>LEA leaders are committed to taking account of the larger local context, and policies pursued are consistent across local education organizations.</p> <p>Some board policies and school policies reflect LEA priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>Local education organizations generally get along and programs no longer interfere or conflict. Cooperation is heavily driven by the LEA.</p> <p>LEA leaders work with the school board and school leaders to align their overall approach to budgeting, but there are still inconsistencies in the final product.</p> <p>The LEA is aware of State and regional-level agendas but has not set the local policy agenda to align with the other levels, or the LEA has aligned completely with the State-level agenda without adapting for its own context.</p>	<p>LEA leaders view their work and the work of other local education organizations in the context of a community-wide education policy agenda where policies of the organizations support and reinforce the enabling policies for the LEA's priority reforms.</p> <p>Board policies enable and facilitate the LEA's priority goals and reforms. Schools also establish their own policies to support the priority goals and reforms within their buildings. Where applicable, collective bargaining agreements support the implementation of priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>Local education organizations collaborate on some of their major efforts. Implementation efforts build on one another; the LEA coordinates implementation but is first among equal partners.</p> <p>Budget decisions and requests focus resource investments across the LEA on strategies aligned with the LEA's priority reforms and goals.</p> <p>The LEA has considered how local policy aligns with State-level priority goals and reforms and associated requirements and supports coming from the State and regional levels.</p>	<p>The superintendent and LEA leaders, school board members and leaders of local education organizations share a single education policy agenda, and the policies of all local education organizations are consistently aligned in support of common priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>Board policies, school policies and collective bargaining agreements reflect these common priority goals and reforms across the community.</p> <p>Local education organizations take collective responsibility for implementing priority reforms with shared planning and shared monitoring of progress. The efforts do not rely solely on involvement of the LEA.</p> <p>The LEA's education budget is a complete reflection of the shared agenda; it invests in the strategies that yield the greatest impact on common priority goals.</p> <p>The LEA provides feedback to the SEA on State policy and uses the statewide policy agenda as a model for policy integration at the local level; the LEA's policy agenda reflects that of the SEA and regional organizations (where applicable) but has been tailored to meet the needs of the local community.</p>	<p>There is evidence of a common reform agenda among the superintendent, other LEA leaders, school board members and leaders of other local education organizations (for example, a written document or common language in public statements about priority goals and reforms).</p> <p>The superintendent engages frequently with members of the school board, local government leaders and State government leaders to maintain the alignment of policy.</p> <p>Cooperation between institutions includes broad data sharing and a focus on meaningful and actionable analysis that can guide alignment and integration.</p> <p>The budgeting process involved collaboration among local education organizations rather than political bargaining.</p> <p>LEA policy is reflective of key State reforms and priorities, as well as local context.</p>

## B. Public Value

### 1. Context for Sustaining Reform > B. Public Value

#### i. Build education stakeholder support for priority goals and reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a critical mass of relevant stakeholder groups—including local education organizations, but also extending to parents, students, teachers, administrators, school board members, political leaders, philanthropies, opinion leaders, local education activists and business and community leaders—that understand and support the LEA’s priority goals and priority reforms?</li> <li>Does the LEA engage those stakeholder groups through a deliberate strategy that is designed to build this support?</li> <li>Does this strategy differentiate its approach to different stakeholder groups, both in the messaging and in the means of engagement?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA has no specific strategy for engaging with stakeholder groups relative to priority goals and reforms; the function of communication and other forms of engagement may be disconnected from other work in the community.</p> <p>LEA leaders have little sense of the current level of support for priority goals and reforms in most stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>The LEA is actively developing a stakeholder engagement strategy in support of its priority goals and reforms; it is mostly focused on communications and owned by communications leaders who solicit input from those responsible for the priority reforms as they craft the strategy.</p> <p>LEA leaders have some anecdotal evidence of the strength of current stakeholder group support for priority goals and reforms, and they use this to improve their engagement efforts.</p>	<p>The LEA has a stakeholder engagement strategy that includes a clear leader, has a core message that describes and links its priority goals and reforms, involves those responsible for implementation of priority reforms and is coordinated with similar efforts at other local education organizations.</p> <p>The LEA seeks feedback from stakeholder groups to better understand the success of its communications and other forms of engagement; it makes occasional mid-course adjustments based on this input.</p>	<p>Local education organizations pursuing a common agenda collectively take responsibility for communications and other forms of stakeholder engagement; the LEA participates in and helps coordinate a community-wide engagement effort to build support for priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA collects quantitative and qualitative feedback to regularly assess the impact of the engagement strategy on stakeholder group support and adjust its work accordingly.</p>	<p>The LEA and local education organizations dedicate significant and senior staff resources to the leadership of their communications work as part of a broad engagement strategy (for example, the communications lead is on the leadership team).</p> <p>The engagement strategy includes core messages that link all of the LEA’s priority reforms and illustrate how they work together to improve performance against priority goals.</p> <p>The engagement strategy includes communications as one of many forms of engagement; it is not *just* about communications.</p> <p>The engagement strategy is captured in a written plan that clearly differentiates the most critical stakeholders, is connected to other reform plans and drives ongoing work.</p> <p>The engagement strategy includes efforts to inform and maintain open and effective working relationships with opponents of priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>There is a wide and creative variety of mechanisms in use to engage stakeholder groups and reinforce core messages (for example, advisory groups to provide input at the front end; social media; meetings and conferences; newsletters from the superintendent; one-on-one outreach by multiple department leaders, not just the superintendent; strategic use of networks, such as teacher leader cadres, to provide input and serve as informed champions.</p>



1. Context for Sustaining Reform > B. Public Value

ii. Build broad public support for priority goals and reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there strong public support for priority goals and reforms?</li> <li>Do LEA and local leaders demonstrate a commitment to making the case for the public value of priority goals and reforms?</li> <li>Do LEA and local leaders identify, cultivate and coordinate “champions” for reform—including leaders of local education organizations, school leaders and leaders of other stakeholder groups—to build public confidence in its priority goals and reforms?</li> <li>Do LEA and local leaders ensure that there is high visibility and understanding of priority goals and reforms?</li> <li>Is this work driven by regular feedback on the larger public opinion and public value of priority goals and reforms?</li> </ul>	<p>LEA leadership has shown very little evidence of making a commitment to building the case for the public value of priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA has not devoted time, attention or resources to building public commitment to priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA has made no attempt to engage potential champions who could speak out in support of priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA has little or no sense of public sentiment and has no strong mechanism to gauge it.</p>	<p>LEA leadership is committed to making the case for the public value of priority goals and reforms, but has varying success in doing so.</p> <p>The LEA has developed strategies for building and maintaining public value of its priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA has attempted to engage champions to support priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA is beginning to use mechanisms that allow it to gauge public sentiment and to receive public input about priority goals, priority reforms and progress being made.</p>	<p>Making the case for the public value of priority goals and reforms is a high and consistent priority of LEA leaders and many other local leaders and school leaders.</p> <p>The LEA coordinates with other local education organizations to implement a set of well-defined and comprehensive strategies for building the public value of priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA and other local education organizations have identified, engaged and coordinated champions to lead the implementation of their strategies for building public value of priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>The LEA and other local education organizations have well-established mechanisms that they use to gauge public sentiment and to receive public input; they use this information to shape the reform work and message.</p>	<p>LEA leaders, a critical mass of local community leaders and school leaders share a common commitment to making the case for the public value of priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>Community-wide strategies for building public value influence the tone of all LEA interactions with the public, so that there is a culture of building public value throughout the LEA and other local education organizations.</p> <p>There is an extensive and self-sustaining network of engaged and active champions, such as teacher leader cadres, that are fully integrated into these strategies as both co-authors and executors of them.</p> <p>Local leaders actively listen to and shape public conversation around priority goals and reforms; they have a consistent sense of public sentiment and are dynamically responsive to it.</p>	<p>The LEA and other local leaders devote significant time to issues of public value; their public statements show consistent support for priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>There is a written strategy for building public support for priority goals and reforms; everyone in the LEA and other local education organizations understand the strategy and his or her role in it.</p> <p>All pertinent communications are designed to build public support for priority goals and reforms.</p> <p>LEA leaders can name the circle of core reform champions; they present a united message on priority goals and reforms, and they lead the effort to build public support independent of the LEA.</p> <p>There is a healthy public conversation about the progress of reform in which LEA leaders and staff members are active and effective participants.</p> <p>There is strong positive public feedback (for example through surveys, focus groups, polling) on the LEA’s priority goals and reforms.</p>

## 2. System Capacity

### Description of Category

Capacity is the resources, readiness and willingness of a system to achieve its priority goals. Resources include not just money, but also time, people, direction, systems and processes. LEAs can sharpen and define their roles in building capacity as they provide support to schools by leveraging their available resources to better sustain priority reforms.

Sustainable reform, however, is not the sole responsibility of a single organization or jurisdiction; priority reforms will not be sustained if they are treated like a special project, separate from the regular operations of the broader school system. Rather, to be sustainable, reform must permeate the community-wide context and, ideally, be taken up by educators and the public as their own purpose. Therefore, this rubric examines community-wide capacity both as a property inherent to the LEA and as a property of the broader community context—the sum of resources, readiness and willingness throughout the local community to accomplish sustainable reform. Although LEAs do not have direct control over the extended capacity of the entire community, part of the work of developing sustainable reform is to leverage this broader capacity so that it is aligned with shared expectations for successful implementation.

### Key Variables

To develop the capacity for sustainable reform on a community-wide basis, LEAs should consider two variables:

- A. **LEA Capacity.** LEA capacity is the resources, readiness and willingness dedicated to reach priority goals through the implementation of priority reforms. LEAs are multipurpose organizations, and therefore do not commit 100 percent of their capacity to reform-related activities. Nevertheless, the position of reform related activities within the LEA organization and the allocation of resources, especially the development and management of valuable and limited human capital and the organizational culture surrounding it, are critical strategic considerations for LEAs as they organize their reform effort. The data, processes and systems LEAs use to conduct ongoing performance management of reform activities lead to strategic and tactical adjustments of LEA capacity. Although the distinction between the two categories of sustainable reform is somewhat artificial, this rubric understands capacity to be the static, present allocation of resources and the organizational structure that supports them, and it understands performance management as the dynamic action of using data to consider how to reallocate them over time..
- B. **Community Capacity.** LEAs are relatively small organizations with many limitations, and therefore are not the sole driving force to accomplish priority goals. The true capacity to create sustainable reform includes resources, readiness and willingness dedicated community-wide, throughout the complex system of jurisdictions, agencies and support organizations at the local level. To develop sustainable reform, LEAs should extend their capacity through multiple means, including, but not limited to local partnerships, support to schools and regional or cross-LEA collaborations (where appropriate), to encourage the commitment of resources and support reform implementation throughout the community.

## A. LEA Capacity

### 2. System Capacity > A. LEA Capacity

#### i. Align human capital decisions with priority goals and reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all LEA staff members understand how their work supports the LEA's priority reforms and goals?</li> <li>Does the LEA have well-designed recruitment and accountability structures that hold staff appropriately accountable for results?</li> </ul>	Individual staff and team goals are not aligned to the LEA's priority goals or reforms.	All staff members in the LEA know how their individual goals align to the goals of their team but may not know how their goals align to the LEA's priority goals or reforms.	All staff members in the LEA know how their individual and team goals align to priority goals; they also know how their work supports the LEA's priority reforms.	All staff members in the LEA demonstrate a thorough understanding of how their individual work and goals contribute to the LEA's priority reforms and goals.	Staff members can articulate how their work contributes to priority reforms and goals.
	Recruiting at the LEA has little or nothing to do with achieving the LEA's priority goals or implementing its priority reforms.	Recruiting at the LEA includes ability to achieve priority goals as one of several criteria for considering new candidates.	Priority goals and reforms are the primary consideration for recruiting at all levels in the LEA.	The LEA actively recruits top talent from inside and outside the education field to ensure that the LEA always has the skills and expertise necessary to implement priority reforms and achieve priority goals	Decisions to recruit, retain, promote and dismiss staff are grounded in the priority goals.
	The LEA does not hold staff accountable for achieving the LEA's priority goals or implementing its priority reforms.	The LEA holds high-level staff accountable for multiple criteria, including contributing to priority reforms and goals.	The LEA holds all staff accountable for their contributions to implementing priority reforms and achieving priority goals.	The LEA holds staff accountable for outcomes and rewards top talent for exemplary work that contributes to the implementation of priority reforms and achievement of priority goals.	Human resources is service-oriented and helpful (for example, minimal red-tape to hire, promote or initiate transfers, clear criteria for hiring that area aligned to priority goals and reforms).  Staff members know what is expected of them and take initiative to move the work forward.

## 2. System Capacity > A. LEA Capacity

### ii. Build a culture of continuous improvement toward priority goals

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a culture of continuous improvement that extends to every staff member of the LEA at the central office and in the schools?</li> <li>Is that culture anchored in a regular, formative assessment of each individual's skills, strengths and areas of growth with respect to supporting goals?</li> <li>Does that assessment drive robust professional learning throughout the LEA?</li> </ul>	<p>Little or no formative assessment of central office staff skills occurs throughout the LEA; where it does, it is at the initiative of individuals rather than as a result of organizational practice.</p>	<p>Some formative assessment competency exists and is practiced by managers in the LEA central office, but it is still not an organization-wide practice.</p>	<p>There is a shared expectation in the LEA that a primary responsibility of every manager in the central office is to provide high quality formative and summative assessments of their teams that drive professional learning and growth to help employees implement priority reforms and contribute to priority goals; this culture of continuous improvement is also reflected in schools in the way that principals and teachers work together to improve practice.</p>	<p>Every individual in the organization, including managers and their teams at the central office and principals and their teachers in schools, excels in feedback and coaching, and the practice is pervasive. Feedback drives professional growth to develop the skills needed to implement priority reforms.</p>	<p>Formative assessment of staff (for example, feedback meetings, reflections on progress) is a common and regular practice in the central office.</p>
	<p>The practice of summative assessment of staff is a formality or viewed as an unpleasant element of the LEA's culture.</p>	<p>Managers at the central office and in schools understand and take seriously their roles in summative assessment; quality of this practice varies considerably.</p>	<p>All managers at the central office and in schools actively strive to improve their skills in providing both formative and summative feedback, and most managers are highly competent.</p>		<p>Written employee reviews and formative assessment are of high quality.</p>
	<p>The LEA offers few, if any, professional learning opportunities for its staff; those that it does offer are disconnected from any understanding of the needs or growth opportunities of staff.</p>	<p>The LEA offers professional learning opportunities that are generally good, but these opportunities are not necessarily tailored to staff needs.</p>	<p>The LEA offers professional learning opportunities to staff—both school staff and central office staff—on the basis of individually assessed growth and development needs; offerings LEA-wide are dynamic and responsive to these shifting needs across the organization.</p>	<p>The LEA does not distinguish between “professional learning” time and other time; every moment is considered an opportunity for improvement, punctuated by formal training that is tailored to individual needs.</p>	<p>There is a catalog of professional learning offerings and a process for deciding what to offer, to whom and when.</p> <p>Staff members provide feedback indicating they feel a culture of continuous improvement exists.</p> <p>There is a high number and percent of highly talented mid and senior leaders that were “grown” within the LEA.</p>

## 2. System Capacity > A. LEA Capacity

### iii. Align organizational structure with priority goals and reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the organizational structure facilitate the implementation of priority reforms and the achievement of priority goals?</li> <li>Does the LEA encourage collaboration to focus on priority goals and reforms rather than funding streams or individual programs?</li> <li>Does the LEA focus on guidance and support to schools rather than compliance?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA's organizational structure is not aligned with priority goals and reforms.</p>	<p>The organizational structures charged with implementing priority reforms and achieving priority goals are identified, but these structures are not highly developed, aligned or appropriately staffed.</p>	<p>The organizational structure of the LEA creates coherent organizational units that are focused on priority goals, priority reforms or both.</p>	<p>The entire LEA is organized in a way that is anchored in priority goals and reforms; clear roles and lines of responsibility exist for reform implementation.</p>	<p>Priority goals and reforms have dedicated units working on them or implementing them, though there may not be a one-to-one correspondence of units to reforms and goals.</p>
	<p>LEA staff members generally work within their program areas and rarely communicate with other units or share information.</p>	<p>Some LEA staff work across units on special projects or have developed relationships across divisions that support collaborative implementation of priority reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA intentionally and regularly brings together staff from across the central office to plan and coordinate implementation of priority reforms and achievement of priority goals.</p>	<p>The LEA has cohesive cross-unit teams, where necessary, that maintain focus on implementing priority reforms and achieving priority goals.</p>	<p>Cross-office teams gather regularly to focus on priority goals and reforms.</p>
	<p>Relationships and communications with schools are compliance focused, may appear disjointed and do not reflect shared ownership of student success.</p>	<p>Schools view the LEA as mostly compliance-oriented and not focused on priority goals or reforms.</p>	<p>Schools view the LEA as having established a balance between service-orientation and leadership and a focus on priority goals and reforms.</p>	<p>Schools and the LEA are true partners in reform; the LEA continuously examines ways in which it can improve the balance of service and leadership.</p>	<p>LEA staff members differentiate support to meet needs and ask "why not" instead of asking "why" in serving schools; staff raise issues to leadership for quick resolution; robust informal and formal mechanisms exist to gather feedback and collaborate with schools in advisory and decision-making capacities.</p>



## B. Community Capacity

### 2. System Capacity > B. Community Capacity

#### i. Extend capacity through partnerships

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the priority reforms of the LEA sufficiently aligned with those of the most critical partner organizations?</li> <li>Do the LEA's ongoing relationships with external stakeholder groups give it the capacity to achieve priority goals and implement priority reforms?</li> </ul>	<p>Given staffing and competing or pressing demands, the LEA considers engaging external stakeholder groups to assist with priority reforms a low priority.</p>	<p>The LEA attempts to engage external stakeholder groups to help implement priority reforms, but day-to-day demands take precedence.</p>	<p>The LEA has made external partnerships with other local education organizations an LEA-wide priority; external stakeholder groups actively contribute to the implementation of many priority reforms.</p>	<p>Nearly all LEA action on priority reforms leverages one or more external partnerships.</p>	<p>Public statements of priority from external partners align with the LEA's priority reform agenda.</p> <p>There are formal agreements of partnership between LEA and external stakeholder groups or informal agreements that are well understood.</p>
	<p>The LEA is reluctant to engage in partnerships or is stymied in its attempts to form partnerships that expand its capacity.</p>	<p>LEA leadership attempts to engage external stakeholder groups, but most LEA staff members do not know how to integrate this kind of engagement into their work; day-to-day demands take precedence.</p>	<p>The LEA has made external partnerships a priority; most LEA staff members collaborate with other local education organizations to implement priority reforms.</p>	<p>Nearly all LEA action on priority reforms leverages one or more external partnerships; LEA staff work seamlessly with and through partners.</p>	<p>Staff provides positive feedback on the role (if any) that external partnerships play in their day-to-day work.</p> <p>The mix of activities and functions in the LEA and in external partners reflects a sensible division of labor (for example, LEA partnering with others to extend capacity in critical areas).</p>
	<p>Potential partners, such as local foundations and advocacy groups, pursue reforms that run counter to the LEA's priority reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA understands where external stakeholder groups can be helpful in implementing priority reforms; some key partners are working in parallel with the LEA and are aligned in their activities.</p>	<p>The most critical partners work closely with the LEA, align with the LEA's priority reform agenda and bring resources to the table that the LEA can leverage to support that agenda.</p>	<p>The most critical partners act as true extensions of the priority reform efforts undertaken by the LEA and are institutionalized as such.</p>	

## 2. System Capacity > B. Community Capacity

### ii. Extend capacity in the field

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA ensure that schools and teachers are empowered and equipped to deliver on the LEA's priority goals by implementing its priority reforms?</li> <li>Is there a critical mass of school leaders and teachers in the field aligned with LEA efforts to implement these priority reforms?</li> <li>Are school leaders and teachers equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and resources to implement priority reforms? Are administrative structures between the central office and the schools created in a way to support their implementation?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA provides support to schools and teachers that is too limited to make a significant impact.</p> <p>The LEA relies primarily on policy and compliance monitoring to make changes in the field.</p> <p>School leaders and teachers receive sporadic support at best, and administrative structures are distractions from the real work of implementing priority reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA provides ad hoc support to schools and teachers; LEA leaders are working to align the support offerings to priority reforms and goals.</p> <p>LEA leadership is working to transform the central office into one whose primary orientation to the field is one of service, but this change has only occurred in pockets thus far.</p> <p>A growing cadre of school leaders and teachers support the LEA's priority goals and reforms and are doing their best to implement them, though administrative structures sometimes limit their ability to do so.</p>	<p>The LEA sets a clear direction for support and capacity building in the field; efforts to support school leaders and teachers are aligned with the LEA's priority reforms and goals.</p> <p>The LEA has a prevailing culture of facilitating support to the field and empowering its school leaders and teachers to fulfill their potential in carrying out priority reforms.</p> <p>The vast majority of school leaders and teachers, including the most critical, support the LEA's priority goals and reforms and are working to implement them.</p>	<p>School leaders and teachers have a common understanding of the supports that are aligned with priority reforms; the vast majority of supports the field receives, whether from the LEA, each other or external providers, are consistent and aligned with the LEA's priority reforms.</p> <p>The LEA facilitates the field as a professional learning community. The community serves to develop school and classroom-level capacity to implement priority reforms.</p> <p>Empowered leaders in the field make self-committed efforts to carry out priority reforms; reform has "taken on a life of its own" and every school leader and teacher is an equal partner with the LEA in implementing and further innovating the LEA's priority reforms.</p>	<p>The field has access to high-quality support aligned to the priority reforms (for example, professional learning opportunities, networks of teacher leaders, materials and resources for implementation).</p> <p>That support is offered at scale.</p> <p>Leaders in the field give consistently positive feedback about the LEA and other supports and demand more and more of them (for example, available seats for professional learning opportunities, phone calls, formal feedback submitted).</p>

### 3. Performance Management

#### Description of Category

LEAs are taking on complex priority reforms such as implementing new, more rigorous standards; new educator evaluation and support systems; and turning around low-performing schools. These reforms require more comprehensive oversight, planning and problem-solving than LEAs may be used to. While many factors will contribute to the short- and long-term success of reform, one powerful influence is the performance management system that LEAs establish to ensure that implementation of priority reforms is on track to meet priority goals.

#### Key Variables

Performance management is a systemic approach to assure quality and progress toward priority goals—and the priority reforms that lead to them—by setting clear expectations, monitoring progress against them and using this information for continuous improvement. A performance management system aligns organizational planning, processes and routines to establish and reinforce this focus on results. Performance management includes the following variables:

- A. **Clarity of Outcomes and Theory of Action.** Establishing and widely communicating targets for achieving priority goals, strategies for implementing priority reforms and a clear theory of action that links them.
- B. **Alignment of Resources.** Directing or redirecting resources (time, money, people) to priority reforms that produce results and establishing clear leadership for every aspect of the work.
- C. **Collection and Use of Data.** Establishing and implementing routines and processes for collecting, analyzing and monitoring data, including data on performance and implementation, to provide feedback and make mid-course corrections.
- D. **Accountability for Results.** Making decisions to continue, improve or end practices based on data; implementing incentives tied to performance inside and outside the central office; and closing the loop with stakeholder groups by engaging them about results.

Project management, which is used primarily to track tasks and deadlines of projects across the system, is an essential component of performance management. But, whereas project management focuses on the inputs (activities, tasks, etcetera) that lead to results, performance management focuses on the outputs they produce (for example, evidence of quality implementation) and the resulting outcomes.

Performance management consists of structures, processes and routines developed, implemented and managed by the LEA with the intent of improving progress to goals. Examples include easily understood data tracking mechanisms, consistent routines such as weekly or biweekly meetings focused entirely on examining outcomes and transparent and ongoing ways that the LEA gets feedback on implementation challenges from school leaders and teachers.

## A. Clarity of Outcomes and Theory of Action

### 3. Performance Management > A. Clarity of Outcomes and Theory of Action

#### i. Set student outcome targets to achieve priority goals

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the LEA articulated its priority goals in terms of specific, measurable targets for student achievement?</li> <li>Do the targets represent a significant improvement for students, and do they address equity between subgroups as well as absolute performance?</li> <li>Are they aligned with similar outcomes being set at the school level?</li> <li>Are the goals and outcomes well understood and shared by a wide range of stakeholder groups?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA has not defined clear targets for its priority goals, and the targets they have defined are subject to multiple interpretations.</p> <p>If targets exist, they have little or no resonance outside the LEA—either in the field or with external stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>The LEA has defined some specific metrics to measure its priority goals, but may not have specific targets yet.</p> <p>The outcome measures are educated guesses but not necessarily grounded in rigorous analysis of data; some may be too unrealistic, too incremental or too vague to know.</p> <p>School leaders and teachers are aware of the LEA outcomes, but most of them do not link these outcomes to their own targets.</p> <p>Understanding of and support for the goals vary among external stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>The LEA has translated its priority goals into student achievement targets that leave no room for error in definition.</p> <p>Data analysis and other evidence show that the targets are ambitious but achievable, both for students as a whole and for the most important subgroups in the LEA.</p> <p>School leaders and teachers have committed to equivalent school-level targets; together, these targets add up to the targets set by the LEA.</p> <p>Targets are understood and supported by the vast majority of local leaders and external stakeholder groups.</p>	<p>The LEA and schools share ownership of a comprehensive set of goals and targets for the LEA as a whole.</p> <p>Data analysis and other evidence show that the targets are ambitious but achievable, not just for the LEA as a whole but for each school.</p> <p>These targets are reinforced by overwhelming popular support and by all of the most important accountability mechanisms at the LEA and school level.</p> <p>Taken together, the goals and targets create a sense of urgency and momentum throughout the LEA to achieve them.</p>	<p>Goals and targets are shared across as many entities as possible (for example, central office, school board, mayor's office).</p> <p>Each target has specific parameters (for example, a single measurable metric; baseline data and level, end data; and level, interim targets for each intervening year).</p> <p>Each target is backed by rigorous data analysis (for example, benchmarking against historical performance, other similar LEAs and high and low performers within the LEA) and a needs analysis of disaggregated historical performance.</p> <p>There is a clear link between LEA-level targets and school-level targets; and any LEA-level targets that may be set for the LEA (for example, those set by the State accountability system measures).</p> <p>Educators and external stakeholder groups have clearly been engaged to support goals (for example, they co-developed them).</p>

### 3. Performance Management > A. Clarity of Outcomes and Theory of Action

#### ii. Establish a theory of action and strategies for implementing priority reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA have a clear and evidence-based theory of action for how implementing its priority reforms will lead to the achievement of its priority goals?</li> <li>Has the LEA defined strategies for implementing priority reforms that are informed by this theory of action?</li> <li>Do critical stakeholder groups understand and support the theory of action and strategies?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA has poorly articulated the relationship between what it is doing and the priority goals that it is trying to achieve.</p> <p>The LEA has not defined any strategies; instead, it has lists of projects or activities that are not guided by any underlying approach or rationale.</p> <p>There is no common understanding across the community of what the LEA is doing or why.</p>	<p>The LEA has articulated a theory of action that uses assertions and some evidence to show its priority reforms will contribute to priority goals.</p> <p>The LEA has defined strategies for implementing priority reforms, but they are only superficially connected to the theory of action.</p> <p>Internal and external stakeholder groups understand the LEA's theory of action and strategies, though support may be uneven.</p>	<p>The LEA has defined a theory of action that uses evidence-based practices, research and logic to link its priority reforms to its priority goals.</p> <p>The LEA's theory of action informs the selection and implementation of a small number of prioritized strategies for carrying out priority reforms.</p> <p>Internal and external stakeholder groups understand and support the LEA's theory of action and strategies.</p>	<p>The LEA's theory of action is well-known and shared within the LEA; staff members throughout the organization use it to guide their day-to-day work.</p> <p>The theory of action brings coherence to the LEA's priority reforms and the strategies for implementing them; it clearly shows how these strategies will work together interdependently to achieve priority goals.</p> <p>The LEA continuously tests and refines its theory of action using evidence that connects outcomes to the implementation of strategies.</p> <p>Internal and external stakeholder groups are partners in developing, advocating, testing and refining the theory of action.</p>	<p>The LEA has recorded its theory of action and strategies and made them available in a prominent place (for example, front page of Website).</p> <p>Staff can name the theory of action and use it to make decisions.</p> <p>The selection of strategies is justified by evidence that links them to the theory of action, rather than an appeal to current practice or history.</p> <p>LEA leadership demonstrates an understanding of the difference between ongoing work and strategies designed to change that work during a defined period of time.</p> <p>The LEA uses its data and research capacity to test the impact of its reforms using outcome and other data.</p> <p>Most internal and external stakeholder groups can accurately name the LEA's theory of action and strategies.</p>



### 3. Performance Management > A. Clarity of Outcomes and Theory of Action

#### iii. Develop plans that align strategies with priority goals

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA have plans that articulate its priority goals and reforms, theory of action and strategies?</li> <li>Do the plans show how the LEA will implement its strategies at scale?</li> <li>Do the plans show how implementing each strategy will contribute to the LEA's priority goals for reform?</li> <li>Do the plans drive the day-to-day work of those who will be responsible for implementing the strategies?</li> <li>Do the strategies in the plans impact the strategic work undertaken by schools?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA may have plans, but they do not present a coherent picture of what the LEA is trying to accomplish or how.</p> <p>The descriptions of strategies give little or no sense of the scale at which they will be implemented or how goals will be achieved.</p> <p>The priority strategies have no clearly articulated connection to expected outputs leading to desired outcomes.</p> <p>If they exist, LEA plans bear little or no relationship to what people do in the central office or in schools.</p> <p>Strategies implemented in schools are undertaken almost entirely and exclusively as a result of school-level initiative.</p>	<p>The LEA has plans that identify priority goals, reforms and strategies, but may be vague about the connection between them.</p> <p>The plans articulate strategies and give a sense of the hoped-for scale of implementation.</p> <p>The plans articulate a general connection between strategies and desired outcomes, with some attempts to estimate impact.</p> <p>The LEA's plans have substantial but uneven influence over the day-to-day work of the central office and its interactions with the field.</p> <p>Many schools align their core practices to LEA priorities.</p>	<p>The LEA has plans that coherently articulate and show the connection between its priority goals, priority reforms, theory of action and strategies.</p> <p>The plans clearly show how each priority strategy will reach the field at the necessary scale to have a strong impact on outcomes for students.</p> <p>The plans use evidence to estimate how the priority strategies, implemented together, will add up to significant impact on the LEA's priority goals.</p> <p>The LEA's plans dominate its understanding of its core work and its interactions with the field.</p> <p>A critical mass of schools adopts strategies that are aligned with the LEA's priorities.</p>	<p>The LEA has plans that articulate its priority goals and reforms, theory of action and strategies so well that they serve as the basis for communicating and engaging stakeholder groups about the LEA's work.</p> <p>The plans give detail on the scale of each individual strategy, but also show the interdependencies between strategies and how they will be addressed in implementation.</p> <p>The plan(s) use evidence to estimate how the priority strategies will build on and interact with one another to cause the State to achieve its priority goals.</p> <p>The plans are living documents that form the basis for dialogue and partnership between the LEA, the field and stakeholder groups about effective implementation of priority reforms.</p> <p>A critical mass of schools actively contributes to and participates in the LEA's strategies.</p>	<p>LEA plans exist, and LEA leaders, staff and other key stakeholder groups often quote them.</p> <p>Plans specify a defined, high-priority number of strategies; the plans are aligned with any competing alternatives (for example, LEA or school improvement plans, school board strategic plan).</p> <p>LEA staff and others responsible for implementing plans refer to them as the most significant guidance that they use in their work.</p> <p>The LEA has recently updated plans (for example, within the last 3 to 6 months) to reflect current realities.</p> <p>School-level plans contain implicit or explicit references to LEA priority reforms and strategies. The LEA encourages this.</p>

## B. Alignment of Resources (People, Time, Technology and Money)

### 3. Performance Management > B. Alignment of Resources (People, Time, Technology and Money)

#### i. Direct resources to priority reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA consistently align the vast majority of its resources—people, time, technology and money—to priority goals and priority reforms?</li> <li>Does the LEA understand what resources it will need to sustain its priority reforms over time?</li> <li>Does the LEA regularly act to ensure that its resources are aligned to these needs?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA has little understanding of the resources needed to continue implementing key reforms and has no plan to build that knowledge.</p>	<p>The LEA is working to understand its resource needs for sustaining priority reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA has assessed the resource needs for sustaining each of its priority reforms and the landscape of current resources available to meet these needs.</p>	<p>The LEA regularly reviews its resource needs and resources available.</p>	<p>The LEA has a needs assessment document that clearly shows the resource needs for each priority reform over a long period of time (for example, five years).</p> <p>The LEA has catalogued all of its resources available (for example, Federal and State funding streams, full-time employees, systems, other outside funders) along with a clear knowledge of how flexible or fungible each source is.</p> <p>The LEA has developed protocols for reviewing programs and activities in terms of their contribution to priority reforms and uses these to determine alignment.</p> <p>LEA leadership demonstrates a willingness to end programs and activities that are less aligned to priority reforms to redirect resources to a better use; those programs and activities that are sustained are the most impactful.</p> <p>Leadership has a system for tracking and reallocating staff based on priority reform needs; staff members are nimble in response to assignment shifts, and minimal time is lost during staff transitions.</p> <p>The LEA rigorously identifies institutional, policy and political barriers that hinder resource reallocation and have mitigation strategies to address those barriers.</p>
	<p>The LEA has no reliable way to assess the alignment of current resource allocation to priority reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA identifies all of the resources at its disposal and redirects some of them towards implementing priority reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA has developed and successfully implemented a plan to reallocate resources to meet these needs.</p>	<p>The LEA continuously adjusts the allocation of resources to meet immediate needs of priority reforms and continuously explores new mechanisms to provide additional resources, all in the context of a longer-term plan for meeting these needs over time.</p>	<p>The LEA matches staffing assignments to support priority reforms on an ongoing basis, with continuous assessment and readjustment as needs and circumstances change; staff members are willing and able to continuously adjust their day-to-day work to contribute to these reforms.</p>
	<p>The LEA assesses or adjusts staffing assignments without considering priority reforms; staffing efforts include many competing considerations besides who is best for the job.</p>	<p>The LEA assesses and adjusts assignments of high-level staff in support of the LEA's priority reforms, but this may not be done thoroughly or in a timely manner.</p>	<p>The LEA assesses staffing needs and adjusts staffing assignments throughout the LEA so that necessary staff capacity is allocated in support of the LEA's priority reforms and the changing needs associated with them.</p>		

### 3. Performance Management > B. Alignment of Resources (People, Time, Technology and Money)

#### ii. Establish clear leadership of priority goals and reforms

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the LEA assigned clear and accountable leadership for each of its priority goals and reforms?</li> <li>Do these leaders have a working relationship with the superintendent that facilitates their leadership?</li> <li>Do these leaders marshal the necessary resources (people, time, technology and money) to carry out their responsibilities?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA has not assigned clear roles and responsibilities with respect to its priority goals and reforms, creating confusion and bottlenecks in decision-making.</p>	<p>The LEA has articulated roles and responsibilities for leaders in the LEA, which are largely aligned with priority goals and reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA has assigned a single accountable leader for each of the LEA's priority goals and reforms.</p>	<p>In addition to their individual responsibility, leaders of the LEA's priority goals and reforms form a coherent team that takes collective responsibility for implementation.</p>	<p>The LEA has organized its leadership around priority goals with one leader per goal, around priority reforms or strategies with one leader per priority or strategy) or with a combination of one leader per goal, each working with a team of priority or strategy leaders.</p> <p>LEA leadership, staff and school leaders can name the accountable leader for each priority goal and reform.</p> <p>The superintendent has a support and accountability relationship with each leader that is anchored on the priority reform or goal for which he or she is responsible.</p> <p>There are protocols in place for communicating with the superintendent, having access to his or her time and getting decisions made.</p>
	<p>Authority for final decisions is not reliable; decisions on implementing priority reforms are made ad hoc by the superintendent, various members of the leadership team and others in the LEA.</p>	<p>The superintendent and the leadership team have established clear lines of decision making.</p>	<p>The superintendent relies on, empowers and supports each of these leaders to do what is necessary to carry out their responsibilities.</p>	<p>The superintendent relies on, empowers and supports this team to work collaboratively to achieve priority goals and implement priority reforms.</p>	
	<p>Leaders' use of resources is mostly dictated by the functions that exist within their organizational units.</p>	<p>Leaders in the LEA direct a substantial portion of their resources towards achieving those parts of the priority reform agenda for which they are responsible.</p>	<p>Each leader uses all of their available resources to implement priority reforms and achieve priority goals.</p>	<p>Each leader collaborates with colleagues to draw resources from throughout the organization to implement priority reforms and achieve priority goals.</p>	

## C. Collection and Use of Data

### 3. Performance Management > C. Collection and Use of Data

#### i. Ensure quality data on performance

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the LEA, the field and the public have access to valid, frequent and useful data on performance against priority goals?</li> <li>Are there clearly defined processes and systems for collecting, verifying, analyzing and reporting these data?</li> <li>Does the LEA generate actionable insights in its own analyses of these data?</li> <li>Do stakeholder groups trust in and use these data?</li> </ul>	<p>LEA leaders are not deliberate about prioritizing their data needs; they may take a “systems-first” approach to data and view it as an IT problem.</p>	<p>LEA leaders are identifying data needs that bear some relationship to priority goals.</p>	<p>Using their priority goals as an anchor, LEA leaders have prioritized a set of performance indicators to collect, verify, report and analyze.</p>	<p>The LEA’s priority indicators of performance include lagging and leading indicators drawn from the LEA, school, classroom and student level.</p>	<p>Those leading the LEA’s priority goals and priority reforms take responsibility for defining data needs and collaborating with appropriate staff to meet them.</p> <p>The LEA has found a solution that includes and reconciles State and local data sources.</p> <p>Anybody can log on to the LEA’s data system and have access to data on performance that are easy to understand and manipulate.</p> <p>Access statistics suggest heavy and widespread use of data systems across the LEA.</p>
	<p>The LEA has disorganized and poorly defined systems and processes for data collection, verification, analysis and reporting; the systems and processes are also burdensome for schools.</p>	<p>The LEA is beginning to improve the efficiency and minimize the burden of its systems and processes for data collection, verification, analysis and reporting, but may or may not link these systems to data needs.</p>	<p>The LEA works with schools to shape its systems and processes for data collection, verification, analysis and reporting around prioritized indicators.</p>	<p>The LEA has built the necessary interoperability between its systems and those of schools to facilitate the collection, verification, analysis and reporting of these indicators.</p>	
	<p>Current systems provide data that are incomplete, invalid or unreliable; they are generally limited to results required by Federal or State law.</p>	<p>These systems make performance data available at least once a quarter, but they may or may not be user friendly.</p>	<p>These systems generate frequent (for example, monthly or weekly) and reliable data on these indicators; the data are available to the public in a format that is easily accessible and user friendly.</p>	<p>These systems generate near real-time data on these indicators; the data are available to the public in a format that builds user capacity to analyze and interpret the information.</p>	
	<p>LEA analysis of these data is haphazard, ad hoc and may bear little relationship to priority goals.</p>	<p>The LEA conducts occasional analysis of these data to identify basic patterns or trends in performance, but without necessarily disaggregating the data or connecting them to practice.</p>	<p>The LEA conducts regular analysis and engages in public discussion of the data to identify patterns of performance that can inform discussions on the effectiveness of current practices; the field is regularly engaged in this work.</p>	<p>The LEA’s data analyses identify patterns of performance, generate hypotheses for further investigation and analysis and repeat the process until it has isolated the most persistent trends and patterns; the LEA works with the field to supplement its quantitative analysis of the data with qualitative analysis of potential root causes behind these patterns.</p>	
	<p>There is wide internal and external doubt as to the validity and reliability of these data.</p>	<p>Leaders within the LEA trust the quality of the data they receive, but those in the field have mixed perceptions about their validity and reliability.</p>	<p>Stakeholder groups throughout the LEA view the LEA’s data as reliable and valid and view the LEA as a model of strong data use.</p>	<p>The data are fully trusted and heavily used in the LEA, in schools and by other stakeholder groups.</p>	

### 3. Performance Management > C. Collection and Use of Data

#### ii. Ensure quality data on implementation

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA know whether its strategies are faithfully carrying out priority reforms and impacting priority goals?</li> <li>Does the LEA regularly collect feedback from the field on the quality and the efficacy of implementation?</li> <li>Does the LEA use this feedback to generate actionable learning?</li> <li>Do schools and partners understand this feedback and its implications for their work?</li> </ul>	<p>LEA leaders do not take a deliberate approach to understanding whether their work has an impact on priority goals; any efforts to do this are limited to longer-term research.</p>	<p>LEA leaders may pursue feedback on some key practices linked to priority reforms and have an interest in making these efforts more systemic.</p>	<p>LEA leaders have defined a learning agenda consisting of focused questions about the quality and efficacy of its strategies to implement priority reforms and achieve priority goals.</p>	<p>The LEA has integrated its learning agenda with its broader research and evaluation efforts, so that learning takes place on a spectrum of short-term to long-term feedback.</p>	<p>LEA leaders have identified questions for the learning agenda that range from inputs to outcomes (for example, Did implementation happen as planned? Is the field experiencing it positively? Is the field learning what is expected of it? Is it changing practices? Have students learned?).</p> <p>The LEA works with schools to develop protocols for collecting feedback from the field that utilizes a variety of feedback loops (for example, surveys, focus groups, interviews, school visits, review of artifacts).</p> <p>There is evidence that LEA staff and school leaders understand these data and find them useful for their own work.</p> <p>LEA leaders and staff use data on implementation to anchor all of their conversations about their work.</p>
	<p>The LEA disperses any efforts to collect feedback on implementation throughout the central office; these efforts may overlap and conflict with each other, creating unnecessary burdens for the field.</p>	<p>The LEA collects occasional feedback on the quality and efficacy of these strategies, but there are no formal systems and processes for doing so.</p>	<p>The LEA has developed systems and processes for regularly collecting feedback from the field to answer these questions; these systems generate frequent (for example, quarterly) data that the LEA makes available to staff and the field.</p>	<p>The LEA's systems and processes collect this feedback regularly and systemically, so that much of it can be disaggregated by school; these systems generate near real-time data that can be easily connected with performance data.</p>	
	<p>The LEA has limited ability to draw actionable conclusions from feedback data that may be unreliable or anecdotal.</p>	<p>The LEA is learning how to analyze this feedback and mine it for insights on implementation, but struggles just to report the raw information.</p>	<p>The LEA analyzes these data to find insights about the efficacy and quality of implementation of its strategies to achieve priority goals, implications for future work and implications for adjusting the questions in the learning agenda.</p>	<p>The LEA and most staff continuously analyze these data to identify patterns that have day-to-day implications for their work and learning agenda; the LEA also uses these data to draw long-term, rigorous conclusions about the efficacy of strategies.</p>	
	<p>Schools and partners are not widely aware of any feedback that does exist.</p>	<p>When it produces this information, the LEA shares it with schools and partners, but understanding among them is mixed.</p>	<p>Schools and partners trust the feedback from these systems and use it to improve their implementation efforts.</p>	<p>Schools and partners access these systems to analyze their feedback data and draw their own conclusions for practice.</p>	<p>LEA leaders and staff use data on implementation to anchor all of their conversations about their work.</p>



### 3. Performance Management > C. Collection and Use of Data

#### iii. Use data to review progress and make mid-course corrections

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the LEA's implementation of priority reforms driven by evidence?</li> <li>Does the LEA have a set of routine formal and informal dialogues with the right accountable leaders about performance and its implications for their work?</li> <li>Do the routines use data on performance and implementation quality to arrive at a shared view of current progress?</li> <li>Do the routines encourage productive problem-solving, learning and collaboration?</li> <li>Do the routines result in a clear commitment to next steps that move the work forward?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA does not systemically use data to guide its decision making about the implementation of priority reforms.</p>	<p>The LEA has some routines and processes in place for using data to make decisions, but implementation is sporadic and roles may not be clear.</p>	<p>The LEA has established a system of routine conversations about performance between the superintendent and leaders in the LEA who are responsible for priority reforms and priority goals.</p>	<p>The LEA's system of routines for monitoring progress extends to include critical school leaders and partners, and it drives similar practices throughout the units of the LEA and schools.</p>	<p>The LEA has a schedule of routines that facilitates broad and deep coverage of the LEA's priority goals and priority reforms.</p> <p>The LEA calendar prioritizes the time of the superintendent and accountable leaders of priority goals and priority reforms for routines.</p>
	<p>The LEA holds decision-making meetings and may make use of data when they are conveniently available, but there is disagreement about what story the data tell.</p>	<p>LEA routines use performance and implementation data, but the data are often raw and not interpreted.</p>	<p>LEA routines use analyses of performance and implementation data to paint a clear picture of progress.</p>	<p>LEA routines use clear, sharp and consistent analyses of timely performance and implementation data to bring participants to consensus about areas of strength and challenge.</p>	<p>The LEA has developed written protocols and processes for analyzing the relevant data, drawing preliminary conclusions, teasing up key facts and questions for routines and capturing next steps.</p>
	<p>There is hesitation to surface real challenges from the data because participants fear accountability for results.</p>	<p>Participants spend a significant amount of time in routines trying to understand the patterns in the data and have less time to engage in problem-solving and learning.</p>	<p>Participants use this picture as a starting point to dig into the most pressing problems and to learn from each other about how to address them.</p>	<p>Participants rely on this common understanding to push each other's thinking about what might be possible, to have challenging conversations where necessary and to generate innovative solutions to identified challenges.</p>	<p>The LEA creates a system of similar routines for its engagement with schools and connects it to planning and accountability.</p> <p>For most major decisions on practice, resource allocation, staffing and funding, LEA leaders can point to the evidence that justifies the decisions.</p>
	<p>The LEA rarely uncovers clear next steps from these meetings; It makes real decisions about adjustments to practice, resource allocation, staffing and funding in other venues, which reflect power and politics rather than evidence.</p>	<p>These routines result in some decisions that address challenges identified in the data, but accountability may be unclear.</p>	<p>This problem solving results in clear decisions about adjustments to practice, resource allocation, staffing and funding that build on strengths and address challenges; leaders commit to these decisions and are held accountable for them in future routines.</p>	<p>This problem solving results in clear decision making based on evidence and builds strong, productive working relationships within the LEA and between the LEA and schools; through these relationships, people hold each other accountable for making decisions based on data.</p>	<p>The self-monitoring in these routines informs the LEA's external reporting on performance (for example to the school board, to stakeholder groups, to the public).</p>

## D. Accountability for Results

### 3. Performance Management > D. Accountability for Results

#### i. Link internal accountability to results

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do data on performance and quality of implementation have real consequences for the work of the LEA?</li> <li>Do they have consequences for units within the LEA?</li> <li>Do they have consequences for individuals in the LEA?</li> </ul>	<p>Most of the LEA's practices exist for historical or political reasons; the LEA rarely uses data to adjust these practices.</p>	<p>The LEA is using data on performance and quality of implementation to inform its practices, but it still struggles to end practices that prove ineffective.</p>	<p>The LEA regularly makes mid-course corrections to its practices—adding, changing or ending them based on data on performance and quality of implementation.</p>	<p>The LEA continuously and rapidly updates its practices as data on their efficacy become available; the LEA works closely with schools to test, refine and continuously improve this body of work.</p>	<p>The LEA has processes for modifying strategies and practices to improve outcomes and also terminating practices when they show consistently poor results.</p> <p>There is evidence that strategies and practices have been discontinued based on performance and implementation data.</p> <p>The LEA has processes for making quick staffing, organization, funding and resource decisions based on data.</p> <p>Information from performance reviews references data on performance and quality of implementation.</p>
	<p>The LEA's staffing, organization, funding and resource allocation change slowly over time; these changes are rarely driven by data and they change frequently, but based on personal impulse.</p>	<p>The LEA is making some key staffing, organization, funding and resource allocation changes in response to data on performance and quality of implementation.</p>	<p>The LEA adjusts its staffing, organization, funding and resource allocation to accommodate these changes to practices.</p>	<p>The LEA is a fluid entity that continuously and rapidly updates its staffing, organization, funding and resource allocation in response to these changes in practices.</p>	
	<p>The LEA's human capital management is almost entirely disconnected from data on performance or quality of implementation.</p>	<p>The LEA links data on performance and quality of implementation informally to human capital management.</p>	<p>The LEA links data on performance and quality of implementation to formal and informal human capital management of individuals.</p>	<p>The LEA considers data on performance and quality of implementation in all human capital decisions.</p>	

### 3. Performance Management > D. Accountability for Results

#### ii. Link external accountability to results

Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA use data to hold schools and other partners, such as contractors or community organizations who are enacting LEA projects, accountable for performance?</li> </ul>	The LEA does not translate priority goals into clear expectations for schools and other partners.	The LEA has set expectations for schools and other partners, but it does not make these expectations salient or clearly connect them to priority goals.	The LEA has set clear and transparent expectations for schools and other partners that are linked to priority goals.	The LEA has worked with schools and other partners to set and agree to performance expectations that are linked to priority goals.	<p>The LEA has negotiated and formalized performance expectations with schools and partners.</p> <p>The LEA has a clear set of criteria and rules for differentiating its approach to schools and partners (for example, based on performance, implementation, quality, current relationship, intent to cooperate, size, type).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA set clear and specific performance expectations for schools and other partners?</li> <li>Does the LEA use data to fairly assess school and partner performance against expectations?</li> </ul>	The LEA uses data to assess school and partner performance, but it is not clear how the data relates back to performance against expectations.	The LEA uses data to assess school and partner performance against these expectations, but its engagement with schools and partners may not be driven by this assessment.	The LEA differentiates its support and accountability approach to schools and other partners based on whether they have met these expectations; It prioritizes LEA resources and attention to schools that are struggling the most.	The LEA differentiates its support and accountability approach to schools and other partners based on a variety of factors, including data on performance and quality of implementation; it adjusts its differentiation quickly as new data become available.	<p>The LEA has a clear set of criteria and rules for how rewards and consequences are determined and applied; discretion plays a role but does not prevent the application of the most severe consequences where appropriate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the LEA have a system of meaningful rewards in place for those schools and partners that meet or exceed expectations?</li> <li>Does the LEA have a system of progressive interventions and consequences for LEAs and partners that perform below expectations?</li> </ul>	The LEA limits its system of rewards and consequences to policy, without strong implementation.	<p>The LEA has implemented some limited rewards for schools and partners that meet or exceed expectations.</p> <p>The LEA has consequences available for low performance, but they are blunt instruments that are rarely used.</p>	<p>The LEA has a well-regarded and well-understood system of rewards that showcase high performance and are meaningful to schools and other partners.</p> <p>The LEA has a transparent and easy-to-understand system of interventions and consequences that increase in inverse proportion to the performance of schools and other partners; consequences are exercised whenever the data warrant it.</p>	The LEA's system of rewards addresses absolute performance, progress and implementation quality; it spurs healthy competition between schools to improve.	<p>Schools and partners agree that the system is fair and that the rewards, consequences and supports equip and motivate them to improve performance.</p>

### 3. Performance Management > D. Accountability for Results

iii. Engage stakeholders about results					
Questions to Consider	Inadequate	Emerging	Strong	Exemplary	Look-Fors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do stakeholder groups and the public understand and support the implications of current performance for their work?</li> <li>Does the LEA have a consistent and transparent message about current performance and its implications for the work of reform?</li> <li>Does the LEA engage stakeholder groups and the public with this message?</li> <li>Does the LEA hold itself accountable for receiving and implementing feedback from stakeholder groups and the public?</li> </ul>	<p>The LEA may release analyses of results, but the implications do not go much further than “good news” or “bad news.”</p> <p>The LEA makes few if any attempts to engage stakeholders about results.</p>	<p>The LEA regularly releases transparent and timely analyses of results and the implications for its own work.</p> <p>The LEA communicates with stakeholder groups and the public using these analyses as part of an effort to build support for its ongoing work.</p> <p>The LEA asks for feedback on its work from stakeholder groups and the public, but may not follow up.</p>	<p>The LEA regularly analyzes results and develops clear messages about their implications at the LEA and school levels.</p> <p>The LEA employs a deliberate strategy to communicate with stakeholder groups and the public using these messages, including a reference to overall priority goals and a clear call to action.</p> <p>The LEA takes feedback from stakeholder groups and the public and regularly reports on how that feedback is changing its work.</p>	<p>The LEA continuously develops and refines its messages about results and implications as information becomes available on outcomes and quality of implementation.</p> <p>The LEA uses these messages to engage stakeholder groups and the public in a consistent and transparent dialogue about the current state of performance and implementation.</p> <p>In this dialogue, the LEA continuously commits to and reports on its use of feedback from stakeholder groups and the public to shape its work.</p>	<p>The LEA includes messages about results and implications in a prominent place (for example, Website) and ensures messages are balanced and rigorous (for example, “We must not tolerate this level of performance so we must...” “This is a success that we build on by...”).</p> <p>The LEA has a written strategy for engaging stakeholders about results that differentiates messages to different stakeholder groups and uses multiple media, including social media; this strategy is part of a broader stakeholder engagement plan if it exists.</p> <p>Feedback from stakeholder groups suggests that they: (1) understand local performance; (2) agree on the LEA’s perspective on what must be done; (3) believe that their voices are being heard and reflected in LEA action; and (4) are able and willing to play their part in supporting the LEA’s priority reforms.</p>

## Glossary of Terms

### Terms Referring to LEA Priorities

LEAs use a wide range of terms to describe how they organize their priorities, often with different meanings. For the purposes of this rubric, we use the following terms and definitions to articulate an interconnected hierarchy of LEA priorities.

**Plan:** A document or set of documents (for example, strategic plans, delivery plans, project plans) that lay out the LEA's priority goals, priority reforms, strategies and theory of action. At a minimum, a strong plan:

- Describes at least one priority goal and associated target(s), one priority reform and the strategies that comprise it;
- Clearly shows the connections between these elements through the theory of action; and
- Specifies how each strategy will be implemented at scale.

**Priority goal:** A commitment by the LEA to achieve an improved level of performance for a particular student outcome measure (for example, increase the number of students that are college and career ready, improve proficiency or graduation rates).

**Priority reform:** A body of work that an LEA is undertaking to achieve one or more of its priority goals (for example, implementing college- and career-ready standards or implementing new educator evaluation systems).

**Strategy:** An activity (or set of activities) that an LEA is undertaking to implement a priority reform and contribute to achieving one or more priority goals. A strategy has a defined beginning and an end; it ends when it has changed something about "business as usual" in the LEA (for example, teacher practice). A group of strategies will often make up a larger priority reform (for example, if the priority reform is implementing college- and career-ready standards, and the priority goal is to ensure that more students are college and career ready, a strategy might be to provide professional development to teachers to teach the standards).

**Target:** The quantification of a priority goal that allows the LEA to track progress against it, including:

- A specific, quantitative metric;
- A start date and associated baseline on the metric;
- An end date; and
- A desired level of performance on the metric by the end date.

**Theory of action:** A brief statement that makes a causal connection between the LEA's priority goals, its priority reforms and the strategies that comprise them. The theory of action justifies the LEA's selection of and focus on priority reforms and strategies by asserting, with as much evidence as possible, how their implementation will help the LEA to achieve its priority goals. A theory of action is often phrased as an "if-then" statement that describes the work the LEA will undertake and the expected outcomes that will result from those actions (for example, "If we ensure that every student has a highly effective teacher who is teaching to rigorous standards, then we will increase the number of students prepared for college and careers").

### Other Terms

**Data:** Information—either quantitative or qualitative—that indicates progress toward the successful implementation of priority reforms and achievement of priority goals. Data are most often collected on the metrics that comprise targets and feedback on the quality of implementation.

**Feedback:** Process(es) for gathering quantitative or qualitative data from schools, teachers or stakeholders that an LEA can use to track the implementation of a priority reform, a strategy or both.

**Field:** The people and entities to whom or through whom the LEA is delivering services and who are directly responsible for implementation on the ground (for example, schools and the leaders and educators in them).

**LEA:** Local educational agency.

**LEA leader:** One of a group of people that lead the LEA's work, generally from the central office (for example, the superintendent and his or her leadership team)

**Local education organization:** An organization that exercises formal or informal influence over the statewide implementation of priority reforms. This includes the LEA, policy-making bodies such as the school board or municipal government and third-party advocacy and support groups.

**Partner:** A person or group of people who have an investment in the project's goals; a partner brings something to the table—knowledge, skills, or resources—and stands to benefit in some way from the success of the project (for example, a local community foundation that supports schools).

**SEA:** State education agency.

**Scale:** Reaching the broad number of students, teachers or other stakeholders across the LEA community (for example, implementing a teacher professional development program at *scale* would mean that the program is reaching all, or nearly all, of the teachers in the LEA).

**School leader:** Generally refers to school administrators; mostly principals.

**Stakeholder or stakeholder group:** A person or group of people that has an interest in the LEA's priority goals and reforms. Stakeholder groups include local education organizations non-organized groups of people (for example, parents as a whole, teachers as a whole, students as a whole) and local organizations with influence over implementation of priority reforms.

**Stakeholder engagement:** The creation by the LEA of opportunities for one or more stakeholders to participate in dialogue or action to arrive at a shared understanding of a particular aspect of reform. This dialogue involves stakeholder(s) in making decisions about the reform effort, creating joint ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of reform and strengthening the relationships between the LEA and stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement can take many forms, the most basic being communication. Communication can be one-way (through print or other media) or two-way (through feedback or dialogue gathered through focus groups, social media or other media). LEAs can also provide opportunities for stakeholders to engage by recruiting them to participate in decision-making bodies, technical assistance and communication activities, or as "champions" charged with engaging other stakeholders to advance reforms.

**State:** A collective term for the State level of a system, including the SEA and other State education organizations, as well as the legislative and executive branches of government.

**Units:** Functional offices within the LEA central office (for example, there may be a Curriculum and Instruction Unit, and Educator Quality Unit, etcetera).

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