Solutions

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# FUNCTIONAL COHERENCE IN THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY: A STRUCTURE FOR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Sam Redding, Ed.D. and Dean Nafziger, Ph.D.

### The Question

How does a state education agency (SEA) create an organizational structure that fosters an environment for performance management that continuously improves outcomes?

## Abstract

The purpose of the state education agency (SEA) is to focus the entire education system on helping students become capable in college and career in an increasingly complex world. One of the most vexing problems facing SEAs today is how to meet increasing demands for performance while adjusting to significant resource reductions. Meeting that demand is complicated, because SEAs sit at the center of a sprawling array of institutions and organizations that each have a role in educating students. Meeting the demand requires that an SEA not only become more effective and productive in its own work, but that it will stimulate the same in local education agencies and other organizations that provide education services. This paper addresses one aspect of that challenge—creating an organizational structure that fosters a coherent and powerful system that continuously improves outcomes. The discussion of organizational function and structure also provides a framework for establishing a performance management system for SEAs.

## Purpose and Functions of the State Education Agency (SEA)

An organization's purpose (mission) is expressed by answering: "What value do we add, and for whom?" The purpose of the SEA is to provide resources, information, and assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) and schools to ensure that every student is prepared for college and/or career. Resources, information, and assistance provided by the SEA constitute the value added for LEAs and schools accruing to the benefit of students. Of course, the SEA fulfills its purpose within and through the state's statutes and policy directions.

An organization must know its core functions and core capabilities in order to successfully fulfill its purpose, or mission. Because the SEA responds to and serves a myriad of constituencies and

performs a variety of functions, it needs a conceptual framework that clearly delineates its functions so it can structure itself and align its capabilities to match the functions, and thereby manage its performance in fulfilling its purpose. In part, this is a matter of building the SEA's internal capacity to do its work, with capacity residing in its personnel and how they are organized to fulfill state functions.

## The Problem

A 2009 study of SEAs (Kerins, Perlman, & Redding) included a survey administered to key administrators in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia and concluded that the agencies struggled to achieve coherence across organizational departments and between compliance functions organized by funding stream and school improvement functions that spanned departments. The report stated the problem:

> When a state education agency (SEA) undertakes to provide a statewide system of support for school improvement, it realizes that its organizational structure, resource streams, communication channels, and ways of interfacing with districts and schools fit like a straitjacket. The agency's responsibility for ensuring local compliance with state and federal regulation doesn't go away, but new duties are layered in, often residing within the same departments and performed by the same staff, but calling for new skills and different mindsets. While compliance monitoring requires precise definition, circumscription, certain boundaries, and standardization, school improvement demands agility, responsiveness, keen judgment, and differentiation. (p. 1)

Echoing the observations of the state administrators, the report went on to describe the situation:

> If there is a word as commonly bandied about in state education departments as "data" and "capacity," it is "silos." While successful schools and districts have nimbly reorganized themselves around clear purposes, streamlined their internal structures, weeded out non-productive initiatives, and targeted resources to achieve goals, state education departments have typically not been so agile. Why? Silos. At least that is the conventional explanation.
>
> Silos—the captivity of personnel and programs within narrow tunnels of vision, often emitting light only from the end where the funding originates—are obstacles to coherence, but not the only obstacles. Politics blows the winds of change in sudden and contradictory gusts. With each change in leadership comes a fresh attempt to diverge from the past and put a personal stamp on the directions of the future. With each newly-identified national problem comes a wave of federal funding and regulation, often followed by a similar state response, and seldom with sufficient consideration for how the new is made coherent with the old. More silos. Or more balls to juggle for the denizens of the silos. (pp. 13–14)

In interviews with U. S. Department of Education (ED) officials responsible for funding to states for Title I (students in poverty), IDEA (students with disabilities), and Title III (English learners and immigrants), the report's authors learned that ED personnel were sensitive to the states'

difficulties and were seeking solutions. The legitimate need to safeguard the application of federal funds for their intended purposes through regulatory compliance created a natural tension with state, district, and school needs for greater flexibility in the use of these funds for purposes of cross-categorical improvement.

A 2011 report (Brown, Hess, Lautzenheiser, & Owen) concluded that SEAs suffered from the following functional problems:

1. SEAs are overly focused on compliance.
2. There is a lack of transparency.
3. Federal funding can hinder SEA operations.
4. There are bureaucratic obstacles to reforming the SEA.

The ED has taken a variety of approaches to ameliorate the SEAs' obstacles to internal reform, such as the inclusion of Title I-eligible high schools not receiving Title I funding in the 2009 revamp of the School Improvement Grant program and the ESEA waiver process that began in 2011. In both cases, ED strived for greater flexibility in SEA use of federal funds within strict parameters for performance management and attention to outcomes.

## Theory of Action and Logic Model for Achieving Functional Coherence

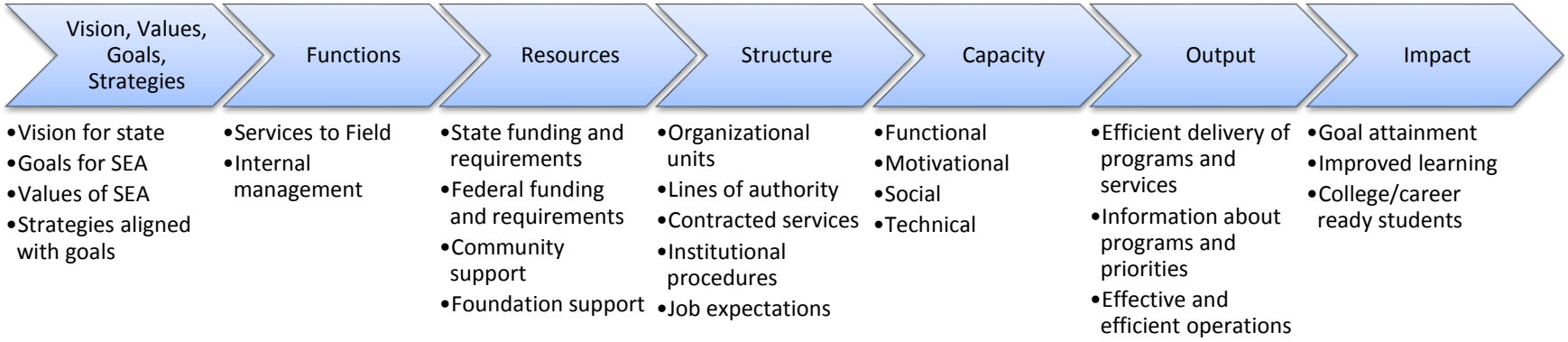
As states transition from a predominantly compliance orientation to a performance management focus, the following Theory of Action provides a useful guide:

> When SEAs organize functional activities in a coherent manner that improves coordination and eliminates redundancy, they will achieve greater effectiveness and productivity in accomplishing their goals and in supporting LEAs in increasing student achievement.

The SEA must adroitly manage a complex web of activities within the state's educational system. These activities are clustered into functions, and the functions flow from the SEA's strategies for reaching its goals. A logic model for achieving functional coherence is depicted in Figure 1 (see below).

As represented in Figure 1, the prerequisites driving subsequent elements are the determination of *Vision, Values, and Goals* for a state's educational system and *Strategies* for realizing them. Together, they determine the needed *Functions* that an SEA must perform to accomplish its work. Further defining the SEAs work are the *Resources* that are available. Some *Resources* are fixed, such as state and federal funding formulas, while others result from state policy initiatives. Those policy initiatives are motivated by the earlier prerequisites in the logic model, and would result in actions such as seeking state legislation or foundation funding. All *Resources* will be accompanied by a set of requirements and restrictions that further define their use.

***Figure 1. Logic Model to Achieve Functional Coherence, Effectiveness, Productivity***



At this juncture in the Logic Model, the SEA establishes an organizational *Structure* that reflects its functions. The *Structure* is populated with subunits and personnel suited to the work, and the *Capacity* of the personnel to ably perform the work is ensured across four dimensions of *Capacity*. *Output* is the work produced by the SEA, and *Impact* is the outcome of the work in the field. *Impact* provides ultimate measures for the SEA's productivity (in ratio with cost) and effectiveness in achieving its *Goals*. A performance management system includes metrics, feedback loops, and processes for continuous improvement throughout the Logic Model.

From all of the above, an SEA can create an organizational *Structure* to accomplish it goals and animate the structure with the personnel capacity to carry out the work. All of these actions and decisions result in the ability to accomplish system-wide *Output* that yields *Impact* defined by significant results in student learning.

In the following sections, we focus on functions within an SEA and offer suggestions about an organizational structure that will achieve a coherent set of outcomes.

## Achieving Functional Coherence

Lists of SEA functions have been proposed (Redding & Walberg, 2007; Tempes, n.d.), and we draw from these sources to posit a set of six functions that provide services to the field, and two that relate to the internal management of the SEA. They are the following:

Services to the Field:

1. Provide leadership and advocacy.
2. Provide information.
3. Set standards and evaluate programs.
4. Allocate resources and monitor compliance.
5. Assist with continuous improvement.
6. Intervene to correct deficiencies.

Internal Management:

1. Ensure internal organizational management.
2. Establish internal performance management systems.

These functions provide the building blocks for the organizational structure of the SEA, and an example is provided in the following section. Deploying these functions to achieve a coherent structure demands establishing clear purposes, boundaries, and responsibilities for each functional area.

**Advocate and Lead (External Relations)**—This function is performed by the chief state school officer and personnel who interface with external stakeholders such as other state agencies, the governor's office, the legislature, institutions of higher education, regional centers, and local school boards and communities. The processes, quality criteria, and outcomes are shown in Table 1.

***Table 1. Provide Leadership and Advocacy***

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • The SEA sets a vision for public education in the state and communicates that vision to the public<br>• The SEA advocates on behalf of children, families, and caregivers<br>• The SEA acts to influence state and national decisions affecting student learning<br>• The SEA assesses, analyzes, and anticipates emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt effective leadership strategies<br>• The SEA develops partnerships with outside organizations and agencies to improve district and school performance | • The SEA prepares policy documents and educational initiatives that are viewed by legislators and other decision makers as thoughtful and well-reasoned<br>• Educators, parents, and other stakeholders view the SEA as an advocate for children, families, and caregivers<br>• The SEA has a process for identifying excellence in schools and districts | • Parents and the public understand the educational mission of the state<br>• Educational leaders know how to respond to the educational mission of the state<br>• Excellent district and school programs are adopted more widely<br>• Public recognition of excellence is an incentive for change |

**Provide Information (Information Services)—**The SEA provides information in several ways (see Table 2), each of which requires gathering, organizing, and presenting the information for audiences that include SEA personnel, as well as its field of stakeholders. Some information is shared through documents that are created by the SEA or selected by the SEA from external sources. Information is provided through the SEA's websites. Information includes research, reports, practice guides, regulatory guidance, and requests for proposals. Information services also manage digital data systems and extract and report information from them. Information services prepare official communication releases, announcements, and notifications of events. Obviously, this functional area works closely with the other functional areas to prepare and disseminate the information required by those areas.

***Table 2. Provide Information***

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • The SEA notifies districts and schools about legal and policy requirements<br>• The SEA communicates its expectations of schools and | • Districts and schools report that SEA communications are clear, thorough, and timely<br>• SEA "how to" information is judged by researchers to be in | • Districts and schools are informed in a timely manner with useful information |

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| districts that go beyond what is required<br>• The SEA announces services and opportunities that are available to schools and districts | line with current and confirmed research<br>• SEA expectations are judged as important, reasonable, and attainable by schools, districts, and other stakeholders | • Districts and schools access SEA services and resources |

**Set Standards and Evaluate Programs (Standards and Evaluation)—**The skill sets necessary for establishing standards and managing assessment systems are similar to those required for program evaluation (Table 3). Standards include curriculum standards, as well as licensure, certification, and accreditation requirements. SEAs are currently engaged in establishing or providing guidelines for districts relative to teacher and leader performance evaluations.

***Table 3. Set Standards and Evaluate Programs***

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • The SEA helps determine requirements for education professionals<br>• The SEA helps determine how schools and districts are accredited by the state<br>• The SEA sets standards for what students should know and be able to do at key points in their education<br>• The SEA establishes accountability systems for credentialing, accreditation, and student achievement<br>• The SEA evaluates state programs to determine their effectiveness | • State standards are clearly stated and understood by all stakeholders<br>• State standards are based on the best available evidence<br>• State standards are viewed as important, reasonable, equitable, and attainable by stakeholders and the general public<br>• Accountability systems are based on state standards<br>• State programs are subject to ongoing evaluation systems with results publicly reported | • Districts and schools improve their ability to reach standards for student learning<br>• Districts and schools employ and retain a better workforce<br>• State programs are resourced or culled based on evaluation results |

**Allocate Resources and Monitor Compliance (Resources and Monitoring)—**The SEA oversees the allocation and distribution of financial and other resources to districts and schools. Where money flows regulation follows, so compliance monitoring is a chief responsibility of the people who allocate and distribute financial resources. Compliance monitoring for federal and state programs requires expertise that is not the same as that required by personnel who provide improvement supports to districts and schools. By separating these functions, while ensuring coordination between them, each function is fortified. Efficiencies are achieved by examining compliance requirements to reduce them to the minimum required by statute and regulation. Personnel monitoring different regulatory regimes are placed together and, with cross-training, can perform the monitoring function for multiple programs. (See Table 4.)

*Table 4. Allocate Resources and Monitor Compliance*

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • Within legal guidelines, the SEA determines district and school eligibility for specific funds and resources<br>• The SEA allocates funds and other resources to schools and districts according to need<br>• The SEA establishes a system for monitoring school and district compliance with state and federal legal requirements<br>• The SEA compliance monitoring process provides tools and information to help schools and districts maintain legally compliant programs | • SEA-determined allocation formulas are viewed as equitable and fair by schools and districts<br>• Schools and districts report that funds and other resources are allocated in an efficient and timely manner<br>• The compliance monitoring system is coherent and comprehensive<br>• The compliance monitoring system is not disruptive of the educational program in schools and districts<br>• The compliance monitoring system is viewed as fair and consistently administered<br>• The compliance monitoring systems make efficient use of SEA resources | • Resources are efficiently and appropriately allocated and distributed<br>• Districts and schools exhibit a high level of compliance with regulation and statute |

**Assist with Continuous Improvement (Improvement Support)—**The state system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support provides and brokers improvement supports for districts and schools. Improvement specialists maintain relationships with the districts and schools that are different from that of compliance monitors but requires coordination with them. Improvement specialists perform work related to but different in kind from interventionists; again, necessitating coordination and communication while maintaining functional differentiation. To adequately support improvement, the SEA provides districts and schools with processes and tools for diagnosing current practice and outcomes, planning their improvement, and implementing and monitoring their plans. The SEA offers or brokers services such as consultation, coaching, and training. (See Table 5.)

*Table 5. Assist with Continuous Improvement*

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • The SEA provides evidence-based "how to" information and tools for districts and schools<br>• The SEA establishes processes to share "best practices" throughout the state<br>• The SEA has an effective and efficient data collection, analysis, and evaluation system | • SEA assistance tools and information are judged as useful by schools and districts<br>• SEA (or agents) technical assistance leads to improvement in district and school performance<br>• Researchers judge SEA assistance to be based on best available evidence | • Districts and schools institute continuous improvement process that results in a heightened trajectory of improved learning outcomes |

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| to assess district and school performance<br>• The SEA has an effective diagnostic process to assess district and school professional practice and operational efficiency<br>• The Sea provides and/or brokers training, professional development, technical assistance, evaluation assistance, and related services to improve districts and schools | | |

**Intervene to Correct Deficiencies (Intervention)—**In cases where the SEA's improvement supports are proven insufficient to remediate deficiencies with regulatory compliance, financial management, or academic outcomes, stronger intervention is required (see Table 6). The SEA, within the limits established by state statute and policy, engages the district and/or school for corrective action, including turnaround and transformation methods, assignment to recovery districts, and state takeover. This work is different in degree and kind from that of providing improvement supports, but the lessons learned and approaches taken through the improvement support and intervention functions deserve cross-fertilization.

***Table 6. Intervene to Correct Deficiencies***

| Processes | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • The SEA has a process to address significant non-compliance issues in schools and districts<br>• The SEA intervenes when school and district educational outcomes are deemed inadequate<br>• The SEA intervenes when districts are unable to meet their fiscal obligations | • SEA interventions result in correction of deficiency<br>• Schools and districts view the SEA interventions as reasonable and fair | • District and school deficiencies and poor performance are corrected within a short amount of time |

**Ensure Internal Organizational Management (Internal Operations)—**Apart from its services to the field, the SEA manages itself by creating plans and budgets, managing human resources, and conducting business transactions. This work is related to performance management, but performance management systems are embedded within this and other functions, and include assessment and reporting duties that span the functions (see Table 7).

*Table 7. Ensure Internal Organizational Management*

| Process | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • The SEA has established a vision, mission, and goals<br>• The SEA has recruiting, hiring, and promotion policies to support the mission<br>• The SEA provides professional development for all staff<br>• The SEA operates with cross-functional teams and coordination teams to ensure coordination of functions | • The SEA's vision, mission, and goals are widely understood and valued within and outside the organization<br>• Individual and unit work plans reflect the vision, mission, and goals<br>• Resources are allocated internally to reflect the vision, mission, and goals<br>• Professional development results in improved staff performance<br>• Cross-functional and coordination teams report adequate time and direction to fulfill their purposes | • The SEA operates with fluid and effective management and coordination of functions |

**Establish Internal Performance Management Systems (Performance Management)**—Nafziger (2013) proposes that the SEA establish the position of *chief performance officer* to institute and oversee performance management systems across the agency. In Figure 1, this functional area reports to the chief state school officer but also assumes reporting responsibilities to the state board of education. "The Chief Performance Officer's (CPO) role is to constantly evaluate the program mix and efficacy of various approaches scaling up the most effective, mobilizing existing support systems or brokering new supports to help the most promising, and phasing out weak, unsuccessful approaches. CPOs gather performance data for their organizations and analyze this information to determine how organizational performance can improve. A CPO then reports recommendations to other executives" (Nafziger, 2013, pp. 2–3). (See Table 8.)

*Table 8. Establish Internal Performance Management Systems*

| Process | Quality Criteria | Impact |
|---|---|---|
| • The SEA utilizes a performance management system to ensure its continuous improvement and effectiveness | • Performance management processes provide clear short- and long-term objectives for the organization, and each unit and individual within it, and metrics and feedback loops to continuously improve results | • The SEA continuously improves its effectiveness and productivity |

## Organizational Structure, Performance Management, and Productivity

Productivity is calculated by the organization's ratio of effectiveness to cost (Redding, 2012). To achieve a high level of productivity, the SEA must be structured in a way that facilitates performance management at each level of the organization. Gross, Jochim, and Nafziger (2013) assert that the "productivity challenge" is especially salient in times of high demand on the organization and scarce resources:

> State education agencies (SEAs) are under fire and face new expectations from all sides. The federal government, state legislatures and governors, and citizens themselves are calling upon the SEA to do *more*—more to improve outcomes for students, more to close the achievement gap, and more to meet the diverse instructional needs of students. But, these new expectations do not come with new funding. SEAs must learn to work with *less*; what Secretary Arne Duncan (2010) has called the "new normal." (p. 1)

### *Step 1. Functional Coherence: Restructuring the SEA by Function*

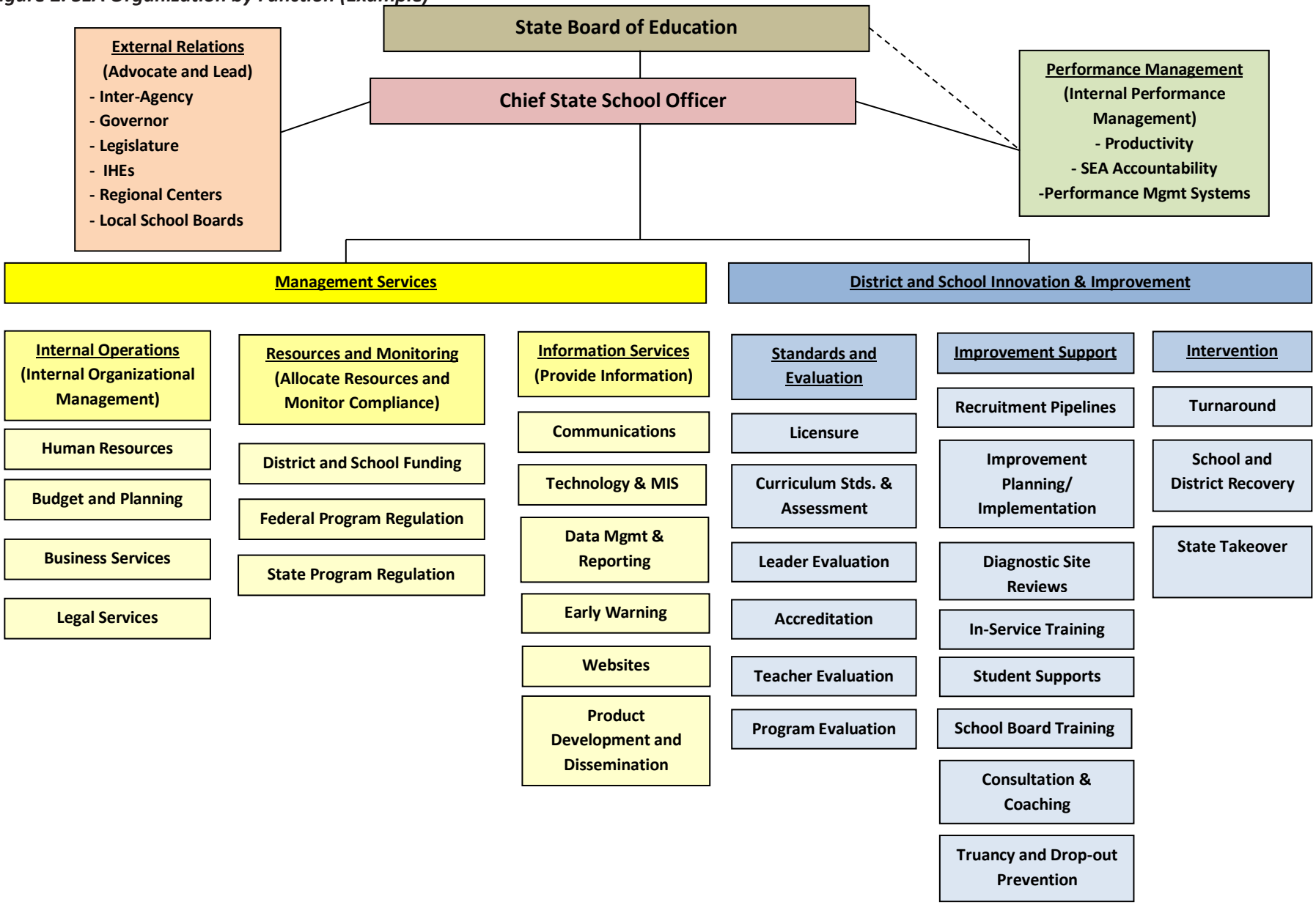
SEAs are often structured around funding streams and regulatory regimes and, in many cases, are person dependent in that positions have conformed to the competencies of particular individuals rather than the functional needs of the organization. Organizing the SEA by function facilitates the institution of performance management systems within each functional area, across functions, and for specific program areas and personnel within the functional categories. Gross and Jochim (2013) describe the basic structure of a performance management system as:

1. Set high performance standards and goals.
2. Systematically assess performance and evaluate progress.
3. Improve or adapt (p. 3).

Gross and Jochim further note that "[i]n organizations working toward multiple objectives, as is the case with SEAs, performance management supports the alignment of work so as to better advance strategic goals" (p. 6). Creating an organizational chart based on the SEA's core functions is a fruitful exercise and the first step in restructuring the agency and assigning its personnel. Figure 2 illustrates an SEA's organization by the eight previously described functions.

This example of an SEA organization chart by SEA function aligns with the eight functions of an SEA as previously described. Beginning with a functional chart, the SEA can organize personnel within the functional categories, placing people and departments with similar functions together to achieve concentrated specialization of expertise, more purposeful work, and a structure that facilitates performance management. To coordinate work across functional categories, cross-functional teams are formed. In the example provided in Figure 2, a cross-functional team would include the leaders of each of the eight functional categories. Further integration and coordination is achieved by forming, for example, coordinating teams under the two main headings: *Management Services* and *District and School Innovation & Improvement*.

*Figure 2. SEA Organization by Function (Example)*



### *Organizational Capacity*

Organizational capacity resides in personnel and the manner in which they are equipped to perform the organizational functions in order to add value for its clients. "In fact, there is a science to bringing the best from people, building their capacity for change, providing incentives for them to change, and opening avenues of opportunity that engage them in the work" (Redding, 2012, p. 3). Capacity, as defined by Redding, includes four components:

1. **Functional capacity—**Functional capacity is the collective skills and knowledge of personnel working in the organization. Functional capacity is increased by improving the skills and knowledge of current personnel, which means improving their practice. In some cases, functional capacity is built by adding or replacing personnel to bring new skill sets into the organization. In other cases, people are reassigned to add their personal skills and knowledge to areas where they are most needed.

2. **Motivational capacity—**The catalyst for a successful innovation is motivation (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008). Even when personnel possess the skills and knowledge that an innovation requires, their best performance depends upon their motivation to adopt the new practice and persevere. The strength of motivation can be measured by a person's willingness to engage in an activity and to persist in it.

3. **Social capacity**—Social capacity (or social capital) is captured in the trust, communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among personnel working to accomplish a shared mission. A highly functioning organization depends upon the requisite level and kind of human capital, but more is necessary than the accumulation of individual capacities. People must work together, inspired to achieve common goals. Social capacity is affected by the structures within which people work.

4. **Technical capacity**—Technical capacity includes tools (e.g., electronic devices), systems, processes, and protocols that guide and facilitate work. The organization's capacity to improve depends upon the quality and appropriateness of its technology and the proficiency of personnel in using it.

By structuring the SEA according to function, with cross-functional and coordinating teams to maintain coordination and communication across functions, the SEA places within each functional category personnel prepared by expertise and experience to perform the duties specific to that function. For example, the compliance functions for various federal and state regulatory regimes are included within the same functional area, and their responsibilities are delineated to separate them from personnel providing improvement support to districts and schools. Coordination between the two functional units is necessary, of course, but efficiencies are derived by placing together people with similar duties (even though they may relate to separate funding streams).

### *Step 2. Functional Coherence: Building Personnel Capacity within Functions*

Once the SEA has created an organization chart by function, personnel can be placed within each functional category, with their departments or other subdivision redefined to acknowledge their necessary specializations. The objectives of the functional categories, departments, and specific personnel are aligned with the overall mission, values, goals, and strategies of the organization. Performance management systems are put in place to provide metrics for measuring effectiveness and efficiency in meeting objectives, with frequent feedback loops to facilitate continuous improvement.

Organizing people according to function and establishing performance management systems does not guarantee that the people charged with the function have the capacity to optimally perform their duties. For each functional category and subunit, the SEA assesses, plans, and implements strategies to address functional, motivational, social, and technical capacity.

#### *Streamlining Processes in the System of Recognition, Accountability, and Support (SRAS)*

As an SEA repurposes its organization to more closely approximate a system of recognition, accountability, and support that is integrated with and complementary of its necessary compliance regime, problems of structural fragmentation, redundant and overlapping interfaces with the field, and inadequate internal communication and coordination become apparent. Achieving greater productivity, the optimal ratio of resources to outcomes, requires the SEA to put aside unproductive and duplicative practices and seek greater coherence and cohesiveness across its divisions and programs. Examining and streamlining the planning and reporting requirements the state places on districts and schools is a place to begin. This includes scrutiny of the purposes and demands of many documents, as well as the systems through which they are prepared, submitted, reviewed, and given feedback.

As Paul Reville (2007) reminds us, a statewide system of support (SSOS) is a concept embedded in the statutory language of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that arose from the realities of states adopting standards-based accountability in the early 1990s. Even as the U. S. Department of Education (2011) has re-titled the SSOS as a "system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support" (SRAS), giving the concept greater definition and broader purpose, it remains a concept often awkwardly superimposed on an SEA's organizational structure, pre-existing compliance mechanisms, and internal communication channels. In 2007 Reville wrote: "This new work for SEAs must be informed by current practice that recognizes some SEAs are already doing pieces of this work, even if those pieces are sometimes fragmented and in need of focus and coherence" (p. 17). This is no less true today.

The SRAS is, in fact, a concept sufficiently broad and encompassing to serve as the purpose of the SEA itself rather than a compartment within the SEA. Thus, as SEAs seek greater coherence, cohesiveness, and effectiveness in their SRAS, they find themselves in need of major restructuring and repurposing of their agencies. The SRAS provides an organizing principle for this work.

"Productivity is the ultimate measure of organizational performance—the organization's ability to achieve maximum results with the minimum of resources committed" (Redding, 2012, p. 18). Walberg (2011) suggests four ways to improve productivity:

1. Increase effectiveness without increasing costs;
2. Reduce costs without diminishing effectiveness;
3. Increase effectiveness and simultaneously reduce costs; and
4. Introduce transformational innovations.

Measuring *actual productivity* requires both input metrics to determine the cost of resources and effectiveness metrics to determine success in attaining organizational goals. As organizational goals shift, so must the metrics for determining effectiveness. The SEA's organizational goals have shifted dramatically with the advent of the SRAS sitting alongside the SEA's compliance regime. Although tallying the "findings" in compliance reports might provide a measure of the SEA's effectiveness in enforcing regulations, only the assessment of student learning outcomes would be an ultimate measure of the effectiveness of the SRAS.

Ultimate organizational goals, such as improved student learning outcomes, lie at a distant remove from the operations of the SRAS. *Productivity enhancement*, the intermediate measure of productivity, is based on the SRAS's theory of action and its assumed linkage to student outcomes. Measures of productivity enhancement provide guideposts for improving the SRAS. The Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center, in its publication *Managing Performance in the System of Support* (Hanes, Kerins, Perlman, Redding, & Ross, 2013) includes a metric with 52 indicators clustered within a framework for the SRAS. The SEA's implementation of the rubric's indicators, in a ratio with estimates of the SRAS's cost, yields a measure of productivity enhancement.

When the SEA strives for stronger implementation of practices aligned with outdated organizational goals, it wastes resources and dilutes productivity. As an SEA enhances productivity by altering its organizational policies, structures, processes, procedures, and practices to function closer to the ideal of an SRAS framework and its underlying theory of action it is, in effect, implementing change. This change is necessary as the SEA shifts its organizational goals to accommodate the SRAS and integrate it with the agency's regulatory obligations. Simply setting the SRAS on top of the compliance regime is not practical and results in confusion and inefficiency.

Implementation science (see, for example, *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*; Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005) provides the means to move the SEA toward greater productivity enhancement and, ultimately, improved actual productivity. The framework and rubrics-based indicators in *Managing Performance in the System of Support* (Hanes et al., 2013) establish a theory of action for an SRAS and guideposts for its implementation and

integration within the SEA. The work of implementing the changes necessary to approach the ideal SRAS will benefit from application of the principles of implementation science. Implementation science, as explicated by Fixsen et al. (2005), is especially useful in designing the capacity-building activities that accompany changes in organizational structure and practice (see their competency drivers) and in planning to sustain the changes.

### *Step 3. Functional Coherence: Integration of Functions, Reports, and Technology Applications*

The BSCP Center's technical assistance project to assist SEAs and their Regional Center collaborators in assessing and improving their SRAS requires some heavy lifting over at least a year, and the process is one that the SEA should continue to utilize to build upon and sustain its initial changes. As a corollary to this process, the SEA will benefit from routine examination of the planning and reporting requirements it places upon districts and schools and the systems with which the requirements are documented and reviewed.

The items below outline a process to begin integrating and streamlining state functions and technology systems in relation to its SRAS and related activities through an inventory and analysis of current reporting documents and systems.

1. Clarify the state's plans for differentiating supports for different district and school improvement categories, such as focus, priority, and targeted assistance (as the state names and defines the categories).
2. Align planned supports with available funding sources.
3. Consider the way the SEA is structured to deliver its system of support and how it might be more efficiently structured.
4. Assess SEA staff capacity to administer and provide support to districts and schools and consider efficient ways to leverage this capacity.
5. Review all state processes and systems for district and school planning and reporting, including applications for funding, budgeting, improvement planning, improvement reporting, and program monitoring.
6. Develop a plan for integration and consolidation of state planning, reporting, data analysis, and compliance monitoring functions, including use of web-based system and their inter-connectivity.

The following form (Figure 3) guides an SEA team in inventorying its current planning and reporting processes and delivery systems and in identifying ways to make them more coherent, cohesive, and productive.

***Figure 3. Sample Inventory Form***

**State Integration of Functions and Technology Applications**
**Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center**

Date:
State:
Your Name:
Your Position with SEA:
Telephone:
Email:
Name of Regional Center liaison for this project:

A. Current and Anticipated Districts and Schools in the SRAS

| | Number School Year: | Plan Required by State (Yes/No) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. SIG Schools | | |
| 2. Focus Schools | | |
| 3. Priority School (non-SIG) | | |
| 4. * Other schools | | |
| Total Schools | | |
| 5. SIG Districts | | |
| 6. Focus Districts | | |
| 7. Priority Districts | | |
| 8. * Other Districts | | |
| Total Districts | | |

* Define “Other Schools”:

* Define “Other District-Required Districts”:

B. Reporting Requirements for Official Improvement Plans

| | How Many Times Submitted Per Year? School Year: | Reviewed by State (Yes/No) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. SIG Schools | | |
| 2. Focus Schools | | |
| 3. Priority Schools | | |
| 4. Other Schools | | |
| 5. SIG Districts | | |
| 6. Focus Districts | | |
| 7. Priority Districts | | |
| 8. Other Districts | | |

C. Coaching and Related Supports

| | Coach Assigned by State (Yes/No) | Coach Assigned by District (Yes/No) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. SIG Schools | | |
| 2. Focus Schools | | |
| 3. Priority Schools | | |
| 4. Other Schools | | |
| 5. SIG District Leadership Teams | | |
| 6. Focus Districts | | |
| 7. Priority Districts | | |
| 8. Other Districts | | |

What does your state call “coaches”?

Do you have different categories of coaches? If so, please define their different roles:

Please describe the State’s expectations for what coaches do:

D. Forms and Reports (Applications, Plans, Budgets, Reports) Submitted by Districts and Schools to the SEA

| Name of Form/Report | District or School or Both? | Submitted Electronically (Yes/No) | Reviewed by SEA (Yes/No) | Feedback Provided by State (Yes/No) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |
| 5. | | | | |
| 6. | | | | |
| 7. | | | | |
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| 9. | | | | |
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| 11. | | | | |
| 12. | | | | |
| 13. | | | | |
| 14. | | | | |
| 15. | | | | |

E. Web-Based Systems: Other State Data, Application, Budget, Planning, and Reporting Systems

| Name of System and Brief Description |
|---|
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| 4. |
| 5. |
| 6. |
| 7. |
| 8. |
| 9. |
| 10. |
| 11. |
| 12. |
| 13. |
| 14. |
| 15. |

F. In examining each document and reporting requirement, what duplications can be eliminated?

G. In reviewing the delivery systems, electronic and otherwise, how can greater integration and interconnectivity be achieved?

H. Please describe your chief goals in better integrating your data, application, budgeting, planning, and reporting systems and processes.

## Conclusions

Federal and state programs and regulations change over time, but the core functions of the SEA remain relatively constant. Restructuring the SEA by its core functions enables it to place together personnel with similar expertise and responsibilities, reduce duplication of effort and inefficiencies in operation, and nimbly adapt to change. Instituting a performance management system across the functional categories and within their components, facilitates productivity and enables continuous improvement through routine examination of feedback on objectives-aligned metrics. Cross-functional and coordinating teams ensure communication and coordination across and within functional categories.

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*Solutions* emerges from specific questions or problems facing an SEA that arise during the work of the BSCP Center with the SEA in a consultancy. It represents information that is highly responsive to an SEA's practical needs. The writing of a *Solutions* issue is also stimulated by questions from Comprehensive Centers or SEAs regarding the use of a BSCP Center tool, the application of a new concept, or an implementation challenge.



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