

TOOLKIT

PRELIMINARY CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR EDUCATION AGENCIES

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CCNETWORK
Comprehensive Center Network



REGION 5
Kentucky
Tennessee
Virginia
West Virginia

Preliminary Capacity-Building Needs Assessment for Education Agencies

Region 5 Comprehensive Center

The Region 5 Comprehensive Center (R5CC) is one of 20 technical assistance centers supported under the U.S. Department of Education’s Comprehensive Centers program from 2019 to 2024. The R5CC serves the needs of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia by building capacity to improve policies and programs to improve student performance.

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Introduction

The charge of the Comprehensive Center program is to support State education agencies (SEAs), regional education agencies (REAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and schools so they can improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, and improve the quality of instruction. The U.S. Department of Education defines capacity-building (CB) services as assistance that strengthens an individual's or organization's ability to engage in continuous improvement and achieve expected outcomes. Given the range of CB services that Regional Comprehensive Centers can provide to SEAs, REAs, and LEAs, a needs assessment can help regional comprehensive center staff understand recipients' needs and can help clarify how the stakeholder will benefit from the Center's services. To get the big picture, or what is often referred to as viewing a situation at the 30,000-foot level, Region 5 staff developed the Preliminary Capacity-Building Needs Assessment (Figure 1 below) to quickly assess where core components of CB services may be warranted and beneficial to support a program, project, or topical focus area of SEAs, REAs, or LEAs. The core components are based on a literature review and evaluations of CB (Dunst et al. 2019; Turnbull et al. 2011; Weinstock et al. 2018). Regional Comprehensive Centers' needs assessment and planning typically focus on interactive discussions with State education leaders and SEA staff (Turnbull et al. 2011; Weinstock et al. 2018). This Preliminary Capacity-Building Needs Assessment is meant to help focus those discussions on core components of CB and corresponding needs and, in short, help Centers and stakeholders decide whether CB services are needed and, if so, which components are crucial.

Instructions

Objective: Use this Preliminary Capacity-Building Needs Assessment with education agencies (State, regional, or local) to quickly identify core CB needs for a program, project, or topical focus area to facilitate a conversation about the potential scope of work for a project as part of the needs assessment and planning process.

Directions: Identify a program, project, or topical focus area that you would like to consider for receiving CB services. Assess which core components of the program, project, or topical focus are already established or "in place" and indicate the extent that you would like to receive CB services. Select your response (*Not at all, Very little, Somewhat, To a great extent, Not applicable*) using the drop-down option. (If the team prefers for the extent of capacity-building, consider using conversational terms, such as *None, Light, Medium, and Heavy*.) Use the comments section to clarify any responses, identify priority areas, and/or identify the dimension of capacity-building (i.e., human, organizational, policy, and resource). Use this information to facilitate a joint-needs conversation about the scope of work for the project.

Duration: For use in a 1- to 2-hour meeting for one focus area with 15-25 minutes allocated for responses to items.



Glossary of Terms

Capacity-building services means assistance that strengthens an individual's or organization's ability to engage in continuous improvement and achieve expected outcomes.

Human capacity means development or improvement of individual knowledge, skills, technical expertise, and ability to adapt and be resilient to policy and leadership changes.

Organizational capacity means structures that support clear communication and a shared understanding of an organization's visions and goals, and delineated individual roles and responsibilities in functional areas.

Policy capacity means structures that support alignment, differentiation, or enactment of local, State, and Federal policies and initiatives.

Resource capacity means tangible materials and assets that support alignment and use of Federal, State, private, and local funds.

References

Dunst, C. J., Annas, K., Wilkie, H., and Hamby, D. W. (2019). Scoping review of the core elements of technical assistance models and frameworks. *World Journal of Education*, 9(2), 109–122.
<https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v9n2p109>

Turnbull, B.J., White, R.N., Sinclair, E., Riley, D.L., and Pistorino, C. (2011, August). *National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers: Final Report* (NCEE 2011-4031). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Weinstock, P., Gulemetova, M., Sanchez, R., Silver, D., and Barach, I. (2019). *National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers Program Final Report* (NCEE 2020-001). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.



List a program, project, or topical focus area: _____

Figure 1. Preliminary Capacity-Building Needs Assessment

Core components	Description	Responses		Comments
		For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that the following core components are established or “in place”:	For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that you would like to receive CB services to support or develop the following:	
Preparation				
1. Needs assessment	A process for determining the gap between current conditions, practices, or outcomes and desired conditions, practices, or outcomes.			
2. Decision making	A process for involving program staff in identifying, among alternatives, the options or priorities that best fit with the organization’s mission or goals.			
3. Visioning	A process for determining what an organization would do or “look like” if it was to make desired changes.			
4. Readiness for change (buy-in)	Staff commitment to change program, organizational, or systems practices to improve effectiveness in order to achieve desired changes or outcomes.			
5. Organizational capacity	The organization's capacity to commit the human, program, and other resources (fiscal, policy, etc.) needed for program, organization, or system changes to produce desired practices.			



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		For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that the following core components are established or “in place”:	For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that you would like to receive CB services to support or develop the following:	
Planning (design)				
6. Goals and objectives	The particular immediate objectives and desired short-, medium-, and long-term goals.			
7. Intervention practices	The particular evidence-based intervention practices to produce desired program, organizational, or systems change.			
8. Fit assessment	An assessment of the intervention’s alignment (fit) with the program or organization’s mission, priorities, desired changes, staff beliefs, etc.			
9. Logic model or theory of change	A description or graphic representation of the relationship between desired program, organizational, or system inputs and resources; the intervention practices, actions, or activities to affect desired change; and the intended outputs and outcomes of use of the practices, actions, or activities.			
10. Resources	The resources necessary to implement the program or improve the use of targeted evidence-based or best practices.			
11. Staff roles and responsibilities	The roles and responsibilities of individual staff, and how enactment of those roles and responsibilities is expected to contribute to desired change.			



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		For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that the following core components are established or “in place”:	For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that you would like to receive CB services to support or develop the following:	
Implementation				
12. Project and performance management	The processes, methods, and skills to manage and monitor work activities and achieve identified project objectives, and to assess progress and strengthen practices. [add SPM]			
13. Cross-departmental coordination	Cross-departmental coordination to plan across different divisions or agencies, when policy areas intersect.			
14. Professional development	The evidence-based professional development practices to build and strengthen staff, program, organization, and system capacity to use targeted intervention practices.			
15. Coaching and consultation	Coaching as part of interactions with staff to build and strengthen their capacity to use targeted intervention practices, including tailored responses to individual staff, small groups of staff members, and other program staff in response to questions, concerns, etc., about staff adoption and use of targeted intervention practices.			
16. Content knowledge	The content knowledge of individual staff, small groups of staff members, and other program staff in response to adopt and use targeted intervention practices.			
17. Facilitation of stakeholder engagement	Facilitating various communications, including meetings and workshops aimed at engaging stakeholders such as State and local education leaders, educator associations, and unions.			



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Evaluation				
18. Process evaluation	Methods for determining if the practices, activities, or interventions specified were implemented as planned and resulted in identifiable outputs.			
19. Outcome evaluation	Methods of determining if the practices, activities, or actions have resulted in desired changes, effected progress, or benefited the target group(s) of a program, organization, or systems.			
20. Follow-up activities and lessons learned	Planned activities to provide program staff opportunities to share concerns and accomplishments and to obtain input, feedback, suggestions, etc., as well as to use the information from evaluations to make changes or improvements in the overall implementation of program activities.			



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		For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that the following core components are established or “in place”:	For a program, project or topical focus area, indicate the extent that you would like to receive CB services to support or develop the following:	
Sustainability				
21. Capacity-sustaining activities	Program, organization, or systems resources, activities, and professional supports to sustain or maintain the changes that have been put into place.			
22. Continuous quality improvement	Processes used to ensure ongoing improvements in a program, organization, or systems.			
23. Ongoing provider support	Procedures used to provide either or both informal and formal supports to program staff, after the completion of related implementation activities.			

Adapted from: Dunst et al. 2019.

