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A. Significance

The ICF Team—ICF Incorporated, L.L.C. (ICF), as grantee and located in the Mid-Atlantic region with an office in Rockville, Maryland; AEM Corporation (AEM), supporting service delivery; and EurekaFacts, supporting external evaluation—proposes to operate the Region 3 (Mid-Atlantic) Comprehensive Center (R3CC) as a state-led, implementation-focused Regional Center serving Delaware (DE), the District of Columbia (DC), Maryland (MD), New Jersey (NJ), and Pennsylvania (PA). The project addresses the **Absolute Priority** by providing high-quality, client-driven technical assistance aligned to State and local priorities for selecting, implementing, scaling, and sustaining evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions, that will impact educator practice and student outcomes, especially in mathematics and literacy. In following sections, we provide details on the significance of the R3CC project, our design for service delivery, and our approach to cost-effectively managing the R3CC. Specifically for details for our response to the **Competitive Preference Priority – Returning Education to the**

The ICF Team Will Deliver R3CC Through an Integrated, Proven Comprehensive Center (CC) Partnership

- **ICF:** Leads strategy, management, implementation science, partner coordination, and capacity-building design. ICF education brings 30+ years of program and policy work, evidence-based K-12 capacity-building expertise, communities of practice, technical assistance, research/evaluation, data collection, grants management, needs assessment, and program implementation.
- **AEM:** Adds education delivery, data/systems, TA, and project implementation capacity. AEM helps education clients improve programs, systems, processes, and data; has worked with all states and territories; and brings 150 specialized SMEs/project management professionals and 15+ years of education expertise in data management/privacy, teacher quality, special education, early learning, and technical assistance.
- **EurekaFacts:** Provides independent evaluation, case studies/impact stories, data collection, analytics, and performance evidence. Since 2003, EurekaFacts has delivered tailored research, full-service data collection, expert analysis, and program evaluation; its ISO 20252 and Capability Maturity Model Integration quality orientation supports credible, usable findings.
- **One experienced CC team:** ICF and AEM currently operate the 2024-2026 Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC) and partnered on the 2019-2024 Region 8 CC; EurekaFacts is part of the current MACC team as the external evaluation partner. This history gives the Region 3 CC shared routines, trusted relationships, and day-one readiness to deliver, evaluate, and improve services.

R3CC Value: Together, the team combines state relationships, embedded SEA support, service delivery, evaluation, data/evidence, and partner coordination to help SEAs translate priorities into annual service plans (ASPs), implement universal/targeted/intensive supports, document outcomes, and improve educational opportunities.



States, see **Section B.3.1**.

A.1 Data-Driven Justification for the Proposed Project (AR#2)

The ICF Team proposes to address the Absolute Priority for the R3CC by providing high-quality, client-driven, evidence-based, tiered technical assistance (see **Section B.3.2**) aligned to State and local priorities for selecting, implementing, scaling, and sustaining evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions that will enhance classroom instruction and positively impact student achievement, especially in literacy and mathematics. The R3CC region serves approximately 4.2 million public school

The ICF Team Will Meet the Absolute Priority for Regional Centers

- Establish and operate the R3CC for DE, DC, MD, NJ, and PA.
- Deliver intensive, client-driven TA aligned to State/local priorities, State Learning Agendas (SLAs), ASPs, and SEA-approved projects.
- Help SEAs, LEAs, REAs, TEAs, and schools select, implement, scale, and sustain evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions, especially in math and literacy.
- Coordinate with the National Comprehensive Center (NCC), REL Mid-Atlantic (REL MA), Content Centers, Federal TA providers as well as other appropriate agencies and organizations providing similar services to the target population to reduce burden, avoid duplication, and connect States to the right expertise.
- Use cost-effective universal, targeted, and intensive supports to reach as many Region 3 clients as practicable, prioritizing students and communities with the greatest need, closing achievement gaps, and improving instruction.

students across 1,626 local educational agencies (LEAs). Students are enrolled in more than 7,300 public schools and nearly 500 charter schools,^[1] representing a variety of challenges facing rural, suburban, and urban populations across the region.^[2] According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2024), substantial proportions of public-school students in the Mid-Atlantic region are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, including 56.6% in Pennsylvania, 49.7% in the District of Columbia, 50.7% in Maryland, 36.1% in New Jersey, and 25.2% in Delaware. These data highlight the significant economic challenges faced by many students across the region.^[3] Additional data about the states can be found in the State Profiles (see **Appendix A**). Because the ICF Team operates the current MACC, we understand the complexity and nuances of the Region. We collaborate with the SEA leadership and staff to co-design projects that help



the states achieve their goals as described in state strategic plans, legislation, and state board of education policies to improve educational outcomes of all students, regardless of their backgrounds. In spring 2026, we conducted needs assessments in each Mid-Atlantic state to confirm current SEA capacity-building needs and continued interest in R3CC support (see Letters of Designation/Endorsement in **Part 6, Other Attachments**).

We identified regional and state needs through four data sources: (1) ten interviews with chief state school officers, designees, and SEA staff; (2) 5 interviews with LEA representatives across various locales; (3) 2 interviews with education-oriented organization representatives, such as charter school networks, parent/family engagement associations, and rural initiatives; and (4) a review of existing evidence, including consolidated state plans, strategic plans, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and state achievement data, federal monitoring reports, and media coverage of state reform efforts. A list of organizations that were contacted and

The ICF Team after Award Will Continue to Use Our Needs Assessment Process with SEA Clients in the Region to Identify the Most Urgent Educational Challenges

- **State-led start:** Continue the proposal needs-sensing approach with SEA leaders and project teams, State Learning Agendas, strategic plans, current initiatives, and education-oriented organization representatives.
- **Evidence check:** Triangulate national, State, and local data; project results; client feedback; and context before naming urgent high-leverage problems.
- **Co-definition:** State Coordinators and embedded State Strategy Leads will document the challenge, intended beneficiaries, evidence base, outcomes, and capacity needs in ASPs.
- **Continuous update:** Use semiannual needs sensing, regular SEA check-ins, and context monitoring to refresh priorities as conditions change.
- **Action path:** Use findings to choose universal, targeted, or intensive supports and adjust services so they remain aligned, client-approved, and implementation-ready.

participated in the needs-sensing activities can be found in **Appendix B**. After contacting the key representatives from the organizations, we set up Microsoft Teams meetings to ask them three key questions: (1) What are the highest priorities facing education in your state right now? (2) What TA capacity-building activities could best support you? and (3) What specific projects could the R3CC support through TA capacity building. The notes were summarized and



categorized to align with the federal priorities as shown in **Exhibit 1**. This needs assessment process will be used formally with the states semiannually, in addition to informal, regular communication with SEA leadership and team members. The most recent assessment confirmed the importance of continuing current MACC initiatives while identifying additional needs aligned with state and federal priorities. Discussions with Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic (REL MA) also pointed to opportunities to collaborate on applied research projects. The following section summarizes the most significant data-based needs.

A.1.1 Regional Challenges (AR#2)

The needs assessment identified a set of shared policy priorities across Mid-Atlantic states while also highlighting emerging and state-specific needs that warrant targeted support. All five jurisdictions shown in **Exhibit 1** prioritize meaningful learning, evidence-based literacy, and returning education to the states, reflecting strong regional alignment around key education priorities. The assessment also identified targeted areas of state interest, including student career pathways and workforce readiness across most jurisdictions, integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in DC, and NJ, and education choice in DC. [PR#1, PR3#, PR#6, PR#7, AR#1, AR#2, AR#8]

Exhibit 1. The ICF Team Will Turn Mid-Atlantic Priorities into Targeted, Evidence-Based Supports.

Federal Priority	State-Identified Need or Challenge	DE	DC	MD	NJ	PA	Regional Comparison and R3CC Implication
Meaningful Learning	Core instruction; math/literacy; high-quality instruction materials (HQIM); tutoring; applied and career-connected learning; evidence-based practices	•	•	•	•	•	5 of 5 region-wide; supports shared tools, cross-state learning, and intensive state projects.
Evidence-Based Literacy	Early and structured literacy; screeners; reading supports; evidence-based practice	•	•	•	•	•	5 of 5 region-wide; supports regional products, targeted networks, and state-specific TA.
Returning Education to the States	SEA-led priority setting; SLAs; ASPs; state-owned implementation	•	•	•	•	•	5 of 5 direct federal-state alignment; reinforces state-led MACC model.



Federal Priority	State-Identified Need or Challenge	DE	DC	MD	NJ	PA	Regional Comparison and R3CC Implication
Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness	Career and technical education (CTE); apprenticeships; credentials; work-based learning; educator pathways; postsecondary transitions	•	•	—	•	•	4 of 5 multi-state priority; supports peer learning and tailored pathway/workforce implementation support.
Advancing AI	AI use; data systems; decision support; instructional innovation; operational efficiency	—	•	—	•	—	2 of 5 emerging priority; supports targeted exploration and shared learning.
Expanding Education Choice	Family-facing transparency; access to options; charter/school-choice supports; pathway options	—	•	—	—	—	1 of 5 state-specific priority; supports DC-defined targeted or intensive assistance.
Prioritizing Patriotic Education*	Civics, history, or related state interest if elevated by SEAs	—	—	—	—	—	Monitor; respond if elevated in SLAs or ASPs.

*Note: • = identified through needs sensing; — = not currently identified. *No Mid-Atlantic SEA identified Prioritizing Patriotic Education as a current priority; R3CC will monitor civics/patriotic education and respond if elevated by SEAs.*

These challenges cut across the Mid-Atlantic region and require coordinated capacity-building support. State leaders reported needing help not only to identify evidence-based strategies but also to implement, scale, and maintain them, a primary goal of R3CC. The ICF Team will strengthen SEA and LEA capacity to translate policy priorities into measurable improvements in student outcomes through our capacity-building services driven by SEA-identified needs and leadership priorities, including SLAs, to improve educational outcomes and outcomes for all students.

These findings underscore the need for a differentiated, evidence-based regional strategy that balances shared priorities with state-specific needs. **Exhibit 2** summarizes the federal definition for “meaningful learning” as an example of the needs identified through the assessment, the supporting evidence and policy context, and the corresponding high-leverage problem for each state. Other high-leverage problems that align with the remaining federal priorities and the proposed ICF Team response can be found in **Appendix D**. These strategies demonstrate how the ICF Team plans to build upon existing partnerships and TA efforts, strengthening state



capacity, accelerating priority initiatives, deepening collaboration, and improving outcomes for students and educators across the region. [PR#1, PR#2, PR#3, AR#2, AR#8]

Exhibit 2. The ICF Team Will Employ Strategies to Accelerate Meaningful Learning

Meaningful Learning: Focuses on strengthening core instruction in literacy and mathematics, expanding access to HQIM, advancing effective interventions and supports, creating competency-based instructional models, creating strategic staffing models, implementing new school day schedules, expanding access to high-impact tutoring, supporting career-connected learning, and advancing innovative assessment models.^[4]

Data and Evidence

2024 NAEP National and Mid-Atlantic Region Proficiency ^[5] results show that in every Mid-Atlantic state and jurisdiction, fewer than half of students were at or above Proficient in grade 4 or grade 8 reading and mathematics.

State	4th Grade	8th Grade	4th Grade	8th Grade
	Math	Math	Reading	Reading
National	39%	27%	30%	29%
DE	33%	20%	30%	25%
DC	35%	19%	26%	23%
MD	37%	25%	34%	33%
NJ	44%	37%	38%	38%
PA	41%	31%	33%	31%

High-Leverage Problems and Priorities by State with Data/Evidence, R3CC Response and Intended Capacity Gains/Outcomes

DE	<p>Data/evidence: DE, like many states, is facing educator shortages, particularly in high-need districts and certification areas; recognizing the critical role teachers play, the Delaware Workforce Development Board has designated teaching as an “in-demand occupation.”^[6] SEA priority: In alignment with this priority, the Delaware Department of Education, in partnership with the Delaware Department of Labor, has developed the Delaware Educator Apprenticeship Program to offer aspiring teachers, including high school youth, paid school-based positions while they complete the coursework required for certification. High-leverage problem: To strengthen this apprenticeship model and support statewide scalability, DDOE needs robust mentor supports that help teacher mentors guide apprentices effectively and increase apprentice success. R3CC response: The ICF Team will collaborate with DDOE to develop supports for teacher mentors participating in the apprenticeship program, including three components: (1) training for teacher mentors, (2) a statewide community of practice (CoP) to build mentor capacity, and (3) resources to directly support mentoring and apprentice-mentor relationships. Intended capacity gain/outcome: This support will build DDOE’s capacity to strengthen mentor preparation, improve the quality and consistency of apprentice support, enhance apprentice success, and advance statewide scalability of the Delaware Educator Apprenticeship Program.</p>
DC	<p>Data/evidence: Many DC, students, particularly those pursuing CTE and applied learning pathways, struggle to connect advanced math content to real-world applications, an outcome that correlates with lower graduation readiness and limits postsecondary opportunity. Only 15% of high school students met proficiency in math on 2025 statewide assessments.^[7] High-leverage problem: Current math sequences can limit flexibility, contribute to disengagement, and hinder graduation readiness. SEA priority: The Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) needs a data-driven, student-centered model for an integrated math option that supports multiple pathways to postsecondary success with rigor and real-world relevance while maintaining alignment with the DC Graduate Profile. R3CC response: The ICF Team will collaborate with OSSE’s Division of Teaching and Learning Team to develop a roadmap for an integrated mathematics course or pathway that may serve as an alternative to Algebra II while maintaining rigor and alignment with the DC Graduate Profile. Intended capacity gain/outcome: This initiative builds capacity for curriculum innovation and alignment by facilitating a research-informed design process, stakeholder consultation, and model course development.</p>



MD	Data/evidence: In 2025, a significant gap existed between MD district leaders’ reports of strong instructional materials implementation and teachers’ reports of actual usage, with only 11% of teachers using high-quality English language arts materials and only 26% of teachers using high-quality math materials for most instruction. SEA priority: Maryland’s Blueprint for Maryland’s Future requires statewide adoption and implementation of HQIM. ^[8] High-leverage problem: Although adoption of HQIM is high across many LEAs in Maryland, implementation supports, particularly those for educators, are uneven, and assistance with monitoring and continuous improvement is needed. ^[9] R3CC response: The ICF Team will collaborate with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to build its capacity to effectively adopt, implement, and monitor HQIM in MD schools. Intended capacity gain/outcome: Through capacity-building TA, the ICF Team will facilitate effective synthesis of data to inform ongoing adoption, implementation, and monitoring of HQIM across MD and partner across offices at MSDE to develop resources and professional learning to guide implementation of HQIM in MD schools.
NJ	Data/evidence: The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has invested over \$50 million to implement two cohorts of high-impact tutoring grants to serve students in grades K–12 in nearly 300 public school districts and charter schools from November 2023 through June 2025. ^[10] SEA priority: In preparation for implementing future cohorts of grantees, NJDOE needs stronger systems to evaluate tutoring implementation and outcomes and use findings to inform grant monitoring, reporting, and continuous improvement. High-leverage problem: Although grantees were required to collect and share evaluation data, their performance measures, delivery methods, and implementation timelines varied, making it difficult for NJDOE to evaluate the initiative consistently. R3CC response: The ICF Team will collaborate with NJDOE to strengthen SEA and LEA capacity to collect, analyze, and use data to evaluate tutoring implementation and outcomes, support grant monitoring and reporting requirements, and facilitate CoPs. Intended capacity gain/outcome: This support will build NJDOE’s capacity to use consistent data and peer learning to improve future tutoring cohorts, strengthen continuous improvement, and disseminate effective practices.
PA	Data/evidence: During the 2023–2024 school year, 56% of third graders in PA scored Proficient or Advanced on the Pennsylvania Standards of School Assessments, with 28% achieving Basic and 16% falling within the Below Basic achievement level. ^[11] SEA priority: To address this challenge, PA enacted Act 135 of 2024, requiring the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to establish and maintain a list of universal reading screeners aligned to structured literacy and science-of-reading principles, and Act 47 of 2025, requiring PDE to select and administer universal reading screeners in grades K–3. This work also supports Chapter 49 of the PA Code, as amended, to ensure structured literacy competencies are embedded in educator preparation and continuing professional education plans. ^[12] High-leverage problem: PDE must translate these statutory requirements into a coherent statewide implementation system that supports early identification of reading needs, structured literacy instruction, educator professional learning, and consistent use of screening data. R3CC response: The ICF Team will collaborate with PDE to implement a pilot and later scale a universal screener and structured literacy professional learning/coaching programs statewide. Intended capacity gain/outcome: This support will build PDE’s capacity to select, implement, monitor, and scale universal screening and structured literacy supports, strengthening statewide early literacy infrastructure and helping educators use screening data and evidence-based literacy practices to improve reading outcomes.

A.2 Building Capacity to Address the Needs of Underserved Populations (PR#2, AR#8)

A.2.1 Overview of ICF’s Approach to Capacity Building

Regional data show the need to address high-leverage problems that impact opportunity and achievement for all students (see State Profiles in **Appendix A** and Strategies for High-Leverage Problems in **Section A.1** and **Appendix D** for more information). In response, the ICF Team will



implement the capacity-building approach depicted in **Exhibit 3**, driven by SEA-identified needs, leadership priorities, and SLAs to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students, particularly underserved students, including students in urban and rural communities, students experiencing low academic achievement, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students attending schools affected by educator shortages.^[13]

Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of all R3CC investments and the central focus of the ICF Team’s approach in **Exhibit 3**, which places SEAs as the center of priority setting, strategic planning, and implementation. Through coordinated services, the R3CC and REL MA will align support to state-defined goals and needs while drawing on a shared partner ecosystem that contributes expertise, resources, and connections. Using coaching, professional learning, implementation support, and strategic consultation, the R3CC will deliver integrated TA focused on strengthening the human, organizational, policy, and resource capacities.^[14] Services will be provided through a tiered approach, including universal resources for all education systems, targeted support for identified needs, and intensive engagement for the most high-level and complex challenges.

As SEA capacity strengthens, states will be better positioned to support regional educational agencies (REAs), LEAs, tribal education agencies (TEAs,) and schools through coherent guidance, professional learning, TA, and implementation support. This cascading approach will also extend the impact of R3CC investments beyond individual state initiatives, strengthening regional and local systems and promoting collaboration across states and regions. At the regional level, cross-state communities of practice, peer learning networks, and shared resources enable states to learn from one another and address common challenges more efficiently. At the national level, tools, implementation lessons, and evidence-informed resources developed through R3CC



projects contribute to the broader Comprehensive Center Network (CCNetwork) and support improvement efforts beyond Region 3.

The intended pathway of impact is straightforward: coordinated, evidence-based support strengthens SEA capacity; stronger SEA capacity improves implementation support for LEAs and schools; and improved implementation leads to better educator, organizational, and student outcomes. As shown in **Exhibit 3**, these investments are expected to produce short-term increases in SEA capacity, medium-term improvements in SEA effectiveness in selecting, implementing, scaling, and sustaining evidence-based practices, and long-term development of sustainable systems that improve outcomes for all students, especially those most underserved.

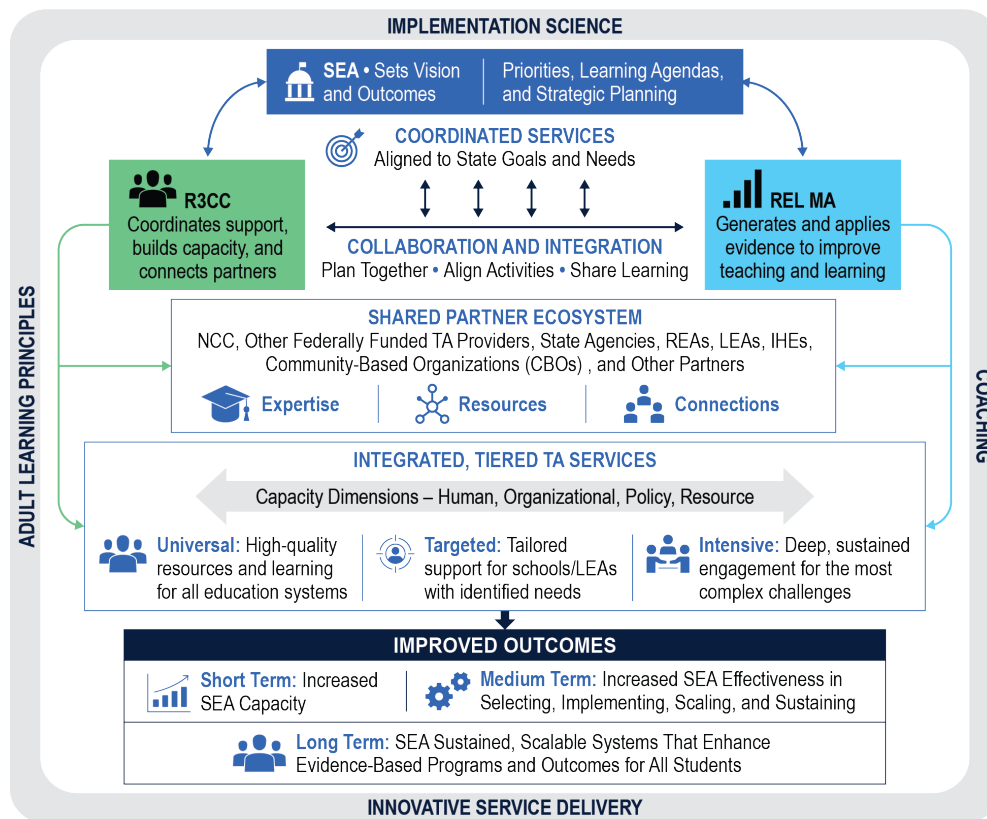
The examples in the textbox illustrate how the R3CC's capacity-building approach will translate into practice by strengthening SEA capacity, improving implementation supports, and ultimately advancing student outcomes. These examples demonstrate how investments in state systems could create lasting benefits that extend to districts, schools, educators, and students.

Capacity Building in Action

- **DE - Enhancing Apprentice Mentoring.** R3CC support will build on the MACC's current efforts to help DDOE establish rigorous mentor training and supports with continued communities of practice, additional trainings, and ongoing resource development.
- **PA - Strengthening Industry-Aligned Pathways.** R3CC, building on the current MACC's initiative, will support PDE's efforts to enhance alignment across education, workforce, and credentialing systems to expand access to high-demand careers and workforce-relevant learning opportunities.

Across all projects, the R3CC will use ASPs, implementation milestones, fidelity measures, outputs, and short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes to monitor progress and ensure capacity gains translate into measurable improvements in educational practices and student success. In this way, capacity building serves as the mechanism through which education agencies strengthen their ability to maintain improvement long after R3CC support concludes. [PR#1, PR#2, PR#4, PR#6, PR#7, PR#8, AR#1, AR#2, AR#4, AR#8]

Exhibit 3 The ICF Team Will Build Capacity through Integrated, Evidence-Based Support.



A.2.2 Why the ICF Approach Works

Because capacity-building services must be **responsive to state and local priorities**, the ICF Team will partner with SEAs and other beneficiaries to co-develop solutions grounded in data, identified needs, and continuous learning. Priorities may emerge from existing SLAs, statewide improvement efforts, educator workforce challenges, literacy and mathematics initiatives, or other agency-identified goals aimed at improving outcomes for underserved students.

The ICF approach works because it is grounded in a research-based framework that reflects how adults learn, how organizations change, and how evidence-based practices are successfully implemented within complex education systems. Research shows that capacity building is most effective when it is client driven, differentiated, maintained, collaborative, and coordinated across providers.^[15] Accordingly, and as **Exhibit 4** illustrates, our approach integrates four



complementary foundations: adult learning principles, implementation science, coaching for impact, and an innovative navigator-style service delivery model.

Collectively, these research foundations, as described in Exhibit 4, support the identification, implementation, scaling, and maintenance of evidence-based practices within complex educational systems and provide the basis for the R3CC’s theory of action and capacity-building approach. [AR#1, AR#4]

Exhibit 4. The ICF Team Will Build Capacity through Research-Based Solutions.

ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES	
Research	Solution
The ICF Team knows that lasting systems change depends on the knowledge, skills, and actions of the people within those systems, making research-based adult learning a critical foundation for an effective capacity-building approach. ^[16] Research shows that adults learn best when learning is relevant, collaborative, grounded in authentic problems of practice, immediately applicable, and reinforced through reflection and feedback. ^[17]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide interactive training with reflection, small- and large-group work, and participant-led facilitation, as appropriate. • Emphasize ongoing professional learning instead of one-time workshops. • Embed learning in authentic work contexts to support immediate application. • Support learners to apply, refine, and sustain new practices through feedback and reflection.^[18] [AR#4]
IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE	
Research	Solution
Because capacity building is intended to strengthen the ability of individuals and organizations to improve continuously and achieve desired results, ^[19] the ICF Team’s approach is grounded in implementation science to help SEAs, LEAs, REAs, and TEAs move evidence-based policies and practices from intention to implementation, scale, and maintenance by building the organizational conditions those strategies require. Furthermore, research shows that education reforms fail when systems lack the implementation infrastructure and organizational capacity, leadership, and continuous improvement processes needed to successfully adopt, scale, and maintain change. ^[20] Therefore, SEAs play a pivotal role in strengthening these implementation systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed an ICF state strategy lead in each SEA to connect SEA priorities with ICF Team support (see Section B.3.5). • Design services to build implementation capacity for execution, improvement, and maintenance. • Strengthen SEA systems for priority setting, resource alignment, LEA support, and continuous improvement.
COACHING	
Research	Solution
The ICF Team’s coaching approach will bridge learning and implementation because it supports the application of knowledge, strengthens problem solving, provides feedback, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach SEA staff and leaders through trained, credentialed staff.



helps individuals adapt evidence-based strategies to their unique contexts while maintaining fidelity. Research shows that coaching is among the most effective professional learning strategies for improving practice because it moves beyond knowledge acquisition to behavior change. ^[21] Coaching also helps agencies translate evidence-based practices into day-to-day implementation, increasing the likelihood that improvements are maintained over time. Coaching is especially valuable when agencies are implementing complex initiatives. ^[22]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen individual skill development and organizational learning. • Create structured reflection opportunities to review progress and address challenges. • Make data-informed adjustments to improve implementation. • Translate evidence-based practices into day-to-day implementation. • Sustain complex initiatives through ongoing feedback and problem solving.^[23]
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INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Research	Solution
<p>The ICF Team will integrate implementation science, adult learning principles, and coaching through an innovative, navigator-style service delivery model designed to enhance coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning services with state priorities, learning agendas, and existing improvement efforts while coordinating with RELs and across the Shared Partner Ecosystem to reduce fragmentation and duplication • Through responsiveness, maintaining close relationships with clients; remaining available and highly service oriented; and adapting quickly as needs, priorities, and circumstances evolve • Integrating efficiency and leveraging existing resources, expertise, and partnerships to deliver high-value support that minimizes administrative burden, avoids duplication, and maximizes impact^[24] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace top-down TA with a collaborative, SEA-centered service model. • Center supports on SEA, REA, and LEA needs, priorities, and contexts. • Act as a strategic implementation partner to identify priorities, coordinate support, access expertise, and navigate implementation. • Use AI strategically to improve responsiveness, adaptability, and service quality (see Section B.3) • Streamline access through a single point of entry, coordinated project management, and proactive TA navigation. • Reduce administrative burden so agencies can focus on implementation and results.

ICF APPROACH BENEFITS

- Stronger implementation infrastructure, organizational systems, and continuous improvement processes that support the sustained use of evidence-based practices across diverse contexts.
- Greater capacity to use data, engage stakeholders, address contextual challenges, and make informed decisions that advance improvement priorities.
- Expanded access to high-quality educational opportunities for students in rural communities, low-performing schools, and educator-shortage settings.
- Improved adoption, scaling, and long-term sustainability of evidence-based practices within complex educational systems. [AR#1, AR#4]
- Increased transfer of learning into practice and greater likelihood that changes in professional practice will be maintained over time. ^[25]
- Enhanced leadership, organizational learning, and problem-solving capacities that support adaptation, continuous improvement, and effective implementation.
- More coherent and coordinated improvement efforts that translate evidence into practice, reduce duplication, and maintain momentum through differentiated capacity-building supports (see **Section A.2.3**). ^[26] [AR#1, AR#4]
- Greater coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability of improvement efforts through the integration of implementation science, adult learning, and coaching.
- Improved outcomes for all students, especially those who are underserved, through stronger systems, more effective implementation, and sustained reforms. [PR#2, PR#4, PR#6, PR#7, PR#8, PR#9, AR#3, AR#4]



A.2.3 ICF’s Capacity-Building Drivers

Unlike traditional TA models that require states to navigate multiple providers independently, the ICF Team will deliver a coordinated, relationship-based capacity-building system that integrates priority setting, implementation support, and continuous improvement through a single, client-centered approach.

Student outcomes are the north star of the ICF Team’s capacity-building approach. While our work will focus on strengthening agency capacity, its fundamental purpose will be to improve outcomes for underserved students in ways that continue to support all students. As shown in **Exhibit 5**, six **interconnected capacity-building drivers** will translate implementation science, adult learning, and coaching research into a coherent, innovative client-centered framework for action. Together, these six capacity-building drivers will provide a coherent, responsive, and efficient framework for designing, delivering, and continuously improving services that remain aligned with SEA priorities and focused on improving outcomes for all students. Grounded in adult learning, implementation science, coaching, and innovation, these drivers translate research into practice by creating a structure for identifying priorities, building knowledge and skills, supporting implementation, coordinating expertise, differentiating supports, and using continuous improvement processes to achieve measurable and long-lasting results.

Exhibit 5. The ICF Team Will Use Six Capacity-Building Drivers to Translate State Priorities into Coordinated Support and Improved Student Outcomes. [AR#1]

1. State Priorities Lead	
The SEA at the top of the approach (see Exhibit 3) signals a fundamental shift in how the ICF Team will engage with SEAs, LEAs, REAs, and TEAs. Rather than beginning with “What assistance can we provide?” the ICF Team will begin with a different question: “What challenges are states trying to solve, and how can we partner with them to develop effective solutions?” [PR#1, PR#2, PR#3, PR#7, AR#2, AR#8]	
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leading through state priorities strengthens state capacity to identify, implement, evaluate, and sustain solutions aligned with state priorities, local context, available data, stakeholder feedback, and educational needs.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows improvement efforts are more successful when priorities are identified by implementing organizations and supports are tailored to local needs and contexts.^[41] • Priorities may be informed by chief state school officers, SEA leaders, REAs, LEAs, educators, students, parents/families, and other stakeholders to ensure services remain locally grounded and responsive. • Client-driven problem solving better aligns capacity-building investments with state-identified needs, leadership priorities, and implementation realities. • Leading through state priorities increases ownership, strengthens organizational capacity, and supports long-term maintenance of improvements.^[28] • Leading through state priorities aligns with the U.S. Department of Education's (ED's) priority to return education to the states.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowers states to lead improvement efforts that result in relevant solutions. • Strengthens long-term state ownership.

2. Responsiveness Drives Service Delivery

The ICF Team will provide flexible, relationship-based support that adapts to evolving needs, emerging challenges, and changing implementation contexts. Central to this approach is an innovative shared-leadership structure (see Section C) designed to ensure that every SEA receives proactive, coordinated, and personalized support. In addition to overall leadership provided by two co-directors, each state will be supported by two dedicated leaders: a **state strategy lead** responsible for relationship management, coordination, and strategic planning and a **state coordinator** (see Section B.3.5) responsible for overseeing project implementation and connecting agencies to relevant expertise and resources. Together, these leaders will provide a seamless experience that enables the ICF Team to respond quickly to emerging needs while maintaining alignment with SEA priorities. [PR#2, PR#4, AR#2, AR#6]

Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness supports more effective implementation by providing adaptive, relationship-based assistance that responds to evolving state needs rather than relying on predetermined approaches.^[29] • Responsiveness improves long-term outcomes and sustainability through ongoing engagement, continuous feedback, timely problem solving, and access to expertise that help states successfully implement and sustain improvements.^[30]
Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerates problem solving and strengthens implementation.

3. Coordination Creates Coherence

The R3CC and REL MA will function as an intentionally coordinated support system, rather than as separate TA providers working in parallel. [PR#6, PR#7, PR#9]

Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows that coordinated, aligned systems improve implementation effectiveness and long-term outcomes by reducing fragmentation and initiative overload while creating a shared focus, aligning resources, and leveraging complementary expertise across organizations.^[31]
Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps states achieve more effective and sustainable improvement by aligning efforts, reducing duplication, and maximizing resources and expertise.

4. Partnerships Amplify Impact

The ICF Team will leverage an extensive network of partners to connect agencies with the expertise, resources, and relationships needed to address complex challenges. Partner engagement will be determined collaboratively with SEA leaders based on identified needs, desired outcomes, and available expertise across the Shared Partner Ecosystem, ensuring support remains aligned to state priorities and local context. This approach enables states to access the evidence, expertise, implementation supports, and specialized resources necessary to advance state-led improvement efforts.

The ICF Team will work to coordinate with a variety of partners, as relevant and needed, to reduce burdens and barriers to service for States and other clients and avoid duplicative efforts. Rather than requiring SEAs, LEAs, REAs, and TEAs to independently navigate a complex landscape of TA providers, research organizations, institutions of higher education, professional associations, and local partners, the ICF Team will serve as a strategic navigator, helping agencies access the right expertise at the right time. Depending on project needs, the ICF Team may engage the NCC for specialized content expertise, partner with REL MA to support applied



research and evidence generation, collaborate with other Regional CCs on cross-regional learning opportunities, or coordinate with federally funded TA centers to leverage complementary resources and expertise. [PR#8, PR#9]

Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows that effective capacity building relies on coordinating expertise across organizations, as complex implementation challenges often require multiple forms of specialized knowledge and support rather than a single provider. ^[32] • Intentional coordination and brokerage of expertise are critical to effective TA systems, ^[33] positioning the ICF Team as the right fit to respond to SEA priorities due to our longstanding relationships with national experts, regional partners, and federally funded TA providers.
Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to stronger, more comprehensive solutions by connecting states with the specialized expertise, resources, and perspectives needed to address complex challenges and support successful implementation.

5. Differentiated Supports Build Capacity

The ICF Team will deliver tiered capacity-building services tailored to each agency's needs, readiness, and desired outcomes (see **Section B.3.2**). Consistent with implementation science and TA research, this framework matches the intensity of support to the complexity of the challenge, level of implementation readiness, and desired outcomes. As a result, agencies may engage in universal, targeted, or intensive services designed to strengthen human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity while maximizing the impact of capacity-building investments. [PR#2, PR#8, AR#1]

Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows differentiated TA is more effective than a one-size-fits-all approach, with stronger outcomes when supports are tailored to an organization's implementation stage, context, and needs. ^[34] • Cross-state learning and shared supports (e.g., communities of practice [CoPs], peer networks, tools, resources) help address common challenges, reduce duplication, and maximize the impact of federal investments. [AR#8] • Research supports intensive capacity-building services that include ongoing engagement, strong relationships, continuous feedback, reflection, and evidence-based improvement strategies to strengthen implementation and outcomes. ^[35] • Intensive support is prioritized based on agency needs, readiness, data, and desired outcomes, ensuring resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact.
Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases the effectiveness of capacity-building efforts by matching the level and type of support to each state's unique needs, readiness, and implementation challenges, resulting in stronger outcomes and more efficient use of resources.

6. Student Outcomes Remain the North Star

Student outcomes are the ultimate goal of the ICF Team's capacity-building approach. The ICF Team recognizes that long-lasting improvements in student achievement and opportunity depend on the capacity of SEAs, LEAs, REAs, and LEAs to effectively implement, scale, and maintain evidence-based practices, particularly for students experiencing obstacles to educational success. [PR#1, PR#4, AR#1, AR#3]

Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows that stronger organizational, leadership, and implementation capacity enables education agencies to effectively adopt, scale, and sustain evidence-based practices, leading to improved student outcomes. ^[36] • Research identifies SEA capacity building as a critical driver of educational improvement, as SEAs influence priorities, resource allocation, and the conditions that support success for all students. ^[37] [PR#1, AR#1]
Benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves outcomes for all students by strengthening state capacity to effectively implement, scale, and sustain evidence-based practices that support student success. [PR#4, AR#3]



The ICF Team’s capacity-building approach reflects the belief that long-lasting improvements in student outcomes require strong implementation systems, and strong implementation systems require capacity at the SEA, REA, and LEA levels.

Grounded in adult learning principles, implementation science, and coaching and through an innovative navigator-style service delivery approach, the ICF Team will provide a coherent framework for translating state priorities into meaningful action and measurable results, including student outcomes and high satisfaction from SEAs. The following section describes the quality of the project design and the

“Without the support of the Region 8 CC Team over the last 18 months, MI would not be at the point it is with having launched its initiative, having 86% of the state having access to the credentials, having over 900 CTE students enrolled in the MiRegistry system to track their credentialing work plans, and overall having a robust system of supports initially put in place and coordinated well across multiple offices within the SEA, external with multiple stakeholders, including a PR contractor, to carry off this initiative to ensure its sustainability. They have been true authentic partners and collaborators in this initiative. The BEST TA team I’ve worked with in my nearly 14 years at the SEA.”

—ICF 2019-2024 R8CC
Client Survey

specific strategies, structures, and partnerships that will bring this model to life across the Mid-Atlantic region.

B. Quality of the Project Design

B.1 Measurable and Achievable Project Goals and Objectives

The ICF Team will apply a clear methodology aligned with the R3CC logic model (see **Section B.6**) to assess implementation fidelity and achievement of outcomes through a high-level project goal, objectives, and associated performance measures. ICF’s current and previous experiences in successfully operating and evaluating regional CCs provide a wealth of knowledge about establishing and meeting clearly specified, measurable, and ambitious yet achievable goals, objectives, and outcomes that align with the purposes of the CC grant program.

B.1.1 R3CC Project Goals

As noted in **Section A.2**, the overarching R3CC project goal is to provide capacity-building



services driven by SEA-identified needs and leadership priorities, including SLAs, to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. While these capacity-building services will focus primarily on intensive capacity building, the project goal and project objectives (POs) will also include universal and/or targeted services, as appropriate.

B.1.2 Project Objectives and Associated Performance Measures

As shown in **Exhibit 6**, seven POs address ED’s program performance measures (PPMs) and the project-level performance measures aligned with the R3CC logic model. Preliminary targets have been established by the ICF Team based on current and prior experience in evaluating regional CCs to ensure objectives are measurable and achievable; these targets will be finalized by R3CC staff (leadership and evaluators) during Year 1. Performance measure type (program or project) is denoted in parentheses, as are targets. All performance measures are annual, beginning in Year 1, except for medium- and long-term outcomes (measures 7a and 7b below), and will contribute to continuous improvement efforts as well as outcome measurements.

Exhibit 6. The ICF Team Will Deliver Measurable, Capacity-Building Services through R3CC Project Objectives and Associated Performance Measures

Project Objectives	Performance Measures/Measurement Type
PO 1: Provide high-quality, relevant, and useful capacity-building services that meet the needs of SEAs and other key clients. (Key clients include SEAs, REAs/LEAs, and/or other primary clients served.)	1a. Percentage of key clients reporting satisfaction with the quality of the services provided. (PPM 1) (80%) 1b. Percentage of key clients reporting satisfaction with the usefulness of the services provided. (PPM 1) (80%) 1c. Percentage of key clients reporting satisfaction with the relevance of the services provided. (PPM 1) (80%) <i>Note: PPM 1. The extent to which CC clients are satisfied with the quality, usefulness, and relevance of services provided.</i>
PO 2: Provide services and products to a wide range of recipients.	2a. Number of recipient group types to which services and products were provided. (PPM 2) (at least 3 groups) <i>Note: PPM 2. The extent to which CCs provide services and products to a wide range of recipients.</i>
PO 3: Deliver collaborative, relationship-centered capacity-building services that strengthen agency capacity, support continuous improvement, and assist with reliable implementation of evidence-based practices.	3a. Percentage of key clients reporting that the CC works in a collaborative manner. (project) (80%) 3b. Percentage of key clients reporting that CC staff match TA expertise and supports to state priorities and identified needs. (project) (80%) 3c. Percentage of key clients reporting that the CC works in a manner that fosters a trusting relationship. (project) (80%)



Project Objectives	Performance Measures/Measurement Type
	3d. Percentage of key clients reporting that CC services strengthen continuous improvement practices. (project) (80%) 3e. Percentage of key clients reporting that CC services support long-term maintenance of agency implementation efforts. (project) (80%)
PO 4: Implement client-driven, evidence-based capacity-building services that are aligned to SLA goals, state-identified needs, and/or leadership priorities and that are responsive to identified needs and challenges.	4a. Percentage of ASP initiatives aligned to state-identified priorities and SLA goals. (project) (100%) 4b. Percentage of key clients reporting that CC services address current state leadership priorities and emerging educational needs. (project) (80%) 4c. Percentage of key clients reporting that CC capacity-building services are evidence-based. (project) (80%) 4d. Percentage of key clients reporting that CC capacity-building services are delivered as agreed upon with the state. (project) (80%)
PO 5.1: Implement ASP activities with fidelity and achieve planned milestones and outputs within established timelines.	5a. Percentage of milestones completed. (PPM 3) (80%) 5b. Percentage of outputs completed. (PPM 3) (80%) <i>Note: PPM 3. The extent to which CCs demonstrate that capacity-building services were implemented as intended.</i>
PO 5.2: Implement ASP activities with fidelity and achieve planned milestones and outputs within established timelines.	5c. Percentage of key clients reporting that CC capacity-building services are consistently delivered in a timely manner. (project) (80%)
PO 6.1: Strengthen clients' human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity to apply knowledge, improve organizational practices, align and implement evidence-based policies and practices, and effectively secure, align, and use resources to support long-lasting systems improvement.	6a. Percentage of short-term outcomes met. (PPM 4) (80%) <i>Note: PPM 4. The extent to which CCs demonstrate recipient outcomes were met.</i>
PO 6.2: Strengthen clients' human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity to apply knowledge, improve organizational practices, align and implement evidence-based policies and practices, and effectively secure, align, and use resources to support long-lasting systems improvement.	6b. Percentage of key clients reporting a gain in new knowledge or skills (human capacity). (project) (80%) 6c. Percentage of key clients reporting use of new knowledge or skills (human capacity). (project) (60%) 6d. Percentage of key clients reporting improved understanding of organizational structures and functions (organizational capacity). (project) (80%) 6e. Percentage of key clients reporting improvement in organizational structures and functions (organizational capacity). (project) (60%) 6f. Percentage of key clients reporting improved understanding of how to align or enact federal, state, and local policies (policy capacity). (project) (80%) 6g. Percentage of key clients reporting improved alignment or enactment of federal, state, and local policies (policy capacity). (project) (60%) 6h. Percentage of key clients reporting increased understanding of how to secure, align, or use resources (e.g., staffing, funding, facilities, equipment, technology, materials) (resource capacity). (project) (80%) 6i. Percentage of key clients reporting improvement in securing, aligning, or using resources (e.g., staffing, funding, facilities, equipment, technology, materials) (resource capacity). (project) (60%)
PO 7: Position states to maintain evidence-based practices and achieve improved organizational effectiveness, educator practice, and student outcomes through	7a. Percentage of medium-term outcomes met. (PPM 4) (N/A for Year 1, 75% in Years 2–5) 7b. Percentage of long-term outcomes met. (PPM 4) (N/A for Years 1–3, 70% in Years 4–5)



Project Objectives	Performance Measures/Measurement Type
strengthened human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity.	

The ICF Team has a strong history of ensuring that data collection and reporting methods used yield reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data, based on current and previous successful operation and evaluation of regional CCs. Not only has ICF successfully collected, analyzed, and reported reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data for regional CCs via annual performance reports and annual and final evaluation reports (e.g., 2012-2019 Appalachia Region

Comprehensive Center, 2019-2024 Region 8 CC and 2024-2026 MACC), but ICF has also provided similar reports documenting performance data for other state and federally funded projects (e.g., Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grants program, Rethinking Responsive Education

Ventures (RREV) grant program, CHOICE EIR Early-Phase Evaluation, Charter School Programs, and AmeriCorps Program Life Cycle Evaluation). The R3CC goals, objectives, and performance measures will ensure measurement

and monitoring of progress toward milestones, outputs, and outcomes as well as the reach, use, and impact of service delivery to ensure implementation fidelity (see **Section B.2.3**). [PR#4, AR#1,

ICF Experience in Setting and Meeting Measurable and Achievable Objectives and Outcomes

From the most recently ended 5-year operation of the 2019-2024 Region 8 CC, across Years 1–5:

- **90%** of milestones were met
- **92%** of outputs were met
- More than **75%** of the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes were achieved

In addition, **90%** of the performance measures were met or exceeded.

Further, **90%** or more of client survey respondents were satisfied with the quality, relevance, and usefulness of services provided.

2019-2024 R8CC Outcome Achievements (as reported by former clients)

- “Region 8 has helped us build, implement and increase high school pathways in education related fields in CTE programs across the state.”
- “Region 8 is helping ED build its capacity to do school improvement work across the state, and then the team at ED is more effectively able to build the capacity of others.”

R3CC Satisfaction (as reported by current clients)

- “We have had a fantastic experience with the group to date. They are highly responsive, collaborative and flexible and we have deeply appreciated their partnership.”



AR#3]

The ICF Team Will Use Evidence to Measure, Adjust, and Demonstrate TA Outcomes

The ICF Team will collect reliable and valid data through an organizational structure with the needed capacity to determine whether R3CC services help clients overcome identified challenges because evaluation, performance management, secure data practices, and continuous improvement are built into delivery of universal, targeted, and intensive services.

- **Reliable data:** common definitions, ASP-aligned indicators, standardized trackers/surveys, scheduled collection, dashboards, and QA checks support consistent measurement across states, projects, and service types.
- **Valid evidence:** Context, Input, Process, and Product model (CIPP)-aligned questions tie data to context, inputs, delivery, fidelity, reach, use, satisfaction, and outcomes; surveys/interviews, event feedback, artifacts, logs, extant data, and case studies triangulate findings.
- **Meaningful outcomes:** evidence shows reach/use for universal services; participation, peer learning, and action steps for targeted services; and fidelity, coaching progress, capacity gains, and client-defined outcomes for intensive services.
- **Continuous adjustment:** internal evaluators, external evaluators, State coordinators, embedded state strategy leads, and co-project directors review evidence through dashboards, rapid cycles, and quarterly debriefs to refine dosage, mode, partners, workplans, and ASPs.
- **Quality controls:** secure data practices, role-based access, codebooks, human review of AI-assisted analysis, client validation, and institutional review board (IRB) review as appropriate protect data integrity.
- **Organizational Capacity:** The ICF Team has a long history of high-quality data collection, analysis and reporting as demonstrated through our work on the current MACC, the 2019-2024 Region 8 CC, the 2012-2019 ARCC, the 2012-2017 REL MA, and evaluations of Education Innovation Research grants.

Result: The R3CC will demonstrate client progress, document capacity gains, report against POs and ED PPMs, and refine services in real time so support remains aligned to SEA priorities and produces measurable improvement.

B.2 Continuous Improvement Through Quantitative and Qualitative Data (PR#4, AR#3)

The ICF Team understands the importance of continuous quality improvement and will ensure an ongoing focus on it through the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data aligned with performance measures. Continual input and feedback from clients, partners, and other relevant stakeholders (including those in communities across R3CC States) forms the foundation of proposed capacity-building services, and such input will help assess changing needs, shape plan modifications, and influence course corrections in each state's evolving landscape.



B.2.1 Performance Management and Evaluation Approach

R3CC's performance management and evaluation approach will ensure that evaluation activities generate ongoing feedback loops among CC leaders, staff, partners, education agencies, and other clients to drive continuous improvement and enhance effective achievement of client outcomes. The evaluation will maintain a formative focus, using rapid response cycles throughout service delivery to ensure evaluation informs continuous improvement and to examine the fidelity of the capacity-building approach. The evaluation will also maintain a summative focus to examine the extent to which outcomes were achieved. The data collection and reporting mechanisms described in **Section B.2** will ensure periodic assessments of client satisfaction, timely identification of changes in state contexts, and appropriate reporting on performance measures.

The R3CC evaluation will be framed using the CIPP model^[38] as shown in **Exhibit 7**. CIPP components align well to R3CC capacity-building services (see the R3CC logic model in **Section B.6**), which proceed from selecting and planning for evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions to implementing, scaling up, and maintaining. CIPP domains are summarized below.

- **Context.** This assesses needs, problems, assets, and opportunities, plus contextual conditions.
- **Input.** This examines strategies and action plans to determine feasibility.
- **Process.** This focuses on program delivery and fidelity of implementation, as well as formative feedback throughout implementation (ongoing continuous improvement).
- **Product.** This examines whether delivered services resulted in intended outcomes.

The proposed methods (see **Section B.2.3**) describe the techniques that will be used to measure and monitor progress toward agreed-upon milestones, outputs, and outcomes and to measure the



reach, use, and impact of the services being delivered to ensure fidelity of implementation, reach intended clients, and achieve the desired results. In addition to delivering substantive, credible process and outcome evaluation findings to ED, the evaluation will equip the R3CC leaders, staff, partners, and clients with timely, relevant, and actionable information via the continuous improvement focus.^[39] [PR#1, PR#4, AR#1, AR#3]

Exhibit 7. The ICF Team will use CIPP Evidence to Adjust Support and Demonstrate Outcomes [AR#3, PR#1]

The R3CC will use the CIPP model to turn implementation and outcome evidence into timely service adjustments and proof of progress across universal, targeted, and intensive supports.

CIPP Lens	Evidence Used	How R3CC Uses It
Context	SEA priorities; SLAs; ASPs; SEA input; context scans; extant data	Confirm needs, beneficiaries, and changing conditions; keep services anchored in SEA priorities.
Input	Service strategy; staffing/expertise; partner resources; mode, cadence, dosage, tools	Test feasibility and fit; assign the right intensity and expertise before delivery.
Process	Service trackers; participation logs; event feedback; artifacts; milestones, outputs, fidelity checks	Monitor reach, use, timeliness, and implementation as intended; adjust support through rapid-response cycles.
Product	Surveys/interviews; capacity evidence; dashboards; case studies; selected outcomes data	Demonstrate satisfaction, capacity gains, and outcomes: universal = reach/use; targeted = application; intensive = fidelity/progress.

Result: Client progress is documented, barriers are identified early, supports are recalibrated, and outcomes are demonstrated for ED reporting and continuous improvement.

B.2.2 Evaluation Roles

To ensure evaluator involvement and engagement with R3CC leadership, staff, and partners through continuous improvement efforts while fostering an opportunity for a more objective, external perspective, the evaluation will include internal and external evaluation teams, as well as an evaluation collaborative to enhance joint planning across both teams. **Exhibit 8** depicts how this structure will foster operation of the evaluation (internal team), validation through an external perspective (external team), and alignment of continuous improvement with independent validation (evaluation collaborative). [PR#1, PR#4, AR#1, AR#3]



Exhibit 8. The ICF Team Will Operate, Validate, and Align Evaluation to Drive Continuous Improvement.

Role/Lens	Core Responsibilities	Management Value/Evidence Use
OPERATE Internal Evaluator Lead <i>Andrew MacDonald, ICF</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carries out day-to-day evaluation operations Monitors/tracks ASP implementation Participates in team meetings Collects and analyzes client data Produces evaluation reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeds timely data to R3CC leaders, staff, partners, and clients Supports real-time feedback and continuous improvement Documents progress for reporting and refinement
VALIDATE External Evaluation Lead <i>Jonathan Steinberg, EurekaFacts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects feedback from R3CC leaders, staff, and partners Provides objective insights on operations and service delivery Conducts case studies/impact stories of selected initiatives, one per state Oversees the evaluation collaborative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adds independent perspective on implementation and outcomes Deepens evidence on impacts of selected high-leverage initiatives Strengthens credibility of findings
ALIGN Evaluation Collaborative <i>Internal and External Teams</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrates internal and external evaluation teams Meets virtually each quarter throughout the grant period Uses virtual and in-person meetings to build trust and shared understanding Develops/supports data infrastructure Aligns metrics across projects and states Provides formative feedback on evaluation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combines continuous improvement with independent validation Builds collective evaluation capacity Improves rigor, credibility, and utility for program refinement and federal reporting Enables real-time learning and objective assessment of outcomes

Bottom Line. The internal team keeps evaluation embedded in implementation; the external team adds objectivity and impact evidence; and the collaborative aligns metrics, infrastructure, and feedback loops across projects and states.

B.2.3 Evaluation Methods and Analysis

The R3CC evaluation will use mixed methods to secure data by using qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. Mixed-methods studies are advantageous in evaluating complex programs, such as R3CC capacity-building services, given the variety of data collection and analytic techniques that leverage strengths and account for weaknesses inherent in individual methods, thus providing a more comprehensive analysis than might be possible otherwise.^[40] Moreover, mixed-methods approaches will allow the R3CC evaluation team to triangulate findings across multiple data sources and across years, thereby exploring contradictions and confirmations between quantitative and qualitative information.^[41]



Triangulating findings across data sources will foster interpretation of results through multiple lenses reflective of the R3CC states' education and local landscapes, including the timely identification of changes in State contexts which may impact successful implementation of R3CC services. **Exhibit 10** presents a depiction of CIPP model domains, evaluation questions (and associated performance measures), data collection methods, types of analysis, and which team (internal or external) will be responsible.

The teams will analyze data using appropriate qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as shown in **Exhibit 9**. These methodologies will allow us to derive findings that inform implementation efforts toward the goal of continuous improvement and gauge the effectiveness of the capacity-building services being provided.

Exhibit 9. The ICF Team Will Apply Mixed-Methods Analysis to Generate Actionable, Triangulated Insights for Continuous Improvement

Qualitative data (interviews, open-ended survey prompts, observations, and extant documents) will be analyzed using an iterative process. A codebook will be developed based on a priori codes informed by the logic model and key evaluation questions with clear definitions and inclusion or exclusion criteria. Qualitative software programs will be employed to manage and analyze the substantial amount of qualitative data. To enhance efficiency and rigor, ICF- and ED-approved AI-enabled tools will be used, with appropriate guardrails including human review, data privacy, checks for accuracy, and restrictions on sensitive data, to support rapid coding, pattern identification, and cross-case analysis, with ongoing evaluator oversight to ensure validity, alignment with the codebook, and data confidentiality, enabling more timely insights to inform continuous improvement.

Quantitative data (surveys, academic data, etc.) will be analyzed by generating frequencies (numbers and percentages) and descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency, such as mean, mode, and median; and measures of dispersion, such as standard deviation, range, and variance) to illustrate, display, and summarize characteristics of such data. Quantitative software programs will be employed to conduct efficient data analysis and to build more complete datasets across instruments and across years.

In addition, in-depth case studies will focus on one initiative per state per year (systems-level initiatives addressing high-leverage problems) to further illuminate the R3CC capacity-building model and resulting outcomes. These impact stories, to be completed by the external evaluation team, will extend over multiple years and may include additional interviews and/or site visits.

[PR#1, PR#4, AR#1, AR#3]



Exhibit 10. The ICF Team Will Operationalize Continuous Improvement through the CIPP Evaluation Framework.

CIPP Domains	Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Methods	Analysis	Responsible Team(s)*
Context	To what extent are initiatives based on SLA goals and leadership needs and priorities? (PM 3b, 4a, 4b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Context Monitoring Protocol: Used for creation of ASPs and for ongoing monitoring of each state’s contextual factors 	Qualitative	Internal
Input	To what extent are initiative approaches, strategies, and activities feasible to undertake and accomplish? (PM 4c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASPs: Used for SEA client input during creation of ASPs and review of ASPs by R3CC leadership and internal evaluation team 	Qualitative	Internal
Process	To what extent are initiatives being carried out as intended? (PM 2a, 4d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients 	Qualitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CC Staff/Partner Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key CC staff and partners 	Qualitative	External
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CC Staff/Partner Progress Survey: Used throughout year 	Qualitative and Quantitative	External
	What obstacles are being encountered, and how are they addressed? (3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients 	Qualitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CC Staff/Partner Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key CC staff and partners 	Qualitative	External
	What factors help facilitate successful implementation? (3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients 	Qualitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CC Staff/Partner Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key CC staff and partners 	Qualitative	External
	How satisfied are clients with ongoing services? (PM 1a, 1b, 1c, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 5c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Survey: Used at mid-year and end of year for all clients 	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients 	Qualitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event Feedback Forms: Used at service delivery events 	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event Observation Forms: Used at key events 	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation/Sign-In Logs: Used at service engagements 	Quantitative	Internal
	To what extent are clients increasing their knowledge and skills in targeted areas? (PM 6b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Survey: Used at mid-year and end of year for all clients 	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients 	Qualitative	Internal
	To what extent are milestones and outputs being met? (PM 5a, 5b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artifact Review: Use for inspection of CC materials, progress reports, etc. 	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal



CIPP Domains	Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Methods	Analysis	Responsible Team(s)*
Product	To what extent are clients changing their individual and/or collective behaviors? (PM 6c)	• Client Survey: Used at mid-year and end of year for all clients	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		• Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients	Qualitative	Internal
	To what extent are outcomes being achieved? (PM 6a, 7a, 7b)	• Client Survey: Used at mid-year and end of year for all clients	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		• Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients	Qualitative	Internal
		• Artifact Review: Used for inspection of CC materials, progress reports, etc.	Qualitative	Internal
	To what extent can changes be detected in improving educator practice? (PM 6d, 6e, 6f, 6g, 6h, 6i)	• Client Survey: Used at mid-year and end of year for all clients	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		• Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients	Qualitative	Internal
		• Artifact Review: Used for inspection of CC and client materials	Qualitative	Internal
	To what extent can changes be detected in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for all students? (PM 6d, 6e, 6f, 6g, 6h, 6i)	• Extant Data: Used for benchmark and summative student assessment data	Quantitative	Internal
		• Client Survey: Used at mid-year and end of year for all clients	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		• Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients	Qualitative	Internal
		• Artifact Review: Used for inspection of CC and client materials	Qualitative	Internal
	To what extent can changes be detected in improving the quality of instruction for all students? (PM 6d, 6e, 6f, 6g, 6h, 6i)	• Client Survey: Used at mid-year and end of year for all clients	Qualitative and Quantitative	Internal
		• Client Interview Protocol: Used at end of year for key clients	Qualitative	Internal
		• Artifact Review: Used for inspection of CC and client materials	Qualitative	Internal

* The internal evaluation team will participate in monthly meetings with the state coordinators & state strategy leads to stay abreast of service delivery efforts and to discuss evaluation findings that will inform continuous improvement efforts and any subsequent modifications necessary in the ASPs.



B.2.4 Data Management and Security Practices

Exhibit 11 summarizes the ICF Team’s data management and security practices for protecting evaluation data, maintaining data quality, and supporting responsible use of client and project information. These practices define how data will be collected, stored, accessed, reviewed, and shared, including how IRB review will be secured. [PR#4, AR#1]

Exhibit 11. The ICF Team’s Data Management and Security Practices Will Protect Evaluation Data.

R3CC Practice	R3CC Controls and Standards	R3CC Benefit
Secure and preserve evaluation data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust data management protects personally identifiable information Network, physical, and file security Secure cloud-based servers with routine backups ICF data-protection team applies globally accepted best practices Standards: confidentiality, privacy, integrity, appropriate availability; controlled server environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant data protected Secure, usable evaluation data Reduced risk of data loss Reliable access for analysis and reporting
Govern access and sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access limited to authorized users Multifactor authentication, role-based access, and strict password management Data-sharing agreements used as appropriate Agreements define shared data, parties, and use expectations Standards: access tied to role and need; secure transfer and use expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced unauthorized access risk Clear accountability for data use Appropriate partner and client data exchange Less ambiguity about data handling
Assure ethical review and staff readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICF IRB reviews data-collection instruments and protocols Compliance with 45 CFR Part 46 OHRP registration IRB00001920; FWA00002349 Staff trained routinely on data security policies and procedures Evaluation staff CITI-certified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical data collection Protection of human subjects Protocols aligned to purpose Consistent implementation Staff readiness and compliance discipline

B.2.5 Evaluation Reporting

In conjunction with ED reporting requirements, the internal evaluation team will use data from the methods described above to share evaluation findings with relevant audiences (such as ED, R3CC staff and partners, and clients) to ensure that the evaluation informs CC processes and services through the use of ongoing, real-time feedback as part of the continuous improvement



efforts in the operation of the CC. The team will also use the data to document achievement of intended outcomes. The external evaluation team will produce case studies (impact stories) to showcase progress on high-level problems over time. **Exhibit 12** describes the evaluation reporting products, their frequency, and the benefits of each product. [PR#1, PR#4, AR#1, AR#3]

Exhibit 12. The ICF Team Will Translate Data into Timely Products That Guide Action and Improvement.

Product	Frequency	Benefits
ASPs	Annually (with revisions as needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align services, milestones, outputs, and outcomes to client priorities Set shared expectations for implementation and results
Quarterly progress reports	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track progress against plans Flag obstacles and needed course corrections
Informal data summaries	As data become available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share timely interim findings for continuous improvement and identification of potential next steps or modifications Support rapid learning and decision-making
Data debriefs	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpret findings with project teams Turn data into action steps
Annual performance reports	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document progress on performance measures Support accountability and ED reporting
Annual evaluation reports	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synthesize implementation and outcome findings Inform annual planning and continuous improvement
Case studies (impact stories)	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show progress on high-leverage problems over time Communicate concrete examples of impact
Database dashboards	Annual updates to show progress over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display trends and progress visually Support monitoring and discussion
Conference presentations	Annually (if applications are accepted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate findings and lessons learned Share promising practices with the field

B.3 Training and Professional Development to Build Recipient Capacity (PR#1, PR#7)

The ICF Team’s approach to training and professional development services are intentionally designed to ensure **sufficient quality, intensity, and duration** to build reliable capacity and drive measurable improvements in practice. Rather than offering one-time or episodic professional development, the ICF Team will implement a structured, iterative, and evidence-based TA approach that supports SEAs in moving from planning to implementation to maintaining improvements. Training and professional development services align to the broader



capacity-building approach described in **Section A.2.1** and is operationalized through a staged TA cycle that ensures coherence, continuous improvement, and measurable outcomes (see **Exhibit 15 in Section B.3.7**). The ICF Team will also employ the strategic use of AI to strengthen quality of delivery, enhance efficiency, and expand impact. The ICF Team recognizes that AI does not replace TA; rather, when paired with effective, human-centered strategies, it enhances quality, extends reach, deepens engagement, and supports scaling.

B.3.1 Competitive Preference Priority: Returning Education to the States

The ICF Team will support SEAs in designing and implementing coordinated, statewide strategies that return priority-setting and implementation leadership to the states while expanding access to high-quality educational options. The foundation of this approach is the partnership already built through discussions with Mid-Atlantic SEA leaders, state education officials, and project leads, who identified the priorities, implementation challenges, and project ideas they would like to advance with the R3CC when the ICF Team is awarded the Center. These conversations confirmed state buy-in for a client-driven model in which SEAs will determine the work, and the R3CC will organize the expertise, evidence, tools, and implementation supports needed to carry it out. This work will focus on aligning federal and state funding streams, strengthening cross-agency collaboration, and improving transparency for families.



Coordination in Action: The Current MACC's Strategic Funding Project and NCC/ Education Resource Strategies (ERS) Partnership

MACC's current work already reflects this coordination model in practice through the Strategic Funding initiative in partnership with the District of Columbia's OSSE, the NCC, and ERS.

In this project, MACC is coordinating closely with the NCC and its ERS team supporting OSSE's Division of Strategic Funding for School Quality in shifting from compliance-oriented grant management toward a more strategic, outcome-focused approach to the ESEA consolidated application to help leverage and align discretionary grants and funding streams. This effort aims to improve return on investment, strengthen program design and cross-office alignment, enhance SEA-LEA partnerships while reducing administrative burden, and expand high-quality educational options. This collaboration demonstrates how the current MACC serves as a connector across federal investments, ensuring the SEA benefits from specialized expertise while maintaining a coherent, client-centered approach.

MACC is facilitating this work by aligning the project to the ASP, integrating NCC/ERS expertise into the project design, and coordinating communication and deliverables across all partners. The NCC/ERS team contributes deep expertise in evaluation, funding strategy, and evidence use, while MACC supports project management, stakeholder engagement, design, and implementation.

This project illustrates how MACC operationalizes coordination by anchoring work in state priorities, integrating specialized expertise from federal partners, and embedding collaboration directly into project design and deliverables. Through this approach, MACC ensures that coordination is intentional, structured, and aligned to client-defined outcomes.

Key features of this coordination model include:

- **Clear Delineation of Roles Across Partners.** Ensure that each organization contributes distinct expertise and that services are not duplicative.
- **Integration of Specialized Expertise Into SEA-led Initiatives.** An example is leveraging NCC and ERS to strengthen strategic funding redesign while maintaining SEA ownership.
- **Alignment of Partner Contributions to ASPs and SEA Priorities.** Ensure that all work is directly connected to client-defined needs.
- **Use of Coordinated Communication Structures.** Include shared planning routines and documentation tools, to enhance consistency, transparency, and efficiency across partners.

Together, these elements demonstrate how coordinated federal investments can strengthen both short-term knowledge and long-term system improvements, including stronger alignment between application design, monitoring, and TA. **This model will be scaled across the project period to ensure that all R3CC initiatives benefit from similarly coherent, coordinated, and high-impact partnerships.**

Through needs sensing, system design, and intensive capacity-building supports, the R3CC will help SEAs move from fragmented initiatives to coherent, long-lasting approaches that address state-identified challenges and expand access, particularly for students and communities with the highest needs.^[42] The products of these discussions are documented in the letters of support, endorsement, and commitment accompanying this application, demonstrating that the proposed work is not hypothetical; it is grounded in SEA-identified priorities and ready to move into implementation.

Consistent with the federal priority of returning education to the states, the R3CC will



strengthen SEA capacity to lead, coordinate, and implement state-defined education priorities. For example, the R3CC will help SEAs in DE and DC align programs, funding streams, and technical assistance resources to advance state priorities, improve coordination, and support more strategic, outcomes-focused use of resources (see **Appendix D**). Through strategic planning, implementation support, and cross-agency collaboration, the R3CC will help states reduce fragmentation, develop decision-support tools, and address challenges that limit access to high-quality educational opportunities. AI-enabled tools will support this work by accelerating data analysis, synthesizing stakeholder input, and generating draft planning tools and crosswalks.

As an example from the current 2024-2026 MACC, this approach builds on ICF's experience supporting the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) in strengthening alignment across federal programs, discretionary grants, and agency priorities. To help address administrative burden and support more strategic use of funds, ICF partnered with OSSE to identify opportunities to improve the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Innovation: AI-enhanced Design of TA and Professional Learning

The R3CC will strategically integrate AI tools to enhance the design of TA and professional learning.

AI will support the **rapid synthesis of research, analysis of complex inputs, and development of high-quality draft materials**, including facilitation guides, learning resources, and implementation tools.

These capabilities will **enable the CC and SEA teams to design more responsive, differentiated, and efficiently developed supports** tailored to varying levels of readiness and need.

Importantly, **AI will be used within a human-centered design process** by augmenting, not replacing, expert judgment and co-construction with SEA partners to ensure that all services remain contextually grounded, evidence based, and aligned to state priorities.

(ESEA) consolidated application process and strengthen coordination across programs. This work demonstrates the current MACC's role as a connector across federal investments, helping SEAs leverage specialized expertise while maintaining a coherent, client-centered approach.

[PR#1, PR#2, PR#3, PR#6, PR#7, AR#1, AR#2, AR#4, AR#5, AR#8]



B.3.2 Differentiated Intensity Through a Tiered Model of Support

A core driver of quality and intensity is the ICF

Team’s tiered model of support (see **Exhibit 3** and **Differentiated Supports Build Capacity in Exhibit 5**), which ensures SEAs receive the level of engagement aligned to their needs and readiness. The model includes Universal, Targeted, and Intensive tiers, allowing the R3CC to allocate resources efficiently while maintaining high-quality, coherent services (see **Exhibit 13**). The ICF Team anticipates that a substantial majority of services will be at the intensive level in accordance with federally funded centers of a similar type and in line with ED’s expectations for Regional CC support for SEAs. Universal and Targeted supports will address shared regional priorities and are delivered, when appropriate, in coordination with REL MA and other partners (see **Partnerships Amplify Impact, Exhibit 5**).

Intensive supports will focus on high-priority, system-level challenges requiring ongoing engagement, often conducted on-site and requiring an ongoing relationship between the R3CC and the SEA and other agencies to increase capacity in

The ICF Team Will Use Evidence to Validate Needs, Adjust Supports, and Demonstrate Outcomes

- **Confirm challenges with clients:** State Coordinators and embedded State Strategy Leads will triangulate SEA/LEA input, State Learning Agendas, strategic plans, state and NAEP data, prior MACC work, and partner feedback so each high-leverage problem is data-supported and client-approved.
- **Build evidence into ASPs:** Each ASP will document the challenge, evidence source, State/local priority, intended beneficiaries, service intensity, milestones, outputs, fidelity indicators, and short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes.
- **Demonstrate outcomes by service type:** **Universal** - reach, access, use, satisfaction, and uptake of tools/resources; **Targeted** - participation, peer-learning outputs, action steps, and application of learning; **Intensive** - coaching dosage, implementation milestones, fidelity, capacity gains, and progress toward client-defined outcomes.
- **Adjust support in real time:** Evaluators, state coordinators, state strategy leads, and co-project directors will review dashboards, trackers, surveys/interviews, event feedback, artifacts, and quarterly debriefs to refine dosage, mode, partners, workplans, and ASPs as State contexts evolve.

The ICF Team Will Use Tiered Service Delivery to Maximize Reach and Cost-Effectiveness

R3CC will match service intensity to client needs to maximize reach and impact.

- Scale reusable resources for broad access.
- Deliver targeted supports through peer learning and regional collaboration.
- Reserve intensive coaching for highest-priority, highest-need contexts.
- Coordinate with federal and regional partners to expand capacity.
- Use data and feedback to adjust services over time.



more than one dimension of capacity-building services, resulting in medium- and long-term outcomes at one or more system levels. At the Intensive tier, the ICF Team will partner closely with SEA leadership to support complex reforms, such as tutoring systems or HQIM implementation. This work will be iterative and data driven, with ongoing stakeholder engagement and refinement, with periodic reflection, continuous feedback, and use of evidence-based improvement strategies. By concentrating high-touch support where it is most needed while maintaining efficient and cost-effective services across all tiers, the model ensures TA is both scalable and impactful, driving meaningful and long-lasting change. [PR#1, PR#3, AR#1, AR#5, AR#8]

Exhibit 13. The ICF Team Will Deliver Tiered, Needs-Aligned TA to Maximize Impact and Reduce Implementation Risk and Enhance Cost Effectiveness

TA Type / Support	Typical Dosage Cadence + Duration	Sequence + Mode	SEA Benefit / Risk Reduced
Universal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Region-wide webinars, tools, guidance, and convenings Common priorities across states/region 	1-2 offerings per shared priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60-90 min sessions On-demand tools/recordings; updated as needs emerge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scan common need → curate/develop tool → deliver webinar/convening → post resources → collect feedback/use data Mostly virtual; occasional cross-state convening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expands access to shared resources Builds common understanding Reduces uneven access and duplication Feeds needs into targeted/intensive TA
Targeted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CoPs, peer groups, focused training, facilitated problem solving Specific priority or cohort need 	3-6 month learning series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly/bimonthly 60-90 min sessions Between-session tasks; optional office hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm priority → form cohort → orient → facilitate learning cycles → apply tools → share artifacts/next steps Virtual, hybrid, or in-person sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables deeper engagement and peer learning Builds capacity around shared implementation problems Reduces isolated problem solving and misalignment
Intensive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedded coaching, planning, design support, co-implementation, data reviews High-leverage ASP projects 	6-18+ months or full service-plan cycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biweekly/monthly coaching and work sessions Quarterly progress reviews; more frequent at launch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select → Design → Implement → Scale → Sustain Virtual/in-person working sessions, coaching, facilitation, dashboards, evidence reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity Moves priorities from plan to implementation Reduces stall/fidelity risk Sustains and strengthens SEA ownership



Final timing and duration will be confirmed in the client-approved ASP and adjusted through progress monitoring and SEA feedback.

B.3.3 Ensuring Quality Through Evidence, Partnerships, Continuous Improvement, and AI

The ICF Team will ensure quality by grounding all training and professional development in evidence-based practice, coordinated partnerships, continuous improvement, and strategic use of AI. The R3CC team will integrate research, improved science methods, and collaboration with partners such as REL MA and other TA centers to ensure rigor and coherence (see Coordination Creates Coherence and Partnerships Amplify Impact in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**).

A central mechanism for ensuring quality is the co-development of theory of change logic models and measurement plans (see **Section B.2**). The ICF Team will work with SEAs to explicitly connect activities to intended outcomes and define how progress will be measured. For example, when supporting an SEA implementing a literacy initiative (see **Appendix D**), the ICF Team co-develops a logic model that connects professional learning activities (e.g., coaching cycles, instructional training) to changes in educator practice and, ultimately, to improved student outcomes (see Student Outcomes Remain the North Star in **Section B.2.3, Exhibit 5**). The Team strengthens this process by using AI to analyze prior implementation data, identify evidence-informed strategies, and support the rapid development of aligned measurement frameworks.

The ICF Team Will Match TA Quality and Intensity to Capacity Needs, Implementation Stage, and Scope of Change

- **Capacity dimensions:** Target human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity ^[43].
- **Implementation stages:** Align supports to exploration, emerging implementation, full implementation, and maintenance ^[44] (see Grounding in Implementation Science, **Section A.2.2**).
- **Scope of change:** Tailor strategies to developmental, transitional, and transformational change ^[45].
- **How this actionizes quality and intensity:** Match supports to need and readiness, ranging from skill-building and continuous improvement to structured implementation support and deep leadership/systems alignment.

Result: TA intensity aligns with stage and complexity of change, enabling more effective adoption, scaling, and maintenance of innovations.



The ICF Team will embed continuous improvement across all services by establishing structured feedback loops, collecting data, and incorporating stakeholder input. The ICF Team will use AI-enabled tools to streamline data collection and analysis, such as synthesizing survey responses, identifying trends in implementation artifacts, and generating summary dashboards, allowing TA staff and SEA partners to quickly interpret results and act on findings. For example, after each professional learning session, the ICF Team collects feedback, analyzes participant responses using AI-assisted tools, and refines subsequent sessions to improve relevance and effectiveness. This approach ensures that TA remains responsive, adaptive, and focused on measurable impact.

[PR#1, PR#2, PR#3, PR#4, PR#6, PR#7, PR#8, AR#1, AR#2, AR#3, AR#4, AR#5, AR#8]

B.3.4 Building Long-Lasting Capacity Through Quality Intentional Design

A defining feature of the ICF Team's approach is its focus on dependability and empowerment.

All quality capacity-building efforts will be intentionally designed to gradually transfer ownership to the SEA, enabling staff to independently maintain and extend improvement efforts.

The ICF Team will apply this framework during ASP design and implementation to ensure that training and professional development are tailored to the SEA's context and readiness. For example, an SEA in the exploration stage may receive training focused on building foundational knowledge and leadership alignment, while an SEA in the full implementation stage receives coaching and systems-level supports to ensure fidelity and scale. The ICF Team will also use AI tools to assess readiness indicators, analyze implementation progress, and recommend differentiated supports based on emerging needs. By aligning supports to these dimensions, the ICF Team will ensure that services are high quality and appropriately intense, addressing the right capacity needs at the right time. [PR#1, PR#4, AR#1, AR#3]



B.3.5 Delivering High-Quality TA Through an Integrated Staff Model

The ICF Team will organize its approach through a two-part state-facing staffing model, consisting of a **state coordinator** and a **state strategy lead** (see Responsiveness Drives Service Delivery, **Section A.2.3., Exhibit 5**). This model will ensure that training and professional development services are both strategically aligned and effectively executed.

The **state coordinator** will lead the TA cycle, facilitate needs sensing, coordinate ASP design, manage implementation, and oversee benchmarking and continuous improvement. For example, the state coordinator will schedule and facilitate biweekly meetings with SEA teams, organize professional learning sessions, and ensure that progress monitoring data are collected and reviewed regularly.

The **state strategy lead** will provide high-touch, embedded support within the SEA context, participate in internal meetings, align initiatives across divisions, and identify opportunities to strengthen coherence. For example, the state strategy lead may identify alignment between a statewide coaching initiative and a graduate profile effort, ensuring that professional learning supports both priorities.

The ICF Team will enhance coordination by using AI-supported tools to track tasks, summarize meeting insights, and monitor progress across initiatives, ensuring continuity and efficiency.

Together, these roles will ensure that TA is delivered with sufficient quality, intensity, and duration while maintaining strong relationships, clear communication, and strategic alignment.

[PR#1, AR#1, AR#6]

B.3.6 Co-Designing ASPs With the SEA

The development of ASPs will be a critical process that ensures training and professional development services are responsive to SEA needs and structured for impact (see State Priorities



Lead, **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**). The ICF Team will engage SEAs in a collaborative, structured co-design process (as depicted in **Exhibit 14**) to develop ASPs that reflect state priorities and define clear pathways for capacity building. [PR#1, PR#2, PR#3, AR#1, AR#2, AR#8]

Exhibit 14. The ICF Team Will Design Service Plans through a Structured, Data-Driven Process

Step	Key Activities	Output
Needs Sensing	Analyze data, engage stakeholders	Clear understanding of priorities
Problem Identification	Define high-leverage problems	Focused problem statement
Design	Define outcomes, services, partners	Service plan draft
Measurement	Establish milestones and metrics	Monitoring framework
Access	Identify high-need populations	Targeted strategies

For example, in developing an ASP for improving instructional practice in Title I schools, the ICF Team will work with the SEA to define specific outcomes (e.g., increased use of evidence-based instructional strategies), design professional learning sequences, and identify metrics for tracking progress. The ICF Team will also partner with REL MA (see Coordination Creates Coherence in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**), with support from NCC (see, Partnerships Amplify Impact in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**), to co-develop or refine multiyear SLAs aligned to the ASP. This ensures that training and professional development will be informed by and contribute to ongoing evidence-building efforts. [PR#1, PR#2, PR#4, PR#7, AR#1, AR#2, AR#3]

The ICF Team Will Co-Develop ASPs with the Following Elements That Turn SEA Priorities into Action

- **State-led foundation:** State-identified needs, leadership priorities, State approval, and State Learning Agenda alignment.
- **Problem and need:** High-leverage problem, identified client need, intended beneficiaries, and priority students/communities with highest needs.
- **Services:** Universal, targeted, or intensive capacity-building services across human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity.
- **Outcomes:** Short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes tied to client-defined capacity gains and student-outcomes.
- **Delivery plan:** Responsible personnel, key TA partners, milestones, outputs, timeline, and client/partner commitments.
- **Quality and use:** Dissemination plan, fidelity measures as appropriate, progress data, feedback loops, and any ED- specified elements.

B.3.7 The Capacity Building TA Cycle: How Training and Professional Development Are Delivered

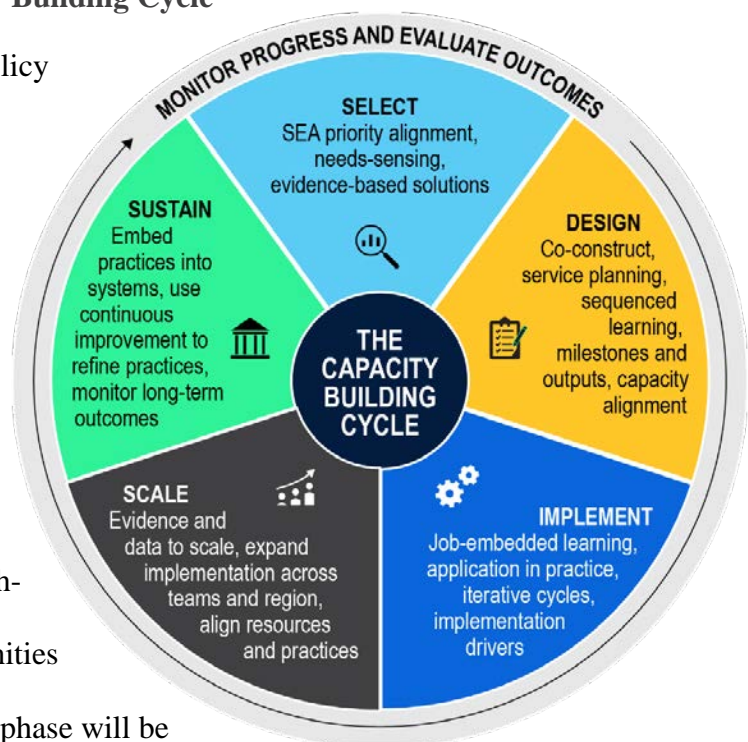
The ICF Team will deliver training and professional development through a structured capacity-building cycle: **Select, Design, Implement, Scale, and Maintain** (see **Exhibit 15**). This cycle will guide SEAs from identifying high-priority challenges to embedding effective practices, ensuring services are coherent, data driven, and delivered with sufficient quality, intensity, and duration. Across all phases, the ICF Team will integrate AI to enhance data use, accelerate design, and support continuous improvement while maintaining human-centered facilitation and decision-making.

Select Phase: Identifying Priorities and Opportunities

The ICF Team will partner with SEA leaders to identify high-leverage priorities based on stakeholder input (chief state school officers and SEA leaders, TEAs, LEAs, educators, students, and families), data analysis, and existing initiatives. We will synthesize

information across sources, including policy documents, performance data, and stakeholder feedback to define clear problems of practice and identify where TA will have the greatest impact. For efforts aligned to the competitive preference priority, this phase will include identifying gaps in access to high-quality educational options and opportunities to improve statewide coordination. This phase will be

Exhibit 15. The ICF Team Will Drive Continuous Improvement through a Structured Capacity-Building Cycle





intentionally designed to return control of priority setting to SEA and LEA staff, those closest to the work and most affected by the outcomes, so that TA reflects real needs, not external assumptions (see State Priorities Lead, **Section A.2.3**). For example, the ICF Team will facilitate biweekly meetings, share weekly updates, and conduct targeted interviews. During meetings with the SEA team, the ICF Team will summarize data to revise and ensure joint agreement. This process will allow the ICF Team and SEA to move into design with a shared understanding not only of what to address but also what conditions must be strengthened to support successful implementation and maintenance.

Driving Implementation of the DC Graduate Profile Through State-Led, Needs-Driven Support

The current MACC is partnering with the DC OSSE through a state-led, needs-driven TA process focused on implementing the DC Graduate Profile and new high school graduation requirements, with the Graduate Profile serving as the north star for OSSE's broader strategic plan.

- The work begins with the **Select phase**, grounded in OSSE's identification of the high-leverage challenge of supporting comprehensive integration. For successful implementation, LEAs and schools require additional tools, professional learning, and communication supports to bring this vision into practice. To address this, MACC facilitates ongoing needs-sensing through focus groups, advisory meetings, stakeholder sessions, and leadership engagement, ensuring implementation priorities reflect both strategic goals and on-the-ground realities.
- Building on these insights, MACC partners with OSSE through the **Design and Implement phases** to co-develop and deliver a cohesive set of supports, including playbooks, training modules, instructional exemplars, and communication resources, while maintaining OSSE ownership of the work. Implementation is reinforced through targeted professional learning, advisory structures, and continuous feedback loops, alongside OSSE-led dissemination and alignment with statewide systems and partnerships. This work has also surfaced the need to revisit earlier phases of the TA cycle to strengthen cross-department alignment, establish coherent professional learning, and more fully integrate the Graduate Profile across divisions and initiatives.
- **Maintenance** efforts focus on ongoing stakeholder engagement, data-informed refinement, and increasing OSSE's capacity to independently design, scale, and maintain implementation, advancing system coherence and long-term impact.

Design Phase: Co-develop Service Plans and Solutions

The ICF Team will co-design service plans that define outcomes, milestones, and capacity-building supports aligned to SEA priorities that address high-leverage problems (see Responsiveness Drives Service Delivery, **Section A.2.3**). The state coordinators and state strategy leads will assemble tailored TA teams, drawing on the CC's experts, REL and NCC partners, and local providers as appropriate (see Coordination Creates Coherence and



Partnerships Amplify Impact, **Section A.2.3**). We will develop professional learning experiences, tools, and implementation strategies tailored to the SEA's context, stage of implementation, and scope of change. AI will support this phase by accelerating synthesis of evidence, generating draft tools and crosswalks, and strengthening alignment across initiatives and funding streams. The ICF Team will coordinate with evaluators to establish clear benchmarks, outcomes, and data collection methods; submit finalized service plans for internal review; and present plans for SEA commitment and ED approval. Within 90 days of award, the ICF Team will provide ED with memoranda of understanding (MOUs) documenting coordination with RELs, other TA centers, and local partners.

Maryland HQIM Implementation Partnership

The current **MACC is partnering with MSDE and the REL MA** through a state-led, iterative **intensive TA process** to strengthen HQIM implementation systems and professional learning.

Select

- Conducted needs-sensing activities to identify implementation challenges and opportunities.
- Reviewed national trends, existing data, and current support systems.
- Shifted focus from HQIM adoption to strengthening classroom implementation and educator practice.

Design

- Co-developed professional learning resources aligned to Maryland's HQIM implementation framework.
- Created implementation supports and data collection processes to guide continuous improvement.

Implement

- Supported districts and educators in translating HQIM into daily instructional practice.
- Established processes for monitoring implementation and using data to inform improvement efforts.

Targeted Supports

- Leveraged Maryland's work as a case study in a multistate webinar with Maryland, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Delaware.
- Shared lessons learned on moving from HQIM adoption to system-level implementation and instructional coherence.

Universal Supports

- Developed a public-facing brief to disseminate tools, lessons learned, and emerging practices nationally.

Through intensive State-specific support, cross-state collaboration, and national dissemination, the partnership is building MSDE's capacity to strengthen and maintain HQIM implementation while contributing to national learning and improvement efforts.

Implement Phase: Applying Learning to Practice

The ICF Team will support SEAs in applying new strategies through coaching, facilitated learning sessions, and ongoing problem solving. Professional learning will focus on real work,



ensuring that participants implement new practices, receive feedback, and refine approaches based on data. We will monitor progress and fidelity using AI to analyze feedback and identify emerging challenges, allowing for timely adjustments that keep initiatives on track.

Scale Phase: Expand Effective Practices

As initiatives demonstrate success, the ICF Team will support SEAs in expanding effective practices across additional districts, schools, or program areas. This will include aligning policies, funding, and systems to support broader implementation and ensuring that practices remain consistent and high quality as they scale. For competitive priority efforts, this phase will emphasize expanding access to high-quality educational options statewide.

Maintain Phase: Ensure Impact Longevity

The ICF Team will support SEAs in embedding effective practices into policies, procedures, and organizational routines to ensure long-term impacts. This includes developing internal tools, training structures, governance processes, and data systems that enable SEAs to continue and refine the work independently. Ongoing focus on coordination, transparency, and access will ensure that improvements persist beyond the project period. [PR#1, PR#2, PR#3, AR#1, AR#3, AR#8]

B.3.8. Evidence of Quality, Intensity, and Duration

The ICF Team’s approach to training and professional development has demonstrated strong results. As reflected in the April 2026 survey, SEA partners in Delaware emphasized both the practical value and high quality of the current MACC’s work, noting that *“the ability of this team to ‘actionalize’ feedback and put forth a program that is smart and also useful has been a key strength. Similarly, state leaders highlighted that the*

MACC Results Reflect a High-Impact Performance Model

In the current support cycle, the results reflect the effectiveness of a model that prioritizes quality, intensity, duration, and continuous improvement.

- **89%** of clients reported satisfaction with the quality and relevance of services
- **78%** reported satisfaction with the usefulness of services
- **89%** reported satisfaction with the CC’s contribution to initiative progress



CC brings “innovative ideas... and professionals who excel in this area of project planning... to develop a truly outstanding product” with the potential to transform practice. These statements underscore how the CC reduces implementation risk while increasing the likelihood of producing meaningful, usable outcomes.

Exhibit 16 presents evidence from ICF’s work as the 2019-2024 Region 8 CC, demonstrating the organization’s proven ability to deliver capacity-building services of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration. Data drawn from the Year 4 external evaluation highlight high levels of client satisfaction, substantial volume and reach of services, and reliable implementation resulting in measurable outcomes.

How the ICF Team will Innovate to Provide Implementation-Ready Support

- **Start with SEA priorities:** Use needs sensing, State Learning Agendas, ASPs, data, client feedback, and implementation context to define the challenge, users, constraints, and desired result.
- **Bring in the right expertise:** Mobilize, as appropriate, State Coordinators, embedded State Strategy Leads, TA Specialists, and/or expertise from REL MA, Content Centers, NCC cadre SMEs as well as institution of higher education practitioners, and expert consultants.
- **Design with people who know the work:** Use evidence scans, examples from other states, facilitated design sessions, AI-supported drafting with human review, and rapid prototyping with SEA staff.
- **Actionalize the idea:** Convert concepts into roadmaps, tools, playbooks, training modules, coaching routines, timelines, owners, milestones, fidelity measures, and data sources.
- **Test, learn, scale, sustain:** Use pilots, feedback loops, dashboards, and evaluation data to refine support and move innovations from promising ideas to SEA-owned, measurable capacity gains.

Collectively, these results provide strong evidence that ICF has the experience and infrastructure necessary to successfully operate a CC and support SEAs in achieving meaningful, system- level change.

Exhibit 16 The ICF Team Has a Track Record of Demonstrating Proven Delivery of High-Quality, Intensive, and Sustained Capacity Building with Measurable Impact.

Dimension	Key Data from 2019-2024 R8CC	Demonstration
Quality	4.78 quality; 4.81 usefulness/relevance; 78–89% satisfaction (n = 247); 28/32 measures met; implementation ~4.6–4.7	High-quality, aligned, responsive services with strong fidelity and satisfaction
Intensity	13 initiatives; 748 engagements; multimodal (meetings, PD, tools); 100% jointly planned; 91% groups served (+ additional)	High-touch, ongoing TA across multiple systems and stakeholders



Dimension	Key Data from 2019-2024 R8CC	Demonstration
Duration	92% milestones; 90% outputs; 78% outcomes; multiyear initiatives Capacity Assessment Tool(CAT) across 4 time points; adaptive planning	Ongoing support leading from planning to implementation and outcomes
Capacity Impact	82% improved capacity-building understanding; 91% applied practices; growth across capacity domains	Demonstrates lasting SEA capacity gains and system-level impact

Our prior CC work demonstrates that this approach builds capacity and improves practice. In Michigan, 2019-2024 R8CC work helped the Michigan Department of Education bridge early literacy strategies from schools to families, illustrating our ability to connect professional learning to implementation beyond a single audience and strengthen literacy support across settings. Our team connected instructional strategies from school to families and our approach consistently emphasizes shoulder-to-shoulder collaboration, implementation science, and reliability.

The ICF Team will Prioritize Support for Students and Communities with the Greatest Need

- The R3CC will prioritize ASP projects and capacity-building services for schools serving high percentages or numbers of students from low-income families, including rural and urban Title I schools; LEAs with high percentages or numbers of school-age children from low-income families; and schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement or targeted support and improvement activities under ESEA section 1111(d).
- State Coordinators and embedded State Strategy Leads will use SEA data, State Learning Agendas, Title I and CSI/TSI identifications, and client input to document intended beneficiaries, align universal, targeted, and intensive supports, and monitor whether services help close achievement gaps, improve instruction, and strengthen educational outcomes.

In a separate Michigan initiative, the 2019-2024 R8CC partnered with the Michigan Department of Education to design and implement the Future Proud Michigan Educator LAUNCH program, creating pathways for high school students to earn early childhood and youth development credentials.

The initiative expanded to nearly 90% of Michigan intermediate school districts, and more than 1,650 CTE students entered the state professional development registry. This partnership was also one of only three CC-SEA collaborations selected by ED’s *Best Practices Clearinghouse for a Focus on the Field* video.



Together, these examples show our ability to deliver long-lasting professional development of sufficient scale and duration to strengthen implementation, expand recipient capacity, and support durable systems change. [PR#1, PR#2, PR#7, PR#8, AR#1, AR#3, AR#4]

B.4 Coordination With Federal Investments and Partner Organization (PR#6, PR#8)

Our coordination model will provide structured, client-driven, capacity-building services by aligning federal investments, partner organizations, and subject matter expertise with multiyear SLAs, ASPs, and client-defined priorities (see **Section A.2**). The ICF Team will serve as a central connector and facilitator (see **Exhibit 3** and Coordination Creates Coherence and Partnerships Amplify Impact in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**) across the federal TA ecosystem, ensuring that states receive coherent, efficient, and responsive support that eliminates duplication, maximizes available expertise, and strengthens outcomes.

R3CC will embed coordination as a core feature of its operating model rather than as a supplemental activity. All services will be grounded in SLAs and ASPs, which will serve as the organizing mechanisms to align the contributions of the RELs the NCC, Content Centers, other federally funded TA providers, and local TA providers. Through this structure, coordination will be purposeful and responsive to SEA's priorities, ensuring that each partner contributes in clearly defined and complementary ways. [PR#7, PR#8, AR#1, AR#4]

B.4.1 Structure Coordination with REL

The R3CC co-project directors will lead active coordination with REL MA through annual joint planning, monthly coordination meetings, and a joint advisory board (Education Technical Assistance Act of 2002 [ETAA] Section 203[g] requirements) designed to inform and improve service delivery across both programs while reducing the burden on state agencies (see **Exhibit 3**



and Coordination Creates Coherence in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**). These coordination structures will ensure that research, evaluation, and implementation supports are strategically aligned and directly responsive to SEA priorities.

The co-project directors will use shared agendas, decision logs, and coordination trackers to document priorities, clarify roles, identify opportunities for shared support, and prevent duplicative services. These tools will formalize coordination and provide transparency across partners regarding who is responsible for which aspects of each project.

CC state coordinators and strategy leads will play a critical role in this process by bringing SEA priorities, emerging needs, and ASP updates into these coordination routines. Through this approach, REL engagement directly ties to the projects clients need most. For example, when a state identifies a need for evidence-building around a new initiative, the state coordinator and state strategy lead will elevate that priority to the REL MA where they can contribute research, evaluation design, or learning agenda development in alignment with R3CC's implementation support.

Coordination in Action: MACC and REL MA

MACC's current work already reflects an example of a partnership between the CC and REL MA. The MD state lead for REL attends the biweekly MACC team meetings with MSDE.

The REL MA has served as a thought partner in determining how an HQIM measurement system could be studied and validated before assessing its impact. This project will be highlighted as part of the joint REL/CC Governing Board meeting in July 2026.

REL collaboration will also strengthen SLAs by helping SEAs identify priority questions, connect those questions to evidence needs, and use the resulting agenda to guide ASP priorities and longer-term capacity-building strategies. This coordinated approach will ensure that research and TA are not siloed but instead operate as an integrated system of support. **Exhibit 17** provides details on each planning activity jointly conducted by the R3CC and REL MA. [PR#7]



Exhibit 17. The ICF Team Will Align R3CC and REL MA Planning. (PR#6 and PR#7)

SEA priorities + evidence needs -> joint R3CC/REL MA planning -> advisory-board guidance -> SLAs -> ASPs -> quarterly refinement

Planning Element	Who + When	Documents Produced	How It Drives SLAs and ASPs
1. Annual joint planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-project directors + REL-MA leads State coordinator + embedded strategy lead SEA chiefs/designees + SEA leads NCC as needed Annually before ASP cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs/evidence scan High-leverage problem map Partner role + decision matrix Joint planning memo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validates State priorities Sorts REL evidence-building vs. R3CC capacity-building roles Feeds candidate ASP projects and milestones
2. Joint advisory board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One joint R3CC/REL board SEA and required stakeholder perspectives At least semiannually Annual meeting anchors planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charter, roster, agendas Recommendations to improve service delivery Burden-reduction actions Action log 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets ETAA Sec. 203(g) through one shared advisory body Informs both programs Avoids duplicate advisory structures Enhances Efficiency
3. SLA refinement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEA teams State coordinator + embedded strategy lead REL state lead/researchers NCC as needed During SLA creation/refinement; quarterly refresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority-question list Evidence-use plan Data needs Partner assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Converts SEA priorities into evidence and implementation agenda Creates source material for ASP priorities Aligns research and TA early
4. ASP co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State coordinator leads Strategy lead anchors SEA context REL contributes evidence input TA + evaluation leads support design Annually; revised as context shifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client-approved ASP Workplan, milestones, outputs Time-based outcomes Fidelity + dissemination plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translates SLA/advisory input into sequenced services Documents responsible staff and partners Makes REL/R3CC roles transparent
5. Monthly coordination + quarterly debriefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> R3CC/REL leads Co-project directors + operations manager State teams + evaluators SEA input as needed Monthly/quarterly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination tracker Decision log Duplication/risk log ASP revisions Board updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps SLAs and ASPs current Adjusts supports using data and feedback Maintains coherent client-facing services

B.4.2 Coordination Across Federal TA Investments

The R3CC will maintain active coordination with the NCC, Content Centers, REL MA, and other Federal TA investments as well as appropriate agencies and organizations providing similar services to our target populations (partners) to ensure States benefit from the full range of



available expertise (see Coordination Creates Coherence and Partnerships Amplify Impact in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**). The coordination model will align Federal investments, partner organizations, and subject matter expertise to SLAs, ASPs, and client-defined priorities. For each ASP project, the state coordinator and embedded state strategy lead (see Responsiveness Drives Service Delivery in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**), along with the engagement and partnerships lead (see **Section B.4.3**), will work with the SEA client to define the expertise needed to address the high-leverage problem, desired outcomes, implementation stage, and service intensity. The ICF Team will use the NCC cadre of subject matter experts as our primary resource to select, and procure expertise, alongside Content Centers, REL MA, other ED-funded TA providers, and regional or local experts. The ICF Team operating the current MACC has established a constructive partnership with REL MA and will engage Federal partners such as the National Charter School Resource Center, the Statewide Family Engagement Centers Program, the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Center, and the National Center on Improving Literacy, as appropriate. [PR#8, AR#1, AR#4, AR#5]

The ICF Team will use the Engagement and Partnerships Lead to coordinate, curate, disseminate, and track partner resources.

- **Scan and curate resources:** Monthly scans of tools, research, guidance, partner products, and Federal TA resources aligned to State priorities and ASPs; keeps teams connected to timely, relevant expertise.
- **Coordinate partners:** Recurring check-ins with the NCC, Content Centers, REL MA, other CCs, and Federal TA providers; shares updates, identifies collaboration opportunities, clarifies roles, and reduces duplication.
- **Maintain shared repository:** Centralized partner resources, CC products, dissemination materials, and engagement records; creates one organized source for current materials and partner activity.
- **Disseminate products:** Package and share curated products developed with other CCs, RELs, and TA providers to SEAs, LEAs, REAs, TEAs, and schools through targeted channels; expands access to audiences most likely to use them.
- **Track reach and use:** Communication logs, participation data, partner engagement records, dissemination reach, and feedback loops; shows usefulness and informs future product and sharing strategies.

Result: Stronger cross-network communication, efficient deployment of expertise, and dissemination that is proactive, non-duplicative, and aligned to State needs.



B.4.3 Role of the Engagement and Partnerships Lead in Coordination

The ICF Team will use a dedicated engagement and partnerships lead to maintain and strengthen partnerships with the NCC, Content Centers, REL MA, other Comprehensive Centers, and relevant Federal TA providers. Working with the Co-project directors, this role will keep partner expertise, products, dissemination opportunities, and coordination routines aligned to State priorities, ASPs, and R3CC projects. The engagement and partnerships lead will also proactively identify opportunities to connect R3CC work with complementary initiatives, expertise, tools, and technical assistance available across these partners, coordinating expertise and resources across the Federal TA ecosystem to reduce burden on States, minimize duplicative efforts among TA providers, and maximize the use of existing federal investments (see Partnerships Amplify Impact in **Section A.2.3, Exhibit 5**).

The ICF Team's dissemination approach will be purposeful, audience-specific, and tied to State priorities and ASPs. The engagement and partnerships lead will work with state coordinators, state strategy leads, evaluators, REL MA, the NCC, Content Centers, and other partners to identify products, tools, lessons learned, and implementation resources ready for broader use; package them in clear and accessible formats; and share them through targeted emails, webinars, convenings, partner networks, the project repository, and other appropriate Federal TA channels. Tracking will enable R3CC to assess reach, usefulness, and opportunities to refine future products and sharing strategies. [PR#1, PR#8, AR#1, AR#4, AR#5]

B.4.4 Client-Driven Partner Selection and Expertise Matching

As shown in **Exhibit 18**, the ICF Team will use a structured, client-driven process to identify and integrate the right expertise for each initiative, ensuring support is aligned to SEA priorities and delivered with quality and coherence. [PR#1, PR#8, AR#1, AR#4, AR#5]



Exhibit 18. The ICF Team’s R3CC Approach to Expertise Selection and Use Aligns to Priorities and Strengthens Capacity.

Step / Lead	Cadre-Based Mechanism	Client + Quality Check	Output / Evidence
SEA priority → expertise profile → NCC cadre scan → broad-source comparison → client-approved selection → SOW/onboarding → integrated implementation support			
Define expertise need <i>state coordinator & state strategy lead</i> + <i>SEA clients</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map ASP project to high-leverage problem, intended outcomes, and service intensity. 	Client confirms required expertise, SLA alignment, and context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise profile
Search cadre and broad sources <i>state coordinators & state strategy leads</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use NCC cadre of subject matter experts as the primary scan mechanism. Compare with Content Centers, REL MA, other ED-funded providers, and regional/local experts. 	Verify source options cover a broad range of qualified providers and avoid duplication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate options matrix
Evaluate and select <i>state coordinators & state strategy leads</i> + <i>SEA clients</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate options for fit to the expertise need, evidence base, capacity-building approach, availability, cost, and service intensity. 	SEA preference and approval are explicit selection factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client-approved expert or team
Procure and onboard <i>state coordinators & state strategy leads</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish scope, deliverables, timelines, and coordination expectations. 	Selected experts are oriented to client context and project team roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executed SOW/contract Onboarding record
Integrate into implementation <i>state coordinators & state strategy leads</i> + <i>TA teams</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experts contribute to tools, resources, frameworks, virtual and/or in-person convenings, coaching, and cross-network learning. 	Expert support is embedded in project teams, not treated as a referral.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated workplan updates TA products/deliverables
Deliver coordinated support <i>MACC team + selected experts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combine NCC cadre and other qualified expertise to meet client priorities. 	Support is practical, relevant, aligned to local context, and nonduplicative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated expertise Strengthened SEA capacity



B.4.5 Continuous Improvement and Future Enhancement

While MACC's current work reflects a strong foundation for coordination, the next iteration of the R3CC will continue to strengthen its approach over the project period. The ICF Team will formalize coordination protocols by developing role-clarity matrices that define the distinct and

The ICF Team Will Strengthen Coordination Infrastructure to Reduce Duplication and Increase Federal TA Impact

- **Expand coordination trackers:** monitor partner engagement across projects.
- **Develop measurable indicators:** track joint-planning frequency, coordinated projects, and client satisfaction with partner integration.
- **Strengthen partnership agreements:** define communication, data-sharing, and collaboration expectations.
- **Refine coordination routines:** use SEA and partner feedback to improve alignment and delivery.

Result: R3CC will further reduce duplication, enhance efficiency, and increase the impact of Federal investments across the region.

complementary roles of RELs, the NCC, Content Centers, and other providers. These matrices will guide decision-making and ensure that all partners understand their contributions within each project. [PR#8, AR#1, AR#3, AR#4]

B.5 Support from the Target Population (PR#3)

The ICF Team has intentionally designed the R3CC and plans to implement capacity-building activities in partnership with the target populations we aim to serve: SEAs, LEAs, REAs, TEAs, and schools across the Mid-Atlantic. This state-led approach ensures that our services are responsive to state and local priorities, aligned with SLAs, and focused on high-leverage problems that improve educator practice and impact student outcomes. Letters

Letters of Endorsement and Support for the ICF Team

- Delaware Department of Education
- Office of the State Superintendent of Education
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Johns Hopkins University
- Rodel Foundation of Delaware

of endorsement and support from state and local education leaders and educational organizations across the region are provided in Part 6, Letters of Designation/Endorsement, **Competitive Preference Priority**. As described in **Section A.1**, the ICF Team engaged leaders from SEAs, LEAs, schools, institutions of higher education, parent and local organizations, and other



regional educational partners (e.g., Rodel Foundation in Delaware) to discuss priorities, identify needs and challenges, and determine areas for potential CC support. We will maintain support from the target population by gathering ongoing feedback on R3CC services (e.g., annual state client feedback surveys and interviews) and shared governance structures, including a joint advisory board consisting of representatives of the target population as described in **Section B.4.1**. Feedback will be used to monitor the relevance and usefulness of capacity-building services, refine TA design and delivery, and ensure the ICF Team remains responsive to emerging needs across the region. [PR#1, AR#3]

B.6 Logic Model and Conceptual Framework for Project Outcome (AR#1)

The R3CC logic model shown in **Exhibit 19** is the organizing framework for the Center's design, management approach, capacity-building strategy, and evaluation system. It creates a clear line of sight from SEA-defined priorities and SLAs to inputs, services, outputs, capacity gains, system improvements, and long-term outcomes. Consistent with the state-led approach in **Section A.2**, the model begins with state-identified needs; partnerships with SEAs, LEAs, REAs, TEAs, schools, REL MA, NCC, Content Centers, and other federal TA resources; ICF expertise; and the infrastructure needed for evidence-informed delivery. These inputs keep the model client driven: SEAs define the priorities, and the R3CC organizes support around them.



Exhibit 19. R3CC Logic Model

The R3CC provides capacity-building services driven by SEA-identified needs and leadership priorities, including SLAs to improve educational outcomes and outcomes for all students.

INPUTS	CAPACITY-BUILDING SERVICES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-identified needs and leadership priorities Partnerships and collaborations with SEAs, REAs, LEAs, TEAs, schools, RELs, the NCC, contracted TA centers, and other federally funded TA resources R3CC staff expertise, use of Practice Profile and ICF's Approach to Capacity Building Data, technology, and AI, supported by secure infrastructure and data protections Federal staff, resources, regulations, and funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions Implement evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions Scale up evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions Sustain evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions Monitor progress and continuously refine services using data and evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions aligned to needs Implementation plan developed for evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions Scale-up and sustainability plans developed for evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions Progress monitoring reports and document changes in implementation based on data and evidence 	<p>Increase SEA individual and organizational capacity to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Organizational Policy Resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved SEA capacity to plan, implement, scale up, sustain, and plan evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions Improved policies, practices, and systems to plan, implement, scale up, sustain, and plan evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved educational opportunities and outcomes for all students



Assumptions: The R3CC services will reflect state-identified needs and leadership priorities for assistance, including state approval of services and alignment to SLAs. Each SEA's needs-sensing process will be differentiated to identify, refine, prioritize, and co-develop the most pressing needs. The R3CC will collaborate with the NCC and RELs, as applicable, to assist in building the SLAs based on SEA-determined state priorities.



Expectations: If inputs are used to deliver capacity-building services with fidelity, then the expected outputs will be produced; if outputs are produced, then short-term outcomes will be achieved; if recipients apply new capacity, then individual and organizational change will contribute to medium- and long-term outcomes. Progress data will be collected continuously to monitor how needs are being addressed and to guide service refinements.



Underlying Contexts: External factors may influence implementation, including state and local policy changes, funding shifts, new priorities, stakeholder dynamics, leadership and staff turnover, media attention, unanticipated events, demographic changes, economic conditions, and ecological or climate disasters.



Beliefs: We believe capacity-building responsive to client needs, grounded in evidence, and co-constructed with SEAs and partners is more likely to sustain improvements. ICF investments in secure data, technology, and AI infrastructure support protected, data-informed service delivery.



Theories: The logic model is based on evidence-based practices in adult learning, organizational development, implementation science, and systems change.



The evidence base and strategies supporting this capacity-building approach are embedded in the logic model and described in greater detail in **Sections A.2 and B.3**. The R3CC’s approach draws on adult learning, coaching, implementation science, improvement science, systems change, and continuous improvement. Adult learning principles shape professional learning that is relevant, problem centered, and immediately applicable. Coaching supports job-embedded transfer of new knowledge into practice. Implementation science guides how the R3CC helps clients select, design, implement, scale, and maintain evidence-based practices with attention to readiness, fit, fidelity, and reliability. Improvement science and continuous quality improvement create rapid feedback loops that help teams learn from implementation data and adjust supports in real time. Systems change principles ensure that services strengthen human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity rather than producing one-time products or isolated activities.

The model translates this evidence base into action through the Select, Design, Implement, Scale, and Maintain process described in **Section B.3**. State coordinators, state strategy leads and TA teams will partner with clients to identify high-leverage problems; select and plan for evidence-based programs, practices and interventions; and support their implementation, scale-up, and maintenance. Capacity-building services are continuously refined through progress monitoring and data use, ensuring supports remain responsive to students and areas with the greatest need under ETAA Section 9602(e), because the model begins with state priorities and documented needs and then links services to measurable outcomes.

The outputs in **Exhibit 19** capture whether capacity-building services led to the selection of evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions; development of implementation and maintenance plans; and the use of ongoing monitoring data to guide adaptation and continuous improvement. As described in **Section C.1**, the co-project directors, operations manager, state



coordinators, state strategy leads, TA teams, evaluation staff, and partners will use milestones, dashboards, and review cycles to keep activities aligned and on track. **Sections C.2–C.4** show how staffing and resources assign responsibility for translating state priorities into services,

connecting clients to expertise, monitoring delivery, and adjusting implementation. This structure builds on the ICF Team’s operation of the current MACC, our direction of prior CC iterations, and partner capacity from AEM and EurekaFacts.

The outcome chain is explicit and measurable. Short-term outcomes include increased SEA human, organizational, policy and resource

capacity (e.g., knowledge to develop HQIM implementation measures assessed through client interviews). Medium-term outcomes reflect strengthened SEA capacity and system-level improvements to plan, implement, scale, and maintain evidence-based programs, practices, and interventions, enabling more consistent, coordinated, and effective use of evidence to drive results (e.g., development of HQIM implementation support plans evidenced by the plan produced). Long-term outcomes include improved educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. **Section B.2** describes how the R3CC will test and use the model through the CIPP evaluation framework. Context data will confirm that services are anchored in documented needs

The ICF Team Demonstrates Proven Capacity to Deliver Effective Capacity-Building Services

- **Proven team:** The ICF Team includes ICF as the grantee, AEM as the service delivery partner, and EurekaFacts as the external evaluator, bringing continuing staff who bring established R3CC relationships and prior 2019-2024 Region 8 CC experience.
- **Relevant expertise:** The ICF Team possess the deep expertise to implement the R3CC successfully, including within implementation science, adult learning, coaching, evaluation, performance management, HQIM, literacy, educator workforce, tutoring, strategic funding, and systems improvement.
- **Demonstrated results:** The ICF Team’s 2019-2024 Region 8 CC achieved 90% of milestones, 92% of outputs, more than 75% of outcomes, and 90% of performance measures; 90%+ of clients rated services high quality, relevant, and useful.
- **Key personnel depth:** Co-project directors, state coordinators, embedded state strategy leads, evaluators, AEM delivery staff, and EurekaFacts evaluators provide leadership, SEA-facing support, technical expertise, and independent validation.
- **Benefit:** R3CC can deliver high-quality, client-driven services that strengthen human, organizational, policy, and resource capacity and move evidence-based practices from planning to sustained implementation.



and changing conditions. Input data will assess whether strategies, staffing, partnerships, and resources are sufficient. Process data will monitor delivery, fidelity, milestones, outputs, and feedback (measurement of the logic model capacity-building services and outputs). Product data will examine whether delivered services resulted in short-, medium- or long-term outcomes.

[PR#1, PR#4, AR#1, AR#3]

C. Quality of the Management Plan

C.1 Management Plan for Achieving Project Goals and Objectives (PR#5, PR#9, AR#6)

Effective communication, paired with efficient management, are the key values at the core of ICF's proposed approach for managing the R3CC. Our team will use a suite of tools and proven strategies to manage, monitor, and report on costs, schedule, and technical performance. Our management plan will leverage lessons learned, cost savings, and procedural efficiencies from our experience operating the current MACC and other large-scale projects, including the 2019–2024 Region 8 CC. This experience positions the ICF

The ICF Team Will Use One Integrated Leadership Structure and Staffing to Utilize Program Resources to Turn SEA Priorities into Capacity-building Action

- **State-facing core:** Co-Project Directors provide strategic direction and resource stewardship; the State Coordinator manages the TA cycle; and the embedded State Strategy Lead works inside the SEA context to keep services aligned to State Learning Agendas, ASPs, and leadership priorities.
- **Delivery bench:** TA specialists, consultants, REL MA, the NCC, Content Centers, and SMEs are activated based on SEA-approved needs, implementation stage, and service intensity.
- **Evidence loop:** Internal evaluators and EurekaFacts track milestones, outputs, fidelity, client feedback, and outcomes so the team can adjust dosage, mode, partners, and workplans as conditions change.
- **Coordination supports:** The project co-directors and partner/subcontract liaisons maintain partner flow, documentation, dissemination, and role clarity across the R3CC structure.
- **Integrated benefit:** The model creates one line of sight from SEA priorities to people, partners, resources, data, and results; reducing duplication, fragmentation, and delay while sustaining high-

Team to assume the R3CC's tasks and responsibilities immediately upon award (including participation in the national evaluation of the CC program), with a feasible transition approach that minimizes risk, supports continuity of operations, and enables effective performance from

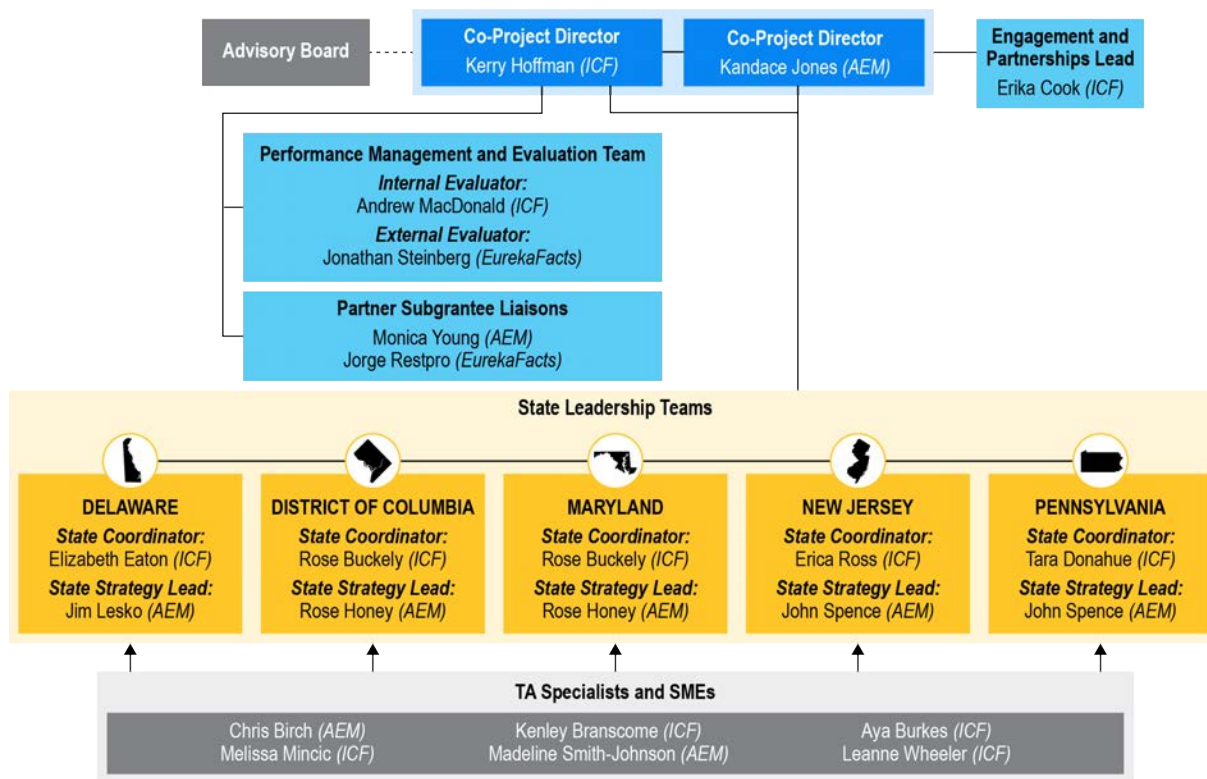


Day One. [AR#4, AR#5, AR#6]

C.1.1 Organizational Structure

The proposed organizational structure for the R3CC as shown in **Exhibit 20** provides hierarchical, clear lines of management authority with direct responsibility and accountability of key functions. The Center will be led by two co-project directors who share overall leadership responsibility. For Grants.gov form compliance, Kerry Hoffman is listed as project director; however, she and Kandace Jones will jointly serve as co-project directors at a total of 1.0 FTE.

Exhibit 20. The ICF Team’s organizational structure supports educational success across the Mid-Atlantic.



To assist our state clients in addressing high-leverage problems, we will form and lead flexibly staffed TA delivery teams to develop SLAs and execute ASPs developed collaboratively with service recipients. **Exhibit 21** provides a detailed description of proposed staff roles and responsibilities. [AR#4, AR#6]



Exhibit 21. The ICF Team’s Clear Roles and Responsibilities Yield Strong Management across the R3CC.

R3CC Roles	Key Responsibilities
CO-PROJECT DIRECTORS	
<u>Co-Project Directors</u> Kerry Hoffman* (ICF) Kandace Jones* (AEM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate closely to provide vision, direction, and leadership of the R3CC, including approval of TA service plans and staffing (Hoffman, Jones) Serve as the primary points of contact for ED (Hoffman, Jones) Monitor and manage the budget, subgrantee performance, infrastructure, staffing, and milestone completion (Hoffman) Oversee the R3CC performance management and evaluation team and implementation of the Smartsheet PM System (Hoffman) Oversee the development and maintenance of the operations manual (Hoffman) Ensure consistent use of quality assurance/quality control processes (Jones) Serve as the leadership liaison to the DE, NJ, and PA TA teams (Hoffman) Serve as the leadership liaison to the DC and MD TA teams (Jones) Manage collaboration and coordination efforts with the NCC, Content Centers, REL MA, and ED-funded TA providers (Hoffman, Jones) Meet all reporting and service requirements to standards of high quality (Hoffman, Jones) Serve as the lead liaison to the joint advisory board (Hoffman)
TA DELIVERY TEAMS	
<u>State Coordinators</u> Elizabeth Eaton* (DE) (ICF) Rose Buckley* (DC/MD) (ICF) Erica Ross* (NJ) (ICF) Tara Donahue* (PA) (ICF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as the primary facilitator and manager of the R3CC’s TA cycle Maintain and strengthen relationships across the SEA, REAs, and LEAs Lead needs sensing and prioritization activities, including the SLA development process and ASPs Coordinate the design, delivery, monitoring, and refinement of TA services Act as the central hub connecting the SEA with R3CC resources Ensure each initiative follows a structured, evidence-based process Align TA initiatives with implementation science principles Track the delivery of services by updating the Smartsheet PM System weekly Assist with requested communication, evaluation, and reporting tasks
<u>State Strategy Leads</u> James Lesko* (DE) (AEM) Rose Honey* (DC/MD) (AEM) John Spence* (NJ/PA) (AEM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate as an embedded R3CC staff member within the context of the SEA Strengthen the connection between the SEA and R3CC through consistent, high-touch engagement and regularly attend SEA meetings Build deep knowledge of the state’s policy environment, organizational dynamics, and strategic priorities Provide ongoing thought partnership to SEA staff and leaders Identify opportunities to align initiatives across divisions, partners, and the SEA’s learning agenda Ensure TA is strategically integrated across the agency
<u>Engagement and Partnerships Lead</u> Erika Cook (ICF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and broker connections to relevant expertise and potential partners Develop, implement, and update the communication and engagement plan Collaborate with state coordinators to identify, develop and disseminate resources Manage the development of the R3CC website, blog, and newsletter Track delivery of stakeholder engagement and communication and dissemination activities in the Smartsheet PM System weekly
<u>TA Specialists</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of SLAs and concepting of ASPs



R3CC Roles	Key Responsibilities
Kenley Branscome, Aya Burkes, Melissa Mincic, and Leanne Wheeler (ICF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a strong understanding of and ability to apply the R3CC TA framework and practice profile to delivery of TA • Provide content knowledge and TA expertise to R3CC activities • Contribute to designing and delivering TA • Contribute to developing customized TA tools • Assist with requested communication and evaluation tasks
Chris Birch and Madeline Smith-Johnson (AEM)	
COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION TEAM	
Internal Evaluator Andrew MacDonald* (ICF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the evaluation team to develop data collection instruments and protocols and clean, store, and manage data • Conduct data collection, cleaning, and analyses/interpretation • Develop formal evaluation reports • Help R3CC staff consider how to use findings for program improvement • Participate in and support ED’s national evaluation of the CC program, including data coordination, reporting, and quality control activities
External Evaluator Jonathan Steinberg (EurekaFacts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-develop interview/focus group protocols with the internal evaluation team • Conduct data collection, analyses, and interpretation • Develop external evaluation summary reports
SUBGRANTEE LIAISON	
Subgrantee Liaison Monica Young (AEM) Jorge Restpro (EurekaFacts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall responsibility for managing the subgrantee, resources, invoicing, and quality control.
*Denotes Key Personnel	

C.1.2 Management Tools and Processes

Exhibit 22 describes the sets of tools and processes that will guide our co-project directors in managing the project and overseeing all activities. [PR#1, PR#4, PR#5, AR#3, AR#5]

Exhibit 22. ICF Will Manage R3CC Implementation with Integrated Project Tools, Controls, and Reporting.

Integrated Action, Purpose, and Key Tools/Features	How It Supports Management and Oversight	Outputs, Data, or Evidence Generated
TAILORED PM SYSTEMS		
Implement Smartsheet PM System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored online system powered by Smartsheet; hosted on Microsoft Teams • Piloted for the 2019–2024 R8CC and used on current MACC • Centralizes collaboration across organizations, locations, and devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives staff one shared workspace • Provides real-time access to TA service information • Supports service reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized workspace • TA service information at a glance • Automated TA reporting functionality
Track needs, workplans, dashboards, and metrics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and regional workplans updated weekly by state coordinators • Auto-generated timelines and status dashboards • Real-time dashboards with customizable key metrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports executive oversight of TA delivery • Connects outreach, engagement, and TA planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated workplans and TA delivery data • Project timelines and status dashboards • Rolled-up view of key metrics



Integrated Action, Purpose, and Key Tools/Features	How It Supports Management and Oversight	Outputs, Data, or Evidence Generated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership and engagement lead maintains activity data State coordinators add needs as identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informs program management and continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs-sensing records Communication activity records
Integrate evaluation and ED reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplan data supports evaluation tracking Tracks milestones/outcomes/outputs Aligns with ED reporting requirements, including the ASP, and links to performance evaluation results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces repetition and errors Enhances efficiency Connects implementation, evaluation, and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation database records Milestone, outcome, and output data ASP-aligned reporting data and performance results
ONLINE PROJECT PORTAL		
Maintain Microsoft Teams project portal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Password-protected portal stores Smartsheet and project resources Includes chat, document storage, team calendar, TA workplans, guidance, and reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves as primary communications hub Connects TA teams and encourages portal use Provides staff access to current resources and reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stored project information and team communications Calendar, workplans, and guidance Progress, performance, and evaluation reports
CORPORATE CONTROLS AND OPERATIONS MANUAL		
Use corporate controls and manual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICF standard corporate management control system (e.g., Deltek systems for timekeeping, earned, accounting processes, purchasing systems) Monthly budget-to-actual reviews, burn-rate monitoring, approval thresholds, cost variance triggers, and corrective action steps Annually updated R3CC operations manual Used with the Smartsheet PM System and Microsoft Teams portal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guides overall project management Complements R3CC tools and procedures Supports consistent project operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate management control information Updated R3CC operations manual Documented processes and operating guidance

C.1.3 Subgrantee and Consultant Management

Our subcontracting management plan is composed of the following components: establishing agreements, providing orientation and training, and managing the assignment and performance of tasks and subtasks performed. The ICF Team includes two integral partners for this effort with a longstanding history of collaboration who are partnering together on the current MACC:

(1) **AEM**, known for their expertise in education data management, early childhood education, and educator workforce strategies, and (2) **EurekaFacts**, a small business based in Maryland with an extensive history of valid and reliable evaluation studies.



ICF will Manage Subgrantees, Consultants, and Expert Services to Ensure Timely, Accountable Delivery

- **Dr. Hoffman:** lead and maintain subgrantee agreements across the grant cycle; orient subgrantees to R3CC policies, procedures, mission, and TA approach through the R3CC Operations Manual; and manage work to ensure collaboration and timely completion of tasks and deliverables.
- **State Coordinators:** rapidly initiate expert services through consultant purchase order agreements; monitor performance through regular meetings and work product reviews; and share feedback with the CC as appropriate.
- **Oversight:** monitor performance, availability, spending, reporting, and potential conflicts of interest through monthly reports, invoice review, and regular meetings with the Co-Project Directors, State Coordinators, and State Strategy Leads.

Result: R3CC will secure the right expertise quickly, keep partner work aligned to SEA-approved service plans, control cost and conflict risks, and deliver timely, useful, cost-effective products and services.

ICF will seamlessly integrate subgrantees and consultants into R3CC's processes, tools, and plans, establishing clear expectations for scope, schedule, level of effort, quality, reporting, performance, and quality assurance. [PR#4, PR#5, AR#1, AR#3, AR#6]

C.1.4 Partnership Management

As outlined in **Section B.4**, coordination with other partners, including federally funded TA providers (e.g., REL MA, NCC, and Content Centers) will be imperative to successfully and efficiently implement the R3CC, reduce client burden, and ensure effective use of federal resources (see **Exhibit 3** and *Coordination Creates Coherence and Partnerships Amplify Impact* in **Section B.2.3, Exhibit 5**). Within 90 days of receiving funding, the co-project directors will provide ED with copies of partnership agreements and/or MOUs with subgrantee and consultant partners, REL MA and, as appropriate, other ED-funded TA providers (e.g., NCC and Content Centers), as outlined in **Exhibit 23**. These agreements will be reviewed and updated annually. [PR# 7, PR#8, PR#9, AR#1, AR#6]



Exhibit 23. ICF Will Use Clear Partnership Agreements to Document Role Clarity, Coordination Processes, and Responsibilities.

Agreement/Partner	Processes Defined to Meet CC Requirements	How R3CC Will Use the Agreement	Documentation/ Compliance Value
All partnership agreements and MOUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles, responsibilities, and decision rights Joint planning and coordination routines Referral/request routing, data sharing, communication, and documentation protocols Processes for avoiding duplication and reducing client burden (e.g., joint needs sensing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convert collaboration into actionable operating procedures Ensure partner work is tied to client-defined capacity-building needs Use agreements as management tools, not generic collaboration statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-project directors, provide copies to ED within 90 days Agreements reviewed and updated annually or as SEA priorities and ASPs evolve
REL MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual joint planning process and meeting cadence Shared support for SLAs Alignment of research, evidence-building, and capacity-building services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate services for shared clients Reduce burden on SEAs through shared planning and coordinated needs sensing Prevent duplicative or misaligned TA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement documents REL-R3CC planning, roles, and service-alignment routines Outputs inform SLAs and ASPs
NCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to NCC resources Use of the NCC cadre of subject matter experts Process for reviewing, selecting, and integrating expertise into ASP projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route expertise requests through a clear mechanism Compare subject matter expert options against client needs and project requirements Integrate selected experts into R3CC project teams and deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement shows how NCC resources are connected to client priorities Supports documented compliance with coordination and expertise requirements
Content Centers and other ED-funded TA providers, as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria for identifying relevant specialized expertise Processes for connecting tools, resources, and TA to SEA needs Coordination expectations for shared or complementary services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring specialized expertise into ASP projects Connect SEAs to relevant federal resources and evidence-based supports Coordinate delivery across providers when more than one partner is involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreements clarify when and how ED-funded TA expertise is used Documentation supports efficient use of federal resources and avoids duplication
Subgrantee and consultant partners, as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scopes of work, deliverables, timelines, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure subgrantee and consultant work aligns with client priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreements create transparent expectations for



Agreement/Partner	Processes Defined to Meet CC Requirements	How R3CC Will Use the Agreement	Documentation/ Compliance Value
	and coordination expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onboarding, communication, documentation, and reporting routines • Integration with R3CC service delivery and project management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage expert contributions to tools, convenings, coaching, and implementation support • Maintain clear accountability for partner deliverables 	performance and deliverables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICF co-project director supports procurement, onboarding, integration, and monitoring

C.1.5 Communication Strategies

In day-to-day practice, multiple modalities for communication and collaboration will be employed across the R3CC, including (1) a **project kickoff meeting** following grant award; (2) weekly **meetings with the co-project directors, state coordinators, and state strategy leads**; (3) a monthly **all-staff meeting**; (4) quarterly **project reviews** with ICF leadership to assess delivery performance and track financials; and (5) an annual **staff in-person strategy planning session**. These routines provide structured opportunities to review progress, identify challenges, and adjust strategies in real time. [PR#1, AR#6]

C.1.6 Ensuring Quality Products and Services

With oversight from our co-project directors, state coordinators will ensure that all R3CC products follow **ICF's quality control process** and are driven by the needs of service recipients; are accurate in presentation, technical content, and adherence to accepted elements of style; are clear and concise, written in plain language, and aligned with content objectives; are appropriately edited and formatted; are adherent to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act accessibility requirements; and will be submitted on or before due dates.

To ensure high-quality capacity-building services, **ICF's Practice Profile** (included in **Appendix C**) translates guiding principles into clear expectations for staff behavior, ensuring consistency, alignment, and continuous improvement. All R3CC staff, including subgrantees and



consultants, will be trained on the Practice Profile during onboarding and receive refresher training during all-hands meetings. Rather than leaving concepts like co-construction, systems thinking, and maintenance in the abstract, the practice profile shows how they are enacted in day-to-day work, supporting consistent, reflective, and actionable practice across staff and contexts. **Exhibit 24** highlights the ICF Team’s core capacity-building practices and the observable behaviors that define each. By focusing on observable behaviors rather than abstract concepts, the practice profile ensures that TA is delivered as a partnership-based, adaptive, and capacity-building process that is continuously refined through feedback, reflection, and improvement, ultimately building agency ownership and long-term impact. [PR#1, AR#1, AR#4]

Exhibit 24. ICF’s Practice Profile Guides Delivery of High-Quality Capacity-Building TA Services.

Core Practice	Behaviors That Define the TA Approach
Forming and Supporting High-Functioning Teams	Align expertise to SEA priorities; facilitate high-functioning teams; model collaboration and build trust; use structured processes to support team development; anticipate and respond to change; establish supports and systems for continuity; ensure TA remains responsive, coordinated, and effective.
Nurturing Relationships and Effective Communication	Communicate clearly and listen actively; foster trust and psychological safety; support data interpretation and reflection; encourage open dialogue and challenge identification; approach work with humility; use inquiry and questioning to guide thinking; co-develop client-owned solutions; advance meaningful and long- lasting improvement.
Integrating Capacity Building into TA	Co-construct initiatives with agency partners; identify and build targeted capacities; tailor supports to agency context and strengths; embed coaching and systems thinking; enhance continuous improvement; strengthen agency leadership and adaptability; build reliable capacity for long-term change.
Supporting Maintenance and Capacity	Focus on strengthening agency capacity rather than short-term support; set clear expectations for long-lasting change; co-develop reliable plans and success metrics; support ongoing reflection and readiness assessment; enhance agency ownership of improvement efforts; build capacity to lead, adapt, and maintain change independently.

C.1.7 Mitigating Risks

When challenges arise, the co-project directors will use a risk register and monthly review cycle to assess probability/impact, assign owners, and activate mitigations. **Exhibit 25** describes potential project implementation risks and our associated mitigation strategies. [PR#1, PR#9, AR#2]



Exhibit 25. ICF Will Proactively Identify and Mitigate Risks to Ensure Continuity and Performance

Risk	Mitigation
Delayed MOUs	Use 30/60/90-day trackers, interim coordination protocols, and ED escalation as needed.
Client Availability	Align meetings to SEA cadence, use asynchronous reviews, and identify backups.
Data Access	Define data needs in workplans/MOUs, use secure transfer processes, and identify proxy data when needed.
Staff Turnover	Maintain transition plans, cross-train staff, reassign duties, and hire qualified replacements.
Consultant Availability	Maintain a pre-vetted expert bench and backup subject matter experts.
Duplicative TA	Use REL/NCC/Content Center coordination logs and joint planning
Budget Variance	Conduct monthly burn-rate reviews, apply approval thresholds, and reforecast resources.
Changing State Context	Conduct quarterly needs sensing and update workplans and ASPs accordingly.

C.1.8 Timeline of Key Activities

The ICF Team’s proposed timeline for the completion of key activities in Year 1 is shown in

Exhibit 26. As the incumbent, the ICF Team will have minimal, if any, transition or start-up tasks upon award, minimizing the disruption and burden for SEAs. Dr. Hoffman and Ms. Jones, our co-project directors, will finalize the timeline in coordination with the joint advisory board and through the development of individual state workplans in collaboration with SEA partners and TA teams.

Exhibit 26. ICF Proposes a Timeline for R3CC Key Activities In Year 1 (September 30, 2026–September 30, 2027).

Key Activity	Lead	Milestone/Deliverable	Months											
			10	11	12	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT														
1.1 Finalize subgrantee/consultant agreements, MOUs	Hoffman	Executed agreements; MOUs												
1.2 Submit list of key personnel to ED	Hoffman; Jones	Key personnel list; resumes												
1.3 Host R3CC project kickoff meeting	Hoffman; Jones	Agenda; notes												
1.4 Participate in grant management meetings with ED	Hoffman; Jones	Monthly agenda; notes												
1.5 Facilitate R3CC management meetings	Hoffman; Jones	Weekly agenda; notes												



Key Activity	Lead	Milestone/Deliverable	Months											
			10	11	12	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09
1.6 Facilitate monthly all-staff meetings	Jones	Monthly agenda; recording												
1.7 Launch customized Smartsheet PM system	Hoffman	System; user materials												
1.8 Update R3CC Operations Manual	Hoffman; Jones	Updated operations manual												
1.9 Develop annual performance report	Hoffman	Annual performance report												
2. TA DESIGN AND DELIVERY														
2.1 Conduct needs sensing discussions with SEA leaders	State Coordinators	Protocol; summary												
2.2 Initiate state learning agenda development process	State Coordinators	Learning agenda toolkit												
2.3 Develop and finalize ASPs and state workplans	State Coordinators	ASP and workplan template												
2.4 Implement state workplans	State Coordinators	Deliverables as identified												
3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP														
3.1 Plan and facilitate joint advisory board meetings	Hoffman; Jones	Agenda; presentation; notes												
3.2 Develop stakeholder engagement and communications plan	Engagement and Partnerships Lead	Stakeholder engagement and communications plan												
3.3 Launch updated R3CC website, blog, and newsletter	Engagement and Partnerships Lead	Updated website; blog posts; newsletter; editorial calendar												
3.4 Participate in CCNetwork collaboration activities	Hoffman; Jones	Meeting notes												
4. EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT														
4.1 Develop R3CC evaluation plan	Internal Evaluator	R3CC evaluation plan; data collection instruments												
4.2 Conduct quarterly progress reviews (QPR)	Internal Evaluator	QPR template												
4.3 Develop annual evaluation report	Internal Evaluator	Annual evaluation report												
4.4 Develop external evaluation summary report	External Evaluator	Summary report/presentation												

C.2 Time Commitments of Project Leadership, Key and Lead Personnel (PR#10)

Our overall level of effort was determined based on two key indicators: the ICF Team's presence in the region, with an office in Rockville, MD, and the ICF Team's knowledge of the labor mix



and qualifications needed to complete the work and achieve ED’s desired outcomes. To ensure effective leadership and sufficient availability to provide TA at the intensity, duration, and modalities required by Mid-Atlantic SEAs, we are dedicating 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) across two co-project directors, Dr. Hoffman (.50 FTE) and Ms. Jones (.50 FTE). Each state will receive paired state coordinator and embedded state strategy lead coverage totaling at least 0.45 FTE, giving each SEA an operational lead for needs sensing, ASP management, service coordination, and progress monitoring, plus an embedded strategic partner who participates in SEA meetings, understands state context, and keeps TA aligned to SEA priorities and the SLA. This level of effort is adequate for high-touch support because the state coordinator will manage the full TA cycle and connect the SEA to R3CC staff, partners, and experts, while the embedded State Strategy Lead will provide ongoing thought partnership, cross-office alignment, and contextual intelligence so support remains sustained, sequenced, responsive, and strategically integrated rather than episodic. Allocations for TA specialists and consultants are variable, intended to be flexible enough to accommodate emerging needs within initiatives. Our internal evaluator is sourced at .25 FTE and our engagement and partnerships lead at .20 FTE. **Exhibit 27** demonstrates the adequacy and appropriateness of the time commitments for our co-project directors and other key and lead project personnel. [PR#10, AR#1, AR#4, AR#6]

Exhibit 27. ICF’s Level of Effort Ensures Adequate and Appropriate Time Commitments for Key and Lead Personnel.

Key and Lead Staff/Organization	Proposed Role	Level of Effort (FTE)
Kerry Hoffman (ICF)	Co-Project Director	0.50
Kandace Jones (AEM)	Co-Project Director	0.50
Erika Cook (ICF)	Engagement and Partnerships Lead	0.20
Andrew MacDonald (ICF)	Internal Evaluator	0.25
Rose Buckley (ICF)	State Coordinator (DC/MD)	0.20
Elizabeth Eaton (ICF)	State Coordinator (DE)	0.25
Erica Ross (ICF)	State Coordinator (NJ)	0.25
Tara Donahue (ICF)	State Coordinator (PA)	0.25
Rose Honey (AEM)	State Strategy Lead (DC/MD)	0.50



Key and Lead Staff/Organization	Proposed Role	Level of Effort (FTE)
Jim Lesko (AEM)	State Strategy Lead (DE)	0.25
John Spence (AEM)	State Strategy Lead (NJ/PA)	0.50
Jonathan Steinberg (EurekaFacts)	External Evaluator	0.03

C.3 Qualifications and Experience of Key and Lead Project Personnel (AR#4)

The ICF Team brings the qualifications, experience, and role-specific expertise required to deliver high-quality Regional Center services for the Mid-Atlantic region. Our proposed key personnel have deep experience supporting SEAs, LEAs, schools, and other education system leaders through federal TA; evidence-based program selection and implementation; adult learning, coaching, and facilitation; implementation science; performance management and evaluation; math and literacy improvement; and support for high-need schools, LEAs, and areas as described in our approach to capacity building in **Exhibits 3, 4, and 5** in **Section**

The ICF Team Demonstrates Personnel Expertise and Research-Based TA Capacity

- **Personnel evidence:** ICF's key personnel address AR#4 through formal training, direct SEA/LEA/school-system experience, and demonstrated expertise delivering highly relevant, highly effective, research-based TA.
- **Client-experienced staff:** The ICF Team includes staff from the CC client population, including former SEA, LEA, school, and system leaders who understand the operating conditions, implementation responsibilities, and capacity needs of R3CC clients.
- **Methods in practice:** Across roles, the team applies adult learning principles through job-embedded, problem-centered, practice-based supports; uses coaching to help SEA and LEA leaders translate evidence into action; and applies implementation science to assess readiness, support adoption, monitor progress, and adjust TA through continuous improvement.
- **Partner alignment:** The ICF Team applies these research-based TA methods when coordinating with REL MA and other federal TA partners and when supporting SLAs, helping SEAs align evidence-building, implementation supports, and continuous improvement activities to state-defined priorities.

Results: The team will deliver capacity-building services that are relevant, implementation-ready, and aligned to client priorities while strengthening trust with stakeholders and partners and increasing the likelihood of measurable improvements in practice and system capacity.

A.2. As shown in **Exhibit 28** and detailed further in the resumes provided in **Part 6, Other Attachment**, the **ICF Team's qualifications align directly to the Center's required work: helping Mid-Atlantic clients identify high-leverage problems, build capacity, implement evidence-based strategies, monitor progress, and use data for continuous improvement.**



ICF’s personnel approach is intentionally designed for R3CC. For the co-project director and state coordinator and state strategy lead roles, paired leadership provides defined coverage, continuity, quality assurance, and state-context expertise for highly visible, relationship-intensive, and technically complex work. **Paired leaders deepen state-context SEA and partner relationships, increase leadership coverage, and**

Personnel Qualifications That Reduce Start-Up Risk and Increase Client Value

Ensures Day 1 readiness through current Mid-Atlantic experience

Expands client responsiveness through paired state leads with broader SEA relationships and state-context knowledge

Delivers full-scope expertise across capacity-building TA, evidence use, adult learning, coaching, implementation, evaluation, dissemination, operations, and federal TA coordination

provide thought partnership that strengthens service planning and implementation. This gives Mid-Atlantic clients greater access to both local knowledge and specialized expertise.

For this personnel criterion, the target population includes the Mid-Atlantic SEAs, LEAs, REAs, TEAs, schools, and system leaders served by the Center, including those responsible for supporting students and areas with the greatest needs under ETAA.

ICF’s key personnel address AR#4 through formal training, direct SEA/LEA/school-system experience, and demonstrated expertise delivering highly relevant, extremely effective, research-based TA. Across roles, the team applies adult learning principles through job-embedded, problem-centered, practice-based supports; uses coaching to help SEA and LEA leaders translate evidence into action; and applies implementation science to assess readiness, support adoption, monitor progress, and adjust TA through continuous improvement. The ICF Team applies these same research-based TA methods when coordinating with REL MA and other federal TA partners and when supporting SLAs, helping SEAs align evidence-building, implementation supports and continuous improvement activities to state-defined priorities.

Exhibit 28 provides a targeted summary of each key and lead person’s role-relevant experience,



practitioner/lived experience, and strongest research-based TA expertise; full evidence of credentials, training, employment history, and related accomplishments is provided in the individual resumes in **Part 6, Other Attachments**. Degree fields identify formal training, while role-relevant work experience and technical expertise demonstrate additional qualifications related to the project objectives.

Exhibit 28. The ICF Team Will Deploy Seasoned Leaders and Practitioners to Deliver Responsive, Evidence-Based Capacity-Building Support.

Name	Proposed Role	Highest Degree/Field	Years Experience
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT			
Kerry Hoffman	Co-Project Director	PhD, Curriculum and Instruction	35
Current MACC co-executive director and former Region 8 CC co-director/Indiana state coordinator with extensive SEA-facing, district, school, and federal TA experience.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Leads needs sensing, annual service planning, partnership-level logic models, rapid-response TA, professional learning, evidence use, and implementation monitoring with SEAs and education partners. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct SEA, district, school, and postsecondary experience, including service with the Indiana Department of Education, Muncie Community Schools, Carmel High School, Purdue CLEAR, Indiana University Indianapolis, and as a classroom teacher. • Research-based TA expertise: As demonstrated through her MACC and Region 8/Indiana state coordinator work, applies adult learning, coaching, implementation science, evidence use, and continuous improvement by co-designing job-embedded professional learning, coaching SEA/LEA leaders as a thought partner/critical friend, translating research/data into decision-ready tools, and using outcomes to guide implementation and refinement. 			
Kandace Jones	Co-Project Director	MBA, Marketing	20
Current MACC co-executive director with more than 20 years of K–12 capacity-building, federal/state TA, strategic leadership, and large-scale education systems management experience.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Leads Region 3 TA across Washington, DC, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; previously co-directed Region 15, Region 8, and Appalachia Regional CCs and supported ED School Improvement Grant TA across 50 states, 3 territories, approximately 600 districts, and 1,500 schools. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings executive and state/local system experience through leadership roles at AEM, The American Institutes for Research, WestEd, ICF, Junior Achievement, DC Public Schools, ED, and Pomona Unified School District, including oversight of major portfolios, budgets, staff teams, and youth-serving programs. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies adult learning, coaching, implementation science, performance management, data use, and continuous improvement by leading large TA teams, facilitating professional development and CoPs, coordinating national experts, and helping SEA/LEA leaders implement, evaluate, and maintain priority initiatives. 			
OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT			
Erika Cook	Engagement and Partnerships Lead	PhD, Leadership and Policy	33
Former SEA chief academic officer and national nonprofit state partnerships executive, and current MACC communications/collaboration lead with more than 33 years of education experience across state, regional, district, school, national nonprofit, and federal TA contexts.			



Name	Proposed Role	Highest Degree/Field	Years Experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Leads MACC communications, dissemination, and federal TA coordination, helping connect clients with REL MA, the NCC, Content Centers, and other federally funded providers; has provided TA across Regions 8 and 5 on standards, chronic absenteeism, instructional materials, mathematics acceleration, and principal coaching models. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct SEA, REL/CC client, district administrator, building administrator, and classroom teacher experience, including service as the Iowa chief academic officer overseeing teaching and learning, assessment, educator quality, professional learning, and accreditation. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies adult learning, facilitation, leadership, thought partnership, high-quality instruction and materials expertise and use, and continuous improvement models by leading multiyear SEA/REA models using needs sensing and data analysis to shape strategy and coach state and national leaders. 			
CAPACITY BUILDING AND TA			
Elizabeth Eaton	DE State Coordinator	BS, Psychology	20
Current MACC Delaware state co-director with 20 years of experience managing and delivering capacity-building TA, research/evaluation, knowledge transfer, and dissemination projects for education and human services clients.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Conducts needs sensing, develops TA workplans, and supports DDOE's Delaware Educator Apprentice Program; previously provided capacity-building TA services for Ohio and Virginia and managed ED-funded CoPs, grantee supports, and REL coordination. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct state- and local-system TA experience with SEAs, LEAs, districts, schools, community-based organizations, RELs, CCs, and ED-funded networks, including educator workforce, college/career readiness, algebra readiness, whole child, and school turnaround initiatives. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies adult learning, coaching, implementation science, evidence use, and continuous improvement by helping partners identify root causes, develop logic models and theories of action, design action plans, disseminate evidence-based practices, and maintain peer learning networks. 			
Jim Lesko	DE State Strategy Lead	EdD, Leadership and Policy	45
Current MACC Delaware state co-lead with more than 45 years of state/local education leadership, early learning systems, special education, state TA, and capacity-building experience.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Manages the MACC Delaware TA Team and supports Delaware's teacher apprenticeship work through SEA, LEA, and university partnerships; previously served as DDOE director of early development and learning resources, managing state initiatives with the governor's and secretary's staff. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings deep Delaware context as a state resident and 27-year Delaware educator, plus multistate experience supporting state-system planning and stakeholder partnership TA. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies adult learning, implementation science, data use, facilitation, and continuous improvement through needs assessments, TA plans, stakeholder engagement, workplans, deliverable schedules, data-quality analysis, and management of multistate federal TA teams. 			
Rose Buckley	DC/MD State Coordinator	PhD, School Psychology	25
Current MACC state co-director for Maryland/DC and former R8CC State Co-Coordinator with senior TA and applied research experience supporting SEAs across the Midwest, Plains, and Mid-Atlantic regions.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Supports SEAs in Maryland, Washington, DC, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan through needs sensing, formal needs assessments, multiyear TA/evaluation projects, partnership-level logic models, rapid-response methodological guidance, and evidence-informed policy support. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct SEA/LEA partnership experience through Regional CC work, multistate TA, Indiana Department of Education committee service, university teaching, and SEA/LEA support focused on literacy, student support systems, systems change, and evidence use. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies adult learning, coaching, implementation science, applied research, evaluation, and data use by designing professional learning, coaching leaders as a thought partner/critical friend, strengthening research literacy, supporting systems change, and using data visualization and short-/medium-term outcomes to guide improvement. 			
Rose Honey	DC/MD State Strategy Lead	EdD, Educational Policy, Leadership, and Instructional Practice	20



Name	Proposed Role	Highest Degree/Field	Years Experience
<p>Current MACC DC state co-lead with more than 20 years of experience in educational research, program evaluation, data analysis, curriculum design, and capacity-building TA for tribal, state, local, and federal education initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Supports the MACC DC Integrated Math Project and previously managed the Northeast CC Expanding Math Pathways for Student Success in Mathematics Project; has supported Institute of Education Sciences, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Indian Education, and National Science Foundation education initiatives. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct experience with state, local, tribal, and federal education partners, including TA, grantee support, CoP facilitation, and curriculum design, as well as international educator service. Research-based TA expertise: Applies evaluation/data use, facilitation, continuous improvement, and evidence use by conducting needs assessments, developing logic models and leading indicators, analyzing service-delivery data, designing webinars and CoPs, and translating findings into TA plans and reporting. 			
Erica Ross	NJ State Coordinator	PhD, Education	14
<p>Current MACC New Jersey state director with more than 10 years of experience as a special education reading teacher, researcher, evaluator, TA provider, and project manager supporting state and local agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Serves as SEA point of contact, conducts needs sensing, develops workplans, and provides TA to NJDOE, including initiatives to evaluate high-impact tutoring and explore teacher pathways, apprenticeships, and other practices addressing teacher shortages. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct school-based experience as a special education reading teacher, plus state and local agency partnership experience through MACC, Region 8 internal evaluation, Kentucky literacy curriculum review, Massachusetts higher education evaluation, and Virginia Commonwealth University/Virginia Department of Education research/evaluation projects. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies implementation science, evaluation/data use, evidence use, and continuous improvement through mixed-method evaluation, logic model development, implementation planning, impact measurement, survey design, administrative data analysis, focus groups, and tailored products for policymakers and practitioners. 			
John Spence	NJ/PA State Strategy Lead	MA, History	20
<p>Current MACC New Jersey/Pennsylvania state co-lead with more than 12 years of education consulting/TA experience and more than 20 years of broader education-system experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Serves as SEA point of contact, develops ASPs, manages TA delivery, facilitates client meetings, and coordinates TA providers; currently supports New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky and previously served as the Texas CC deputy director. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct SEA and education-system experience through New Jersey/Pennsylvania/Kentucky collaboration, Illinois leadership academy work, Nevada strategic planning, Maine field-based coaching, Ohio career-technical education supports, and Qatar Foundation systemwide professional learning. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies adult learning, coaching, facilitation, implementation science, data use, and continuous improvement through certified coaching, Concerns-Based Adoption Model training, logic model development, virtual CoPs, strategic planning, professional learning, and evidence-based implementation supports. 			
Tara Donahue	PA State Coordinator	PhD, Educational Policy	20
<p>Current MACC Maryland/Pennsylvania state co-director with more than 20 years of experience as a TA provider, project manager, evaluator/researcher, and education policy analyst across PreK–20 systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Conducts needs sensing, develops TA workplans, and supports MSDE and PDE initiatives focused on literacy achievement, teacher certification pathways, and systems to implement and measure HQIM. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct SEA and education-stakeholder experience through MACC, Region 8, three prior Regional CCs, REL Pacific, Illinois statewide 21st Century Community Learning Centers TA, and work with SEAs in the Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, Appalachia, and U.S. territories. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies implementation science, evaluation/data use, adult learning, facilitation, and continuous improvement through logic model co-design, mixed-method evaluation, 			



Name	Proposed Role	Highest Degree/Field	Years Experience
professional development, CoPs, networked improvement, and actionable reporting to guide program improvement.			
EVALUATION			
Jonathan Steinberg	External Evaluator	MA, Statistics	20
External evaluation lead with more than 20 years of experience designing, managing, and evaluating education research, assessment, and mixed-methods studies.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Serves as the MACC external evaluator, executing periodic pulse surveys for internal project team members and supporting work led by internal evaluators and CC leadership. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings extensive state, federal, district, and education research experience, including projects involving NAEP, Tennessee mathematics instruction, New Jersey mathematics/science reform, Baltimore City schools, and national education studies. • Research-based TA expertise: Strengthens TA effectiveness through evaluation design, survey methodology, statistical analysis, educational measurement, and continuous improvement, developing and validating instruments, managing large project databases, analyzing service quality and outcomes, and producing evidence that helps leadership refine services and document impact. 			
Andrew MacDonald	Internal Evaluator	MPP, Public Policy	18
Current MACC internal evaluator with 18 years of experience delivering training and TA on using data, research, and evaluation to inform education programs, policy, and continuous improvement.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-relevant experience: Provides MACC guidance on evaluating capacity-building services; develops milestones, outputs, and outcomes for initiatives across all five Region 3 states; trains stakeholders on evaluation guidance; develops data collection tools; administers SEA surveys; and supports data reflection to assess SEA capacity growth and improve delivery. • Practitioner/lived experience: Brings direct evaluation capacity-building experience with SEAs, LEAs, schools, federal agencies, state agencies, nonprofits, foundations, and local organizations, including work in Maine, Michigan, Virginia, West Virginia, Louisiana, Texas, and other education contexts. • Research-based TA expertise: Applies adult learning, coaching, evaluation/data use, evidence use, and continuous improvement by designing evaluation curricula and tools, building CoPs, coaching grantees and schools, developing logic models, and helping organizations collect, analyze, and use evidence to strengthen implementation. 			

Collectively, these key personnel provide the continuity, SEA-facing leadership, state-specific knowledge, and research-based TA expertise required for the R3CC. Their combined experience enables ICF to match personnel expertise to client-defined priorities across capacity-building TA, evidence use, adult learning, coaching, implementation, evaluation and data use, math and literacy, federal TA coordination, and high-need contexts. Individual resumes in **Part 6, Other Attachments**, provide additional evidence of credentials, training, employment history, and relevant accomplishments.

C.4 Budget Adequacy and Cost-Reasonableness (AR#5, AR#7)

The ICF Team's budget is adequate because it is built from the proposed design that includes



client-driven, state-led ASPs, paired state coordinator and embedded state strategy lead coverage for each SEA, expert TA delivery, partner coordination, evaluation, communications, dissemination, and project controls. Costs are assigned activities needed to support and deliver universal, targeted, and intensive capacity-building services and to achieve the milestones, outputs, and measurable outcomes described in the application.

Consistent with AR#5, the budget narrative will explain and estimate costs by service type. Intensive services will fund sustained coaching, co-planning, implementation support, data review, and progress monitoring for SEA-identified high-leverage problems. Targeted services will fund communities of practice, peer learning, convenings, and facilitated problem solving for shared priorities. Universal services will fund tools, briefs, webinars, and shared resources that extend reach at lower marginal cost.

Cost reasonableness will be maintained through ICF's financial management controls, monthly budget-to-actual reviews, burn-rate monitoring, subgrantee and consultant invoice review, approval thresholds, and quarterly resource reforecasting. The co-project directors will review staffing, travel, subgrantee, consultant, and other direct costs against service intensity, market expectations for similar technical assistance, ASP progress, and client needs before authorizing work or reallocating resources.

Consistent with AR#7, the budget includes a five percent annual set-aside for emerging needs aligned with project outcomes. This allows responsiveness to evolving SEA priorities, and cross-state needs without disruption. Overall, the budget is adequate, flexible, cost-effective, aligned with market expectations, and directly tied to project objectives and impact.



Appendix A: State Profiles

Delaware State Profile



Secretary of Education
Cynthia Marten

Delaware Department of Education

Mission:

To empower every learner with the highest quality education through shared leadership, innovative practices, and exemplary services.

Vision:

Every learner ready for success in college, career, and life.

46

Districts
(2025)

236

Schools
(2025)

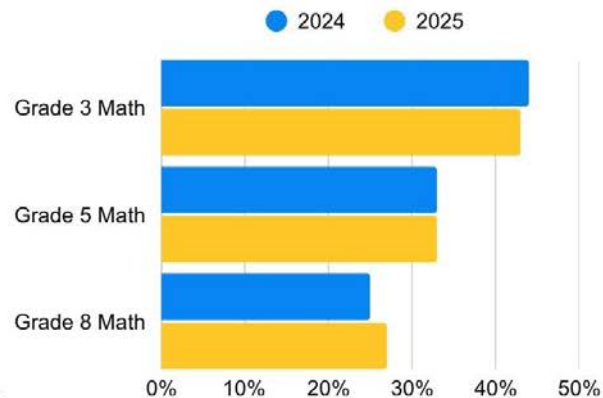
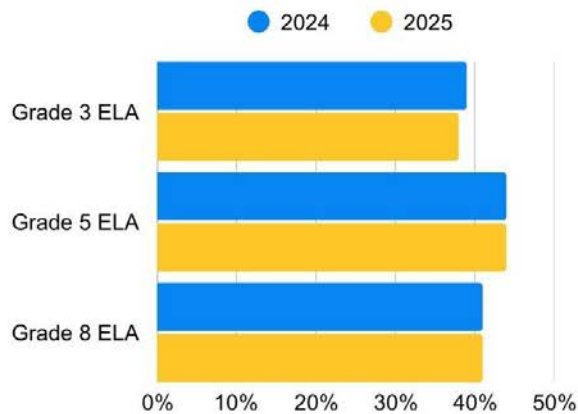
14.8

Student/Teacher
Ratio (2025)

4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2024)



Proficient or Above: State Assessment



ACT Average Composite Score (2025)

19.4

National

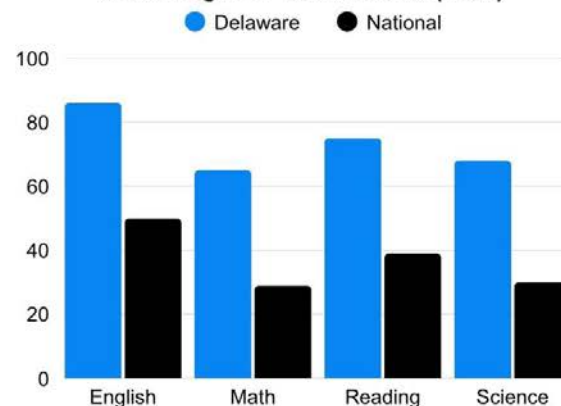
25.2

Delaware

% Tested ACT (2025)



% Meeting ACT Benchmarks (2025)





District of Columbia District Profile



**State Superintendent
of Education**
Antoinette S. Mitchell

OSSE

Mission:

As DC's state education agency, we will set high standards, build educator and system capacity to meet those standards, expand educational opportunities for all learners with a focus on those underserved, and hold everyone—including ourselves—accountable for results.

Vision:

DC learners of all ages and backgrounds are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to pursue and thrive on the life path of their choice.

71 245 10.9

**Districts
(2025)**

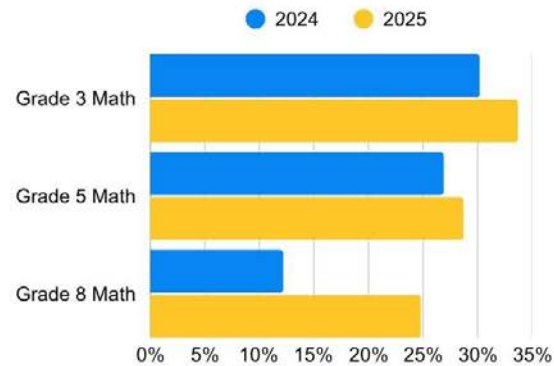
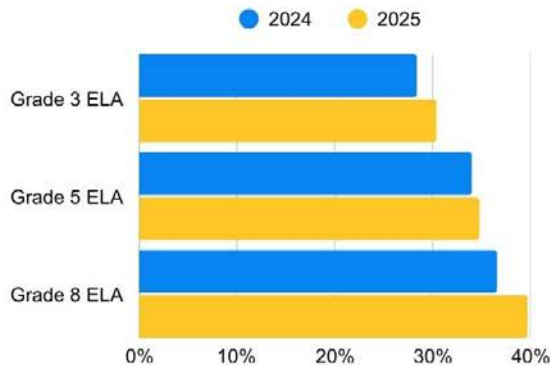
**Schools
(2025)**

**Student/Teacher
Ratio (2025)**

4-year Graduation Rate (2024)



On Track for College and Career Readiness: State Assessment



ACT Average Composite Score (2025)

19.4 27.6

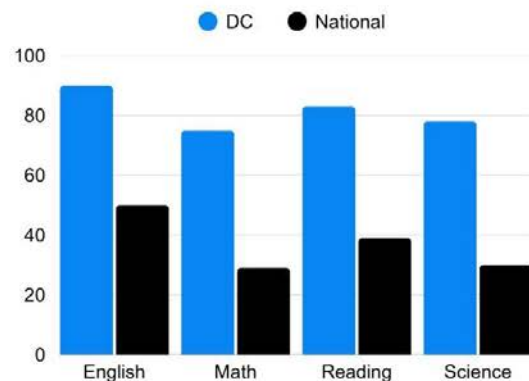
National

DC

% Tested ACT (2025)



% Meeting ACT Benchmarks (2025)





Maryland State Profile



Superintendent of Schools
Carey Wright

Maryland State Department of Education

Mission:

We will ensure a rigorous and world-class educational experience for every Maryland student, in every neighborhood, that prepares each to be college and career ready, through:

- strategic direction and leadership;
- policy making and resource allocation; and
- engagement and advocacy.

Vision:

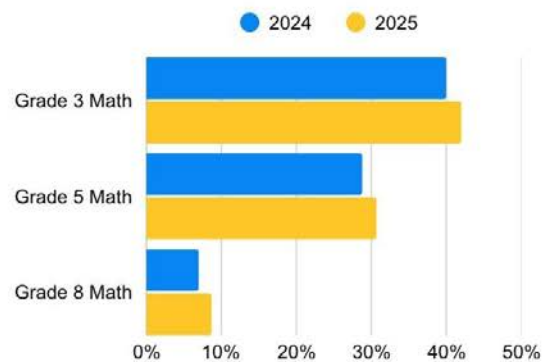
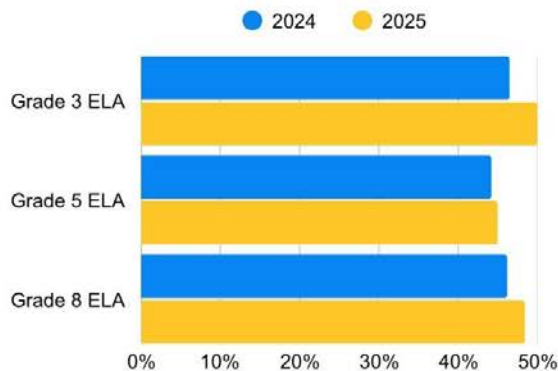
We will be a system of world-class schools where students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, career, and life.

25 **1,408** **14.1**
Districts (2025) Schools (2025) Student/Teacher Ratio (2025)

Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2024)



Percent Proficient or Above: State Assessment



ACT Average Composite Score (2025)

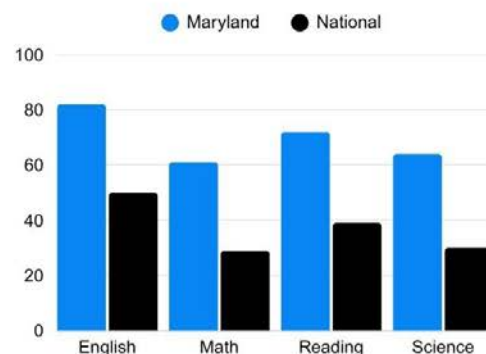
19.4 **24.9**

National Maryland

% Tested ACT (2025)



% Meeting ACT Benchmarks (2025)





New Jersey State Profile



Commissioner of Education
Lily Laux

New Jersey Department of Education

Mission:

The New Jersey Department of Education supports schools, educators, and districts to ensure all of New Jersey's 1.4 million students have equitable access to high-quality education and achieve academic excellence.

Vision:

Become a model organization that strengthens teaching, leading, and learning in order to increase educational equity for all students.

697 **2,557** **11.8**

Districts
(2025)

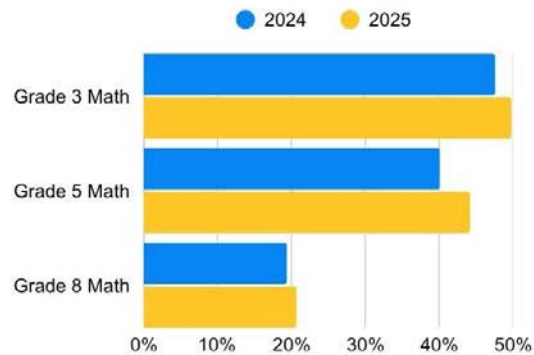
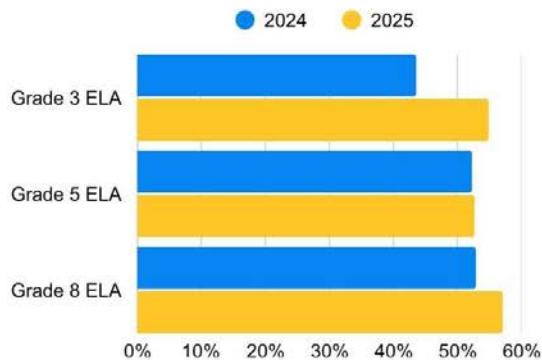
Schools
(2025)

Student/Teacher
Ratio (2025)

4-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2024)



Percent Meeting/Exceeding Expectations: State Assessment



ACT Average Composite Score (2025)

19.4 **24.6**

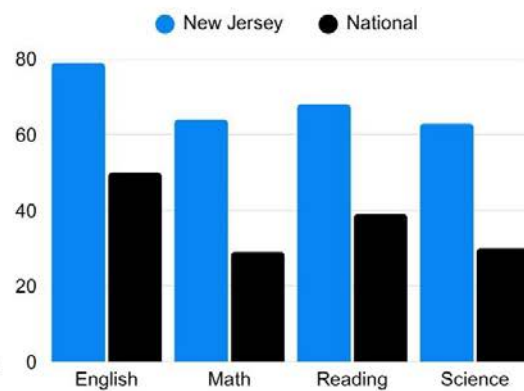
National

New Jersey

% Tested ACT (2025)



% Meeting ACT Benchmarks (2025)





Pennsylvania State Profile



Secretary of the Pennsylvania
Department of Education
Carrie Rowe

Pennsylvania Department of Education

Mission:

To ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. Further, the Department seeks to establish a culture that is committed to improving opportunities throughout the commonwealth by ensuring that technical support, resources, and optimal learning environments are available for all students, whether children or adults.

787
Districts
(2025)

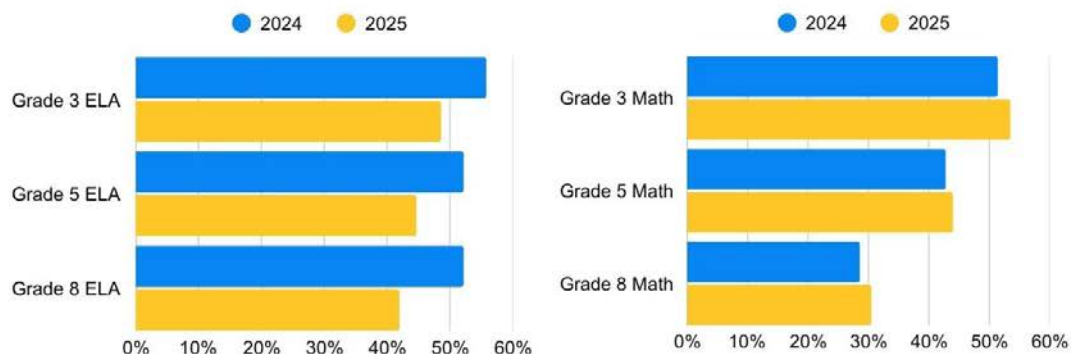
2,932
Schools
(2025)

13.0
Student/Teacher
Ratio (2025)

4-year Cohort Graduation Rate (2024)



Percent Proficient or Above: State Assessment



ACT Average Composite Score (2025)

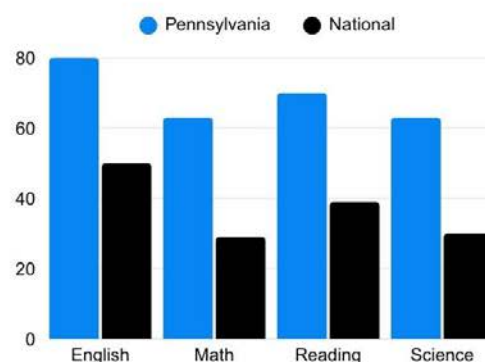
19.4 **23.5**

National Pennsylvania

% Tested ACT (2025)



% Meeting ACT Benchmarks (2025)





Appendix B: Participating Organizations for Needs-Sensing

Exhibit B.1 presents a summary of the organizations contacted as part of state and local needs-sensing activities. The ICF Team’s outreach efforts across state educational agencies (SEAs), LEAs, schools, and education-focused organizations helped to identify current needs and priorities, emerging challenges, and opportunities for Region 3 (Mid-Atlantic) Comprehensive Center (R3CC) capacity-building technical assistance services and support.

Exhibit B.1 State and Local Organizations Participating in Needs-Sensing Activities

State/Jurisdiction	Organization	Organization type
Delaware	Delaware Department of Education*	SEA
	Delaware Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	Parent/Family Organization
	Delaware Charter Schools Network	Charter School Association
	Delaware State Chamber of Commerce	Business Organization
	University of Delaware	Institute of Higher Education
	Rodel Foundation of Delaware*	Education Organization
District of Columbia	Office of the State Superintendent of Education*	SEA
	District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce	Business Organization
	Janney Elementary School PTA	Parent/Family Organization
	Department of Labor	State Department of Labor
Maryland	Maryland State Department of Education	SEA
	Cecil County Public Schools	LEA
	Maryland Chamber of Commerce	Business Organization
	Free State PTA	Parent/Family Organization
	Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools	Charter School Association
	Maryland Department of Labor	State Department of Labor
	Johns Hopkins University*	Institute of Higher Education
New Jersey	New Jersey Department of Education	SEA
	New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association	Charter School Association
	New Jersey Chamber of Commerce	Business Organization
	New Jersey PTA	Parent/Family Organization
	New Jersey Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Business Organization
	Brick Township High School	School
	New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development	State Department of Labor
Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Department of Education*	SEA
	Pittsburgh Public Schools	LEA
	East Stroudsburg Area School District	LEA
	School District of Philadelphia	LEA
	Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools	Charter School Association
	Pennsylvania PTA	Parent/Family Organization
	A+ Schools Pittsburgh	Parent/Family Organization
	Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry	State Department of Labor
* Letters of designation/endorsement and support are included in Part 6, Other Attachments.		



Appendix C: ICF's Practice Profile

ICF Practice Profile

Revised: November 14, 2024



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Purpose

The purpose of this practice profile is to describe our approach to capacity building via the ICF Team. The practice profile is designed to help ICF staff understand what to say and do when providing capacity building services to state and local education agency teams or staff. This document will help state coordinators, technical assistance specialists, subject matter experts, and other partners understand the core values and principles of the approach as well as the practices and behaviors expected throughout the delivery of capacity building. Clear, consistent expectations will enable those providing capacity building services to best help state, regional, and local education agencies learn how to plan, implement, monitor, and refine policies and programs so that they in turn provide high-quality services that improve outcomes for students, educators, and other constituencies.

Practice profiles are a useful way to ensure consistency of practice. Just as educators find value in a clearly articulated practice model, we think that a clearly articulated approach to capacity building will promote our effectiveness. Our goals for articulating an operational model for capacity building practice include:

- Ensuring that our guiding principles permeate all our capacity building services to state, regional, and local education agencies.
- Translating our principles into operational behavior so that principles, and not simply compliance with procedures, guide our capacity building work.
- Describing how our staff can enhance agency capacity during service provision, while ensuring that our technical assistance staff have the flexibility to customize capacity building services to particular project contexts and agency needs.
- Supporting continuous quality improvement (CQI) and consistent practice through an explicit, shared set of expectations.

How This Practice Profile Was Developed

The ICF Team relied on a range of sources to inform development of this document. A design team of education-focused staff members contributed to the practice profile development. The design team began their efforts by conducting a review of published and gray literature about capacity building and technical assistance in education and other human services as well as developing a crosswalk of themes commonly identified across literature review articles. Then, drawing on their experiences assisting state and local education agencies and their knowledge of capacity building and technical assistance, the design team provided expertise and insights from practice throughout the development cycle, offered input about design issues, contributed narrative, and conducted reviews of all materials. Following the creation of a full draft, the group convened a vetting committee consisting of other education staff, staff representing other technical assistance centers prioritizing capacity building, and members of the educational services advisory board. This committee reviewed the draft and participated in a vetting focus group, during which time they responded to prompts designed to solicit their feedback and suggestions for improvement. Finally, the design team analyzed and prioritized feedback from the vetting focus group and conducted a final revision of the practice profile.

How to Use This Practice Profile

The practice profile is designed to help ICF staff understand what to say and do when providing capacity building services to state and local education agency teams or staff.¹ Thus, it focuses on behaviors rather than competencies or subject matter knowledge. To ensure that capacity building services are of high quality and consistent across staff and partners, this profile stipulates the behaviors that constitute desired practice.

Implementing our capacity building approach with integrity and in a manner consistent with our values and principles is both an organizational and individual responsibility. ICF staff and partners should use this profile to translate principles of practice into practice behaviors that achieve desired outcomes. In addition, ICF staff members, in consultation with state coordinators, a supervisor, or a peer, may use this to determine the level of their practice development, and explore which practice areas need improvement.

ICF Team leaders may also use this practice profile to identify areas in which overall practice is substantially developed but needs improvement across the team to develop and implement supports. Generally, this practice profile serves as an important tool to support the continuous improvement of individual and collective practice; we do not intend for it, nor should others use it, to relay judgment or criticism.

Capacity building practices are described at three levels: desired, developmental, and insufficient.

Desired practice:

Occurs when ICF staff fully embody our approach to capacity building. Staff practicing at this level have internalized the approach and apply it consistently, independently, and in a wide range of settings and contexts. They feel comfortable being innovative and flexible within the parameters of the approach and can sustain their practice over time while continuing to grow and improve.

Developmental practice:

Occurs when ICF staff take steps to integrate our approach to capacity building into their work and can apply it in a limited range of settings. Staff have not yet fully internalized the approach but are making efforts to apply it. They may need supervisory consultation or coaching to successfully develop and sustain effective behaviors. Typically, when practice falls into this level, a coaching agenda that targets particular individual behaviors for improvement is used to progress from developmental to desired practice.

¹ ICF serves a variety of educational clients in addition to SEAs, but the profile focuses on SEAs as our most common primary clients. Although we only refer to SEAs, users can also apply statements to other service recipients such as REAs and LEAs, and other agencies.

Insufficient practice:

Occurs when ICF staff demonstrate behaviors that do not reflect our capacity building approach. The practice is called “insufficient” because it will not achieve capacity building goals. Insufficient practice may include the absence or opposite of desired practice. Typically, when practice reaches this level, a plan will be put in place to provide support for prioritized areas for improvement and then engage in coaching, professional learning, and so forth to help the staff member move along the continuum to desired behaviors.

The core capacity building practices profiled here include forming and supporting high-functioning teams, nurturing relationships and exercising creative courage, integrating capacity building into technical assistance, and supporting the sustainability of capacity. Although they are presented sequentially, we recognize that some practices may occur throughout the lifecycle of an initiative or that ICF staff may determine that a particular practice must be repeated. In addition, many behaviors associated with transitioning to sustainable capacity are relevant throughout capacity building service delivery. The following image depicts the four core capacity building practices and the associated behaviors.

Core Capacity Building Practices and Associated Behaviors

Forming and Supporting High-Functioning Teams

- Practices self-awareness and encourages other team members to do the same
- Matches state education agency (SEA) priorities and technical assistance needs with staff experience and expertise
- Ensures ICF Team members model collaboration, responsiveness, respect, and dedication to both the client and internal team
- Ensures engagement among team members
- Fosters an environment that supports group development and preparation for changes
- Prepares for changes to teams
- Ensures supports and structures are in place to facilitate high-quality teams

Nurturing Relationships and Exercising Creative Courage

- Communicates clearly and consistently
- Listens actively
- Is responsive
- Is well-prepared
- Fosters sense-making of data in a safe environment
- Is humble (is a partner, not just an expert)
- Effectively nudges clients' thinking
- Creates and fosters an environment that allows for processing fear and discomfort

Integrating Capacity Building into Technical Assistance

- Co-constructs initiatives
- Identifies specific capacities for development
- Tailors and contextualizes services
- Builds on agency strengths
- Coaches agency staff
- Sees the system—and our system within it
- Employs systems thinking
- Empowers participants
- Fosters continuous quality improvement

Supporting the Sustainability of Capacity

- Communicates clearly from the start that this is capacity building—not "extra hands"
- Co-develops multiyear sustainability plan
- Co-develops metrics for sustainability
- Facilitates SEA team reflection about capacity to lead this and other similar work

Forming and Supporting High-Functioning Teams

Definition:

Because capacity building for the ICF Team involves a number of key individuals across multiple organizations (state and local education agency staff, state coordinators and technical assistance specialists, partner organization staff and technical assistance specialists, etc.), we require a unique approach to forming and supporting high-functioning teams that can not only be effective in our work, but also to ensure that the other practices in this profile are possible, sustainable, and embrace the interrelationship among equity,² complexity, user-centered design, and technical assistance. Teaming involves making decisions about which staff members have particular expertise, as well as interpersonal skills that lend themselves to building relationships, integrating capacity building into technical assistance, and supporting the development of systems conditions that increase capacity to bring about more equitable outcomes.

Contribution of this practice to capacity building:

Having individuals with subject matter expertise and lived professional experience are key to technical assistance, but capacity building in technical assistance requires a much more interpersonal approach. Building an ICF Team of individuals with the right experience, perspectives, collaborative spirit, and commitment to fostering learning and building client agency not only leverages the strengths of team members, but also creates a positive environment for continued learning, self-awareness, collaboration, risk-taking, and mutual support.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
Practices self-awareness and encourages other team members to do the same.	Recognizes and redresses biases and privileges within self and supports such practices among all team members.	Recognizes and redresses biases and privileges within self and supports such practices among some but not all team members.	Fails to recognize and redress biases and privileges within self, or to support such practice among any team members.
	Acknowledges, processes, and manages thoughts and feelings so that service provision is as client-focused as possible.	Sometimes acknowledges, processes, and manages thoughts and feelings so that service provision is as client-focused as possible.	Fails to acknowledge, process, and manage thoughts and feelings so that service provision is as client-focused as possible.

² By equity, we mean ensuring that ICF helps SEAs plan and take action on policies, programs, and practices that (1) improve access to high-quality educational experiences for students who belong to groups that experience ongoing and systemic obstacles to such access and (2) improve the working conditions of all educators, particularly those who experience marginalization.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
Matches state education agency (SEA) priorities and technical assistance needs with staff experience and expertise.	Works with SEA staff to clearly understand their goals and areas where they need support and assistance.	Has some understanding of SEA goals and priorities, and where they need support and assistance.	Has little understanding of SEA goals and priorities, and where they need support and assistance.
	Supports the team in consistently implementing a process to actively seek diverse identities, roles, and skill sets when building a team to work on particular projects.	Inconsistently supports the team in implementing a process to actively seek diverse identities, roles, and skill sets when building a team to work on particular projects.	Does not support the team in implementing a process to actively seek diverse identities, roles, and skill sets.
	Has exceptional professional and personal experience and expertise necessary to support all of the SEA requests for support and assistance.	Has a range of necessary professional and personal experiences and expertise to support some of the SEAs requests for support and assistance.	Has little to no necessary professional and personal experience or expertise to support the SEAs requests for support and assistance.
Ensures ICF Team members model collaboration, responsiveness, respect, and dedication to both the client and internal team.	Consistently positions SEA staff as “experts.”	Sometimes positions themselves as the expert over SEA clients.	Does not value SEA staff experience or expertise.
	Consistently engages with others to brainstorm, problem-solve, and offer support to meet common goals.	Sometimes approaches the work in isolation; may see their role as “doing for or instead of” the client rather than “with.”	Often works in isolation, does not collaborate, lacks respect for others, and has no trust of other team members.
	Consistently responds to both clients and teammates in a timely and reliable way.	Sometimes responds to both clients and teammates in a timely and reliable way.	Does not feel accountable for responsiveness and timeliness.
	Consistently presumes positive intent and shows respect through words and actions.	Sometimes does not presume positive intent and uses words or actions that do not show respect.	Does not presume positive intent of SEA staff or teammates.
	Consistently reflective, acknowledges shortcomings, and honors others’ time and ideas.	Inconsistently reflective or able to acknowledge shortcomings; does not consistently honor others’ time and ideas.	Does not reflect, acknowledge shortcomings or mistakes, or honor others’ time and ideas.
	Consistently shows dedication to the client, the team, and the work by being on time and meeting deadlines and quality standards.	Occasionally submits work late, is late to meetings, or does less-than-stellar work.	Often late to meetings, misses deadlines, or does poor-quality work.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Embraces capacity building as a mutually beneficial learning opportunity. Dedicated to personal and team excellence.	Does not always see capacity building as a mutually beneficial learning opportunity. Inconsistently dedicated to personal and team excellence.	Approaches the work with SEA clients as low-level tasks done for the client, rather than with them. Has no genuine commitment to excellence.
	Highly adaptable and flexible and is highly communicative.	Occasionally resists having to pivot, does not consistently communicate well about the progress of work or challenges encountered, or does not consistently communicate through proper channels.	Not adaptable or flexible; does not communicate well or does not communicate through the proper channels.
	Demonstrates courage to identify and process emotions by implementing protocols that invite ALL members to share tensions, fears, discomforts that are present in their work.	Inconsistently demonstrates courage to identify and process emotions by implementing protocols that invite team members to share tensions, fears, and discomforts that are present in their work.	Demonstrates little or no courage to identify and process emotions by implementing protocols that invite team members to share tensions, fears, and discomforts that are present in their work.
Ensures engagement among team members.	Actively participates in the work— both in meetings and in the collaborative development of deliverables.	Inconsistent engagement in meetings and in deliverable development.	Allows others on the team to do the bulk of the work or requires others to intervene to ensure the work is completed.
	Creatively and collaboratively solves problems together with the SEA client and internal team.	Sometimes makes unilateral decisions when faced with a problem.	Has little to no collaborative problem-solving skills or interest.
	Works toward common goals, and seeks and gives feedback along the way.	Sometimes focuses on quick fixes; inconsistently seeks and provides feedback to others.	Has little to no opportunity or encouragement to seek or give feedback or is not interested in working toward common goal.
	Takes a shared approach toward establishing brave and safe places to ask for support and learn from mistakes.	Inconsistently takes a shared approach to establishing brave and safe places to ask for support or learn from mistakes.	Does not take a shared approach to establishing brave and safe places.
	Encourages discussion about the gap between current reality in the SEA and the potential each member senses.	Inconsistently encourages discussion about the gap between current reality in the SEA and the potential each member senses.	Does not encourage discussion about the gap between current reality in the SEA and the potential each member senses.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Collaboratively assigns decision-making authority to team members AND defines specific constraints to their decision-making authority before beginning and throughout the initiative.	Collaboratively assigns decision-making authority to team members but does not define specific constraints to their decision-making authority.	Does not collaboratively assign decision-making authority to team members or define specific constraints to their decision-making authority.
Fosters an environment that supports group development and preparation for changes.	Embraces all stages of group development (i.e., members getting to know one another, members experiencing disagreement or conflicts as work is solidified, members establishing norms and expectations, and members working to achieve the agreed-upon goals).	Embraces some but not all stages of group development, leading to an under-functioning group.	Fails to embrace any stages of group development, leading to a non-functioning group.
	Prepares for unexpected staff transitions (team members, leadership, etc.) by helping to develop contingency plans in place for maintaining continuity in the work, onboarding new members, and using a shared repository for key documents.	Helps to develop some contingency plans and/or does not appropriately operationalize them when needed.	Fails to generate or put in place any contingency plans for staffing transitions.
	As transitions occur, helps ensure plans are operationalized swiftly, helping minimize any negative impact on efforts underway.	Inconsistently helps to ensure plans are operationalized swiftly, resulting in some uncertainties that are eventually resolved.	Does not help to ensure transition plans are operationalized.
Prepares for changes to teams.	Uses feedback and data to identify potential issues with the work and with teaming structures.	Some feedback and data are used to identify issues; other times issues are ignored.	Issues are ignored regardless of the severity.
	Willing to have difficult conversations with clients to determine necessary changes to the work and staff, including navigating personality conflicts and terminating projects due to changes in client priorities.	Some difficult conversations are possible, but not others.	No difficult conversations are possible.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
Works within supports and structures in place to facilitate high-quality teams.	Embraces relationship building and trust with teammates and SEA clients.	Inconsistently embraces relationship building, so trust is sometimes fragile.	Little to no relationship building so trust is almost nonexistent.
	Effectively participates in regular check-ins or meetings to communicate progress and understands necessary shifts or pivots with both the SEA client and the internal team.	Inconsistently participates in regular check-ins and meetings, so there are sometimes questions about the status of the work or opportunities to pivot are missed.	Meeting participation is haphazard, and the status of the work is often unknown or stalled.
	Effectively understands roles, responsibilities, outcomes, and deadlines among teammates and SEA clients.	Inconsistently understands roles and responsibilities as well as outcomes and deadlines, so some tasks are overlooked or there is redundancy in the work.	Does not understand their role or responsibilities; outcomes and deadlines are ignored or nonexistent.
	Has the right expertise to support the work.	Lacks some of the expertise to effectively do the work.	Lacks necessary expertise to adequately provide capacity building.
	Follows clear lines of authority and communication with both the SEA client and the internal team.	Inconsistently follows lines of communication and authority sometimes cause confusion for the internal team and the SEA client.	Does not follow lines of authority or communication.
	Celebrates successes with both the SEA client and the internal team.	Celebrates successes sometimes but ignores other times.	Never celebrates success.
	Follows a process for resolving disagreements, reaching consensus, and making decisions.	Sometimes follows a process for resolving disagreements, reaching consensus, and making decisions happen, but there is no clear process.	Lets disagreements fester, does not follow a process for reaching consensus, and does not make decisions to solve issues.
	Embraces opportunities for additional support, and is open to coaching, additional training, or changes to assignments.	Sometimes embraces opportunities for additional support.	Not open to opportunities for additional support.

Nurturing Relationships and Exercising Creative Courage

Definition:

Nurturing relationships encompasses both the early efforts to create relationships with education agency staff and the ongoing processes of developing those relationships. This includes facilitating clear and positive introductions of the ICF Team and its staff and establishing the rapport that will serve as the foundation for trusting relationships between SEA and ICF staff. It also involves the ongoing process of maintaining trusting relationships between SEA and ICF staff through intentional activities such as regular communication, active listening, responsiveness to requests, and accessibility.

Contribution of this practice to capacity building:

Nurturing strong, productive relationships with SEA staff can support candid communication about agency needs, capacities, and issues, which in turn enables effective needs assessment, work planning, and service delivery. In addition, such relationships may enhance the ICF Team's ability to continually affirm its credibility, model collaboration, and deliver services as designed.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
Communicates clearly and consistently.	Uses concise and direct language but does not oversimplify complex issues.	Language can be wordy or indirect at times, occasionally uses jargon.	Uses a lot of jargon and unfamiliar language, talks in circles, and oversimplifies complex issues.
	Defines and highlights exactly what is meant or the most important points (using multiple channels).	Occasionally provides definitions and highlights the most essential information; talks in binaries (good/bad, success/failure).	Does not provide definitions or highlight the most essential information; only uses a singular mode of communication.
	Provides contextual information to ensure understanding.	Occasionally provides context.	Does not provide context.
	Communicates both proactively and responsively.	Communication is not regularly proactive and does not always provide the response that is needed.	Communication is only reactionary.
	Consistently willing to raise difficult issues/topics.	Inconsistent in addressing difficult topics.	Avoids difficult topics.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Communicates frequently or on a regular basis.	The frequency and regularity of communication varies.	Communication is infrequent and irregular.
	Is willing to repeat or rephrase essential information.	Occasionally repeats or rephrases essential information.	Does not repeat or rephrase essential information.
	Checks for understanding.	Occasionally checks for understanding.	Does not check for understanding.
Listens actively.	Is attentive and demonstrates listening (eye contact, avoids distractions in environment and internal thoughts, acknowledgement through body language).	Inconsistent in demonstrating active listening.	Does not demonstrate active listening.
	Observes speaker's body language.	Occasionally observes speaker's body language.	Focuses on one aspect of speaker's message or spends time thinking of response instead of listening; ignores speaker's body language.
	Listens for both feelings and content, and invites team members to reflect on and process their thoughts and emotions aloud.	Listens for content only and does not support all team members to share aloud their perspectives.	Does not support any team members in sharing aloud their perspectives.
	Allows the speaker to finish.	Occasionally interrupts.	Interrupts without recognition or apology.
	Paraphrases, summarizes, and reflects without judgement ("What I heard you say is ...").	Occasionally paraphrases and immediately provides a response.	Does not paraphrase and provides a response or solution instead.
	Asks clarifying questions ("What do you mean when you say ...?").	Occasionally asks clarifying questions.	Does not ask clarifying questions.
Is responsive.	Responds to SEA in a timely manner.	Typically responds to SEA in a timely manner but is somewhat inconsistent.	Does not respond to SEA in a timely manner and may not respond at all.
	Thoroughly addresses all questions or points.	Partially addresses some questions or points.	Does not provide responses to all points and/or causes more confusion.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Questions are asked in response to observations of new needs, contexts, resources, and so forth, and are key to reflection as well as planning in order to effectively pivot technical assistance.	Technical assistance may be adjusted but not fully effective because either not all questions were asked or the wrong questions were asked in response to observations, contexts, and resources.	Not observing new needs, contexts, resources; not able to pivot technical assistance.
Is well-prepared.	Reviews timeline, actions steps, or notes from last meeting to continue the conversation or check in on what has occurred between meetings. Familiarizes self with relevant data and reports about the topic under discussion.	Comes to meetings with agenda and other materials but does not connect these back to prior meetings; not as familiar as required with data and reports.	Comes to meetings with some of these things, but they are incomplete; not familiar at all with data and reports.
	Communicates in advance to answer questions and ensure that the client shares a vision for upcoming engagements.	Little communication in advance to answer or ask relevant questions or to help shape common vision.	No advance communication.
	Provides access to needed resources, research, tools, and protocols.	Not sharing all resources.	No sharing of resources.
	Focused and alert during meetings and other engagements.	Distracted or multitasking during meetings.	Not engaged during meetings.
	Supports others in being prepared with regular check-ins or offers support—especially before major deadlines or events.	Check-ins are sporadic.	No regular check-ins.
	Collaborates with the client to draft agenda/purpose before meetings and ensure the right people are invited to meetings.	Inconsistently collaborates with the client to draft meeting agendas and set the purpose.	Creates agendas in isolation.
	In advance of meetings, sends the agenda, purpose, points of discussion and decision, open-ended questions, and framework for intended next steps.	Occasionally sends out relevant materials in advance of meetings.	Fails to send materials out prior to meetings.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
Fosters sense-making of data in a safe environment.	Invites team members and clients to express their synthesis or interpretation of relevant data in an environment of trust.	Invites some but not all members to express their interpretation of relevant data.	Fails to provide a trusting environment for members to express their interpretations of relevant data.
Is humble (is a partner, not just an expert).	Cultivates a safe climate to ask questions and be honest.	Offers solutions without adequate listening/learning.	Assumes position of expert.
	Spends time learning about the SEA's situation and/context.	Completes tasks without honoring the importance of learning together.	Provides solutions without consultation or opportunity to listen and learn.
	Assumes a learner mindset; asks questions.	Calls on past work for solutions without learning the context of current issues.	Takes over tasks.
	Works shoulder-to-shoulder so both parties are learning together.	Meetings are often rushed with little time for regular reflection on the work.	Meetings are checklists of items.
	Assists agency team to reflect together about the issues at hand; provides time for team discussion and reflection and collaboration.	Provides minimal opportunities for team discussion, reflection, and collaboration.	Lectures rather than promoting team discussion.
	Includes stakeholders with lived experience.	Few members of the team have lived experience; experiences of team members are not reflective of the goal of the work.	Lived experience is not considered at all.
	Collaborates with agency and team to set norms.	Norms are set without collaboration with the agency.	No norms are used.
	Reflects on and acknowledges bias.	Little acknowledgement of bias.	Bias is not considered.
	Is willing to be vulnerable and acknowledge defensiveness.	Inconsistently willing to be vulnerable.	Unwilling to be vulnerable.
	Asks questions and models a culture of questioning.	Questions are asked, but often lack depth or are not asked often.	Questions are surface-level and task-oriented.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Helps create safety by encouraging belonging; identifies, focuses on, and maximizes the strengths of others.	Inconsistently helps to create safety or belonging.	No effort or consideration of creating safety, belonging, or identities.
	Honors SEA staff as experts in their fields by consistently asking for and valuing their input and perspectives.	Recognizes some but not all SEA team members as being experts.	Does not acknowledge any SEA staff or other team members as experts in their respective fields.
	Consistently creates space for deep listening to learn the perspectives of those most impacted by and involved in the initiative.	Sometimes create space for deep listening to learn the perspectives of those most impacted by and involved in the initiative.	Rarely or never creates space for deep listening to learn to seek the perspectives of those most impacted by and involved in the initiative.
Effectively nudges clients' thinking.	Cultivates a safe climate to ask questions and be honest; embodies genuine service-consultant mindset. Asks reflective, prompting questions to both learn and evoke awareness about needs related to enhancing knowledge or skills.	Asks closed questions with answers in mind and/or judgment of feasibility; offers resources not tied to specific need or request.	Judges client's ideas or plans; makes assumptions about knowledge/skill level of client; provides prescriptive solutions/resources.
	Coaches and is intentional; employs purposeful questioning to spark reflection, innovation, and action.	Little coaching with intentional questioning to spark reflection.	No purposeful questioning or coaching.
	Consistently holds honest conversations with clients about which groups are closest to the problem, which groups hold the least power, and how to act to shift power and agency to those who experience inequity.	Occasionally holds honest conversations about which groups are closest to the problem, which groups hold the least power, and how to act to shift power and agency to those who experience inequity.	No honest conversations; does not prompt client to consider the equity implications of any planned policies, programs, or practices, or the impact on marginalized groups.
	Is responsive to needs (spoken and unspoken) and discusses potential resources and research that the client can choose to request or refuse.	Is sometimes responsive to needs and discusses potential resources and research.	Is nonresponsive to needs and fails to discuss potential resources and research.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Asks targeted questions to help client consider the equity implications of any planned policies, programs, or practices as well as the impact on marginalized groups.	Sometimes asks targeted questions.	Fails to ask targeted questions.
	Consistently prompts clients to better understand their stakeholders, the system in which they operate, and what creates inequity in their system.	Occasionally prompts clients to better understand their stakeholders, the system in which they operate, and what creates inequity in their system.	Prompts clients to create solutions without the input or insights of the most marginalized or underrepresented groups in their system.
Creates and fosters an environment that allows for processing fear and discomfort.	Routinely creates/holds space for processing fear and discomfort, including establishment of protocols for identifying and exploring their sources and reflecting on the impact of fear and discomfort.	Occasionally creates/holds space for processing fear and discomfort, establishes protocols, and reflects on impact.	Never creates/holds space for processing fear and discomfort or fails to use established protocols for naming and exploring their sources or fails to reflect on the impact of fear and discomfort.

Integrating Capacity Building into Technical Assistance

Definition:

Whereas technical assistance is the process of providing targeted expertise to help agencies address challenges and accomplish goals, capacity building refers to the longer-term process of helping agencies acquire their own capacities to address challenges and accomplish goals in the future without ICF assistance. The capacity-building process requires the ICF Team to partner with agencies to co-create initiatives that respond to real and immediate pressures for change and to strengthen their ability to make and sustain positive change to programs, policies, practices, and processes. To do this, the ICF Team co-creates initiatives with agencies, operating more as collaborators than vendors—as co-learners rather than as prescriptive experts. Capacity-building services should be grounded in existing agency strengths, informed by systems thinking, embedded in the daily work of the agency, and directed toward the empowerment of agency staff to achieve their goals. In addition, ICF should help agencies to reflect on what they are learning throughout the capacity-building process and how their strengthened capacities could be applied to other projects or challenges.

Contribution of this practice to capacity building:

Education agencies are better equipped to pursue their goals if the support they receive weaves together opportunities to enhance substantive knowledge and skills with opportunities to build sustainable organizational strength. In other words, implementation of programs and policies is more likely to succeed when education leaders can learn not only about the technical aspects of such programs and policies but also about how to establish, staff, support, and continuously improve such efforts.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
Co-constructs initiatives.	Embraces the importance of co-constructing initiatives by the agency, ICF Team, and partners.	Inconsistently embraces the importance of co-constructing initiatives.	Does not value the co-construction of initiatives.
	Helps to co-create initiative goals, activities, action steps, interventions, and meeting agendas with the agency.	Consults with the agency and team about initiative goals, activities, action steps, interventions, and meeting agendas, but sometimes finalizes decisions without agency participation or sometimes determines next steps in isolation.	Creates initiative goals, activities, action steps, interventions, and meeting agendas in isolation.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Demonstrates respect for the agency's expertise throughout the initiative.	Occasionally demonstrates respect for the agency's expertise.	Demonstrates little regard for the agency's expertise throughout the initiative.
	Understands and can articulate the voluntary nature of service delivery as well as the CC's flexibility to adapt to emerging needs and priorities.	Understands and can explain the voluntary nature of service delivery, but not the CC's ability to adapt to emerging agency needs and priorities.	Fails to understand and explain the voluntary nature of service delivery as well as the CC's ability to adapt to emerging agency needs and priorities.
	As part of initiative co-construction, embeds usage/explanation of capacity-building language to ensure agency staff have a solid understanding of terms and how that shapes the initiatives.	Minimal or cursory usage and/or explanation of capacity-building language; minimal attention given to ensuring agency staff's understanding of capacity-building language.	No explicit usage or explanation of capacity-building language when co-constructing initiatives; no efforts are made to ensure agency staff understand capacity-building language that is used.
Identifies specific capacities for development.	Helps to determine, in partnership with agency staff and team, which capacities (human, organizational, policy, and resource as well as the capacity to build capacity in others [meta-capacity]) to target.	Engages agency staff and team in discussing capacities to target but fails to link these to activities.	Fails to engage agency staff and team in determining which capacities (human, organizational, policy, resource as well as meta-capacity) to target.
	In coordination with the agency, specifies the content associated with each targeted capacity (e.g., knowledge about what content, a process to accomplish what activity).	Recommends content to be associated with each targeted capacity and requests agency staff approval of such.	Does not involve agency staff in specifying the content associated with each targeted capacity.
	Helps to design service activities that help the agency meet its specified initiative goals AND that enhance targeted capacities.	Helps to design service activities that help the agency meet its specified initiative goals but that do not appear to enhance targeted capacities.	Helps to design service activities that do not appear to help the agency meet its specified initiative goals or enhance targeted capacities.
	Helps the agency understand how initiative activities support effective capacity building.	Occasionally mentions that initiative activities are intended to support capacity building but does not explain further.	Fails to help the agency understand how initiative activities support capacity building.
Tailors and contextualizes services.	Clearly aligns services to agency needs and the actual work of agency staff.	Communicates some links between services and agency needs and work.	Fails to align services to agency needs and work.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Consistently employs language that agency staff use.	Occasionally employs language that agency staff use.	Does not adopt language that agency staff use.
	Uses multiple means of engagement, representation, expression, and action to ensure inclusion of all participants.	Sometimes uses more than one means of engaging and communicating with clients.	Replies principally on one method for engaging and communicating with clients.
	Meets agency staff where they are.	Occasionally differentiates services according to agency staff needs or capacities.	Provides services that are undifferentiated by agency staff needs or capacities.
	Solicits agency staff feedback and monitors progress in an ongoing manner, calibrating technical assistance services accordingly.	Monitors progress but does not solicit agency staff feedback.	Neither solicits agency staff feedback nor monitors progress.
	Finds ways to build capacity even when performing tasks that do not seem amenable to capacity building (e.g., when co-developing a guidance document, engages the agency in planning not just for dissemination but for use and support, etc.).	Mentions ways to enhance capacity when performing tasks that do not seem amenable to capacity building but does not implement them.	Does not attempt to find ways to build capacity when performing tasks that do not appear amenable to capacity building.
Builds on agency strengths.	Treats agency staff as experts in their own content areas and organizations.	Inconsistently treats agency staff as experts in their own content areas and organizations.	Treats agency staff as novices.
	Assists agency staff to identify organizational strengths and assets that can support initiative goals and activities.	Assists agency staff to identify organizational strengths and assets but does not help clarify how these can support goals and activities.	Fails to help agency staff identify organizational strengths and assets that can support initiative goals and activities.
Coaches agency staff.	Combines teaching, modeling, assessing, and feedback.	Communicates content, sometimes offering modeling, assessment, or feedback.	Communicates content, but fails to combine modeling, assessment, and feedback.
	Explains the rationale for suggesting specific approaches to address agency needs.	Sometimes explains the rationale for suggesting specific approaches to address agency needs.	Does not explain the rationale for suggesting specific approaches to addressing agency needs.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Facilitates agency staff reflection about their learning and how they might apply or adapt such learning to new situations.	Facilitates agency staff reflection about their learning but doesn't help them consider how they might apply or adapt such learning to new situations.	Neglects to facilitate agency staff reflection about their learning and how they might apply or adapt such learning to new situations.
	Creates opportunities for agency staff to integrate new knowledge, skills, resources, systems, and processes into practice.	Prompts agency staff to discuss how they might integrate new knowledge, skills, resources, systems, and processes into practice.	Provides no opportunities for agency staff to integrate new knowledge, skills, resources, systems, and processes into practice.
	Helps agency staff transfer and apply new capacities to other projects or challenges.	Encourages agency staff to transfer and apply new capacities to other projects or challenges but does not monitor or assist.	Does not help agency staff transfer and apply new capacities to other projects or challenges.
	Seeks to understand all agency staff's preferred ways to learn and internalize knowledge.	Seeks to understand some agency staff's preferred ways to learn and internalize knowledge.	Does not seek to understand all agency staff's preferred ways to learn and internalize knowledge.
	Presents multiple (verbal or written) ways for agency staff to demonstrate learning and knowledge.	Presents only one way for agency staff to demonstrate learning and knowledge.	Presents no opportunity for agency staff to demonstrate learning and knowledge.
Sees the system—and our position within it.	Consistently prompts clients to name identity-related patterns of inequity they see in their system/context.	Sometimes prompts clients to name identity-related patterns of inequity they see in their system/context.	Rarely or never prompts clients to name identity-related patterns of inequity they see in their system/context.
	Consistently examines the structures, policies, processes, and practice that have produced and sustained inequity over time.	Inconsistently examines the structures, policies, processes, and practice that have produced and sustained inequity over time.	Rarely or never examines the structures, policies, processes, and practice that have produced and sustained inequity.
	Creates space for honest reflection of how our (practitioner and client) identities, privileges, and positional power shape what we see and hear, and how we perceive challenges.	Sometimes provides opportunities for honest reflections and discussions of how identities, privileges, and positional power shape what we see and hear, and how we perceive challenges.	Rarely or never engages in discussion about how our identities, privileges, and positional power shape what we see and hear, and how we perceive challenges.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Consistently pushes client to notice—before, during, and after design of the initiative—the ways in which they can use positional authority to shift power to those historically oppressed, silenced, or excluded.	Occasionally pushes client to notice—before, during, and after design of the initiative—the ways in which they can use positional authority to shift power to those historically oppressed, silenced, or excluded.	Rarely or never pushes client to notice—before, during, and after design of the initiative—the ways in which they can use positional authority to shift power to those historically oppressed, silenced, or excluded.
	Maintains action-oriented leadership while recognizing historical and current inequities within the system.	Recognizes historical and current inequities within the system but does not persist along the best route for action.	Disassociates from the challenge or does not articulate the historical and current inequities within the system.
Employs systems thinking.	Assists agency staff to examine relevant issues in context.	Assists agency staff to examine relevant issues, but without reference to contextual factors.	Ignores relevant issues and does not assist agency staff to examine them.
	Regularly facilitates agency staff reflection about interdependencies among offices, teams, and partners.	Occasionally facilitates agency staff reflection about interdependencies among offices, teams, and partners.	Fails to engage agency staff in reflection about interdependencies among offices, teams, and partners.
	Encourages agency staff to maintain a comprehensive, systems-level view.	Sometimes reminds agency staff to maintain a comprehensive, systems-level view.	Neglects to encourage agency staff to maintain a comprehensive, systems-level view.
Empowers participants.	Prepares agency staff to tackle challenges and pursue change once ICF assistance ends.	Mentions that ICF assistance will end but does not engage agency staff in considering how to proceed without ICF support.	Encourages agency staff to develop a dependence on ICF support.
	Demonstrates confidence in the ability of agency staff to apply learnings to address challenges and pursue ambitious goals.	Communicates mixed messages about the ability of agency staff to apply learnings to address challenges and pursue ambitious goals.	Demonstrates skepticism about the ability of agency staff to apply learnings to address challenges and pursue ambitious goals.
	Fosters opportunities for clients to process what they are learning and reflect on/articulate how they will use/apply what they have learned.	Minimal or cursory opportunities are provided for clients to process, reflect on, and articulate what they are learning and how to apply it.	ICF Team does all tasks in isolation, without building skills and knowledge of SEA staff; no opportunities for client processing, reflection, or articulating what they are learning or how it will be applied.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Encourages agency staff to “own” the work and establish shared understandings to ensure a through line for maintaining momentum.	Minimal attention is given to ensuring shared understandings; little opportunity for agency staff to demonstrate “owning” the work.	No focus on ensuring shared understandings, client ownership, or a through line for maintaining momentum.
Fosters continuous quality improvement (CQI).	Embeds opportunities for reflection and discussion about continuous improvement and supports agency staff CQI practices in their work with their clients.	Embeds opportunities for reflection and discussion about continuous improvement but does not support or encourage agency staffs’ use of such practices.	Does not include opportunities for reflection and discussion related to continuous improvement or encourage agency staffs’ use of such practices.

Supporting the Sustainability of Capacity

Definition:

Effectively transitioning to end service delivery begins early in ICF initiatives by exploring the agency's vision for the future. It continues by setting goals; establishing the type, intensity, frequency, and duration of services; and performing ongoing monitoring of changes to achieve goals. As the agency approaches the planned end of service, ICF and agency staff work together to review and validate progress as well as plan for sustained, enhanced capacity. Effective transitioning requires careful collaboration with the agency to determine when and how to end services.

Contribution of this practice to capacity building:

Working with agency staff to plan for the end of services helps agencies understand the capacity-building mission of the ICF Team and sustain such enhancements after ICF assistance ends. Transition and sustainability planning supports stability and sustainability of strengthened capacity and can help diminish the risk of future threats to capacity.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
Communicates clearly from the start that this is capacity building, not “extra hands.”	Communicates clearly and regularly that the ICF Team mission is to strengthen agency capacity to achieve goals.	Communicates once that the ICF Team mission is to strengthen agency capacity to achieve goals.	Fails to communicate that the ICF Team mission is to strengthen agency capacity to achieve goals.
	Reiterates ICF and SEA roles in an ongoing manner to maintain role clarity.	Reiterates ICF and SEA roles once or twice.	Does not reiterate ICF and SEA roles in an ongoing manner.
	Determines expected capacity outcomes in collaboration with agency staff.	Determines expected capacity outcomes without collaboration with agency staff.	Does not identify capacity outcomes.
	Engages agency staff in discussions about how ICF workplan activities strengthen agency capacity to achieve goals.	Explains how ICF workplan activities strengthen agency capacity to achieve goals but fails to engage agency staff in discussion.	Does not help agency staff understand how ICF workplan activities strengthen agency capacity to achieve goals.
Co-develops multiyear sustainability plan.	Articulates the importance of sustaining capacity and communicates that sustainability planning is an important part of ICF assistance.	Mentions the importance of sustaining capacity but does not reference sustainability planning as an important part of ICF assistance.	Neglects to communicate the importance of sustaining capacity and that sustainability planning is an important part of ICF assistance.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Facilitates discussions about agency progress and capacity.	Describes agency progress and capacity but does not inquire about agency staff perspectives.	Does not engage agency staff in discussion about their progress and capacity.
	Engages agency staff in discussion about their vision for sustaining capacity in conjunction with the SEA's strategic plan, vision/mission, and other relevant priorities.	Communicates a vision for sustaining capacity without soliciting input from agency staff.	Does not engage agency staff in discussion about their vision for sustaining capacity.
	Assists agency staff to articulate sustainability objectives, strategies, action steps, timelines, persons responsible for tasks, and ways to determine progress.	Refers agency staff to resources for learning about strategies and supports to sustain capacity but does not assist them in identifying which to employ.	Fails to assist agency staff to identify sustainability objectives, strategies, action steps, timelines, persons responsible for tasks, and ways to determine progress.
	Guides agency staff through a sustainability planning process, to include transition away from ICF support.	Assists agency staff to plan transition away from ICF support but does not guide them through a sustainability planning process.	Guides agency staff through neither sustainability nor transition planning.
Co-develops metrics for sustainability.	Includes multiple voices and ensures those impacted are involved in planning, decision-making, and measuring impact.	Involves some but not all of those impacted in planning and decision-making.	Fails to include multiple voices; does not ensure those impacted are included in planning and decision-making.
	Mines for patterns, insights, and experiences that reveal the needs of the people closest to the initiative.	Occasionally mines for patterns, insights, and experiences that reveal the needs of the people closest to the initiative.	Develops metrics that are solely quantitative and (the team) cannot articulate the needs of the people closest to the initiative.
	Collaboratively works with SEA staff to identify/create/employ formal and informal methods to obtain ongoing feedback about sustainability of results.	Has only minimal input by SEA staff in planning for feedback; collects infrequent feedback related to sustainability progression.	Does not engage SEA staff in identification/creation/employment of feedback methods; fails to capture feedback.
	Collaboratively works with SEA staff to develop appropriate and realistic benchmarks to document sustainability.	Has only minimal input from SEA staff in setting benchmarks; sets insufficient benchmarks.	Does not engage SEA staff in development of benchmarks; fails to develop benchmarks.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Collaboratively works with SEA staff to identify needed systems, structures, policies, and resources necessary to support expansion, adaptation, and sustainability.	Has only minimal input from SEA staff regarding needed components for sustainability; insufficient identification of needed components.	Does not engage SEA staff in identifying needed systems, structures, policies, resources; does not identify needed systems, structures, policies, resources.
	Ensures that technical assistance includes a focus on services at the stability stage, where feasible, to help ensure lasting gains in capacity.	Technical assistance services are minimally related to stability and sustainability.	Fails to include services focusing on stability.
	Ensures that technical assistance includes a focus on transfer of skills and tasks to support SEA sustainability.	Minimal opportunities are provided for SEA staff transfer of skills.	Fails to build in transfer of skills/tasks to support SEA stability.
	Collaboratively plans and implements monitoring, evaluation, CQI, and communications/marketing activities that demonstrate the value of the initiative.	Minimal involvement by SEA staff in planning and implementing the activities; sporadic implementation of all four areas.	Does not include opportunities for SEA staff to take ownership/ demonstrate proficiency; does not engage SEA staff in planning and implementing activities; fails to implement all four areas.
Facilitates SEA team reflection about capacity to lead this and other similar work.	Fosters a positive, safe environment conducive to candid conversations about SEA capacity, including areas of strength to build on and areas for growth.	Insufficient opportunities are provided to discuss SEA capacity strengths/growth areas in SEA capacity; does not ensure agency staff feel secure enough to provide candid insights, especially related to areas of need.	Fails to provide a positive, safe environment with SEA staff; fails to include conversations about sustainability planning as part of service delivery.
	Discussions include the application of a sustainability rubric to map sustainability.	Discussions mention a sustainability rubric could be helpful but limited use of sustainability rubric.	A sustainability rubric is not used.
	Strives to reach a consensus with SEA staff on readiness to transition to sustainability.	Provides minimal/insufficient attention and time regarding a sustainability transition.	Fails to build consensus on sustainability readiness.
	Employs asset-based, inclusive language when communicating with SEA staff about sustaining capacity.	Communications are not consistently focused on asset-based, inclusive language.	Does not employ asset-based or inclusive language in communications with SEA staff.

Behaviors	Desired Use	Developmental Use	Insufficient Use
	Models and shares responsibility with SEA staff for planning/ implementing sustainability efforts.	Insufficient or intermittent modeling or sharing responsibility with SEA staff.	Fails to model or share responsibility with SEA staff for sustainability efforts.
	Collaboratively carries out SWOT analyses with SEA staff to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to sustainability.	Minimal involvement by SEA staff in planning for and conducting SWOT analyses; SWOT planning is not completed at the appropriate times.	Fails to conduct any type of SWOT analysis and discussion.
	Collaboratively works with SEA staff to identify potential solutions for sustainability challenges (plans for contingencies).	Minimal involvement by SEA staff in identification of solutions.	Fails to involve SEA staff in collaborative identification of solutions for sustainability challenges.
	Works with SEA staff to identify the commitments needed to sustain newly-built capacity.	Insufficient attention is given to identifying solutions to sustainability challenges.	Fails to include any discussion of solutions to sustainability challenges.

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Appendix D: Strategies for High-Leverage Problems [PR#1, AR#1, AR#2]

Evidence-Based Literacy: Promoting literacy instruction based on evidence to ensure that proven methods based in the science of reading will be used to help our students learn to read ^[46]

Data and Evidence

2024 NAEP National and Mid-Atlantic Region Proficiency Results ^[47] show that in every Mid-Atlantic state and jurisdiction, fewer than half of students were at or above Proficient in reading for grade 4 or grade 8:

State	4th Grade	8th Grade
	Reading	Reading
National	30%	29%
DE	26%	23%
DC	30%	25%
MD	34%	33%
NJ	38%	38%
PA	33%	31%

High-Leverage Problems and Priorities by State with Data/Evidence, R3CC Response and Intended Capacity Gains/Outcomes

DE	<p>Data/Evidence: Delaware faces educator shortages, particularly in high-need districts and certification areas, and the Delaware Workforce Development Board has designated teaching as an in-demand occupation.^[48] In response, the Delaware Department of Education and the Delaware Department of Labor have launched the Delaware Educator Apprenticeship Program to create paid, school-based pathways into teaching.</p> <p>SEA Priority: DDOE seeks to strengthen the educator pipeline by supporting high-quality apprenticeship implementation and building mentoring capacity statewide.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: The apprenticeship model requires stronger mentor preparation, implementation support, and shared learning structures to ensure apprentice success and statewide scalability.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will continue to collaborate with DDOE to develop training for teacher mentors, establish a statewide CoP, and create tools and resources that strengthen mentoring and apprentice-mentor relationships.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will continue to build Delaware’s capacity to implement and scale a high-quality educator apprenticeship model that improves mentor effectiveness, apprentice success, and long-term workforce stability.</p>
DC	<p>Data/Evidence: The District of Columbia (DC) continues to face persistent adolescent literacy challenges. In 2024, only 30% of fourth graders and 25% of eighth graders scored at or above Proficient in reading on NAEP, with eighth-grade performance below the national rate of 29%. At the same time, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has established key conditions for improvement through Literacy DC, implementation of DC’s dyslexia law, required universal screening and science-based reading support, approved structured literacy trainings, and a high-quality instructional materials list rooted in the science of reading.^[49]</p> <p>SEA Priority: OSSE seeks to move from policy adoption to consistent, systemwide implementation of evidence-based literacy practices, particularly in upper elementary and middle grades.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools need stronger support to translate screening data, instructional materials, educator training, and continuous improvement tools into consistently strong Tier 1 literacy instruction and improved adolescent reading outcomes.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will continue to partner with OSSE to strengthen implementation support, continuous improvement tools, and cross-LEA learning structures so schools can use evidence-based literacy policies and resources more effectively.</p>



	<p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build OSSE’s capacity to support coherent, systemwide implementation of evidence-based literacy practices and improve reading outcomes, particularly for older struggling readers.</p>
MD	<p>Data/Evidence: Maryland’s Blueprint for Maryland’s Future requires statewide adoption and implementation of high-quality instructional materials. ^[50] At the same time, 2025 survey results show a significant gap between district leaders’ reports of strong instructional materials implementation and teachers’ reported use of high-quality english language arts and math materials for most instruction, indicating uneven implementation support across LEAs. ^[51]</p> <p>SEA Priority: The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) seeks to strengthen statewide capacity to adopt, implement, and monitor high-quality instructional materials in ways that improve instructional coherence and classroom use.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Uneven educator support, inconsistent implementation, and limited continuous improvement structures reduce the impact of high-quality instructional materials across Maryland schools.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will continue to partner with MSDE to synthesize implementation data, develop cross-office resources and professional learning, and strengthen monitoring and continuous improvement processes for instructional coherence in the use of high-quality instructional materials.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build MSDE’s capacity to guide, monitor, and improve implementation of high-quality instructional materials so that classroom use becomes more consistent and effective statewide.</p>
NJ	<p>Data/Evidence: The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has launched several initiatives to strengthen foundational literacy statewide, including a \$50 million Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant, literacy legislation establishing a K–3 literacy framework, the New Jersey Literacy Framework, and the Funding for Optimal Comprehensive Universal Screeners (FOCUS) and Building Responsive Instruction through Data-Guided Evaluation (BRIDGE) grant programs to support screening, professional learning, data use, and Tier 1 literacy improvement. ^[52]</p> <p>SEA Priority: NJDOE seeks to support effective statewide implementation of its literacy framework and related grant initiatives so districts can strengthen early literacy instruction and improve K–3 outcomes.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Districts need implementation support, professional learning, data-use guidance, and continuous improvement processes to translate new literacy policies and grants into stronger classroom practice.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will continue to support NJDOE and LEAs through implementation assistance, professional learning, data-use and continuous improvement support, and documentation and scaling of promising practices emerging from FOCUS and BRIDGE grantees.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build NJDOE’s capacity to guide, monitor, and improve statewide literacy implementation and to scale effective practices that improve reading outcomes.</p>
PA	<p>Data/Evidence: During the 2023–2024 school year, 56% of Pennsylvania third graders scored Proficient or Advanced on the state assessment, while 16% scored Below Basic, signaling a need for stronger early literacy support. ^[53] Pennsylvania has also enacted policies requiring the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to establish a list of universal reading screeners aligned to structured literacy and science-of-reading principles and requiring districts to administer universal screeners in K–3.</p> <p>SEA Priority: PDE seeks to strengthen statewide literacy implementation by supporting adoption of universal screeners and expanding structured literacy professional learning.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: PDE needs implementation and scaling support so new screening and structured literacy requirements translate into stronger local practice and improved reading outcomes.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will continue to partner with PDE to implement a pilot and later scale a universal screener and structured literacy professional learning opportunities.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will continue to build PDE’s capacity to implement and scale statewide literacy support that improves early identification, educator practice, and student reading outcomes.</p>



Returning Education to the States: Prioritizing state-level applicants and entities that align with state administrative endorsements ^[54]

Data and Evidence

Returning education authority to states presents a strategic opportunity to strengthen the alignment of policy, funding, and implementation with local needs; however, research indicates that state flexibility must be coupled with strong capacity and accountability systems to produce improved outcomes. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) expanded state discretion in designing accountability and resource allocation systems, but early evidence suggests that, in some contexts, reduced federal oversight has been associated with declines in achievement growth where states did not maintain rigorous, outcomes-focused policies. ^[55] At the same time, research demonstrates that decentralization can yield measurable gains when state and local leaders have the capacity to use data effectively, align incentives, and tailor strategies to local contexts and student needs. ^[56] Effective state leadership is therefore critical: state educational agencies (SEAs) must provide clear guidance, robust technical assistance, and coherent implementation frameworks to ensure that increased flexibility translates into improved outcomes rather than fragmented or compliance-driven practices. ^[57] In addition, research underscores the importance of maintaining safeguards within decentralized systems, as states play a central role in ensuring that underserved student groups continue to receive targeted support and resources despite increased flexibility. ^[58] Accordingly, advancing a “returning education to the states” agenda requires not only shifting authority but also investing in state capacity, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and supporting continuous improvement processes that enable both SEAs and LEAs to operationalize flexibility in ways that drive measurable gains in student achievement and system performance.

High-Leverage Problems and Priorities by State with Data/Evidence, R3CC Response and Intended Capacity Gains/Outcomes

DE	<p>Data/Evidence: Delaware’s increased flexibility under federal programs such as ESSA creates an opportunity to better align funding with state workforce and educator pipeline priorities, but LEA capacity to do so strategically varies across the state. ^[59] Without clear statewide guidance and coordinated planning structures, local use of funds may remain fragmented and compliance-driven rather than focused on high-need areas such as teacher recruitment, retention, and instructional quality.</p> <p>SEA Priority: DDOE seeks to better align federal funding streams with workforce and educator pipeline priorities through stronger cross-agency coordination, clearer guidance, and more strategic local planning.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Variation in LEA capacity to connect federal funds, workforce initiatives, and instructional priorities can lead to uneven implementation and limit statewide impact.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will partner with DDOE and cross-agency partners to develop integrated planning tools, support coordination between education and labor partners, strengthen LEA capacity to design outcomes-focused funding strategies, and establish data-driven monitoring processes.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build Delaware’s capacity to operationalize increased federal flexibility in ways that promote coherent planning, stronger educator pipelines, and improved student outcomes statewide.</p>
DC	<p>Data/Evidence: DC has 66 LEAs, including 60 single-site charter LEAs, many of which operate with limited staff capacity, small funding allocations, and heavy reliance on external vendors for grant administration. ^[60] This context contributes to grant management practices that are often compliance-driven rather than oriented toward strategic program design and outcomes.</p> <p>SEA Priority: OSSE seeks to reduce administrative burden on LEAs and redesign the ESEA consolidated application so that it better supports strategic planning, reflects current requirements, and aligns with regulatory expectations.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: DC’s complex school funding landscape and administratively burdensome consolidated application make it difficult for LEAs to plan and use funds strategically in support of student outcomes.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team is currently partnering with OSSE to identify best practices from other SEAs, assess opportunities to strengthen the consolidated application process, and support shifts toward a more strategic, user-centered approach to grant planning and administration.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will continue to build OSSE’s capacity to move from compliance-oriented grant management to a more strategic, outcomes-focused approach that emphasizes return on investment, stronger program design, and more effective SEA/LEA partnerships.</p>



Returning Education to the States: Prioritizing state-level applicants and entities that align with state administrative endorsements ^[54]

MD	<p>Data/Evidence: Maryland’s strong policy framework, anchored in the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, creates an opportunity to better align federal education funds with state-led priorities while supporting local flexibility and coherent implementation. ^[61] At the same time, the complexity of multiple federal funding streams can lead the LEAs to approach planning and administration as separate compliance tasks rather than as integrated, outcomes-focused strategies.</p> <p>SEA Priority: MSDE seeks to strengthen how federal formula funds are coordinated, administered, and aligned with statewide goals so LEAs can implement locally responsive solutions within a coherent state framework.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Fragmented grant administration and compliance-driven local planning limit the state’s ability to use federal funds strategically in support of statewide priorities and student outcomes.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will collaborate with MSDE to modernize grant administration, guidance, and accountability processes so that federal funds are better coordinated and more effectively support local planning and implementation.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build MSDE’s capacity to align federal funding with state priorities, reduce fragmentation, and enable more strategic, outcomes-focused use of resources across Maryland’s LEAs.</p>
NJ	<p>Data/Evidence: New Jersey manages a varied portfolio of grant-funded initiatives, including literacy, innovation, workforce pathways, and federally funded programs, which gives LEAs flexibility to address statewide priorities. ^[62] However, these funding streams are administered through separate structures with different requirements, timelines, and reporting expectations, contributing to fragmented local implementation.</p> <p>SEA Priority: NJDOE seeks to modernize grantmaking so that funding streams are better aligned and support more coordinated, strategic implementation of statewide priorities.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Separate grant structures and inconsistent requirements can lead LEAs to implement initiatives in parallel rather than as integrated strategies, limiting the impact of expanded flexibility on student outcomes.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will continue to partner with NJDOE to align requirements across funding streams, develop integrated planning and application structures, and embed performance metrics tied to statewide priorities.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build NJDOE’s capacity to support more strategic, coordinated use of funds and drive measurable improvements in student outcomes across the state.</p>
PA	<p>Data/Evidence: Pennsylvania has advanced statewide priorities related to literacy, educator preparation, and workforce pathways through a mix of federal formula funds and state-led initiatives, creating greater flexibility for LEAs to design locally responsive strategies. ^[63] However, these efforts are administered through separate programs with different requirements and timelines, which can contribute to fragmented implementation and limit coherence across priorities.</p> <p>SEA Priority: PDE seeks to better align federal and state funding streams to support coordinated implementation of statewide priorities and stronger local planning.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Separate funding structures and siloed implementation reduce the state’s ability to ensure that increased flexibility translates into integrated strategies and measurable statewide outcomes.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will partner with PDE to modernize grantmaking by aligning requirements across funding streams, developing integrated planning structures, and strengthening data-driven monitoring and continuous improvement processes.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build PDE’s capacity to support more strategic, coordinated use of funds and improve the state’s ability to drive measurable statewide outcomes.</p>



Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness: Aligning education and workforce systems to prepare students for postsecondary education and high-demand careers through career-connected learning, industry-recognized credentials, and work-based learning experiences ^[64]

Data and Evidence

- Forty-three states include career-readiness indicators in their accountability systems. ^[65]
- States increasingly use industry-recognized credentials to measure workforce readiness. ^[66]
- Internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning experiences are expanding nationwide. ^[67]
- Students participating in career and technical education (CTE) are more likely to complete high school, develop employability skills, enroll in 2-year colleges, and be employed after high school. ^[68]

High-Leverage Problems and Priorities by State with Data/Evidence, R3CC Response and Intended Capacity Gains/Outcomes

DE	<p>Data/Evidence: Delaware has made significant investments in CTE to help more learners explore careers, build workforce-ready skills, and earn industry credentials. By expanding CTE pathways and work-based learning, the state aims to increase college and career readiness from 78% in 2024 to 80% by 2028. ^[69]</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: SEA and LEA leaders need stronger, more consistent continuous improvement routines to understand whether all students can access, progress through, and successfully complete high-quality CTE programs that lead to college, career, and economic success.</p> <p>SEA Priority: DDOE seeks to improve statewide and district-level use of CTE data to improve student access, participation, completion, and outcomes in high-quality CTE pathways.</p> <p>R3CC Response: DDOE is currently working with Regional Educational Lab (REL) Mid-Atlantic to collect data to better understand how students move through CTE pathways. Building on REL MA's work to strengthen Delaware's CTE data collection and analysis capacity, the ICF Team and DDOE will co-develop practical tools, routines, and professional learning support (e.g. CoP) that enable SEA and LEA leaders to use data to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities across CTE pathways.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will strengthen statewide and district-level capacity to use data to guide CTE program improvement and ensure that all students have access to high-quality pathways leading to postsecondary and career success.</p>
DC	<p>Data/Evidence: OSSE has developed a Graduate Profile and proposed new graduation requirements through its Reimagining High School Graduation Requirements initiative. ^[70] These efforts are particularly important given DC's 76% 4-year graduation rate, 56% postsecondary enrollment rate within 6 months of graduation, and low proficiency rates in math (23%) and ELA (34%). ^[71]</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: LEAs and schools need implementation tools, professional learning support, and communication strategies to effectively operationalize the Graduate Profile and new graduation requirements.</p> <p>SEA Priority: OSSE seeks to support consistent implementation of the Graduate Profile and revised graduation requirements to improve graduation readiness, academic outcomes, and postsecondary and career success.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team is currently partnering with OSSE and will continue to develop implementation guidance, tools, professional learning resources, and communication strategies that support adoption across LEAs and schools.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will continue to build OSSE's capacity to support and sustain implementation of the Graduate Profile and graduation requirements while improving alignment among K–12 education, postsecondary pathways, and workforce readiness.</p>
NJ	<p>Data/Evidence: New Jersey continues to face educator workforce shortages in critical areas such as mathematics, science, and computer science, highlighting the need for stronger educator career pathways. ^[72] Research suggests that teacher residency and apprenticeship models can strengthen educator recruitment and retention in high-need fields. ^[73]</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Persistent shortages in high-need teaching fields underscore the need for stronger, evidence-based educator workforce pathways.</p> <p>SEA Priority: NJDOE seeks to strengthen educator recruitment, preparation, and retention strategies to build a viable pipeline of educators in high-demand fields.</p>



Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness: Aligning education and workforce systems to prepare students for postsecondary education and high-demand careers through career-connected learning, industry-recognized credentials, and work-based learning experiences ^[64]

	<p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team will continue to support NJDOE in evaluating educator workforce pathway initiatives, identifying barriers and promising practices, and strengthening the state’s capacity to make data-informed decisions about recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build NJDOE’s capacity to develop, evaluate, and scale effective educator workforce pathways that expand access to the teaching profession and address persistent workforce shortages.</p>
PA	<p>Data/Evidence: Pennsylvania faces a growing gap between workforce demands and learner access to high-quality career pathways. More than 60% of jobs are expected to require postsecondary education or training, while only 45% of Pennsylvanians currently hold a postsecondary credential. ^[74]</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: Misalignment among education, workforce, and credentialing systems limits access to high-quality, industry-aligned career pathways and constrains the state’s ability to meet workforce demands.</p> <p>SEA Priority: PDE seeks to strengthen alignment across education, workforce, and credentialing systems to expand access to high-demand careers and workforce-relevant learning opportunities.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team is currently supporting PDE by conducting a statewide scan of existing pathways; analysis of alignment across regions, industries, and credential types; and identification of gaps in access and workforce relevance. We will continue to support PDE by facilitating convenings with stakeholders across the state, including local businesses and workforce organizations, to create policies that will address the gap and move Pennsylvania’s workforce forward.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will continue to build PDE’s capacity to use evidence and cross-sector partnerships to improve pathway design, expand access to industry-aligned opportunities, and better meet workforce needs.</p>

Advancing Need for AI: Supporting the responsible use and integration of AI to improve teaching and learning, strengthen educator capacity, increase operational effectiveness, and prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in an increasingly AI-enabled economy ^[75]

Data and Evidence

- Only 7% of LEAs have systems in place to manage AI data infrastructure. ^[76]
- AI is becoming a core workforce skill. The World Economic Forum identifies AI, big data, and technological literacy among the fastest-growing skills needed for future jobs. ^[77]
- AI use is already growing in K–12 education. RAND found that about 25% of teachers and nearly 60% of principals reported using AI tools during the 2023–24 school year, highlighting the need for guidance and professional learning. ^[78]
- States need support for responsible AI implementation. National surveys show significant variation in AI adoption across schools, creating a need for state-led policies, capacity building, and evidence-based implementation strategies. ^[79]
- Federal policy has elevated AI education as a national priority. Executive Order 14277 (2025) calls for expanding AI literacy, educator training, and workforce pathways to prepare students for an AI-driven economy. ^[80]

High-Leverage Problems and Priorities by State with Data/Evidence, R3CC Response and Intended Capacity Gains/Outcomes

DC	<p>Data/Evidence: OSSE has identified AI as an emerging priority and has begun gathering information on AI implementation across LEAs to inform future guidance and support. ^[81]As AI adoption accelerates, OSSE has an opportunity to develop a coordinated approach that promotes effective and ethical AI use while strengthening college, career, and workforce readiness.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: LEAs and educators need clear guidance, capacity-building support, and implementation frameworks to integrate AI effectively and responsibly into teaching and learning.</p> <p>SEA Priority: OSSE seeks to develop a coordinated AI strategy that supports responsible implementation, educator readiness, and access to AI-enabled learning opportunities.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team currently supports OSSE and will do so in the future in the development and implementation of a comprehensive AI-in-education strategy through stakeholder engagement, policy</p>
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Advancing Need for AI: Supporting the responsible use and integration of AI to improve teaching and learning, strengthen educator capacity, increase operational effectiveness, and prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in an increasingly AI-enabled economy ^[75]

and guidance development, educator capacity building, AI literacy frameworks, implementation planning, and evaluation.

Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will continue to build OSSE’s capacity to lead and sustain AI implementation efforts that enhance teaching and learning while advancing educational opportunity and workforce readiness.

NJ **Data/Evidence:** NJDOE has linked AI initiatives to workforce preparation and future employment opportunities, including the development of AI-focused CTE pathways. ^[82] These efforts position AI as a key component of the state’s broader innovation economy strategy and expand pathways that prepare students to understand and apply AI technologies in future careers.

High-Leverage Problem: As AI adoption expands, schools need guidance, professional learning, and implementation support to connect AI education with workforce development goals and ensure consistent, responsible use across districts.

SEA Priority: NJDOE seeks to strengthen AI readiness across the state while aligning AI education initiatives with career pathways and workforce development priorities.

R3CC Response: The ICF Team will support NJDOE in developing statewide AI readiness strategies, facilitating educator professional learning, supporting responsible AI guidance and implementation frameworks, strengthening connections between AI education and workforce pathways, and identifying and scaling promising practices.

Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will build NJDOE’s capacity to support responsible AI implementation, prepare educators and students for an AI-driven economy, and scale effective practices across districts.

Expanding Education Choice: Increasing access to a variety of educational options so families can select learning environments that best meet student needs ^[83]

Data and Evidence

- Education choice now spans multiple settings and programs. National estimates indicate that approximately 74.6% of students attend traditional public schools, 6.6% attend charter schools, 4.9% attend magnet schools, 4.7% are homeschooled, 6.8% attend private schools outside a choice program, and 1.9% participate in a formal choice program such as an ESSA, voucher, or tax-credit scholarship. ^[84]
- Charter school enrollment has grown substantially nationwide. Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, public charter school enrollment increased from 1.8 million to 3.7 million students, and the share of public school students enrolled in charter schools rose from 4% to 7%. ^[85]
- Public school choice also includes magnet schools and open-enrollment options, reflecting growing family demand for access to schools beyond assigned attendance boundaries. ^[86]
- Family voice is a critical part of educational choice. National surveys on parent and family involvement underscore that families value meaningful opportunities to influence school decisions, access information, and select learning environments that align with student needs. ^[87]
- Expanded learning opportunities are another important form of choice. In 2024–2025, 85% of public schools reported offering after-school programs and 60% offered academically focused after-school programs, but only 42% of schools with those academic programs said they could serve all interested students. ^[88]

High-Leverage Problems and Priorities by State with Data/Evidence, R3CC Response and Intended Capacity Gains/Outcomes

DC **Data/Evidence:** Approximately 48% of public school students in DC attend charter schools, reflecting a highly choice-rich environment, but families and schools still need stronger access to high-quality options, clear information, and expanded learning opportunities. ^[89]

SEA Priority: OSSE seeks to strengthen family-centered choice systems and improve access to quality programs across DC.

High-Leverage Problem: Families need clearer information and access to high-quality educational options, while OSSE needs stronger data to identify and address gaps in opportunity.



Expanding Education Choice: Increasing access to a variety of educational options so families can select learning environments that best meet student needs^[83]

	<p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team is currently partnering with OSSE and will continue to support them in the future to strengthen funding for LEAs that will provide enhanced family-centered choice systems, improve access to quality programs, and use data to identify and address gaps in opportunity across DC.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support continues to build OSSE’s capacity to support more transparent and responsive education choice systems that better meet LEA, student, and family needs.</p>
NJ	<p>Data/Evidence: NJDOE has invested more than \$50 million in two cohorts of high-impact tutoring grants serving students in K–12 across nearly 300 public school districts and charter schools from November 2023 through June 2025.^[90] These investments create an opportunity to treat tutoring as a core education choice strategy by expanding access to high-quality academic support.</p> <p>SEA Priority: NJDOE seeks to strengthen how families and students access high-quality tutoring options and how the SEAs and LEAs use data to improve those options over time.</p> <p>High-Leverage Problem: NJDOE needs stronger family-centered communication, access analysis, implementation monitoring, and continuous improvement processes to ensure tutoring programs are accessible, effective, and responsive to student needs statewide.</p> <p>R3CC Response: The ICF Team is currently supporting NJDOE in designing family-centered communication and outreach as well as identifying gaps in access and participation. We will strengthen implementation and outcome monitoring as well as facilitate continuous improvement and peer learning across grantees in the future.</p> <p>Intended Capacity Gain/Outcome: This support will continue to build NJDOE’s capacity to position tutoring as a high-quality education choice strategy and improve access, program quality, and outcomes statewide.</p>



Appendix E: Acronyms

AI	artificial intelligence
AR	Application Requirement
ARCC	2012-2019 Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center
ASP	annual service plans
BRIDGE	Building Responsive Instruction through Data-Guided Evaluation
CC	Comprehensive Center
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIPP	Context, Input, Process, and Product model
CITI	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
CoP	community of practice
CQI	continuous quality improvement
CSI	Comprehensive Support and Improvement
CTE	career and technical education
DOE	Department of Education
ED or Department	U.S. Department of Education
ERS	Education Resource Strategies
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ETAA	Education Technical Assistance Act of 2002
FTE	full-time equivalent
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
HQIM	high-quality instructional materials
IES	Institute of Education Sciences
IRB	institutional review board
LEA	local educational agency
MA	Mid-Atlantic
MACC	2024-2026 Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MSDE	Maryland State Department of Education
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCC	National Comprehensive Center
NJDOE	New Jersey Department of Education
OESE	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
OHRP	Office for Human Research Protections
OIE	Office of Indian Education
OSSE	Office of the State Superintendent of Education
PDE	Pennsylvania Department of Education
PO	project objectives
PPM	program performance measure
PR	Program Requirement
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
QA/QC	quality assurance/quality control
QPR	quarterly progress report
R3CC	Region 3 (Mid-Atlantic) Comprehensive Center
R8CC	2019-2024 Region 8 Comprehensive Center
RCC	Regional Comprehensive Centers
REA	regional educational agency
REL	Regional Educational Laboratory
REL MA	Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic
SEA	state educational agency



SLA	State Learning Agenda
SME	subject matter expert
SOW	statement of work
SSP	Secretary's Supplemental Priorities
TA	technical assistance
TEA	tribal educational agencies



Appendix F: Requirements Cross Reference

Application Requirements (AR)			
Requirement	Primary Response Section(s)	Specific Subsection(s)	Summary of How the Requirement is Addressed
AR#1	A.2; B.3; B.6	A.2.1, A.2.2, A.2.3; B.3.3-B.3.8; B.6	Presents the overall capacity-building model, research foundation (adult learning, implementation science, coaching), theory of action, logic model, measurable outcomes, and long-term capacity-building approach.
AR#2	A.1; B.3	A.1; A.1.1; B.3.6; B.3.7 (Select Phase)	Describes the needs-sensing methodology, evidence review, stakeholder interviews, identification of high-leverage problems, and translation into State Learning Agendas and Annual Service Plans.
AR#3	B.1; B.2	B.1.2; B.2.1-B.2.5	Establishes project objectives, performance measures, CIPP evaluation framework, mixed-method evaluation, dashboards, continuous improvement cycles, and reporting processes.
AR#4	A.2.2; C.3	A.2.2; C.3	Demonstrates organizational expertise in technical assistance, implementation science, adult learning, coaching, evaluation, and documents qualifications of key personnel.
AR#5	C.4	C.4	Explains budget adequacy, cost reasonableness, allocation across service intensities, and financial management controls.
AR#6	C.1	C.1.1-C.1.8	Presents organizational structure, staffing, management systems, communications, quality assurance, risk management, partnership management, and implementation timeline.
AR#7	C.4	C.4	Explicitly identifies the required five percent annual reserve for emerging needs.
AR#8	A.2; B.3	A.2.1-A.2.3; B.3.2; B.3.6; B.3.8	Demonstrates prioritization of underserved students through differentiated capacity-building services, tiered supports, and prioritization of highest-need schools and populations.

Program Requirements (PR)			
Requirement	Primary Response Section(s)	Specific Subsection(s)	Summary of How the Requirement is Addressed
PR#1	A.2; B.1; B.2; B.3	A.2.1; B.1.2; B.2.1-B.2.5; B.3.6; B.3.7	Annual Service Plans are developed, monitored, evaluated, and refined through milestones, outputs, dissemination, evaluation, and continuous improvement.



PR#2	A.2; B.3	A.2.1-A.2.3; B.3.2; B.3.6	Describes the client-driven capacity-building framework, differentiated technical assistance, and state-led service model.
PR#3	A.1; B.5	A.1; B.5	Documents stakeholder engagement through needs sensing, client participation, advisory structures, letters of support, and ongoing feedback mechanisms.
PR#4	B.2	B.2.1-B.2.5	Comprehensive continuous improvement framework including evaluation, dashboards, formative assessment, performance monitoring, and quarterly review cycles.
PR#5	C.1	C.1; C.1.1; Exhibit 21	Management structure assigns responsibility for participation in the Department's national evaluation and project oversight.
PR#6	B.4	B.4.1-B.4.5	Describes structured coordination with REL Mid-Atlantic, National Comprehensive Center, Content Centers, and other Federal TA providers.
PR#7	B.3; B.4	B.3.6; B.4.1	State Learning Agendas are developed jointly with SEAs and coordinated with REL Mid-Atlantic as the basis for Annual Service Plans.
PR#8	B.4	B.4.2-B.4.4	Client-driven process for identifying, selecting, and integrating subject matter experts through NCC, REL, Content Centers, and other providers.
PR#9	C.1	C.1.4	Formal partnership agreements and MOUs define coordination, responsibilities, communication, and avoidance of duplication across partners.
PR#10	C.2	C.2	Documents Project Director/co-project director commitments, staffing allocations, SEA coverage, and FTE commitments for key personnel.