Non-Regulatory Guidance for Title II, Part A:

Building Systems of Support for Excellent Teaching and Leading

U.S. Department of Education Non-Regulatory Guidance
Title II, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,
as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015
September 27, 2016

Induction and Mentorship

Novice Teacher and Principal Induction and Mentorship

LEAs (districts and charters) are encouraged to use Title II, Part A funds to establish and support high quality educator induction and mentorship programs that, where possible, are evidence-based and are designed to improve classroom instruction and student learning and achievement and increase the retention of effective teachers, principals, or other school leaders. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(vii)(III) and 2103(b)(3)(B)(iv)). Research shows that high-quality induction and mentoring programs can increase teacher retention as well as increase student achievement. For instance, comprehensive induction programs can cut the new teacher turnover rate in half. Additionally, students of novice teachers who experienced strong induction "in general, achieve in patterns that mirror the achievement rates of students assigned to more experienced mid-career teachers." Taking into account the high cost of teacher turnover, investments in mentoring and induction programs not only benefit students and teachers, but also reduce costs for LEAs. Title II, Part A funds may be used to support a mentoring and induction program by providing early release time for mentoring, compensation for mentors, and evidence-based professional development for novice educators and mentors.

LEAs should consider many factors when designing and implementing educator mentorship and induction programs, including potential partners that can support these efforts, such as educator preparation programs. In particular, partnerships with educator preparation programs can provide continuity for novice teachers' transitions into the classroom, as well as offer educator preparation programs the opportunity to align their programs with the needs of LEAs.

There are several resources that identify factors to consider in developing such programs, including the New Teacher Center report Support from the Start: A 50-State Review of Policies on New Educator Induction and Mentoring, which includes recommendations such as:
- Requiring that all beginning teachers and principals receive induction support during their first two years.
- Requiring a rigorous mentor/induction coach selection process.
- Establishing criteria for how and when mentors/induction coaches are assigned to beginning educators, and determining the training they will receive to serve in this role.
- Requiring regular *observation* by mentors/induction coaches and opportunities for new teachers to observe classrooms.

Strong Teacher Leadership

Leveraging Teacher Expertise and Leadership

Sustainable teacher career paths should give teachers the opportunity to exercise increased responsibility and to grow professionally, while keeping effective teachers in the classroom. Moreover, the availability of teacher leadership opportunities positively impacts teacher recruitment and retention, job satisfaction, and student achievement. With the recommended strategies below, and all other permissible activities, Title II, Part A funds may be used to support "time banks" or flexible time

for collaborative planning, curriculum writing, peer observations, and leading trainings; which may involve using substitute teachers to cover classes during the school day. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(v) and 2103(b)(3)(E)). Furthermore, funds may be used to compensate teachers for their increased leadership roles and responsibilities. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(vii)(I) and 2103(b)(3)(B)).

Recommended Strategies

Title II, Part A funds may be used for a full range of activities to better leverage and support teacher leadership, for example:

➢ Career opportunities and advancement initiatives for effective teachers that promote professional growth and emphasize multiple career paths. This includes creating hybrid roles that allow instructional coaching of colleagues while remaining in the classroom, as well as assuming other responsibilities such as collaborating with administrators to develop and implement distributive leadership models and leading decision-making groups. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(vii)(I) and 2103(b)(3)(B));

➢ Supporting peer-led, evidence-based[1] professional development in LEAs and schools. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(v)(I) and 2103(b)(3)(E));

➢ Recruiting and retaining talented and effective educators, including mentoring new educators. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(v) and 2103(b)(3)(B));

➢ Participating in community of learning opportunities and other professional development opportunities with diverse stakeholder groups such as parents, civil rights groups, and administrators, to positively impact student outcomes; for example, through a forum to discuss the implication of a policy or practice on a school community, or organizing a community-wide service learning project, where teachers afterwards work together to imbed conclusions of these activities into their teaching. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(vii) and 2103(b)(3)(E)).

Transformative School Leadership

Ongoing Professional Learning for Principals and Other School Leaders

Effective principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders are essential to school success, particularly in schools with large numbers of students from low-income families and minority students. Strong principals attract teachers with great potential for success, support the ongoing professional learning of teachers, and retain excellent teachers.

> **Recommended Strategies**
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> SEAs and LEAs may use Title II, Part A funds to support school principals, through a variety of strategies such as:
>
> ➢ Partner with organizations to provide leadership training and opportunities for principals and other school leaders to hone their craft and bring teams together to improve school structures. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(viii) and 2103(b)(3)(B)).
>
> ➢ Offer community of learning opportunities where principals and other school leaders engage with their school teams to fully develop broad curriculum models. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(viii) and 2103(b)(3)(E)).
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> ➢ Develop opportunities for principals and other school leaders to collaborate, problem-solve, and share best practices. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(viii) and 2103(b)(3)(E)).
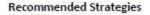
Principal Supervisors

When developing strategies for supporting principals and other school leaders, SEAs and LEAs may use Title II, Part A funds to improve the effectiveness of principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders, which includes an employees or officers of an elementary or secondary school, LEA, or other entity operating a school who are "responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations in the elementary school or secondary school building." (ESEA section 8101(44)).

By including principal supervisors who are responsible for the daily instructional leadership and managerial operations in the elementary school or secondary school building, the ESEA section 8101(44) definition of "school leader" acknowledges the importance of school leaders who are actively responsible for successful instruction and management in the school. This means that the ESEA considers those LEA staff, such as the principals' supervisors, who actively mentor and support principals and by doing so are themselves "responsible for the school's daily instructional leadership and managerial operations," to also be eligible for Title II, Part A funded support. (ESEA section 8101(44)). We encourage SEAs and LEAs to extend Title II, Part A-funded services to these principal supervisors to the extent that those individuals actively and frequently take responsibility for helping principals with instructional leadership and the school's managerial operations.

Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce Across the Career Continuum

Research shows that diversity in schools, including representation of underrepresented minority groups among educators, can provide significant benefits to all students. In addition to benefits for all students, improving the diversity of the educator workforce may be particularly beneficial for minority students helping to close the achievement gap. When considering how to better support educators, SEAs and LEAs should consider supporting a diverse educator workforce as a critical component of all strategies across the career continuum.

SEAs and LEAs may use Title II, Part A funds to improve the recruitment, placement, support, and retention of culturally competent and responsive educators, especially educators from underrepresented minority groups, to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Recommended Strategies

Under ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(v) and 2103(b)(3)(B), these efforts may include, but are not limited to:

➢ Providing financial support to educator recruitment programs within the community to improve hiring and retention of a diverse workforce;

➢ Offering career advancement opportunities for current staff members, such as paraprofessionals, who have worked in the community for an extended period of time, to support their efforts to gain the requisite credentials to become classroom instructors;

➢ Partnering with preparation providers including local community colleges, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), Minority Serving Institutions, and alternative route providers, to build a pipeline of diverse candidates;

➢ Providing ongoing professional development aimed at cultural competency and responsiveness and equity coaching, designed to improve conditions for all educators and students, including educators and students from underrepresented minority groups, diverse national origins, English language competencies, and varying genders and sexual orientations;

➢ Providing time and space for differentiated support for all teachers, including affinity group support;

➢ Supporting leadership and advancement programs aimed to improve career and retention outcomes for all educators, including educators from underrepresented minority groups; and

➢ Developing and implementing other innovative strategies and systemic interventions designed to better attract, place, support, and retain culturally competent and culturally responsive effective educators, especially educators from underrepresented minority groups, such as having personnel or staff-time dedicated to recruiting diverse candidates of high-quality who can best teach to the diversity of the student population.

➢ Although efforts to recruit a diverse workforce may not be limited on the basis of race, differentiation of supports for educators from diverse backgrounds is permissible.

Equitable Access to Excellent Educators

The Title II, Part A program is designed, among other things, to provide students from low-income families and minority students with greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders. Under ESEA sections 1111(g)(1)(B) and 1112(b)(2), SEAs must describe how low-income and minority children are not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers and **identify and address any disparities** that exist in the rates at which these students are

taught by teachers in these categories. To eliminate any such disparities, an SEA and its LEAs should develop and implement strategies that are responsive to the root causes of those disproportionate rates; Title II, Part A funds can be used to provide students from low-income families and minority students with greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders.

The most effective strategies are designed to support the students for whom there are the greatest rates of disproportionality in access to excellent educators, while also addressing the underlying factor or factors causing or contributing to these disproportionalities. For example, SEAs and LEAs in which students from low-income families are taught at higher rates by inexperienced teachers may discover that this is driven by a lack of teacher retention in rural areas. Such SEAs and LEAs may consider developing "grow your own" initiatives, through which resources are devoted to recruiting local talent to counteract teacher shortages, particularly in high-need schools in rural areas, because teachers who grew up in a particular rural area are more likely to stay there over the long term. These initiatives, which exist in urban areas as well as rural areas, often involve partnering with local high schools and IHEs to promote education as a career pathway and may include experiential learning opportunities in high-need schools.

Depending on the root causes identified by an SEA or LEA for the absence of excellent educators, the SEA or LEA may also want to consider making strategic investments in data systems to ensure that decision-makers have ready access to comprehensive, timely, and high-quality data. These data would help to inform decisions and target resource allocations. In a case where the root cause analysis demonstrated that appropriate incentives were not in place to help ensure that excellent educators are attracted to and remain in high-need schools, Title II, Part A funds could be used to incentivize and reward excellent educators serving in an SEA's or an LEA's highest-need schools. An SEA or an LEA might further consider implementing specific initiatives designed to increase the diversity of its educator workforce. For example, they might support an initiative to increase the number of pre-college students from underrepresented minority groups who are interested in education careers, by helping them to become certified to teach, and supporting them to ultimately become effective educators that are recruited and hired. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(iii) and (v)).

Attracting and Retaining Excellent Educators in High-Need Schools

Nationally, between the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years, 22 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools either moved to another school or left the profession, a rate that is roughly 70 percent higher than in low-poverty schools. In addition to higher turnover, one study found that four times as many math and science teachers transfer from high-poverty schools to low-poverty schools than transfer from low-poverty schools to high-poverty schools. Given these statistics and the urgency of students' needs in high-poverty schools, SEAs and LEAs need bold approaches that fundamentally change the nature of the teaching job in these schools and change it in ways that are responsive to what teachers say are needed in order to attract and keep a diverse set of talented educators.

Recommended Strategies

To realize the equity goals of the ESEA, Title II, Part A funds may be used by LEAs in high-need schools to:

- ➤ Create incentives for effective educators to teach in high-need schools, and ongoing incentives for such educators to remain and grow in such schools. (ESEA section 2103(b)(3)(B)).

- ➤ Develop and implement initiatives to assist in recruiting, hiring, and retaining effective teachers to improve within-district equity, particularly in districts that are not implementing districtwide reforms, such as initiatives targeted to high-need schools that provide (ESEA section 2103(b)(3)(B)):
    - Expert help in screening candidates and enabling early hiring;
    - Differential and incentive pay for educators in high-need schools, which may include performance-based compensation systems;
    - Differential and incentive pay for teachers in high-need academic subject areas and specialty areas (e.g., serving English learners and children with disabilities), which may include performance-based compensation systems;
    - Educator advancement and professional growth and an emphasis on leadership opportunities, which may include hybrid teacher/leader and leadership positions, multiple career paths, pay differentiation and incentives for effective educators to receive additional certifications in high-need areas;
    - Co-teaching of classes, especially co-teaching by an experienced effective teacher and a novice teacher.

Recommended Strategies (Continued)

- New educator induction or mentoring programs designed to improve classroom instruction and student learning and achievement and increase the retention of effective educators;
- Many of the other strategies highlighted earlier in this document with a focus on the highest-need schools.
- Development and provision of training for school leaders, coaches, mentors, and evaluators on how to accurately differentiate performance, provide useful feedback and use evaluation results to inform decision-making about professional development, improvement strategies and personnel decisions;

➤ Develop feedback mechanisms to improve working conditions, including through periodically and publicly reporting results of educator support and working conditions feedback which may leverage teacher leadership and community partners. (ESEA section 2103(b)(3)(N)).

➤ Carry out in-service training for school personnel in addressing issues related to school conditions for student learning, such as safety, peer interaction, drug and alcohol abuse, and chronic absenteeism. (ESEA section 2103(b)(3)(I)(iv)).

➤ Create teams of educators for teachers in high-need schools who convene regularly to learn, problem solve, and look over student work together, or provide time during the school day for educators to observe one another and reflect on new teaching and leading practices. A recent Department blog entry, Top Atlanta Teachers Put Good Teaching on Display, describes one approach to innovative use of time.

➤ Provide "teacher time banks" to allow effective teachers and school leaders in high-need schools to work together to identify and implement meaningful activities to support teaching and learning. For example, when implementing teacher time banks, Title II, Part A funds may be used to pay the costs of additional responsibilities for teacher leaders, use of common planning time, use of teacher-led developmental experiences for other educators based on educators' assessment of the highest leverage activities, and other professional learning opportunities. (ESEA sections 2101(c)(4)(B)(v)(I) and 2103(b)(3)(E)(iv) and reasonable and necessary cost principles in 2 CFR § 200.403).

➤ Improve working conditions for teachers through high-impact activities based on local needs, such as improving access to educational technology, reducing class size to a level that is evidence-based, to the extent the State determines that such evidence is reasonably available, or providing ongoing cultural proficiency training to support stronger school climate for educators and students. (ESEA sections 2103(b)(3)(B), (D) and (E)).

Supporting Early Learning Educators: Ensuring All of Our Youngest Learners Start Strong

The ESEA explicitly includes new ways SEAs and LEAs may use Title II, Part A funds to support early learning so that all children, no matter their zip code, begin kindergarten ready to succeed. Title II, Part A funds may be used to support the professional development of early educators. These funds have a wide variety of possible applications for early educators and the ESEA explicitly includes new ways SEAs and LEAs may use Title II, Part A funds to support early learning.

Recommended Strategies

Title II, Part A funds may be used by SEAs and LEAs for the following strategies:

➢ For the first time, allowing LEAs to support joint professional learning and planned activities designed to increase the ability of principals or other school leaders to support teachers, teacher leaders, early childhood educators, and other professionals to meet the needs of students through age eight. (ESEA section 2103(b)(3)(G)). The National Academy of Medicine's Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation offers recommendations to build a workforce that is unified by the foundation of the science of child development and early learning and the shared knowledge and competencies that are needed to provide consistent, high-quality support for the development and early learning of children from birth through age eight.

➢ Supporting LEAs to increase the knowledge base of teachers, principals, or other school leaders regarding instruction in the early grades and developmentally appropriate strategies to measure how young children are progressing. (ESEA section 2103(b)(3)(G)). Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice (Executive Summary), from the National Association of Elementary School Principals, defines new competencies, and outlines a practical approach to high-quality early childhood education that is critical to laying a strong foundation for learning for young children from age three to third grade.

➢ Supporting LEA training on the identification of students who are gifted and talented, and implementing instructional practices that support the education of such students, including early entrance to kindergarten. (ESEA section 2103(b)(3)(J)).

➢ Allowing SEAs to support opportunities for principals, other school leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals, early childhood education program directors, and other early childhood education program providers (to the extent the State defines elementary and secondary education to include preschool; explained further in the Early Learning Guidance) to participate in joint efforts to address the transition to elementary school, including issues related to school readiness. (ESEA section 2101(c)(4)(B)(xvi)).

Consultation to Strengthen Title II, Part A Investments

Consultation is a critical part of ensuring that Title II, Part A funds are used effectively and decisions about resource allocation are fully informed. SEAs and LEAs must engage in meaningful consultation with a broad range of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds (e.g., families, students, educators, private school officials, community partners), as required by ESEA sections 2101(d)(3) and 2102(b)(3). Under Title II, Part A and Title VIII, SEAs and LEAs are **required** to:

- Meaningfully consult with teachers, principals and other school leaders, paraprofessionals (including organizations representing such individuals), specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders (in a State that has charter schools), parents, community partners, and other organizations or partners with relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities designed to meet the statutory purpose of Title II, Part A;
- Seek advice from these stakeholders regarding how best to improve the Title II, Part A activities;

- Coordinate the activities with other related strategies, programs or activities in the State or LEA (ESEA sections 2101(d)(3) and 2102(b)(3)); and

- Provide for the equitable participation of private school teachers and other educational personnel in private schools and engage in timely and meaningful consultation with private school officials during the design and development of their Title II, Part A programs. (ESEA sections 8501).

Recommended Strategies

SEAs and LEAs should consider engaging in the following activities to help meet the consultation requirements described above and strengthen Title II, Part A planning and implementation:

➤ Conduct outreach to, and solicit input from relevant stakeholders during the design and development of plans for Title II, Part A funds ensuring that there is a diverse representation of educators from across the State or LEA, especially those who work in high-need schools and in early education.

➤ Be flexible when consulting with stakeholders, especially educators, by holding meetings or conferences outside the hours of the school day or by using a variety of communications tools, such as electronic surveys.

➤ Seek out diverse perspectives within stakeholder groups, when possible, and ensure that consultation is representative of the State or LEA as much as possible.

➤ Make stakeholders aware of past and current uses of Title II, Part A funds, and research or analysis of the effectiveness of those uses, if available, as well as research or analysis of proposed new uses of funds, in order to consider the best uses for schools and districts to support teacher and school leader development.

➤ Consider the concerns identified during consultation, and revise uses of Title II, Part A funds when appropriate.
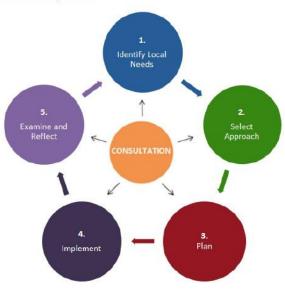

A Cyclical Framework for Maximizing Title II, Part A Investments

Title II, Part A interventions are more likely to result in sustained, improved outcomes for students if:

1) Chosen interventions align with **identified local needs;**

2) The **evidence base** and **the local capacity** are considered when **selecting a strategy**;

3) There is a robust **implementation plan;**

4) Adequate resources are provided so the **implementation** is well-supported;

5) Information is gathered regularly to **examine** the strategy and to **reflect** on and **inform** next steps**.**

Here's how this framework should look in practice:

1. IDENTIFY LOCAL NEEDS

Here are a few examples of sources SEAs and LEAs might examine when identifying local needs:

Stakeholders	Student Data	School Data	Educator Data
Educators Students Families Community	Demographics Achievement and Growth Graduation Rates	Resources Safety Climate	Effectiveness Retention Rates Areas of Expertise and Shortages Job Satisfaction

Historically, LEAs were required to conduct a needs assessment to engage key stakeholders under section 2122(c) of the ESEA, as amended by NCLB. While Title II, Part A of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, does not require the same formal needs assessment (although a needs assessment is required under other sections of ESEA), such an assessment may help ensure that Title II, Part A funds are used strategically, to maximize educator effectiveness and student outcomes.

Identifying Local Needs

☐ *What data are available or needed to best understand local needs?*

☐ *How do student outcomes compare to identified performance goals? Are there inequities in student outcomes across the State or district?*

☐ *What are the potential root causes of areas where performance falls short of goals or of inequities in student outcomes?*

☐ *What kinds of support, including better resource alignment, might further progress toward goals or address inequities in student outcomes? How might support need to vary to serve the needs of different student subgroups (e.g., English Learners and students with disabilities)?*

☐ *How should needs be prioritized when several are identified?*

2. SELECT RELEVANT, EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

Once needs have been identified, SEAs and LEAs, along with stakeholders through consultation, need to determine the approaches most likely to be effective. By using rigorous and relevant evidence to identify appropriate evidence-based strategies and assessing the local context to identify the capacity (e.g., funding, staff, staff skills, and stakeholder support), SEAs and LEAs are more likely to implement evidence-based approaches successfully.

Best Practices and Resources for Using Evidence
In order to leverage evidence, SEAs and LEAs should consider the rigor and relevance of evidence and the local capacity to implement the evidence-based activity. Those concepts and related resources are discussed below:

- Activities supported by higher levels or rigor of evidence, specifically strong or moderate evidence as defined in ESEA section 8101(21), are more likely to improve student outcomes because there is evidence about their effectiveness. Activities supported by strong and moderate evidence should be prioritized, and if not available, promising evidence may suggest that an activity is worth exploring. For some activities, there may be no evidence and in those cases, the activities should demonstrate a rationale for how they will achieve their goals.

- The relevance of the evidence – namely the *setting* (e.g., elementary school) and/or *population* (e.g., students with disabilities, English Learners) of the evidence – may predict how well an evidence-based activity will work. SEAs and LEAs should look for activities supported by promising, strong, or moderate evidence in a similar *setting* and/or *population* to the ones being served. The What Works Clearinghouse_{TM} (WWC) uses rigorous standards to review evidence of effectiveness on a wide range of activities and also summarizes the *settings* and *populations.*

- In addition to the WWC, the Department's Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) and other federally-funded technical assistance centers may provide summaries of the evidence on various activities and strategies and guidance on how existing research aligns to the ESEA evidence levels.

- Local capacity also helps predict the success of an activity, so the available funding, staff resources, staff skills, and support for activities should be considered when selecting an evidence-based activity. SEAs can work with individual and/or groups of LEAs to improve their capacity to implement evidence-based activities.

Selecting Relevant, Evidence-Based Strategies: Using Evidence

☐ *Are there interventions that are supported by higher levels of evidence that could address local needs around student outcomes or educator effectiveness?*
☐ *Are the findings in this study or studies positive and statistically significant?*
☐ *Are these findings relevant to this particular context, including the students aimed to be served (e.g., students with disabilities and/or English Learners)?*
☐ *Are there other rigorous studies with contradictory (e.g., negative or null) findings?*
☐ *If strong evidence or moderate evidence is not available, is there correlational evidence?*
☐ *Is the intervention rationale-based with some evidence that suggests this approach may work (e.g., represented in a logic model)?*
☐ *How will the effectiveness of the intervention be measured?*

Selecting Relevant, Evidence-Based Strategies: Understanding Local Capacity

☐ *What resources are required to implement this intervention? Will the potential impact of this intervention justify the costs, or are there more cost-effective strategies that will accomplish the same outcomes?*

☐ *What is the local capacity to implement this intervention?*
  - *Are there available funds? Could resources be reallocated to support the intervention? How do costs for the intervention compare to other potential interventions?*
  - *Does staff have the skills necessary to implement this intervention? If not, what is the plan to help them develop such skills?*
  - *Does the intervention require hiring of additional staff or individuals with other expertise?*
  - *Do the individuals who will implement the intervention believe it is something they can and should do?*
  - *Will stakeholders support the intervention? If not, what additional consensus-building might be required?*
  - *Is external support necessary to help ensure this intervention is successful?*

☐ *How does this intervention fit into larger strategic goals and other existing efforts?*
  - *Will this be an additional intervention, or will it replace an existing intervention or strategy?*

☐ *Are there reasons to believe this intervention will not work in the local setting, and if so, how can those issues be mitigated?*

☐ *How will this intervention be sustained over time?*

3. PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

An implementation plan, developed with input from stakeholders, while not required by statute, sets up LEAs and schools for successful implementation. Implementation plans may include the following components:

- A **logic model**, which demonstrates a theory of action by visually connecting the intervention to expected outcomes that are stated as well-defined and measurable goals, clarifies how the intervention will work;

- **Well-defined, measurable goals;**

- **Clearly outlined roles** and responsibilities for people involved, including the person or people responsible for the intervention's success, those with a deep understanding of the intervention, and those working to implement the intervention on the ground;

- Implementation **timelines** for successful execution;

- Identified **resources** required to support the intervention; and

- Strategies to **monitor performance** and **ensure continuous improvement**, including plans for data collection, analysis and/or an evaluation.

4. IMPLEMENT

Effective implementation of the LEA's selected Title II, Part A intervention is essential to reaching its goals. Inevitably, there will be unexpected hurdles during implementation, so having an ongoing mechanism outlined during the planning stage to identify and address issues as they arise is crucial. Also see the next section titled Examine and Reflect for more details on the use of performance monitoring and evaluation to examine success.

Implementing

- ☐ *Is the implementation plan being followed as designed? If not, why not? Are changes necessary?*
- ☐ *What information will be collected to monitor the quality of implementation? Is additional information needed to understand how the implementation is working?*
- ☐ *What does the information being collected suggest about the success of the implementation?*
- ☐ *Are more resources required?*
- ☐ *Do resources need to be realigned or timelines adjusted?*
- ☐ *Are stakeholders being regularly engaged about implementation? How do they think implementation is working?*
- ☐ *What are unforeseen barriers to successful implementation?*
- ☐ *How is implementation working among other existing efforts?*
- ☐ *Is the intervention ready to be scaled to more students or educators?*
- ☐ *How were the decisions informed by consultation? How is the information being conveyed to stakeholders?*
- ☐ *How will stakeholders be included in all implementation phases, including the initial announcement, to ensure smooth implementation?*

5. EXAMINE AND REFLECT

Under ESEA sections 2102(b)(2)(D) and 2102(b)(3), LEAs are required to use data and ongoing consultation to continually improve their Title II, Part A funded activities. LEAs must use Title II, Part A funds to develop, implement, and *evaluate* comprehensive programs and activities. (ESEA section 2103(a)). To ensure effective Title II, Part A investments, it is important to track and measure the short-term and long-term impacts of an intervention. There are different ways to examine how activities are working. Performance monitoring, for instance, involves frequently tracking data about an activity to see how outcomes compare to identified targets and goals. Rigorous evaluations, on the other hand, measure the effectiveness of an activity, answering questions about the impact of a specific activity on measured outcomes. Both types of knowledge help inform future decisions and investment, and should be reflected upon and shared with key stakeholders to make future decisions. Performance monitoring and evaluations of effectiveness are described below:

- **Performance monitoring** involves regularly collecting and analyzing data in order to track progress against targets and goals. For example, performance monitoring can help identify whether key elements of a logic model are being implemented as planned and whether the intervention is meeting interim goals and milestones, and suggest ways the intervention could be changed for continuous improvement. Performance information can also provide insight into whether the expected outcomes are being achieved.
- **Evaluations of effectiveness** may be appropriate when SEAs and/or LEAs want to know if an activity was effective in that the activity affected the intended student or educator outcomes. These types of evaluations may meet strong or moderate evidence levels, as defined in ESEA section 8101(21). In order to ensure these evaluations of effectiveness produce credible results, SEAs or LEAs can leverage Department of Education technical assistance, including working with local RELs to plan, implement, and conduct evaluations, engage university faculty as research partners, and/or by using supporting resources like this free software to simplify analysis and reporting of evaluation results.

- ☐ *What are reasonable expectations of success and how can success be measured?*
- ☐ *What are interim progress and performance milestones that can be tracked?*
- ☐ *Is there the need and/or the capacity to examine the effectiveness of an intervention (i.e., a study that would produce strong or moderate evidence under ESEA section 8101(21)) or would a correlational study (e.g., a study that would produce promising evidence under ESEA section 8101(21)) or use of performance data suffice?*
- ☐ *Are the necessary data being collected and examined at the right frequency to monitor performance and make needed adjustments? Are the data high quality?*
- ☐ *What have participants (i.e., students and educators) in the intervention shared about their experience and how the intervention was implemented?*
- ☐ *How could knowledge about this intervention be shared with others and incorporated into decision-making? Who needs to be briefed and how can information be made more accessible to them?*
- ☐ *What do stakeholders think the information suggests about how to improve going forward?*
- ☐ *Do the data or evaluation results suggest that the intervention should continue being implemented as is, that the intervention should be modified, or that another approach should be identified?*

Guidance on the Definition of "Evidence-Based"

Evidence is a powerful tool to identify ways to address education problems and build knowledge on what works. ESEA emphasizes the use of evidence-based activities, strategies, and interventions (collectively referred to as "interventions"). Section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA defines an evidence-based intervention as being supported by *strong evidence, moderate evidence, promising evidence,* or evidence that *demonstrates a rationale* (see text box below). Some ESEA programs encourage the use of "evidence-based" interventions while others, including several competitive grant programs and Title I, section 1003 funds, require the use of "evidence-based" interventions that meet higher levels of evidence.

In order to help SEAs, LEAs, schools, educators, and partner organizations (collectively referred to as "stakeholders") understand and identify the rigor of evidence associated with various interventions, below are the recommended considerations, resources, and criteria for each of ESSA's four evidence levels. These recommendations are applicable to all programs in ESSA. This guidance does not address the specific role of evidence in each ESSA program and therefore should be used in conjunction with program-specific guidance.

The criteria below represent the Department's recommendations for identifying evidence at each of the four levels in ESEA.

❖ **Strong Evidence.** To be supported by *strong evidence,* there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study on the intervention. The Department considers an experimental study to be "well-designed and well-implemented" if it meets or is of the equivalent quality for making *causal inference*s. Additionally, to provide *strong evidence*, the study should:

> *1)* Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other *relevant outcome;*
>
> 2) Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on the same intervention in other studies that meet *WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations* or are the equivalent quality for making *causal inferences*;
>
> 3) Have *a large sample* and *a multi-site sample*; and
>
> 4) Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served) AND settings (e.g., rural, urban) proposed to receive the intervention.

❖ **Moderate Evidence.** To be supported by *moderate evidence,* there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented *quasi-experimental study* on the intervention. *The Department considers a quasi-experimental study to be "well-designed and well-implemented" if it meets WWC Evidence Standards with reservations or is of the equivalent quality for making causal inferences.* Additionally, to provide *moderate evidence*, the study should:

> 1) Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome;
>
> 2) Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on that intervention from other findings in studies that meet *WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations* or are the equivalent quality for making *causal inferences*;
>
> 3) Have a *large sample* and *a multi-site sample*; and

4) Have a sample that overlaps with the populations (i.e., the types of students served) OR settings (e.g., rural, urban) proposed to receive the intervention.

❖ ***Promising Evidence.*** To be supported by *promising evidence,* there must be at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias on the intervention. The Department considers a correlational study to be "well-designed and well-implemented" if it uses sampling and/or analytic methods to reduce or account for differences between the intervention group and a comparison group. Additionally, to provide *promising evidence*, the study should:

1) Show a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other *relevant outcome*; and
2) Not be overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence on that intervention from findings in studies that meet *WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations* or are the equivalent quality for making *causal inferences*.

❖ ***Demonstrates a Rationale.*** To demonstrate a rationale, the intervention should include:

1) A well-specified *logic model* that is informed by research or an evaluation that suggests how the intervention is likely to improve *relevant outcomes*; and
2) An effort to study the effects of the intervention, ideally producing promising evidence or higher, that will happen as part of the intervention or is underway elsewhere (e.g., this could mean another SEA, LEA, or research organization is studying the intervention elsewhere), to inform stakeholders about the success of that intervention.