
Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Appalachia: The Nuts and Bolts of Working with Research Partnerships

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- Alliance members in Virginia, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Kentucky

Overview of the Presentation

1. Description of REL-AP's research partnerships
2. Building local capacity for use of data and research by practitioners
 - Listening to stakeholder needs
 - Translating needs into a research study or TA
 - Making sense (and use) of data
 - Starting simple, ending coherent
3. Next Steps for REL-AP
4. Challenges and Promises

REL-AP Research Partnerships

College & Career Readiness (CCR)

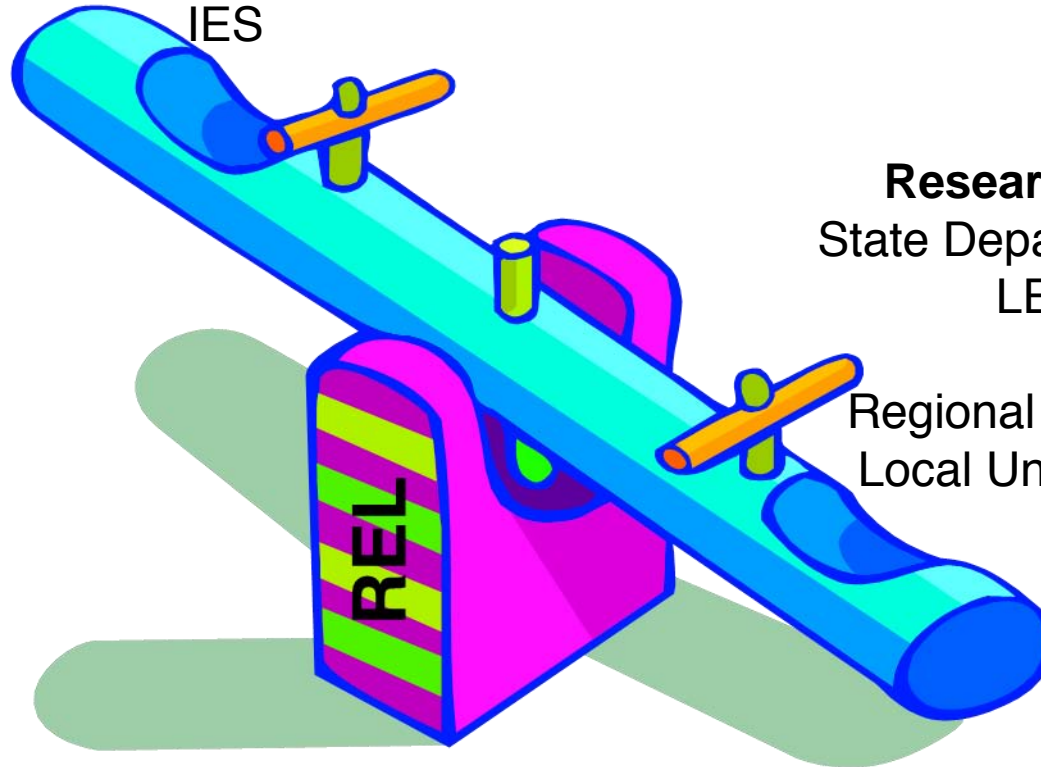
- Eastern KY CCR Collaborative
 - 26 districts in KY in SE/South Central area
- Southern VA CCR Alliance
 - 12 districts in Southern VA (Halifax) and 15 districts in Eastern VA (Norfolk)
- SW TN Rural Education Cooperative
 - 12 districts in SW TN, University of Memphis

Low Performing Schools (LPS)

- WV Turnaround Alliance
 - 31 schools in State System of Support and WVDOE

The Stakeholders and Alliance Members

Federal Funding:
US Department of Education



Research Partnerships
State Department of Education
LEAs/Districts
Schools
Regional Education Centers
Local Universities/Colleges

“You say Tomato, I say Tomato”

What We Say

- Researchers
 - Data
 - Evidence
 - Partnerships
- Policy Makers
 - Data
 - Evidence
 - Partnerships
- Practitioners
 - Data
 - Evidence
 - Partnerships

What We Mean

- Researchers (Academics)
 - Generalizable, no selection bias
 - Rigorous research, ideally RCTs
 - Where I can get data
- Policy Makers (Superintendents SEA/LEA)
 - Accountability/ performance indicators
 - Experts, curriculum/standards developers
 - Where I can communicate to LEA/schools
- Practitioners (School principal/ teachers)
 - Johnny in my class
 - Johnny’s DRP test went up
 - What’s that?

Bridging the Gap between Policy and Practice



Building Local Capacity for Data Use

Policy Makers & Practitioners

- Share information and data
- Help to identify needs and gaps
- Provide content expertise
 - Regional
 - Local
 - Topical

Applied Researchers

- Listen to stakeholder needs
- Translate needs into a research study or TA
- Make sense (and use) of data
- Start simple, end coherent

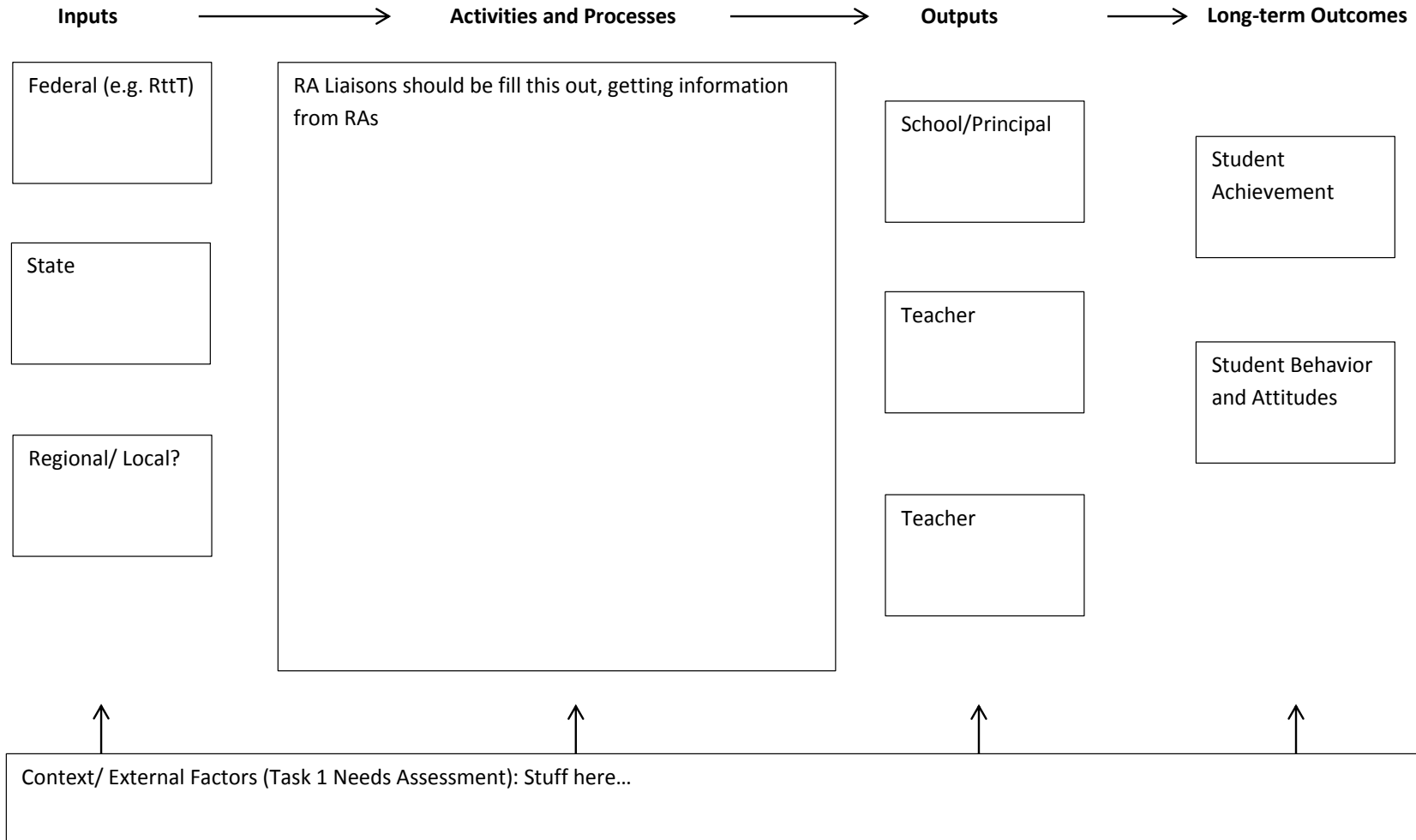
Listening to Stakeholder Needs

- Active listening allows for:
 - Gaining understanding
 - Improving relationships
 - Making people feel understood and valued
- Active listening strategies include:
 - Understanding the intent of the speaker
 - Restating and clarifying
 - Being aware of your own opinions
- Active listening in practice...

Logic Models as a Communication Tool

- Creates a coherent line in inquiry
 - Align Tasks 1 (Needs Assessment), Task 2 (Research Alliance, Task 3 (TA), and Task 4 (Applied Research)
- Creates a communication tool with the Research Alliance
 - Share your understanding with the Alliance members
 - Obtain feedback from Alliance members
 - Mirror (therapeutic technique) what the Alliance members say with a visual
- Creates a road map and management tool for REL TA Providers and Researchers
 - Create consistent need and rationale of a study
 - Meet policy and practice relevance with research rigor

REL Logic Model Template



Note: **Task 1**—Get information about needs of each Research Alliance and State. **Task 2**—Get information about the Inputs, Activities, and Outputs. **Task 3**—Get information about gaps to help link inputs (policy) and context (policy) to activities and outputs (practice). **Task 4**—Get information about student outcomes and codify treatment of interest.

Active Listening to Stakeholder Needs

Use the Logic Model Approach to:

- Task 2: Research Alliance
 - Build and Maintain Relationships with Research Alliance
 - Formulate logic model draft from phone calls
 - Ask Alliance members for feedback
 - Use the Improvement Cycle approach to continue to codify their Alliance
 - Codify the Research Alliance
 - Create road map of what the Research Alliance's goals and mission is, what their resources are, and how they will achieve their goal
 - Identify gaps or holes in the logic

Translating Need into a Study or TA

Use the Logic Model Approach to:

- Task 3: Technical Assistance
 - Align Technical Assistance Products with Alliance Needs
 - Identify gaps and holes in the logic, verify with Task 2 researcher
 - Identify opportunity for TA
- Task 4: Applied Research
 - Align Research Products with Alliance Needs
 - Discuss with Task 2 researcher on the rationale and need of the study, relevant research product to help Alliance members

Making Sense of Data All Around Them



Researchers Role: Working in the Seams

Starting Simple, Ending Coherent

Use the Logic Model Approach to:

- Create a Five-year Strategic Plan for the Research Partnership
 - Year 1: Awareness of data, gaps, needs
 - Be aware of data via data inventory, profile, literature summary
 - Focus on inputs and activities/processes
 - Year 2: Application and use of data
 - Use the data via relational analysis, setting up an RCT/natural experiment
 - Focus on activities/processes and outputs
 - Year 3-5: Analysis and feedback loop of data
 - Analyze the data from RCT/ natural experiment
 - Translate, disseminate, apply the results to school improvement
 - Focus on outputs and long-term outcomes

Next Steps for REL-Appalachia

- Year 2 Planning
 - Creating a road map using our logic models
- Research Partnerships
 - Moving into Application and Use of Data
 - Identifying research studies that can have multi-year interest from the alliance
 - Delving deeper into the maintaining the partnerships
 - Refining the logic models
- Rapid Prototyping for Continual Improvement
 - Adapting to the needs of the partnership
 - Doing what we preach
 - Using our own data for continual improvement of our services

Challenges and Promises

Challenges

- Relationship building
 - Art not science or list of protocols
 - More than just a “free service”
- What’s Hot, What’s Not
 - Planning out studies that have long-term interest and potential impact for improvement
- Sustainability
 - Life without the REL researchers

Promises

- Research as the bridge
 - New ways to think about research
 - Potential to lead to new methods, new ideas
 - Potential to train new researchers
- Taking advantage of data
 - Wide usage and dissemination of data