California's System of Support 2–Assess Needs

Module 2B: Designing a Needs Assessment for Continuous Improvement

Updated January 2019

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

California's System of Support Goal

To help local educational agencies (LEAs) and their schools meet the needs of *each student they serve*, with a focus on **building local capacity to sustain improvement** and to **effectively address disparities** in opportunities and outcomes.

– California Department of Education (CDE) California's System of Support web page

Overview of Modules

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Purpose of Module 2B

To provide LEAs and local stakeholders with specific guidance and questions to consider when designing needs assessments for use within the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and school planning processes.

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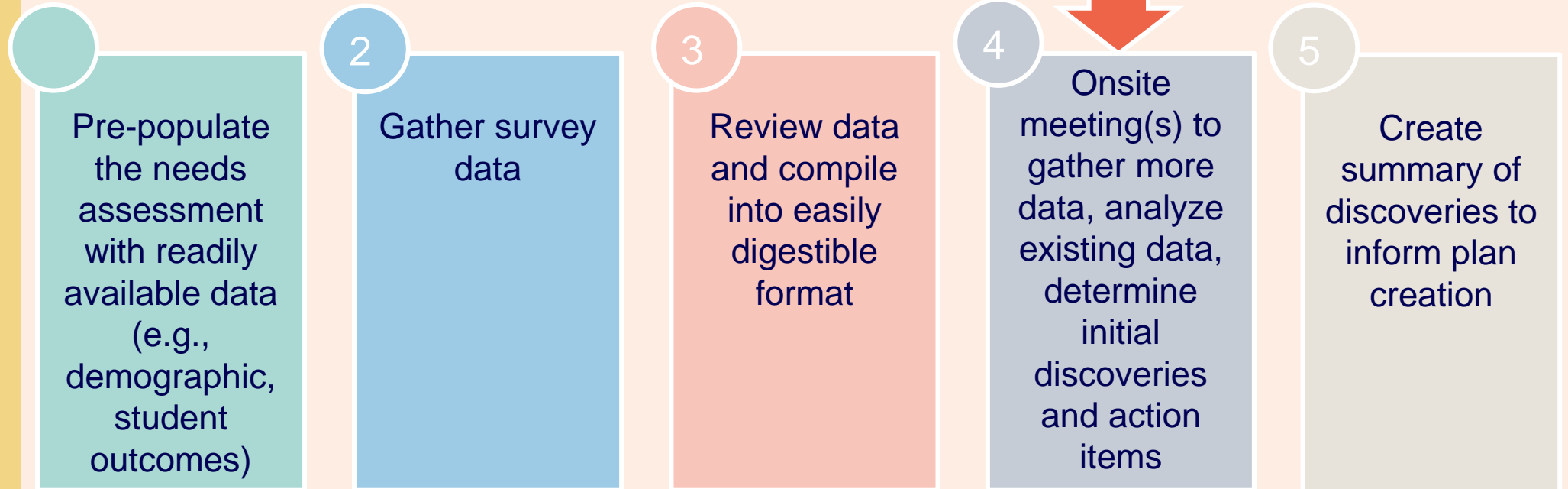Needs Assessment for Continuous Improvement

Designing the Needs Assessment

Steps in a Needs Assessment

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Onsite analysis meetings are a crucial component during which **data is analyzed**, **root cause analysis** occurs, and **plan development** begins.

1. Pre-populate the needs assessment with readily available data (e.g., demographic, student outcomes)

2. Gather survey data

3. Review data and compile into easily digestible format

4. Onsite meeting(s) to gather more data, analyze existing data, determine initial discoveries and action items

5. Create summary of discoveries to inform plan creation

Designing a Successful Needs Assessment

Organizing Principles

- Content
- Process
- Presentation

Research-based Elements

- Diverse and rigorous data
- Needs-driven, context-specific data collection
- Stakeholder engagement
- Collaborative identification of improvement needs

Organizing Principle–Content

- What will the needs assessment cover and include?

- What data sources will be utilized and how will they align to the overall focus?

Organizing Principle–Process

- How will the needs assessment unfold at the LEA level?

  – Who is responsible for the process?
  – Who will collect the data?

- How does the process tie to the chosen organizing framework and expectations?

- How will the county office of education (COE) support implementation of the needs assessment/process?

Organizing Principle–Presentation

- How will the needs assessment process and outcomes be organized and disseminated?

  – How will data/discoveries be presented?
  – How will results of the needs assessment be documented and tied to what comes next (e.g., LCAP Annual Update)?

- What tools and collateral will the COE create to support implementation at the LEA level?
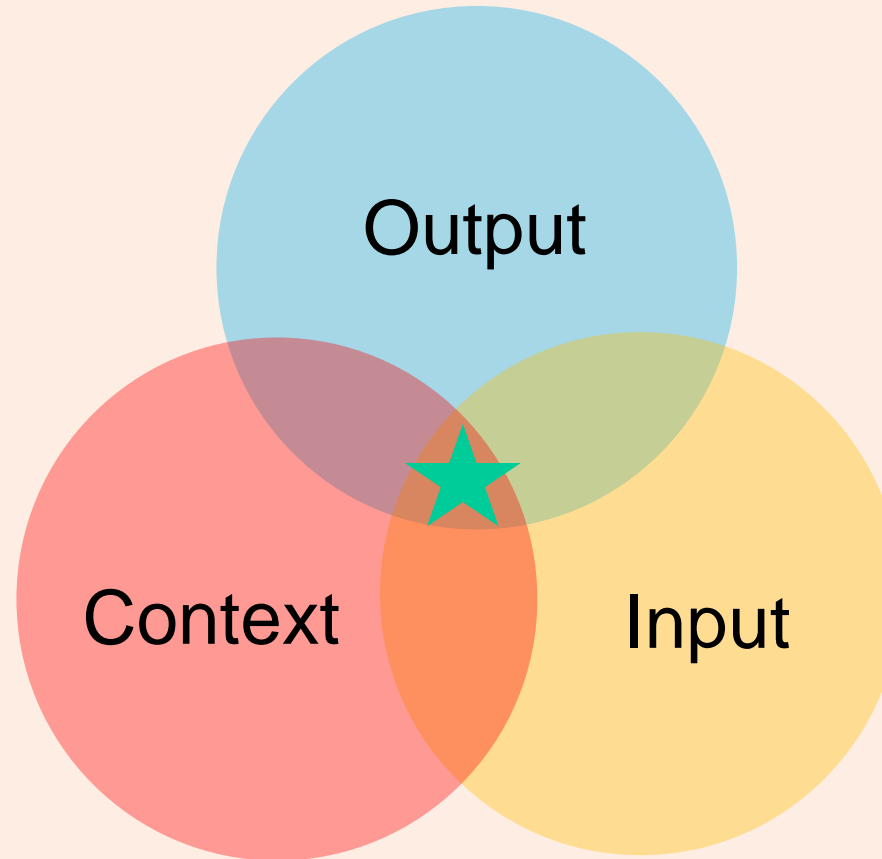
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Research-based Element– Diverse and Rigorous Data

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- **Diverse:** consisting of many different elements; various

  – Synonyms: different, unlike, dissimilar, distinct, separate

- **Rigorous:** extremely thorough, exhaustive

  – Synonyms: precise, accurate, trustworthy, high-quality

- **Enables triangulation:** cross-checking data to identify trends

Data Types

Data Types–Context

- **Demographics**
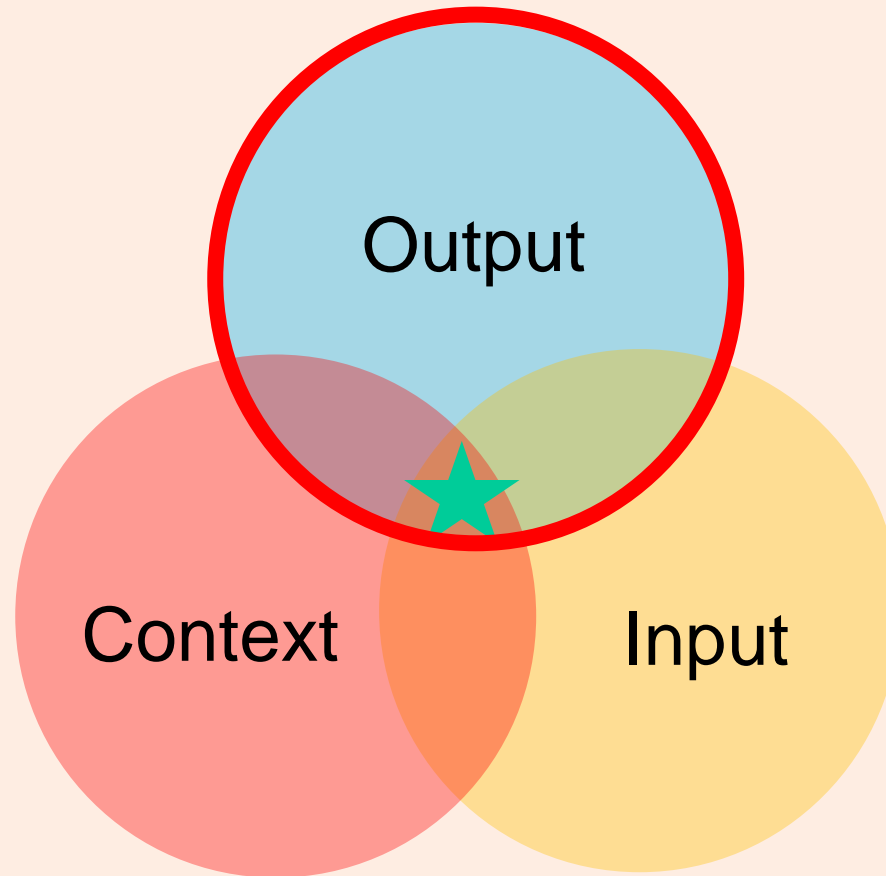 - Total student population (and trends)
  - Student groups
  - Mobility
- **Overall Climate and Culture**
  - Stakeholder perceptions and engagement
- **LEA Policies and Practices**
  - Local school board decision-making
  - Policies for magnet programs
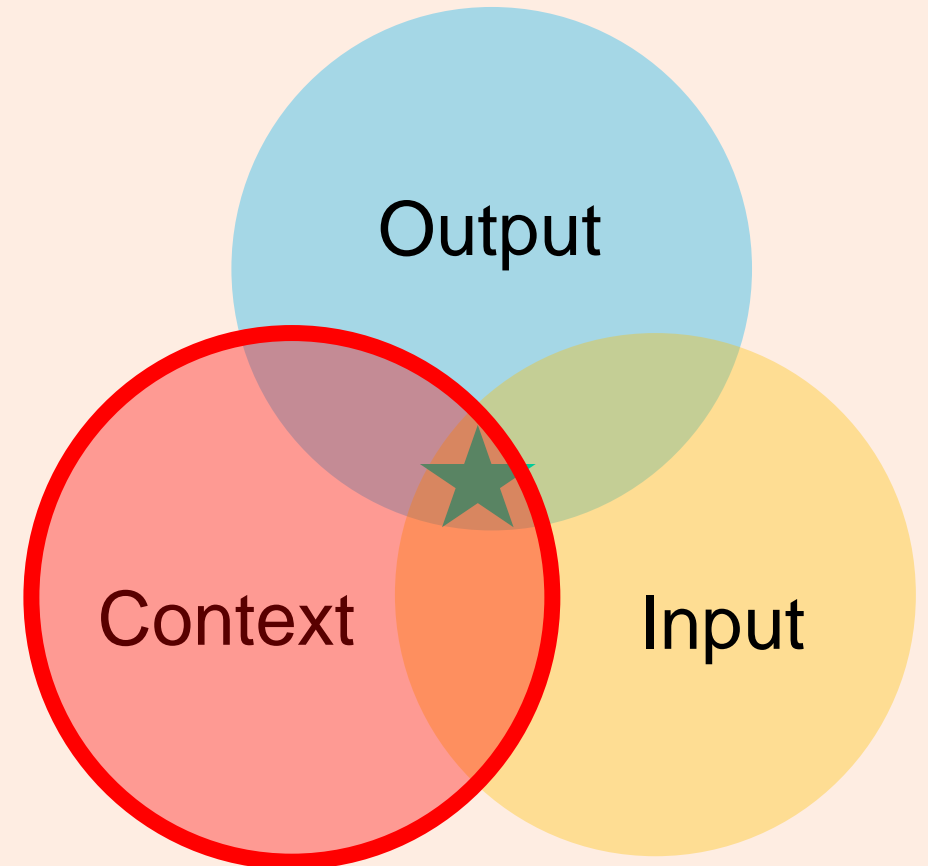
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Data Types–Output

- Achievement
- Behavior
- Attendance
- Performance

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Data Types–Input

Output

Context

Input
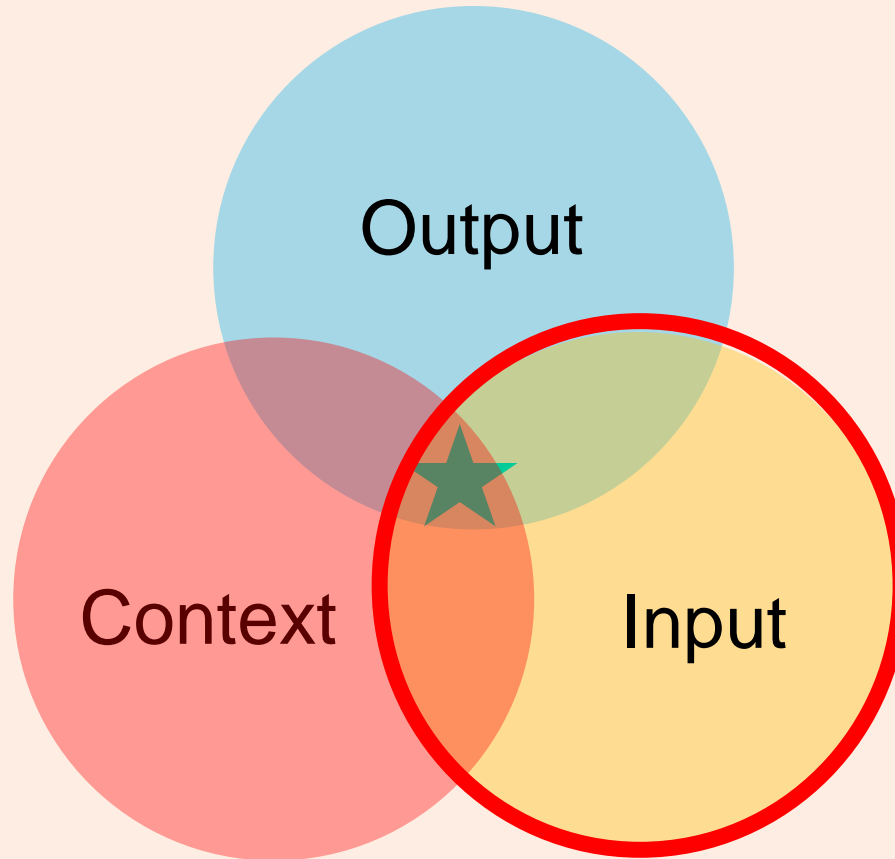
- Resources
- Materials
- Plans
- Training
- Support

Quantitative Data Sources

- Assessments, accountability metrics

  – e.g., achievement, attendance, graduation, behavior data

- Demographic trend data

- Classroom observations (scored)

- Survey data (Likert scale)

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Qualitative Data Sources (1)

- Interviews

- Focus groups

- Observations (descriptive)

- Survey data (open response)

- LEA and school plans

- LEA policies and practices
  - e.g., local school board decision-making; policies for magnet programs

- Personnel policies and procedures
  - e.g., recruitment and hiring, placement, evaluation, differentiation, advancement, and termination

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Qualitative Data Sources (2)

- Professional practice
  - e.g., leadership and decision-making; leadership development; planning; and curriculum and instruction

- Vendor/partner practices and outcomes
  - e.g., resource scan of current vendor services, use of performance contracts

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LEA- and COE-specific Topics

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Questions about the effectiveness and functionality of the LEA and COE should be included in the needs assessment. Topics may include:

LEA-specific topics

- Operational effectiveness of the central office and local school board in taking care of LEA functions

- Infrastructure for school leadership; teaching and learning

- Support for the improvement of individual schools

COE-specific topics

- Operational effectiveness of the county office in taking care of county office functions

- Infrastructure for LEA leadership; teaching and learning

- Support for the improvement of individual districts

Worksheet 2: Designing Your Needs Assessment (1)

Which data do you anticipate including?

Contextual variables

- Demographics (student, community, personnel, and/or other)
- LEA policies and supports (operations, learning infrastructure, and/or support for school improvement)

Student variables

- Student outcomes/performance (assessment results, graduation rates, postsecondary success, accountability metrics, and/or other)
- Student engagement (attendance, behavior, and/or other)
- Student opportunities (enrollment/participation in various programs, curricular areas, equity of access to quality instruction, and/or other)

Worksheet 2: Designing Your Needs Assessment (2)

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Personnel policies and procedures

- Including, but not limited to: recruitment, hiring, placement, development, evaluation, differentiation, advancement, and/or termination

Professional practice

- Including, but not limited to: leadership and decision-making; leadership development; planning, curriculum and instruction; family/community engagement; and/or student support services

Climate and culture

- Including, but not limited to: student and adult (including parent) perceptions; stakeholder engagement

Vendor/partner practices and outcomes

- For example: do contracts include performance management provisions?

Research-based Element–Needs-driven, Context-specific Data Collection

- Put guardrails/structure in place to focus on those key areas (segmented needs assessment) rather than creating a comprehensive needs assessment that looks at everything.

  – Develop a theory of action, select a research-based framework, and identify high-level areas of improvement using the California School Dashboard to determine key areas of focus.

- Guiding topics:

  – What do we need to know?

  – About what or whom?

- This leads to coherence and connection between the needs assessment and improvement and support activities that follow.

Methods of Data Collection

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Compilation of data from available sources (by CDE, COE, LEA, external partner)

Consensus compilation by LEA-based team, arriving at consensus on needs assessment query items

Guided compilation by LEA-based team with COE, CDE, or external partner facilitation

Surveys or questionnaires (paper and pencil, scannable, and/or online)

Focus groups (conference call and/or face to face)

Interviews (phone call and/or face to face)

Onsite analysis team (external, internal, or hybrid)

Worksheet 3: Designing Your Needs Assessment

Which data collection methods do you anticipate including in your needs assessment?

- Compilation of data from available sources (CDE, COE, LEA, external partner)
- Consensus compilation by LEA-based team
- Guided compilation by LEA-based team, with the CDE, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), a COE, or external partner facilitation
- Surveys or questionnaires (paper and pencil, scannable, online)
- Interviews (phone call, face to face)
- Focus groups (conference call, face to face)
- Data collected by onsite analysis team (facilitated externally by CDE, CCEE, and/or COE partner; internally by the LEA; hybrid)

Key Questions Graphic Organizer

What are the Key Questions the LEA needs to answer to create and implement the needs assessment?

Element	Content	Process	Presentation
Diverse and rigorous data			
Needs-driven, context-specific data collection			
Stakeholder engagement			
Collaborative identification of improvement needs			

Research-based Element– Stakeholder Engagement

- Stakeholder engagement is:

  – Necessary for data collection

  – Important for analyzing discoveries

  – Crucial for implementing an improvement plan

- Which stakeholder groups should be engaged depends on the scope of the needs assessment

Engaging Stakeholders...

- Builds ownership

- Builds trust

- Increases local capacity and knowledge

- Increases utility of data

- Leverages implementation science

- Leads to action

"Change happens at the speed of trust."

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Required Stakeholders

- Parent advisory committee
- English learner parent advisory committee, as applicable
- Parents
- Students

- Teachers
- Principals
- Administrators
- Other school personnel
- Local bargaining units
- Local community

These are the required stakeholders to meet minimum consultation requirements for districts (California *Education Code (EC)* Section 52060[g]) and COEs (*EC* Section 52066[g]) in the LCAP process. Single school districts and charter schools using the LCAP to serve as their School Plan for Student Achievement must ensure their LCAP meets federal school planning requirements and the stakeholder requirements established in subdivision (a) of *EC* Section 52062.

Other Stakeholders

- CDE, COE, and/or LEA personnel
- Local board of education
- Broad community (e.g., enrollment area, business leaders, faith-based organizations, social service providers)
- School Site Council
- School support staff
- School volunteers

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Worksheet 4: Designing Your Needs Assessment

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Check off the roles and responsibilities for each of the stakeholder groups identified:

Stakeholder Group	Establishment of Design Requirements	Development of Tools and Processes	Data Collection	Analysis	Onsite Analysis	Plan Development
CDE Personnel						
COE Personnel						
LEA Personnel						
Local Board of Education						
Families and Community						
School Personnel						
Students						
LEA-hired External Partners						
Other: _____						

Research-based Element– Collaborative Identification of Improvement Needs

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- Promotes transparency

- Provides LEA communities an authentic voice and a role in the process

- Local stakeholders don't own what they didn't identify

- Work out a process that involves a variety of people from across the system

Return to Key Questions Graphic Organizer

What are the key questions the LEA needs to answer to create and implement the needs assessment?

Element	Content	Process	Presentation
Diverse and rigorous data			
Needs-driven, context-specific data collection			
Stakeholder engagement			
Collaborative identification of improvement needs			

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Decision Points to Consider (1)

- Who participates in the needs assessment?
- Does the needs assessment occur off site, on site, or a combination of both?
- If the needs assessment is on site, how much time is required?
- If the needs assessment is on site, what is the cost?
- What training/capacity building is needed for anyone participating?
- Is there pre-work to be done (e.g., information gathered, compiled, distributed, and reviewed)?
- What is the format for the deliverables/results of the needs assessment?

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Decision Points to Consider (2)

- What is the total cost of developing and administering a needs assessment?

- What is the follow-up process for engaging stakeholders about the results and discoveries from the needs assessment?

- How will the results be used?

- How are the results connected to plans and funding applications for school or LEA improvement work (e.g., Comprehensive Support and Improvement grants)?

- How can the results inform ongoing monitoring processes?

Resources and Tools

- California School Dashboard
https://www.caschooldashboard.org/#/Home
- Continuous Improvement Resources web page
http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/continuousimprovement.asp
  - Worksheets 2-4
  http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/continuousimprovement.asp#NeedsAssessment
  - Key Questions Graphic Organizer
  http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/documents/contimpnakq.doc
  - Decision Points to Consider
  http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/documents/contimpdptc.doc
- *Using Needs Assessments for School and District Improvement: A Tactical Guide*
https://centeronschoolturnaround.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NeedsAssessment-Final.pdf
- *Utilizing Integrated Resources to Implement the School and District Improvement Cycle and Supports*
https://www.ccsso.org/resource-library/utilizing-integrated-resources-implement-school-and-district-improvement-cycle-and

References

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