Assessing SEA Capacity Grid

ASSESSING SEA CAPACITY

Great Lakes East/West provides technical assistance (e.g., provides professional development, disseminates information, brokers relationships, etc…)	Level 1: Capacity-Building Objectives (Characteristics of a High-Capacity State)			
	The state accurately assesses the improvement needs of districts and schools.	The state develops solutions to address the improvement needs of districts and schools.	The state builds and sustains systemic support for district and school improvement efforts.	The state improves tools and systems for improvement and accountability
	Level 2: SEA Capacity Elements			
	Internal Collaboration / Planning / Evaluation	Organizational Learning	Systemic Approach	Influencing or Development of Policy / External Partnerships
	Change Management and Knowledge Management (cross-cutting capacity elements)			

Preliminary Theory of Action

To help states achieve the broad capacity-building objectives and become high capacity (Level 1), Great Lakes East/West provides technical assistance that addresses key capacity elements (Level 2) considered crucial to the success of any project or organization/agency.

State: _____   Project: _____ _____ Date: _____

Best Practices—Capacity Elements	Capacity Stages			
	Start-up or nascent stage	Development or emerging stage	Expanding, growth, or consolidation stage	Sustainability or mature stage
Internal Communication, Coordination & Collaboration	No collaboration or knowledge of relevant activities or expertise in other units within the SEA; different units function in silos; little or dysfunctional coordination and communication between them	Incomplete knowledge of relevant activities or expertise in other units within the SEA; early stages of building relationships and coordinating with other units; if relations do exist, some may be precarious or not fully "win-win"; coordination and communication problems exist	Growing knowledge of relevant activities or expertise in other units within the SEA; some key relationships with a few units within the SEA; collaboration around common goals is generally short term; coordination and communication is getting stronger	Extensive knowledge of relevant activities or expertise in other units within the SEA; strong, high-impact relationships with other units have been built, leveraged, and maintained; relationships anchored in stable, long-term, mutually beneficial collaboration; relationships are dictated primarily by needs and interests rather than hierarchy or politics
Planning	Limited ability and tendency to develop a coherent project plan, either internally or via external assistance; if a plan exists, it is rarely or never referenced	Some ability and tendency to develop high-level plan either internally or via external assistance; plan sometimes directs management decisions	Ability and tendency to develop and refine concrete, realistic plan; some internal expertise in planning or access to relevant external assistance; planning carried out on a near-regular basis; plan used to guide management decisions	Ability to develop and refine concrete, realistic, and detailed plan; critical mass of internal expertise in planning, or efficient use of external, sustainable, highly qualified resources; planning carried out regularly; plan used extensively to guide management decisions
Evaluation	Very limited measurement and tracking of performance and progress; all or most evaluation based on anecdotal evidence; some data collection of activities and outputs (e.g., number of districts served), but no measurement of outcomes (e.g., the extent to which the dropout rate has been lowered)	Performance partially measured and progress partially tracked; regular collection of solid data on activities and outputs, and beginning to measure outcomes	Performance measured and progress tracked in multiple ways on a regular basis; multiple indicators used in evaluation, with primary focus on outcomes; some attention paid to cultural appropriateness of evaluation process/methods; impact measured, but longitudinal (long-term) or independent nature of evaluation is missing	Comprehensive, integrated system used for measuring performance and progress on continual basis; clear and meaningful outcomes-based performance indicators exist in all areas; careful attention paid to cultural appropriateness of evaluation process/methods; measurement of impact based on longitudinal studies with independent evaluation

Best Practices—Capacity Elements	Capacity Stages			
	Start-up or nascent stage	Development or emerging stage	Expanding, growth, or consolidation stage	Sustainability or mature stage
Organizational Learning	Performance data rarely used to improve performance and outcomes; little experience with evaluation beyond capturing information to report to funders; information systems not in place	Performance data occasionally used to improve performance and outcomes; some staff time devoted to evaluation efforts, as required by funders, however staff do not typically see the value of evaluation; information systems not in place	Learnings from performance data widely distributed, and often used by staff to make adjustments and improvements; some staff time devoted to documenting activities; some information systems in place to support ongoing evaluation	Systematic staff practices of making adjustments and improvements on basis of performance data; resources are devoted to thoroughly documenting activities and capturing impacts; evaluation processes fully integrated into information systems
Systemic Approach	Core programs and initiatives vaguely defined and lack clear alignment with overarching goals; programs seem scattered and largely unrelated to each other	Most core programs and initiatives well-defined and solidly linked with overarching goals; programs may be somewhat scattered and not fully integrated into clear strategy	Core programs and initiatives well-defined and aligned with overarching goals; programs fit together well as part of clear strategy	All programs and initiatives well-defined and fully aligned with overarching goals and constituency; programs are clearly linked to one another and to overall strategy; synergies across programs are captured
Influencing of Policy	No ability or awareness of possibilities to influence policy; never called on to participate in substantive policy discussions	Aware of possibilities to influence policy; some readiness and skill to participate in policy discussion, but rarely invited to substantive policy discussions	Fully aware of possibilities to influence policy; active in policy discussions at the local, state, and/or national level (as relevant and appropriate)	Proactively influences policy in a highly effective manner at the local, state, and/or national level (as relevant and appropriate); always ready for and often called on to participate in substantive policy discussions
External Partnerships	No partnerships or alliances with other for-profit, nonprofit, or public sector entities	Early stages of building relationships and collaborating with other for-profit, nonprofit, or public sector entities; if relations do exist, some may be precarious or not fully "win-win"	Some key relationships with a few types of relevant entities (e.g., for-profit, nonprofit, public sector) have been built and leveraged; action around common goals is generally short term	Strong, high-impact, relationships with variety of relevant entities (local, state, and federal government as well as for-profit, other nonprofit, and community agencies) have been built, leveraged, and maintained; relationships anchored in stable, long-term, mutually beneficial collaboration

Best Practices—Capacity Elements	Capacity Stages			
	Start-up or nascent stage	Development or emerging stage	Expanding, growth, or consolidation stage	Sustainability or mature stage
Change Management	Change is small scale and isolated; change is generally seen as not necessary or threatening by staff	Some staff are involved in identifying problems and creating solutions; some staff are aligned and committed to the direction of change; the culture and behaviors that change will bring are not widely known	The majority of staff are aligned and committed to the direction of change and understand the need for it; the culture and behaviors that change will bring are openly discussed	All staff are aligned and committed to the direction of change and understand the need for it; the culture and behaviors that change will bring are widely known and prepared for; there is continuous reassessment of impact from change; adjustments necessary to maintain momentum and drive results are implemented
Knowledge Management	No formal system to capture and document internal knowledge	System may exist but are either not user-friendly or not comprehensive enough to have an impact; system known by only a few people, or only occasionally used	Well-designed, user-friendly system, but not fully comprehensive; system is known by many people and often used	Well-designed, user-friendly, comprehensive system to capture, document, and disseminate knowledge internally in all relevant areas; all staff are aware of system and trained in their use; system used frequently