Reform Support Network

Communications and Engagement Assessment Rubric

A Tool to Help State Education Agencies Assess Their Current Efforts to Communicate with and Engage Stakeholders and Consider Options for Improvement

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The Reform Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, supports the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms, while sharing these promising practices and lessons learned with other States attempting to implement similarly bold education reform initiatives.

Introduction

As Race to the Top grantees make wide-reaching reforms, shift policies and heighten expectations, communicating with and engaging a range of key audiences is as important as ever. Building widespread understanding and support is crucial to the successful implementation and sustainability of ongoing State reform efforts. This means that States need the tools, skills and staffing necessary to think and plan ahead to determine just what key stakeholders need to know, how to reach them and when; they also need to be prepared to answer their questions, listen to and respond to their feedback and react quickly when opposition or conflicts arise.

Recognizing this challenge, the Reform Support Network (RSN) has developed this communications rubric to help State Education Agencies (SEAs) reflect on their current communications and engagement efforts and take tangible steps forward to improve their work. Specifically, the goals of this tool are to help State education leaders confirm areas of strength and identify areas of need and to provide suggested steps for sharpening strategies, building capacity and enhancing reach.

A strong, agency-wide effort needs to begin with a set of shared, basic assumptions that establish communications and engagement as a priority, and illustrate that it is everyone's job, not just the responsibility of the communications staff. This requires creating a culture of engagement within the SEA that enables stakeholders and staff to regularly participate in and provide feedback to the development of evolving programs and policies. This also requires staff across the agency to take responsibility for identifying what needs to be communicated and providing the communications team with the information necessary to do their jobs well.

The rubric is divided into five sections, with each section representing a strategic focus area surrounding communications and engagement:

- **Overall Strategy:** How SEAs define communications and engagement, connect this work to their mission, make communications and engagement a priority, use a strategic plan to guide the work, support staff members as key communicators and measure success.
- **Audience Segmentation:** How SEAs identify priority audiences whose understanding and support is central to achieving their goals—and how effectively they communicate with them.
- **Audience-Specific Messages and Diverse Tactics:** How SEAs develop their core messages, select messengers for each audience, differentiate messages to meet the needs of different stakeholders, use diverse communications vehicles (including emerging social tools) and measure success.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Coalition Building:** How SEAs involve important stakeholders in shaping policies and programs at the front end and/or inquire about these policies and programs later in the process, build relationships with a variety of partners, engage other reform champions, ensure all messages are delivered accurately and solicit and use feedback.
- **SEA Communications Capacity:** How SEAs allot staff to communications and engagement, train staff members, allocate funding to support their work and leverage partnerships.

The tool is meant to provide States with an opportunity to reflect on their current efforts and provide suggested strategies to improve. To use it, we encourage SEA leaders to form teams of SEA staff, key education leaders and other stakeholders from across the State, and then use the suggested discussion questions to evaluate the current status of existing communications and engagement efforts. Team members can review the list of possible strategies and activities, using the rubric to honestly self-assess current efforts in the State (with 1 as the lowest rating, and 4 as the highest). Some areas may not be applicable to all SEAs; teams should focus on their particular areas of need.

The communications and engagement framework provides a way to think about needed activities in a comprehensive way. This framework is designed to represent the *purpose* behind what SEAs should look to do to strengthen their communications and engagement efforts:

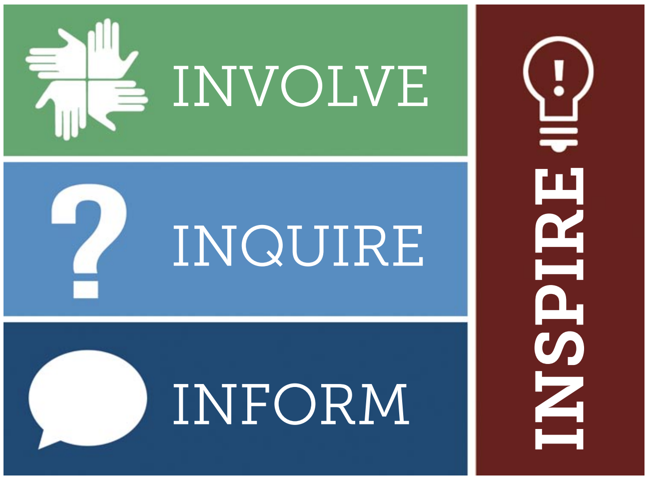

Figure 1. Communications and Engagement Framework for SEAs

- Conceptually this framework identifies **informing** as the foundation of all good practice: Keeping key audiences abreast of changes in expectations, policy and practice, and developing relevant messaging, content and strategic communications is the minimum expectation.
- Efforts that lead to **inquiry** are more proactive, less reactive and more likely to have a positive impact. This can include opportunities for audiences to provide feedback and have their questions answered by SEAs and intentional efforts to demonstrate how and when feedback and input is used to inform and improve practice.
- In certain cases, SEAs also will benefit by creating opportunities for key audiences to get **involved** in the work as active co-creators of policies, practices, training and/or tools.
- The most powerful result—**inspiration**—will occur when State leaders motivate others to act and lead, based on what they have learned and on the policies and programs they have helped develop.

Doing a good job of *informing*, *inquiring* and *involving* makes it more likely that audiences will be *inspired* to action. Appendix A has a more detailed discussion of the framework and a definition of each of the "Four I's."

The rubric that follows utilizes a four-point scale in which 1 (Basic) is the lowest rating and 4 (Exemplary) is the highest rating. The categories represent progressively more advanced and strategic approaches to effective communications. The categories are defined in the following way:

1. **Basic (1).** Either the practice doesn't exist or it is occurring at a very rudimentary level. The SEA's efforts serve to primarily *inform* stakeholders, if that. Synonyms: lacking, inadequate, rudimentary.
2. **Emerging (2).** The SEA has taken important steps to improve its performance, building and growing its practices until they become routinized. There is evidence that good work is sometimes happening in at least one priority area of reform. The SEA's efforts better *inform* stakeholders and create some opportunities for *inquiry* and *involvement*. Synonyms: progressing, developing.
3. **Strong (3).** The SEA is regularly performing high-quality, purposeful communications work in multiple areas. The SEA's efforts *inform* stakeholders and create multiple opportunities for *inquiry* and *involvement*, leading to some evidence of *inspiration* and growing support. Synonyms: meets or exceeds expectations, comprehensive, proficient.
4. **Exemplary (4).** The SEA's practices are highly strategic and consistently effective. The SEA's efforts successfully *inform* stakeholders and create ongoing, diverse opportunities for *inquiry* and *involvement*, leading to widespread evidence of support and, in some cases, *inspiration* among stakeholders. Synonyms: excellent, advanced, innovative.

SEAs are asked to assess the depth and quality of their current work and to strive to reach at least a 3 on the four-point scale in every relevant category. SEAs are encouraged to set goals in priority areas to move their efforts forward over time. States are recommended to re-assess their work every 3–6 months to identify where progress has been made and where additional effort is still needed. A self-assessment exercise for State teams to use under the guidance of a facilitator (either internal or external) is included in Appendix B; additional tools that States can use to assess and refine their communications and engagement work are available in the *State Facilitator's Guide for the Reform Support Network Communications and Engagement Assessment Rubric*. Appendix C includes RSN resources on communications and engagement.

Communications and Engagement Assessment Rubric

I. Overall Strategy

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
SEA communications and engagement goals and objectives • *Does the agency have a clear sense of what it is trying to accomplish through its communications and engagement efforts?* • *Are the goals and objectives clearly stated and actionable?*	We have no clear goals or objectives for our communications and engagement strategy.	We have several goals and objectives for our communications and engagement strategy that are shared with SEA staff.	We have a concise set of clear and specific goals coupled with supporting objectives that are used to define our communications and engagement efforts and strategy.	We have clearly defined goals and objectives that are actionable and serve as the foundation for all of our communication and engagement efforts. Prior to all new initiatives we revisit our goals and objectives and refine or adjust as needed to ensure that we know exactly who we are trying to reach and engage and for what purpose.
Alignment to the SEA's mission • *Does the agency have an overall strategic plan?* • *Does the agency's communications and engagement work connect to its overall vision and strategic goals?* • *Does the agency use this connection to illustrate how individual reforms are connected to a bigger set of goals?*	Agency goals and priorities are not broadly articulated or understood, either inside or outside the agency.	We have a strategic plan but the agency's communications work is not aligned to it. Our messages rarely connect back explicitly to the agency's vision or goals. Our communications priorities do not always clearly reflect the agency's priorities.	We use our strategic plan to shape our communications plan. We strive to connect our messages to our vision, goals and strategies, particularly when dealing with complex issues.	We refer to our strategic plan regularly to ensure that our messages on all topics connect directly back to the agency's vision, goals and strategies, and to ensure that our key audiences see the connections and broader vision for our work.
Communications Plan • *Does the agency have an aggressive, proactive communications and engagement plan and a strategic plan?* • *How often are these plans reviewed and updated?* • *How regularly does the agency use these plans?* • *Does the plan include crisis communication planning?*	We have no communications plan or agreed-upon agency-wide priorities.	We follow a broad communications strategy based on a plan written several years ago and/or see communications as the primary role of the SEA communications/media staff.	We have an up-to-date, clear communications plan, which includes a calendar of proactive outreach strategies and a crisis communications plan, both of which are regularly used by the SEA's communications director and other members of the senior leadership team.	We closely follow our communications plan, which includes a calendar of proactive outreach and engagement strategies and a crisis communications plan. It assigns responsibility for all elements of agency communications. The plan is strategically designed to support key initiatives from across the agency.
Prioritization of communications and engagement • *Are communications and engagement top SEA priorities?* • *How are these priorities made clear to staff?* • *How are these priorities reflected in the agency's actions?*	Given staffing and competing or pressing demands, communications and engagement are necessarily a low priority at our agency.	We say that communications and engagement are a high priority, but day-to-day demands take precedence. Communications are largely focused on responding and reacting; planned and thoughtful communications are often put off and given less attention than they deserve. We very rarely use the tools of two-way engagement (such as focus groups, advisory groups).	Our Commissioner/Superintendent frequently stresses that communications and engagement are key to our work, and has made them an agency-wide priority. Most staff take this seriously, others do not. Some units communicate and engage stakeholders effectively, but not all do.	Our Commissioner/Superintendent has made communications and engagement an agency-wide priority. This is taken seriously by staff in every unit. Efforts are coordinated by the agency's communications director, but content is developed and maintained by staff from across the agency.
Measuring success • *Does the agency have a process to measure the success of its communication efforts?* • *Who interprets the results, and how are they used?*	We do not formally measure our success. Trying to do so is not a priority given the challenges of measuring the impact of communications and other demands on our time.	We measure our success infrequently, but we do use feedback we receive during informal conversations, press coverage and web hits to gauge whether our communications efforts are working.	We regularly use both formal and informal feedback to measure our success. We frequently distribute surveys to key stakeholders to determine if they have heard and understood our messages. These results are used to improve our communications and engagement activities.	We collect and review feedback regularly. In addition to using both formal and informal feedback to measure our success, our communications director reviews the survey results and, with senior staff, uses them to improve our communications and engagement activities. We regularly monitor news and key blogger coverage of our work to determine where there is confusion or disagreement about our work.

II. Audience Segmentation

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Prioritizing audiences and disseminating information • *Does the agency consider which audiences are impacted by each initiative?* • *Does the agency determine which information is relevant to each audience?* • *Does the agency plan how to communicate the right material to each audience?*	We do not prioritize audiences or stakeholders; we distribute the same information to everyone.	When an initiative impacts one stakeholder group directly, we prioritize our communications to that group.	We analyze each initiative or program individually to determine which audiences are most directly impacted and prioritize communicating with these stakeholders.	We always differentiate our messages to key stakeholders to ensure that they receive the most relevant information about key initiatives or programs.
Strategies to reach teachers • *Is the agency able to reach teachers directly? How?* • *Does the agency work with the teachers unions to communicate with the teachers?* • *Does the agency participate in regional meetings that enable teachers to communicate with SEA staff directly?* • *Has the agency developed communication vehicles that allow teachers to ask questions and receive personalized answers?* • *Has the agency developed communication vehicles that allow teachers to provide feedback and that promote transparency in the feedback that is being provided?*	We do not communicate with teachers; we rely on school districts to do that.	We do not have the ability to communicate directly with teachers, but we do send district leaders materials for teachers and ask that they disseminate them widely. This information is also posted to our website. We have a cordial relationship with the teachers unions and occasionally ask them to distribute information on our behalf. The Commissioner/ Superintendent occasionally meets with teachers while visiting schools.	We have a solid relationship with the teachers unions and sometimes ask them to distribute information on our behalf. We meet with teachers at regional meetings or when traveling around the State whenever possible to gain additional feedback and input. The Commissioner/ Superintendent always visits classrooms when visiting school districts or communities.	We have a frequently updated database that enables us to contact teachers directly via email or regular mail. We use this to distribute regular news on new initiatives and programs of interest and other critical information to teachers. We have a strong relationship with the teachers unions that enables us to work together even when we disagree about policies or initiatives. We regularly ask them to distribute information on our behalf and to co-sponsor or publicize any key State workshops for teachers. In addition to meeting when possible with teachers at regional meetings or when traveling around the State, the Commissioner/Superintendent regularly convenes one or more advisory committees of teachers to get their insights and advice about key initiatives. We maintain a social media presence directed specifically at teachers to provide up-to-date information.
Strategies to reach principals • *How does the agency communicate with principals?* • *How can principals communicate with SEA staff directly?* • *Are there communication vehicles that allow principals to ask questions and receive personalized answers?* • *Has the agency developed communication vehicles that allow principals to provide feedback and that promote transparency in the feedback that is being provided?*	We do not communicate with principals; we rely on school district leaders to do that.	We do not have the ability to communicate directly with principals, but we do send out a regular (at least monthly) update for principals to district leaders and expect that they disseminate them. We post this update to our website. We work closely with the State's principal associations and occasionally ask them to distribute information on our behalf.	We have the ability to email principals and we send them a regular (at least monthly) update that is posted to our website. We work closely with the State's principal associations and participate in regional principals meetings each year. The Commissioner/ Superintendent always meets with principals in addition to district leaders when visiting school districts or communities.	We email principals directly and send them information on a regular basis to keep them updated on statewide and regional initiatives, issues and new programs. We have a close relationship with the State's principal associations and often ask them to distribute information on our behalf or help publicize or even co-sponsor State workshops for school leaders. We regularly seek guidance and feedback from principals at regional meetings and their associations' annual meetings. The Commissioner/Superintendent regularly convenes one or more advisory committees of principals to hear their insights and advice.

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Strategies to reach superintendents, district leaders and school board members • *How does the agency communicate with district leaders and school board members?* • *How does the agency collaborate with the superintendent's association? The school boards association?* • *Does the State Commissioner/ Superintendent meet with superintendents and school board members?*	We send superintendents information to address State agency requests or compliance issues, but do not communicate with them on a regular schedule or routinely describe major State education initiatives or priorities. We do not communicate at all with members of school boards/school directors.	We have the ability to send email messages directly to superintendents. We use this vehicle to send critical information and to distribute regular (at least monthly) updates. We have a cordial relationship with the State's superintendents and school boards associations, and occasionally ask them to distribute information on our behalf. We do not regularly communicate with school board members themselves, but the Commissioner/ Superintendent speaks at the State association's annual meeting.	We regularly reach out to our superintendents by email to provide them with critical information and gather input and feedback on new initiatives. We often ask both the superintendents and school boards associations to distribute information on our behalf. We meet with groups of superintendents and school board members at least annually and participate in regional meetings of these district leaders whenever possible.	We meet regularly with the leadership of the superintendents and school boards associations. The Commissioner/Superintendent regularly convenes one or more advisory committees of superintendents and school board members to hear their insights and advice about key initiatives.
Strategies to reach parents • *How does the agency reach parents?* • *Has the agency partnered with outside organizations to reach parents?* • *Can parents speak with SEA staff directly?* • *Does the Commissioner/ Superintendent participate in regional meetings with parents?*	We do not conduct any outreach to parents. We assume districts, schools and/or the State's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or equivalent Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) do that.	We do not conduct any direct outreach to parents, but the Commissioner/ Superintendent and agency leaders speak to them at regional meetings, workshops or conferences. We occasionally work with the State's PTA or equivalent PTO to distribute information to parents. Parents have input in decision making; for example, a parent representative sits on the State Board of Education, or a parent advisory group is consulted on a regular basis.	We occasionally send messages to principals to send home to parents about critical issues. We speak to parents at regional conferences and workshops, and work closely with the State's PTA or PTO to regularly distribute information to parents. We meet with the State PTA or PTO leadership regularly to gauge the effectiveness of our communications and outreach efforts and seek their advice.	We regularly send messages or materials to principals that can be readily shared with parents on critical issues. We proactively seek opportunities to speak and listen to parents at regional events, and we work closely with the State's PTA or PTO to distribute information and gauge the effectiveness of our communications and outreach efforts. We maintain a social media presence directed specifically at parents to provide them with up-to-date information. The Commissioner/Superintendent meets regularly with an advisory committee of parents to hear their insights and advice about key initiatives.

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Building relationships and communicating with legislators • *Does the Commissioner/ Superintendent meet with new legislators to bring them up to speed?* • *How frequently does the agency communicate with the education committee leadership?* • *Who is responsible for communicating regularly with legislative staff?*	We do not communicate directly with legislators or their staff; we respond to questions when they approach us. We respond to questions from the Governor's office when they contact us.	We have a part-time legislative director who is charged with responding to legislative calls when we receive them. We meet occasionally with the heads of the education committee and the Governor's key policy aides.	Our agency's legislative director proactively reaches out to all newly elected legislators to provide them with briefing material on key issues and answer their questions. The Commissioner/ Superintendent proactively briefs the education committee or committee chairs on our priorities at the start of the budget season or legislative session each year.	Our legislative director proactively reaches out to all newly elected legislators to provide them with briefing material on key issues and answer their questions. The Commissioner/Superintendent meets regularly with the leadership of the State's education committee and the Governor's policy advisors. Our legislative director stays in close contact with legislative staffers and the Governor's policy advisors to ensure that their questions are answered quickly and that they have access to whatever information they need.
Strategies to reach community and business leaders • *How does the agency reach community and/or business leaders?* • *How frequently does the Commissioner/Superintendent meet with community and/or business leaders?* • *What opportunities exist to engage community/business leaders?* • *Is someone at the SEA responsible for building and maintaining these relationships?*	We do not do any direct outreach to community and/or business leaders but respond to their questions when they approach us.	We participate in meetings led by community and business leaders when we are invited. A business representative sits on the State Board of Education.	We have a core group of community and/ or business leaders with whom we engage regularly, and who sit on advisory committees. The Commissioner/ Superintendent annually speaks with business leaders at the Chamber of Commerce or like entity, and attends local and regional meetings when he is invited. The State's Business Alliance for Education or similar entity is one of our primary partners and regularly convenes business leaders to build understanding and support for new initiatives.	The Commissioner/Superintendent has an advisory committee of community and/or business leaders with whom he meets on a quarterly basis. We have a core group of community/ business leaders with whom we work regularly and who frequently help to promote new initiatives within the business and advocacy communities. Some of the leading businesses in our State have offered grants or provided direct funding to support key initiatives that align with our core reform areas. We have one staff person dedicated to building and maintaining these relationships and to finding new ways to leverage and enhance these partnerships.
Strategies to build relationships and communicate with media • *How often does the Commissioner/Superintendent meet with education reporters?* • *How often does the agency hold off-the-record briefings with media or provide reporters with embargoed information prior to the release of data?* • *How does the communications director establish trusting relationships with education reporters?* • *How does the agency bring new education reporters up to speed?*	We respond to media calls when we receive them. We regularly distribute press releases and post information to our website.	A designated media liaison or spokesperson meets with new education reporters/ producers when they are hired and responds to press calls when they are received. In addition to regularly distributing press releases and posting information to our website, we have a short list of reporters we call directly when big decisions are made.	Our communications staff meets regularly with education reporters/producers/ bloggers to build relationships with them. In addition to proactive outreach by the communications team to reporters when news is breaking, we have identified a few leading reporters with whom the Commissioner/ Superintendent personally and regularly speaks.	Our communications team conducts regular off-the-record briefings with key reporters, producers and bloggers to ensure that they are up to speed on major issues and to build their understanding about complex concepts (for example, the release of new data) before their deadlines. These briefings often involve the Commissioner/Superintendent and other members of the senior staff to ensure that key media are up to speed on big issues and to build their understanding about complex concepts (for example, the release of new data) before their deadlines. The Commissioner/Superintendent regularly speaks to the top editors of the State's regional papers to inform and influence their position in editorial columns.

III. Audience-Specific Messages and Diverse Tactics

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Process to develop robust, audience-specific messages • *Does the agency ground its messages in research?* • *How does the agency determine what specific audiences want to know?* • *How does the agency ensure its messages are up-to-date, relevant and effective?*	We have no defined process to develop core messages about the design and implementation of key reforms.	Our communications director typically drafts broad messages that are reviewed by members of the senior leadership team, and sometimes our Commissioner/ Superintendent. Our media relations director uses them as talking points and in press releases.	Our agency's senior leadership team regularly collaborates on the development of core messages and, when possible, develops audience-specific messages on particularly controversial or complex issues, using best practices from other States. The Commissioner/ Superintendent gives final approval on all these core messages, which are then shared with senior leadership.	The development of core messages includes a scan of available market research, a review of best practices from other States, input from key audience focus groups and collaboration with the senior leadership of the agency. The core messages are updated frequently. Completed messages are distributed to all senior staff within the agency plus key external partners to ensure consistency of message. We closely monitor feedback, questions and responses to ensure our messages are effective and are reaching the appropriate audiences at the right time.
Development and distribution of tools SEA-wide to inform and manage communications • *Does the agency have communications tools (such as talking points or one-pagers on key issues)? If so, who uses them?* • *How often are they updated?*	When we develop core messages—which is not often—we develop one set and generally do not differentiate by audience.	We typically develop one set of core messages and communications materials, but when an issue is particularly important to or controversial for a specific audience, we develop separate sets of messages to address those concerns. We use these when speaking to the media.	We typically develop multiple sets of messages and communications materials to address what we think are the needs of the different audiences impacted by a particularly important or controversial issue. We distribute these to external partners, use them in media briefings, on social media, to draft press releases and to regularly update Frequently Asked Questions on our website.	We proactively distribute core messages to our senior staff and external partners to ensure consistency. We survey and meet regularly with advocacy groups representing key audiences to ensure that this strategy is effective and use their guidance and feedback to improve our efforts.
Development and use of audience-specific messages • *Does the agency develop different messages for different audiences?* • *Are these audience-specific messages presented using different vehicles?* • *Are they effective? How do you know?*	When we develop core messages—which is not often—we develop one set and generally do not differentiate by audience.	We typically develop one set of core messages and communications materials, but when an issue is particularly important to or controversial for a specific audience, we develop separate sets of messages to address those concerns. We use these when speaking to the media.	We typically develop multiple sets of messages and communications materials to address what we think are the needs of the different audiences impacted by a particularly important or controversial issue. We distribute these to external partners, use them in media briefings, on social media, to draft press releases and to regularly update Frequently Asked Questions on our website.	We proactively distribute core messages to our senior staff and external partners to ensure consistency. We survey and meet regularly with advocacy groups representing key audiences to ensure that this strategy is effective and use their guidance and feedback to improve our efforts.
Use of messages that link reforms • *How does the agency use its messages to connect reform initiatives?* • *Do the messages track back to the larger vision and goals of the agency?* • *How does the agency make this connection clear?*	When we develop messages they are typically focused on a single initiative. We do not develop broad messages to intentionally link reforms.	We typically develop broad messages on individual initiatives to build understanding about what we are doing and why. When we develop messages, we review our goals and priorities as a point of reference.	We regularly develop and refine a set of core messages that link the initiatives together. These messages are used as primary talking points for agency senior leadership to ensure connections are consistently made about how individual reforms are linked to achieve the agency's broader vision, goals and strategic priorities. We give all staff members basic talking points on major initiatives.	We have a set of broad, overall messages that we regularly refine and update each quarter to link all of the agency's reform initiatives and illustrate clearly how they work together to achieve the agency's vision, goals and priorities. Beyond talking points, the core messages also inform the content for most publications and presentations as well as relevant press releases. We give staff talking points, boilerplate PowerPoint slides and other materials that reflect these broad messages.

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Timeliness of message delivery • *Does the agency inform key audiences about big issues and/or changes (that is, new evaluation systems, test results) before they occur to manage expectations?* • *What methods are used to proactively inform key audiences?* • *How are partners involved?*	We lack capacity to inform stakeholders of big initiatives, decisions and changes before they are publicly announced.	We aim to be proactive and inform and involve key audiences in decisions related to major initiatives and changes in advance, but often run out of time. We have set this as a goal for the future because we recognize that this practice is important. We have involved some key partners in helping us think through when proactive communication is most important.	We proactively inform all key audiences about key elements of major initiatives and changes before they occur to build understanding and manage expectations. We typically distribute information to superintendents to share with teachers and principals, post information on our website and, when possible, conduct off-the-record, informational briefings with the media. We also work with key partners to involve them in our determining what we should proactively communicate about, with whom and when.	We always proactively inform our key audiences about major initiatives and changes before they occur and rely on them to help us build broad support and understanding. When appropriate, we conduct face-to-face briefings with core stakeholders, including superintendents and principal groups, to give them an opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions. Depending on the complexity of the issue, we distribute information to superintendents to share with teachers and principals, post information on our website, conduct media briefings, meet with key partners and publish op-eds in the regional papers.
Use of multiple communication vehicles • *What vehicles does the agency use to disseminate messages?* • *Does the agency use different vehicles to communicate with different audiences?*	We rely strictly on print and TV media coverage and our website—which is updated periodically—to communicate.	We rely largely on media coverage for our communications, but also distribute a regular (at least monthly) newsletter to district leaders and other primary stakeholders. We maintain a robust agency website that is regularly updated.	We use email listservs, media coverage and regional meetings to supplement our agency newsletter and website. Our agency maintains a blog and/or Twitter feed, which is updated at least once a week, to discuss key issues and reforms.	We use a wide range of communications vehicles, including multiple social media tools, depending on the issue and the audience to whom we need to communicate. We regularly hold regional meetings, Twitter town halls and webinars, and frequently meet in person with leaders of key advocacy organizations to reinforce our messages.
Use of social media and other non-traditional vehicles • *How does the agency use social media or other non-traditional communications vehicles?* • *With which audiences are these vehicles used to communicate?*	We do not use any social media or non-traditional vehicles. We rely on our traditional communications vehicles, mainly email and press releases.	We are currently using one social media platform, which we update a few times a week with links to press releases and other SEA announcements.	We use at least two social media platforms, and we are considering whether others will help us reach our key stakeholders. We use social media regularly to link to press releases, publications, op-eds and articles that align with our goals and priorities. We occasionally use these tools to engage in two-way conversations by soliciting feedback and input from teachers, parents and the general public.	We use multiple major social media platforms, after investing time and resources in identifying the ones that will best connect us with the audiences we want to reach. We regularly use these tools to engage stakeholders in discussion and solicit input and feedback. We closely monitor comments and questions to gauge public support and/or understanding of key issues and reforms.
Evidence that messages are effectively delivered to target audiences • *How does the agency track response?* • *How does the agency determine whether messages are having the desired effect?* • *How does the agency use messages from other States to identify best practices?*	We are not able to track whether our communications are delivered effectively or how they are received.	We do not regularly track responses to our communications, but we occasionally speak to our partners to get their feedback and input on how our messages are being received and whether they were accurately delivered.	We regularly seek feedback from our partners through surveys and in-person meetings, and closely monitor media coverage. We also use some web analytics and other digital information to measure our success and reach.	We conduct focus groups with key audiences just before and immediately after the launch of major initiatives. We closely review market research on messaging and what other States are using and use web analytics, social media stats and other digital information to measure the success and reach of our efforts.

IV. Stakeholder Engagement and Coalition Building

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Coalition building • *Do the critical State education organizations—the SEA, higher education, early childhood, other State agencies, the State board of education, unions and professional associations—work together to communicate about key reforms?*	There is little cooperation or collaboration among State education organizations. Some may cooperate, but most work largely independent of one another.	Some education organizations generally get along and cooperate with one another. There is some interest in increasing collaboration on communications.	The most critical State education organizations collaborate on some of their major communications efforts involving related reforms.	Key State education organizations work collaboratively to communicate about reforms relevant to their work to ensure their messages align and support one another.
Working with existing stakeholders • *How does the agency maintain its relationships with key stakeholders?* • *How does the agency communicate with these groups directly?* • *How does the agency use some or all of these groups to relay key messages to their constituencies?* • *How frequently does the agency meet with key stakeholder groups?*	We do not have close relationships with any stakeholder groups.	We have growing relationships with all of the primary-education-focused stakeholder groups and provide them with the same information that is distributed to the general public and media. The Commissioner/ Superintendent meets with key groups when he/she is invited to speak with them.	The Commissioner/ Superintendent meets with the leaders of key stakeholder groups at least once a year and speaks to their membership at their annual meetings. We communicate with these groups by sending these leaders copies of key newsletters, updates and other pressing information as it is released. We sometimes invite them to give us feedback on key decisions and initiatives.	We have a very strong relationship with all of the key stakeholder groups in the State, even those who have opposite opinions about key issues. Whenever possible we create opportunities for the leaders of these groups to play a role by participating in advisory committees, task forces and so on, so their voices can be heard. The Commissioner/ Superintendent meets with the leadership of key stakeholder groups regularly and speaks to their membership regularly. In addition to sending information as it is released, we provide these groups with talking points and rely on them to help us in our efforts to disseminate key messages. We always invite them to give us feedback on key decisions and initiatives.
Involving stakeholders at the front end of developing new policies and programs • *How do teachers, principals, district leaders, parents and school board members provide input on draft policies, plans and strategies?* • *To what extent do they have a chance to be involved in actually shaping these policies, plans and strategies?* • *What mechanisms exist for involving key stakeholders in major decisions?*	We typically do not involve external stakeholders in making decisions. We do our best to inform them once decisions have been made.	We have set up several advisory committees on key issues that meet periodically. However, we do not have capacity to staff the committees and we are inconsistent in how we use the input and report back on our work.	For every major proposed policy change or program, we convene one or more advisory groups to help shape the decisions. The groups are staffed and are an essential part of our decision-making process.	Listening to our stakeholders is a core value that permeates all of our work. Because advisory groups play a key role in shaping all major policies and programs, we regularly adjust proposals based on their input and report back to them so they can see how their voices have been heard. We make a conscious effort to recruit and train advisory group members as "ambassadors" to help build broader understanding and support among their peers for the decisions that they have helped to shape.
Soliciting and using feedback after policies and strategies have been developed • *Do you inquire about how key stakeholders feel about new policies and programs?* • *How do teachers, principals, district leaders, parents and school board members provide feedback on draft policies, plans and strategies? How do they know how or if it is used?* • *How is this feedback system monitored?* • *How often does the agency respond to feedback, and how?*	We do not have any established feedback loops, or ways for stakeholders to provide regular feedback and understand how and why it was used.	We do not have any formally established feedback loops, but we do track and listen to any feedback when stakeholders reach out to us. We take unsolicited feedback by email or via social media platforms at all times. We occasionally distribute surveys to generate feedback on a particular issue.	We have established some clear feedback loops for major reform efforts and initiatives for educators. We regularly distribute surveys to generate feedback on a particular issue. All of the feedback we receive is used to inform our efforts to refine and improve our work.	We have established strong feedback loops for major reform efforts and initiatives for educators. These include a dedicated email address for stakeholders to use to pose questions and submit feedback on especially complicated policy changes or initiatives. At least one staff member monitors this email box to ensure writers receive a personalized response. We use all of this feedback to refine and improve our work.

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Use of stakeholders as "champions" • *How does the agency use like-minded stakeholders to speak on behalf of key reforms?* • *How are these stakeholders prepared to speak on the agency's behalf?* • *How are they kept up to speed on key issues?*	We do not rely on any stakeholders to act as our "champions" or partners but work with partner organizations when approached and appropriate.	We sometimes ask one or two key stakeholders to speak on our behalf to their constituents, other stakeholders or leaders about important reform plans. We typically provide them with basic briefing materials, as well as regular newsletters, updates and access to other reports and publications.	We provide key stakeholders with robust briefing materials, talking points, newsletters, updates and access to other reports and publications to prepare them to speak on our behalf to their constituents, other stakeholders or leaders about important reform plans. We seek their advice in advance of all critical decisions so they can be most effective as champions.	Stakeholders help us co-develop policies and materials for distribution to their members. We work with these stakeholder organizations to identify on-the-ground "champions" (for example, classroom teachers) who can speak concretely about the impact of State reform efforts and policies.
Ensuring stakeholder "champions" are spreading the message accurately • *How does the agency measure the impact of messages spread by its communications team or by key stakeholders on the SEA's behalf?* • *How is feedback collected?* • *How is feedback used?*	We do not rely on any stakeholders to act as our "champions" or partners but we do work with partner organizations when approached and appropriate.	We speak with key stakeholders after they communicate on our behalf to their constituents to get feedback on how their efforts were received. We monitor media news coverage.	We meet with key stakeholders after they communicate on our behalf to their constituents to discuss how these efforts were received. We monitor media news coverage and conduct focus groups to ensure that messages were disseminated accurately and were fully understood. We mostly use this feedback to refine and improve our communications and outreach strategies.	We track media coverage and occasionally spot-check public meetings to ensure that information is being disseminated accurately. We use all of this feedback to refine and improve our messages and outreach strategies, and deepen our relationship with the most effective champions of our work. We follow up with our key stakeholders to ensure that they understand what has changed and why.
Communication with opponents • *How well does the agency anticipate criticism from opponents?* • *How does the agency respond to advocates who oppose key reforms?* • *How does the agency keep these opponents informed?* • *Are efforts made to maintain a relationship with opponents and to discuss—not debate—disagreements openly?*	We typically do not communicate with stakeholders who publicly oppose our initiatives or reforms.	We do not reach out to stakeholders who publicly oppose our initiatives or reforms, but will speak with them if they reach out to us. We track their issues closely but do not respond.	We maintain a cordial relationship with opponents to anticipate when criticism may emerge. We do not engage in any public debates, but do make an effort to keep our opponents informed about our position on key issues and correct factual errors when they are made publicly.	We maintain a cordial relationship with opponents to allow for an ongoing dialogue on key issues. We do not engage in unnecessary public debates, but make an effort to keep opponents well-informed about our position on key issues and correct factual errors when they are made publicly. We meet with opponents occasionally and hear out their positions on key areas of conflict. We recognize that we will likely remain on opposite sides of certain issues, but take steps to remain professional and cordial, to learn from them and to help them understand our perspective when we can.

V. Capacity

Topic	1: Basic	2: Emerging	3: Strong	4: Exemplary
Extending SEA capacity through partnerships with external stakeholders • *Does the SEA have the internal capacity to meet its key reform goals? Has the State factored this information into its plans to engage external resources?* • *Are staff members provided access to professional development to understand how to engage external stakeholders to build internal capacity?* • *How does the State use external stakeholders as partners to extend internal capacity to reach its reform goals?* • *How is the process of engaging external stakeholders to build internal capacity reviewed and improved on a regular basis?*	Given staffing and competing or pressing demands, engaging external stakeholders to assist with reform efforts is a low priority. We are reluctant to engage in partnerships, or have had trouble forming effective ones. Traditional partners, such as regional delivery systems, do not share our reform strategy, resulting in a competition for time, resources and attention on reform activities.	We try to engage external stakeholders to help implement key reforms, but day-to-day demands take precedence. We understand where external stakeholder groups can be helpful in supporting our efforts; some key partners are working in parallel and have aligned their activities. External stakeholders have let us know where they can be helpful in implementing key reforms. Education partners are working in parallel with us and are aligned in their reform activities.	Our senior leadership frequently stresses that engagement of external stakeholders is key to our work, and has made this kind of engagement an agency-wide priority. Some staff take this seriously; others do not. Some of our units engage stakeholders effectively, but not all do. External stakeholders are receiving the information they need to help with reform efforts, and are actively participating. External stakeholders bring resources to the table and we leverage these resources to support the reform agenda. Staff members are provided access to professional development on engaging external stakeholders to help with reform efforts.	Our senior leadership has made stakeholder engagement to extend internal capacity an agency-wide priority. This is taken seriously by the staff in every unit. Nearly all communication on priority reforms leverages one or more external partnerships to further extend the reach of the message. Efforts are coordinated by an assigned unit or department within the agency, but content is developed and maintained by staff from across the agency. We and our external stakeholders nurture the partnership with honest and transparent information about the progress of the work, successes accomplished and challenges encountered. We formalize long-term partnerships with external groups to continue work we have chosen no longer to do ourselves in order to focus internal resources on a smaller set of critical high-impact activities.
Staff assigned to communications- or engagement-related roles • *Does the agency have a communications/ engagement team?* • *Are the members of the communications staff trained in communications and engagement?* • *Are members of this staff provided access to the Commissioner/ Superintendent?*	One person at our agency is charged with handling all communications, media and public/stakeholder engagement activities. This person is stretched thin and thus is almost always reactive rather than proactive.	Our one-person media office handles all of our communications- and engagement-related work. The person who staffs that office reports to the Chief of Staff to the Commissioner/ Superintendent. This person has some experience in agency communications and media relations.	Our communications director oversees all of the agency's communications/engagement efforts and a media relations staff member works directly with the media. Both have a background in communications and direct access to senior staff and the Commissioner/Superintendent whenever necessary.	A member of our senior leadership team serves as communications director. This person oversees all of the agency's communications/engagement efforts, participates in all high-level meetings and provides the senior staff with guidance on all communications-related decisions. This senior leader is charged with ensuring that all agency messages are consistent, aligned and tied to the agency's vision, goals and strategic priorities. The communications director oversees a small staff responsible for media relations, publications, digital media, all agency messaging and regular engagement and outreach efforts. The members of this team are experienced in communications, public engagement and education policy, and have direct access to senior staff and the Commissioner/Superintendent.
Resources • *What is the budget for the SEA's communications or engagement office? How is it staffed? How is the funding used?* • *How much is spent on professional development? Consultants? Participation in national organizations?*	We have no budget to support communications, and only one staff member dedicated to supporting communications.	We have a small communications office, but no specific budget to support communications. We use in-house capacity (printing, graphic design, IT) to develop publications and our website.	We have at least a two-person communications office and a small budget to support communications. This funding is used for graphic design services on major publications. A small percentage is used for membership to national organizations that provide relevant professional development.	We have three or more people in our communications office and maintain a modest budget to support communications. Beyond graphics support, this funding is used to contract research and writing when extra capacity is needed. Our communications staff are members in national organizations and attend conferences and participate in professional development and networking opportunities when they arise.

Appendix A.
A Framework for Communications and Engagement

From "Inform" to "Inspire"

A Framework for Communications and Engagement

As Race to the Top grantees make far-reaching reforms, shift policies and heighten expectations, communicating with and engaging a wide range of key audiences have grown in importance. Building widespread understanding and support is crucial to the successful implementation and sustainability of proposed State reforms. Engaging educators in this work is essential, but State education agencies (SEAs) have a responsibility to reach out to their many other stakeholders as well.

The Reform Support Network (RSN) encourages SEAs to assess their current efforts to communicate with and engage key audiences and look for ways to sharpen approaches, build capacity and extend reach. The Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Community of Practice (SCE CoP) is developing resources to encourage State leaders to strengthen their work in several areas. To start with, the CoP is helping States craft a **strategy** with specific goals, define internal and external **audiences**, and create clear and compelling **messages**. Those messages, in turn, will require a variety of **tactics** — from face-to-face meetings to social media — to reach their audiences. States can expand their reach by working in **coalitions** and with partners. In the process, States might need to build staff **capacity** to do this work. Finally, the CoP is urging States to **measure** everything and use their data to adjust course as needed.

The communications and engagement framework in Figure 1 provides a way for SEAs to think about and implement these priorities.

This framework recognizes that SEAs will, at a minimum, **Inform** key audiences about their work and changes in key practices, expectations and systems. However, these efforts will be more responsive, less reactive and likely to be more successful when audiences' unique needs are considered and State leaders listen to feedback closely and respond to questions (**Inquire**). In some cases, SEAs will want to actively **Involve** key audiences in the work as active co-creators of policies and programs. Ultimately, the most powerful results will occur when State leaders **Inspire** others to act and lead, based on what they have learned and the policies and programs they have helped develop.

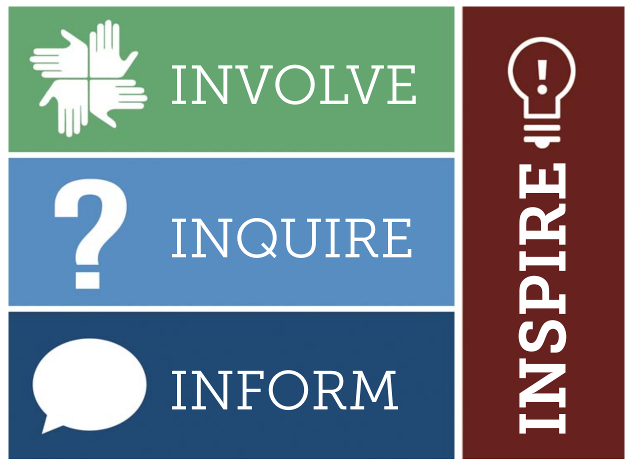

Figure 1. Communications and Engagement Framework for SEAs

Connecting the Dots

The concepts discussed in this framework overlap significantly with Engaging Educators: A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts, published in December 2012. That guide focused on the need to engage one key set of stakeholders: teachers and other educators. This framework deals with multiple stakeholders, including educators. And its four action steps are described from the perspective of the SEA: that is, how the SEA can inform, inquire, involve and inspire various stakeholders, including educators. Our inform and involve steps particularly align with the many engagement concepts discussed in more depth in Engaging Educators, such as using feedback loops, joining communications teams and assuming school leadership roles.

Doing a good job of **informing**, **inquiring** and **involving** makes it more likely that audiences will be **inspired** to action.

Involve: Adding more opportunities for deliberate two-way communications, SEA leaders do not just listen well, they also proactively enlist key stakeholders in shaping relevant policies, programs and practices. Staff, parents and community members throughout the State know what is going on because they are active participants. For example, educators help design and improve State professional development offerings and resources. Parents learn how to advocate for their children and serve on school councils. Funders, business and civic leaders serve on advisory groups. Recognizing that active ownership builds understanding and support, the SEA makes a steady effort to extend meaningful opportunities to participate to all segments of the community.

Inquire: SEA leaders listen closely to stakeholders to ensure that messages about key policies and programs are heard and understood. And at the front end, they use surveys, focus groups and other feedback loops, and outreach strategies to learn what educators and other stakeholders think about major policy shifts or new programs — and to use those diverse perspectives to help shape the policies and programs.

Inform: The SEA uses a diverse array of communications tools to provide timely, accurate, and actionable information to a wide range of stakeholders. These tools include Websites, newsletters, video, school report cards, presentations/meetings and media reform efforts.

Inspire: The SEA's efforts to inform, inquire and involve mean that more stakeholders fully understand and support the State's education reform efforts. Stakeholders are committed to the reforms and are actively helping to gain the understanding and enthusiasm of others. They are personally invested in the proposed changes and are proactively helping to implement them.

Doing a good job of informing, inquiring and involving makes it more likely that audiences will be inspired to action. The RSN defines each of these four strategic actions as described above.

There is no sharp dividing line between and among these strategic actions. Depending on the issue, State education agencies are likely to regularly do some combination of *informing, inquiring and involving* activities; when done well, the result should be well-informed, supportive and inspired audiences.

This framework does not necessarily suggest a continuum that progresses from good to better to best. In some cases, providing sound and timely *information* is all that is required. And doing an excellent job of consistently *informing* audiences is a major accomplishment in itself. However, we believe that finding ways to add an *inquiry* or *involvement* component to the work will make it more likely that SEAs' information will be heard — and acted on.

Providing additional opportunities for inquiry and involvement will require a real commitment from the SEA to meaningfully engage stakeholders — that is, supplementing one-way communications with more two-way engagement opportunities that invite stakeholder input from educators and others and have higher potential for creating shared commitment for state reforms. This kind of culture shift will require more collaborative leadership — and the active leadership of the chief and his/her executive team.

This framework and related resources are designed to provide a starting point for those important conversations. Additional details are available at http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/stakeholder-communications-engagement.html.

Appendix B. Self-Assessment Exercise

Estimated time: 75–90 minutes

A group of SEA leaders can use this exercise, facilitator notes and template to conduct an honest assessment of the agency's current communications and engagement efforts in one or more areas. The assessment will be most effective when led by a facilitator, who can help to drive the discussion and assist the SEA team in reaching consensus.

While the tool can be used to evaluate the SEA's overall communications capacity and practice, it is most effectively used when assessing the strength of the agency's communications around a particular reform initiative.

Additional exercises published by the RSN to help States assess, discuss and develop plans to enhance their communications and engagement efforts can be found in the *State Facilitator's Guide for the Reform Support Network Communications and Engagement Assessment Rubric*.

Learning Objectives:

- All participants will reflect on the quality of current SEA communications and engagement work, using the rubric.
- All participants will identify strategies to strengthen and improve current SEA communications and engagement efforts.

Facilitator Detailed Agenda:

Time	Activities
15 minutes	Introduce the rubric: • Remind participants that the purpose of today's workshop is to reflect on their current work and identify potential methods for strengthening their communications and engagement efforts. • Review the purpose of the rubric and its general structure, including the five areas and the exercises included at the end. • Specifically point out the communications and engagement challenge area of focus for the day and discuss how and why it was chosen. • Explain that the rubric is intentionally content neutral, and that it can be used to help assess the strengths and weaknesses of any agency initiative. Today's workshop is intended to focus on one specific initiative, but participants should take the tools and approaches modeled at the workshop and use them to think through communications for other initiatives as well.
60 minutes	Share judgments on one area of the rubric (5 minutes): • Remind participants that they should have already taken the time to review this area of the rubric in advance, as part of their pre-work one week before the workshop, and that they should have made judgments on the State's progress in the communications and engagement challenge area. • Provide them with dot stickers and ask them to indicate their judgments for the first row of the rubric (1–4) on the flipchart paper, using the Rubric Voting Template at the end of this exercise as a formatting guide. Discuss judgments and rationale (45 minutes): • As a group, review the first row of votes and discuss the various judgments. • Ask someone who voted on either extreme to share why, and then ask someone from the other extreme to share why. • Continue to ask participants to share the rationales behind their votes, making connections and recording their notes on the flipchart throughout. • If time is limited, don't feel that you need to push participants to come to consensus; the point is to have a good conversation and record notes about the reasoning behind their votes. • After completing the first-row discussion, ask participants to vote on the remaining rows, and then discuss each. *Note that this section will take more or less time depending upon the section of the rubric that you chose to focus on and the number of rows in that section. Discuss the overall picture (10 minutes): • How do we perform as a whole on this part of the rubric? • Within this challenge area, what are our strengths? What are our challenges? **Specifically ask participants to identify areas where they rank a 1 or 2, so you can focus on how to move them to a 3 or 4.

Facilitator Notes:

- As participants vote, urge them to indicate the votes they actually came with and to not be swayed when they see the votes of other people.
- Keep in mind that when you are pushing participants to come to a consensus on their judgments, they don't have to be in total agreement; rather, they just have to all be able to live with their decision.
- It will be easy for this conversation to go long, so push to keep it moving and urge the group to come to a consensus as quickly as possible. Consider tabling a rubric row and coming back to it if you're finding consensus hard to achieve.
- If votes cluster around the same rating, you should still ask participants to identify their rationale and record notes on the flipchart, but feel free to move on quickly if the group reaches consensus. If you feel the consensus is inauthentic, though, feel free to challenge that consensus or call participants back to the rubric and question whether certain elements are in place. Asking "How do you know?" may help further drive the discussion.
- Some tips for facilitating conversation:
  - Ask people who voted certain ways to share why (start with the highest and lowest votes or with the majority vote).
  - Ask any outliers to share why they voted the way they did. Ask whether they are convinced by others' rationales, and whether they are willing to accept the group answer. If not, ask them to identify why.
  - Keep in mind that the group won't necessarily come to an agreement on the rating with the most votes at the start. They may come to a completely different consensus through the conversation.
  - Sometimes you may want to synthesize what you're hearing, make a suggestion for moving forward and see if the group can live with it.

Template:

- Rubric Voting Template: Develop this ahead of time on two sheets of flipchart paper hung side by side.

Rubric Voting Template

Topic	Rating				Rationale
	1	2	3	4	

Appendix C.Related Resources Developed by the Reform Support Network

Educator Evaluation Communications Toolkit

This toolkit, developed by the Quality Evaluation Rollout Work Group, contains a set of tools and resources to support States in communicating about educator evaluation systems with key audiences, with a focus on teachers. It includes recommended strategies to help States develop effective messages, provide educators with the information they really want, and communicate about difficult and complex topics such as value-added data.

Engaging Educators: A Reform Support Network Guide for States and Districts

This guide proposes a framework for engaging teachers in evaluation reforms and proposes new roles that State and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) and State and local union affiliates can play to support their engagement.

Measurable Success, Growing Adoption, Vast Potential Social Media Use Among State and Local Education Agencies

This report presents data collected through a questionnaire of State education agencies and local educational agencies on the growing use of social media to reach key stakeholder groups and engage with primary audiences.

Social Media Tip Sheets

The Reform Support Network created social media tip sheets to help State and local education agencies expand their efforts to communicate and engage with key audiences on reform topics via social media.

- Tip Sheet #1: Innovative Engagement. This tip sheet showcases ways in which States are engaging with audiences in new and innovative ways, including using State chiefs to lead department social media efforts and using new and different social media platforms to reach key audiences including teachers.
- Tip Sheet #2: Building Capacity. This tip sheet showcases ways in which States are building more capacity for social media work, including the Georgia Department of Education's strategy of asking non-communications staff throughout the department to help create compelling content and the Colorado Department of Education's use of social media ambassadors to help spread the word.
- Tip Sheet #3: Driving Success Through Smart Policies. This tip sheet showcases ways in which States are implementing smart policies, including educating internal audiences on the advantages and disadvantages of social media, identifying dos and don'ts of social media and ensuring policies are firm and enforceable.
- Tip Sheet #4: Measuring Success. This tip sheet showcases ways States are tracking followers, fans and figures, digging in deeper with micrometrics and building measurement reports to showcase their progress.

Strategies for Community Engagement in School Turnaround

This paper examines one key strategy for making school turnaround more effective: community engagement. To explore community engagement in action, the Reform Support Network (RSN) conducted studies between April and August of 2013 of 11 States and districts, urban and rural, engaged in the communities surrounding low-performing schools. The research yielded five primary lessons or takeaways: make engagement a priority and establish an infrastructure, communicate proactively in the community, listen to the community and respond to its feedback, offer meaningful opportunities to participate, and turn community supporters into leaders and advocates.

Using Social Media to More Effectively Communicate Reform Efforts: A Case Study on the Ohio Department of Education's Use of Twitter

Ohio is one of the leading State education agencies embracing and experimenting with social media. This publication details how the Ohio Department of Education used social media, including Twitter and a Wordpress blog, to drive interest and engagement in its 2012 statewide educator conference, Connecting the Dots, and how this strategy resulted in creating a network of educators statewide.

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