



Effectively Conducting and Evaluating Professional Development



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Purpose

Under Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A), state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) can use funds to support planning, execution, and evaluation of professional development (PD) activities. These activities may include enhancement of teachers' and other school personnel's knowledge of academic subjects as well as skills and competencies for various roles supporting student well-being and achievement. This brief highlights the multiple instances where PD and evaluation are discussed in the Title IV-A statute, including the comprehensive definition under Section 8101 (42); specific direction related to the Well-Rounded Education (WRE), Safe and Healthy Students (SHS), and Effective Use of Technology (EUT) priority areas; guidance on comprehensive planning for PD; and PD opportunities related to recruitment and certification of qualified teachers.



common challenges and solutions related to evaluation. Checklists and links to additional resources are also provided to assist SCs with practical application of the content herein (e.g., strategies to assess the merit of proposed PD and evaluation activities).

Relevant Statute on Professional Development (PD) and Evaluation

For purposes of Title IV-A funding, PD is defined in the statute as activities that are “(A) an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and (B) are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.”¹ Tables 1 and 2 summarize allowable Title IV-A PD and associated evaluation activities. [Table 1](#) is organized into three categories: the SSAE priority areas of Well-Rounded Education (WRE), Safe and Healthy Students (SHS), and Effective Use of Technology (EUT). [Table 2](#) features three additional topics covered in the statute: comprehensive planning; teacher hiring, preparation, and certification; and evaluation.

Introduction

This brief is designed to help Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A) Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant State coordinators (SCs) understand how [Title IV-A defines effective professional development \(PD\)](#) and requirements for evaluation of these activities.

First, this brief provides a comprehensive summary of the Title IV-A statute that addresses PD and evaluation of PD activities. Following that section is a description of different types of PD that can be supported under technical assistance and what makes PD effective. Additionally, the brief provides best practices for evaluating this training at the state education agency (SEA) and local education agency (LEA) levels. With this information, SCs can determine if proposed evaluation activities are appropriate and, if necessary, provide technical assistance to LEAs around developing and evaluating PD effectively. Examples of SEA resources that support PD and grantee learning are provided. Finally, the brief summarizes some

Table 1. Acceptable Uses of Title IV-A Funds for PD in Priority Areas (WRE, SHS, EUT)

Area	Allowable Activities	Reference in Statute
Well-Rounded Education (WRE)	Training on specific academic subjects (i.e., content to be taught to students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(i[I]) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(i)(I)
	Instruction on student learning theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(i[II]) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(i)(II)
	Training on different instructional strategies, behavior management strategies and supports, assessments, and materials for both the general student population and special populations (e.g., English learners or children with disabilities or developmental delays)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(ix and xii) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(ix and xii)
	Instruction on the use of data, technology, and assessments to inform practice and increase student achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4109, “Activities to Support the Effective Use of Technology,” (a)(5) – 20 U.S. Code 7119 § 4109(a); and • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(xiii) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(xiii)
	Advancement of teacher understanding of evidence-based programming and instructional strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(vi[I]) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(vi)(I)
	Training for teachers and joint PD with professionals from institutions of higher education on how to participate in dual or concurrent enrollment programs in secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1114, “Schoolwide Programs,” (e) “Use of Funds for Dual or Concurrent Enrollment Programs,” (2)(A) “Flexibility of Funds” – 20 U.S.C. 6314 § 1114 (e)(2)(A)
	Use of expanded learning time to provide PD to instructional and support staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (22)(B) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(22)(B)
Safe and Healthy Students (SHS)	Training on classroom management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(iv) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(iv)
	Training (for school and specialized instructional support personnel, as well as community members) on topics of prevention, education, early identification, intervention mentoring, recovery support services, and (when applicable) drug and violence rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4108, “Activities to Support Safe and Healthy Students,” (5)(A)(ii) – 20 U.S.C. 7118 § 4108 (5)(A)(ii)
	Instruction for staff on effective parent and family engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(xiv) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(xiv)
	Evaluation of efforts to coordinate with other schools and community-based services and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4107, “Activities to Support Well-Rounded Educational Opportunities,” (a)(1) – 20 U.S.C. 7117 § 4107(a)(1); and • Section 4108 “Activities to Support Safe and Healthy Students,” (1) – 20 U.S.C. 7118 § 4108(1)
Effective Use of Technology (EUT)	Instruction to increase staff use of technology (including understanding of the consequences of piracy) to improve teaching and learning, academic achievement and growth, and digital literacy of all students (both generally and specifically in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics [STEM], including computer science)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4109, “Activities to Support the Effective Use of Technology,” (a) “Uses of Funds,” (5) – 20 U.S. Code 7119 § 4109(a)(5); and • Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(x) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(x)
	Training and ongoing support for use of blended learning strategies (i.e., using both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4109, “Activities to Support the Effective Use of Technology,” (a) “Uses of Funds,” (4) – 20 U.S. Code 7119 § 4109(a)(4)


Table 2. Acceptable Uses of Title IV-A Funds for PD on Planning, Staffing, and Evaluation

Area	Allowable Activities	Reference in Statute
Comprehensive Planning	Needs assessment activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 4106, “Local Educational Agency Applications,” (d) “Needs Assessment,” (1) “In General,” (C) – 20 U.S.C. 7116 § 4106 (d)(1)(C)
	Development of comprehensive plans that include PD and evaluation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 1114, “Schoolwide Programs,” (b) “Schoolwide Program Plan,” (7)(A)(iii)(IV) – 20 U.S.C. 6314 § 1114 (b)(7)(A)(iii)(IV)
	Stakeholder engagement to develop plans for PD (including teachers, administrators and other school leaders, parents, representatives of Indian tribes [as applicable], etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(viii) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(viii)
	Supports for collaboration between staff to address school readiness and the transition to elementary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(xviii) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(xviii)
	SEA provision of technical assistance to LEAs around aligning PD with districtwide educational improvement plans and academic goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(ii and vii) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(ii and vii)
Teacher Hiring, Preparation, and Certification	Follow-up training after PD, to ensure that new knowledge and skills are being implemented with fidelity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(xvii) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(xvii)
	Development of personalized learning experiences and plans for educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(iii) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(iii); and Section 4106, “Local Educational Agency Applications,” (d) “Needs Assessments,” (1) “In General,” (C) – 20 U.S.C. 7116 § 4106 (d)(1)(C)
	Supports for recruitment, hiring, training, and partnerships that help prepare and identify prospective school personnel (e.g., alternative routes to certification; partnerships with institutions of higher education, business, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, or other public or private entities; coaching and mentoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 1114, “Schoolwide Programs,” (b) “Schoolwide Program Plan,” (7)(A)(iii)(IV) – 20 U.S.C. 6314 § 1114 (b)(7)(A)(iii)(IV); Section 4108, “Activities to Support Safe and Healthy Students,” (4) – 20 U.S.C. 7118 § 4108 (4); and Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(v, xv, and xvi) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(v, xv, and xvi)
Evaluation*	Regular evaluation of the impact of PD on teacher effectiveness and student academic achievement, with the findings used to improve the quality of PD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 8101, “Definitions,” (42)(B)(xi) – 20 U.S.C. 7801 § 8101(42)(B)(xi)
	SEA review of the acceptability of LEA applications proposing plans to conduct and evaluate PD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 4106, “Local Educational Agency Applications,” (e) “Contents of Local Application,” (1) “Descriptions,” (E) – 20 U.S.C. 7116 § 4106 (e)(1)(E)
	Description of program objectives and intended outcomes (e.g., a logic model or theory of change) for PD activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 4106, “Local Educational Agency Applications,” (e) “Contents of Local Application,” (1) “Descriptions,” (E) – 20 U.S.C. 7116 § 4106 (e)(1)(E)
	Regular evaluation of allowable activities under each of the previous sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 4108, “Activities to Support Safe and Healthy Students” – 20 U.S.C. 7118 § 4108 (1, 2, 3, and 4)

***Please note:** Title IV-A funds cannot be used to pay for an evaluation. These funds are meant for direct services or programs. Program funds may be used to pay for a technical assistance effort that has an evaluation component as long as the evaluation component is a minimal component of the total effort. The technical assistance must align with the programs and activities for those content areas from which the funds are spent.

What Are the Different Types of PD?

PD may include training seminars, workshops, courses, conferences, coaching and mentoring, and other forms of adult learning. PD can occur in different formats (e.g., online/virtual vs. in-person delivery, taught vs. independent study) and settings (e.g., in a school facility, at an outside training site, at individuals' homes via technology). It may be developed and provided by SEAs, LEAs, or an external source (e.g., an institution of higher education, community partner, or contractor). Activities may be delivered either as a single event or a series of sustained supports like a training series, certification course, or coaching. Personalized learning opportunities such as coaching, customized workshops, communities of practice, professional learning communities, and micro-credentialing (a digital form of certifying staff competency²) offer opportunities to customize PD around individual needs and goals. All of these different options may be interpreted as allowable activities under Title IV-A.



For more information on stakeholder engagement, see this T4PA Center resource: [Developing Stakeholder Relationships to Support School Programming](#).

What Makes PD Effective?

Across all types and formats, Title IV-A emphasizes that effective PD is (1) an integrated strategy (i.e., part of a state's or district's comprehensive vision or plan) and also (2) sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.³ A number of best practices have been identified to meet these criteria. Both the field and the Title IV-A statute confirm that



the following can help ensure that PD is effective at achieving the stated goals.^{4,5,6,7,8}

Considerations for Designing Effective PD

- ✓ **Identify and engage stakeholders to determine where PD training and support are most needed.** Stakeholders might include LEA or SEA decision-makers, PD recipients (e.g., general or special education staff; school counselors, nurses, or other support staff; bus drivers or cafeteria workers; extracurricular and out-of-school-time personnel); or community partners and program funders.
- ✓ **Articulate clear training objectives that describe which dimensions of PD will be influenced** (i.e., implementation; participant reactions, knowledge change, and behavior; or school, staff, or student impact; see "[What Are Best Practices for PD Evaluation?](#)" below for more information).
- ✓ **Design PD with the intent to yield meaningful, positive results and offer value to recipients.** Effective PD consists of the following elements:
 - It is content focused, featuring information on specific curriculum or teaching strategies.
 - It incorporates active learning methods, allowing participants to practice what they are learning (vs. just listening to a lecture or watching a video).
 - It supports collaboration and opportunities for attendees to exchange ideas.
 - It shares models of "best practice" for curriculum, instruction, and student support, including sample lesson plans, student work samples, or videos of staff modeling the new skill.
 - It offers ongoing opportunities for coaching to support teachers' individual needs.
 - It allows sufficient time for participants to learn, practice, implement, get feedback on, reflect on, and improve their new skills.

- ✓ **Align PD events to match SEA standards and local curriculum.** Alignment will ensure that the training meets articulated goals and objectives, as well as staff PD and certification requirements.

SEAs can model these best practices through PD offered statewide or to selected LEAs or pass down these recommendations for LEAs to consider and apply locally. SCs can look for these indicators of effective training in LEA applications for Title IV-A funds.

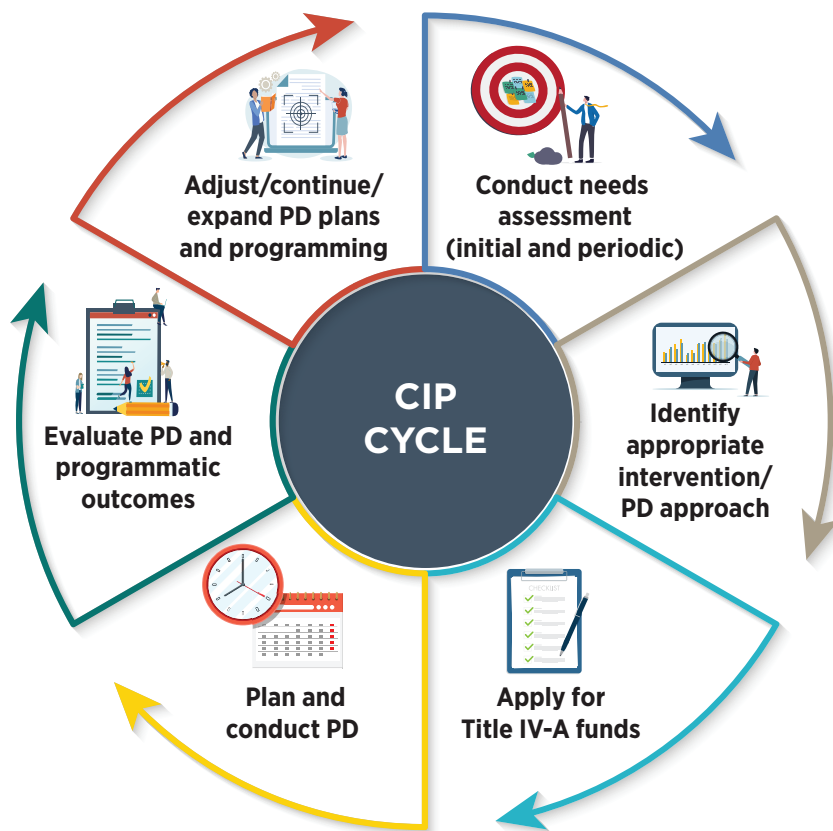
How Do PD and Evaluation Support Continuous Improvement?

PD provides a structured format for helping school staff (including teachers, career and technical educators, support staff, and leadership) gain the information and skills needed to do their jobs, improve teaching quality, and support student learning and achievement.^{7,9,10,11} LEA

plans to conduct PD must be grounded in a needs assessment in order to use Title IV-A funds.¹² Needs and choice of programming will vary across both SEAs and LEAs but ideally will reflect state or local priorities. Once an approach or programmatic intervention is selected, staff must be trained, and stakeholders (including SCs making funding decisions) will want to know whether that PD was effective. In the absence of accountability measures for Title IV-A grantees, SEAs are responsible for holding LEAs accountable for results, and evaluation activities are required by the Title IV-A statute.

In addition to being statutorily required,¹³ evaluating PD is an important component of a continuous improvement process (CIP; see Figure 1). SEAs and LEAs participating in a CIP work to achieve their goals by systematically reviewing data and outcomes and adjusting their plans and activities, as needed. Figure 1 provides an overview of a typical CIP.

Figure 1. Title IV-A PD and Evaluation Continuous Improvement Cycle



PD evaluation ideally begins with the SEA or LEA planning well in advance of scheduled events and continues as they collect and analyze data, disseminate findings, and incorporate recommendations for improvement and sustainability. A well-designed evaluation is key to providing evidence of effectiveness of funded PD events and activities and can demonstrate a return on investment made by SEAs and LEAs, in support of improved district, school, staff, and student performance. Specifically, evaluation helps determine whether PD is effective at achieving its intended outcomes. Evaluation also informs decisions about spending on school programming and future PD.^{14,15,16} By identifying which activities have the most potential to increase capacity among school staff and improve outcomes for students, evaluation helps LEAs to know when to replicate successful trainings and discontinue ineffective ones.

delivery. The combination of outcomes and implementation data can help LEAs know which approach to take.

Across the two types of evaluation, five dimensions can be assessed:^{18,19}

1. Implementation components;
2. Participant reactions;
3. Knowledge change;
4. Participant behavior; and
5. The impact of the PD.

Multiple dimensions can be included in a single evaluation, with appropriate planning and the use of data collection tools designed for these purposes. In fact, evaluating more than one dimension offers a more complete picture of the activity being evaluated. Staff conducting an evaluation will also want to collect some basic demographics. This allows them to look at patterns showing whether the PD worked equally well for everyone who participated or was more useful for some than others. For example, when interpreting evaluation data, it may be helpful to know if the participants were administrators, support staff, experienced teachers, or novice teachers.

Data collected directly after PD can help evaluators assess changes in knowledge or attitudes while longer term follow-up data is valuable for learning whether participants have sustained changes in practice. Some information is best to collect while the participants' experiences are still forefront in their mind, while some might be more useful after staff have had time to reflect, practice new skills, or integrate new knowledge (particularly around newly introduced, system-level policies, curricula, or practices). To examine the success and sustainability of newly learned skills and practices, follow-up ideally happens at multiple time points. This enables both the evaluator and participants to notice behavior or school system change over time and provides more evidence to help determine whether any changes happened as a result of the PD.

Title IV-A requires that evaluation data be used to help improve the design, content, and delivery of activities.²⁰ Findings may tell you which aspects of



For a high-level overview of evaluation basics and the steps of an evaluation cycle, refer to the T4PA Center [Evaluation Guide](#).

What Are Best Practices for PD Evaluation?



There are two commonly used types of evaluations: (1) process (a.k.a. implementation) evaluations, which examine whether program activities are being implemented as intended;

and (2) outcome evaluations, which measure program effects and progress made toward meeting the desired outcomes or goals.¹⁷ Both are valuable. Notably, if the outcomes are not as anticipated, the implementation data can offer insights as to why this was the case. If the PD was well implemented but the desired outcomes were not achieved, it may be time to pick a new approach. If the PD was poorly implemented, more attention should be paid to planning and equipping facilitators to ensure high-quality

PD were most or least successful, and can provide guidance on how to design, deliver, and evaluate the activities in the future.¹³ As noted above, this process is a continuous cycle where lessons from past activities are applied to future events and planning.

Checklist 1 can be used to assess whether proposed SEA or LEA evaluation activities are consistent with best practices for evaluating PD.

Checklist 1. Evaluation Best Practices

Indicator	Guiding Practices
<p>Goals and Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Training objectives are clearly outlined. <input type="checkbox"/> The objectives clearly describe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The topic(s) to be covered; <input type="checkbox"/> The rationale for the PD; and <input type="checkbox"/> Which outcomes the PD may influence. <input type="checkbox"/> The objectives are measurable. <input type="checkbox"/> The objectives are relevant. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a logic model that clearly communicates the problem, the plan, and the expected outcomes that can be used to guide the evaluation. <input type="checkbox"/> The plan or request for funds explains whether the proposed evaluation efforts are for internal program/PD improvement or external accountability. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a plan to use evaluation data to support the sustainability, scaling-up, or redesign of the PD or school system programming.
<p>Measurement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Data for both implementation (i.e., process) and outcomes (i.e., results) will be collected. <input type="checkbox"/> Specific dimensions of change will be evaluated (e.g., specific components of implementation; changes in participant attitudes, knowledge, or behavior). <input type="checkbox"/> It is clear what types of measures will be used to collect data and when. <input type="checkbox"/> The time points of data collection are logical given the objective(s) of the PD. <input type="checkbox"/> The evaluation will satisfactorily examine whether participants have successfully learned and applied new knowledge or skills.
<p>Staffing and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The plan or request for funds describes how evaluation of PD will be supported. <input type="checkbox"/> Staffing and funds are sufficient for the type of evaluation activities being proposed. <p><i>Note: Some LEAs may request funds to hire an external evaluator. However, regardless of the size or duration of the PD, external evaluators are not required to accomplish this task.</i></p>
<p>Analyses and Dissemination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The evaluation will break out findings by participant demographics. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a plan for how the evaluation will be summarized and disseminated (i.e., in what form and to whom).

The T4PA Center [Evaluation Guide](#) provides additional information about generating and using logic models (pp.4-5) and information about partnering with an outside evaluator (p.3).

Examples of SEA Resources on PD Activities and Evaluation

Title IV-A supports PD offered both at the state level (hosted by the SEA) and at the LEA level. More and more SEAs are offering this training virtually, recording those sessions, and posting the training online for LEA and school staff to access independently, as needed. SEAs are also building their online repositories of Title IV-A grant management information that can be used as part of PD efforts to educate LEA staff about different topics and requirements. Table 3 shows how some

SEAs are using Title IV-A funds to create and archive online resources to support activities.

When funds for PD are limited, either due to competing priorities or the reality of allocations being insufficient for lofty PD and evaluation goals, SCs and LEAs can benefit from strategic thinking. SEAs and LEAs alike can consider blending and braiding funds from different programs and sources. For example, as noted above, Idaho has rich [catalog of resources](#) associated with Title II-A programming. SCs could work to coordinate Title II-A and Title IV-A activities to support a comprehensive PD plan.

Table 3. Examples of Title IV-A-Funded State Resources on PD and Evaluation

State	Description
Arizona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts the Reimagine Education Title IV-A blog and podcast. The blog includes announcements and updates from the Title IV-A personnel to grantees. • Uses blog posts to notify its audience of events like the Free PD Opportunity with AzTEA or calls to register for PD such as Reimagine Education: Title IV-A Symposium 2020. • Features podcast episodes on education trends related to different aspects of Title IV-A and how grant funds can be leveraged to improve students' success and achievement (e.g., integrating arts and education in classroom instruction; effective family and community engagement).
Idaho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a Web page dedicated to Title II-A grants, which is a natural partner to Title IV-A (i.e., funds from Title II-A and Title IV-A can be braided to offer PD activities). • Features virtual opportunities, workshops, and training resources, some of which are offered in partnership with institutions of higher education (which is an allowable activity). • Embeds a calendar with relevant details on upcoming workshops.
Massachusetts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts a Website archive with Federal Grant Programs Conference Materials and News Archives; these archived conference materials (such as Investing your Title IIA & IVA funds in evidence-based PD) provide opportunities for self-guided learning and reference sources for providing training and technical assistance to LEAs. <p><i>Note: The Federal Grant Programs News Archives are structured as memos that provide relevant topical guidance to Title Directors.</i></p>
New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds archived recordings of Webinars and presentations on different title programs, including a dedicated series, Title Talk Tuesdays, which includes information on grant administration.
Texas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides an example of a state guide that outlines evaluation opportunities and statutory information.

Assessing the Merit of Proposed PD and Evaluation Activities



SEAs and LEAs will be at different places in terms of their needs, preferences, and capacity to provide PD and associated evaluation activities. At all levels, it is crucial to examine whether the activities can (or did) meet the intended objectives with fidelity. While some may propose very “light touch” evaluation activities (e.g., participant satisfaction forms, self-assessed skill changes measured by a survey), there may be benefits to doing more

substantial evaluation activities (e.g., pre- and post-test comparisons, classroom skill observations, focus groups). SCs can use the information in this brief as they consult, with both SEA and LEA leaders planning PD, to confirm the utility of different approaches and evaluation options.

Indicators of Effective PD and Evaluation Outlined in the Title IV-A Statute

Checklist 2 can be used by SCs when planning state-level PD for Title IV-A LEA beneficiaries or when reviewing LEA applications for funds that include proposals to conduct and/or evaluate PD. SCs can also use the following lists of indicators (directly from the statute as well as additional best practices) to confirm that adequate planning has been done for PD and related evaluation efforts and that the proposed activities are of high quality.

Checklist 2. PD and Evaluation Planning

Indicator	Guiding Practices
Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A needs assessment was conducted. <input type="checkbox"/> The needs assessment addressed PD.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant stakeholders are included in the planning of PD.
Strategic Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Plans describe an integrated strategy connecting PD and evaluation to SEA or LEA articulated priorities (i.e., standards, initiatives, staff competency requirements). <input type="checkbox"/> Activities are data-driven (i.e., they will use information from an evaluation about learning outcomes to determine what happens next).
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The proposed PD is classroom-focused or topically focused (i.e., it provides educators and other staff with relevant knowledge and skills that are directly related to what and whom they are teaching). <input type="checkbox"/> The activity is supported and sustained over a period of time, allowing staff time to integrate or scaffold new knowledge and skills. <input type="checkbox"/> The proposed PD satisfies the Title IV-A requirements of being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive (i.e., characterized by ongoing and rigorous learning activities that require critical thinking and reflection); <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative (i.e., allows staff to work together to problem solve, share ideas, and develop skills); and <input type="checkbox"/> Job-embedded (i.e., allows teachers to learn in their daily environment in which they work rather than being pulled out for outside training).

Challenges and Solutions When Evaluating PD

SEAs and LEAs may encounter some barriers during the planning, execution, or follow-up stages

of studying PD. Careful planning may help avoid problems, but unforeseen challenges can still arise. Table 4 lists some common experiences and suggestions to minimize their impact.^{7,18}

Table 4. Selected Challenges and Solutions When Evaluating PD

Challenge	Limitations	Solutions
Limited Funds for Evaluation Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Few LEAs actually have evaluators on staff or funds to contract with evaluators for small-scale evaluations. ✗ Some evaluation designs require more funds to properly implement (e.g., quasi-experimental studies or randomized control trials). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Some evaluation activities are low cost; start small with a brief survey that focuses on participant satisfaction and whether the objectives were met. Then work on longer term planning to secure funds for larger scale evaluation activities over time. ✓ Larger scale evaluations to assess impact might be successfully funded through grants. ✓ In lieu of in-person data collection, consider virtual options (e.g., surveys, online focus groups or interviews, etc.).
Lack of Support or “Buy-In”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Planners may encounter pushback to evaluation activities broadly or to aspects such as cost or to logistics such as finding time for PD on the school or district calendar. ✗ Efforts to conduct evaluation may be wasted if leadership, participants, or stakeholders do not follow up and act on the basis of the findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To increase the odds of getting support, before PD and evaluation activities begin, spend time communicating with various stakeholders about the value of evaluation activities and the benefit of the information that will be collected.
Negative/ Inconclusive or Null Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Data showing unexpected or undesirable results can undermine support for continuing PD, programming, or evaluation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Re-examine available implementation and outcomes data to provide more context about what needs to change. ✓ Communicate to stakeholders that understanding what is not working is equally important to improving effectiveness or programming. ✓ Revisit whether SEA/LEA standards, policies, and practices were well aligned with PD goals; unfavorable results are more likely if there is a mismatch.



Conclusion

Effective PD offers teachers and other school personnel meaningful learning experiences that improve their knowledge and skills, leading to improved student outcomes. The Title IV-A statute requires that PD activities be integrated into school and LEA strategies that aim to equip educators of all types (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, etc.) with the knowledge and skills needed to provide a high-quality, safe, and comprehensive education, helping students meet challenging academic standards. The statute also requires that PD be

sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused. Many different types of activities are allowable under Title IV-A. Evaluation of PD is also required to help determine whether it is effective at achieving its goals, and to inform decisions about investments in future staff training and programming. PD and accompanying evaluation activities go hand in hand as part of a school system's continuous improvement cycle.

Title IV-A SCs can use the information in this brief to think critically about the content and value of state-sponsored PD. This brief can also help inform SC reviews of LEA applications for Title IV-A funds or technical assistance planning to help LEAs understand the basics of planning and evaluating activities. This brief could be used as a discussion guide with Title IV-A-funded evaluators as part of a community of practice, to promote sharing of strategies and best practices for evaluation. Taking full advantage of the information in this brief has the potential to improve the quality of PD and have a positive impact on school, staff, and student outcomes as well as Title IV-A grant performance.

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ENDNOTES

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¹² Title IV, Part A Statute, Section 4106. (d)(1)(C) Local Educational Agency Applications In General

¹³ Title IV, Part A Statute, Section 4106 (e)(1)(E) Local Educational Agency Applications.

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