On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, the Title IV, Part A Technical Assistance Center (T4PA Center) provides State education agencies (SEAs) and their State coordinators (SCs) with dedicated support for implementing the Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program. This document details select efforts by the T4PA Center during its Base Year of operations to facilitate the achievement of program goals.

Best Practices in Training and Technical Assistance

This resource is an operational guide for state coordinators as they explore strategies and approaches to providing training and technical assistance (T/TA) for local education agencies (LEAs) in their states. The recommendations and resources here can be applied broadly to T/TA across Title IV, Part A topic areas.

What Is Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA)?

As your LEAs carry out Title IV, Part A activities, they undoubtedly will run into questions and challenges. T/TA encompasses all the strategies that you could use to provide support and help them address those questions and challenges. This support can be proactive (e.g., a group training provided before the rollout of a new data system) or reactive (e.g., supporting an LEA that is having a hard time engaging one of its targeted schools). T/TA also can be provided in a variety of methods (including virtual and in-person sessions, or downloadable tools and resources) depending on the needs and constraints — such as location, budget, time, and capacity.

Identify T/TA Needs

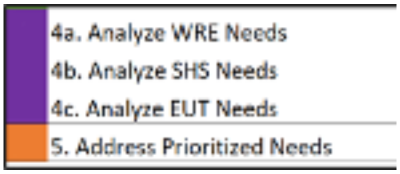
As a T/TA provider, you will want to build relationships with your LEAs to help you gauge their needs and identify the strategies that will best fit their situation. To design a T/TA experience that is relevant and applicable to your LEAs, first identify their areas of greatest need. Needs might include support in partner engagement, guidance on building or using a data system, or finding additional funding to sustain work as a grant ends. You can assess need in a variety of ways: a brief survey, a scheduled meeting gathering all LEAs (e.g., an in-service), or one-on-one calls. When assessing the needs of your LEAs, it is important to consider the feasibility of the T/TA based on time and available resources. You may also wish to have a plan for revisiting LEA needs, as they will likely change over time — as their Title IV, Part A activities evolve.

The Title IV, Part A LEA Needs Assessment Tool

One way you can assess your LEA's needs is by using the free, downloadable Title IV, Part A LEA Needs Assessment Tool.[1] The tool was developed to support LEAs in deciding how to use their funding strategically. The tool is especially useful for LEAs receiving $30,000 or more in Title IV, Part A funds, given that they are required to complete a comprehensive needs assessment of some kind. The tool encourages an LEA to work with others in its district (e.g., data managers, curriculum specialists, student support service managers) to complete its needs assessment, discuss its results, and use the data to set its priorities. An LEA's responses to the questions in the tool can provide insight into the challenges it faces.

[1] The LEA Needs Assessment Tool, specifically tailored to match the Title IV, Part A statute, was developed by the U.S. Department of Education as one option for use with LEAs. The tool can be accessed at https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/title-iv-part-lea-needs-assessment-tool. Contact your LEAs for a copy of their completed needs assessment.

The best place to begin looking at your LEAs' needs is in the three analysis (purple) tabs of the tool. These tabs contain your LEAs' interpretation of their data, including the contextual factors that may affect their student outcomes in each of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment priority areas — Well-Rounded Education (WRE), Safe and Healthy Students (SHS), and Effective Use of Technology (EUT). Specifically, the purple tabs ask them to reflect on any disparities through a set of questions — similar to a root cause analysis (a way of looking at data to find the main causes behind an issue) —so they can identify the environmental and policy factors shaping their data. In responding to the open-ended questions in each section, LEAs may specifically ask for training or additional support in a particular area. You may gain additional insight by reviewing the section on addressing prioritized needs (orange tabs). These sections share your LEAs' approach to their work, which you can use to forecast challenges they may face based on your previous experiences and/or research on similar efforts. As a state coordinator reviewing applications and needs assessments, you may wish to consult with other colleagues at your agency and have follow-up conversations with your LEAs to help you understand the full context of their needs and potential challenges. In addition to needs identified in the tool, other needs may emerge as you build relationships with LEAs.



Create a Plan for Providing T/TA

Once you have identified needs and potential challenges for each of your LEAs, you can develop a plan for providing T/TA. A plan can guide you in supporting your LEAs within the constraints of time and available resources. You will likely need to develop a plan that encompasses all planned, general T/TA activities, as well as an individualized T/TA plan for each LEA that captures its learning objectives.

PRIORITIZE T/TA TOPICS

Depending on the time and resources for providing T/TA to each LEA (e.g., based on the number of LEAs that need to receive T/TA), it is likely that not every need can be addressed in the same level of depth. Additionally, you may realize that some LEAs need more help in certain areas than others, so you may need to prioritize different topics for different LEAs. These questions may help you think through setting priorities with your LEA:

- How did each LEA prioritize its T/TA needs?
- What capacities are time sensitive?
- In your experience, what capacities do LEAs need to successfully do their work?
- What foundational capacities need to be established before other capacities can be developed?
- Are there any needs that are easy to address or can be addressed quickly?
- In which capacities or skills did LEAs score the lowest?

CONSIDER ECONOMIES OF SCALE

You also will need to decide whether activities should be delivered one-on-one (i.e., a meeting with an individual LEA) or in a group (e.g., as a large training or a small community of practice).[2] When considering the most efficient and effective ways to deliver T/TA, consider the following:

- How many LEAs have identified the same or similar needs?
- Do different LEAs require beginning, intermediate, or advanced level content?
- Could LEAs that have not identified a need still benefit from training on that topic?
- Would LEAs benefit from hearing from one another or hearing from a subject matter expert?
- What are the logistical assets and constraints around delivering T/TA to a large or small audience, across various locations in the state, and at different times of year?

SELECT T/TA MODES AND CREATE A SCHEDULE

Once you have identified the focus and scale of the T/TA you want to prioritize, you will need to match these topics to different T/TA modes or activities. The appendix at the end of this document shares a variety of options for providing T/TA. Each option has its own strengths and limitations. In general, you want to match the T/TA mode with the topic/content you are covering (its complexity, the breadth or depth you need to cover); consider how many LEAs need the information, when the information needs to be delivered, and your own availability and expertise.

After determining the T/TA modes you want to offer, the next step is to develop a schedule for executing these activities. Some may be offered on an ongoing basis, while others may need to occur at more discrete points in time (e.g., the beginning of a new school year). While you may not be able to select specific dates, it is a good practice to have proposed timeframes to ensure that the T/TA is timely and that you have the appropriate resources to carry out the plan.

Provide T/TA

A plan for T/TA is beneficial only if it is carried out well. To provide the most effective support for your LEAs, the T/TA should be carefully structured and adequately planned.

SET OBJECTIVES AND AGENDAS

Objectives articulate what you want your LEAs to learn and/or be able to do by the end of your T/TA event. An agenda represents the series of speakers, activities, and discussions you want to cover over the course of the event, which will help to accomplish the objectives. Essentially, the agenda is an outline of how you intend to accomplish your objectives. When putting together your agenda, be sure to balance information sharing with practice or application. Practice or application activities can include reflection questions, role play, or completion of a document, and they are critical to learning or mastering a new skill. When your LEAs are practicing a skill, you will want them to practice in as close to real-life conditions as possible.

DIFFERENTIATE AS NEEDED

As noted above, LEAs may be at different levels of skills and competencies. They also may be operating within different contexts, such as having different levels of buy-in, different funding or resource levels, or rural versus urban communities. When doing group T/TA events, it is important to recognize and acknowledge those differences. Ways to differentiate might include organizing participants into smaller groups or having different speakers share multiple perspectives on a given topic.

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[2] A longer list and description of possible T/TA modes, including virtual platforms, can be found in the appendix of this document.

RECOGNIZE YOUR LEAS' EXISTING ASSETS

Every LEA has its own strengths. Consider how your efforts coordinate with and leverage those strengths. For example, you may have more experienced LEAs lead a discussion or present in an area in which they feel comfortable. You also may look for other groups that have similar resources to share how they have tackled different problems. Working from each LEA's assets can provide new perspectives and make it easier to build new competencies from a strengths-based perspective.

Tips for Writing Objectives

One helpful frame for developing objectives is to finish the statement "By the end of this [T/TA resource or event], participants will be able to...." For example, an objective for this fact sheet is "By the end of this document, readers will be able to name some considerations for planning T/TA."

You Try: If you were working on a Webinar about partnerships, what objective might you write?

Evaluate Your T/TA

Immediately following delivery of your T/TA event, reach out to your participants to seek their feedback, either via survey or follow-up conversation. Consider including questions such as:

- Did this event or tool meet the stated objectives?
- Did this event or tool meet your needs on this topic?
- Was the delivery method appropriately engaging for the topic?
- What additional training or support would be beneficial?
- Use their responses to further tailor or update future T/TA experiences for your LEAs.

To request additional information on this topic, please visit the T4PA Center Website. You can also contact the T4PA Center at info@t4pacenter.org or call (833) 404-4845.

Appendix: Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Modes

This table shares different options for providing T/TA. Besides a description of each activity, it includes situations where the activity may be helpful in addition to some constraints. When possible, an example from a state has been provided as inspiration. It is important to note that these examples are just a few — of many — ways to do things and may not be the best practice for your state.

	MODE OF T/TA	BEST SUITED FOR	THINGS TO CONSIDER	EXAMPLES	STATE
SYNCHRONOUS	**In-person workshop** An interactive session in which participants can engage in discussions and walk away with new skills or content area knowledge	• Smaller groups • An introduction of a new concept that has broad applicability	• Constrained by location availability and travel demands	https://www.cde.state.co.us/edtech/erate_training	CO
SYNCHRONOUS	**In-person — lecture** A training format that features a single speaker or panel of speakers; participants may be able to ask questions at the end	• A plenary as a part of a larger conference or T/TA experience	• Typically less interactive		
SYNCHRONOUS	**In-person — meeting** An informative technical assistance (TA) experience in which participants and the TA provider engage in dialogue to plan action steps	• Small pre-existing groups, or one or two key stakeholders. • Development of action plans, opportunity to make decisions and walk through complex or customized content	• Not suited for large groups • Constrained by location • May be difficult to replicate (though a general template may be reused for multiple sites)		
SYNCHRONOUS	**Live Webinar** A virtual training experience that is focused on a specific topic, can be made interactive, and should include visuals	• A broad audience • Presentation of new information, sharing of best practices	• Can be challenging to make interactive • Most beneficial to those available at time of the live event • Live mistakes cannot be corrected • May be recorded and shared more broadly later	https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/ssaecgp2018.asp	CA

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	MODE OF T/TA	BEST SUITED FOR	THINGS TO CONSIDER	EXAMPLES	STATE
SYNCHRONOUS	**Conference call** A group meeting that can be accessed remotely by phone	• Groups with minimal access to technology • Broad audience	• No visuals • Can be interactive with a small number of participants but may be more difficult with a larger group	https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Teacher-Licensure-and-Accreditation/K-12-Accreditation-Home/KESA/KESA-Conference-Call-and-Training-Information/Conference-Call-Archive	KS
ASYNCHRONOUS	**Prerecorded Webinar** A rehearsed virtual learning experience that, once made available, can be accessed at the audience's own convenience	• Presentation of instructional content on a specific topic (e.g., fiscal management)	• Can be rehearsed and recorded ahead of time • Participants can access at their convenience • Not interactive	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHl-X_3ZAvw&t=944s	OR
	Fact sheets and one-pagers A printable document that presents information, guidance, or answers to frequently asked questions on a specific topic	• Common areas of need addressed succinctly • Wide dissemination	• Not interactive • May not answer all relevant questions	http://www.nysed.gov/essa/guidance	NY