

Performance Management System Section Summary

Executive Priorities

In addition to meeting the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the Performance Management System section of the Vermont State Plan reflects the education reform priorities of Vermont's governor, Phil Scott. This section of the plan 1) prioritizes support for the most vulnerable students in the state; 2) prepares students to be members of a healthy and growing Vermont economy, and; 3) frames proposals that will be affordable to implement and maintain. Agency proposals' reflection of executive priorities are described below, and recur throughout this section of the plan.

1. This section of the Plan prioritizes support for the most vulnerable students in the state

The Performance Management System section of the Plan describes how Plan components will work together cohesively to support student outcomes. Every component of that system prioritizes supporting the state's most vulnerable students (referred to as "Historically Marginalized Students"); school performance will be disaggregated to spotlight the performances of vulnerable student groups; continuous improvement plans and supports will be developed and identified with the needs of those groups in mind; and federal funding will be distributed to schools connecting their grant applications to students most in need of supports. When those individual components are taken together into a Performance Management System, that goal is amplified, with the state's most vulnerable students being prioritized in each step of the school and SU/SD improvement process.

2. This section of the Plan prepares students to be members of a healthy and growing Vermont economy

The Performance Management System section of the Plan describes how Plan components will work together to improve student, school, and SU/SD outcomes. This includes ensuring that technical assistance and programs are being directed to schools serving secondary students, with some of those supports reflecting the college and career readiness-related performance measures in the proposed accountability system, and others reflecting Flexible pathways options promoting positive post-secondary outcomes, as described in Vermont's Act 77 and Education Quality Standards.

3. This section of the Plan promotes proposals that will be affordable to implement and maintain

As the proposed components of the Performance Management System were developed, their affordability (also described using the terms "efficiency" and "possibility") were central to the Agency's decision-making process. As a result, the components that make up the Performance Management System have been evaluated as being affordable for the state, with the understanding that components found to be cost-prohibitive after further analysis would need to be revised accordingly.



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System of Performance Management

Review and Approval of SU/SD Plans

All SU/SDs in the state are required to create a continuous improvement plan (CIP), whether identified for supports through ESSA or not. The AOE-approved needs assessment provides a foundation for continuous improvement planning. The Education Quality Standards serve as the lodestar for good teaching and learning for both SU/SDs and for AOE; while Vermont and federal laws and rules (including ESSA, Vermont's Education Quality Standards, and Vermont's Act 77) provide a policy set for CIP implementation to reflect. The purpose of the continuous improvement process and plan is to use data and cycles of learning to monitor and document the impact of strategic improvement actions or changes. The AOE's Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework describes the structures and practices that need to be in place to foster this commitment, and the Plan-Do-Study-Act model that schools should use in the development of their CIP. (For more detail, please see: <http://education.vermont.gov/documents/education-quality-and-continuous-improvement-framework>.)

All Federal formula grants (including Title IA, Title I School improvement, Title IIA, Title III, and Title IVA) are included in one SU/SD consolidated application. That application is reviewed for completion and accuracy by a team from the AOE representing the various Titles and other AOE staff as their expertise is appropriate. Non-formula (competitive and discretionary) grants (including, Title IVB, Migrant Education, Neglected or Delinquent Students, and McKinney-Vento) follow a separate processes. Non-formula grants are reviewed by internal teams representing the breadth of expertise needed to fully and accurately assess the application. As these are competitive and discretionary, a larger review team is typically needed with a greater focus on the content of the proposal. All reviews are based on the requirements delineated in the law and aligned with an SU/SD's CIP and EQS.

Each SU/SD CFP application undergoes a thorough review by Title program consultants, the CFP Grant Manager, Education Quality Coordinators, and the CFP team administrative assistant. A member of the CFP team checks each application to ensure that all required components, signatures, and assurances have been properly submitted. Members of the agency finance team complete a fiscal review of the applications against information they have on file about SU/SD carryover and audit information. Finally, Title program consultants and Education Quality Coordinators review the applications holistically, noting any compliance issues, and identifying alignment with the State-required Continuous Improvement Plan. Follow-up calls are made to SU/SD CFP Team leaders, and changes are made as needed to achieve cohesion between CFP applications, Continuous Improvement Plans, and any applicable state and federal requirements.

The Vermont State Plan aligns with existing Vermont policy and practice by continuing to emphasize a process of Continuous Improvement in identified districts, bolstered by technical

assistance from the AOE; however, this new model details a more involved approach to aiding schools through their continuous improvement processes, with levels of AOE support and monitoring increasing over cumulated years of identification.

Vermont's model is primarily concerned with providing equitable opportunities for high-quality teaching and learning. The state has chosen to prioritize supporting Comprehensive and Targeted schools with their continuous improvement processes. By assisting SU/SDs in developing their capacity to identify areas of need, seizing opportunities for high-leverage interventions, and supporting schools and SUs/SDs throughout iterative improvement cycles, Vermont hopes to empower schools to increase the quality of education for all students, statewide.

Monitoring

All formula and competitive grants follow a similar monitoring process, though formula grants have risk assessment as an additional monitoring component.

For competitive grants, the CFP team conducts a comprehensive on-site program reviews at a minimum of three SU/SDs annually. The selected SU/SDs are identified through the annual risk assessment as posing the highest risk of not being in compliance. The process is not intended to be an exhaustive review or to ensure compliance with each and every legal requirement; rather, it is designed to verify compliance with major provisions of the law as well as to assist the SU/SD in increasing the impact of their federal dollars on student learning. Areas of the comprehensive program review include, but are not limited to:

- Needs assessment
- SU/SD administrative responsibilities
- Qualified Teachers and Paraprofessionals
- Services to independent schools
- Services to homeless students
- Requirements for school improvement
- Requirements for providing services to English Learners
- Parental involvement
- Schoolwide schools
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of program investments
- Fiduciary requirements

Additionally, the CFP team reviews application data, email requests from SU/SDs, issues identified by the agency's Federal Fiscal monitoring team, and issues identified from past programmatic reviews to identify key single issues. The CFP team decides each September what issues will be reviewed and in what manner the review will take place—either an on-site or desk audit. The team chooses a minimum of two issues each year and a minimum of ten SU/SDs for focused reviews. Single issues may include:

- Review of schoolwide plans
- Use of evidenced-based strategies
- Independent school equitable services
- Professional learning

Finally, private audit firms are contracted by the SU/SDs to conduct audits in all SU/SDs and schools that expend more than \$750,000 in federal funds, including lunch program commodities. The agency's audit managers maintain an extensive database of audit information and review the outcomes of these audits. When audit findings are made, the information is forwarded to the appropriate program consultants and to coordinators for follow-up.

For formula grants, the CFP team follows the same process as for the competitive grants, but conducts an additional annual risk assessment on program management and delivery each September. This assessment provides the information needed to target available administrative resources on factors that pose the greatest risk to the integrity of the CFP programs. The CFP team will rate each SU/SD against multiple risk factors and indicators, record the risk level for each SU/SD, and rank them from highest to lowest risk. Risk factors may include:

- Fiscal—Indicators include the amount of the award and the SU/SD's past history of high level of carryover.
- School Improvement—Indicators include the number of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and the reason the SU/SD has been identified.
- Grants management—Indicators include turnover of key SU/SD staff, with particular attention to the CFP Team Leader and the number of applications an SU/SD submits before the AOE ultimately approves the application.
- Past Monitoring and/or Auditing—Indicators include the number and nature of past programmatic and fiscal monitoring or audit findings and the scope of and length of time since the preceding monitoring
- Special Circumstances—Indicators include the number of independent schools students within the SU/SD attend, whether the SU/SD is a McKinney-Vento grantee, and whether local neglected or delinquent sites are located in the SU/SD.

Continuous Improvement

The AOE is dedicated to using a Vermont-developed improvement science approach, framed by rapid cycles of learning, and clear, measurable goals and indicators. The AOE will monitor and coach SU/SDs and schools through the continuous improvement process, with the greatest support being given to Comprehensive and Targeted schools. The AOE has established timelines that outline levels of monitoring, technical assistance, and actions, differentiated by a school's identification within our accountability framework.

To support and sustain school-based capacity-building efforts for continuous improvement, our statewide system of support has identified key features of continuously improving systems, including Learning Supports, Information Systems, Ongoing Review, Innovation and Evaluation, and Knowledge Sharing Strategies.

i. Learning Supports

Our system of continuous improvement is grounded in reciprocal accountability at all levels-- State, SU/SD, and School; all of the members of these communities share responsibility for education quality and equity in Vermont. Collectively, we must ensure that all schools have sufficient resources; an organizational infrastructure for ongoing, embedded, and content-focused professional learning; and support for continuous improvement of curriculum,

instruction, assessment, and student support strategies. Our state support plan focuses on six improvement principles recommended by Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu (2015):

- Making the work problem-specific and user-centered
- Focusing on variation in performance
- Understanding the system that produces the current outcomes
- Examining relevant measures for improvement
- Using disciplined inquiry
- Accelerating learning through networking

ii. Information Systems/Data Collection and Analysis

Key to any form of improvement planning is a data-driven, comprehensive needs assessment. Needs assessments serve as the foundation for Vermont Continuous Improvement Plans. All Plan strategies will be informed by needs assessment data, and will reflect the underlying causes for a school's accountability identification as applicable, in alignment with state and federal law and policy.

iii. Ongoing Review

In addition to ongoing progress monitoring of continuous improvement plans, regular self-assessments and reviews will provide a wide range of data clarifying areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. Additionally, Integrated Field Reviews will provide an external, qualitative assessment of the school's implementation of Vermont law and rule, including Act 77 and the Education Quality Standards. These reviews will include commendations, and recommendations for improvement.

iv. Innovation and Evaluation

Supporting education systems as ongoing projects makes refinement and continuous improvement the default expectation for schools and SUs/SDs. As such, outcomes are continuously evaluated, and effective innovative practices will be identified and promoted.

v. Knowledge Sharing Strategies/Networking

Within Vermont's improvement science framework, schools will have the opportunity to collaboratively engage in the process of co-constructing knowledge and skills. Schools may share promising practices and engage in mutual learning opportunities by participating in learning communities. These communities provide venues for strengthening social capital, building collective capacity, and co-constructing and applying knowledge/strategies for solving problems of practice.

Guiding Questions for continuous improvement planning investments

The CFP and Education Quality team have established a series of five questions that schools can ask themselves to ensure that their proposed investments are consistent with their proposed Continuous Improvement Plan. Together, these questions will guide schools to making their investments more aligned with their CIPs, and will streamline the application process by making the AOE's assessment criteria more accessible.

- How are your needs assessment results (including quantitative and qualitative data analysis) aligned with your decision?
- How does your determined problem of practice justify your innovation/intervention?
- Please describe, in detail, the professional learning plan to implement and sustain this innovation/intervention? Please include service delivery plans for any internal or external consultants/interventionists.
- How will you evaluate efficacy?
- Is all of the above information, including a detailed description of the innovation/intervention, included in your Continuous Improvement Plan?

Differentiated Technical Assistance

The Education Quality team will facilitate monthly networking webinars for technical support in developing, implementing, and revising Continuous Improvement Plans, as well as quarterly progress monitoring and evaluation meetings with each school, during which time we will apply a coaching protocol and exit criteria evaluation process.

i. Comprehensive support and improvement

Districts with schools with a Comprehensive identification must develop Continuous Improvement Plans with stakeholder input, must include evidence-based strategies and a resource equity component, must have those plans be approved by the district and the state, and will be monitored and reviewed by the state, with frequency of AOE monitoring varying by level of Comprehensive identification.

For schools in Comprehensive 1 status, SU/SDs will work with identified schools to develop their EQS-required Continuous Improvement Plans:

- Continuous improvement planning must occur annually, must follow the AOE's Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework, and must include assistance from the AOE.
- When using federal funds for school improvement efforts, schools must choose from a State-identified menu of research-based practices designed to impact their area(s) of identification.

An SU/SD will follow this model in the first three years of being identified as a school in need of comprehensive support.

Schools that do not exit comprehensive status after their first three-year identification period will move to Comprehensive 2 status:

- Continuous improvement planning must occur annually, must follow the AOE's Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework, and must include assistance from the AOE.
- The AOE will further limit the menu of state-approved research-based strategies that the school can choose from when using federal funding for continuous improvement.
- Continuous Improvement Plans must be reviewed and approved by a panel of educators composed of members recognized for outstanding practice in education. Plan approval will be based on the perceived impact of the Plan on the challenges leading to the school's identification.

An SU/SD will follow this model in the years 4-6 of being identified as a school in need of comprehensive support.

Schools that do not exit Comprehensive status after their second three-year identification period will move to Comprehensive 3 status, and will face state-determined action(s) drawn from the list cited in 16 V.S.A. 165(b).

- Continue technical assistance;
- Adjust Supervisory Union/Supervisory District boundaries or responsibilities of the superintendency;
- Assume administrative control only to the extent necessary to correct deficiencies; or
- Close the school and require that the school district pay tuition to another public school or an approved independent school pursuant to chapter 21 of this title.

An SU/SD will follow these model from year 7 on for a school in need of comprehensive support.

ii. Targeted support and improvement

Schools with significantly underperforming subgroups will be identified as Targeted schools. These schools must develop plans with stakeholders, must include evidence-based strategies in their plans, and must have those plans be approved and monitored by their SU/SD.

A school's Targeted status will change as they continue to be identified for the same underperforming subgroup, as follows:

Targeted 1: identified as a Targeted school for one year

Targeted 2: identified as a Targeted school, for at least one of the same underperforming subgroups, for two consecutive years

Targeted 3: identified as a Targeted school, for at least one of the same underperforming subgroups, for three consecutive years

Schools identified as Targeted must comply with the following expectations:

- Supervisory Unions/ Supervisory Districts work with the school to complete annual Continuous Improvement Plans

- When using federal funds for school improvement efforts, schools must explicitly link investments to the equity gaps that they are designed to address.

Schools that are identified for targeted improvement for a fourth consecutive year, when that identification results from the same underperforming student group, will be expected to continue to comply with the requirements for Targeted schools. Additionally, they will be assessed for their eligibility to join a Comprehensive school cohort, where they can receive all of the supports available to Comprehensive schools.