Building Your SPP/APR Stakeholder Engagement Plan: 10 Essential Questions

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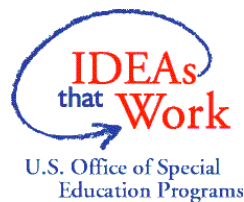
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Introduction

Building Your SPP/APR Stakeholder Engagement Plan: 10 Essential Questions can help states develop and report on authentic and broad stakeholder engagement as required in the FFY 2020–2025 State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR). This resource provides 10 key questions states should be asking themselves, with detailed options to consider, as they build their stakeholder engagement plans and prepare for describing their engagement activities in their SPPs/APRs. The questions and options to consider center on meeting the specific stakeholder engagement requirements as well as their intent. The resource addresses topics such as the number and diversity of parents states engaged and how states involved stakeholders in a full range of SPP/APR development activities (e.g., setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress; informing stakeholders of decisions the state made as a result of stakeholder input; and making results available to the public). The resource also provides links to a variety of Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and IDC SPP/APR resources.

The resource provides information in response to the following key questions that states should ask themselves:

1. What are the requirements for the SPP/APR regarding stakeholder engagement?
2. Who are our stakeholders? Do we have the right people at the table?
3. How will we organize and engage our stakeholder groups?
4. What is our timeline for obtaining stakeholder input—this year and in the future?
5. What are our communication strategies with stakeholders?
6. How will we collect and receive input and advice from our stakeholders?
7. How will we document and analyze the input we receive?
8. How are we keeping stakeholders informed of decisions?
9. What must we report about stakeholder engagement in the SPP/APR and to the public?
10. What other resources are available to support stakeholder engagement?

States can use this resource to think about the complexities of planning for meaningful stakeholder engagement, to guide actual plan development, and to inform staff and stakeholders about requirements as well as other considerations for their involvement. States also can use the questions and options to consider as a checklist to ensure they have the information on their successful stakeholder engagement work readily available to report on in their SPPs/APRs and to the public.

1. What are the requirements for the SPP/APR regarding stakeholder engagement?

Stakeholder engagement is an integral component of the FFY 2020–2025 SPP/APR requirements. States must have broad stakeholder engagement throughout the SPP/APR development, review, and revision process.

- States must report stakeholder engagement across all indicators in the introduction of the SPP/APR, including the mechanisms for soliciting broad stakeholder input on the state's targets in the SPP/APR and any subsequent revisions that the state has made to those targets and in the development and implementation of Indicator 17, the State's Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). This reporting must include
  - The number of parent members in the stakeholder group and a description of how the state engaged the parent members of the state advisory panel (SAP), parent center staff, parents from local and statewide advocacy and advisory committees, and individual parents in setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress
  - A description of the activities the state conducted to increase the capacity of diverse groups of parents to support the development and implementation of activities designed to improve outcomes for children with disabilities
  - The mechanisms and timelines for soliciting public input for setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress
  - The mechanisms and timelines for making the results of the target setting, data analysis, improvement strategies development, and evaluation available to the public
- States must consider specific requirements for stakeholder input for Indicators 8 (parent involvement) and 14 (post-secondary outcomes). Beginning with FFY 2021 SPP/APR (due February 2023), states must report representativeness with at least two demographics including
  - Race/ethnicity
  - At least one other demographic (e.g., disability, gender, geographic region, age of student) approved through the stakeholder input process

2. Who are our stakeholders? Do we have the right people at the table?

Stakeholders should represent the families and communities of the state population. Stakeholder group membership may change over time as the work progresses and there is a need for specific input. To ensure they have the right people at the table, states must know who their stakeholders are and whether their efforts to recruit stakeholders will ensure equitable representation.

- Identifying stakeholders: It is critical that states identify what individuals and groups they need to include on their stakeholder teams. The focus of the team, as well as appropriate breadth of

representation, will influence stakeholder team membership. To help identify necessary stakeholders and gain broad representation, states can

- Consider existing stakeholder groups, such as a state advisory panel, local education agency (LEA) administrators and other local school staff, parent/advocacy groups, higher education representatives, and other state agencies
- Consider other critical groups and individuals who can inform the SPP/APR, such as families, students or former students, and business and community members
- Enlist other partners in the state, who also may be stakeholders themselves, to help recruit a broad array of stakeholders. Other partners include
  - Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs)
  - State advocacy groups, such as a governor's council on developmental disabilities
  - Faith- or service-based community organizations
- Ensuring equitable representation: Stakeholders should represent the student population of the state. Consider these and other factors when recruiting stakeholders from across the state:
  - Geographic regions of the state as well as urban and rural communities
  - Representation of all sizes of school districts (small, medium, large)
  - Race/ethnicity of stakeholder voices compared to student population
  - Gender, disability, age/grade/school level, migrant status, foster status, homelessness
- Implement strategies for engaging hard-to-reach stakeholders
  - Partner with PTIs to identify and reach underrepresented stakeholders
  - Engage with disability-focused advocacy organizations in the community
  - Collaborate with other organizations to provide refreshments during meetings
  - Work with other organizations to provide childcare during meetings
  - Use natural gathering spots in the community to "go to them" (e.g., local mall, large employer, neighborhood community centers)
  - Draw on community partners (e.g., faith-based organizations, parent groups) to seek stakeholders
  - Use social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to invite and engage stakeholders
  - Employ other technology (e.g., email, text, direct message) to reach stakeholders

3. How will we organize and engage our stakeholder groups?

There are many ways to organize and engage stakeholder groups that will support the context of the state and process for obtaining ongoing input and advice.

- Groupings can include
  - One large group for all indicators
  - Groups that focus on certain indicators
  - Multiple groups, such as LEA administrators, teachers, or parent/families, that each focus on all indicators
  - Groups set up by content (indicators) and expertise (e.g., preschool or secondary transition)

- Engaging stakeholders requires planning for various meeting times and formats, including
  - Time of day
  - Day of the week
  - Type of meeting (virtual, in person, hybrid)
  - Length of meeting (to avoid having meetings that are too short or too long)

4. What is our timeline for obtaining stakeholder input—this year and in the future?

Stakeholder engagement can occur throughout the year and should include analyzing the data, developing improvement strategies, evaluating progress, as well as setting targets. The timeline should enable the state to obtain necessary stakeholder feedback for the annual SPP/APR submission and input on an ongoing basis.

- Obtain feedback for the annual SPP/APR submission
  - Plan by indicator data availability
  - Schedule by clusters of indicators
  - Receive stakeholder input in a time frame that allows for analysis and decisionmaking as well as developing the SPP/APR draft
  - Account for state internal development, finalizing, and approval process
- Obtain stakeholder input on an ongoing basis
  - Schedule regular meetings (e.g., quarterly, bi-monthly)
  - Confirm other existing meetings already scheduled
  - Allow for ongoing public input through a website or SPP/APR designated email

5. What are our communication strategies with stakeholders?

Communication should be clear, concise, timely, accessible, and purposeful.

- *Communication should be clear.* Ensure all communications are unambiguous and understandable:
  - Use facilitation strategies during meetings
    - Follow a clear agenda
    - Use meeting norms
    - Determine/assign roles (e.g., timekeeper, recorder)
    - Ensure a process is in place so that all stakeholders have a voice
  - Strive for jargon-free written and oral language
    - Spell out or explain all acronyms
    - Define terms
    - Create a list of frequently used terms and acronyms with definitions
    - Review materials to ensure they are jargon-free

- – Compose user-friendly print materials and visuals
  - ▪ Label all charts and graphs clearly
  - ▪ Check the readability level of the materials
  - ▪ Have parents (e.g., parents from PTIs or parents on staff) review materials for clarity and understanding
  - ▪ Format materials for easy review
    - • Use a lot of white space on print materials
    - • Use visuals to support the content
    - • Clearly label sections of information
    - • Use callout boxes with key terms or key thoughts
    - • Use bullets rather than paragraphs when possible
    - • Prepare data visualizations appropriate for specific audience(s)
  - ▪ Prepare oral communication appropriate for specific audience
    - • Assess and accommodate oral language needs of audience(s)
    - • Ensure presentations are culturally appropriate
    - • Allow sufficient time for questions and answers
    - • Monitor to ensure that all voices (least and most vocal) are heard
- • *Communication should be concise.* Ensure all materials include only necessary details and words and do not overwhelm the stakeholders:
  - – Include only information related to the content or purpose
  - – Use only supporting information related to the content or purpose
  - – Keep written information brief
  - – Consider breaking information down into more than one delivery time
- • *Communication should be timely.* Provide information and notices to stakeholders promptly and with sufficient time to review and respond:
  - – Give appropriate notice (enough time to plan for participation) to stakeholders about the meeting schedule, providing feedback, and other logistics. Consider stakeholders' needs to
    - ▪ Plan for travel
    - ▪ Access technology, if needed
    - ▪ Find childcare
    - ▪ Rearrange work schedules
  - – Provide reminders about upcoming meetings or due dates for submitting input or information
  - – Provide materials for stakeholders to review with adequate time to review prior to meetings or input deadlines
- • *Communication should be accessible.* Ensure all meetings and materials are available and obtainable:
  - – Confirm meetings are physically accessible for all participants
    - ▪ Ask about needed accommodations if using registration process
    - ▪ Assume interpreters may be needed if there is no registration
      - • Consider both sign language and other common languages in the community

- Use closed captioning for virtual meetings or for participants who must attend in-person meetings virtually
  - Ensure print materials are accessible to stakeholders and the public
    - Ensure 508 compliance of multimodal materials used
    - Determine need for braille or translation into other languages
    - Be prepared to make alternative formats available later, if requested
- *Communication should be purposeful.* Provide a reason or objective for each communication:
  - Clearly state the purpose in all written materials and oral communications
  - Open meetings with the stated purpose
  - Reference the purpose of the meeting and all materials and tasks during meetings to keep the meeting focused
  - Identify intended participant outcomes
  - Recap during and after meetings to ensure you achieved intended participant outcomes

6. How will we collect and receive input and advice from our stakeholders?

States should provide ongoing opportunities and multiple means for receiving input from stakeholders. States should plan for an ongoing process to receive stakeholder input and advice throughout the 6-year SPP/APR cycle.

- Develop ongoing opportunities for stakeholders to reach out
  - Be available and approachable before, during, and after meetings, whether in person or virtually
  - Post information on a website
  - Provide a designated email address
  - Work with the PTI or other partners to keep communication channels open and easy to use
  - Hold meetings at various times of the day (evening, day, weekend) to allow all stakeholders to participate
- Use a variety of methodologies to allow all stakeholders to provide input
  - Plan for the collection of both in-person and virtual public comments
  - Develop and use survey tool(s) to collect input
  - Use interactive tools (e.g., Padlet, Jamboard, Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere) to collect input during a meeting or after meetings
  - Accept written input and provide a method to document oral input
  - Conduct focus groups
  - Keep routine office/input hours and publicize the opportunities
- Implement strategies for receiving input from hard-to-reach stakeholders
  - Partner with a PTI to gather input from their stakeholders
  - Engage with the disability-focused advocacy organizations in the community to gather input from their stakeholders

7. How will we document and analyze the input we receive?

States should have a plan in place to document, record, and analyze input throughout the SPP/APR cycle. States must receive input on setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress. (Many states also collect input on other areas such as setting baselines or selecting methodology.)

- Decide what to document
  - Collect demographics information (e.g., race/ethnicity, disability of child, gender, school district) on stakeholders providing input
  - Identify role(s) (e.g., parent, education professional, organization representative, community member) of stakeholders providing input
  - Document dates on which stakeholders are providing input and the method used to provide the input
  - Document frequency of meetings or opportunities for providing stakeholder input
  - Describe meetings or opportunities that are related to input stakeholder(s) is providing
  - Record content of specific input
  - Identify indicator(s) or full SPP/APR to which the input relates
- Document input
  - Create and distribute surveys, and document input collected through the surveys
  - Use interactive tools to document input (e.g., Jamboard, Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere, Padlet)
  - Use a structured form for notetakers to document in-person and virtual meeting notes and public comments
  - Monitor and save input from designated websites and dedicated email
  - Use simple, standardized form for individual input; distribute at meetings, public forums, and other opportunities; and document results received
  - Create and use a form that organizes input received
- Analyze input
  - Examine trend data
  - Identify patterns
  - Document by themes
  - Determine commonalities and differences in response by different groups or other factors
  - Sort by indicators or groups of indicators
  - Ensure that all areas/roles are represented in the input provided
  - Determine if additional stakeholder input is needed and if so, decide how the state will receive this input

8. How are we keeping stakeholders informed of decisions?

States should think of various strategies to inform stakeholders about the ways the state considered stakeholder input and made the final decisions. States must consider all the internal and external stakeholder input as well as other factors that influence decisions about the SPP/APR.

- Plan for follow-up communication with stakeholders
    - Summarize input from all diverse stakeholders
    - Prepare state's rationale for proposed target decisions, development of improvement activities, and evaluation of progress
- Identify multiple mechanisms for follow-up communication with stakeholders, including
    - Website
    - Newsletters, blogs, or listservs
    - Podcasts
    - Presentations or distributions of summaries at other existing meetings
    - Emails to stakeholders
- Develop timelines to inform stakeholders of the state's decisions. Options include
    - Immediately after preliminary decisions have been made about individual indicators or a group of indicators
    - When all decisions have been made about individual indicators or a group of indicators
    - When all decisions have been made for submission of the SPP/APR
    - When deciding upon a combination of options
- Plan for ongoing communication with stakeholders once the state has submitted the SPP/APR
    - Share the SPP/APR as submitted and updated versions (e.g., after clarifications or when the state posts the final version to the state website)
    - Communicate OSEP's response to proposed baselines and targets and any proposed response OSEP requires of the state
    - Determine an annual plan for communication with various strategies to inform and receive input about progress toward targets, improvement activities, and evaluating progress

9. What must we report about stakeholder engagement in the SPP/APR and to the public?

States must report in the SPP/APR and to the public on how they engaged stakeholders and the results of stakeholder engagement.

- States must report in the introduction to the SPP/APR the following:
    - The number of parent members in the stakeholder group and a description of how the state engaged parent members of the SAP, parent center staff, parents from local and statewide

advocacy and advisory committees, and individual parents in setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress

- A description of the activities the state conducted to increase the capacity of diverse groups of parents to support the development and implementation activities designed to improve outcomes for children with disabilities
- The mechanisms and timelines for soliciting public input for setting targets, analyzing data, developing improvement strategies, and evaluating progress
- The mechanisms and timelines for making the results of the target setting, data analysis, improvement strategies development, and evaluation available to the public
- States must consider what information about stakeholder engagement they should include with each indicator in addition to what they include in the introduction. They should
  - Review the indicator-specific target-setting process they followed with stakeholders
  - Confirm development of improvement activities and evaluation of progress for applicable indicators
  - Decide whether to add more information to individual indicators
- States must make the SPP/APR available to the public
  - They must report results to the public (e.g., via website, newsletters, media releases, email, listservs, social media, in-person or virtual meetings)
  - They should develop a timeline to report the SPP/APR to the public
  - They should create and make available reports of local education agency (LEA) progress toward the state targets for each indicator within 120 days of the SPP/APR submission

10. What other resources are available to support stakeholder engagement?

OSEP and IDC have created many resources to support authentic stakeholder engagement.

- OSEP SPP/APR resources
  - *Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR) Part B Indicator Measurement Table (for FFY 2020 Submission)*
  - *Part B State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (Part B SPP/APR) General Instructions (for FFY 2020 Submission)*
  - *State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Universal Technical Assistance for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2020-2025*
- IDC SPP/APR resources for FFY 2020–2025
  - Templates for Part B SPP/APR Stakeholder Involvement and Target Setting
  - *FFY 2020–2025 SPP/APR Stakeholder Requirements*
  - *FFY 2020-25 Part B SPP/APR Changes at a Glance*
  - *For FFY 2020 SPP/APR, What Data Will States Report?*
  - *SPP/APR Tasks and Timelines*

- Indicator Cards for Part B FFY 2020-2025 SPP/APR
- *Data Meeting Toolkit*
- *Part B Indicator Data Display Wizard*
- Recorded webinar and slides: *Setting Baselines and Targets in a World of Questionable Data Quality*
- Recorded webinar and slides: *Developing Your Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the New SPP/APR Package*