

Regional Comprehensive Center Omnibus Protocol¹

1. Tell me about your professional background and areas of expertise. What is your primary role within this organization? Describe the tasks you might perform or decisions you might make during a typical one- or two-week period. [A B C]
2. Give me an overview of your Center's internal structure and operations: [A]
 - a. How are staff and consultants assigned?
 - b. How is communication initiated and supported between the Center and its clients?
 - c. How are decisions made regarding the provision of services (e.g., the nature and duration of services)?
 - d. How do you organize your work (e.g., by state, functional specialization)?

During this interview, we would like to talk with you about your RCC's work to help **X SEA** meet the requirements of NCLB. Based on answers to the senior state manager surveys implemented in 2007 and 2008, we will be focusing on two areas indicated as priorities for the SEA in terms of NCLB responsibilities. These two areas are **State Systems of Support/School Support Teams** and **X Priority Area**.

3. First, we would like to hear about the contextual factors in [X SEA's state] that impact the effectiveness of the work that this RCC does with regards to SSOS/SST and **Priority X**. These factors might be political, social, legal, economic, institutional or demographic. What factors enhance this RCC's ability to be effective in its work on SSOS/SST? What factors constrain this RCC's ability to be effective in its work on SSOS/SST? What factors enhance your ability to be effective with **Priority X**? What factors constrain your ability to be effective with **Priority X**? [A B C]

We would like to discuss the extent to which your work with the X SEA has had the effect of influencing the SEA's abilities to meet the requirements of NCLB in these two areas. The process of influencing abilities is sometimes called capacity-building. For the purpose of this study, we are defining capacity-building as *those activities that improve an organization's ability to achieve its mission over the long-term without direct assistance from external agencies.* **(SHOW CARD WITH DEFINITION OF CAPACITY BUILDING.)**

¹ Three levels of RCC respondents will be questioned using this protocol. Questions followed by an **A** will be directed toward RCC Directors. Those followed by a **B** will be directed toward RCC staff assigned to the state (State Liaison or State Manager). Those followed by a **C** will be directed toward an RCC staff person dealing with state actors on the key issues that are the focus of the case studies – e.g., the lead person from the Center responsible for specific topics such as State Systems of Support.

4. Does your RCC have a different definition of capacity or capacity building? Please explain. [A]
5. In thinking about building the capacity of the X SEA, are there particular actions, activities, or resources that you believe are needed to build capacity? **IF YES:** What are the actions, activities, or resources you believe are needed to build the capacity of the SEA? What are the outcomes in SEA capacity that should be expected from each action, activity, or resource you mentioned? [A B C]

In discussing the SEA's abilities to meet NCLB requirements and any work that is needed or has been done to increase the SEA's capacity, we want to organize our discussion around 4 major dimensions of capacity that we believe might be influenced by an SEA's work with the Center. Those 4 areas are *technology, systems, and infrastructure; the expertise of SEA staff; the SEA's access to outside expertise; and the SEA's leadership in its work with schools and LEAs*. On this card, you can see the types of things we believe fit within each dimension. **(DISPLAY CARD WITH 4 DIMENSIONS)**

6. Which of these 4 dimensions do you agree are the primary dimensions of capacity for the SEA? Are there any others that should also be included? What are they? [B C]
7. Okay, now we are going to talk about needs assessment. Has this RCC conducted needs assessments looking at the SEA's capacity for conducting the work in the area of SSOS/SST? **IF YES:** How was this needs assessment conducted? What needs have been identified through these assessments? For each identified need, what dimension of capacity is it most closely related to? [B C]
8. Has the RCC conducted a needs assessment on its capacity for **Priority X**? **IF YES:** How was this needs assessment conducted? What needs have been identified through these assessments? For each identified need, what dimension of capacity is it most closely related to? [B C]
9. Apart from any formal needs assessment, have other needs for building capacity been identified by your RCC for this SEA within the areas of SSOS/SST or **Priority X**? How did you discover these needs? What were they? For each identified need, what priority area and dimension of capacity is it most closely related to? [B C]
10. At any point, did this RCC identify a need for X SEA within the areas of SSOS/SST or **Priority X** that the SEA staff didn't agree with? What was the identified need? What made your RCC think this was a need for X SEA? Can you explain how that happened? For each identified need, what priority area and dimension of capacity is it most closely related to? [B C]

11. For all of these needs that were identified for building SEA capacity, was this RCC involved in any planning for meeting them? **IF YES:** Did your RCC or the SEA create a timetable for meeting these needs? Were any other agencies or entities involved in plans to meet these needs? Who were they? How useful were these outside agencies for creating a plan for addressing these needs? [B C]

Okay, let's talk about how this RCC may have worked with X SEA in building capabilities in aspects of need you have just talked about with me in the priority area of **State Systems of Support/School Support Teams**.

[Note: for the remaining protocol questions, ask only about those priority areas and dimensions of capacity for which there was an identified need, as stated by the respondent for Questions # 7, 8, 9, 10.]

SSOS/SST

Technology, Systems, and Infrastructure

Activities

12. Did your RCC engage in activities with X SEA to improve capabilities around the dimension of *technology, systems, and infrastructure*, particularly in the area of SSOS and SST? **IF NO: skip to next dimension for which there was an identified need, as stated by the respondent for Questions # 7, 8, 9, 10.** **IF YES:** What were the activities? For each of these activities, what goals did you have in mind? [B C]
13. Did these activities help the SEA meet NCLB requirements for SSOS/SST in the short-term? **IF YES:** Is there any evidence you can point to? What processes, activities, or practices were particularly useful? For each of these processes, activities, or practices, what about them made them useful? **IF NO:** why do you think that was the case? Is there something this RCC could have done differently? [B C]
14. Did your work with the SEA “leave behind” any capabilities, or build the SEA’s capacity for its work in the longer-term? **IF YES:** Is there any evidence you can point to? What processes, activities, or practices were particularly useful for building capacity? For each of these processes, activities, or practices, what about them made them useful? **IF NO:** why do you think that was the case? Is there something this RCC could have done differently to build SEA capacity? [B C]

Additional TA sources

15. In your work with X SEA, were there other agencies or organizations involved, trying to help the SEA meet its goals in the area of *technology, systems and infrastructure* as they relate to SSOS/SST? **IF YES:** Was there one primary agency or organization? Who were they? [B C]
16. What activities did you engage in with this (these) other organization(s)? Did these activities help X SEA meet NCLB requirements for SSOS/SST in the short-term? **IF YES:** Is there any evidence you can point to? What processes, activities, or practices were particularly useful? For each of these processes, activities, or practices, what about them made them useful? **IF NO:** why do you think that was the case? Is there something you or X Agency could have done differently? [B C]

Future needs/plans

17. Do you still perceive a need to improve the SEA's *technology, systems and infrastructure* as they pertain to SSOS/SST? Have you developed plans to meet these needs? What are your key plans for the future in this area? [B C]

Okay, let's talk about [next identified dimension]. **(DISPLAY CARD WITH 4 DIMENSIONS)**

Questions 12 – 17 repeated for each of the areas below as needed [B C]

SEA Staff Expertise

Activities

Additional TA sources

Future needs/plans

SEA Access to Outside Expertise

Activities

Additional TA sources

Future needs/plans

SEA Leadership in its Work with Schools and LEAs

Activities

Additional TA sources

Future needs/plans

Priority Area X

Technology, Systems, and Infrastructure

Activities

Additional TA sources

Future needs/plans

SEA Staff Expertise

Activities

Additional TA sources

Future needs/plans

SEA Access to Outside Expertise

Activities

Additional TA sources

Future needs/plans

SEA Leadership in its Work with Schools and LEAs

Activities

Additional TA sources

Future needs/plans

FINAL QUESTION: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about these issues we discussed today – your relationship with the X SEA, your relationship with other Centers, capacity-building, SSOS/SST, **X Priority Area**, etc.?