

APPENDIX B

2. IMPLEMENTATION-FOCUSED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CENTER STAFF

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[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Below are suggested introductory remarks. While it is not necessary to follow this as a script, it is important that you cover all of the main points contained here.]

I work for IMPAQ International, and we are researching the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers. The U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences contracted with us to conduct this study. You may recall that we visited last year to learn about the Center.

As part of our study, we will be interviewing directors, managers, and staff at the Centers to understand the work that you do. The purpose of the study is to gather data to describe the work of the Centers and how the Centers build the capacities of state departments of education, and to report that information to the Department of Education. What you have to say is important to us and we appreciate you helping us understand your work. We want to assure you that participation in this interview is voluntary. We estimate that this interview will take 60 minutes.

[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Please read the following to the respondent(s):

"Information collected for this study comes under the confidentiality and data protection requirements of the Institute of Education Sciences (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). Responses to this data collection will be used only for research purposes. Findings from the interview data will be reported in summary form and individuals will not be identified by name. However, respondents' roles and the CC they work with may be identified in the report, which may lead to individuals' being identified. Other than this situation that we have made respondents aware of, we will not provide information that identifies you to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law."

Before we begin, do you have any questions about the purpose of the evaluation or our confidentiality policy?

To start, do you mind if we audio record our session for the accuracy of our note taking?

All questions will be asked about the Early Learning priority area first, and then about the Great Teachers/Leaders priority area. Questions are for staff of both Regional Centers and Content Centers unless specifically noted otherwise. Interview respondents for the first section (“Overall Perspective”) should be Center Directors, Content Specialists in the Early Learning or Great/Teachers Leaders areas, and lead TA providers who work within these priority areas. Interview respondents for the second section (“Project Background”) should be lead TA providers who work on the identified projects, but Center Directors and Content Specialists may also be involved with these projects and should be included as relevant. **Prior to conducting the interview, the interviewer will review relevant extant documents such as proposals, annual performance review reports, evaluation reports, etc. Some of the answers to questions asked below may be in those documents. If so, the interviewer will start the question by referring to information gleaned from the document, and will ask the respondent to verify the accuracy of the information.**

Further introduction from the Interviewer: We are going to ask you questions that focus on two priority areas. We will begin with the Early Learning priority area; we will first ask about your overall approach to TA in this area, and then we will ask about specific projects. We will then ask about the Great Teachers/Leaders priority area, again starting with questions about your overall approach followed by questions about specific projects.[Note to interviewer; ask ALL questions, including both overall perspective and project-specific questions, first about Early Learning and then repeat all the questions focusing on Great /Teachers Leaders.]

Overall Perspective on the Priority Area

Ask Regional Centers Only:

1. Are there needs for technical assistance within the Early Learning [Great Teachers/ Leaders] priority area that have been identified by your states? If so, please describe the needs.
2. If there are needs, how did they come to your attention? If this area has not been identified as a priority need, do you know why not? What do SEA staff say about why this area is or is not a priority TA need?

PROBE: What evidence have you reviewed that helps you understand the needs?

3. Is there a range of early learning [great teachers/leaders] TA needs across states in your region? How do states in your region differ in the types and level of these needs?

Ask Content Centers Only:

4. Are there needs (whether state, regional, national needs) in this priority area that have fallen within the purview of your center, or intersected with the focus of your center? If so please describe these needs. How did these needs come to your attention?

PROBES: *Have early learning [great teachers/ leaders] needs come up in discussions with Regional Centers, other Content Centers, SEAs, or other constituents? What evidence have you reviewed that helps you understand the needs?*

5. Have you encountered a range of early learning [great teachers/leaders] needs across states and regions? If so please describe the differences in level or types of needs.

If no needs have been identified in the Early Learning priority area, skip the remaining questions for Early Learning and start over with the Great Teachers/Leaders area.

6. Have the needs in this priority area changed since first identified to the Center? If so, please describe how. How did you learn about any changes?
7. Who (individuals, agencies, groups) has been part of the Center’s discussion of early learning [great teachers/leaders] needs and any plans to address them?

PROBES:

- *Chief State School Officers or other SEA leadership*
 - *Other SEA staff (such as middle management staff)*
 - *Leadership in other Agencies such as Human Services, Family and Children's Services, etc.*
 - *Other staff within these agencies (such as middle management staff)*
 - *Others such as governors' offices, task forces, etc.*
 - *Advocacy or TA groups*
 - *Other Centers, whether Regional or Content Centers*
8. Do you have designated staff and partners who work with you on early learning [great teachers/leaders] projects? [If so], please identify them and their expertise relevant to this area of work.
 9. Do you have a theory of action that is specific to early learning? [If so], please describe it. By theory of action, we mean how your Center works to build SEA capacity in early learning, including the chain of causal assumptions linking program resources, activities, intermediate outcomes and ultimate goals. Specifically, we’d like to know:
 - 9a. What are you trying to help the states achieve in early learning? What are the expected outcomes? How is this TOA anchored to the needs we discussed above?
 - 9b. Can you identify any overall approaches or strategies (e.g., ones that cut across specific projects or activities) that you use to help states achieve these outcomes in early learning [great teachers/leaders]—approaches or strategies that are specific to this priority area? How do the strategies lead to the outcomes?

10. *[Note to interviewer: whether the Center being interviewed is a Regional or Content Center, be sure to ask about how they work with both types of Centers.]* Do [other] Regional Centers work with you on these approaches or strategies? If so, how? Do [other] Content Centers work with you on these approaches or strategies? If so, how?
11. What has gone particularly well in your work with other Centers—with both Regional and Content Centers-- in this priority area? What has been challenging in working with other Centers—with both Regional and Content Centers?
12. *[Note to interviewer: ask this of both types of Centers, since Content Centers may receive training from other Content Centers.]* Have you received TA or training in this priority area from any of the [other] Content Centers (directed to your own center as distinct from or in addition to SEA staff)? If so, please describe and tell me how you have used this information.
13. As you think about all of your work in early learning [great teachers/leaders], what do you consider to be going very well? How do you know? What indicators do you rely on?
14. As you think about all of your work in early learning [great teachers/leaders], what have you found to be unsuccessful or challenging? How do you know? What indicators do you rely on?

Project Implementation

We will now discuss up to 2 projects from your center as examples of how the Center works in this priority area. As we discussed with you earlier when planning this visit, if you have more than two projects in this priority area, please select the two projects that you consider the best illustrations of your work in this area in terms of their capacity building potential, or uniqueness to the work that you do at your center.

15. *[Start with one project]* What do you call this project?
16. Is this a state, regional, or national project? Please identify the specific states or regions, if relevant, or describe the scope of the project.
17. Is the project completed or ongoing? What was the start date, and the ending date (or anticipated end date) if applicable?
18. Why did you select this project as a focal project for discussion?
19. What prompted this project? Who initiated the concept of this project? Who participated in the early discussions? Who helped plan the project? What needs were identified as having the greatest priority? How did you decide on priorities?

PROBES:

- *Chief State School Officers*
- *SEA staff below leadership level*
- *Other Centers*
- *Other partner organizations*

20. Which constituents (SEA representatives or others) do you work with most closely on this project? Please describe their roles on the project. Can you give us their contact information so we can contact them for interviews to obtain the TA recipient perspective?

21. Please identify and describe the roles of any organizations serving as partners in this project. What is their role in implementing the project and how do the partners work together?

PROBES:

Other Regional Centers or Content Centers

RELS

Other TA providers or experts

22. Which Center staff members work on this project? Please describe their respective roles on the project.

23. What were the elements of the context –political, fiscal, legal, economic, etc.—that were influential factors during the project’s early development? Did these elements facilitate or impede the project in any way? If so, how?

PROBES:

How influential do you think these elements of the context were?

How did it impact what your team was thinking and doing in relation to this project?

Did the state(s) have any Federal or state grant money behind this project?

Project Goals

24. What are the broad goals of the project? What areas of SEA capacity are expected to improve? Which SEA staff are the primary targets of this project?

PROBES:

Human capacity/knowledge/skills

Organizational capacity

Structural capacity/policy change

25. Have the goals of the project changed over time? If so, please describe.

26. What are the key strategies and activities—including training events, products, meetings—that are part of achieving the goals? Who are the recipients of these strategies and activities?

27. Have you modified the strategies or activities originally planned for this project? [If so] Please tell us about how and why these were changed.

Project Communication

28. How often do you meet or talk with SEA representatives, or other key constituents, if relevant, regarding planning and implementation of the project? With which SEA representatives do you meet? What do you discuss? How do these discussions inform implementation of the project?

Project Implementation and Outcomes

29. What is your definition of success in this project? What will we ‘see’ if this project is successful? What are the milestones for the project?

30. Based on your definitions of a successful project, how have things gone so far? What is your evidence for making this assessment of progress?

PROBES:

Has the project met its milestones so far? Why/why not?

31. What have been the outcomes so far? Have you seen changes in the capacity of the SEAs or other targeted constituencies? Please describe any changes in each of these types of capacity, and the evidence of the change:

- Knowledge and skills (e.g., knowledge, expertise, skills, will, understanding necessary to implement something)
- Organizational (e.g., interaction, collaboration, communication among individuals in a system; evaluation and feedback on processes and structures for continuous improvement)
- Structural/policy change (e.g., policies, procedures, and formalized practices)

PROBE: Has the SEA capacity to work with LEAs improved?

32. What has been the most challenging aspect of this project—including any challenges to implementation or to building SEA capacity? Please describe. How have you handled the challenges?

PROBES:

Has there been turnover within the SEA?

Have there been challenges in communicating with the SEA?

Have there been other challenges in working with the SEA?

Have there been challenges in working with partners?

What makes it difficult to build capacity?

33. Overall what do you think has been the most successful aspect of this project? Please describe it. To what do you attribute this success? What have you learned from this?

34. Are there plans for the Center to build on, replicate, or continue this project?
35. Have the SEAs or other constituents begun to take over or "own" this work in any way?
What are their next steps?
36. Are there upcoming events associated with this project that we may be able to observe to help us understand project implementation? *[If so]* Please describe them and provide dates.
37. Are there products/materials associated with this project (in addition to those we've received prior to the interview) that we could collect and read to help us understand project implementation or outcomes?

Repeat project questions for the 2nd project in the Early Learning area, if applicable. Then repeat all questions for the Great Teachers/Leaders priority area.