

U.S. Department of Education Technical Assistance (TA) Interview Protocol

This interview protocol can be used for either 1-on-1 interviews or small-group interviews with the following stakeholders depending on State educational agency (SEA), Local educational agency (LEA) and/or TA activity context: (1) TA recipients; (2) senior SEA/LEA staff not directly involved in TA, or; (3) partner in providing TA to Network service recipients. Questions are color coded to differentiate between prompts for different stakeholder groups.

Text in *italics* indicates language to be spoken during interview while standard text indicates language to guide interviewer through the conversation. Highlighted text indicates language that will need to be customized by the interviewer prior to the interview.

Context

Hello, [*name of interviewee*]. My name is [*interviewer's name*], a member of the evaluation team for the State Support Network (which I'll sometimes refer to as "the Network"). The Network is a technical assistance initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of State Support. Thank you for taking time today to share the experiences you and your colleagues have had with the Network. I anticipate this conversation will last 45 minutes.

Introduction

Question	Notes/actions for interviewer if applicable
<p>(Q1) Confirm interviewee's affiliation with the Network.</p> <p><u>TA recipients</u> <i>First, you were identified as someone who has worked with the State Support Network, but can you confirm that you participated in [<i>State Support Network TA activity</i>], which took place on/around [<i>date(s)</i>]?</i></p> <p><u>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA</u> <i>First, can you confirm that you are familiar with the State Support Network and your state's involvement with some of its activities such as [<i>State Support Network TA activities</i>]?</i></p> <p><u>TA partners</u> <i>First, you were identified as someone who has worked with the State Support Network, but can you confirm that you contributed to [<i>State Support Network TA activity</i>], which took place on/around [<i>date(s)</i>]?</i></p>	<p><u>For all interviewee types:</u></p> <p>If yes to Q1, skip to Q3</p> <p>If no to Q1, move to Q2</p>
<p>(Q2) In the event that the interviewee is not familiar with the State Support Network seek to better understand their experiences working with other providers.</p> <p><u>TA recipients</u> <i>Thank you for clarifying that you are not familiar with the State Support Network through [<i>State Support Network TA activity</i>]. (Is there a point of contact that you recommend I reach out to?) If I may, though, can I ask one or two questions about your experience working with technical assistance providers?</i></p>	<p><u>For all interviewee types:</u></p> <p>If yes to Q2, skip to Q8</p> <p>If no to Q2, politely end the interview, thanking [<i>name of interviewee</i>].</p> <p>The interviewer should always try to identify a recommended point of</p>

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<p><u>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA</u> <i>Thanks for clarifying that you are not familiar with the State Support Network’s activities with your state. (Is there a different project-specific point-of-contact that you recommend I reach out to?) If I may, though, can I ask one or two questions about your experience working with technical assistance providers?</i></p> <p><u>TA partners</u> <i>Thanks for clarifying that you are not familiar with the State Support Network through [State Support Network TA activity]. (Is there a point of contact that you recommend I reach out to?) If I may, though, can I ask one or two questions about your experience working with technical assistance providers?</i></p>	<p>contact.</p>
<p>(Q3) Gauge the interviewee’s awareness/recall of the TA activity that is the focus of this interview.</p> <p><u>TA recipients</u> <i>In your own words, please describe the technical assistance activity that you participated in. How was the assistance helpful to you? For example, was there a specific activity or resource that impacted your work?</i></p> <p><u>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA</u> <i>In your own words, please describe the ways your state is being served through technical assistance provided by the State Support Network. For example, what assistance did the state receive? What specific activity or resource was especially helpful?</i></p> <p><u>TA partners</u> <i>With regard to [State Support Network TA activity], how have you interacted with the Network during this project? For example, do any specific activities, tools, and/or resources come to mind?</i></p>	<p><u>For all interviewee types:</u></p> <p>Interviewer may wish to refer to a list of activities, tools, and/or resources associated with the TA activity/activities that are the focus of this interview.</p> <p>If interviewee is grasping for a name, date, or descriptor, interviewer may offer prompts or suggestions from the list to minimize burden.</p>

Quality

I want to ask a couple of questions about quality. When my colleagues at the State Support Network think about quality, they are thinking about technical assistance with:

- content based on research and best practice
- highly knowledgeable subject-matter experts and facilitators
- effective pace, organization, communication strategies, and follow-up support
- objectives met as evidenced by participant feedback and measurable outcomes

Question	Notes/actions for interviewer if applicable
<p>(Q4) Gather information about the quality of the technical assistance provided by the Network.</p> <p><u>TA recipients</u> <i>With those aspects of quality in mind, and thinking about [State Support</i></p>	<p><u>For all interviewee types:</u></p> <p>If interviewee offers a “yes/no” response to any question, probe for</p>

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<p>Network TA activities], what is your general sense of the quality of the TA?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did the content of [State Support Network TA activity] seem to draw on research and best practice? b. Did the subject-matter experts and facilitators seem highly knowledgeable about the content? c. Were the pace, organization, communication strategies, and follow-up support of the TA effective? d. One of the stated objectives of this particular project or activity was [INSERT SUCCINCT SUMMARY HERE]. In your estimation, was this objective met? e. Another of the stated objectives of this particular project or activity was [INSERT SUCCINCT SUMMARY HERE]. In your estimation, was this objective met? f. [Repeat for up to as many as three or four primary objectives.] <p>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA</p> <p>With those aspects of quality in mind, and thinking about State Support Network TA activities, what is your general sense of the quality of the TA?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Was the TA designed such that it could serve the needs and objectives of your state? b. Was the TA delivered such that it could serve the needs and objectives of your state? <p>TA partners</p> <p>With those aspects of quality in mind, and thinking about [State Support Network TA activities], what is your general sense of the quality of the TA?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did the content of [State Support Network TA activity] seem to draw on research and best practice? b. Did the subject-matter experts and facilitators seem highly knowledgeable about the content? c. Were the pace, organization, communication strategies, and follow-up support of the TA effective? d. One of the stated objectives of this particular project or activity was [INSERT SUCCINCT SUMMARY HERE]. In your estimation, was this objective met? e. Another of the stated objectives of this particular project or activity was [INSERT SUCCINCT SUMMARY HERE]. In your estimation, was this objective met? f. [Repeat for up to as many as three or four primary objectives.] 	<p>additional detail or examples as appropriate.</p>
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Relevance

Thank you. Next, I want to talk about relevance. When my colleagues at the State Support Network think about relevance, they are thinking about the extent to which:

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- technical assistance is addressing state and district needs and priorities
- technical assistance has clear potential for direct application to state and district priorities
- technical assistance appropriately matches participants’ knowledge and resources

Question	Notes/actions for interviewer if applicable
<p>(Q5) Gather information about the relevance of the TA activity that is the focus of this interview.</p> <p>TA recipients <i>With those aspects of relevance in mind, and thinking about [State Support Network TA activities], what is your general sense of the relevance of the TA?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>How did [State Support Network TA activities] address the needs and priorities of your context?</i> b. <i>To what extent has [State Support Network TA activity] had direct application to the priorities of your context?</i> c. <i>How was the content of [State Support Network TA activity] appropriate for your knowledge and resources?</i> <p>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA <i>With those aspects of relevance in mind, and thinking about State Support Network TA activities, what is your general sense of the relevance of the TA?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>How did Network TA activities address the needs and priorities of your state and/or district(s)?</i> b. <i>How were Network TA activities directly applicable to the priorities of your state and/or district(s)?</i> c. <i>How was the content of State Support Network TA appropriate for meeting the needs of those that participated from your state and/or district(s)?</i> <p>TA partners <i>With those aspects of relevance in mind, and thinking about [State Support Network TA activity], what is your general sense of the relevance of the TA?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>To what extent [State Support Network TA activity] address the needs and priorities of the state(s) and/or district(s)?</i> b. <i>How did [State Support Network TA activity] have direct application to the priorities of the state(s) and/or district(s)?</i> c. <i>Was the content of [State Support Network TA activity] appropriate for participants’ knowledge and resources?</i> 	<p>For all interviewee types:</p> <p>If interviewee offers a “yes/no” response, probe for additional detail or examples as appropriate. For example: <i>What aspects of the State Support Network’s technical assistance have been most useful and relevant to your work, and why?</i></p>

Application of information, tools, or resources

Next I want to talk about actual use or application of the information, tools, or resources that resulted from [State Support Network TA activity].

Question	Notes/actions for interviewer if applicable
<p>(Q6) Gather information about the application of information, tools, or resources from the TA activity that is the focus of this interview.</p>	<p>For all interviewee types:</p>

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<p>TA recipients How have the information, tools, or resources presented in [State Support Network TA activity] been used and applied by individuals in your state or district?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. One of the stated objectives of this particular project or activity was [INSERT SUCCINCT SUMMARY HERE]. What can you tell me about the extent to which this objective was met, and has led to ongoing use or application of the information, tools, or resources featured in the Network TA? b. [Repeat for up to as many as three or four primary objectives, limiting to TA objectives that are logically about ongoing use, application, or implementation of information, tools, or resources.] <p>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA How have the information, tools, or resources presented in [State Support Network TA activity/activities] been used and applied by your state and/or district(s) from your context?</p> <p>TA partners Based on your knowledge and experience, how have the information, tools, or resources presented in [State Support Network TA activity/activities] been used and applied by the state(s) and/or district(s)?</p>	<p>If “yes” to Q6, ask: What specific instances or examples come to mind? Are there other instances or examples?</p> <p>If “no” to Q6, ask: Why do you think there has not been use or application in ways that are easy to trace or identify?</p>
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Application and extension

A goal of the State Support Network is for its TA to provide opportunities for participating states and districts to move their own work forward – whether this is in writing draft language for a policy or plan, developing or piloting new tools and systems, or in other ways.

Question	Notes/actions for interviewer if applicable
<p>(Q7) Gather information about the application and extension of the TA activity that is the focus of this interview.</p> <p>TA recipients</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How has participation in [State Support Network TA activity] informed state and/or district work in your context? Please cite specific examples. b. How has participation in [State Support Network TA activity/activities] contributed to your state and/or district(s)’s capacity to meet ESEA goals? Please cite specific examples. c. As a result of participation in [State Support Network TA 	<p>For all interviewee types:</p> <p>If interviewee offers a “no” response to any portion of Q7, ask: Do you have thoughts about how the TA could have been structured or operated differently to allow this to happen?</p>

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<p><i>activity/activities</i>], how has your state and/or district(s) changed or improved practice? Please cite specific examples.</p> <p>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Have you observed any changes to state and/or district work in your context as a result of participation in [State Support Network TA activity]</i>? If yes, please cite specific examples. b. <i>Has participation in [State Support Network TA activity/activities] enhanced your state and/or district(s)'s capacity to meet ESEA goals? If so, how?</i> c. <i>As a result of participation in [State Support Network TA activity/activities], has your state and/or district(s) changed or improved practice? Please cite specific examples.</i> <p>TA partners</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>How have the state(s) and/or district(s) changed or improved practice as a result of participation in [State Support Network TA activity/activities]</i>? Please cite specific examples. b. <i>How has participation in [State Support Network TA activity/activities] influenced your work providing assistance in this area? Please cite specific examples.</i> c. <i>Has participation in [State Support Network TA activity/activities] resulted in continued engagement with participating state(s) and/or district(s)? If so, how?</i> 	
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Conclusion

Thank you for sharing your valuable insights about quality, relevance, use, and application of State Support Network activities and materials. Before we conclude, I have a few general questions about other technical assistance that you have received and what your technical assistance needs might be in the near future.

Question	Notes/actions for interviewer if applicable
<p>(Q8) Inquire about effective experiences with other technical assistance providers.</p> <p>TA recipients <i>When you think of other technical assistance opportunities that your state has participated in, aside from Network TA (from federally funded or otherwise), what made that assistance effective/impactful for you? For the state?</i></p> <p>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA <i>When you think of other technical assistance organizations aside from the Network (federally funded or otherwise) that have supported your state and its school districts, what made that assistance effective/impactful?</i></p>	

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<p><u>TA partners</u> <i>When you have collaborated with other technical assistance organizations aside from the Network (federally funded or otherwise), what has characterized an effective partnership?</i></p>	
<p>(Q9) Inquire about challenging experiences with other technical assistance providers.</p> <p><u>TA recipients</u> <i>What types of technical assistance (either through the Network or other organizations) have not been particularly effective, if any, in your opinion? Why? How can the TA provided by the State Support Network be improved to better meet the needs of your state and/or district(s)? Please cite specific recommendations.</i></p> <p><u>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA</u> <i>What types of technical assistance (either through the Network or other organizations) have not been particularly effective, if any, in your opinion? Why? How can the TA provided by the State Support Network be improved to better meet the needs of your state and/or district(s)? Please cite specific recommendations.</i></p> <p><u>TA partners</u> <i>What types of technical assistance collaborations (either with the Network or other organizations) have not been particularly effective, if any, in your opinion? Why?</i></p>	
<p>(Q10) Inquire about the need for future technical assistance.</p> <p><u>TA recipients</u> <i>What technical assistance do you and/or your state anticipate needing in the next 3 to 6 months? Do you and/or your state have an emerging need?</i></p> <p><u>Senior SEA staff not directly involved in TA</u> <i>What technical assistance will your state and/or district(s) need in the next 3 to 6 months? Does your state and/or district(s) have an emerging need?</i></p> <p><u>TA partners</u> <i>What technical assistance do you recommend the State Support Network consider undertaking in the next year?</i></p>	<p><u>For all interviewee types:</u></p> <p>If interviewee does not explain response, probe for additional detail or examples as appropriate.</p>

Wrap-up

Thank you again for your time. The information that you've shared with us will be very helpful in informing future TA offerings. We look forward to working with you again in the future on other State Support Network opportunities.