

Strengthening Child Welfare Systems Grantees – Technical Assistance Feedback Focus Group Guide



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Instructions for Facilitators

Highlighted areas of text under *Overview* can be summarized. For bolded text, read verbatim. For questions, italicized questions are to be used as optional probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Questions in yellow highlight are key questions that should be prioritized if time becomes an issue.

Overview

Provide an introduction. Introduce leaders of the focus group and roles of each in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). Ask each participant to provide name, role on project, and how long they have worked on the project.

Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: The purpose of today's focus group is to gather feedback about your experiences with the technical assistance (TA) support you have received for the Strengthening Child Welfare Systems Grantees (SCWS) project. Specifically, this evaluation effort is focused on getting feedback about services provided by TA providers who support grantees with implementation. As such, references in this survey to the "TA Team" are used to indicate staff and consultants from the Center for States collectively known as the Implementation Specialists. Combined with the findings from the survey, your feedback will be used to improve future services for SCWS and other CB funded grantees.

Convey to participants our privacy policy: (1) the focus group is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions or can stop participating in the focus group at any time (3) Data from this focus group will be held private by the evaluation team. The Information from today's focus group will be reported and shared with the Children's Bureau. When reported this information will be aggregated across all stakeholders involved in the project and individual's names will not be associated with it. No reporting will be provided by grantee project and the names of individuals who participated in the focus group will not be shared (4) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information from the focus group outside the focus group.

Confirm permission to tape record the focus group: We would like to record today's focus group to ensure we capture the discussion accurately and completely. Only evaluation team members will have access to this recording. If any person in the group chooses not to have the focus group recorded, we will be taking notes instead. In our confirmation e-mails to each participant before today's call, there were no objections to recording today's focus group. **I would like to confirm that we still have the group's permission to record the session. Would anyone prefer we not record this focus group?** *[Start recording if there are no objections.]*

Introduction

For today's focus group, we want to dig a bit deeper about your experiences with TA support. We want to follow-up on some of the questions asked in the survey and ask some new questions that are more suited for a focus group. Also, we recognize that you all have various roles and time spent on the projects, so we ask that you speak to direct experiences you have with the project. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions

1. **As you began your work on this project, what were your general expectations for TA support?**

Optional probes:

- What was your interpretation of the funding announcement requirement to “work with” the CB’s TA provider as part of the cooperative agreement?
- What aspects of the funding announcement were you expecting to get TA support for?
- What topics related to the implementation and evaluation of your project were you hoping to get TA support for?
- What were your expectations about how much TA support would be provided or available to you?
- What were your expectations about the role of the Children's Bureau?
- What were your expectations about how the CB and TA providers would work together to support your project?
- What would you describe as the biggest discrepancy between what you actually received for TA support and what you expected?
- How could future communication about expectations for grantee participation with TA support be improved?

2. **In the survey, we asked grantees to describe what “effective TA support” looked like. I would like to get your reactions to a brief summary of these survey responses.**

[Provide brief synopsis of responses from survey question, *What does effective TA support look like to you?*]

What is your reaction to what I just summarized from the survey?

Optional probes:

- What do you agree with?
- What do you disagree with?
- How else would you define what “effective” TA support looks like?
- How has TA support contributed to the success of your project?

3. **In the survey, we also asked grantees about whether they felt that TA support had been effective and to provide a brief explanation for their responses. I would like to get your reactions to a brief summary of these survey responses.**

[Provide brief synopsis of responses from survey question, *Do you think the TA support that your project has received so far has been effective?*]

Optional probes:

- What do you agree with?
- What do you disagree with?
- What would you like to add to this summary?

4. Thinking about the TA support over time, how has the TA support changed?

Optional probes:

- Have you seen any changes in the TA approach from year to year throughout the project cycle?
- How did the TA support adapt to the needs of your project?
- How did these changes help you to achieve the goals of your project? How did they help you to address CB requirements?

5. The TA team focused on building knowledge and skills in specific areas. This included support for change and implementation (e.g., teaming, problem exploration), partnerships with key stakeholders, and meeting funding and other CB requirements. In what ways (if any) did TA support increase your skills in these areas?

Optional probes:

- What specific activities (e.g., coaching, peer-to-peer learning sessions) did TA providers use to build these skills?
- Which TA activities were most helpful? Which were least helpful?
- What should be done differently to better support the development of these skills?
- What skills are missing from this that you think TA support should focus on?

6. I want to dig a bit deeper with the TA support around change and implementation skills (e.g., teaming, problem exploration). How has involvement with the grant influenced your motivation and interest to use some of these skills for future work?

Optional probes:

- In what ways (if any) have your attitudes or perceptions about these skills changed?
- How has the TA support increased your confidence in using these skills?
- Going into the project, what were your expectations about if or how skills gained through TA support would be applied to work outside the project?
- How do you anticipate using these skills other types of work in your organization (e.g., CFSP, CFSR-PIP, CIP, other research projects or grants)?

7. How would you define success for your project?

Optional probes:

- How do you define success related to...
 - o Meeting grant requirements
 - o Meeting CB requirements
 - o Capacity for managing change and implementation (e.g., developing teams, using data for problem exploration)
 - o Putting strategies in place
 - o Sustaining these strategies beyond the grant
 - o Improving your organization (e.g., data system, partnerships)
 - o Improving child welfare outcomes
- How has your definition of success changed during your involvement with the project?

8. What additional TA support does your project need to achieve this success?

9. Are there other comments you would like to provide about your experience with TA support?