

### Core Elements of a Professional Learning Plan

Most professional learning plans, whether short-term, annual, or multi-year, contain the following elements:

**Needs analysis.** Needs emerge from data, not wishes. Through a process of analyzing data about students, educators, and the system, studying trends and patterns, and assessing the potential causes of contributors, needs emerge. These needs are then studied to understand what might be causing or contributing to them.

**Goal(s).** Goals specify the broad outcomes of professional learning. Typically, they are stated as outcomes for students, e.g. student achievement increases because educators learn. Many plans use the SMART goal format to convey the goal(s).

**Objectives.** Objectives delineate the specific long- and short-term changes that need to occur in order to meet the goal(s). In professional learning they are frequently stated as the knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behavior (KASAB) changes that occur in educators to achieve the goal(s) stated for students.

**Strategic actions/interventions.** The strategic actions or interventions delineate what a state, district, school, team, or individual does, provides, or offers to accomplish the changes necessary to achieve the goals.

**Timeline.** The timeline explains when actions will be completed and the objectives and goals achieved. It helps monitor progress over the duration of a plan.

**Responsible person(s).** The responsible person(s) is the designated point person, or the persons who know about the actions and the status of each action. In most cases, the responsible person(s) works with a team or multiple individuals to complete an action.

**Indicators of success.** Indicators of success describe how planners will know whether the actions have occurred, and the goals and objectives have been achieved. In other words, the indicators are descriptions of the completed actions or markers that demonstrate progress toward the goals.

**Measures of success.** Measures of success identify how the data or evidence will be collected to demonstrate the indicators of success. For example, if improved student writing is an indicator of success, the measures of success are the quarterly writing samples scored by teachers.

**Evaluation plan.** The evaluation plan measures the success of the professional learning. It uses the indicators of success and measures of success to guide data collection to determine if the goals and objectives were achieved, if the strategic actions and interventions were appropriate, and what improvements can be made in future professional learning plans.

**Resources needed.** Resources include the staff, technology, funding, materials, and time necessary to accomplish the objectives and goals. Resources may also be called the inputs.

The following components are sometimes included in professional learning plans:

**Assumptions.** The assumptions are statements of belief, rather than facts, that undergird or drive the design of the plan. The assumptions frame the plan's development and serve to explain its design.

**Theory of change.** A theory of change maps the sequential actions needed to achieve identified goals. This theory is often graphically displayed to demonstrate the interrelationship of the components. It identifies the core components of professional learning that will produce the intended changes.

**Logic model.** A logic model is a diagram showing how a program works. Because it delineates the inputs, short-term outputs, and intermediate-term and long-term outcomes, the logic model is used as a progress-monitoring, assessment, evaluation, and communication tool.

Individuals who are leading or facilitating professional learning planning teams or members of planning teams may use *Tool i: Websites to sample professional learning plans* to locate examples of templates and formats for professional learning plans. These examples represent how professional learning plans are structured, not necessarily exemplary plans.