

Making the Most of the Every Student Succeeds Act:

A Reference Guide (and Our Advice)
for States, Districts, Advocates & Funders
to Advance State Goals

MAY 4, 2016

Education First developed this reference guide to help state and district leaders, advocates and funders make the most of ESSA.

Who We Are and What We Do

We are **Education First**, a national, mission-driven strategy, policy and grantmaking effectiveness organization with unique and deep expertise in P20 education.

Our mission is to deliver exceptional ideas, experience-based solutions and results so all students—particularly low-income students and students of color—are prepared for success in college, career and life.

Since 2006 we have worked in nearly 40 states with state policymakers, district leaders, funders, practitioners and advocates to provide support for strategic planning, policy research and program implementation.

Why We Created This Guide

This ESSA reference guide is intended to **spark a sense of possibility** and offer some **clear guidance** to state and district leaders, funders and advocates.

There's **a lot of information** in this guide. We've gone beyond explaining the new law to **share our point of view**. Many of our suggestions are **concrete and directive**.

Not all of these ideas will work for everyone. But we hope our ideas will **inform your thinking** and **jumpstart important conversations about the future of education** in your state.

This reference guide contains information and advice to:

Navigate key ESSA requirements and changes from NCLB



Design ESSA plans that advance equity and each state's guiding vision



Identify opportunities to innovate and challenges for design and implementation



We encourage you to print or save and share this reference guide. We look forward to your feedback and a rich dialogue.

What you'll find in this reference guide:

- | | | |
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| 1 | Making the Most of ESSA | <u>Slide 5</u> |
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| | <i>Stakeholder Engagement</i> | <u>Slide 11</u> |
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ESSA continues NCLB’s focus on equity: college and career readiness, equitable access to effective educators and funding directed to low-income children.

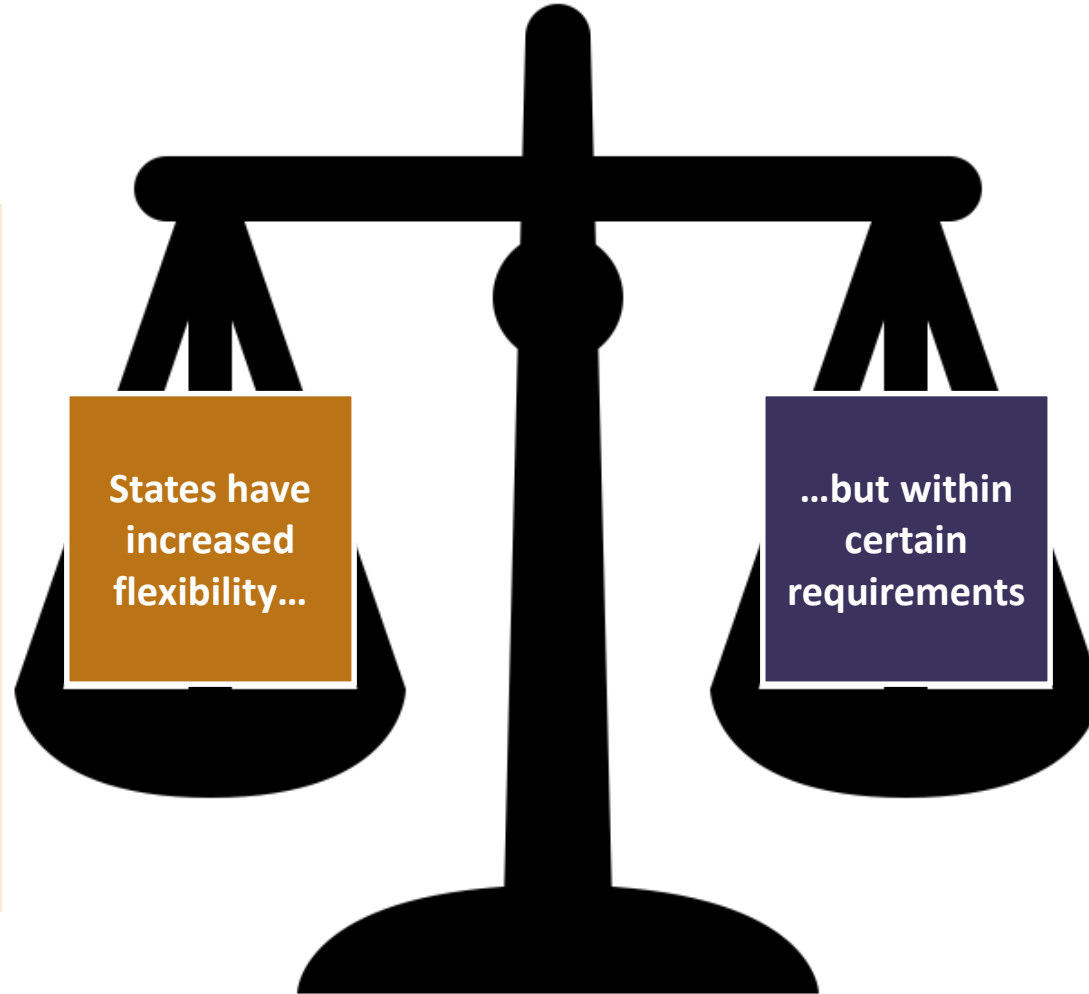


Our focus in this document is on using these five areas of ESSA to **advance state goals to increase equity of opportunity and achievement for low-income children and children of color.**

But while ESSA puts states and school districts in charge by setting up new opportunities, it also requires states to balance many decisions.

More flexibility: SEA leaders can...

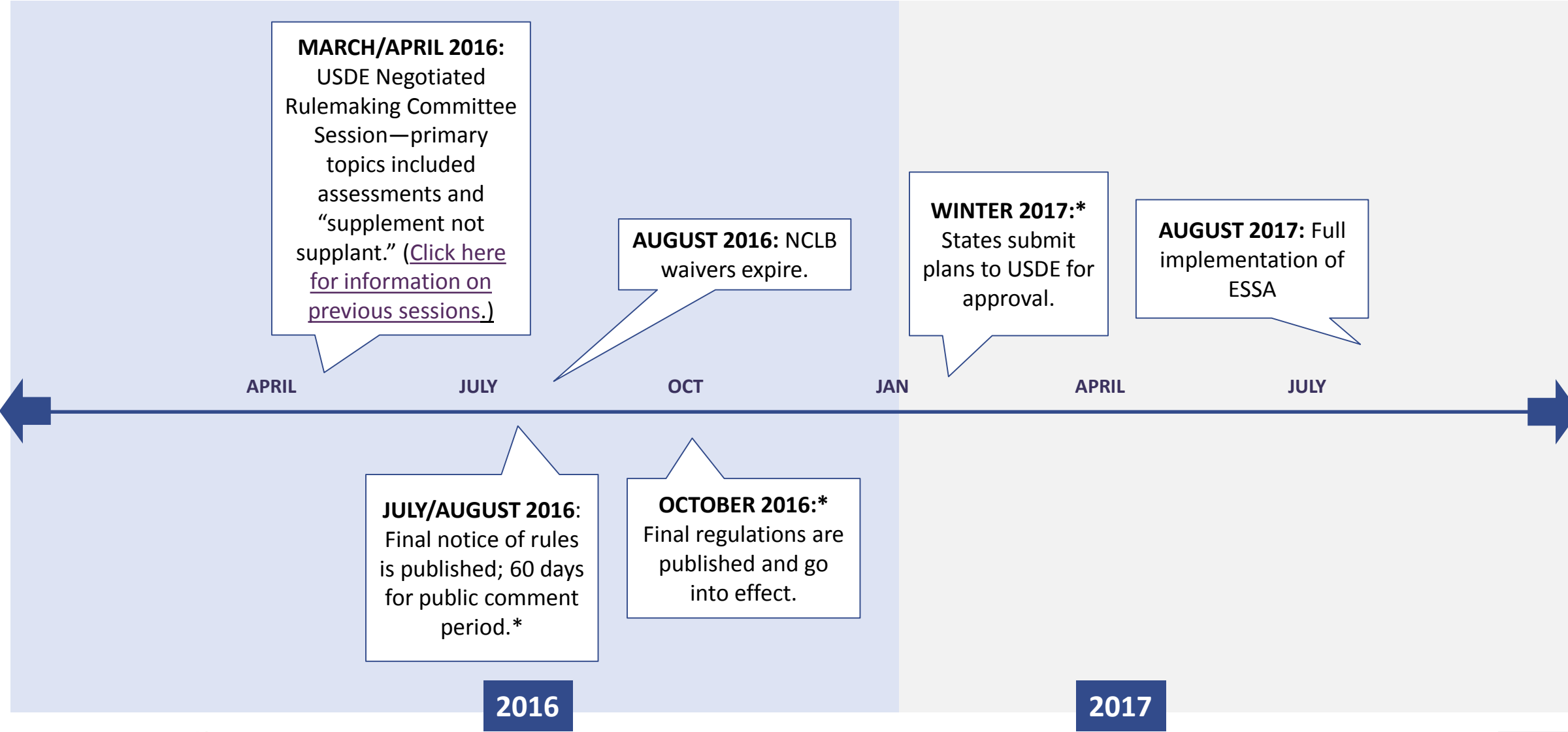
- Design their own school ratings and decide how to determine the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools
- Innovate with assessment options, such as using computer-adaptive assessments, interim assessments that roll up to a single score or performance assessments
- Choose the ACT or SAT instead of a separate state high school assessment
- Decide how to evaluate teachers



Many requirements: SEA leaders must...

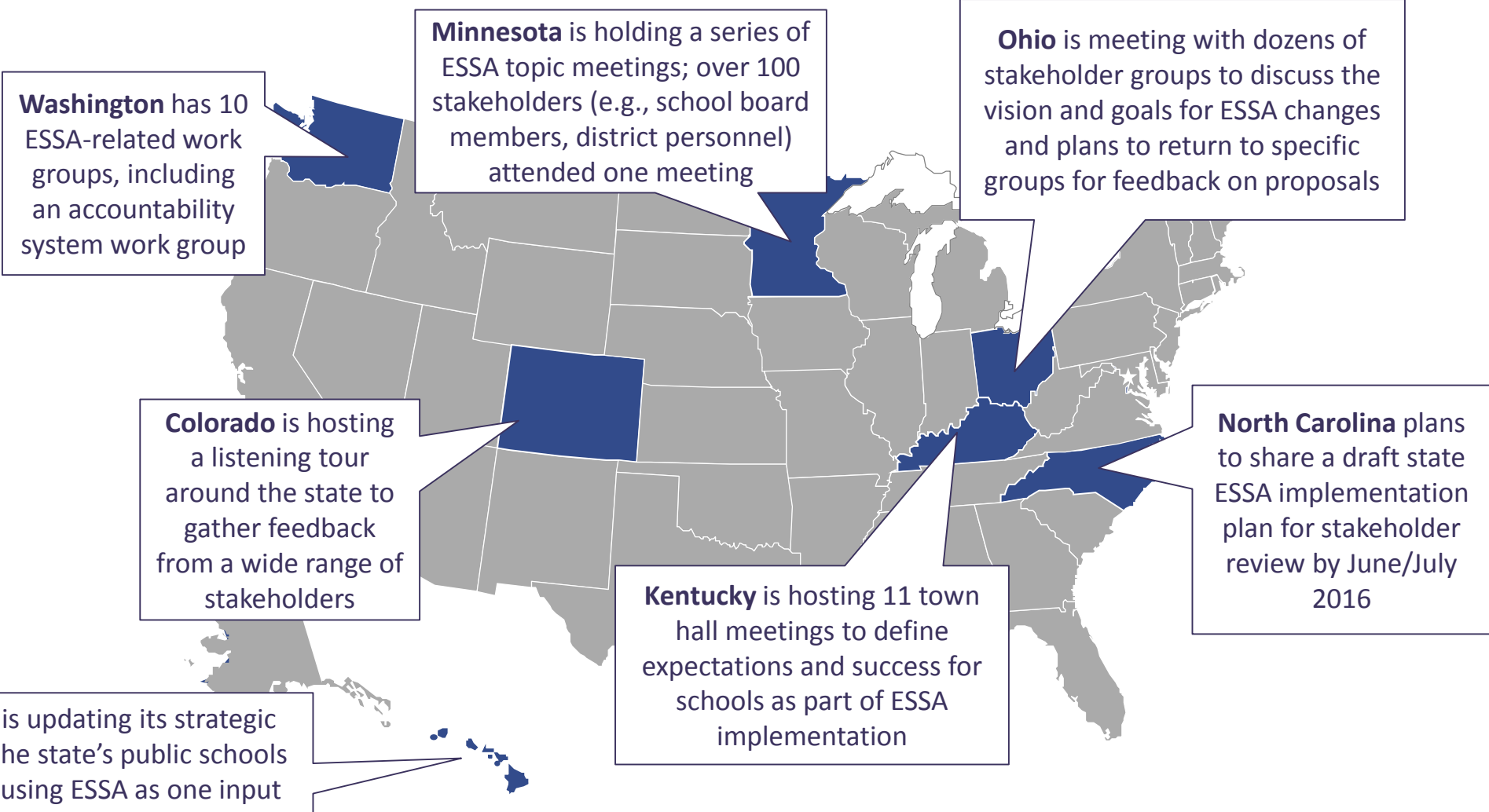
- Report results for more student subgroups
- Continue to have 95% state test participation
- Identify the lowest-performing schools, approve locally-developed improvement plans and monitor their progress
- Report data on the distribution of effective teachers
- Consult a prescribed list of stakeholders when developing their plans

States have just a year to set a strong vision, engage stakeholders and design ESSA plans for implementation beginning in school year 2017–18.







*Estimated dates. See a more detailed timeline from ASCD [here](#) and USED’s more [detailed ESSA transition guidance](#).

Many states have already started seeking stakeholder input into ESSA plans. Here are a few examples:*



*See appendix to learn about the work of additional states.

To make the most of ESSA, we recommend defining or re-asserting your state’s “North Star” vision and priorities as a first step.

-  **Avoid the compliance mentality.** Lead from your big vision for improving teaching and learning—make that your **North Star**—rather than starting with what ESSA requires or allows.
-  **Don’t innovate for innovation’s sake;** take advantage of new flexibilities only when they help your state make progress against your vision.
-  Keep the focus on **decisions that improve students’ lives**, not those that make the work of adults easier.
-  Engage stakeholders meaningfully, but **don’t try to get everyone to agree on everything.**

The guidance we provide in *Making the Most of ESSA* can help you take the reins and drive forward your own state vision.

ESSA planning in Delaware, Hawai'i and Wisconsin is guided by each state's North Star vision for education success.*



Delaware's statewide vision is "Student Success 2025, an education that prepares every Delaware child for success in 2025." State leaders see ESSA as an opportunity for policy alignment toward this vision, which the plan calls its North Star.






Hawai'i's statewide goal is "55 by '25": 55% of adults will earn a college degree by the year 2025. State education leaders are updating their strategic plan with ESSA in mind, still aiming for this statewide goal.



Wisconsin's statewide vision is "Agenda 2017—every child a graduate, college and career ready." State leaders aim to increase graduation rates to 92%, close achievement gaps and make school finance more equitable and transparent.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

What's the work ahead?

-  **States:** Approach “engagement” differently to ensure stakeholders feel heard, informed and involved. Roll out a strategic approach that enables input from a wide range of stakeholders.
-  **Districts:** Collaborate on plan design with your SEA and urge community members and teachers to participate.
-  **Funders & Advocates:** Encourage grantees and partners to get involved and seek opportunities to contribute.

Key Provisions: ESSA requires states to engage with a multitude of stakeholders to inform decision-making



Stakeholder
Engagement

ESSA requires states to **engage in and provide evidence of “meaningful consultation”** with a **variety of stakeholders** in virtually every major state-level decision.*

- A variety of **local education agencies**:
 - ✓ **Geographically diverse**—suburban, rural and urban
 - ✓ Serving a high percentage of schools identified for and those implementing **comprehensive support and improvement plans**
- **Charter school** leaders
- **Teachers, principals**, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals and other staff
- Representatives of **early education organizations**
- **Parents and families** of students of all ages
- The **Governor**, members of the **state legislature** and **state board of education**
- Representatives of **American Indian tribes** located in the state
- Teacher and school leader **professional standards, certification and licensing** organizations
- Individuals, organizations or partners connected to related **strategies, programs and activities** being conducted in the state

***CCSSO's** [*Let's Get This Conversation Started*](#) guide for stakeholder engagement can help.



SEAs AND STAKEHOLDERS?

Approach “engagement” differently to ensure stakeholders feel heard, informed and involved.

Old Approach

Field questions

Cursory engagement done after decisions are made

No follow-up

Let others define the message

New Approach

Have a dialogue

Authentic, deep engagement done in time to inform decision-making

Clear follow-up that lets stakeholders know how their input was used

Own the message



SEAs AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS?

Roll out a strategic approach that enables input from a wide range of stakeholders.

- **Assign key staff to develop, carefully implement and monitor** an effective stakeholder engagement strategy. Don't let this be "owned" solely by the Communications Director; the Chief or Deputy driving your overall planning should be deeply involved.
- Create a **guiding coalition of stakeholders** to help during the initial planning. Aim to **turn new connections into long-term relationships** to inform implementation and to build and maintain support for the plan over the coming years.
- **Prepare your guiding coalition for "meaningful engagement":**
 - ✓ Clearly articulate your state's stakeholder engagement approach early in the process.
 - ✓ Define the role of stakeholders and how they can participate.
 - ✓ Be clear about what is on—and off—the table for discussion.
 - ✓ Work with coalition members to define and refine your state's North Star early on, and refer back to this vision regularly.
- Identify **ambassadors** who are already trusted and respected by stakeholders to connect with groups with whom the SEA is not closely tied.
- **Create effective communication channels and engagement formats** to gather feedback, share back what the SEA has heard, and let stakeholders know how their input will inform plan development.
- Work with stakeholders to **identify what is most important for their students and schools**; collaborate on developing or confirming your **state's vision for an effective school system** with the goal of crafting a plan over which everyone feels ownership and can collectively support.
- **Don't get stuck in the weeds**—be clear, transparent and concise, providing stakeholders with only the information most relevant to them.
- Select stakeholders who will come with **solutions and thoughtful feedback**.
- **Go beyond the usual suspects** to identify new stakeholders and partners that represent all communities, including those left off the required list—like the business community and communities of color.
- **Keep your internal team informed** through formal and informal meetings and information sessions.

What's the work ahead for...



Stakeholder Engagement



SCHOOL SYSTEMS?

Collaborate on plan design with your SEA and urge community members and teachers to participate.

- **Gather feedback from your own community** and share it with your SEA.
- Identify the **most important things your state can do—or not do—to support LEAs in delivering results for students** in districts, schools and classrooms.
- **Identify current strengths, barriers or challenges** that a new plan could build upon or address.
- **Contribute solutions and thoughtful feedback** to inform a cohesive state plan that can be implemented well at the local level.
- **Work in coalition with other LEAs** to influence deliberations and inform decision-making.
- **Urge parents to participate** in statewide stakeholder conversations, surveys and feedback.






FUNDERS & ADVOCATES?

Encourage grantees and partner organizations to get involved and seek opportunities to contribute.

- Help states consider the **non-negotiables to hold onto** during this process.
- **Help your grantees figure out the best ways to get involved** with state and district ESSA planning.
- Consider providing resources to support **bringing in an outside organization** to help your SEA lead a meaningful, wide-reaching stakeholder engagement process.
- **Keep equity at the forefront** of the conversations about ESSA design and implementation by calling attention to the needs of subgroups of students.
- **Seek opportunities to contribute** to and **encourage members of your community to participate** in stakeholder conversations.
- **Push for transparent and inclusive conversations** about ESSA design and implementation.

STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

What's the work ahead?

-  **States:** *Consider the quality of your state standards and tests. Look for opportunities to innovate and improve.*
-  **Districts:** *Build your educators' ability to teach to higher standards and use data from all types of assessments.*
-  **Funders & Advocates:** *Combat opt-outs and ensure assessments are fewer, better and more meaningful.*

Key Provisions: ESSA enables increased alignment, variety and innovation for standards and assessments



Standards and Assessments

1

REINFORCES ALIGNMENT FROM K–12 TO POSTSECONDARY

- States must still have K–12 academic standards, but **now standards must align with entrance requirements for credit-bearing coursework** in their public higher education systems **and the state’s career and technical education standards.**
- **English-language proficiency standards also must align** with the state’s academic standards.
- States may still adopt **alternate standards for students with the most significant disabilities**, but the standards must now lead to students’ college or career readiness.

2

ENCOURAGES MORE VARIETY IN STATE ASSESSMENT TYPES

- State flexibility to **choose a variety of assessment types** within their required system of annual summative assessments—including relying more heavily on performance assessments, combining interim assessments, and making ACT or SAT part of their system at high school—is reiterated (and encouraged).
- **BUT, requirement remains for statewide annual assessment** of at least 95% of students in grades 3–8 and HS for math/language arts and once each in ES, MS & HS for science.
- Indicators for school success now include **reporting on the progress of English learners toward English proficiency.**

3

ENCOURAGES ASSESSMENT INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT

- Seven states (or groups of states) will have the opportunity to **pilot “innovative assessment systems,”** which can include competency-based, performance-based, and other types of assessments in select districts.
- All states and districts have the opportunity (and now funding) to create more streamlined systems of high-quality assessment—within the law’s annual testing requirements for grades 3–8 and high school—by **conducting assessment audits and streamlining tests.**



SEAs AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS?

Consider the quality of your state standards and tests.

- What work, if any, do you need to do with **higher education leaders and employers to confirm your state standards really do align** with college and career expectations? Find out if these groups value your state tests.
- **Verify whether state tests signal the classroom instruction you expect** by truly measuring critical thinking, problem-solving and writing. If you're not sure, commission an outside validation study to identify any gaps.
- **If you're considering SAT or ACT** in place of your current HS state test, **carefully weigh the pros** (nationally recognized, accepted by colleges, fewer HS tests) **and cons** (outside of state control, not designed to measure HS learning, possible lack of alignment to state standards).
- Remember that **annual state testing is still the backbone of federal law**: while individual parents may opt out of state testing, states remain accountable for maintaining a 95% participation rate. Take responsibility for encouraging students to “opt in,” support districts in maintaining participation and step in when they falter, and **work proactively to streamline duplicative state and local testing**.

Look for opportunities to innovate and improve.

- Coming on the heels of a transition to a new state test in most places, **ESSA's new flexibility could be viewed as “yet another change”** and destabilize progress. Scrutinize whether your goals for improving assessment strategies are best accomplished through the Assessment Pilot, or whether the existing flexibility under ESSA to evolve your approach is good enough. [CCSSO](#) has great tools to help.
- Use ESSA flexibility to **explore new assessment approaches that make sense in your state context**: could you add more performance items to state tests in any subject areas, for example?
- **Think strategically about funding for local assessment audits**. Focus review criteria on high-quality systems of assessment and eliminating state/local overlaps—not simply on cutting the longest tests. Give districts tools ([Achieve](#) and [Education First](#) both have extensive free resources). Look to lessons from CT, DE, IL and NY.

What's the work ahead for...



Standards and Assessments



SCHOOL SYSTEMS?

Build your educators' ability to teach to higher standards and use data from all types of assessments.

- Don't let up on efforts to **support teachers' instructional practices to meet the demands of college/career-aligned standards**: focus on effective adult learning, grade-level content and choosing high-quality teaching materials. Find more advice [here](#).
- **Help educators use all the data** assessments generate, including data from summative tests.
- **Eliminate any reliance on traditional "test prep,"** which doesn't work on tests measuring skills needed for college and careers.
- Seize the opportunity to **audit and streamline your own assessments**: How many different benchmark, diagnostic and interim tests are used in your district, and why? Which are higher quality? Which give the best information to educators, parents and students? Genuinely engage educators and parents in these reviews and answer these questions. These free resources from [Achieve](#) and [Education First](#) can help.






FUNDERS & ADVOCATES?

Combat opt-outs and ensure assessments are fewer, better and more meaningful.

- **Discourage opting out**: Provide accurate and persuasive information to parents and educators about the value proposition for state tests. These [new videos and tools](#) for advocates can help.
- Research and frame solutions to **help fix the problem of too many HS tests**. Each test has trade-offs—publish pros and cons of each.
- Keep shining a spotlight on state testing in particular to **insist on high-quality tests that accurately reflect state standards**—and ask state leaders to prove it. Consider convening teacher review panels.
- **Offer support to districts** trying to organize assessment audits to streamline testing.
- Advocate with state leaders for better data systems and **faster turnaround of summative test results** so that educators can use these data.
- Continue to actively **support strategic teacher development efforts at the state and district levels—and demand evidence** that these activities are effective at helping teachers improve their practice.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

What's the work ahead?

-  **States:** *Start with your North Star—then consider indicators and design school ratings. Incent schools to help all students achieve college and career readiness. Empower districts by giving them control over some indicators. Help low-performing schools attract and retain great teachers and principals.*
-  **Districts:** *Help develop your state's North Star. Engage teachers, principals, families and others in school improvement.*
-  **Funders & Advocates:** *Advocate for school ratings and indicators that drive equity. Provide political cover for changes.*

Key Provisions: ESSA drives state ownership of achievement goals, ratings indicators and supports



Accountability and School Improvement

1

STATES SET THEIR OWN ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

- No more “100% proficient” with annual targets: **states set their own goals from their own starting points.**
- No more AYP: states are required to set **statewide, long-term goals and interim progress targets** for improving outcomes **for all students and each student group** (e.g., race/ethnicity, income, students with disabilities, English learners, homeless, foster and military youth).
- States set **four-year cohort graduation rate goals** with interim progress targets. States may set higher extended goals.

2

STATES CHOOSE INDICATORS FOR SCHOOL RATINGS

- States **choose at least 4 indicators**, with the first 3 getting a “substantial” and, collectively, “much greater weight” than the 4th:
 1. **Academic achievement**—including at least math and reading proficiency
 2. **Another academic indicator**—must include HS cohort graduation rate; for EMS can be growth
 3. **English language proficiency** for English learners
 4. **At least one other indicator of school quality or student success**—e.g., postsecondary readiness, school climate, social-emotional learning—that must be valid, reliable and available statewide for all subgroups

3

STATES AND DISTRICTS DETERMINE IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS

- States must identify schools and provide support and intervention to at least 2 categories of schools:
 1. **Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools:** lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools and HS with graduation rates below 67%. Identified every 3 years. **State approves improvement plan.**
 2. **Targeted Support and Improvement Schools:** annual list of schools with one or more student subgroups consistently underperforming on ALL state indicators. Schools in the bottom 5% of subgroup performance for ALL indicators must identify resource inequities. **District approves plan.**



SEAs AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS?

Start with your North Star—then consider indicators and design school ratings.

- Before diving in, consider: **how do we want our school and LEA accountability system to help educators improve outcomes?** What values and priorities do we want our accountability system to embody? What unintended consequences do we want to avoid? CCSSO's [Critical Area Outline for Accountability](#) can help.
- Consider **innovating with indicators in areas that matter to your state, even if the measures are imperfect**, like SEL measures. Choose a coherent set of indicators that encourages the teaching and learning your state values, even if the current measures and data need work.
- Articulate the qualities of high-performing schools, then identify **student success/school quality indicators that are closely correlated with student success**, like equitable access to effective teachers; chronic absenteeism; early literacy in pre-K–2; access to AP/IB/rigorous CTE coursework; or college readiness, enrollment and persistence.

Incent schools to help all students achieve college and career readiness.

- Extend **beyond simple “percent proficient” for achievement**: calculate what percentage of students are at basic, solid, proficient and advanced, and incent schools to move students up to proficient and advanced.
- Consider also using **student growth to standard**—not annual average growth—or students who are behind likely will never catch up to college and career readiness.
- **Differentiate measures and data** to determine school ratings and identify which schools are struggling from data you want to collect to represent a broader picture of school performance or to diagnose problems.
- Be **inclusive but selective**, especially with student success/school quality indicators. ESSA asks states to use *at least one* of these new indicators—that doesn't mean only one. But remember: “if everything matters, then nothing matters,” and schools won't know where to focus.



SEAs AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS?

Empower districts by giving them control over some indicators.

- Because the data schools and systems collect are often richer than what the state can collect, **leave room in your school ratings system for LEAs to choose and report some indicators**. Engaging schools in this way not only helps take into account local context and values, but it also builds stronger support for the system and allows for more innovation. Study a sample approach [here](#).
- Look to **high-quality indicators from leading district accountability systems** as possible statewide indicators. [California's CORE District](#) dashboard is a terrific model for how ESSA-required elements could come together in a new accountability and reporting system.
- Using real data, **model how the entire proposed accountability system will play out for different types of districts and schools**. Select 2–4 partner districts for the modeling. Make the process very transparent to increase stakeholder buy-in.

Help low-performing schools attract and retain great teachers and principals.

- In low-performing schools, **teachers and principals matter most**. Carve out autonomies for great teachers and principals in low-performing schools. Incent and support effective educators to work in low-performing schools and enable distributed leadership in these schools.
- Internally and/or with partners such as regional service centers, **build your capacity** to support districts to place great teachers and principals in low-performing schools, and to adopt evidence-based strategies.
- Research interventions that have worked in your districts and in other states to move schools out of the lowest categories of performance. As schools improve, **maintain the conditions** that helped schools improve in the first place.

What's the work ahead for...



Accountability and
School Improvement

...SCHOOL SYSTEMS?

Help develop your state's North Star. Engage teachers, principals, families and others in school improvement.

- Collaborate with state leaders on your statewide **North Star**.
- Do your homework: What **“evidence-based” supports, services and interventions have proven effective** in your district or similar settings? What strategies do you need for schools with consistently-underperforming subgroups?
- **Adopt school models that incent your best principals and teachers** to work in your lowest-performing schools. Give them autonomy from district policies and practices and work with them to identify needed supports. What state support, funding and flexibility will help?
- Foster **greater engagement and buy-in from teachers, staff** and others in your school improvement strategies.
- **Prepare the school board, staff and school leaders** to communicate effectively about this work, since these leaders will bear responsibility for possibly unpopular interventions.

...FUNDERS & ADVOCATES?

Advocate for school ratings and indicators that drive equity. Provide political cover for changes.

- If this doesn't already exist, **help your state develop a North Star** to guide overall ESSA planning.
- Identify **research-based indicators** (beyond test scores) that show promise for positive outcomes for all students, and especially for the state's lowest-performing students.
- Advocate for **transparency and simplicity** so that school ratings don't mask what's really happening in schools.
- Help your state **take advantage of ESSA's focus on English learners**; promote policies that support bi-literacy for all youth.
- Support states in coming up with rigorous definitions of **“consistently underperforming”** student subgroups and **“evidence-based”** supports and interventions.
- Help states and districts **prepare the school board, the media and other civic leaders** to communicate effectively about why school turnaround efforts, while sometimes painful and messy, are necessary for better schools.

HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATORS

What's the work ahead?

- States:** *Be much more strategic about Title II and teacher leadership. Increase the equitable distribution of teachers. Strengthen your educator evaluation process to help develop teachers, not sort or fire them.*
- Districts:** *Be much more strategic about Title II.*
- Funders & Advocates:** *Help districts and the state take greater advantage of Title II flexibilities and requirements.*

Key Provisions: ESSA drives educator equity, evaluation, preparation and leadership



High-Quality
Educators

1

EQUITY

- ESSA **strengthens the provision that addresses disparities in teacher quality across income groups and ethnicities**. SEAs are now required to report data on teachers' qualifications in high- and low-poverty schools.
- State and district plans must describe strategies to **ensure low-income and minority students are not taught at a disproportionate rate** by ineffective, out-of-field or inexperienced teachers—**with “ineffective” crucially replacing NCLB’s “unqualified.”**

2

EVALUATION

- Under ESSA, the **Secretary may not require teacher or leader evaluations** or define any aspect of evaluation systems and cannot put any parameters around how a state defines “effectiveness.” There is no longer a “highly qualified teacher” requirement.
- While states are not required to implement teacher and leader evaluation systems under ESSA, they **may use federal professional development funds** to do so if their evaluations are based in part on evidence of student academic achievement.
- States that use teacher evaluations will need to **review, use and report on evaluation data to demonstrate equitable access** to “effective” teaching.

3

PREPARATION AND LEADERSHIP

- **Professional development funding expands** to include a range of teacher and leader improvement activities: preparation and certification, incentive programs, subject-matter PD and technical assistance
- States can use up to 2% of their Title II funds for new **teacher “academies” designed to prepare excellent teachers for schools serving high-need students**. Operating outside state regulations and colleges of education, academies must focus on clinical preparation and issue credentials only when teachers show an impact on student learning.
- Title II dollars can also now be used for **teacher leadership** activities.



SEAs AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS?

Be much more strategic about Title II and teacher leadership. Increase the equitable distribution of teachers.

- Instead of using Title II funds just to reduce class size or for professional development, develop **stronger guidance about evidence-based professional learning** for districts.
- Use 2% of total state Title II funds to **create educator development academies**, like teacher residency programs. **Partner with school districts** to strengthen teacher preparation ([this roadmap](#) can help).
- **Apply for Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund** (formerly TIF) grants to support performance-based compensation systems and innovative approaches to evaluation, career ladders and school-leader autonomy.
- Adopt a **rigorous statewide definition** of teacher leadership, incent more **innovative teacher leadership models** and more **effective principal training** and support for your districts.
- **Build upon your existing educator equity plan.** Use effectiveness ratings if your current evaluation model accurately identifies effective teaching.

Strengthen your educator evaluation process to help develop teachers, not sort or fire them.

- Increase the **quality of evaluation implementation and feedback to teachers.** Insist on high-quality training for all evaluators on effective feedback, support and professional learning for teachers. Expand the evaluator pool to include other instructional experts, such as peer observers and literacy coaches.
- Maintain student growth data, but **vary the weights and measures** for educators in different subjects, grades and roles. Consider **growth measures that better match teacher subject areas**, such as student surveys, student learning objectives (SLOs), performance tasks, portfolios and evidence collections.
- If your evaluation model is working well, engage teachers, principals and other stakeholders to build more political support for your **implementation timeline and inclusion of student growth measures.**
- Get more ideas from leading districts and states [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

What's the work ahead for...



High-Quality
Educators

SCHOOL SYSTEMS?

Be much more strategic about Title II.

- Reallocate Title II dollars away from class-size reduction and toward effective and **high-quality professional learning**.
- Allocate additional Title II dollars to **recruit and hire excellent teachers**, particularly in schools serving the highest-need students.
- Build **systems of feedback and support** ([this roadmap](#) from Education First can help) to provide your teachers with useful and timely feedback on practice.
- Consider applying for **Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund** (formerly TIF) grants, which continue to support performance-based compensation systems and innovative approaches to evaluation, career ladders and school-leader autonomy—either individually, with partner districts or through a state-supported application.

FUNDERS & ADVOCATES?

Help districts and the state take greater advantage of Title II flexibilities and requirements.

- Take positions and/or develop **high-level guiding principles** for the effective use of Title II dollars in your state and districts.
- Be prepared to **share research and data** highlighting the importance of equitable distribution of teachers in your state.
- When thinking about the equitable distribution of teachers in your state, encourage state leaders to **build upon the equity plans** they developed through the Equitable Access Support Network.
- Offer to **help your SEA with the stakeholder engagement process around teacher quality** (see [here](#) for details).
- Support your state to **monitor educator evaluation implementation and revision** and **build political will** for your state's educator evaluation system. If you don't currently have an ongoing council or advisory group that monitors implementation, consider helping your SEA/state board put a group like this together.

FUNDING FLEXIBILITY

What's the work ahead?

- States:** *Use your guiding vision to reorganize state funds. Push out dollars to LEAs more strategically.*
- Districts:** *Engage community partners and innovate with funding models.*
- Funders & Advocates:** *Help ensure dollars go to effective programs.*

Key Provisions: ESSA provides funding flexibility, transferability and new pre-K and teacher quality support



Funding Flexibility

1

INCREASED FLEXIBILITY

- The Title IV “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant” **rolls funding for 50+ previously distinct programs into one** flexibly-allocated grant.
- The Title I weighted funding pilot allows up to 50 LEAs across the country to apply to **flexibly combine and spend local, state and federal funding**.
- States can **set aside 3% of Title I** funds for LEAs to apply to provide **direct student services (DSS)**.

2

TRANSFERABILITY

- States and districts can now **transfer funds between and into programs**, but not out of programs supporting sub-groups.
- States and districts are **no longer required to itemize expenses for “supplement not supplant”** reporting; they must show compliance only every two years instead of annually.
- For a detailed breakdown of new transferability and flexibility regulations in ESSA, see [this resource from CCSSO](#).

3

PRE-K AND TEACHER QUALITY SHIFT

- The **Preschool Development Grants** through the Department of Health and Human Services aim to **broaden access to early childhood education** through expanded or new state-driven programs that prepare children for kindergarten.
- The Title II teacher quality grant will **increase the weight of poverty rates in allocations** over the next four years, accounting for 80% of the allocation by 2020.



...SEAs AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS?

Use your guiding vision to reorganize state funds.

- **Evaluate your SEA's strengths** (e.g., data tracking, partnering with agencies to delivery pre-K) and **align your SEA's ESSA funding plan** to these strengths.
- **Conduct a financial audit** to pinpoint current funding streams and consider how to **focus funding effectively across the state and across the titles to work toward your North Star**, ensuring that funding plans and activities do not become siloed by title.
- **Consider the 3% Title I set-aside for direct student services (DSS)**, which could fund LEAs to provide wraparound/Integrated Student Services, tutoring or AP coursework; **weigh your state's preparedness to administrate** these funds. [Chiefs for Change](#) provides helpful guidance for the DSS set-aside.
- Engage SEA staff in **trainings to rethink bureaucratic processes for managing title funding** to **emphasize cross-title collaboration** and innovation to support new policies.

Push out dollars to LEAs more strategically.

- **Evaluate which discrete programs have been rolled into the Title IV block grant**; consider how to apply for the block grant to streamline/maintain programs.
- Award **funds to LEAs with an emphasis on innovation—deemphasizing “compliance.”**
- **Weigh the potential impact of fund transfers** to avoid inadvertently diverting funds from underserved students.
- **Help districts strategically implement the new Title II Teacher Quality formula**, which is **based more on poverty rates**. Take steps to expand, streamline or preserve programs that are directly correlated with student achievement, based on your state's anticipated allocation. **Eliminate** programs that are **not backed up by research**, like class size reduction in the upper grades.

What's the work ahead for...



Funding Flexibility



...SCHOOL SYSTEMS?

Engage community partners and innovate with funding models.

- Use ESSA's direct call-out of wraparound services among allowable Title I expenses to **forge partnerships with Integrated Student Services providers that connect students with needed wraparound services**; apply to your SEA to **fund these programs under Title I**, possibly via the Title I DSS set-aside if your SEA chooses to use it.
- Consider your current funding models. **If you already have experience with weighted funding**, you may be well-positioned to apply to USDE for the weighted funding pilot; be sure to **stay apprised of upcoming pilot details**. Current information:
 - ✓ 3-year pilot duration for 50 LEAs
 - ✓ Flexibility to combine federal, state and local funding to better serve low-income students and students with particular needs (e.g., English learners)
 - ✓ Assurance that high-poverty schools receive more per-pupil funding than previously



...FUNDERS & ADVOCATES?

Help ensure dollars go to effective programs.

- Engage with SEAs and LEAs to **advocate for money to be spent more effectively or innovatively** to improve education for underserved students; participate in stakeholder engagement activities to **ensure that new programs (or providers) use a strong evidence base** and will **not inadvertently divert funds away from underserved students**.
- **Consider which new funding opportunities** (e.g., Preschool Development Grants) **fit with your organization's** theory of action and **consider partnering with districts and states to help or co-fund pilots**.

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Appendix: Early ESSA State Actions* (1)

State	ESSA-Related State Action Examples
Alaska	The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development is considering new assessment structures, and will be replacing the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) assessment for the 2016–17 school year.
Arizona	A new law in Arizona allows school districts and charter schools to fulfill the state assessment requirement by choosing from a menu of assessments, including the state produce assessment and options by vendors.
California	The California State Board of Education is currently engaged in a process to create an “evaluation rubric” as part of its work to revamp the state’s accountability system (to replace API). It will include measures beyond test scores and will likely include consideration for high-need students, and other data like suspension rates.
Colorado	In May, Colorado Department of Education staff and other education officials will launch a statewide, seven stop tour to gather the public’s input and feedback on how Colorado should implement vital components of ESSA.
Connecticut	The state unveiled a new accountability system in March that rates schools based on 12 indicators that the Connecticut Department of Education says is aligned to ESSA requirements.
Delaware	The Delaware Department of Education is using their state vision 2025 to craft a plan for ESSA.
District of Columbia	District of Columbia released a draft of its accountability principles and timeline, which is guiding its policy development.
Georgia	The Georgia Department of Education is pursuing a waiver from ESSA requirements that speaking and listening be assessed by the state summative assessment.
Hawai’i	The governor formed a team that will work to develop a blueprint for Hawai’i’s public schools that is consistent with ESSA and will maximize opportunities and possibilities for Hawai’i to transform education. The state plans to hold an education summit as well as town halls to share plans and collect public input.

Appendix: Early ESSA State Actions* (2)

State	ESSA-Related State Planning Examples
Idaho	The Idaho Department of Education announced they will form working groups focused on Idaho's transition under ESSA. The groups will look at specific issue areas including migrant education, English learners, standards and assessment, accountability, educator effectiveness and others.
Illinois	The Illinois State Board of Education is working with the Regional Offices of Education to host a listening tour across the state this spring to give an opportunity to provide feedback on ESSA implementation. There will be a series of eight meetings.
Kentucky	Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt is holding a series of 11 Education Town Hall Meetings across the state to determine how Kentuckians define school success.
Maryland	The Maryland State Department of Education is working with the ESSA Stakeholder Committee to participate in the review of the new law and development of Maryland's ESSA Plan.
Minnesota	The State Department of Education held the first in a series of ESSA topic meetings. Nearly 100 stakeholders from many school boards, district personnel and other associations attended and discussed revamped accountability systems, specifically, the process used to identify schools for improvement or recognition.
Montana	The Office of Public Instruction released guiding principles for the implementation of ESSA.
Nevada	Nevada Superintendent Steve Canavero indicated at the CCSSO annual legislative conference that the state is considering using industry recognized credentials or certificates as an indicator to measure career readiness into their accountability systems.
New Hampshire	The New Hampshire Department of Education will facilitate advisory teams of educators, policymakers, partners and other stakeholders to gather input into the plan design. Each team will focus on specific policy areas.
New Jersey	New Jersey's Department of Education issued a memo in March 2015 outlining several goals for the state's implementation of ESSA

Appendix: Early ESSA State Actions* (3)

State	ESSA-Related State Planning Examples
New Jersey	The Department of Education issued a memo in March 2015 outlining several goals for the state's implementation of ESSA
North Carolina	At the State Board planning and work session, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Dr. Lou Fabrizio presented on ESSA implementation in the state. He highlighted a series of six public hearings (4 in April and 2 in May) around the state on ESSA. North Carolina also plans to have a first draft of the state implementation plan for stakeholder review by June/July 2016.
North Dakota	Superintendent Baesler established an ESSA Planning Committee to develop the state's ESSA plan, beginning in May 2016.
Ohio	Ohio's Department of Education is engaging stakeholders on high level vision for ESSA implementation during February-April. They will follow up with specific stakeholder groups as certain policies develop.
Oregon	The Department of Education released a press release announcing 11 education forums in April and May across the state and inviting all community members to come discuss ESSA. ODE also has appointed four workgroups comprised mainly of district leaders and teachers to develop recommended plans and strategies in the major areas of ESSA.
Pennsylvania	The Pennsylvania State House and Senate Education Committees held a joint hearing on ESSA featuring two representatives from the state's Department of Education.
South Dakota	South Dakota create four policy workgroups to formulate sections of the state's ESSA plan.
Tennessee	Tennessee plans to build off the work outlined in its approved ESEA waiver and its statewide strategic plan lead by its unifying vision – success for all students upon graduation from high school.
Vermont	The Vermont Agency of Education has identified over 40 key ESSA decision points, and has committed to applying the following lenses to its proposed solutions: equity, alignment, efficiency and practicality. The Agency is currently seeking input from stakeholders for several face-to-face discussions and via online public surveys.
Washington	Washington has 10 ESSA-related work groups, including an accountability system work group.

Appendix: References and Acknowledgements (1)

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