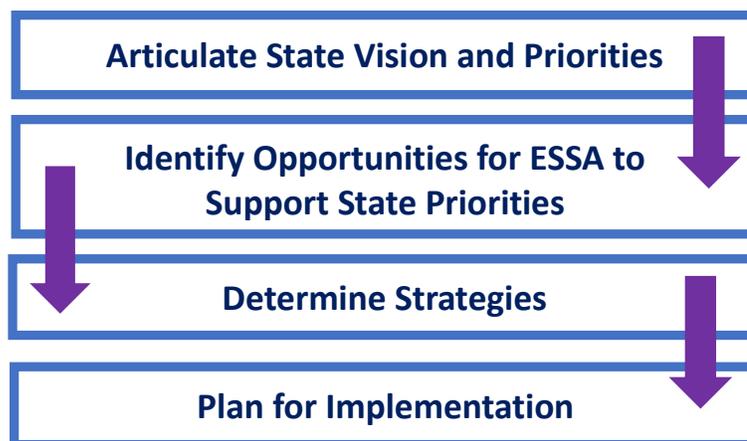


STATE STRATEGIC VISION GUIDE

As the education leader in the state, the Chief State School Officer (Chief) has the great responsibility to ensure all students – regardless of background – get the best possible education so they can pursue college, careers and life. Chiefs took these roles because they had a vision for how that could be done and done better in the state. With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which landed much of the decision-making and responsibility at the state and local levels, Chiefs are presented with not only the opportunity to rethink how they and the state education agency (SEA) they oversee can best meet the needs of students, but the responsibility. Over the course of the next year, state leaders will make a series of policy decisions in response to the new federal law. Before making any of those decisions, however, it is important for Chiefs and their senior leadership teams to think comprehensively about the state’s vision for education and how this federal law will play a role in making that vision possible.

This State Strategic Vision Guide is a consideration for Chiefs as they solidify, reform and enact their vision for their state in the context of increased flexibility now provided in the federal law. The state vision should represent the local context, how improvement in education will best be achieved and input from a wide variety of stakeholders in the state. The following guide presents the elements of a strategic decision-making and planning process. It is divided into four sections, which each contain questions to consider to help state leaders think holistically about policy adjustments while at the same time determining how ESSA can support the State Strategic Vision.



ARTICULATE STATE VISION AND PRIORITIES

Chiefs should think big before diving into the specifics of the new law. Every state Chief and their senior leadership teams are strongly encouraged to first take this opportunity to reexamine their existing vision and aligned set of priorities to determine how ESSA aligns with this vision, if this current vision sufficiently captures the strategic direction of the agency, or if any adjustments should be made prior to the planning and implementation of changes under ESSA.

Questions to consider:

- Do your existing vision and key priorities¹ adequately describe what you are trying to achieve for students?
- What is your theory of action?
 - Do you have a clear theory of “if we do X, then Y will occur”?
 - Is this theory of action tied to your priorities?
- How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the strategies presently in place to achieve that vision for all students?
- Is your state agency structured to effectively implement your vision?
- Do your existing vision and key priorities drive the day-to-day work of your staff right now? If not, what adjustments need to be made to the implementation?
- Have you defined a clear measure of success?
 - How will you know when you have achieved the vision and key priorities?

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ESSA TO SUPPORT STATE PRIORITIES²

Now that each Chief and senior leadership team have articulated their vision and how the Every Student Succeeds Act aligns with that vision, it is important to determine how states will make key decisions around implementing the new federal law. The new law presents many opportunities for Chiefs to work with key stakeholders and rethink how they best serve students, while still holding the state, schools and districts accountable for results. With increased flexibility under the law, states have the freedom to make many new decisions. For example, a state now can determine more innovative solutions to drive school improvement in certain areas, while still making sure these solutions meet the needs of all kids. While there are many parts to the law, CCSSO has outlined seven critical areas that have the most changes through the reauthorization. In each section, CCSSO provides a set of overarching questions the Chief should consider.

¹ For the purpose of this guide, the term vision is defined as the overall aspiration for students, and the term priority is defined as the specific and measurable key areas of focus for the agency.

² *Disclaimer: the questions and considerations presented here reflect the current status of ESSA and may be influenced by future regulations and guidance from the U.S. Department of Education.*

Assessments. Standards and assessments are the foundation for the state accountability system. Getting these elements right is critical, and it is important that stakeholders both internally and externally know the long-term plans as well as the steps that will be taken in the near term to get to the bigger vision. While the assessment elements in ESSA are somewhat more discrete than other parts of the law, the transition to the new law presents state leaders with an opportunity to evaluate the state’s comprehensive assessment system and to contemplate how information from that system helps to achieve the overall state vision. Key questions to consider include:

1. How does the comprehensive assessment system align to the state’s college and career ready standards? Does the alignment extend beyond statewide summative assessments to all assessments that students take at the state and local level?
2. Will the state conduct an audit of the testing system and the time spent on assessments? Will the state set a cap for testing time in the state?
3. What assessments will be given next year? Will they be the same in grades 3-8 as high school?
4. What are long-term plans for the state’s comprehensive assessment system? (See *Innovative Assessment Pilot*)
5. What is the status of the state’s English Language Proficiency standards and an aligned ELP assessment? (See *English Language Learners*)
6. How will data from summative assessments be used in the state’s accountability system? (See *Accountability*)
7. How can data from summative assessments be used to inform instruction and what are its limitations? (See *School Improvement and Supports*)

Innovative Assessment Pilots. Under the new law, the U.S. Secretary of Education can provide states with the authority to rethink what kinds of student outcomes are most valued, and to redesign how state assessment and accountability models more meaningfully measure progress toward those outcomes. States may consider innovative approaches to assessment and accountability that allow for the following:

- Timely and useful data that clearly signals the nature of college and career readiness for students, educators, parents, and policymakers;
- Valid , varied and richer measures of student learning and progress;
- Assessment of a broader set of skills; and
- Advancing shifts toward personalized learning and competency-based education to achieve high learning expectations for all students.

States will have to decide if they want to participate in such a demonstration project if made available. A state may be interested in, applying to be one of seven states to receive the Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority under ESSA Sec. 1204, if the answer is “yes” to most or all of the questions below.

1. Is the state interested in revising its assessment system to include competency-based, instructionally-embedded, performance-based, or other innovative assessments that can be used to demonstrate student mastery or proficiency?
2. Will at least some of these innovative assessments replace statewide summative assessments required under ESSA in years other than high school, and/or will they count as a factor in the state accountability system?
3. Does the state want to first implement these innovative assessments in a smaller number of pilot districts and schools?

4. Does the state anticipate being able to scale the innovative assessment system statewide over the course of 5 years? (Note: states may apply for extensions, but should be clear on how they plan to scale statewide).
5. Does the state have existing structures to engage teachers, parents, and “stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, and other vulnerable children” as you design your innovative assessment system?

Accountability. As state leaders consider the transition to ESSA, there is an opportunity to move from a No Child Left Behind-like model based on measuring, sorting and labeling to a coherent system where information collected is thoughtfully and deliberately tied to desired outcomes based on your state’s unique context. Designing an accountability system should first start with key questions of purpose, including: what are the outcomes the state is hoping to achieve for students, what needs to change to achieve those outcomes and what information does the state need to inform that change? State leaders also will consider how the system helps drive the right actions by students, parents, teachers and administrators. For example, if increasing student performance for students with disabilities is a key priority, what are the indicators that could best drive the change needed? As part of this effort, state leaders will likely want to analyze current accountability systems in the context of the state’s vision to determine what elements they want to maintain and how they want the system to evolve. Key questions to consider include:

1. What is the most important outcome for this system?
2. What parts of the current state system are driving the desired outcomes and what does the state not like/want to change?
3. What are the non-negotiables for the state Chief in the accountability system?
4. What indicators does the state want to emphasize?
5. How does the state accountability system drive the behaviors and instructional practices desired in the state?
6. How will the reported information be used?
7. How is the state accountability system informing the state’s strategy for supports and interventions (please see *School Improvement and Supports* section)?

School Improvement and Supports. The state accountability system will signal to every school their areas of strength and weakness and give districts information about where major interventions in schools need to occur. Based on that, state leaders need to identify the level of support they will provide to districts and schools along the spectrum of need. The new law provides states with significant flexibility to reimagine how to provide supports for low-performing schools, which the law categorizes as comprehensive support³ and targeted support⁴ schools. Key questions to consider include:

1. What is the Chief’s vision for a statewide school improvement and supports system?
2. What has worked and what has not worked in previous state efforts to turn around low-performing schools, and what lessons can be applied to a new school improvement and support system?
3. How will the SEA support and work with districts in this process?

³ Schools identified as the lowest-performing Title I schools in the state, high schools with less than a 67 percent graduation rate, and schools with one or more consistently underperforming subgroups over a number of years.

⁴ Schools with one or more low-performing subgroup.

4. How is the state's teacher and leader development strategy as an agency focused on improving and supporting schools in their targeted areas of need? (please see *Teacher and Leader Development* section)
5. How will the state communicate a sense of urgency for change?
6. How is the state building local capacity to sustain the improvements?

English Language Learner (ELL)/Title III Transition. Many previous Title III standards, assessment, and accountability requirements have migrated to Title I under the new law, even though the Title III program remains in place. For example, the assessment and accountability of English Language Learners (ELL) moved to Title I and must be included in the state's overall accountability system. In order to leverage expertise and efficiencies, states should consider how this affects staffing, coordination and collaboration among Title I and Title III programs within the SEA as well as in local schools and districts. Key questions to consider include:

1. What are the Chief's key priorities for ELL students in the state?
2. How will the state use this opportunity to drive significant improvement in proficiency rates for English Language Learners?
3. How does the state envision ELL's progress and achieving English proficiency factoring into the accountability system, as is now required?
4. Does the state's strategy include changes or modifications to current state policy on ELL standards, proficiency exams, or entrance and exit criteria?

Federal Funds. ESSA provides states with expanded flexibility to better align state education policy objectives with federal funding streams. As a result, states may wish to consider the following:

- More impactful and efficient uses of federal funds;
- Blending and braiding federal funds with state and local funds to provide comprehensive systems of support; and
- Leveraging economies of scale to better serve students with expanded options.

Key questions to consider include:

1. Considering the state's vision and how to achieve that vision, are there ways that federal funding rules can better support this vision and priorities?
2. What parts of the state vision could advance with greater flexibility and new spending options for the following:
 - a. Title I, Part A?
 - b. Title II, Part A?
 - c. Title III, Part A?
 - d. New Student Supports grant program in Title IV, Part A?
 - e. Changes to the Title I supplement not supplant requirements?
 - f. Expansion of the schoolwide program designations?

Teacher and Leader Quality. Under the new law, every state has the opportunity to analyze its current teacher and leader quality initiatives and use ESSA to ensure their education workforce is prepared and supported to deliver on the state's strategic vision and priorities. Key questions to consider include:

1. How will the SEA focus on its highest education workforce priorities with the additional flexibility in Title II dollars, including the new 3% set aside for activities to strengthen school leadership?

- a. Will the agency use Title II dollars for creating teacher and leader preparation academies^[2] for high-need schools?
- 2. Will the state refine or revise its teacher and/or leader evaluation system now that there are no longer federal requirements guiding the design of those systems?
 - a. Will the state use Title II dollars for this work?
 - b. What considerations will guide those efforts going forward?
- 3. How will the state incorporate its equitable access plan into the overall planning and use of ESSA funds?

DETERMINE STRATEGIES

Once the state has established the strategic shifts to the state’s vision and priorities based on the opportunities presented by ESSA, the Chief and senior leadership team should determine a set of coordinated and coherent strategies that will help achieve the vision and priorities. For example, the table below shows how a state might articulate a limited set of strategies to achieve each key priority.

<u>Vision</u>			<u>Overall aspiration for students</u>
Key objective 1	Key objective 2	Key objective 3	What we want to achieve: specific and measurable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy 1A • Strategy 1B • Strategy 1C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy 2A • Strategy 2B • Strategy 2C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy 3A • Strategy 3B • Strategy 3C 	<p>How we will achieve it: programs and initiatives that will achieve the objective.</p>

Key questions the Chief and senior leadership team might want consider as they develop and articulate each strategy include:

- What would success look like for each strategy and by when?
- Can the team describe each strategy in a sentence or less? Can they explain to any audience what that strategy is intended to achieve?
- What is the state’s risk assessment? What are the barriers?
- Do you have a clear plan in place to manage the work, including identifying key staff and partners?
- How will you ensure this vision endures the test of time? What is the plan for continuous improvement?

As the state develops its set of strategies, the Chief and senior leadership team should consider key questions that connect all work related to implementing ESSA, regardless of the critical content area. CCSSO has categorized these key connecting questions by topic: \1) stakeholder engagement, 2) communications and messaging, 3) advocacy and 4) data use and technology.

^[2] Preparation academies must admit students using a rigorous selection process; provide a significant part of their training through clinical preparation that partners the student with an effective teacher or school leader; and awards a certificate of completion (that is recognized as the equivalent of a master’s degree) to a teacher or principal only after he or she has demonstrated effectiveness by increasing student achievement.

Stakeholder Engagement:

Each state should begin constituency outreach *today* to inform key stakeholders about the new law and to begin gathering ideas for implementation. Input is a requirement under the new law, but it also is a good strategy to generate support and create meaningful implementation throughout the process. The process of gathering input also is an opportunity to identify partners who will help implement changes and to communicate about the state’s vision, mission and implementation strategy.

- Does the state have an existing or ongoing coalition, or does one need to be created?
 - If the state needs to build one, has the state considered all possible stakeholders?
 - Examples might include business, philanthropy, civil rights leaders, parents, teachers, school administrators, district administrators, etc.
 - Which foundation and corporate partners work in this area in a state?
 - Has the state engaged civil rights leaders or groups representing traditionally underrepresented students, such as students with disabilities, English language learners and communities of color?

Communications and Messaging:

When a new law passes, teachers, parents, principals, superintendents and legislators want to know, “What’s changing today?” ESSA has been branded as a law that provides tremendous state flexibility, but requirements still exist to which states and local districts must adhere. Both of these issues present a communications and messaging challenge that states should be proactive in discussing with key stakeholders.

- Has the state identified key audiences in which it should communicate about the passage of ESSA and the state’s plan to implement the new law? (Examples: media, legislators, teachers, school administrators, business community, civil rights leaders)
- How will the state communicate with each identified audience throughout the planning and implementation process? Consider:
 - Does the state have a central location for providing updates on the website?
 - How is the state being transparent with the public throughout the process?
 - Has the state established regular updates and/or meetings with key groups?
- Has the state developed key messages for communications within and throughout the state education agency?

Advocacy:

ESSA provides increased flexibility and complex implementation challenges; therefore, advocacy strategies for implementation efforts at the state and federal levels are necessary to ensure successful transition to the new law. Integrating advocacy along with stakeholder engagement activities into early implementation planning will allow state Chiefs to realize their vision.

- Does the state need to make changes to state policy, legislation, or regulation to implement its vision?
- How does the ESSA implementation timeline align with state legislative calendar or State Board meetings?
- Does the SEA, or do local school districts, need additional state resources to carry out the work?
- What areas of the law require clarification from the U.S. Department of Education, and which should be clarified at the state level?

Data Use and Technology Supports:

Data and technology enable the success of an SEA’s policy priorities by supporting the delivery of services and applications. Information collected by SEAs shines a light on student outcomes and supports better decision-making at all levels. The passage of ESSA provides states with an excellent opportunity to think strategically and

holistically about the data implications across program areas and the necessity of technology supports for implementation.

- How will the state's ESSA strategies use data to inform decisions and support better student outcomes?
- What data will the state need to track in order to determine the success of the strategic vision?
- How will the state share data with key stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability?
- What technology supports does the state need in place to deliver on its strategic vision?

PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In some cases, the state will be making significant shifts in critical content areas. The key to successful implementation is solid planning and focused execution. The following are several questions to consider when implementing a new or modified strategy.

Clarity of roles

- Who serves on the coordinating team in your state, both within the state agency and externally among stakeholders? How are the Chief and senior leadership team working across the SEA to ensure a comprehensive approach to implementation, such that areas directly implicated by the law are coordinating and areas that are not explicitly implicated by new ESSA requirements are reflected in those discussions?
- Who will lead the implementation of this strategy for the state agency?
- Who else does the state need to do this work? Consider individuals within the SEA and external to the agency.

Plan

- What are the 5-7 key milestones that must happen to implement this strategy?
- At what scale (statewide, certain number of districts, students, etc.) will the strategy be implemented and when? How will the SEA scale this vision to the entire state?

Timeline

- By what date does the SEA want the strategy fully implemented?
- Are there any federal deadlines (for example, new accountability systems must be in place by fall 2017) that impact your timeline?
 - Could this timeline be leveraged to move the state strategic vision faster?
- Does the state need to consider the legislative session or State Board calendar for this action?
 - If so, what is the last possible time to introduce this policy in the legislature or to the State Board and still be sure it would be enacted that year?

Capacity to implement

- What are the necessary budget and resources needed to implement this strategy, both at the state and local level?
- Do any changes need to be made to the SEA's current structure to implement this strategy?

Monitoring and problem solving

- How will the SEA measure whether implementation is on track?
- How will the SEA ensure that implementation strategies are regularly reviewed and continuously improved?

NEXT STEPS

CCSSO has developed this State Strategic Vision Guide as a consideration for Chiefs and their senior leadership teams as they begin to plan for the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Going forward, CCSSO will provide more detailed support and technical assistance around each of the seven critical areas as well as the important work that connects these areas, such as communications, stakeholder engagement, advocacy and data. In addition, CCSSO will continue to offer individualized state support throughout this process to ensure every Chief and senior leadership team has the tools and resources necessary to successfully implement this new federal law aligned with the state's strategic vision.