

ESSA Plan Rollout:

Taking the Right Approach for Your State

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THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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ESSA Plan Rollout: *Taking the Right Approach for Your State*

Submission of state consolidated plans aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) presents state education agencies (SEAs) the opportunity to communicate with stakeholders—those who participated in consultation and those who may not have—about what is in the plan and how stakeholder input informed the final plan. It also gives SEAs the opportunity to transition the conversation to implementation, what major changes will occur under this new plan and how stakeholders can continue to be involved in the future.

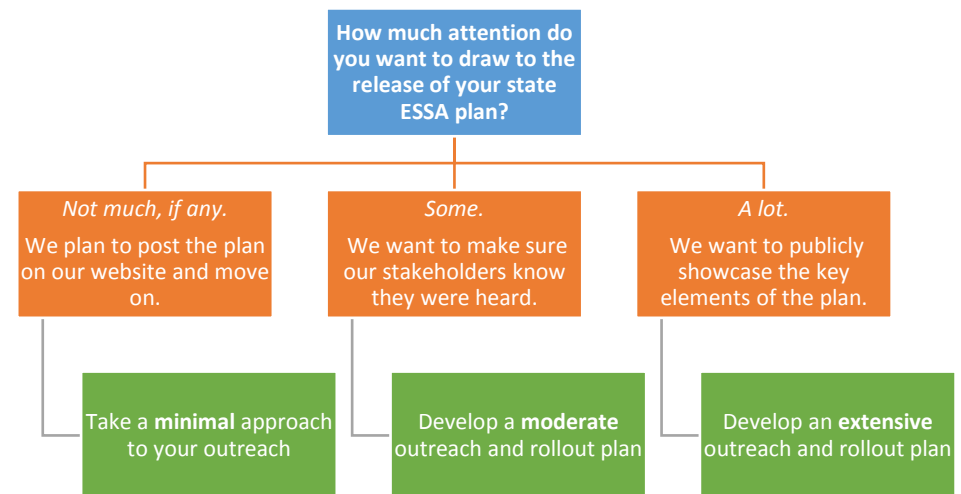
This Guide is designed to help states determine how extensive they want the rollout of their ESSA plan to be, and identify strategies they can use to engage stakeholders before, during and after the release of the plan. It aims to help states think about audiences they should engage, the messages and materials they might develop and how to deliver them. This guide also includes links to examples of communication materials from states that submitted their ESSA plans in spring 2017.

Many of the strategies contained in this document reflect the guidance provided in CCSSO's prior stakeholder engagement publications, [Let's Get This Conversation Started](#), and [Let's Keep This Conversation Going](#).

State agencies should review this guide in its entirety before making a final determination about how extensive they want their outreach to be, and work with the state chief and senior leadership team at the SEA to weigh the pros and cons of creating a minimal, moderate, extensive stakeholder engagement plan, or some combination of these, when rolling out their ESSA plan.

When making this decision, states might consider the following questions:

- How will communications with various stakeholder groups help us advance implementation of the plan and encourage/maintain stakeholder support, particularly if there are any moderate to significant changes in how the state spends funds?



- To what degree does the context of our state dictate how we talk about the impact of federal programs or the opportunity to advance our state’s vision and mission?
- Are there other pressing communication issues, such as the rollout of a new teacher evaluation system or summative assessment, that are more of a priority for the agency to focus its communications at this time?

Based on the response to those questions, consider the differentiation between the minimal, moderate and extensive approach, as detailed below:

Types of State Communication ESSA Rollout Plans

| Plan Intensity | Possible Activities ¹ |
|----------------|---|
| Minimal | Post key documents on state ESSA web page, thank stakeholders for their input and communicate directly to school districts about how the new plan will impact them and what their responsibilities are. |
| Moderate | All of the above plus media outreach, and outreach to key stakeholder groups that participated in consultation, such as education associations and civil rights groups. |
| Extensive | All of the above plus more extensive engagement of stakeholder groups, active use of social media to announce release, explain content and provide links to key documents—such as summaries of state plans, fact sheets and FAQs. Plans might include other stakeholders in media release and provide districts with tools to support media or staff inquiries. |

Regardless of the approach states choose, planning ahead for engagement and outreach activities at all three stages will be important. The charts below detail suggested activities at each stage for states choosing a minimal, moderate or extensive approach.



POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES FOR OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

¹ The list of potential activities is not all-inclusive. There are certainly other activities states can engage or pull from other types of plan. For instance, those states interested in more moderate rollout of plans can certainly use social media as a tool.

The tables below detail an array of minimal, moderate and extensive engagement strategies that states can employ throughout their ESSA plan release and implementation. The strategies are listed under these broad action steps, timed for before, during and after the release of the state plan:

Pre-Release Activities (Beginning 4-6 weeks prior to submission)

- Gather information to support the development of messages and materials for the rollout of the ESSA plan
- Create and prioritize messages
- Create materials that support the messages you want to deliver and highlight the most important elements of the state plan
- Develop an engagement plan to reach targeted audiences
- Begin rollout activities to select stakeholder groups

Release Activities (Day of submission)

- Publicly release the state ESSA plan

Post-Release Activities (Ongoing following submission)

- Prepare for revisions immediately following submission
- Communicate to stakeholders responsible for implementation what they should expect in the coming months
- Begin to engage stakeholders in conversations about implementation

PRE-RELEASE ACTIVITIES

| Gather information to support the development of messages and materials for the rollout of the ESSA plan (4-6 weeks before submission) | | Examples |
|--|--|--|
| Minimal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> List the components of the plan you consider to be most important or that have the biggest changes. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider how the final ESSA plan needs to be communicated directly to all stakeholders. | |
| Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make a list of the portions of the plan that were developed as a result of stakeholder consultation. <input type="checkbox"/> Make a list of stakeholders you want to communicate with about the state’s ESSA plan. Consider parents, educators, school districts, schools, non-profit organizations, teacher preparation programs, civil rights groups, state legislators, civil rights leaders, community organizations and others from whom you gathered feedback during the consultation period. Also consider other potential stakeholders, such as the state’s congressional delegation and the media. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider how the release of the ESSA plan needs to be communicated directly to all stakeholders. <input type="checkbox"/> Make a list of how ESSA funds will help achieve the goals of your state. | For an extensive list of stakeholders, see page 26 of CCSSO’s guide to stakeholder engagement for ESSA plan development and implementation: Let’s Get this Conversation Started. |
| Extensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make a list of any parts of the plan that might be considered controversial or lead to more questions. | |

| Create and prioritize messages (2-3 weeks prior to submission) | | Examples |
|--|---|--|
| Minimal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the message you most want to deliver, whether it is on your state’s ESSA web page or in upcoming presentations from the SEA. This can be as simple as explaining that the state has submitted the plan to the U.S. Department of Education, but consider adding a statement about what you hope to accomplish through ESSA. | Massachusetts’ ESSA page ; Tennessee’s ESSA page |
| Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and prioritize the messages you most want to deliver and make them clear and succinct. <input type="checkbox"/> Share draft messages with key stakeholders to test and refine them. | |
| Extensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Differentiate messages for various stakeholder groups (i.e., the general public vs. the civil rights community vs. education associations). Consider which elements in the plan will be of greatest interest or controversial to different stakeholder groups and develop focused, targeted messages that address those topics. | |

| Create materials that support the messages you want to deliver and highlight the most important elements of the state plan (2-3 weeks prior to submission) | | Examples |
|--|---|--|
| Minimal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create a concise, easy to read, jargon-free overview or executive summary of the state plan. Strive for fewer than 10 pages. <input type="checkbox"/> Create versions of your overview or summary in multiple languages. | <p>Oregon's public-facing summary of final ESSA plan;</p> <p>Massachusetts' executive summary of final state ESSA plan;</p> <p>Michigan's overview of final state plan;</p> <p>Connecticut's two-page fact sheet about the major components of the state's ESSA plan.</p> |
| Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create a PowerPoint that summarizes the plan that SEA staff, stakeholders or district leaders can use for local presentations. Include how stakeholders influenced the final document. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a concise, easy-to-read jargon-free overview or executive summary that shows how stakeholder engagement influenced the final plan. Strive for fewer than 10 pages. <input type="checkbox"/> Create versions of your overview or summary in multiple languages. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a press release announcing the submission of the state plan that includes messages you most want to deliver to the general public. | <p>Tennessee's plan overview that aligns stakeholder feedback received to the details of its final ESSA plan;</p> <p>Tennessee's PowerPoint summary that aligns stakeholder feedback received to the details of its final ESSA plan;</p> <p>The District of Columbia's summary and responses to public feedback on its ESSA plan.</p> |
| Extensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create other communications tools to summarize key elements of the plan, such as an FAQ, fact sheets, talking points, a blog series that the state agency can publish, and/or a video outlining key components of the state plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Have this content reviewed by key stakeholders to ensure the material addresses key concerns and is written in a way that is accessible and culturally sensitive. <input type="checkbox"/> Make these tools available in multiple languages. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a press release announcing the submission of the state plan that includes messages you most want to deliver to the general public. Reach out to key stakeholder groups and ask them to provide a supportive statement for the release. | <p>Oregon's video of a state assistant superintendent providing overview of ESSA plan.</p> |
| Develop an engagement plan to reach targeted audiences (1-2 weeks prior to submission) | | Examples |

| | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| Minimal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a plan to post information on the agency website or ESSA web page and communicate with school districts about key components of the plan, any shifts in responsibilities and details about new expectations. | |
| Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Set up in-person meetings or conference calls with key stakeholder groups to walk through the final ESSA plan and answer any questions before it is released publicly. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the best vehicles to use to communicate with the stakeholders you have identified for engagement. Consider email blasts with links to important documents and in-person or virtual meetings with certain stakeholder groups (e.g., educator associations, civil rights groups). <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the varied methods of communication you will use to deliver messages and materials to each identified stakeholder group: in-person meetings with an expanded list of key stakeholder groups, social media (Twitter, Facebook, blogs), roundtable discussions, personalized emails, webinars and conferences. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask trusted partners to deliver messages and materials to their constituents through their own in-person or virtual communication systems (e.g., education associations, civil rights groups, school districts). | For examples of potential vehicles you can use to communicate with stakeholders, see two stakeholder engagement guides produced by CCSSO: Let's Get this Conversation Started and Let's Keep this Conversation Going . |
| Extensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create talking points and other materials to support trusted partners in delivering messages and gathering input from their constituents. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with key stakeholders who may not have participated in the prior consultation period: additional district leaders, principals, teachers, educator associations, school boards and their associations, civil rights organizations and non-profits focused on equity, business, higher education, parents and parent organizations, state policy-makers and the state congressional delegation. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop sample social media that SEA staff, key partners and stakeholder organizations can use when the plan is released. <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to schedule live or recorded interviews with local radio stations, TV outlets and editorial boards on or after the release date. | |

| Begin rollout activities to select stakeholder groups (1 week prior to submission) | | Examples |
|--|---|----------|
| Minimal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Share your outreach materials internally. Distribute the informational material at staff meetings, make them available online and use them in internal newsletters. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide staff with talking points. Even SEA staff who are not involved in the detailed ESSA planning, such as your transportation or child nutrition teams, spend a lot of time in schools and work closely with district-level staff. They may be approached with | |

| | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| | <p>questions from stakeholders outside of the agency and should feel prepared to answer questions and discuss ESSA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post ESSA summary on state ESSA web page. <input type="checkbox"/> Send thank you email blast to stakeholders that includes a link to the final plan on your ESSA web page. | |
| Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send thank you email blast to stakeholders you consulted; include links to summaries and other helpful documents (fact sheets, FAQs, and documents that show the connection between final plans and stakeholder feedback). <input type="checkbox"/> Hold face-to-face meetings with a handful of key stakeholder groups to walk through the final plan. <input type="checkbox"/> At least one day prior to submission, set up an embargoed in-person meeting or conference call with members of the media to walk through the key components of the plan and deliver key messages. | |
| Extensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hold face-to-face meetings with state union/association affiliates, school board associations, state superintendent and administrator associations and other stakeholders that participated in consultation. Share materials, such as fact sheets and summaries and comparisons between stakeholder feedback and final plans, at these meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide school districts with fact sheets, summaries and other materials in multiple languages to prepare them for media inquiries, questions from their own staff, or questions from parents. <input type="checkbox"/> At least one day prior to submission, set up an embargoed in-person meeting or conference call with members of the media to walk through the key components of the plan and deliver key messages. Include one or two stakeholder representatives in this embargoed release. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with stakeholders to schedule visits to specific communities or schools where your state chief and other stakeholders can talk about the new plan and how it will benefit students. | |

RELEASE ACTIVITIES

| Release state ESSA plan (day of submission) | | Examples |
|---|---|----------|
| Minimal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post full plans and summaries on SEA website or web page if you have not already. <input type="checkbox"/> Send copies of or links to the final plan to stakeholders. | |
| Moderate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post supplementary summary materials (fact sheets, comparisons between stakeholder feedback and final plan, etc.) on the SEA website or ESSA web page. <input type="checkbox"/> Announce the release of the plan through Twitter, Facebook, a blog or other social media devices, providing links to materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide copies of supplementary materials and social media posts in multiple languages. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with stakeholders about the next steps of how they can stay engaged while the plan is under review and throughout implementation. | |
| Extensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make SEA officials –including the state chief—available for media interviews. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify key stakeholders to do interviews with the media and provide talking points, key messages or other preparation prior to interviews. <input type="checkbox"/> Send summaries of fact-sheets to state legislators and state congressional delegation; offer to meet with them at their convenience to discuss implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> Share sample social media posts with stakeholders in advance. <input type="checkbox"/> Notify individuals who attended town hall meetings, focus groups or other engagement activities of the final plan. | |

POST-RELEASE ACTIVITIES

| Prepare for revisions (immediately following submission) | | Examples |
|--|---|--|
| Minimal | <input type="checkbox"/> Consider whether you will post any potential requests for revisions and your responses on your website or ESSA web page. | Massachusetts' public-facing response to USED's request for revisions. |
| Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to plan for how you will communicate potential revisions requested by the U.S. Department of Education and your responses. Identify which audiences you will communicate with and how. | |
| Extensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for how you will respond to any media requests about the requested changes and your responses. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan for how actively you will present both requests and responses through your website or ESSA web page, email blasts to stakeholders or through social media. | |

| Communicate to stakeholders responsible for implementation what they should expect in the coming months (2-4 weeks following submission) | | Examples |
|--|--|--|
| Minimal | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide written communications to educators and other stakeholders (e.g., teacher preparation programs or school boards association) responsible for implementing the plan. Communicate what the state, districts and other stakeholders will be responsible for and when. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to monitor, track and quickly respond to questions that come in over email. | Oregon's two-page "what's next" for ESSA overview Oregon's two-page implementation timeline for key ESSA provisions |
| Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Host in-person and/or virtual meetings for school districts and other key implementers to explain important components of the ESSA plan and what might be different about it (e.g., how the state has set different expectations for ESSA-funded professional development and class-size reduction programs), what district responsibilities are and the timeline for implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a video or PowerPoint presentation for districts to use, detailing key components of the ESSA plan, district responsibilities and timeline for implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with all stakeholders involved in the development of the plan about how they can continue to be involved through implementation at the state, district and school levels. | North Dakota met with school district leaders after their ESSA plan was submitted to walk through the plan and explain district responsibilities. |
| Extensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Host in-person and/or virtual meetings for key stakeholders, identifying key implementation dates, expectations for school districts and future plans to engage stakeholders in a review of implementation of the plan. | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Reconvene working groups that your state agency formed to develop the final plan to share implementation plans. | |
|--|--|--|

| Engage stakeholders in implementation (ongoing) | | Examples |
|---|---|--|
| Minimal | <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to update your ESSA webpage after the state plan is approved and transition the content to focus on implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule and conduct regular meetings to update all internal SEA staff on ESSA implementation and solicit their input. <input type="checkbox"/> Use regularly scheduled meetings with key stakeholder groups (e.g., educator associations, parent groups) to update them on ESSA implementation. | |
| Moderate | <input type="checkbox"/> Continue ongoing ESSA communication efforts (newsletters, email blasts, social media updates—blogs and through Facebook posts) after the state plan is approved and transition the content to focus on implementation. <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule quarterly meetings with key external partners to check in on implementation, hear input from their stakeholders and discuss any upcoming changes or shifts in policy. <input type="checkbox"/> Review your engagement strategies every few months to ensure you are still getting actionable input from, and working with and responding to, a representative array of stakeholder groups. If not, make adjustments as needed. | Connecticut has established stakeholder working groups on key topics and has committed to keeping them engaged at every stage in the ESSA development and implementation process. |
| Extensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Create one or more advisory committees of stakeholders to work closely with the SEA on an ongoing basis to ensure that the needs of their communities are continually met after ESSA implementation begins. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with civil rights and advocacy groups and organizations that represent students with disabilities and/or historically underserved communities to identify members of key stakeholder groups to appoint to ongoing committees that will continue to meet throughout ESSA implementation and beyond. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out new ways to stay engaged with stakeholders, such as making return visits to historically underserved communities and proactively reaching out to them to inform new efforts. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider holding a listening tour in the spring of 2018 so that stakeholders from across the state can give feedback on the implementation of the plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Produce a report on the first year of ESSA implementation. Disseminate through earned media, email, social media, newsletters, webinars, virtual town-halls and/or a live-streaming event. | Wisconsin has created an Equity Council that is supporting the development of their state plan and will remain in place after implementation begins to ensure that the state maintains an ongoing focus on equity. Illinois held an 8-stop listening tour during the spring of 2016 to give stakeholders an opportunity to give feedback during the consultation period of ESSA plan development. |

