Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit

2023

Revision Log

Changes to this document made after March 15, 2023, will be noted in the table below.

| Section	Page	Description of Revision	Revision Date

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Introduction

The Needs Assessment Process

A Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) is a process of examining data to help us identify, understand, and determine priorities that will inform implementation of improvement efforts to address the gap between the current state of a school or a district and the desired state. At the school-level or district-level this process is implemented across five phases. Conducting an effective needs assessment is the first step in the improvement process as it is designed to inform goals, as well as identify strategies and action steps leading to success across all programs (Cuiccio & Husby-Slater, 2018).
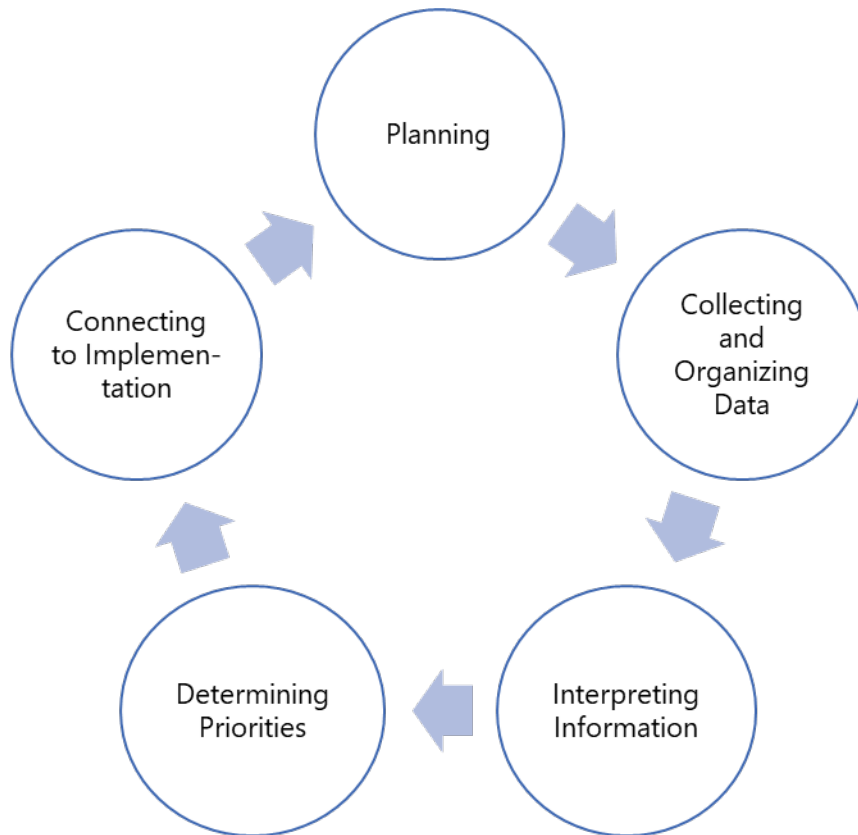
Recommendations from the Needs Assessment Guidebook (2018) for a successful needs assessment process requires four essential elements:

1) **Needs-Driven and Context Specific**—requires the problem, topics, and questions to be addressed are clearly defined, and the design and data inputs of the needs assessment must reflect the local context for the work.

2) **Rigorous Data Analysis**—requires diverse data sets that include multiple data types, reflecting multiple viewpoints, and high-quality data that is collected using valid and reliable methods in order to be deemed clean and trustworthy (error-free).

3) **Stakeholder Engagement**—expects the needs assessment process be conducted collaboratively with local stakeholders rather than completed by a small group of leaders or an outside agency. This means engaging school staff, parents, a diverse assortment of leaders and external support providers (even students at the secondary level) during each phase of the CNA process.

4) **Collaborative Identification of Improvement Needs**—involves stakeholders working collaboratively to identify and prioritize areas of needed focus to inform improvement efforts.

Question: How does the comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) process, and the essential elements of a successful CNA process fit with the **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** framework in Washington state?
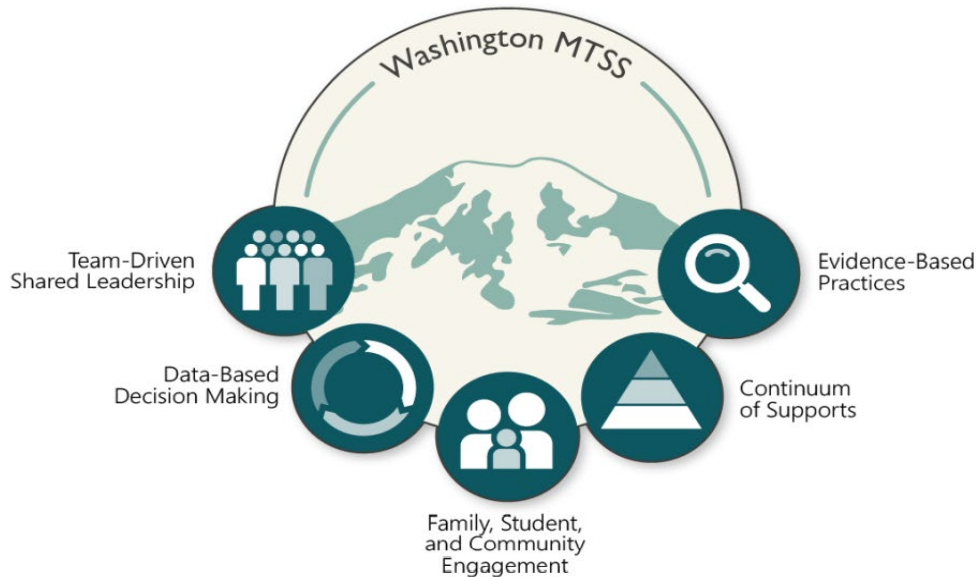

Figure 1. Multi-Tiered System of Supports, from OSPI.

MTSS can provide the structures, processes, and decision-making protocols to help inform a comprehensive needs assessment process, as well as implement actions that result from a needs assessment. "The essential components of MTSS are interrelated, and as the intensity of student need increases, each of the components also increases in intensity. Teams share the responsibility of making decisions in an MTSS framework. These decisions are driven by high quality data, collected over time, from multiple sources. Teams intentionally engage families, students, and community partners to plan, implement, and improve services. Staff and community partners provide a continuum of supports to students through a tiered delivery system, starting with strong core instruction. Staff use evidence-based practices to accelerate student learning across all tiers (Washington's Multi-tiered Systems of Support Framework, 2020, p. 6)."

Question: How do these ESEA requirements for comprehensive needs assessments across major program areas and the essential elements of a successful CNA process fit with the Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol (WISSP) required to be utilized for the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) here in Washington state by September 2025?

The essential components of the WISSP (below), establish the conditions necessary to create inclusive and supportive schools for every child. Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) provide the delivery system through which components of the WISSP are organized and implemented with high integrity.

"These [essential] components are also present in a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework that, when implemented, enables educators and community members to work together to effectively and efficiently address students' needs across multiple domains of learning and development within

one seamless system (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016)" ([Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol](#), 2017, p. 3).

Essential Components of the WISSP:

1.) **Needs (and Strengths) Assessments**—combine student level data from multiple sources along with community health indicators (i.e., poverty rates, insured rates, chronic health conditions, etc.) to be used in the CNA process, where teams seek to determine needs, understand their nature and causes, and set priorities for action.

2.) **Community Partnerships**—are developed between schools, community members, and community organizations allowing for better alignment across learning environments (home, school, and community), while also expanding available resources and access to supports for both students and their families.

3.) **Coordination of Supports**—allow for coordination of interventions to be implemented early and adjusted as needed in real time. This coordination also provides adequate support for staff in such areas as professional learning, team planning time, policies, and operating procedures, helping to bring cohesion to instruction and student supports.

4.) **Integration of Supports**—involves school leadership, supported by district leadership, working to ensure that services, supports, strategies, programs, practices, and resources are woven together and integrated into the daily functioning of the school.

5.) **Data-driven**—necessitates accurate and reliable data is gathered from multiple quantitative and qualitative sources in a timely manner, is analyzed to inform support planning and adjustments, and these supports are evaluated across tiers to ensure student- and system-level goals are being achieved.

Why Conduct a Needs Assessment?

"A successful needs assessment leads to actionable priorities and meaningful, long-term change. Achieving these results requires more than just one or two people completing a form behind closed doors; it requires active and meaningful engagement of all concerned stakeholders in a process to examine, identify, and diagnose the challenges that need to be addressed for improvement to occur" (Cuiccio & Husby-Slater, 2018, p. 5).

Additionally, the need to equip school district personnel with the tools and skills to complete the CNA process well goes to the goal of moving from mere compliance activities for school improvement to increasing competence for engaging with data and information intentionally, leading to continuous improvement activities that positively impact the lives of all of our students.

Compliance — Have to Do

Competence — Know how to do better

Continuous Improvement — Have a burning desire to improve

The phases of the comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) process outlined by the Cuiccio & Husby-Slater, (2018)—Planning, Collecting and Organizing Data; Interpreting Information; Determining Priorities; and Connecting to Implementation—are activities that facilitate the examination of data to determine priorities that inform the creation of "plans" that guide the actions that schools will engage in to ultimately impact student achievement. Best practice activities that occur within each of these phases are consistent with principles of Improvement Science (Bryk, et. al, 2015). If we are to move beyond mere compliance for creating school improvement plans toward creating plans that are substantive and impactful, then learning how to do this process well is crucial for all schools.

The "external mandate" to create a school improvement plan (SIP) for all Washington state schools comes from state requirements, including WAC180-16-220(2)(b), that hold the expectation for data inquiry activities to include the review of disaggregated data at multiple levels, among other requirements. However, many schools are also under external mandates to engage in the comprehensive needs assessment process to meet federal requirements that involve similar obligations for data inquiry activities, including reviewing disaggregated data at multiple levels through active participation of numerous stakeholders such as building staff, parents, students, and community members. Because various mandates hold the same requirements, it is therefore desirable to coordinate these processes across programs to fulfill multiple mandates at the same time. It is hoped that this coordination of efforts to develop and implement a comprehensive support and improvement plan for each school will lead to improved student outcomes for **all** learners.

Examples of annual federal requirements for engaging in the comprehensive needs assessment process include such programs as Title I, Part A for Schoolwide (SW) schools, and Title I, Part A for Targeted Assistance (TA) schools desiring to move from a TA to a SW program; Title I, Part C for the education of migratory children; and Title IV, Part A for student support and academic enrichment. Examples of federal programs that strongly recommend periodic review include Title II, Part A for supporting effective instruction, and Title III, Part A designed for English language acquisition and language enhancement. Programs such as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the Head Start Act also have needs assessment requirements. Some of the requirements are explicitly set out and described in detail in statute, while others imply receipt of funding will be dependent upon the identification of existing needs and the strategies that will be implemented to address these needs. Therefore, this resource is meant to provide guidance for a coherent process that can be used for multiple purposes so that data and information gathered and used for one program requirements can be utilized for various other program requirements.

Needs Assessment Requirements for Schools/Districts across Programs

Title/Program	Requirement	Section
Title I, Part A Schoolwide	CNA at school level	ESEA 1114(b)
Title I, Part A Targeted	CNA Strongly Recommended at school level; however, CNA process required to move from Targeted to Schoolwide program	ESEA 1115(e)(2) ESEA 1114(b)(1)(A)
All schools, Schools identified for improvement supports (Tier 3 Plus, Tier 3, Tier 2), Targeted Assistance Schools	Not just schools identified for improvement and Targeted Assistance schools, but **ALL** schools in WA state must complete a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that is "data driven"	ESEA1111(d)(1)(B) and WAC180-16-220(2)(b)
Learning Assistance Program (LAP)	CNA Strongly Recommended; however, use of WISPP required for LEA beginning September 2025	HB1208(2021)
Title II, Part A/Title III, Part A	CNA Strongly Recommended for LEAs to periodically review and revise	ESEA 2102(b)(3) (A-B) and 3115(g)(4)(C)
Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grants	Any school district or consortium of school districts that receive an SSEA award in the amount of $30,000 or more must complete a CNA prior to receiving its allocation, once every three years	ESEA 4106(c)(1) & (d)(1-3)
Title IV, Part F: Promise Neighborhoods Program	While the term "needs assessment" doesn't appear in the text, it does require applications for Promise Neighborhoods funding to include an analysis of the needs and assets of the neighborhood covering several specific details	ESEA 4624(a)(4)
Title IV, Part F: Full-Service Community Schools (Community Support for School Success)	To apply for funding for full-service community schools, an eligible entity must submit a CNA as part of their plan	ESEA 4625(a)(4)(B)
Head Start Act and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	Head Start requirement every few years depending upon program. CNA required for LEAs with Title I, Part A funds for determining homeless set-aside amount	ESEA 2223(b)(3) and 9102(f)(4)(A-E) ESEA 1113(c)(3)(C)(i)

About this Resource

This document is intended to be a guidance resource that can be utilized to meet overlapping requirements found in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) that expect completion of a CNA in several areas across major programs in the law. Washington state also has various program requirements that can be met utilizing this resource. This document is intended to

set out the "why" and the "what" to do within the CNA process. The "how" can be tailored within individual programs to meet specific needs and requirements.

Utilization of this document is intended to support the following outcomes:
- Guidance for conducting one Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) that meets multiple federal and state program compliance requirements
- Coordination of federal and/or state programs
- Efficient use of time
- Facilitation of a culture of continuous improvement

Completing the Needs Assessment Process

Comprehensive Needs Assessments are contextual and based on the needs of the learning community. The phases outlined below are a recommendation of how to approach the process and outlines the big picture needs for completing a comprehensive needs assessment. Each phase is broken down with activities and guiding questions to help guide and support your learning community through the process.

We have provided some additional differentiated guidance based on the identification and purpose for your learning community for completing the Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Please refer to the Table of Contents and Appendices for additional details.

Phases of a Continuous Needs Assessment (CNA) Process
(Adapted from State Support Network, Implementation Path Handout—March 1, 2018)

- ➢ **Planning:** Determine the purpose and intended outcomes of the CNA process. Decide which central guiding questions the needs assessment should address. Identify relevant stakeholders.
- ➢ **Collecting and Organizing Data:** Organize readily available data from existing sources. Determine and collect additional needed data. Decide on the method of presentation of data.
- ➢ **Interpreting Information:** Uncover what individual data sources say about guiding questions. Crystalize themes. Investigate areas of stakeholder disagreement and causes of disagreement. Articulate findings for stakeholders without casting blame.
- ➢ **Determining Priorities:** Conclude what findings and themes will have the greatest impact (if addressed). Consider if there is additional data that should be reviewed. If so, gather and review additional data.
- ➢ **Connecting to Implementation:** Use the results to create meaningful, long-term change. Collect additional information about identified priorities. Investigate root causes of priorities. Reflect on the progress of improvement efforts.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment and the Continuous Improvement Cycle

Connecting the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) Process to Improvement Science Principles within a Multi-tiered System of Supports

The following is an excerpt from the Needs Assessment Guidebook (Cuiccio & Husby-Slater, 2018, p. 21).

"The continuous improvement cycle is typically signified as the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle (Deming, 1986; Shewhart, 1931, in Metz, 2015). The four pieces of a continuous improvement cycle are: 1. Specify the plan that helps move service and interventions forward (including selecting evidence-based strategies and regular progress checks to assess implementation). 2. Focus on facilitating the implementation of the plan. 3. Engage in assessment processes to understand and evaluate how the plan is working (including evaluating fidelity of strategy implementation). 4. Make changes to the next iteration of the plan to improve implementation (Metz, 2015). The findings from the needs assessments represent the foundation on which to build a sustainable continuous improvement cycle. A needs assessment, when conducted with the other steps of a continuous improvement process, can lead to improved outcomes for students (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Within the context of district and school improvement, this includes examination of root causes, selection and implementation of evidence-based strategies, and evaluation of the effectiveness of those strategies at producing desired improvement outcomes. Because effective improvement requires commitment to action, assessment, and ongoing adjustment, employing the elements of a successful needs assessment throughout implementation can support periodic data reviews to assess progress."

The following is a visual example of the above description of the Plan-Do-Study-Act process and has been prepared and shared by Stephanie Andler, NCESD 171, to help school teams understand how the CNA process fits within the MTSS framework, utilizing Improvement Science principles of data review, root causes analysis, priority goals, and short-cycle implementation and review processes.
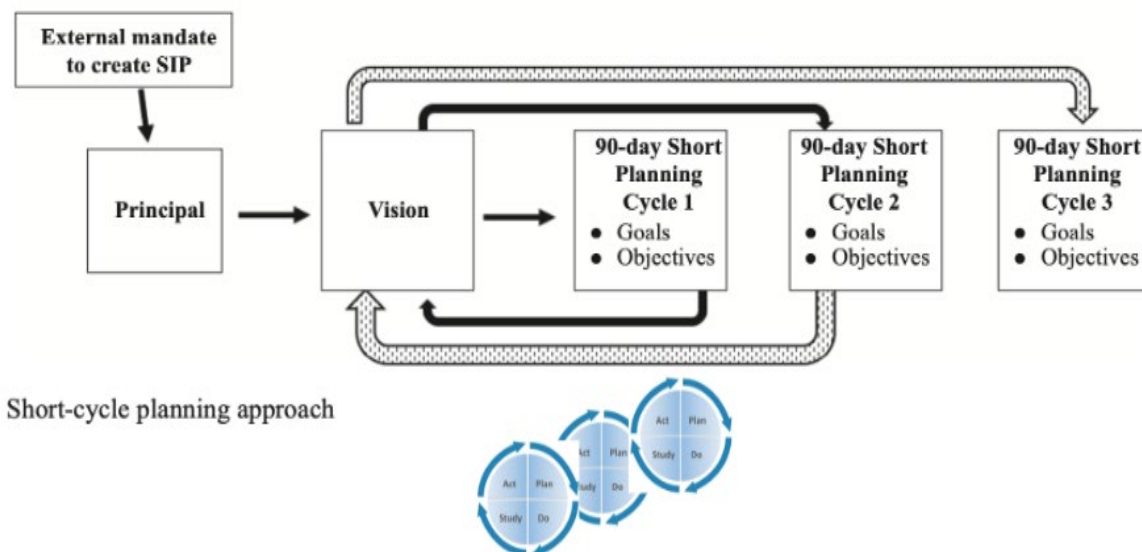
Through this short-cycle review process, a school team can monitor the implementation of selected evidence-based strategies, review what was planned and what occurred, and explore why the results obtained were reached in order to determine how to move forward.

How to Use the Appendices

To begin the Comprehensive Needs Assessment process, please use the documents under Appendix A: All Schools — Getting Started.

If you are required to complete a Tier 2 review, please start with Appendix A resources and see Appendix B.

If you are required to complete a Tier 3 review, please start with Appendix A resources and see Appendix C.

If you are required to complete a Tier 3 Plus review, please start with Appendix A resources and see Appendix D.

If you are required to complete an Open Doors/"R-type" school review, please start with Appendix A resources and see Appendix E.

If you are required to complete a CNA for a Title I, Part A Schoolwide Program or are interested in moving from a Title I, Part A Targeted Assistance school to a Title I, Part A Schoolwide school, please start with Appendix A resources and see Appendix F.

Appendix A: All Schools — Getting Started

"Data are gathered at the school-level and used to create a profile of the school's successes and areas of improvement, then used to assess the root causes, professional learning needs, and improvement plan priorities." UnderstandingandMaximizingFederallyRequiredNeedsAssssments06262017.pdf (ccsso.org)

Note: See Appendix G for optional tools and resources to help gather information and move through the CNA process.

Phase 1: Planning

Activities That may occur during this phase	Guiding questions To consider
Step 1.1) Define the purpose and intended outcomes of the needs assessment process within the local context. **Note**: There is no one correct needs assessment model or process.	**For Step 1.1)** • Why are we engaging in the needs assessment (beyond compliance)? • What do we hope to accomplish with this process? • What are the issues that are most critical to the needs assessment? • What are we hoping the impact will be at the classroom, building, and, potentially, system levels? • What are the gaps between "what is" and "what should be." • Have we developed guiding questions to focus data collection on the issues most critical? • Have we selected multiple data sources that align with each guiding question?
Step 1.2) Determine the guiding questions that the needs assessment should answer (if the needs assessment is not part of a larger project that has already identified central questions or concerns).	**For Step 1.2)** • What are the core themes or topics the needs assessment will cover (student demographics, instruction, assessment, achievement, climate, discipline, etc.)? • What do we need to know or understand about these topics?
Step 1.3) Establish actions, timelines, and responsibilities for all related activities.	**For Step 1.3)** • What are the short- and long-term timelines?
Step 1.4) Identify relevant stakeholders, plan for their involvement, and invite them to participate beginning with the planning process.	**For Step 1.4)** • Who are the key stakeholders who need to be engaged and at what points in the process? • How will we get multiple stakeholders involved in the process?
Step 1.5) Train Stakeholders: Articulate the content (what needs assessment will cover), the process (how the needs assessment will be accomplished), and the presentation (what the school or district will use and how the results will be conveyed).	**For Step 1.5)** • Have we clarified the purpose and explained the steps of the process of the needs assessment to the stakeholders so they know what to expect and can best participate?

Phase 2: Collecting and Organizing Data

Comprehensive Needs Assessments are contextual and based on the needs of the learning community. In the Activities column in the table below, we have outlined steps to help you with the collection and organization of data. In Step 2.2 there are elements listed. These elements are required components that need to be reviewed and addressed in the comprehensive needs assessment. The two Guiding Questions columns provide guidance and consideration to help your learning community through this phase of the process.

You are required to address each element listed under **Step 2.2**; however, you are **NOT** required to answer every guiding question. These are designed to guide and support your process, as well as provide additional considerations for data collection and analysis.

Schools identified for Tier 2 Supports, please refer to Appendix B for additional guidance on completing this section.

Schools identified for Tier 3 Support please refer to Appendix C for additional guidance on completing this section.

Schools identified for Tier 3 Plus Support please refer to Appendix D for additional guidance on completing this section.

Activities Potential **Data Types** to review	Guiding Questions The following are a **small sampling** of potential questions	If your school is identified for **Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 3 Plus** supports, additional questions have been provided under **Step 2.2** for consideration to help guide the thinking/planning process. **You do not have to answer all questions.**
Step 2.1) Define the data most useful for making decisions.	**For Step 2.1)** • What data sources are aligned with the guiding questions and are readily available from existing sources (state databases, program reports, etc.)? • Will qualitative data, as well as quantitative data, be included? • What data will we collect? • What do we want to know?	
Step 2.2) Organize readily available data from existing sources. **Note**: Required data to be reviewed for identified schools are shown with (R).	**For Step 2.2)** • Which data will be provided to the district or school(s), and which data must be added or collected at the local level? • How do we ensure certain types of data are kept confidential?	
Step 2.2) Demographics (R)	• What is the breakdown of students by ethnicity, gender, or other category? • What is the number of students	**For Step 2.2)** • Consider students who identify with more than one demographic, and that it may be

| Activities

Potential **Data Types** to review | Guiding Questions

The following are a **small sampling** of potential questions | If your school is identified for **Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 3 Plus** supports, additional questions have been provided under **Step 2.2** for consideration to help guide the thinking/planning process. **You do not have to answer all questions.** |
|---|---|---|
| | in each special program? What is the breakdown by ethnicity, gender, or other category?
• Are we over- or underrepresented in certain groups?
• What does our attendance data tell us?
• What are staff demographics? | helpful to look for intersection in demographic data to better understand student identities.
• Consider comparing your local data to state data to see if the district or school has relatively higher or lower representation of one program or student group. |
| **Step 2.2)** Student Achievement (R) | • How are student achievement data disaggregated?
• What do the data indicate when disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, special program, or other category?
• In which areas are we showing growth? At what rate? Compared to which standard of achievement?
• Which students are making progress?
• What do the data reflect within and among content areas? | • What does your school's WSIF data tell you about how each student group is performing, *specifically the identified student groups*? Consider intersectional identities and how WSIF may hide important information. What does the local data tell you about how each student group is performing, *specifically the identified student groups*? Consider how local data on performance align with and diverge from WSIF data.
• In which areas are we showing growth? Consider where or on which metrics students are progressing and the rate of progress over time.
• Consider all content areas rather than focusing on only those subject areas measured by WSIF. |
| **Step 2.2)** School Climate and Culture (R) | • What is the vision, mission, and values of your school?
• How do students describe the school climate?
• How does this compare to the staff's perception?
• How do staff members describe the climate?
• How do students and staff describe attitudes, respect, | • Consider how and how often the vision, mission, and values are shared with staff, students, and parents.
• Consider it may take additional effort to hear from students who are most disenfranchised by their school experiences—these voices may provide more valuable data than those from students who are |

Activities Potential **Data Types** to review	Guiding Questions The following are a **small sampling** of potential questions	If your school is identified for **Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 3 Plus** supports, additional questions have been provided under **Step 2.2** for consideration to help guide the thinking/planning process. **You do not have to answer all questions.**
	relationships, belonging, support, etc.? • To what degree do students and staff feel physically safe? • What do the data indicate regarding classroom management and organization? How does this compare to classroom achievement data? • What is the culture and climate in your building around the belief that all students can learn?	traditionally more engaged. • Consider that safety can be physical or social-emotional and that events outside the school environment can also impact experience in the learning environment. • Consider if there is a link between student achievement data and educator perceptions, expectations, and classroom management and organization. • Consider asking educators about their fellow educators' beliefs as the personal perception of an educator can differ dramatically from the collective perception of the group.
Step 2.2) Staff Quality, Recruitment, and Retention (R)	• What are the qualifications and certifications of our teachers? Paraprofessionals? • What is the breakdown of the district's or school's staff by ethnicity/race, gender, or other category? • How are we recruiting highly qualified and effective staff? • What is our staff attendance/ retention/turnover rate? • Are teacher placements strategically based on student need and teacher strengths? • What ongoing support is provided to staff? • What systems are in place to build capacity and support continuous improvement? • What types of professional development have staff members attended? How is implementation monitored? What impact has it	Consider comparing staffing demographics to student demographics or the demographic of the surrounding community.

Activities Potential **Data Types** to review	Guiding Questions The following are a **small sampling** of potential questions	If your school is identified for **Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 3 Plus** supports, additional questions have been provided under **Step 2.2** for consideration to help guide the thinking/planning process. **You do not have to answer all questions.**
	had on performance? What is the follow-up?	
Step 2.2) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (R)	• How is data used to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions? • How are instructional strategies and activities aligned with student learning needs and expected outcomes for achievement? • How consistent is this across the school/district? • What is the impact on specific student groups? • Is there evidence that assessments are aligned with clearly specified and appropriate achievement expectations? • What policies, practices, and procedures are in place for evaluating the cultural relevance of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes? What equity evaluation tool(s) are being used? • What criteria are being used to determine that evidence-based best practices are being implemented and measured?	
Step 2.2) Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (R)	• What evidence exists that families and community members are involved in meaningful activities that support students' learning? • What are the activities? • Which parents, guardians, and community members are involved? What trends and patterns do we observe? • What types of services are available to support students in special programs? What are the	Consider the current communication plan that is in place and if it is culturally responsive and linguistically inclusive of the community.

Activities Potential **Data Types** to review	Guiding Questions The following are a **small sampling** of potential questions	If your school is identified for **Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 3 Plus** supports, additional questions have been provided under **Step 2.2** for consideration to help guide the thinking/planning process. **You do not have to answer all questions.**
	results? • How do school and community systems interact to assure continuity of supports for students? • What types of community partnerships exist to support families and students?	
Step 2.2) School Context and Organization-Focus on Student Learning (R)	• How is adequate time devoted to subjects in which students perform poorly? • What do data reflect about classes, schedules, and student/staff teams?	• Consider how content is or is not integrated across subjects, including in non-tested subject areas. • Consider how classes may or may not be culturally relevant to students.
Step 2.2) Technology	• What are some barriers that potentially prevent effective use of technology? • Is the technology user-friendly for students and parents.	
Step 2.3) Determine and collect additional needed data.	**For Step 2.3)** • Do we have all the data we need to answer our guiding questions? If not, what else do we need? How can we collect that data?	
Step 2.4) Decide on the method of presentation data. Ensure data are organized and presented in digestible formats to facilitate examination, including identification of trends across time and data sources. Potential **data sources** to consider: • State Report Card and other current assessment data	**For Step 2.4)** • How can all data be presented in a way that is easily understood by stakeholders? • Create visuals (charts, tables, graphs) to help readers digest information easily. • Include longitudinal data (when possible) to help identify any trends over time. • Organize observation data by grade level or grade span and perception data by stakeholder groups.	

Activities Potential **Data Types** to review	Guiding Questions The following are a **small sampling** of potential questions	If your school is identified for **Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 3 Plus** supports, additional questions have been provided under **Step 2.2** for consideration to help guide the thinking/planning process. **You do not have to answer all questions.**
• Surveys • Focus Groups • Observations • Document Analysis • Program Evaluations • Budgets • Research Reports • Suggestions Boxes		

Phase 3: Interpreting Information

Activities That may occur during this phase	Guiding questions To consider
Step 3.1) Examine relevant data to unearth meaningful information. Allow time for reflections without assuming cause for the data.	**For Step 3.1)** What do the individual data sources say about the guiding questions that the needs assessment is trying to answer?
Step 3.2) Triangulate data points from different sources, voices, or forms of data to determine themes within the data.	**For Step 3.2)** What themes emerge when multiple sources are cross-referenced or triangulated across a given topic?
Step 3.3) Identify areas of strength and develop three to five areas of strength summary statements.	**For Step 3.3)** What are the strengths and needs of our school/LEA and its representative groups? What evidence supports the strengths and needs?
Step 3.4) Identify areas of needs and develop three to five areas of need summary statements.	**For Step 3.4)** What are the needs of our school/LEA and its representative groups? How do we ensure we follow the summary process and refrain from identifying solutions in this step?
Step 3.5) Articulate findings for stakeholders without casting blame.	**For Step 3.5)** How can we articulate what we have learned in a language that is specific to our community yet does not cast blame?
Step 3.6) Investigate areas of stakeholder disagreement and causes of disagreement.	**For Step 3.6)** Are there places in which the various stakeholder voices disagree with one another or present a different perspective than your own? How can the underlying causes of these differences be explored?

Phase 4: Determining Priorities

Activities That may occur during this phase	Guiding questions To consider
Step 4.1) Narrow and prioritize the list of needs to a key set of priorities for action that, if addressed,	**For Step 4.1)** • What strengths have emerged from multiple data

Activities	Guiding questions
That may occur during this phase	**To consider**
would have the greatest impact on student outcomes.	sources? What needs have emerged from multiple data sources? What findings or themes have emerged that, if addressed, will have the greatest potential for impact on student outcomes? • What identified needs impact each other? • Which needs represent short-term goals and which needs represent long-term goals? • What needs represent "low-hanging fruit" that, if addressed, would represent a quick win and build momentum toward confronting more challenging needs. • How many priorities will a given school or district address simultaneously?
Step 4.2) Consider if there is additional data that should be reviewed.	**For Step 4.2)** Are there additional data that should be considered to make informed decisions about priorities and capacity for implementation?
Step 4.3) If additional data are needed, gather and review.	**For Step 4.3)** Repeat data review process.
Step 4.4) Develop three to five priority statements. Draft these priority statements into SMART (or SMARTIE) goals.	**For Step 4.4)** Do our SMART (or SMARTIE) goals contain each of the needed elements? Specific and Strategic, Measurable, Action Oriented, Realistic, Time-bound (Inclusive, Equitable)
Step 4.5) Stakeholders responsible for carrying out the work resulting from the needs assessment must ensure the priorities identified are authentic and specific to the local context.	
Step 4.6) Direct improvement efforts toward the identified set of priorities.	
Step 4.7) Set timelines/responsibility for monitoring implementation fidelity, review, and adjustment(s) as shown by ongoing evaluation data.	

Phase 5: Connecting to Implementation

Activities	Guiding questions
That may occur during this phase	**To consider**
Step 5.1) Dig deeper into the prioritized needs to understand root causes or further break down the priorities.	**For Step 5.1)** What are the potential underlying root causes of the needs or issues the team has prioritized? What additional information is needed about the needs assessment results or their potential underlying causes to create meaningful, long-term results?
Step 5.2) Use the identified priorities to drive the selection of appropriate strategies or interventions, how they will be implemented, and how	**For Step 5.2)** How will school or district teams connect needs assessment results to the selection of evidence-based practices for implementation?

Activities That may occur during this phase	Guiding questions To consider
improvement will be evaluated and measured along the way.	
Step 5.3) Set criteria for judging the merits of strategies/solutions such as effect on causes, acceptability, and feasibility (including resources).	**For Step 5.3)** How will we know if our solutions are positively impacting student achievement?
Step 5.4) When examining possible solutions, review and document research and evaluation data that supports the merits of possible solutions.	**Step 5.4)** What are some possible solutions? Which solutions are best for the local context? Why?
Step 5.5) On the basis of all information gathered, select one or more solutions for each area of need.	**For Step 5.5)** Consider whether each of the high-ranking solutions will result in the desired outcomes, or whether they will push in the opposite direction, preventing change.
Step 5.6) Connect priorities to relevant goals and incorporate them into an improvement or action plan. Propose an action plan that includes descriptions of the solutions, rationale, proposed timelines, and resource requirements.	**For Step 5.6)** What processes will be created to ensure regular opportunities for utilizing data to reflect on the progress of improvement efforts?
Step 5.7) Prepare a written report to communicate the methods used and the results of the needs assessment process to decision-makers and key stakeholders.	**For Step 5.7)** Who will be responsible for preparing written reports and possible oral briefings?
Step 5.8) Reflect on the progress of the improvement efforts.	**For Step 5.8)** Who will be responsible to monitor progress? How will progress be recorded and communicated?

Appendix B: Tier 2 Schools

The focus of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for Tier 2 schools must address the needs of the identified student groups below the threshold in the most recent Washington State Improvement Framework (WSIF) identification cycle.

The comprehensive needs assessment conducted by the school must address the bulleted elements listed below. The associated guided questions can be found in Appendix A, Phase 2: Collecting and Organizing Data, Step 2.2 Due to the contextual nature of comprehensive needs assessments, you are required to address each element listed below; however, you are **NOT** required to answer every guiding question. These are designed to guide and support your process, as well as provide additional considerations for data collection and analysis.

- Student demographics
- Performance of different student groups on state and local assessments
- Demonstrable focus on student learning and increased learning outcomes
- Supportive learning environment
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to state standards
- Frequency of monitoring of learning and teaching
- Building capacity of staff for setting high standards, expectations, and establishing supports for all students
- Quality professional development aligned to improvement and implementation efforts described in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that is consistent with best practices for adult learners
- Capacity needs of school leadership relative to high-leverage goals and improvement efforts described in the SIP
- High level of collaboration and communication for shared ownership amongst the learning community
- Engagement of family and community
- Strategic allocation of resources to address existing student academic and social and emotional inequities as evidenced in both state and local data sources
- Alternative secondary schools' best practices (Learning Options), if applicable
- Any unique circumstances or characteristics of the school or LEA
- Related Local Education Agency (LEA)/district practices, policies, and collectively bargained provisions

Appendix C: Tier 3 Schools

Tier 3 Schools, under the guidance and support of the LEA, must conduct a needs assessment based on the criteria used to identify the school as needing improvement. The comprehensive needs assessment conducted by the school must address the bulleted elements listed below. The associated guided questions can be found in Appendix A, Phase 2: Collecting and Organizing Data, Step 2.2. Due to the contextual nature of comprehensive needs assessments, you are required to address each element listed below; however, you are **NOT** required to answer every guiding question. These are designed to guide and support your process, as well as provide additional considerations for data collection and analysis.

- Student demographics
- Performance of different student groups on state and local assessments
- Demonstrable focus on student learning and increased learning outcomes
- Supportive learning environment
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to state standards
- Frequency of monitoring of learning and teaching
- Building capacity of staff for setting high standards, expectations, and establishing supports for all students
- Quality professional development aligned to improvement and implementation efforts described in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that is consistent with best practices for adult learners
- Capacity needs of school leadership relative to high-leverage goals and improvement efforts described in the SIP
- High level of collaboration and communication for shared ownership amongst the learning community
- Engagement of family and community
- Strategic allocation of resources to address existing student academic and social and emotional inequities as evidenced in both state and local data sources
- Alternative secondary schools' best practices (Learning Options), if applicable
- Any unique circumstances or characteristics of the school or LEA
- Related Local Education Agency (LEA)/district practices, policies, and collectively bargained provisions

Appendix D: Tier 3 Plus Schools

Schools identified for Tier 3 Plus will be required to conduct an intensive needs assessment and develop an updated School Improvement Plan (SIP) that will comprehensively address needs based on a root cause analysis.

The needs assessment will examine:

- Previous improvement efforts that were articulated in school improvement plans, mid-year progress reviews, and end of year reviews; identifying and analyzing the data that illustrates the areas of progress and growth and the areas that continue to need focused improvement efforts and support.
- All elements outlined in Appendix C: Tier 3 Schools

Based on the intensive needs assessment, the school and district will amend and submit an updated School Improvement Plan to:

- Address whether the school, with support from the district, implemented recent continuous improvement interventions included in the prior school improvement plans with fidelity and sufficient support and resources.
- Specify whether actions focused on systemic fidelity of implementation, the addition of more or different evidence-based interventions, and clearly indicate the connections of actions to findings from the intensive needs assessment.
- Actions and activities outlined in the school improvement plan will be rigorous and based on strong or moderate levels of evidence.

School Improvement Plans will be high quality, relevant, and intentional. State and local data are expected to be used in the development of the plans.

The district will submit an LEA-Consolidated Accountability Plan (L-CAP) that will:

- Address district actions in response to identified resource inequities in support of the updated comprehensive support and improvement plan. The template and guidance for this plan can be found on the OSPI Continuous School Improvement Resources Website.

Appendix E: Open Doors/"R-type" Code Schools

Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs rely on data, experience, community and family voice, and student input to inform meaningful approaches to program improvement.

Schools that are labeled as "Open Doors" are R-type schools. The "R" stands for *reengagement*. The R-type is a designation that is solely used for Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs that elect to become a school entity.

- An Open Doors/R-type school is **not** a single school or location. This is different than the typical school.

- An R-type school is a **conglomerate** of all the Open Doors programs that the district offers to its students. This includes community college partnerships, community-based organization partnerships, skill center partnerships, and sometimes ESD partnerships.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) efforts shall include all relative considerations for the Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs and pathways available to the district's students. Open Doors/R-type schools have unique and specific components to attend to during CNA efforts.

- **Planning.** Identify relevant stakeholders. If the district's Open Doors/R-type school has partnerships with service providers (colleges, community organizations, etc.), recruit and include them in the planning phase. Decide which central guiding questions the needs assessment should address. Consider the existing school improvement plan as a resource for indicating current needs and priorities.

- **Collecting and Organizing Data.** Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs complete annual reporting. Use the data available in the EDS Application titled "*Youth Reengagement*" to pull program reports. Reports are filed by district and include the full suite of partnerships and pathways. Additional data for the Open Doors program(s) may be accessed via the schoolwide information system or other monitoring and tracking reports the local program staff may operate. Please review the district's dropout rates by population, which can be found in [Report Card Data](#). Engage Open Doors instructors and inquire about the core academic skill levels of the students in their program(s).

- **Interpreting Information.** Clarify themes. Investigate areas of stakeholder interest, agreement, and disagreement. Articulate findings for stakeholders. Seek and apply input.

- **Determining Priorities.** Conclude what findings and themes will have the greatest impact (if addressed). Consider if there are additional data that should be reviewed. If so, gather and review additional data. Work to provide status updates or reports to the wider Open Doors Youth Reengagement providers and supporters so the R-type school community can move forward together with shared understanding.

- **Connecting to Implementation.** Consider utilizing the document "Improvement Planning: Open Doors Youth Reengagement" which is found on the Open Doors Resources Website. Use the results to create meaningful, long-term change. Collect additional information about identified priorities. Investigate root causes of priorities. Reflect on the progress of improvement efforts.

Critical documents that will support a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) for Open Doors Youth Reengagement R-type schools are on the [Open Doors Resources Website](#) under the expandable menu titled "**School Improvement Planning.**"

Appendix F: Title I, Part A Schools

Schoolwide (SW) and Targeted Assistance (TA) Programs

A Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) is a required component of an SW program. Utilize Appendix A, the Five Phases of a CNA, to identify the top priorities for each Title I, Part A SW school.

The schoolwide program is evaluated annually and revised as necessary. [ESEA Section 1114(b)(3); CFR 200.26(c)]

Also, it is required that this process is documented with a description of the annual evaluation that includes the following elements:

> ➢ Name of the Title I, Part A school.
> ➢ Date of the most current Title I, Part A program evaluation.
> ➢ Identification of how and who is involved in the process.
> ➢ Review of strategies and best practices that impacted student achievement.
> ➢ Evaluation data that supports the program effectiveness and a summary of the findings.
> ➢ Probable changes to the program based on the evaluation.

Specifically, to convey a more complete picture of the decision-making processes and the actions involved in reviewing data and determining priorities that will inform implementation of specific actions, we would like to recommend that the school-level (district-level) team would consider and utilize the information found in Appendix A of this document as you engage in the program review and evaluation process.

Schoolwide Program Plan. This plan should describe how the strategies the school will be implementing will strengthen the academic program in the school and address the learning needs of all students, but particularly, the needs of the lowest performing students. Additionally, this plan should include benchmarks for the evaluation of the program results.

Schoolwide Evaluation. Annually evaluating the schoolwide plan to determine the level of effectiveness in addressing the major problem areas and revising the plan based upon data from various sources is required by ESEA, section 1114, to ensure continuous improvement.

Non-regulatory guidance from the US Department of Education, Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments (2016), suggests LEAs (or individual schools) should engage in timely and meaningful consultation with a broad range of stakeholders (e.g., families, students, educators, community partners) and examine relevant data to understand the most pressing needs of students, schools, and/or educators and the potential root causes of those needs. Interviews, focus groups, and surveys, as well as additional information on students (e.g., assessment results, graduation rates), schools (e.g., resources, climate), and educators (e.g., effectiveness, retention rates) provide insights into local needs. The action items and guiding questions provided in Appendix A of this document are meant to provide the support needed to engage in meaningful evaluation and decision-making for a schoolwide program.

Targeted Assistance (TA) Program. While a CNA is not required for a TA program, it is still recommended as an excellent process to review program effectiveness. What practices and strategies are being implemented that are positively impacting student achievement? How do we know? What practices and strategies are not having a positive impact on student achievement? How do we know and what adjustments will be made moving forward? These are just a few of the questions found in Appendix A to help support reviewing program effectiveness.

Moving from Targeted Assistance to Schoolwide Program

A Title I, Part A schoolwide program is a comprehensive reform strategy designed to upgrade the entire educational program in a Title I, Part A school to improve the achievement of the lowest-achieving students (ESEA section 1114(a)(1)). Under the ESEA, a school may operate a schoolwide program if it meets any of the following conditions:

A. A school with 40 percent or more of its students living in poverty, regardless of the grades it serves.
B. A school that receives a waiver from OSPI to operate a schoolwide program without meeting the 40 percent poverty threshold.

OSPI will review schoolwide waiver requests if the school has operated a Learning Assistance Program (LAP), Title I, Part A Targeted Assistance program, or other similar program for at least one year prior to implementing a schoolwide program. The school must also be eligible for Title I, Part A funds.

Eligibility Requirements for the Title I, Part A School Below 40% Waiver Request. NOTE: Schools are eligible for Title I, Part A funds if it meets one of the following criteria:

C. The school's low-income or poverty percent is at or above 35 percent, or
D. The school's low-income or poverty percent is at or above the district average.

OSPI has created a waiver request in the Electronic Grants Management System (EGMS) as a progress report. Additionally, after approval is granted from OSPI, the building will be required to leave a comment on the Title I, Part A ranking and allocating form in the EGMS system beginning the 2022–23 school year. The comment should document that the named building was granted the Title I, Part A Schoolwide Waiver for school year 2023–2024.

The district, on behalf of the school, will only need to secure the waiver once from OSPI and will not need to apply annually.

Considerations. Whether applying for the waiver or not, here are some fundamental elements that will need to be thoughtfully considered before a transition to a SW program begins.

1. How will the school implement, as part of the schoolwide program, the instructional or other school improvement strategies that are not currently possible with LAP, or Targeted Assistance Programs, or other similar programs. How will this best serve the needs of students in the school in improving academic achievement and other factors (ESEA 1114(a)(1)(B)).
2. How will the school ensure it continues to address the needs of its most struggling students currently served under other supplemental programs.
3. What data does the school anticipate using in its comprehensive needs assessment to design a schoolwide program that will benefit student learning (ESEA 1114)(b)(6)).
4. What is the planning process the school will take to develop the schoolwide plan as outlined in ESEA Section 1114(b)(2). How will it include parents and families, community members, school leaders, teachers, paraeducators, district staff, and to the extent feasible, tribes and tribal organizations present in the community, and if appropriate, specialized support staff.
5. What are the anticipated programs and funding sources to be combined/blended as part of the schoolwide program (ESEA 114(b)(7)(B).

Creating a Title I, Part A Schoolwide Plan. Please be thoughtful about the capacity of school personnel to engage in the process of developing a schoolwide plan. Each plan must address the four components ESEA

requires under Section 1114, must address critical needs of student populations within the school, AND must specifically address how the new strategies to be implemented will best serve the needs of the lowest-achieving students in the school.

Staff will need to engage in a schoolwide planning process that includes:

➢ Comprehensive Needs Assessment – ESEA Section 1114(b)(6)
➢ Stakeholder Engagement During Plan Development – ESEA Section 1114(b)(2)
➢ Schoolwide Reform Strategies development – ESEA Section 1114(b)(7)(A) Combined Funds – ESEA Section 1114(b)(7)(B)
➢ Implementation Monitoring and Revision – ESEA Section 1114(b)(3)

Optional, guiding questions addressing the four components of a complete SW plan can be found in Appendix A of this document, as well as located on the OSPI Schoolwide webpage. Information contained in this document is meant to help school staff begin the planning process for creating a schoolwide plan that would need to be in place, ideally, before the beginning of the upcoming school year.

Title I, Part A, Schoolwide Plan Requirements include:

➢ Component 1: Comprehensive needs assessment, involving multiple stakeholders using data to identify strengths and challenges in key areas that impact student achievement
➢ Component 2: Schoolwide reform-based strategies identified for addressing student achievement needs
➢ Component 3: Activities to ensure evaluation of the achievement of goals for all students
➢ Component 4: Coordination and integration of resources to achieve goals

The optional consolidated school improvement template combines all required elements into a single document to meet the requirements for Title I, Part A, Schoolwide; Title I, Part A, Targeted Assistance; and those required of schools identified for Tier 2 supports, Tier 3 supports, and Tier 3 Plus supports. However, if you choose not to use the optional template, be sure to summarize all the information required by ESEA to make it available for monitoring purposes.

Creating a Title I, Part A Targeted Assistance Plan. Optional, guiding questions addressing the components of a TA plan can be found in Appendix A of this document. Also, an optional template is located on the OSPI Targeted Assistance webpage. Information contained in this document is meant to help school staff begin the planning process for creating a targeted assistance plan that would need to be in place, ideally, before the beginning of the upcoming school year.

Title I, Part A, Targeted Assistance Plan Requirements:

➢ Component 1: Comprehensive needs assessment (not required but highly recommended unless moving from TA to SW program)
➢ Component 2: Process for identification of students who have the greatest need to receive Title I services
➢ Component 3: Title I, Part A practices and strategies to strengthen the academic program of the school
➢ Component 4: Coordination and support of the regular education program, including possible transitions from preschool programs
➢ Component 5: Parent and family engagement
➢ Component 6: Professional development opportunities

Appendix G: Toolkit Resources

While there is much flexibility for how an individual school or school district gathers information and captures the decisions made while engaging in the process of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), the following are some resources and tools that may be helpful as a team engages in the CNA process.

From the Continuous School Improvement Resources webpage, the District and School Data Team Toolkit has several protocols that can help in the CNA process. For example, the *Understand Issues* section (p. 101) provides a structure to support the analysis of the data the team will be reviewing. There are protocols for constructing good data displays, along with several options to choose from to help guide the data analysis process.

The section titled *Uncovering the Cause* (p. 169) provides several protocols that can assist with ways to get all ideas on the table to look for possible causes of an issue. Using these tools can also help a data review team reach consensus.

There are several protocols in the *Plan and Take Action* section (p. 213) that will help a team determine priorities, write goals, and design a plan for implementation and monitoring for fidelity of implementation to ensure that effective initiatives have the intended positive impact on student achievement over time.

Sample Needs Assessment Templates and Worksheets
Using Needs Assessments for School and District Improvement.
Council of Chief State School Officers and the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd. (2017). *Worksheets from Using needs assessments for school and district improvement*. Washington, DC and WestEd, San Francisco, CA.

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, School Improvement: Needs Assessment

Evidence-based Practices
OSPI Menus of Best Practices and Strategies
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Menus of Best Practices & Strategies.

Updated WSIPP Inventory of Evidence and Research-Based Practices
Washington State Institute for Public Policy. (July 2020). *Updated inventory of evidence-based and research-based practices: Washington's K–12 learning assistance program*. Olympia, WA.

Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education
National Alternative Education Association. (2014). *Exemplary practices 2.0: Standards of quality and program evaluation*. Beaufort, NC.

What Works Clearinghouse
Institute of Education Sciences. Washington, DC.

OSPI Continuous School Improvement Resources
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Continuous School Improvement Resources.

Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments
United States Department of Education. (September 16, 2016). *Non-regulatory guidance: Using evidence to strengthen education investments*. Washington, DC.

Root Cause Analysis

[US Department of Education Root Cause Analysis, Purpose, and Approaches](#)
Office of Elementary & Secondary Education. (September 15, 2020). *Purposes of root cause analysis in school improvement planning.* Washington, DC.

[US Department of Education Approaches to Root Cause Analysis](#)
Office of Elementary & Secondary Education. (September 15, 2020). *Purposes of root cause analysis in school improvement planning.* Washington, DC.

[OSPI Data Inquiry Guide.](#) Section 2.4: Pursuing Root Cause and Problems of Practice
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2020). *Data inquiry guide.*

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Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2020). *Washington's multi-tiered systems of support framework.* https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/cisl/iss/pubdocs/WA%20MTSS%20Framework%20Publication_final.pdf

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Texas Education Agency. (2021). *CCNA collaborative comprehensive needs assessment: A resource toolkit to engage in the comprehensive needs assessment process*. https://online.fliphtml5.com/eflrl/hosw/#p=6

United States Department of Education. (2016, September 16). *Non-regulatory guidance: Using evidence to strengthen education investments.* https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/statesupt/pdf/guidanceuseseinvestment.pdf#:~:text=Non-Regulatory%20Guidance%3A%20Using%20Evidence%20to%20Strengthen%20Education%20Investments,Practices%2C%2072%20Fed.%20Reg.%203432%20%28Jan.%2025%2C%202007%29.

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