

Data Quality Planning and Implementation Checklist

This planning checklist was developed under the State Support Network in conjunction with the Data Systems Community of Practice. The content complements the considerations outlined and discussed in the [SLDS Issue Brief Considerations for Collecting New Data Elements](#). Six topics related to planning and implementing a new data element are addressed: data collection, data quality, internal data control and governance, data coherence, subgroup analysis and reporting, and stakeholder engagement.



Data Quality Element 1: Data Collection

Data collection refers to the activities around identifying data to be collected and data sources. Data collection also includes identifying who will be collecting the data and the data collection timeline.

Reflection Questions	Notes and Next Steps
Was there an existing data element prior to the ESEA ¹ requirement?	
If data were collected on the subgroup prior to the ESEA requirement, can the data be used in their present form?	
Do new subgroup data need to be collected?	
Has a new data element been established since the ESEA requirement?	
Are there state policies and procedures for establishing the new data element?	
Has a standardized definition of the new data element been established for all LEAs and the SEA?	
Has an option set for the data element been established that is consistent with federal reporting requirements?	
Were data governance groups involved with defining the new data element and option sets?	
Were district and school stakeholders engaged in defining the new data element and option sets?	
Have business rules been established for the data element that align to previous SEA business rules?	
Is there a deadline for implementing the new data element?	
Have specific needed data been identified for new element?	
Are there program, agency, or state policies for collecting new data?	
Do the data originate from LEAs?	
Do the data originate from an agency other than the SEA or LEAs?	
Has a process for collecting the new data been established?	
Are data governance groups involved with determining the processes for collecting the new data?	
Have district and school stakeholders been engaged in determining the processes for collecting the new data?	

¹ The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Reflection Questions	Notes and Next Steps
Have the parties responsible for collecting the new data been identified?	
Are there groups that need to be informed of the new data collection?	
Has a timeline for the SEA to collect the new data been established?	
Has the SEA established a standardized timeline for LEA collection of data for the new element?	
Will the data be available for the current school year by the end of the calendar year?	

Data Quality Element 2: Data Quality

Data quality is ultimately about the trustworthiness of the data, which includes the completeness, accuracy, consistency, availability, validity, integrity, security, and timeliness of the data. Given the number of groups and individuals involved with data collection, data quality is challenging to control. Therefore, planning for data quality should include processes for validity checks, audits, and explanations for variants in the data. When planning for data quality, it is also important to consider the fit for the intended use of the data (e.g., for operations, decision making, and planning).

Reflection Questions	Notes and Next Steps
Have specifications been established to measure alignment to definition, completeness, and accuracy of the new data?	
Have data integrity qualifications been established to account for structure and content of the new data?	
Have validity checks been scheduled of the new data?	
Has a data audit system been established for the new data?	
Has a schedule for data cleaning and editing been established for the new data?	
Do the LEAs have a way to add an explanation when reporting the new data to the SEA (e.g., why data are missing or where there may be duplicative counts)?	
Has a timeline for error corrections been established for the new data?	
Are there rules for what happens if the new data are reported late?	
Do the SEA and LEAs have a way to measure the level of confidence in the quality of the data?	
Has a plan been established for varied use of the data (e.g., required reports, public use, and research)?	
Has individual accessibility to the data been determined?	
Do the format and appearance of the data support the appropriate use of the information?	
Are current data available to users?	
Does the SEA have a way to measure the relevance of the data to users' needs?	

Data Quality Element 3: Internal Data Control and Governance

Internal data control and governance affects many aspects of the data quality system, including operations, reporting, and compliance. There are five components of data control and governance (based on the [Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission \(COSO\) model](#)): control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. These processes and standards allow the SEA to ensure data are managed effectively and appropriately over time.

Reflection Questions	Notes and Next Steps
Has the new data element been added to all relevant data systems?	
Are the data definitions, option sets, and business rules for the new data element consistent with the requirements previously established with agency staff and data governance groups?	
Have all data system partners been informed about the new data element?	
Has a privacy policy for the new data element been established?	
Have any training needs, materials, and opportunities been identified for those responsible for supporting the collection, management, and use of the new data?	
Is certification for data staff implemented?	
Has a pilot or test run of the new data collection occurred?	
Is there a clear plan for resolution of issues related to the new data element?	
Is there more than one owner of data for the new data element?	
Is there a group structure that governs the data related to the new data element?	
Does the data governance structure include objectives for the new data element?	
Does the SEA have an existing data governance policy manual in writing or online?	
Has the new data element been included in the data governance policy manual?	
Is the data governance policy easily accessible to internal and external stakeholders?	
Is a risk assessment for the new data element included in the data governance policies?	
Is there a clear plan for what entity is responsible for resolving issues related to the new data element?	
Are there regular meetings focused on data governance?	

Data Quality Element 4: Data Coherence

Data coherence includes uniformity across shared resource data; logical connections and completeness within a single data set and across data sets; internal consistency across time and outputs and programs; logical distinction between concepts and target populations, adequate structures for combining data for various uses; and system compatibility across LEAs, SEA programs and business offices, and federal agencies.

Reflection Questions	Notes and Next Steps
Does the SEA have a cache coherence protocol that includes the new data element?	
Is there data system compatibility and coherence between the state data system and LEAs?	
Are program offices within the SEA able to submit data to the system that can be reported for accountability purposes?	
Are program offices within the SEA able to submit data to the system that can be reported to the U.S. Department of Education?	
Is the message for why the new data are being collected clear across LEAs and the SEA?	
Has the SEA identified key points about the new data element that will be used to ensure consistent messaging and convey the importance or value of the new data collection?	

Data Quality Element 5: Subgroup Analysis and Reporting

Subgroup analysis includes analyzing the relationship between multiple data elements to determine links, trends, patterns, and probabilities and considering how to convey the results of the analysis for use by stakeholders. Reporting includes considerations such as disclosure avoidance and protection of personally identifiable information. Management of risk takes careful consideration and may include strategies such as minimum n-thresholds for reporting, fixed top/bottom coding thresholds, and complementary suppression.

Reflection Questions	Notes and Next Steps
Does the SEA have a plan established to meet the ESEA reporting requirements for the new data?	
Does the SEA have the capacity to conduct cross-tabulation analyses of the new data?	
Do LEAs have the capacity to conduct cross-tabulation analyses of the new data?	
Is there a timeline for conducting cross-tabulations with the new data?	
Which data meet public reporting minimums?	
Is there a plan for protecting personally identifiable information for publicly reported data?	
Has a minimum n-size been established for data that will be publicly reported?	
Will the SEA use data visualization to analyze and report on the new data?	

Data Quality Element 6: Stakeholder Connections

Stakeholder connections and communications are more than simple dissemination of information; rather, they involve meaningful two-way communications with active contributions from a variety of stakeholders to the work of the SEA.

Reflection Questions	Notes and Next Steps
Has the SEA engaged with stakeholders on the new data prior to the ESEA requirements?	
Can current efforts used to engage stakeholders be modified or expanded in relation to the new data?	
Is there a plan for stakeholders to provide meaningful input on the new data?	
Is there a process to address and incorporate stakeholder input?	
Has the role of different stakeholders been established in relation to the new data?	
Has an engagement and communication plan been designed to inform stakeholders (e.g., representatives from schools, program leaders at the district and state levels, education agency leaders, IT personnel, Student Information System vendors, lawmakers, and the public) of the new data collection processes and requirements?	
Have guidance, talking points, or templates been developed to support LEA staff with consistent family and public communication about the new data?	
Have tools, such as fact sheets, FAQs, presentation slides, or letters to stakeholders, been developed to support consistent communications across the SEA about the new data?	
Have tools been developed to support consistent communications across the SEA and LEAs about the new data?	