

Handout 1: Needs Assessment and the ESEA

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) recognizes that context matters and that states and districts should have the flexibility to determine the solutions that will best address the specific needs of their students, schools, and communities. The ESEA requires states and districts to complete a needs assessment in several areas across the major programs included in the law. Table 1 summarizes many of the school-improvement-related requirements; language taken directly from the legislation is quoted. Please note that this table is presented as a reference only and should not be construed as official guidance.

Table 1. Highlighted Needs Assessment Requirements Within ESEA

Title/ Program	Requirement	Section
Title I, Part A Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plans	To assist schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, the local educational agency (LEA) must “for each school identified by the state and in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents), locally develop and implement a comprehensive support and improvement plan for the school to improve student outcomes, that...is based on a school-level needs assessment.” In addition, the comprehensive support and improvement plan must be informed by all of the statewide accountability indicators, identify resource inequities, include evidence-based interventions, and be approved by the school, LEA, and state.	ESEA Section 1111(d)(1)(B)
Title I, Part A Schoolwide Programs	To inform a comprehensive plan for schools operating a schoolwide program, the school will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that “takes into account information on the academic achievement of children in relation to the challenging state academic standards, particularly the needs of those children who are failing, or are at-risk of failing, to meet the challenging state academic standards.”	ESEA Section 1114(b)(6)
Title I, Part A Targeted Assistance Schools	A targeted assistance school may provide comprehensive services (such as “health, nutrition, and other social services”), if these services are not otherwise available to eligible children. The school must have “engaged in a comprehensive needs assessment and established a collaborative partnership with local service providers” and it must be determined that “funds are not reasonably available from other public or private sources to provide such services.”	ESEA Section 1115(e)(2)

Title/ Program	Requirement	Section
Title II, Part B Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants	As part of a state’s application for a Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant, it must include “[a] needs assessment that analyzes literacy needs across the state and in high-need schools and LEAs that serve high-need schools, including identifying the most significant gaps in literacy proficiency and inequities in student access to effective teachers of literacy, considering each of the subgroups of students, as defined in section 1111(c)(2)” of the ESEA.	ESEA Section 2222(d)(2)(A)
Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants	States award Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) sub-grants to eligible LEAs or consortia of LEAs by formula in the same proportion as the LEAs’ prior-year Title I, Part A allocations or on a competitive basis (ESEA section 4105(a)(1); Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 (Public Law 115-31). Any LEA or consortium of LEAs that receives an SSAE allocation or award in the amount of \$30,000 or more must complete a comprehensive needs assessment prior to receiving its allocation “to examine needs for improvement of—(A) access to, and opportunities for, a well-rounded education for all students; (B) school conditions for student learning in order to create a healthy and safe school environment; and (C) access to personalized learning experiences supported by technology and professional development for the effective use of data and technology.” Each LEA or consortium must conduct the needs assessment once every three years.	ESEA Section 4106(d)
Title IV, Part F Promise Neighborhoods Program	Although the term “ <i>needs assessment</i> ” does not appear in the text, it is helpful to consider the following provision, which requires applications for Promise Neighborhoods funding to include the following: “...(4) An analysis of the needs and assets of the neighborhood . . . , including—(A) the size and scope of the population affected; (B) a description of the process through which the needs analysis was produced, including a description of how parents, families, and community members were engaged in such analysis; (C) an analysis of community assets and collaborative efforts (including programs already provided from Federal and non-Federal sources) within, or accessible to, the neighborhood, including, at a minimum, early learning opportunities, family and student supports, local businesses LEAs, and institutions of higher education; (D) the steps that the eligible entity is taking, at the time of the application, to address the needs identified in the needs analysis; and (E) any barriers the eligible entity, public agencies, and other community-based organizations have faced in meeting such needs.”	ESEA Section 4624(a)(4)

Title/ Program	Requirement	Section
Title IV, Part F Full-Service Community Schools (Community Support for School Success)	To apply for Community Support for School Success funding for full-service community schools, an eligible entity must submit as part of their application, a comprehensive plan that includes, among other things, a description of “[a] needs assessment that identifies the academic, physical, nonacademic, health, mental health, and other needs of students, families, and community residents.”	ESEA Section 4625(a)(4)(B)
Title IX, Part B¹ of ESSA Preschool Development Grants	In addition to implementing evidence-based practices and other required activities, states that receive an ESSA Preschool Development Grant in support of the coordination and operation of early childhood care and education programs must conduct “a periodic statewide needs assessment of—(A) the availability and quality of existing programs in the state, including such programs serving the most vulnerable or underserved populations and children in rural areas; (B) to the extent practicable, the unduplicated number of children being served in existing programs; and (C) to the extent practicable, the unduplicated number of children awaiting service in such programs.”	ESSA Section 9212(f)(1)

¹ Preschool Development Grants (PDGs) are authorized in ESEA, as amended by ESSA; however, this program is not the same as the PDG program first authorized in fiscal year 2014 under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014. It is included here to share the range of needs assessment requirements within ESSA. The secretary of health and human services, jointly with the secretary of education, will make awards under the ESSA PDG program.