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Understanding Federally Required Education Policy Needs Assessments and Maximizing Their Impact

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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UNDERSTANDING FEDERALLY REQUIRED EDUCATION POLICY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND MAXIMIZING THEIR IMPACT

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INTRODUCTION

In public education, delivering high-quality services to every student, particularly in our most impoverished communities, is a perennial challenge. However, state, district, and school leaders are getting increasingly adept at designing and using tools to make sure that limited resources are used most effectively to promote student learning and ongoing school improvement. When formalized as a system, an assessment or similar tool can be used to identify specific needs (commonly termed a “needs assessment”), explore these needs in some depth to identify the gap or discrepancy between “what is” and “what should be” and to identify the root cause(s) of any such gaps, and then use the information and analysis to set priorities for future action.

If well designed and used effectively, needs assessments can be an invaluable component of state, district, and school continuous improvement efforts – yielding information, insights, and perspectives that lead to enhanced systems and structures for adults and improved student outcomes. Even so, because the dozen or more federally required needs assessments (including two new needs assessments established by the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA]), each emanate from a specific program or set of program-related activities, and can be subject to piecemeal monitoring, there is a risk that the required needs assessments are undertaken as discrete tasks without considering how they align or overlap.

This document aims to assist state education agency (SEA) staff in designing and promoting a comprehensive and aligned needs assessment process. It includes ideas for consolidating an array of needs assessment activities with the goal of allocating resources more effectively and equitably, based on identified local needs and the root causes of underperformance in alignment with established priorities and toward the implementation of evidence-based strategies and interventions. It includes a summary of the federal requirements for needs assessments and highlights provisions where using a needs assessment is implicit, even if not expressly prescribed in statute or regulation.

What Is a Needs Assessment?

The phrase “needs assessment” is used rather loosely in the educational vernacular.

As currently implemented, a needs assessment can mean anything from asking individuals connected with education what they need to close the gap between current status and some desired state, such as all students reaching proficiency, to conducting a comprehensive research project, complete with a specified set of procedures such as statistical analysis, case studies, and student focus groups.

In both cases, there is an attempt to assess or measure a perceived or actual need by collecting data to document a challenge that exists. For federal programs, typically this means that local staff must collect data that help illuminate the path to improvement.

A Guide for Comprehensive Needs Assessment,
Colorado Department of Education

OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Among the numerous changes SEA staff are addressing to meet the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, as amended through ESSA, P.L. 114-95, enacted December 10, 2015), are two new needs assessments – one to be carried out at the school level following the identification of a school for Comprehensive Support and Improvement and one at the local educational agency (LEA) level required as a condition for receipt of funding under the new Title IV, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program. ESEA's needs assessment requirements in a number of other areas, including the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) were left in-tact with the latest reauthorization. In addition, the Head Start Act (Head Start) has a needs assessment requirement that may be relevant to the work of SEA staff.

Some of these requirements are explicit, meaning that the use of a needs assessment or comprehensive needs assessment is clearly required and described in detail in statute, and often also in regulation, and generally serves as a condition for the receipt of federal funding. Other federal PK-12 education laws require recipients of federal funds to develop plans for using funds in response to the unique or specific needs of one or more student groups, or of all students in a school or LEA. While these general provisions may not explicitly reference a needs assessment, it is implied that a funding recipient has or will take steps to identify existing needs and implement strategies to address them. The following federal laws include explicit and implicit needs assessment requirements:

➤ **Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

-  • Title I, Part A, Comprehensive Support & Improvement – School-Level Needs Assessment
- Title I, Part A, Schoolwide Programs – Needs Assessment
- Title I, Part A, Targeted Assistance Schools – Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- Title I, Part A, LEA Reservations for Homeless Children and Youths – Needs Assessment [*Optional*]
- Title I, Part A, Participation of Children Enrolled in Private Schools – [*Implicit*]
- Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children – Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- Title I, Part D, Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk – Comprehensive Assessment
- Title II, Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants – Needs Assessment
- Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act – [*Implicit*]
-  • Title IV, Part A, Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants – Comprehensive Needs Assessment

➤ **Head Start Act**

- Head Start – Community Assessment and Family Needs Assessment

➤ **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**

- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Education for Homeless Children and Youth –Needs Assessment

The variation that exists across these needs assessment requirements – with regard to roles (Who has primary responsibility?), focus and scope (What is to be examined?), purpose (How is information from the needs assessment to be used?), and implementation (Must it be completed as a precursor to funding or provided for in a plan?) – makes it challenging for a state leader to realize the full potential of these valuable (or potentially valuable) processes. At a minimum, state leaders should take steps to build a more coherent process so that data and information gathered through one needs assessment is not required to be collected again through a different assessment. The Summary Table included on p.5 highlights critical aspects of roles, focus/scope, and purpose. For example,

- **Who has primary responsibility for conducting these needs assessments?**
 - The role the state is required to play under law is limited. Only the migrant education program (ESEA Title I, Part C) and Comprehensive Literacy State Development grants program (ESEA Title II) require an SEA to conduct a statewide needs assessment. The latter further requires that the SEA analyze literacy needs in high-needs schools and LEAs that serve high-needs students.
 - The remaining provisions divide primary needs assessment responsibility among LEAs, schools, and other grantees/subgrantees.
 - Although the LEA must conduct the needs assessment required under McKinney-Vento, an SEA is required to award subgrants to LEAs competitively based on the needs of LEAs, and so the SEA must have some process for evaluating the needs assessments conducted by LEAs.
- **What is to be examined?**
 - In almost every instance, only high-level information is provided in statute. Additional requirements are established through regulations, for many programs, and non-regulatory guidance on some programs provides additional insight. This structure leaves states and districts significant design discretion.
 - The needs assessment's focus is generally tied to program goals. Programs that are targeted to a specific student group or population (i.e., migratory children) require needs assessments that concentrate on those specific students/populations, whereas other requirements, such as the Comprehensive Support and Improvement needs assessment and Schoolwide Programs needs assessment, center more broadly on improved student outcomes and the academic achievement of children. Even so, there may be ways to consolidate multiple tools and processes, while still achieving the requisite focus.

- **How is information gleaned from a needs assessment required to be used?**
 - Information use is another area where the level of statutory specificity varies considerably, as does the use(s) contemplated or required; in addition, where regulations have been published, they tend to provide much more detail about how gathered information must be used.
 - In some instances, the needs assessment itself (presumably the instrument and a summary of results) must be included in an entity’s plan or funding application. In some instances, an entity is only asked to describe the needs assessment and/or information gathered through it.
 - The McKinney-Vento needs assessment is used both by LEAs (to identify services that will be provided) and by SEAs to make competitive grant awards to LEAs.
 - Head Start recipients must use their community assessment to develop selection criteria and inform the prioritization of participants.

An SEA can play a significant role in providing guidance, assistance, and support to help make sure that (1) the focus of each needs assessment (much of which is defined only at a high level in statute) is **aligned with the state’s and district’s priorities** for the improvement of educational outcomes; and (2) each needs assessment process is as **well-designed and implemented** as possible so the results can be used most effectively.

SUMMARY TABLE – HIGHLIGHTS OF EACH REQUIREMENT

	Who has primary responsibility?	On what must the needs assessment focus?	Key requirements and other important information
1. Comprehensive Support and Improvement (ESEA, Title I, Part A)	Any <u>LEA</u> having one or more schools identified by the SEA for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) must develop a plan that is “based on a <u>school-level needs assessment.</u> ”	The school improvement plan must be designed to <u>improve student outcomes.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs assessment is required for any school identified for CSI. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment, other than it must be “school-level” and it must serve as the basis for the school’s CSI plan (so must be undertaken as a precursor to planning). • ESEA does not require a needs assessment for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools; however, some states are electing to make this a requirement for both CSI and TSI (or for any school not meeting state expectations).

	Who has primary responsibility?	On what must the needs assessment focus?	Key requirements and other important information
<p>2. Schoolwide Programs (ESEA, Title I, Part A)</p>	<p>Any eligible <u>school</u> desiring to operate a schoolwide program must develop a comprehensive plan that is “based on a <u>comprehensive needs assessment</u> of the entire school.”</p>	<p>The comprehensive plan must take into account information on the <u>academic achievement of children</u> in relation to the challenging State academic achievement standards.</p> <p>The comprehensive needs assessment must be based on <u>academic achievement information</u> and must <u>assess the needs of the school</u> relative to each component of the schoolwide program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs assessment is required of any school operating a schoolwide program; it must be used in the development of the school’s comprehensive plan. • The plan must be regularly monitored and revised as necessary based on student needs. (This suggests that the needs assessment must also be regularly revised.) • The needs assessment must be developed with participation of individuals who will carry out the schoolwide program plan. • The school’s plan must document how the needs assessment was conducted, the results it obtained, and the conclusions it drew from those results. • Non-regulatory guidance suggests that schools use interviews, focus groups, surveys, and data to gain a better understanding of the root causes of the identified needs.
<p>3. Targeted Assistance Programs (ESEA, Title I, Part A)</p>	<p>An eligible <u>school</u> seeking to offer comprehensive services must have engaged in a <u>comprehensive needs assessment</u>.</p>	<p>The comprehensive needs assessment is used to <u>identify and meet the comprehensive needs of eligible children</u>; services provided may include basic medical equipment, family support and engagement services, professional development, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs assessment is required, but only for Targeted Assistance schools seeking to offer comprehensive services for eligible students. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment.

	Who has primary responsibility?	On what must the needs assessment focus?	Key requirements and other important information
4. Homeless Children and Youths (ESEA, Title I, Part A)	Any <u>LEA</u> may use a <u>needs assessment of homeless children and youths</u> to determine the amount of Title I, Part A funds reserved to serve them.	The needs assessment is used to determine targeted services for homeless students and should take into consideration their <u>number and needs</u> across the LEA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs assessment is optional. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment. • LEAs may use the needs assessment required under McKinney-Vento.
5. Migrant Education (ESEA, Title I, Part C)	Any <u>state</u> seeking migrant education funding must develop a comprehensive state plan based on a <u>current statewide needs assessment</u> .	The needs assessment must be used for the identification and assessment of the <u>unique educational needs of migratory children that result from the children's migratory lifestyle</u> and other <u>needs of migratory students that must be met for them to participate in school effectively</u> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs assessment is required for the receipt of funds under this part. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment; however, there is extensive non-regulatory guidance, including a definition of "comprehensive needs assessment." • A state must use statewide needs assessment information as the basis for the comprehensive state plan. • A state may determine the activities to be provided with funds (including funds granted to LEAs); however, funds must first be used to meet needs of migratory children that result from their migratory lifestyle.

	Who has primary responsibility?	On what must the needs assessment focus?	Key requirements and other important information
<p>6. Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk (ESEA, Title I, Part D)</p>	<p>Any <u>state</u> that provides free public education for children and youth in an institution for neglected or delinquent youth may use funds to serve all children in such institutions or programs if the SEA has a comprehensive plan for the institution or program that provides for a <u>comprehensive assessment of the educational needs of children and youth</u> (in juvenile facilities) and a <u>comprehensive assessment of the educational needs of youth ages 20 and younger</u> (in adult facilities).</p> <p>An <u>LEA</u> may receive funding to meet the transitional and academic needs of students returning to the LEA or alternative education programs from correctional facilities, but must submit an application with a description of (1) how the school will coordinate existing educational programs to <u>meet the unique needs of such children and youth</u>; and (2) how schools will work with probation officers to <u>assist in meeting the needs of such children and youth</u>.</p>	<p>The state plan must provide for at least one of two needs assessments, depending on whether the facility assisted serves juveniles or adults. Any such comprehensive assessment must focus on the <u>educational needs of children and youth</u>.</p> <p>An LEA plan must describe the ways in which schools receiving funding will work, including with probation officers, to meet (or assist in meeting) the <u>educational needs of children and youth</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs assessment is required, though implicit (see Appendix for additional information) for the receipt of funds under this part at both the state and LEA levels. • At the SEA level, a comprehensive assessment must be provided for in the state plan (rather than used as the basis for the plan). • At the LEA level, no assessment is prescribed; however, it can be presumed that one must be undertaken to determine the “unique educational needs of children and youth” that are to be the focus of the LEA plan. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment.

	Who has primary responsibility?	On what must the needs assessment focus?	Key requirements and other important information
<p>7. Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants</p> <p>(ESEA, Title II)</p>	<p>Any <u>state</u> seeking funding must include in its application a <u>needs assessment</u> that “analyzes literacy needs across the State and in <u>high-needs schools and LEAs that serve high-needs students.</u>”</p> <p>An entity seeking a subgrant in support of K-12 literacy must include a description of the entity’s <u>needs assessment</u> in its application for funding.</p> <p>Any <u>entity seeking a subgrant in support of Birth-K literacy</u> may be required by the SEA to submit its <u>needs assessment</u> or information derived from it in its application for funding.</p>	<p>The needs assessment provided by the state must <u>identify the most significant gaps in literacy proficiency and inequities in student access to effective teachers of literacy.</u> It must consider each <u>student subgroup</u>, as well as the <u>literacy needs across the state, and in schools and LEAs serving high-needs students.</u></p> <p>A needs assessment provided or used as part of a K-12 subgrantee application for funding must <u>identify how subgrant funds will be used to inform and improve comprehensive literacy instruction at the school.</u></p>	<p><u>SEA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs assessment is required for the receipt of funds under this part. • A needs assessment must be included in the application (though not all activities provided for in the application are required to be based on the needs assessment). • This needs assessment must be conducted prior to submitting an application – in order to meet the requirement that the application includes the needs assessment. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment. • An SEA may reserve not more than 5 percent of its grant or activities identified through the state-level needs assessment. <p><u>Subgrant Applicants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs assessment is required to be used by a K-12 subgrantee applicant and described in the application (rather than being provided as part of the application). A state has the discretion to require a needs assessment for Birth-K subgrantee applicants.
<p>8. English Language Acquisition</p> <p>(ESEA, Title III, Part A)</p>	<p>Any <u>state</u> seeking funding must include in its application a description of how the agency will “meet the <u>unique needs of children and youth</u>” being served and an assurance that the agency will “address the <u>needs of school systems of all sizes and in all geographic areas.</u>”</p>	<p>This needs assessment must focus on <u>the unique needs of children and youth</u> being provided English language acquisition and language enhancement services. The state must also identify and address the <u>related needs of all school systems.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs assessment is required, though implicit (see Appendix for additional information) for the receipt of funds under this part. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment; however, it can be presumed that a state applicant must use some assessment to identify the unique needs of children and youth as well as the needs existing in systems across the state.

	Who has primary responsibility?	On what must the needs assessment focus?	Key requirements and other important information
<p>9. Title IV Block Grant – Student Support and Academic Enrichment (ESEA, Title IV, Part A)</p>	<p>Any <u>LEA</u> that receives at least \$30,000 in grant funding under this part must conduct a <u>comprehensive needs assessment</u>.</p>	<p>The comprehensive needs assessment must consider the <u>improvement of access to a well-rounded education, school conditions for student learning, and access to personalized learning experiences</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs assessment is required to be carried out by LEAs receiving at least \$30,000 in funding under this part. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment; however, some additional information is provided in non-regulatory guidance.
<p>10. Head Start (Head Start Act)</p>	<p>Any <u>recipient</u> of a Head Start grant must conduct a <u>community assessment</u> that is used to develop selection criteria and prioritization of participants.</p> <p>Each <u>participating family</u> must engage in a <u>family needs assessment</u>.</p>	<p>The community assessment must use <u>data that describe community strengths, needs, and resources</u> (including the number of eligible children to be served; the education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families, etc.)</p> <p>The family needs assessment must be based on consultation with parents about the <u>benefits of parent involvement and the activities in which they may choose to become involved</u>.</p>	<p><u>Community Assessment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs assessment is required to be carried out by any Head Start grant recipient and used to develop selection criteria for program participants. • Each grant recipient must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period. <p><u>Family Needs Assessment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family needs assessment is required of each participating family. • Consultation with parents must, to the extent possible, be in a manner and language that the parents can understand.

	Who has primary responsibility?	On what must the needs assessment focus?	Key requirements and other important information
<p>11. Education for Homeless Children and Youth (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)</p>	<p>Any <u>LEA</u> seeking a competitive grant under this program must include a <u>needs assessment</u> in its application. The application must address needs identified in the needs assessment.</p> <p>An <u>SEA</u> is to award subgrants to LEAs competitively on the basis of the <u>needs of LEAs</u>.</p>	<p>The needs assessment conducted by an LEA must be an <u>assessment of the educational and related needs of homeless children and youths in the area served</u> by such agency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An LEA's needs assessment must be included in the grant application (completed prior to submission) and used to inform the development of the application. • The statute provides no specifics on the design or implementation of the needs assessment; however, some additional information is provided in non-regulatory guidance. • This needs assessment may also be used by an LEA seeking funds under ESEA §1113. • An SEA must have a process for awarding subgrants based on LEA need.

OPPORTUNITY FOR STATE LEADERSHIP

In putting in place the plans, technical assistance, and oversight mechanisms needed to fulfill new needs assessment requirements and continue existing ones, state education leaders have an opportunity to rethink how needs assessments are used to drive advancements in teaching and learning, improve schools and LEAs, and meet goals for student achievement and success. Several SEAs have already taken significant steps toward the design and implementation of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) Process. (In addition to the state-specific resources hyperlinked below, see the resources section links to CNA resources designed by other organizations.) Arizona and Georgia are two such states:

Arizona Department of Education

Arizona uses a [Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Integrated Action Plan](#) process based on the following six (6) CNA principles, each with defined indicators and elements, to identify school strengths and needs and “to increase student achievement and strengthen school systems leading to sustainable improvement.”

Principle 1: Effective Leadership

Principle 2: Effective Teachers and Instruction

Principle 3: Effective Organization of Time

Principle 4: Effective Curriculum

Principle 5: Conditions, Climate and Culture

Principle 6: Family and Community Engagement

Georgia Department of Education

Georgia has multi-tiered School Improvement Planning process aligned with the Georgia School Performance Standards. A core element is the development of a [Comprehensive Needs Assessment Plan](#) “based on trend and summative data developed from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment 3-Yr Profile.” 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. Data gathering and analysis includes the following areas: Achievement; Student Progress; Achievement Gap; Challenge (ED/EL/SWD) Exceeding the Bar Indicators; and Perception Data.

Using the First Steps Check-List and resources identified below (as well as the Summary Table and more detailed information provided in the Appendix), an SEA could begin the process of developing an aligned and comprehensive needs assessment process that would incorporate many, if not all, of the various federally-mandated needs assessments and any additional ones that may be required by the state.

➤ **First Steps Check-List**

- Identify the SEA staff who have primary responsibility for each of the needs assessments highlighted in this paper.
- Identify any additional needs assessments that may be required by the SEA and the person who has primary responsibility for each. For example, a state-led accreditation process for LEAs and/or schools could have a needs assessment component.
- Determine the SEA's current role regarding each needs assessment. For example, does the SEA conduct the needs assessment? Does the SEA provide a template, tool, or guidance? Does the SEA review information from the needs assessments conducted at the LEA and school level – if so, for what purpose(s)?
- If the SEA does not provide a template/tool for LEAs and schools to use, try to gather several examples of those commonly used. These tools may be locally developed or made available by external organizations.
- Review the needs assessment tools you collect, and any instructions or guidance for their use. Look for redundant data/information collections, including areas in which data collection could be streamlined without compromising utility. Determine the extent to which these tools focus on the factors that matter most to student outcomes and school and district improvement.
- Identify obstacles to implementing a comprehensive needs assessment process. These obstacles may include challenges related to timing, concerns regarding the expectations of program-specific monitoring activities, or the discrete areas of focus that are to be assessed.
- Develop a plan and timeline for moving to a comprehensive needs assessment process. It may not be feasible to collapse every needs assessment into a single comprehensive process, but there are almost sure to be some areas where consolidation and/or needs assessment redesign are appropriate.

➤ **Resources for Designing and Implementing High-Quality Needs Assessments**

Experts have published a number of resources about the design and implementation of needs assessment, including the following:

- [Using Needs Assessments for School and District Improvement, A Tactical Guide](#) – Corbett, J. & Redding, S. (2017). CCSSO and Center for School Turnaround at WestEd.
- [Comprehensive Needs Assessment](#) – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education: 2001 New Directors Orientation (2001).
- [ASCD School Improvement Tool](#) – ASCD
- [Community Needs Assessment](#) – The Federation for Community Schools

- [Readiness Assessment: Finding your Starting Point](#) – Center for Educational Leadership at University of Washington
- [District Readiness to Support School Turnaround](#) – Center on School Turnaround
- [Turnaround Schools: District Strategies for Success and Sustainability](#) – Education Resource Strategies
- [District Capacity Assessment](#) – *State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidenced-based Practices at UNC (SISEP)*. (Please note: To gain access to this tool, a 1 hour training must be completed.)
- [Arizona Department of Education - Comprehensive Needs Assessment](#) – Arizona Department of Education
- [Colorado Department of Education - A Guide for Comprehensive Needs Assessment](#) – Prepared by RMC Research Corporation (2008)
- [Georgia Department of Education - CNA Overview](#), [CNA](#), [District-Level Template](#), [School-Level Template](#) – Georgia Department of Education

APPENDIX

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Provided below, for each major needs assessment requirement highlighted above, is a summary of the federal law (including any applicable regulations), relevant information contained in non-regulatory guidance, and, as applicable, additional information on the program or provision with regard to which needs assessment is to be undertaken. Bold text is used within the Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement section for emphasis.

➤ Elementary and Secondary Education Act

Comprehensive Support & Improvement — Title I, Part A, Comprehensive Support & Improvement - School-Level Needs Assessment	
<u>Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement</u>	<u>Additional Context</u>
<p>Any LEA with one or more schools identified by the State for Comprehensive Support and Improvement must develop a Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plan “for the school to improve student outcomes...” The Plan must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be informed by all of the State’s accountability indicators, including student performance against the state’s long-term goals; • Include evidence-based interventions; • Be “based on a school-level needs assessment;” • Identify resource inequities, which may include a review of LEA and school-level budgeting; • Be approved by the school, LEA, and SEA; and • Be periodically reviewed by the SEA. [ESEA § 1111(d)(1)(B)(i) through (iv)] <p>Although the LEA’s plan is required to be developed in consultation with stakeholders, including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents [ESEA §1111(d)(1)(B)], it isn’t clear from the statute that the needs assessment is required to be done in consultation with stakeholders. Rather, the plan must be based on the needs assessment.</p> <p>Note: The regulations [34 C.F.R. Part 200.21(c)(1)-(5)] related to this needs assessment are now rescinded. However, they can still serve as a resource for states if deemed helpful.</p>	<p>The identification of schools for Comprehensive Support and Improvement is a new requirement, under ESEA’s State Plans provisions, specifically those on School Support and Improvement Activities. An SEA must “notify each local educational agency in the State of any school served by the local educational agency that is identified for comprehensive support and improvement” [ESEA §1111(d)(1)(A)]...based on the state’s system of meaningful differentiation and a “State-determined methodology to identify – (i) beginning with school year 2017-2018, and at least once every three school years thereafter, one state-wide category of schools for comprehensive support and improvement...” [ESEA §1111(c)(4)(D)]</p> <p>“Upon receiving such information from the State, the local educational agency shall, 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...” [ESEA §1111(d)(1)(B)]</p> <p>ESEA does not require a needs assessment for schools identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI); however, some states are electing to require one for both CSI and TSI schools (or for any school that does not meet state expectations).</p>

- Under Part 200.21, an LEA's plan would have been required to include the following:
 - Academic achievement data on each of the assessments required under ESEA §1111(b)(2)(B)(v);
 - The school's performance, including subgroups of students, on the long-term goals and measurements of interim progress and indicators;
 - The reason or reasons the school was identified for comprehensive support and improvement;
 - The school's unmet needs, including those with respect to students, school leadership and instructional staff, quality of the instructional program, family and community involvement, school climate, and distribution of resources;
 - At the LEAs discretion, the school's performance on additional, locally selected measures that are not included in the State's system of annual meaningful differentiation and that affect student outcomes in the identified school.
- The regulation also would have required the following:
 - One or more interventions identified in the comprehensive support and improvement plan "must be supported, to the extent practicable, by the strongest level of evidence that is available and appropriate to meet the needs identified in the needs assessment."
 - A new comprehensive needs assessment (used to amend the comprehensive support and improvement plan) if a school does not meet exit criteria within the state determined number of years.

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - [ESEA, Section 1111\(d\)\(1\)](#)
- Regulation
 - U.S. Department of Education regulations ([34 CFR Part 200.21](#) Comprehensive Support and Improvement) were rescinded, but may serve as a resource to USED in developing non-regulatory guidance and to states in implementation.
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - [Timeline](#) for identification of schools for support and improvement
 - [ESSA Dear Colleague Letter](#) on School Support and Improvement Activities and Consultation (April 10, 2017)
 - [ESSA Dear Colleague](#) Letter on 2017-2018 Transition (January 13, 2017)
 - [ESSA Consolidated State Plan](#) Guidance (January 6, 2017)
 - [ESSA State and Local Report Cards](#) Guidance (January 6, 2017)
 - [Dear Colleague Letter](#) on ESSA State Plans (November 29, 2016)

Schoolwide Programs

— Title I, Part A, Schoolwide Programs - Needs Assessment

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

An eligible school operating a schoolwide program is required to develop a comprehensive plan that "...is based on a **comprehensive needs assessment** of the entire school 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 and any other factors as determined by the local educational agency..." [ESEA §1114(b)(6)]

Regulations establish additional requirements. The comprehensive needs assessment must

- Be based on academic achievement information about all students in the school, including all groups under 34 C.F.R. §200.13(b)(7) and migratory children as defined in section 1309(2) of the ESEA, relative to the State's academic standards under §200.1 to — (A) Help the school understand the subjects and skills for which teaching and learning need to be improved; and (B) Identify the specific academic needs of students and groups of students who are not yet achieving the State's academic standards; and
- Assesses the needs of the school relative to each of the components of the schoolwide program under §200.28.

In addition,

- The comprehensive needs assessment must be developed with the participation of individuals who will carry out the schoolwide program plan; and
- The school must document how it conducted the needs assessment, the results it obtained, and the conclusions it drew from those results. [34 C.F.R. §200.26(a)]

According to non-regulatory guidance

- A school should attempt to engage in interviews, focus groups, or surveys, as well as review data on students, educators, and schools to gain a better understanding of the root causes of the identified needs.

Additional Context

ESEA Title I, Part A establishes two types of programs that an eligible LEA can operate – targeted assistance and schoolwide. Only a schoolwide program permits the LEA to use Title I funds to support comprehensive schoolwide reforms. In a schoolwide program, an LEA may use Title I funds to implement reforms to upgrade the entire educational program of the school. In contrast, in a targeted assistance program, an LEA may use Title I funds only for Title I students – i.e., those who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the State's academic achievement standards. [ESSA Schoolwide Guidance]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - ESEA, Section 1114(b)(6)
- Regulation
 - [34 C.F.R. Part 200.26](#) Note: This part was published in 2010; it is not part of the final regulation on ESEA accountability, state plans, and data reporting (November 28, 2016) which was subsequently rescinded.
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - [ESSA State and Local Report Cards](#) Guidance (January 6, 2017)
 - [ESSA Schoolwide Guidance](#) (September 29, 2016)
 - [OMB Circular A-133, Compliance Supplement 2016](#), Part 4 – Department of Education

<ul style="list-style-type: none">o The comprehensive schoolwide plan must describe how the school will improve academic achievement throughout the school, but particularly for the lowest-achieving students, by addressing the needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment.o A school operating a schoolwide program may use Title I funds for any activity that supports the needs of students in the school as identified through the comprehensive needs assessment and articulated in the schoolwide plan. [ESSA Schoolwide Guidance] <p>A schoolwide program comprehensive plan remains in effect for the duration of the school's participation in this program, and the plan and implementation shall be regularly monitored and revised as necessary based on student needs. [ESEA §1114(b)(3)]</p>	
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Targeted Assistance Schools

— Title I, Part A, Targeted Assistance Schools – Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

Eligible schools providing a Targeted Assistance Program may offer comprehensive services (described below) if the following two conditions are met:

- Health, nutrition, and other social services are not otherwise available to eligible children in the school and the school, if appropriate, has engaged in a **comprehensive needs assessment** and established a collaborative partnership with local service providers; and
- Funds are not reasonably available from other public or private sources to provide such services.

Then a portion of the school's Title I, Part A funds "may be used as a last resort to provide such services, including — (i) the provision of basic medical equipment, such as eyeglasses and hearing aids; (ii) compensation of a coordinator; (iii) family support and engagement services; (iv) integrated student supports; and (v) professional development necessary to assist teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, other staff, and parents in identifying and meeting the comprehensive needs of eligible children." [ESEA §1115(e)(2)]

Additional Context

For any Title I-eligible school that is not eligible to operate a schoolwide program, has not received a waiver to do so, or elects not to do so, the LEA serving the school may use Title I, Part A funds only for programs that provide services to eligible children identified as having the greatest need for special assistance. These Targeted Assistance Schools, defined under ESEA §1115, may operate a Targeted Assistance School Program to assist the school and LEA in meeting "their responsibility to provide for all their students served under this part the opportunity to meet the challenging State academic standards..." [ESEA §1115(b)]

A Targeted Assistance School Program shall, among other things, serve participating students, "including by — (A) using resources under this part to help eligible children meet the challenging State academic standards, which may include programs, activities, and academic courses necessary to provide a well-rounded education; (B) using methods and instructional strategies to strengthen the academic program of the school ...; (C) coordinating with and supporting the regular education program, which may include services to assist preschool children in the transition from early childhood education programs such as Head Start ...; (D) providing professional development... to teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, and, if appropriate, specialized instructional support personnel, and other school personnel who work with eligible children...; (E) implementing strategies to increase the involvement of parents of eligible children...; and (F) if appropriate and applicable, coordinating and integrating Federal, State, and local services and programs." [ESEA §1115(b)]

A comprehensive needs assessment is only required to be carried out by a Targeted Assistance School that elects to use a portion of its funds for comprehensive services.

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - ESEA, Section 1115(e)(2)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - [ESSA Early Learning](#) Guidance (January 17, 2017)
 - [ESSA Schoolwide](#) Guidance (September 29, 2016)

Homeless Children and Youths

— Title I, Part A, LEA Reservations for Homeless Children and Youths - Needs Assessment (Optional)

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

An LEA, in determining the amount of Title I, Part A funds to be reserved to provide services to homeless children and youths, **may base such determination on a needs assessment of homeless children and youths** in the LEA, "... taking into consideration the number and needs of homeless children and youths in the local educational agency..." This needs assessment may be the same needs assessment as conducted under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act [ESEA §1113(c)(3)(C)(i)].

This needs assessment is optional. An LEA may use other means to determine the amount of funds to be reserved.

In non-regulatory guidance on the McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by ESSA, updated by USED in March 2017, additional information provided specifically on needs assessments for homeless students includes the following:

- Needs assessments for homeless students should consider enrollment averages and trends, the presence of other State and Federal education grants that can provide the same or similar services, and other community resources, as well as what is necessary and reasonable for each student to fulfill the purposes of Title I and McKinney-Vento programs in their district. [Homeless Student Guidance]
- LEAs should include the identification of homeless students and their unique educational needs in any district needs assessment and school improvement plans that define a school's targeted work to raise achievement for all students. [Homeless Student Guidance]

Additional Context

From Title I, Part A funds allocated to an LEA, an LEA shall reserve "such funds as necessary...to provide services comparable to those provided to children in schools funded under Title I, Part A to serve – (i) homeless children and youths, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelters and other locations where children may live; (ii) children in local institutions for neglected children; and (iii) if appropriate, children in local institutions for delinquent children, and neglected or delinquent children in community day programs." [ESEA §1113(c)(3)(A)]

An LEA shall use such funds to provide homeless children and youths with services "not ordinarily provided to other students under this part, including providing – (I) funding for the liaison designated pursuant to section 722(g)(1)(J)(ii)" of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. [ESEA §1113(c)(3)(C)(ii)]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - [ESEA, Section 1113\(c\)\(3\)](#)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - [Homeless Student Guidance](#) - Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by ESSA (July 27, 2016; updated March 2017)

Participation of Children in Private Schools

— Title I, Part A, Participation of Children Enrolled in Private Schools [Implicit Needs Assessment Requirement]

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

For eligible students, to the extent consistent with the number of eligible children identified under ESEA section 1115(c), who are enrolled in private elementary schools and secondary schools, an LEA must, among other things, “after timely and meaningful consultation with appropriate private school officials, provide such children, on an equitable basis and individually or in combination, as requested by the officials to best **meet the needs of such children**, special educational services, instructional services (including evaluations to determine the progress being made in meeting such students’ academic needs), counseling, mentoring, one-on-one tutoring, or other benefits under this part (such as dual or concurrent enrollment, educational radio and television, computer equipment and materials, other technology, and mobile educational services and equipment) that **address their needs...**” [ESEA §1117]

Additional Context

An LEA’s consultation with appropriate private school officials “shall occur before the local educational agency makes any decision that affects the opportunities of eligible private school children to participate in programs under this part. Such meetings shall continue throughout implementation and assessment of services provided.” It must also include a discussion of service delivery mechanisms an LEA can use. [ESEA §1117(b)(3) and (4)]

All such educational services and benefits shall be secular, neutral, and nonideological. [ESEA §1117]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - [ESEA, Section 1117](#)
- Regulation
 - [34 CFR 200.55](#)
 - [34 CFR 200.59](#)

Migrant Education

— Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children - Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

A State’s application for migratory education funding “shall include – (1) a description of how, in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and projects assisted under this part, the State and its local operating agencies will ensure that the **unique educational needs** of migratory children, including preschool migratory children and migratory children who have dropped out of school, are identified and addressed...; (4) a description of the State’s priorities for the use of funds received under this part, and how such priorities related to the **State’s assessment of needs for services in the State**; [and] (5) a description of how the State will determine the amount of any subgrants the State will award to local operating agencies, **taking into account the numbers and needs of migratory children...**” [ESEA §1304(b)]

Any State that receives funding must “ensure that the State and its local operating agencies **identify and address the unique educational needs of migratory children** in accordance with a comprehensive State plan...” [ESEA §1306(a)(1)]

An SEA that receives a grant “must develop and update a written comprehensive State plan based on a current **statewide needs assessment**” that, at a minimum, has the following components:

- “(2) Needs assessment. The plan must include an identification and assessment of — (i) The unique educational needs of migratory children that result from the children’s migratory lifestyle; and (ii) Other needs of migratory students that must be met in order for migratory children to participate effectively in school.” [34 CFR 200.83]

In the planning and operation of programs and projects under this section, there must be consultation with parents of migratory children, including parent advisory councils. [ESEA §1304(c)(3)]

Funds “shall be **used to address the needs of migratory children that are not addressed** by services available from other Federal or non-Federal programs, except that migratory children who are eligible to receive services under part A may receive those services through funds provided under that part, or through funds under

Additional Context

ESEA’s Title I, Part C – Education of Migratory Children, authorizes the Secretary to make grants to SEAs, or combinations of SEAs, to establish or improve, directly or through local operating agencies, programs of education for migratory children. [ESEA §1302]

The application of each State seeking a grant shall include, among other things, a description of how the State and its local operating agencies will ensure that the unique educational needs of migratory children, including preschool migratory children, and migratory children who have dropped out of school, are identified and addressed through the full range of services that are available for migratory children from appropriate local, State, and Federal educational programs; joint planning among local, State, and Federal educational programs serving migratory children; the integration of services available under Title I, Part C with services provided by those other programs; and measurable objectives and outcomes. [ESEA §1304(b)(1)]

Any State desiring to receive a grant for any fiscal year “shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require.” [ESEA §1304(a)]

Each State that receives assistance under section 1306 shall ensure that the State and its local operating agencies identify and address the unique educational needs of migratory students in accordance with a comprehensive State plan. [ESEA §1306(a)(1)]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - [ESEA, Section 1306](#)
- Regulation
 - [34 CFR 200.83](#)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - Title I, Part C Non-Regulatory Guidance, select chapters revised 2010, Office of Migrant Education, Comprehensive Needs Assessment - [Guide](#)

this part that remain after the agency addresses the needs” of migratory children that result from their migratory lifestyle. [ESEA §1306(b)(2)]

A school that receives funds under this section “shall **continue to address the identified needs of migratory students and shall meet the unique educational needs of migratory children before using funds under this part for schoolwide programs under section 1114.**” [ESEA §1306(b)(4)]

Non-regulatory guidance on Title I, Part C includes extensive information on the comprehensive needs assessment required of SEAs and local operating agencies. Excerpts from this guidance are included below:

- The primary purpose of the comprehensive needs assessment...is to guide the overall design of the MEP on a statewide basis. It is not sufficient to simply document the need for the program (e.g., 50 percent of migrant students are not proficient in reading, or 30 percent of migrant students do not graduate from high school). Rather, SEAs and local operating agencies must identify the special educational needs of migrant children and determine the specific services that will help migrant children achieve the State’s measurable outcomes and performance targets. Because there are never sufficient resources to meet all the needs of migrant children, the comprehensive needs assessment helps SEAs and local operating agencies prioritize those needs.
- Local operating agencies conduct individual needs assessments to (1) determine the needs of migrant students and how those needs relate to the priorities established by the State; (2) design local services; and (3) select students for the receipt of those services. While the SEA and local operating agencies must jointly ensure that needs assessment procedures at the local operating agency level are aligned with those at the State level, local operating agencies are able to narrow their needs assessments because local staff have access to more precise information than is available at the SEA level. This enables the local operating agency to identify such critical elements as the specific needs of children by grade levels, academic areas in which the project should focus, instructional settings, instructional materials, staffing, and teaching techniques.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “needs assessment” is a systematic assessment and decision-making process that progresses through a defined series of phases to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future action. A needs assessment (1) Focuses on the ends (i.e., outcomes) to be achieved, rather than the means (i.e., process). For example, reading achievement is an outcome, whereas reading instruction is a means toward that end; (2) Gathers data by means of established procedures and methods that are thoughtfully selected to fit the purposes and context of the needs assessment; (3) Sets priorities and determines criteria for solutions so that planners and managers can make sound decisions; (4) Sets criteria for determining how best to allocate available money, people, facilities, and other resources; (5) Leads to action that will improve programs, services, organizational structure and operations, or a combination of these elements. • A needs assessment is comprehensive if it: (1) Includes both needs identification and the assessment of potential solutions; (2) Addresses all relevant performance targets established for migrant children (i.e., proficiency in reading, proficiency in math, graduation from high school, reduction of the dropout rate, and any other program goal set for migrant children by the State, including school readiness); (3) Identifies the needs of migrant children at a level that is useful for program design purposes; (4) Collects data from appropriate target groups (i.e., students, parents, teachers, etc.); (5) Examines needs data disaggregated by key subgroups; and (6) Is conducted on a statewide basis. • The “special educational needs” of migrant children, as defined in 34 CFR 200.83(a) (2), are those educational and educationally related needs that (1) result from the migrant lifestyle, and (2) must be met in order for migrant children to participate effectively in school. Each SEA must identify the special educational needs of the migrant children who reside in the State. These needs should be the focus of the program’s design and interventions. 	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sections 1304(b)(1) and 1306(a)(1) of the ESEA require the SEA to ensure that the State and its local operating agencies identify and address the special educational needs of migrant children. Furthermore, every SEA must develop and update a written comprehensive State service delivery plan that includes an identification and assessment of the special educational needs of migrant children, as described in the previous question. [See 34 CFR 200.83] • SEAs must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment in order to develop a comprehensive State plan for service delivery that addresses the special educational needs of migrant children. Local operating agencies must conduct a needs assessment in order to provide services that will meet the identified needs in accordance with the comprehensive State plan for service delivery. • Section 1304(b)(1) of the statute requires SEAs to ensure that they will identify and address the special educational needs of preschool migrant children. • The SEA and local operating agency cannot reasonably design the MEP or determine the grade levels and instructional areas on which individual projects should focus without information on the special educational needs of all eligible children identified in the State. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o At the State level, a comprehensive needs assessment identifies: (1) the needs of migrant children on a statewide basis through a systematic process of prioritizing among competing needs; (2) services, on a statewide basis, that are most likely to enable the MEP to meet its measurable outcomes and contribute to the achievement of the State’s performance targets; and (3) the best way to allocate limited resources, including time, money, and organizational efforts. 	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">o At the local operating agency level, a needs assessment determines (1) the extent of the needs of migrant students in that project area and how those needs relate to the priorities the State has established; (2) how to design local services; and (3) which students should receive services. Local operating agencies identify such critical elements as the specific needs of children by grade levels, the academic areas in which the project should focus, the instructional settings, materials, staffing, and teaching techniques.• SEAs and local operating agencies are required to design and operate their programs based on a current comprehensive needs assessment. [34 CFR 200.83] Because a quality needs assessment is an extensive undertaking and many of the needs and solutions do not change significantly from one year to the next, it is not practical to conduct a complete needs assessment every year. As a rule of thumb, States should conduct a complete needs assessment every 3 years, or more frequently if there is evidence of a change in the needs of migrant children (e.g., project personnel or parents begin recommending changes to improve the program or the demographic characteristics of the migrant student population changes). In addition, key sections of the needs assessment should be updated annually to ensure the results of the needs assessment remain current. Information that is typically updated on an annual basis includes the data required for (1) the SEA's subgrant process, and (2) the local operating agency's project application.	
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Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk

— Title I, Part D, Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk – Comprehensive Assessment

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

An SEA that provides free public education for children and youth in an institution for neglected or delinquent youth or those attending a community-day program, may use funds to serve all children in the institution or program and may upgrade the entire educational effort of such institution or program if the SEA has approved a comprehensive plan for that institution or program that, among other things

- Provides for a **comprehensive assessment of the educational needs** of all children and youth in the institution or program serving juveniles;
- Provides for a **comprehensive assessment of the educational needs** of youth aged 20 and younger in adult facilities who are expected to complete incarceration within a 2-year period;
- Describes the steps the State agency has taken, or will take, to provide all children and youth under age 21 with the opportunity to meet challenging State academic standards in order to improve the likelihood that the children and youth will attain a regular high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or find employment after leaving the institution; and
- Describes the instructional program, specialized instructional support services, and procedures that will be used to meet the needs described above. [ESEA §1416]

In providing transitional and supportive programs, LEAs must design such programs “primarily to **meet the transitional and academic needs** of students returning to local educational agencies or alternative education programs from correctional facilities.” [ESEA §1422(d)]

To receive funding under this part, an LEA must submit an application to the SEA, which such information as the SEA may require, including, among other things

- A description of the program to be assisted, including a description of the “characteristics (including learning difficulties, substance abuse problems, and other special needs) of

Additional Context

Any SEA that desires to receive a grant under this subpart shall submit a plan (1) for meeting the educational needs of neglected, delinquent, and at-risk children and youth; and (2) for assisting in the transition of children and youth between correctional facilities and locally operated programs. Any such plan must be integrated with other ESSA programs and other federal programs, as appropriate. A state’s plan must, among other things, describe the state’s program objectives and the outcomes that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the program in improving the academic, career, and technical skills of children in the program. [ESEA §1414]

An SEA may use funds received under this part only for programs and projects that are consistent with the state plan and that concentrate on providing participants with the knowledge and skills needed to make a successful transition to secondary school completion, further education or employment. [ESEA §1415]

An SEA shall award subgrants to LEAs with high numbers or percentages of children and youth residing in locally operated correctional facilities for children and youth. [ESEA §1422]

An LEA may operate programs that involve collaboration with locally operated correctional facilities in order to carry out high quality education programs, provide activities to transition children and youth from the correctional program to further education or employment, and operate programs in schools for children returning from correctional facilities and programs. [ESEA §1421]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - [ESEA, Sections 1414-1423](#)
- Regulation
 - [34 CFR 200.90-200.91](#)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - [The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth](#)

<p>the children and youth who will be returning from correctional facilities and, as appropriate, other at-risk children and youth expected to be served by the program, and a description of how the school will coordinate existing educational programs to meet the unique educational needs of such children and youth;”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As appropriate, a description of how schools will coordinate with existing social, health, and other services to meet the needs of students returning from correctional facilities, at-risk children or youth, and other participating children or youth, including prenatal health care and nutrition services related to the health of the parent and the child or youth, parenting and child development classes, child care, targeted reentry and outreach programs, referrals to community resources, and scheduling flexibility;” and• As appropriate, a description of how schools “will work with probation officers to assist in meeting the needs of children and youth returning from correctional facilities.”[ESEA §1423]	
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Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants

— Title II, Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants - Needs Assessment

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

Under this grant program, both grantees (SEAs) and at least some subgrantees (eligible entities seeking funding in support of kindergarten through grade 12 literacy) are required to carry out a needs assessment.

SEA Needs Assessment

An SEA's grant application shall include a **needs assessment** that "analyzes literacy needs across the State and in high-need schools and LEAs that serve high-needs students, including identifying the most significant gaps in literacy proficiency and inequities in student access to effective teachers of literacy, considering each..." subgroup of students. [ESEA §2222(d)(2)(A)]

An SEA may reserve not more than 5 percent of its grant for "**activities identified through the needs assessment and comprehensive literacy plan...**" including the following:

- Providing technical assistance, or engaging qualified providers to provide technical assistance, to eligible entities to design and implement literacy programs;
- Coordinating with institutions of higher education in the State to provide recommendations to strengthen and enhance pre-service courses for students preparing to teach children from birth through grade 12 in explicit, systematic, and intensive instruction in evidence-based literacy methods;
- Reviewing and updating, in collaboration with teachers and institutions of higher education, State licensure or certification standards in the areas of literacy instruction in early education through grade 12;
- Making publicly available, including on the State educational agency's website, information on promising instructional practices to improve child literacy achievement; and
- Administering and monitoring the implementation of subgrants by eligible entities. [ESEA §2222(f)(2)]

Additional Context

Comprehensive Literacy State Development grants are part of the new Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) grant program under Title II, Part B – National Activities. LEARN essentially replaces the Striving Readers grant program which was established through funding appropriated in the 2016 budget (not authorized through NCLB).

The Secretary is to award Comprehensive Literacy State Development grants to SEAs through a competitive process. The purpose of the grant is to enable States to

- Provide subgrants to eligible entities (serving a diversity of geographic areas) giving priority to those serving greater numbers or percentages of children from low-income families; and
- Develop or enhance comprehensive literacy instruction plans that ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading and writing for children from early childhood through grade 12, including English learners and students with disabilities. [ESEA §2222(a)]

An SEA may apply by submitting an application at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require. [ESEA 2222(d)(1)] Grants will be awarded to the SEA for a period of not more than five years total. Upon termination of the initial grant period, a grant may be renewed for an additional 2-year period. [ESEA §2222(c)]

In writing and implementing the early childhood portion of its grant application, the SEA must collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering early childhood education programs and the State agency responsible for administering child care programs. [ESEA §2222(d)(1)]

An SEA receiving a grant shall use a portion of the grant funds to award subgrantees in support of birth through kindergarten entry literacy [ESEA §2223] and shall also use a portion of the grant fund to award subgrants in support of kindergarten through grade 12 literacy. [ESEA §2224]

Subgrantee Needs Assessment

An SEA receiving a grant shall not use less than 95 percent of grant funds to award subgrants to eligible entities, based on their **needs assessment** and a competitive application process. [ESEA §2222(f)(1)]

An entity applying for a subgrant in support of kindergarten through grade 12 literacy must include in its application to the SEA “a description of the entity’s **needs assessment** conducted to identify how subgrant funds will be used to inform and improve comprehensive literacy instruction at the school.” It must also include information on how the school, the LEA, or a provider of high-quality professional development will provide ongoing professional development to teachers, principals, and other school leaders and personnel; how the school will identify children in need of literacy intervention and support; an “explanation of how the school will integrate comprehensive literacy instruction into a well-rounded education;” and will coordinate comprehensive literacy instruction with early childhood programs and activities and after-school programs and activities. [ESEA §2224(a)(4)]

An entity applying for a subgrant in support of birth through kindergarten entry literacy could be required, at the discretion of the SEA, to submit a **needs assessment**, or information derived from such an assessment, as part of its application to the SEA. Any such entity shall submit an application to the SEA “...containing such information as the State educational agency may require.” [ESEA §2223(b)]

In making awards to support high-quality early literacy initiatives for children from birth through kindergarten entry, the SEA shall work in consultation with these early childhood agencies described above, and, if applicable, the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care established under Head Start Act requirements (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)). [ESEA §2223(a)(1)]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - o [ESEA, Sections 2222 - 2224](#)

English Language Acquisition

— Title III, Part A, English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act – [Implicit]

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

An SEA plan for funding shall, among other things

- Describe how the agency will **meet the unique needs** of children and youth in the State being served through the reservation of funds under section 3114(d); and
- Provide an assurance that — (A) the agency will ensure that eligible entities receiving a subgrant under this subpart comply with the requirement in section 1111(b)(2)(B)(ix) regarding assessment of English learners in English; (B) the agency will ensure that eligible entities receiving a subgrant under this subpart annually assess the English proficiency of all English learners participating in a program funded under this subpart, consistent with section 1111(b)(2)(G); (C) in awarding subgrants under section 3114, the agency will **address the needs of school systems** of all sizes and in all geographic areas, including school systems with rural and urban schools; (D) subgrants to eligible entities under section 3114(d)(1) will be of sufficient size and scope to allow such entities to carry out effective language instruction educational programs for English learners; (E) the agency will require an eligible entity receiving a subgrant under this subpart to use the subgrant in ways that will build such recipient's capacity to continue to offer effective language instruction educational programs that assist English learners in meeting challenging State academic standards; (F) the agency will monitor each eligible entity receiving a subgrant under this subpart for compliance with applicable Federal fiscal requirements; and (G) the plan has been developed in consultation with local educational agencies, teachers, administrators of programs implemented under this subpart, parents of English learners, and other relevant stakeholders. [ESEA § 3114]

Additional Context

In addition to the State plan requirements described at left, a State plan must also

- Describe how the agency will coordinate its programs and activities under this subpart with other programs and activities under this Act and other Acts, as appropriate;
- Describe how each eligible entity will be given the flexibility to teach English learners — (A) using a high-quality, effective language instruction curriculum for teaching English learners; and (B) in the manner the eligible entity determines to be the most effective;
- Describe how the agency will assist eligible entities in meeting — (A) the State-designed long-term goals established under section 1111(c)(4)(A)(ii), including measurements of interim progress towards meeting such goals, based on the State's English language proficiency assessment under section 1111(b)(2)(G); and (B) the challenging State academic standards; and
- Describe — (A) how the agency will monitor the progress of each eligible entity receiving a subgrant under this subpart in helping English learners achieve English proficiency; and (B) the steps the agency will take to further assist eligible entities if the strategies funded under this subpart are not effective, such as providing technical assistance and modifying such strategies. [ESEA § 3114]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - [ESEA, Sections 3113-3115](#)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - [English Learners and Title III of the ESEA, as amended by ESSA](#) Non-Regulatory Guidance (October 5, 2016)

Title IV Block Grant

— Title IV, Part A, Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants - Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

An LEA that receives at least \$30,000 in Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program funds must conduct a **comprehensive needs assessment** that considers the improvement of

- Access to, and opportunities for, a well-rounded education for all students;
- School conditions for student learning in order to create a healthy and safe school environment; and
- Access to personalized learning experiences supported by technology and professional development for the effective use of data and technology. [ESEA §4106(d)(1)(A)-(C)]

Non-regulatory guidance on Title IV, Part A includes the following:

- Each **needs assessment** must be comprehensive and shall include a focus on well-rounded educational opportunities, safe and healthy students, and effective use of technology. [ESEA §4106(d)(1)] The needs assessment should examine relevant data to understand students’ and schools’ most pressing needs, including the potential root causes of such needs.
- The SEA may consider **needs assessment criteria and protocol** – SEAs may include specific needs assessment criteria for LEAs to address.
- LEAs must engage in consultation with stakeholders, including parents, teachers, principals, students, school leaders, community members, among others.
- Note that, if the LEA has recently conducted a needs assessment that corresponds to the SSAE sections, the LEA may want to consider how best to incorporate the information for the completed needs assessment into the comprehensive needs assessment for the SSAE program. [ESSA, Title IV, Part A Guidance]

Additional Context

The SSAE grants program, ESEA Title IV, Part A, was authorized under ESSA, to “improve students’ academic achievement by increasing the capacity of States, local educational agencies, schools, and local communities to – (1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education; (2) improve school conditions for student learning; and (3) improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.” [ESEA §4101]

In order to receive an allotment for any fiscal year, a State “shall submit a plan to the Secretary, at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may reasonably require.” [ESEA §4012(c)(1)]

A State shall allocate funds to an LEA or consortia of LEAs. To be eligible to receive an allocation, an LEA or consortium must submit an application to the SEA and complete a needs assessment. [ESEA §4106(a)]

Each application shall include assurances that the LEA or consortium will use funds as follows (except that an LEA receiving less than \$30,000 must provide an assurance with regard to only one of these three requirements):

- At least 20 percent of funds for activities to support well-rounded educational opportunities;
- At least 20 percent of funds for activities to support safe and healthy student; and
- A portion of funds for activities to support effective use of technology. [ESEA §§4107-4109]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - [ESEA, Section 4106](#)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - [ESSA Title IV, Part A Guidance](#) – Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant (October 21, 2016)

➤ **Head Start Act**

Head Start

— **Head Start Act, Community Assessment and Family Needs Assessment**

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

Under the Head Start Act, any recipient of a Head Start grant must conduct a **community assessment** at least once over the five-year grant period. [Sec. 640(g)(1)(C), Program Standards] Each participating family must also engage in a **family needs assessment**.

The **community assessment** is used to design a program that meets community needs and builds on strengths and resources. Each Head Start program is to use the community needs identified in the community needs assessment to establish selection criteria that weight the prioritization and selection of participants. [Program Standards]

The **community assessment** must use data that describe community strengths, needs, and resources, and include, at a minimum

- The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak, including
 - o Children experiencing homelessness in collaboration with, to the extent possible, McKinney-Vento Local Education Agency Liaisons;
 - o Children in foster care; and
 - o Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies.
- The education, health, nutrition, and social service needs of eligible children and their families, including prevalent social or economic factors that impact their well-being;
- Typical work, school, and training schedules of parents with eligible children;
- Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served;

Additional Context

The Head Start Act “promotes the readiness of low-income children by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development

- in a learning environment that supports children’s growth in language, literacy, mathematics, science, social and emotional functioning, creative arts, physical skills, and approaches to learning; and
- through the provision to low-income children and their families of health, educational, nutritional, social, and other services that are determined, based on family needs assessments, to be necessary.” [Head Start §636].

In 2016, the Head Start Program Performance Standards were revised and provide the “foundation for Head Start’s mission to deliver comprehensive, high-quality individualized services to support the school readiness of children from low-income families.” [Office of Head Start] These performance standards include minimum requirements for the entire range of Head Start services and apply to both Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Each Head Start service award has a five-year grant period. In applying for a grant, an applicant must “design a program that meets community needs, and builds on strengths and resources, [and] must conduct a community assessment at least once over the five-year grant period.” [Program Standards]

A program must use information from ongoing monitoring and the annual self-assessment, and program data on teaching practice, staffing, and professional development, child-level assessments, family needs assessments, and comprehensive services, to identify program needs, and develop and implement plans for program improvement. [Program Standards]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - o [Public Law 110-134](#), “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007”

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources that are available in the community to address the needs of eligible children and their families; and• Strengths of the community. [Program Standards] <p>The program must then annually review and update the community assessment to reflect any significant changes, including increased availability of publicly-funded pre-kindergarten rates of family and child homelessness, and significant shifts in community demographics and resources. [Program Standards]</p> <p>Each participating family in a Head Start program must also engage in a family needs assessment that includes consultation with parents in a manner and language that such parents can understand, to the extent practicable, about the benefits of parent involvement and about the activities in which such parents may choose to become involved. [Head Start §641(d)]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Regulation</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">o Head Start Program Standards, 45 C.F.R. Chapter XIII
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➤ **McKinney-Vento**

Homeless Education

— **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Education for Homeless Children and Youth - Needs Assessment**

Summary of Needs Assessment Requirement

An SEA awards McKinney-Vento subgrants to LEAs **competitively on the basis of the need of the LEAs** requesting assistance and the quality of their applications. [McKinney-Vento §723(b)]

The application must include an assessment of the educational and related needs of homeless children and youths in the area served by such agency (which may be undertaken as part of needs assessments for other disadvantaged groups). [McKinney-Vento §723(b)(1)]

- An LEA shall submit an application, including a **needs assessment**, to the SEA “at such time, in such manner, and containing or accompanied by such information as the SEA may reasonably require.” [McKinney-Vento §723(b)]
- The application for a subgrant under McKinney-Vento must include a description of the services and programs for which assistance is sought to **address the needs identified in the needs assessment**. [McKinney-Vento §723(b)(2)]
- In determining the needs of an LEA, as addressed in the **needs assessment**, the SEA may consider the number of homeless children and youths enrolled in preschool, elementary, and secondary schools within the area served by the LEA, and shall consider the needs of such children and youths and the ability of the LEA to meet such needs. [McKinney-Vento §723(c)(2)]
- In determining quality of an application for a subgrant, an SEA must consider the applicant’s **needs assessment and the likelihood that the program presented in the application will meet such needs**. [McKinney-Vento §723(c)(3)(A); Non-Regulatory Guidance, p. 19]

Additional Context

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.).

Under the Act, SEAs “must ensure that each homeless child and youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youths. Homeless children and youths must have access to the educational and related services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held. In addition, homeless students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment.” SEAs and LEAs are required to “review and undertake steps to revise laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youths.” [Non-Regulatory Guidance]

- One method for the LEA **needs assessment** is to look at homeless student enrollment averages or trends in the district over a two- or three-year period and the average per-pupil cost of providing Title I-funded services in the current fiscal year and multiplying those two numbers. However, the needs of homeless children and youths that affect their enrollment, attendance, and success in school can be unique and distinct from housed students and should be reviewed periodically and regularly, at least more than once per school year. Other factors to consider are the presence of other State and Federal education grants that can provide the same or similar services as well as other community resources. The LEA should also consider what is necessary and reasonable for each student to fulfill the purposes of the Title I and McKinney-Vento programs in their district, as well as the effectiveness of past programs in accomplishing the goals of those programs for individual students as well as the overall programs. [Non-Regulatory Guidance]
- Note that the **needs assessment** used under section 1113 of ESSA may be the same as the needs assessment conducted by the LEA in applying for local McKinney-Vento subgrant funds. [ESSA §1113(c)(3)(C)(i)]

The Department of Education’s recent non-regulatory guidance also includes the following:

- LEAs should include the identification of homeless students and their unique educational needs in any district needs assessment and school improvement plans that define a school’s targeted work to raise achievement for all students. [Non-Regulatory Guidance]
- Needs assessments may be used to identify homeless students as part of a school improvement plan or other State and Federal education requirements. [Non-Regulatory Guidance]

“Significantly, a number of the changes that the ESSA made to the McKinney-Vento Act highlight and respond to the needs of homeless children and youths across the educational spectrum. There is an increased focus on services for preschool-aged homeless children, which data show compose a major share of the overall homeless population; this includes the explicit inclusion of preschools in the definition of ‘school of origin.’ A number of changes also draw attention to the need for homeless youths in secondary school to be college- and career-ready, and the important role that school staff play in the transition to postsecondary education. ESSA also requires that SEAs implement procedures to ensure full and partial credit transfer for these students. Additionally, the McKinney-Vento Act now has a strengthened emphasis on the unique needs of, and supports for, unaccompanied homeless youths, such as through the verification of independent student status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and improved coordination with other federally funded homeless assistance programs for which these youths may be eligible.” [Non-Regulatory Guidance]

Citations and Related References

- Statute
 - o [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#) (42 U.S.C. 11301 et seq.)
- Non-Regulatory Guidance and Additional Materials
 - o [Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program](#): Non-Regulatory Guidance (updated March 2017)



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