Realizing the Promise of Learning Networks: Getting to Real Results

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A look at the Research

Effective Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) are:

- Focused on a well-specified aim
- Guided by a deep understanding of the problem, the system that produces it, and a theory of improvement relative to it
- Disciplined by the rigor of improvement science
- Coordinated to accelerate the development, testing, and refinement of interventions and their effective integration into practice across varied educational contexts.

Learning Networks Featured Today

- **CEEDAR**
  - Affinity Groups
  - Topical Action Groups
  - Collaboratories

- **DaSy ECTA**
  - Topic Cohorts
  - Learning Communities
  - Cross-State Groups

- **NCSI**
  - Cross-State Learning Collaboratives
  - Affinity Groups
  - Pop-up Groups
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affinity Groups</th>
<th>• Introduction or exploration of topics of interest related to CEEDAR’s mission and state needs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topical Action Groups</td>
<td>• Deeper dive into selected topics related to blueprint or sustainability and scale-up goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboratories</td>
<td>• Select groups engaged as Networked Improvement Communities with an inquiry focus on common topics of interest/problems of practice</td>
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ECTA/DaSy Cross-State Opportunities

**Topic Cohorts**
- Intensive TA
- Mix of cross-state and individualized TA
- States are brought together around a common topic
- 5 Collaborative Topic Cohorts

**Learning Communities**
- Offers states and opportunity to share lessons learned and promising practices in their work around common topics/needs
- Community is lead by the needs of the states
- States share issues and solutions

**Cross-State Groups**
- Ad hoc groups formed to meet common needs
- Short-term
NCSI Networked Improvement Communities

Learning Collaboratives

Five Part B NICs:
- Grad/Post-School SIMRs
- Language & Literacy SIMRs
- Math SIMRs
- Results-Based Accountability
- Systems Alignment

Four Part C NICs:
- Family Outcomes
- Knowledge & Skills
- Social and Emotional Outcomes
- Results-Based Accountability

Affinity Groups

Sub-groups within a given Learning Collaborative.
Issues arise through the membership to form Affinity Groups.
More sustain over time or disband as problems are solved and/or sufficient capacity is built.

Example: Differentiating TA in response to local performance results within the Systems Alignment Collaborative

Pop-Up Groups

Like an Affinity Groups but includes membership from across two or more different Learning Collaboratives.

Formed ad hoc to meet short term needs.

Example: SSIP Writing Group operated from January – March to craft 2018 SSIP submissions, including members from 3 Collaboratives.
Launching, Growing/Sustaining, and Measuring the Impact of Learning Networks

Lessons Learned
Launching Learning Networks

Lessons Learned

- Will you use an existing platform or create a new space?
- What are burning issues related to your mission?
- How can you provide assistance to staff leading networks?
- What strategies can we use to get started?

Ensuring adequate virtual infrastructure

Identifying common problems of practice

Planning Supports

Getting Started
Launching Learning Networks: Adequate Virtual Infrastructure

- Will you use an existing platform or create a new space?

Ensuring adequate virtual infrastructure
Launching Learning Networks: Identifying Common Problems of Practice

Affinity groups:
- State leads submitted topics based on state interests and needs
- Compiled common areas to select 4 groups
  1. Dyslexia/literacy
  2. Licensure/shortages
  3. Data/outcomes for preparation programs
- Added two groups in topics the center hopes to push the field in
  4. Inclusive Leadership
  5. Culturally Responsive Policy and Practice

Topical Action Groups:
- Selected topics aligned to common state blueprint goals
  - High Leverage Practices, Inclusive Leadership and Clinical Practice
Launching Learning Networks: Planning Supports

- Templates for planning
  - Scope and sequence
  - Synchronous
  - A-synchronous
  - Engagement strategies

How can you provide assistance to staff leading networks?

Affinity Group Planning Template

**Topic:**

**Conceptual Lead:**

**Facilitator-Co-Lead:**

**Engagement Specialist:**

**Collaborating Centers:**

**Implementation Specialists:**

**Scope and Sequence:**

- **First Virtual Meeting- Introduction Meeting**
  - Meeting Topic: Introduction and Level Setting
  - Example in Action (EIA) (Optional):
- **Virtual Meeting 2- Meeting**
  - Meeting Topic:
  - Example in Action:
  - EIA Contact:
  - Collaborating Centers:
Launching Learning Networks: Getting Started

• Initial Activities
  • Building Relationships
  • Setting Group Norms
  • Establishing a shared vision and goals

• What strategies can we use to get started?

CHECK IN
CHECK OUT
Growing and Sustaining Learning Networks

Lessons Learned

- **How will you clarify what participation means?**
  - TA Agreements

- **Align work with ongoing efforts**
  - How will you support alignment of the work with ongoing efforts?

- **What “practices” will you use?**
  - Capacity Building Practices

- **What data do you need to collect to ensure the community meets participants needs?**
  - Formative evaluation
Growing and Sustaining Learning Networks continued

- Application process
  - Participants apply
  - Selection criteria
- Clearly articulate the TA activities and the expectations of participation in the learning network
  - Cross-state
  - Individualized action plan
  - Evaluation expectations
- Clearly articulate outcomes

Lessons Learned

- TA Agreements
  - How will you clarify what participation means?
Growing and Sustaining Learning Networks continued.

- How will you support alignment of the work with ongoing efforts?

- Ensure cross-state activities are driven by common needs

- Action Plans should be based on data and connect with ongoing participant work
  - Needs to be meaningful
Growing and Sustaining Learning Networks continued...

- What “practices” will you use?

**Capacity Building Practices**

- Capacity building is key!
  - Mix of cross-state and individualized

- TA providers should be using best practices to support participants in building capacity and making progress

- Structure activities to maximize participant engagement and learning
  - All participants bring important knowledge, but may need support in engaging in learning networks
Growing and Sustaining Learning Networks continued...

• What data do you need to collect to ensure the community meets participants needs?

Formative evaluation

• Gather data on an ongoing basis about the processes used within the learning network
  • Are people actively engaging and sharing knowledge?
  • Are people making progress and building capacity?
  • If not, why not?
Measuring the Impact of Learning Networks

**Lessons Learned**

1. **Define impact**
   - What does impact mean relative to the TA/PD effort?

2. **Determine appropriate measures**
   - What data will show resulting impact?

3. **Get the data**
   - How can you get the information you need?

4. **Tell the story**
   - Who needs to know about impact and how?
Measuring Impact | Step 1

• What does impact mean relative to the TA/PD effort?
  - Define impact

• Look to existing evaluation guidance
  - logic model, theory of action, outcomes chart, etc.…

• Get concrete
  - What does it mean to “succeed” in the TA/PD?
  - What tangible actions or artifacts will show change?

• Be aware of outputs vs outcomes
  - Did policies, procedures, and/or practices change?
Measuring Impact | Step 2

- **What data will show resulting impact?**

- **Data access**
  - Do you have connections with the right sources to access the data that would tell your story?

- **Data legitimacy**
  - Think about causality; consider inference

- **Be realistic**
  - Think about grain size and level of impact within pragmatic parameters
    - Child/student/family impact; systems impact; incremental benchmarks vs. large scale impact

- **Plan for mixed methods**
  - Qualitative and quantitative outcomes

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**Lessons Learned**
• Partner among program staff and project evaluators to develop and implement data collection; use data

• Coach/explain purpose of impact data to clients so they can give you the kinds of evidence you need
  • Not fabricating results — giving useful info when it exists

• Help staff understand importance of impact data and project’s approaches to capturing / using impact data
  • Set expectations up front for data collection
  • Coordinate data collection to reduce over-burden

• Elevate importance of measuring impact
  • E.g., Director-level communication about purpose, approach, use of impact data… both internally and externally
Measuring Impact | Step 4

**Lessons Learned**

- Who needs to know about impact and how?
- Tell the story

- Use your data
  - Formative planning
  - Return on investment
  - Annual Performance Reports
  - Stakeholder partnerships

- Lead with Qualitative data, bolster with quantitative data to support contextual understanding and nature of the systems change
Let’s Talk!

The research...

• To what extent are you anchoring the design and implementation of your current learning networks on the research-based principals of networked improvement communities? Do you need to up your game in translating research to practice?

The pragmatics...

• How can these lessons learned from national TA projects inform the launch, growth, sustainability or measurement of learning networks in your own projects?
For more info or follow up...

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