

## Building a Research Office that Supports Continuous Improvement under ESSA

### A Peer-to-Peer Learning Workshop

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) there are many more opportunities for State Education Agencies (SEAs) to identify educational challenges, and select, develop, and implement evidence-based programs and practices to inform school improvement efforts. Having a research office that supports continuous improvement is an integral part of this process, and many states are grappling with how to design and build a research office that supports this goal.

At an invitation-only discussion group meeting in Washington, DC, researchers, state-level policymakers, and staff from a number of foundations will gather to learn from one another about establishing a research office focused on continuous improvement. Three states, Nevada, Rhode Island, and Ohio, will present a dilemma they are currently dealing with in establishing or re-designing their research office, especially if they only have one or two staff members dedicated to this work. Meeting participants will engage in peer-to-peer learning sessions, working collaboratively to problem-solve and offer a sounding board for ideas in response to the challenges states discuss. Attendees skilled in participating in research-practice partnerships (RPPs) will also be on hand to discuss the role these kinds of partnerships can play in supporting states' research needs under ESSA and beyond. They will explore how and when to use RPPs, how to identify which issues to work on in the context of an RPP, and how to build capacity to engage in effective RPPs. The goal of the meeting is for all states to leave with concrete ideas and actions they can implement in their particular circumstances as they build out their research capacities.

#### AGENDA

##### Monday, October 29, 2018 - EVENING DINNER/NETWORKING

- 6:00 – 6:40 PM**      **Networking Dinner (at Hotel in Washington, DC, TBD)/Welcome from AYPF**
- 6:40 – 7:00 PM**      **Opening Remarks**  
**Vivian Tseng**, Senior Vice President of Program, William T. Grant Foundation, will set the stage for the meeting. She will provide an overview of why the William T. Grant Foundation is focused on the use of research evidence in policymaking, how SEA research capacity-building is an integral component of the successful use of research-based evidence under ESSA, and what role RPPs can play as a promising strategy for promoting the use of evidence under ESSA.
- 7:00 – 7:45 PM**      **Presentation: Organizational Capacity to Use Research**, by Caitlin Farrell, Director, National Center for Research in Policy and Practice, School of Education, University of Colorado Boulder. Following Caitlin's presentation there will be time for audience engagement.

##### Tuesday, October 30, 2018

- 7:00 - 8:45 AM**      **Breakfast Available**
- 8:45 – 9:15 AM**      **Introductions:** Participants will introduce themselves and state their goals for the meeting.
- 9:30 – 9:45 AM**      **Problem-solving Session 1: Nevada – Lacking a Research Office**  
  
**Seng-Dao Yang Keo**, Director, Office of Student and School Supports, **Gabby Pingue**, Title I Director, Office of Student and School Supports, and **Karl Wilson**, Title III Director, Office of Student and School Supports, NDE, will discuss their lack of a research office, and how this is having an impact on the implementation of evidence-based programs under ESSA. Seng's office is conducting the evidence work for NDE, and doing the

program work. They are overwhelmed, there is a lack of financial support and human resources support, and during the next legislative session, which starts in early 2019, they will be asking for a few additional people for the team and ideally having at least one researcher focused on research and practice work.

9:45 – 10:30 AM **Discussion of Session 1**

10:30 – 10:45 AM **Break**

10:45 – 11:00 AM **Problem-solving Session 2: Rhode Island – Redesigning a Research Office**  
Rhode Island, represented by **Brian Darrow**, Director, Office of College and Career Readiness, RI DOE, and **Steve Osborn**, Chief for Innovation, RI DOE, is seeking feedback on how, with the Director of Data retiring soon, they might redesign this office to have it be more of an engine of research, evaluation, data analysis, and impact. Their data and IT teams have historically been siloed and unaligned. Recently, they merged the two teams and are encouraging them to work together, yet much can still be done to unlock the potential of the data they do have. They are also eager to explore how best to leverage the capacity of partners to generate evidence, and how to come up with tools to better share the research they have generated with school districts.

11:00 – 11:45 AM **Discussion of Session 2**

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM **Networking lunch**

12:45 – 1:00 PM **Problem-solving Session 3: Ohio – Expanding the Use of Research to Program Offices**  
**Heather Boughton**, Director, Office of Research, Evaluation & Advanced Analytics, and **Shelby Edwards**, Accountability and School Performance Administrator, Ohio DOE, will discuss how they are trying to move away from a compliance-based approach to school improvement to embracing the use of evidence-based strategies. They are exploring how to set up a statewide framework for continuous improvement for schools and districts to use, that is informed by data. They are trying to develop a community of practitioners across the agency, working to have each program office embrace a research inclination. They want to support program offices to engage in research, incorporate it into their daily lives, in an effort to break the divide between policy and data.

1:00 – 1:45 PM **Discussion of Session 3**

1:45 – 2:00 PM **Break**

2:00 – 2:45 PM **Utilizing Research-Practice Partnerships – Advice from MA and TN**  
**Carrie Conaway**, Chief Research and Strategy Office, MA DOE and **Nate Schwartz**, Chief Research and Strategy Officer, TN DOE, will contribute their observations and advice. They will provide a taxonomy of things state research offices could do (such as commissioning external researchers, or doing original research/policy analysis to share statewide), and then each talk about whether or not they do those things, why, and how.

2:45 – 2:55 PM **Quiet Reflection Time**  
Participants will have time individually to reflect on their learning and consider next steps based on that learning.

2:55 – 3:15 PM **Sharing of Next Steps**  
Participants will share out their learning and next steps. These will also be shared with Results for America, to inform their ongoing work with State Fellows.