



CHIEFS
for **CHANGE**

AUGUST 2022

The Implementation Engine

A guidebook to support leaders from initiative planning to execution

DISCLAIMER: These materials are preliminary and non-exhaustive and are being made available on a nonexclusive basis solely for information purposes in response to the urgent need for measures to address the COVID-19 crisis. The materials reflect general insight and may present potential options for consideration based on currently available information, which is inherently uncertain and subject to change, but do not contain all of the information needed to determine a future course of action. The insights and concepts included in these materials have not been validated or independently verified. References to specific products or organizations are solely for illustration and do not constitute any endorsement or recommendation. These materials do not constitute, and should not be interpreted as, policy, accounting, legal, medical, tax, or other regulated advice, or a recommendation on any specific course of action. These materials are not a guarantee of results and cannot be relied upon. Future results may differ materially from any statements of expectation, forecasts, or projections. Particularly in light of rapidly evolving conditions, these materials are provided “as is” without any representation or warranty, and all liability is expressly disclaimed for any loss or damage of any kind. The recipient is solely responsible for all of its decisions, use of these materials, and compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Consider seeking advice of legal and other relevant certified/licensed experts prior to taking any specific steps.

Chiefs for Change is providing these materials for general informational purposes. One should not rely on the content without first consulting a licensed attorney. Chiefs for Change disclaims all representations and warranties, express or implied, of any kind with respect to this information. By using these materials, the user agrees to indemnify and hold harmless Chiefs for Change and its members, officers, employees, or agents from any and all claims relating to such use. In no event shall Chiefs for Change or its members, officers, employees, or agents be liable for damages of any kind arising out of or in connection with the use of the information contained herein.

The considerations, tools, and resources included in this guide reflect Chiefs for Change’s core **beliefs**, especially that every child must have access to an excellent education.



INTRODUCTION

Executive summary

“It’s not ideas, it’s implementation that matters for our students.”

– Former CEO of a large local education authority

Like many large organizations, school districts and state education agencies often face challenges when moving from ideas to execution. This guide was developed to assist superintendents and their teams as they build or strengthen implementation processes to maximize the impact of investments for students, families, and communities.

Teams and leaders can benefit from clear and established processes to take a project from initial planning through successful implementation in a way that engages a broad set of voices, team members, and other stakeholders. This toolkit may be useful in a variety of situations, including:

- A system-wide transformation or large-scale implementation project
- Efforts to accelerate student learning and address student wellbeing – including the effective deployment and reporting of federal pandemic recovery funding
- Specific initiatives to advance a system’s strategic priorities and goals

This guidebook and accompanying workbook provide a step-by-step, phased approach to define and support these processes (e.g., outlining strategic priorities, setting meeting cadences, developing methods for continuous improvement, communicating with stakeholders).

The included **library** of immediately actionable tools references the full list of resources and guidelines used to build an implementation “engine.” Taken together, this tool can help district and state leaders to:

- Assess existing implementation processes to identify current strengths and potential opportunities for process improvement
- Build an implementation team that is reflective of and works to serve students, community members, and other relevant stakeholders
- Design a portfolio of powerful initiatives to enable and promote long-term strategic priorities
- Determine which initiatives to fund with clear approval processes and criteria
- Monitor progress over time to facilitate removal of roadblocks and engagement with key stakeholders

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT EFFECTIVELY

The best way to use this toolkit to meet specific local needs depends on a system’s existing capabilities and priorities. System leaders should involve a variety of individuals in a deliberate and thoughtful way to get the most value from the resource and ensure that the resulting processes and initiatives represent the perspectives of all students and communities.

For example, leaders may consider asking both a deputy superintendent and a senior program manager to reflect on the current state of implementation processes through the Executive Quick Start, because the varying vantage points will offer a wider breadth of perspectives and highlight a more robust set of strengths and weaknesses.

If your system needs ...	Then use ...	Potential team members	Resource
Support in deciding where to begin (based on processes in place today)	Executive Quick Start – The included diagnostic can help leaders assess current capabilities and pinpoint the most valuable resources and tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent (or deputy superintendent) • Project management lead and/or chief of staff • Cabinet-level leaders responsible for major groups of initiatives (e.g., deputy superintendent for academics, chief operations officer) • Nonexecutive representatives to offer viewpoints in areas that may otherwise be missed 	Executive Quick Start
Support in designing large-scale implementation projects	Full guidebook and workbook – The provided resources and tools and the step-by-step processes will help set initiatives up for end-to-end success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management lead and/or chief of staff • Cabinet-level leaders responsible for major groups of initiatives (e.g., deputy superintendent for academics, chief operations officer) • Owners of specific initiatives (e.g., transportation coordinator) • Representatives from other teams to offer viewpoints in areas that may otherwise be missed 	Guidebook
Specific tools or targeted guidance for implementation	Resource library – Compendium of tools and resources found within the toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected members from the teams and roles listed above, based on specific needs and/or resources used (e.g., specific initiative owners should work with the initiative planning template) 	Resource Library

BACKGROUND FOR THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit was developed in partnership with a large local education authority (LEA) to effectively manage the allocation of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding across more than 50 initiatives district-wide. Individual toolkit elements reflect the perspectives of:

- District leaders and executives responsible for allocation of funds and execution of overall strategy
- Operations managers responsible for monitoring and tracking progress across district initiatives
- Individual initiative leaders accountable for on-the-ground implementation of single programs
- Current and former superintendents with extensive experience in LEA strategy setting and implementation



What this document is

A guidebook and workbook for building the system-level foundation of a successful implementation infrastructure, with helpful step-by-step guides at each stage in the process

A source of actionable tools and guidance targeting key components of implementation that can be used with other tools or in isolation in any system

A compilation of both high-level and detailed planning tools, ensuring resources are actionable for districts with varying levels of time capacities



What this document is not

A digital project-management tool or software meant to track live progress of initiatives over time

A methodology for setting a system's strategic vision and long-term priorities or for engaging key stakeholders on these strategies

A budgeting calculator to estimate resourcing and staffing needs for initiative implementation

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO USE TODAY

This document consists of two sections: a guidebook and a workbook. The guidebook contains background context, how-to guides, and examples for each tool provided. The workbook consists of corresponding blank templates.

The guidebook moves through these tools in consecutive order, though leaders interested in a specific use case or support area may benefit from using a particular tool immediately. To do so, please identify the relevant resource(s) and use this library to jump directly to that tool.

Relevant resources, also included in the [workbook](#)

[Strategic priorities tool](#) – Questions to identify how initiatives can advance strategy

[Roles and responsibilities](#) – Template to define and distinguish key responsibilities for initiative leaders

[Sample meeting calendar](#) – Meeting agendas and calendar for oversight across initiatives

[Initiative approval processes](#) – Processes to establish and assess potential new proposals

[Sample phase reflection criteria](#) – Potential criteria for ongoing reflection to evaluate initiative progress

[Initiative planning template](#) – Tool and training materials to support detailed initiative planning

[Risk anticipation protocol](#) – Tool to support the early recognition and mitigation of potential roadblocks in upcoming initiatives or projects

[Continuous improvement practices](#) – Process and templates to support ongoing progress check-ins

[Stakeholder engagement and update matrix](#) – Tool to identify the frequency and type of stakeholder updates (e.g., school board, community organizations)



This document seeks to set leaders up for success in large-scale implementation efforts by providing them with easy-to-use tools and resources. The steps and components outlined below will help system leaders design and develop a sustainable engine for successful initiative implementation.

Successful implementation involves several key steps

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>1</p> <p>Set the scope for strategic initiatives</p> <p>Identify guidelines for launching initiatives based on strategic priorities, funding availability, and existing system initiatives</p> <p> Strategic priorities tool</p> | <p>2</p> <p>Establish clear roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Determine key roles to define who will oversee planning, funding, and monitoring of initiative progress</p> <p> Sample governance roles and responsibilities</p> <p> Meeting cadence and structure tool</p> | <p>3</p> <p>Adopt clear initiative approval processes</p> <p>Define clear phases for initiative approval to ensure investments are efficient and directed to the most powerful programs and initiatives</p> <p> Initiative approval phases and criteria</p> | <p>4</p> <p>Plan and launch initiatives</p> <p>Use templates to ensure key questions are answered at each phase, including plans for stakeholder engagement, theory of change, and budgeting</p> <p> Initiative checklist, planning template, and training guide</p> <p> Risk anticipation protocol</p> |
|--|---|--|--|

Strive for continuous improvement

Adopt a standard cadence to monitor progress, celebrate successes, and ensure benefits reach all student populations



Sample midyear and year-end check-in process and template

Engage and update stakeholders

Work closely with and seek input from a broad range of stakeholders (e.g., families, the board, community organizations)



Sample stakeholder update criteria

Districts can follow the end-to-end process or use tools for a specific step based on their needs



= actionable tools provided

Table of contents

Executive Quick Start 9

Exercise: System-level diagnostic 11

Exercise: Leadership self-reflection 14

Guidebook 16

Step 1: Set the scope for strategic initiatives 16

Strategic priorities tool 18

Sourcing new initiative ideas 19

Step 2: Establish clear roles and responsibilities 20

Identifying decision makers 20

Establishing roles and responsibilities 22

Setting a standard meeting cadence 26

Step 3: Adopt clear initiative approval processes 30

Defining clear, distinct phases 30

Using distinct phases in practice 33

Sample phase reflection criteria 34

Step 4: Plan and launch initiatives 36

Initiative planning template 36

Risk anticipation protocol 37

Ongoing: Strive for continuous improvement 38

Continuous improvement practices 38

Midyear and year-end impact updates 39

Ongoing: Engage stakeholders 40

Program-level stakeholder engagement 40

Initiative-level stakeholder engagement 41

Stakeholder engagement and update matrix 42

Workbook 43

- Strategic Priorities Tool 43
- Sourcing new initiative ideas 44
- Identifying decision makers 45
- Establishing clear roles and responsibilities 50
- Establishing a standard meeting cadence 51
- Defining phases and key decision points 53
- Phase reflection criteria 54
- Initiative planning template 56
- Continuous improvement practices 57
- Midyear and year-end impact updates 58
- Stakeholder engagement and update matrix 59



Executive Quick Start

The Quick Start format provides an opportunity for leaders to assess their system’s readiness in terms of implementation capabilities, resources, and assets. Local contexts and capabilities will inform the way this document can be most useful to leaders, especially in systems where core elements of an implementation engine already exist. The short reflection exercise and diagnostic below lay out various conditions and factors for success, which can help leaders pinpoint the sections and/or **resources** that will be most valuable.

In this document, the initiative implementation process follows four steps, with ongoing processes for continuous improvement and stakeholder engagement across initiatives. A clear-cut, defined process can help initiatives stay on track and support leaders in managing and executing large-scale implementation programs.





Does this feel familiar?

"We are constantly working on initiatives, but I'm honestly not sure how they align or track to our long-term goals."

"It feels like we have all of the right 'governing bodies' in place, but when it comes down to it, there is really no clear structure for how to make big decisions."

"It's usually the same cast of characters who make the big decisions and lead the charge for big systemic changes like this."

"Meetings on upcoming or in-progress initiatives are 'sit and get,' so it's not like our feedback can be taken into account."

"We have more meetings than anyone can handle; sometimes I don't even know what they are about or why I was included."

"It can feel like we don't know how to assess initiatives. Some should be pushed forward and others should be stopped, but it's hard to know which is which."

"Sometimes we rush into launching initiatives without thinking through the potential issues or roadblocks in our way, which causes bottlenecks way down the line."

"Leadership reviews the system's initiatives ad hoc or when something comes up, but there's no consistency with updates."

"Things were going great on this, but then our superintendent left, and we have lost steam entirely."



Here's what it could look like instead.

All proposed initiatives are directly mapped to operational plans and long-term strategic priorities, and have agreed upon timelines, deliverables, budget targets, and identified interdependencies.

Clear implementation-specific roles and responsibilities are defined early on and follow a predetermined hierarchy that includes varied perspectives.

A broad range of owners (spanning role, background, perspectives, and seniority levels) are deeply involved in implementation processes.

Initiative-related meetings at all levels provide time for all voices to be heard and clear opportunities to provide input/feedback.

Meetings have clear agendas and involve only relevant attendees (e.g., specific initiative owners). Implementation-specific topics are woven into existing meetings if possible.

Each initiative is assessed transparently through the same step-by-step process and must meet specific and clearly communicated criteria before moving on to the next phase.

Before (or while) planning an initiative, leaders have engaged a range of stakeholders to consider potential downstream challenges and develop mitigation strategies in advance.

All initiatives are transparently reviewed on a consistent basis, ensuring that all leaders are up to date and initiatives can be assessed at the system level.

Clear processes and foundational supports are in place to smooth the impact of staff/leadership transitions on implementation progress, especially to protect against having a single "cornerstone" individual.

EXERCISE: SYSTEM-LEVEL DIAGNOSTIC

Instructions: For each element, please identify whether it is a top priority for the system to build or strengthen, a possible opportunity to consider, or not a priority to improve. Elements are grouped by the relevant implementation step, with links directly to specific resources to address specific concerns or areas of opportunity.

Elements of a successful implementation program	Significant opportunity to improve	Potential opportunity to improve	Not a priority to improve	How this guidebook can help	Guidebook step
System has clearly defined district goals/strategic priorities/strategic plan with pathways and plans to achieve long-term goals				Strategic priorities tool – Questions to identify how initiatives can help advance strategy	Step 1
Implementation-specific roles and responsibilities are not only defined but also consistently adhered to. <i>Accountability is clearly defined for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cabinet-level responsibility for major groups of initiatives</i> • <i>On-the-ground execution of individual initiatives</i> • <i>Approval for funding and launching initiatives</i> • <i>Project management of the effort as a whole</i> 				Roles and responsibilities templates – Template to define and distinguish key responsibilities for initiative leaders	Step 2
					Step 2
					Step 2
					Step 2
					Step 2
Implementation teams involve and engage members from various roles, backgrounds, and experience levels				Roles and responsibilities templates – Template to define and distinguish key responsibilities for initiative leaders	Step 2
Implementation teams are representative of and work in the interests of the students and communities they intend to serve				Roles and responsibilities templates – Template to define and distinguish key responsibilities for initiative leaders	Step 2

Elements of a successful implementation program	Significant opportunity to improve	Potential opportunity to improve	Not a priority to improve	How this guidebook can help	Guidebook step
Meetings are purposeful and actionable, while minimizing unneeded meetings and unneeded attendees There are widely understood venues for:				Sample meeting calendar – Meeting agendas and calendar for oversight across initiatives	Step 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sharing information across departments on the progress of system-wide efforts</i> 					Step 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensuring that input from a range of voices is incorporated into initiatives</i> 					Step 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Solving problems and removing roadblocks for ongoing initiatives</i> 					Step 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Making and communicating decisions to fund, advance, stop, or modify initiatives</i> 					Step 2
Initiatives move through pre-existing approval processes to maintain consistency and progress				Initiative approval processes – Processes to establish and assess potential new proposals	Step 3
Initiatives are assessed regularly and transparently to ensure that resources are being invested and used effectively, barriers to success are removed, and needed improvements and critical input are being acted upon				Sample phase reflection criteria – Potential ongoing reflection criteria to evaluate initiative progress	Step 3

Elements of a successful implementation program	Significant opportunity to improve	Potential opportunity to improve	Not a priority to improve	How this guidebook can help	Guidebook step
All proposed initiatives go through a rigorous planning process to include all relevant information and resources				Initiative planning template – Tool and training materials to support detailed initiative planning	Step 4
Owners consider the potential challenges the initiative may face (including political challenges), with early plans to address them				Risk anticipation protocol – Tool to support the early recognition and mitigation of potential roadblocks in upcoming initiatives or projects	Step 4
Consistent updates on each initiative are provided to drive system-wide priorities and efficient resource allocation				Continuous improvement practices – Process and templates to support ongoing progress check-ins	Ongoing
Consistent implementation progress is communicated to leaders, team members, and other key stakeholders to foster transparency, ownership, and buy-in				Stakeholder engagement and update matrix – Tool to identify the frequency and type of initiative updates for stakeholders (e.g., for school board, community organizations)	Ongoing



Exercise: Leadership self-reflection

What are the system's current strengths in implementation?

Example: Every year, leadership sits down to do an initiative review, where we assess what's working and what may need to be deprioritized for the next year based on initiative progress and feedback, as well as budget constraints, from a broad range of stakeholders.

Where are the opportunities to strengthen the system's approach to implementation?

Example: We don't follow a concrete process for initiatives. Everything is typically ad hoc, which can cause stress and delays. The lack of structure leads to missed opportunities to gather needed input in a timely way.

What are the tools, resources, and capabilities that currently enable the system's implementation efforts?

Example: We use system-wide tools to coordinate all project management, which offers great opportunities for collaboration across teams.

Where do gaps in resources and capabilities appear? Are there plans to address these gaps?

Example: Initiative tracking is currently managed across multiple different Excel files, all of which are updated manually through practices that vary by department.

To what extent do existing implementation processes seek and incorporate input from a broad range of individuals representing different roles, levels, backgrounds, and perspectives across the system?

Example: Initiative ideation is typically done exclusively at the cabinet level, where only senior leaders discuss high-level problems and brainstorm potential solutions.

To what extent do system leaders anticipate the positive and negative potential impacts of specific initiatives or larger implementation efforts on different groups of students and/or stakeholders?

Example: Each initiative goes through a rigorous approval process. Leaders identify potential direct impacts to student groups and other key stakeholders and thoroughly discuss those impacts before providing initiative approval.

GUIDEBOOK

Step 1: Set the scope for strategic initiatives

Taking a step back to examine how a system's broader strategies can inform initiative planning can help mitigate common implementation challenges and ensure that initiatives effectively contribute to system-level strategic goals.

Aligning high-level strategy with detailed initiative planning is critical to the development of key aspects

of initiatives, including understanding potential impacts on targeted student groups (e.g., early-education students, multilingual learners) or defining the metrics to anticipate initiative impact.

Each system strategy typically consists of **four primary components**: the vision, strategic pillars, initiatives, and foundational supports. Example strategy graphic below.

LEA or State education agency (SEA) vision

What the district desires to achieve in the long run

Strategic pillars

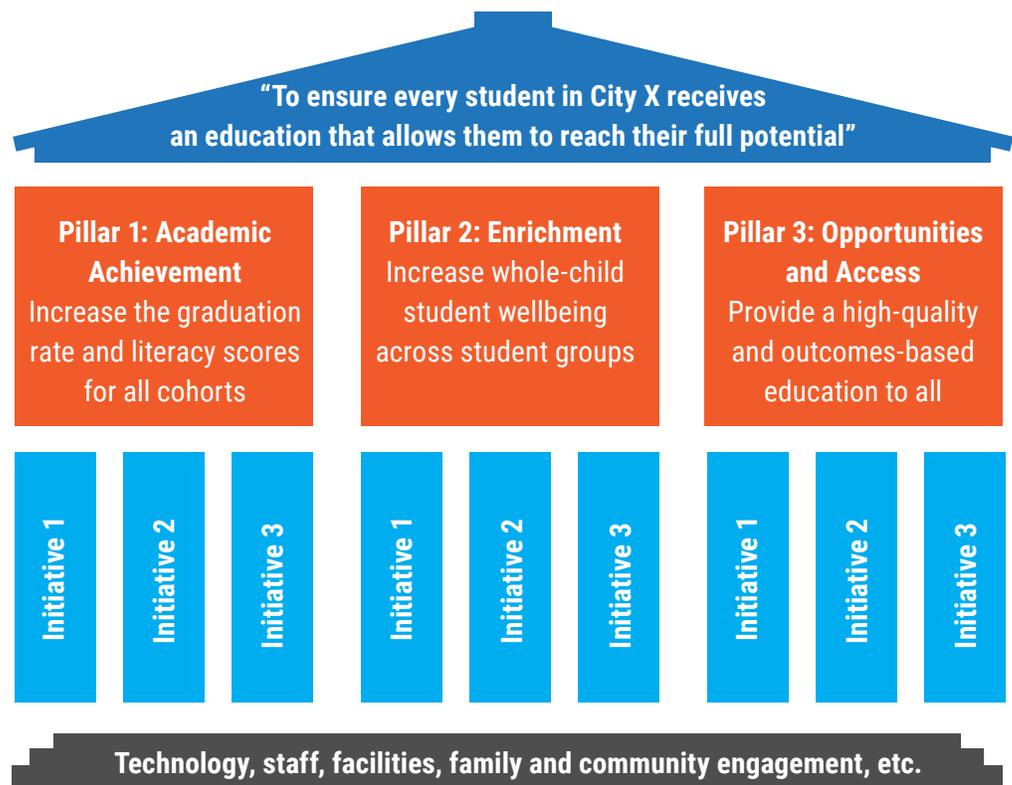
Key objectives in direct support of the vision

Strategic initiatives

Specific programs the district will implement to achieve its vision and goals

Foundational supports

Elements that enable initiatives



Leaders and their teams can ensure initiatives align with the goals of their community and commitments made in their strategic plan by regularly asking questions to help define the scope for new initiatives, including:

- How is our leadership team performing against the overall strategy?
- What specific goals should a new strategic initiative help advance?
- Are there existing initiatives that could be improved to meet these goals? Or is the new initiative needed?
- What is the total cost of the potential new initiative, including set-up and ongoing costs?
- Do team members have the capabilities and support needed to design and roll out the initiative? Are the right people at the table for the initiative to be successful?
- Does the initiative address the needs of students directly, especially those in need of extra support?
- Can progress of the initiative be monitored as part of the accountability system?



Strategic priorities tool

Teams can define the scope for new initiatives by answering the questions outlined in the worksheet below. Using data to inform their responses, teams should be as specific as possible. Sample answers are provided for reference here, and a blank template can be accessed in the [workbook](#).

This document supports the alignment of individual initiatives to existing priorities as a complement to – and driver for – an overarching strategic plan. The overall strategic vision for a system is a separate process that should incorporate community input and ensure that the strategy, its commitments, and the budget are aligned prior to implementation.

Initiative scoping tool and sample responses	
How is our system and leadership team performing against the overall strategy?	<i>Our district has three strategic pillars – improving academic achievement, increasing student wellness, and advancing opportunities and access to a high-quality and outcomes-based education. In 2021, our district met its strategic goals for academic achievement and opportunity and access but fell short on its goal to improve student wellness. Wellness scores declined by 2%, with even greater declines observed among English Language Learners (ELLs).</i>
What specific goals should a new strategic initiative help advance?	<i>To make progress on our strategic pillar goals, we must improve student wellness, specifically for ELLs, who accounted for the largest declines. We measure students across a series of wellness metrics (e.g., engagement, belonging), and we should strive to increase scores for these students from an average of 78% to 84% by the end of next year.</i>
Are there existing initiatives that could be improved to meet these goals? Or is the new initiative needed?	<i>Currently we have multiple initiatives aimed at student wellness (e.g., a required counselor meeting each semester), but relatively few efforts focus on student engagement and school climate, both of which could have an impact on student wellness.</i>
What might need to be stopped to support this effort?	<i>Our district has additional funds in its discretionary budget for the upcoming school year to support student wellness, and the district is open to funding new wellness-focused initiatives.</i>
Do team members have the capabilities and support needed to design and roll out the initiative? Are they managing multiple changes at once (e.g., I.T. department)?	<i>Deputy Superintendent Jane Doe oversees the district’s strategic planning efforts at a high level, and Counselor John Smith will lead the wellness pillar goals, including the initiative launch and implementation processes. Initiative owners of existing and new initiatives will have access to support throughout the process to help ensure their initiative’s success.</i>
Does the initiative address the needs of students directly, especially those in need of extra support?	<i>As a district, we need to make sure that all wellness initiatives can benefit and affect all students, and do not leave some students behind. One or more targeted initiatives to support these students specifically will be extremely beneficial to our student body overall.</i>

Sourcing new initiative ideas

Strategic planning processes often lead to a decision to launch initiatives for a specific purpose, which may present an opportunity to seek broader input. A call for ideas will be most relevant to larger-scale programs (e.g., a program seeking to accelerate unfinished learning and improve student wellness) and may be less relevant to narrower efforts where initiative ideas come from specific departments or are focused on a niche area.

Leaders can use a template to communicate clear guidelines for initiative ideas. However, they should be intentional and flexible about how they accept submissions for new initiatives to make sure all potential owners are given the chance to share ideas

effectively (e.g., anchoring on financial details may exclude those without relevant experience; email-only formats may unfairly benefit strong written communicators; vague expectations may benefit those who have led an initiative in the past). Leaders should also consider alerting their school boards/governing body about a call for initiatives before the call goes out to support partnership with the board on the new effort.

Below is a sample communication about initiative guidelines. Teams can customize this communication by editing this template in the [workbook](#) based on their responses to initiative scoping questions.

Sample call for initiative ideas

Our district is currently seeking submissions from all staff to support the design, planning, and launch of strategic initiatives that will help the district reach its strategic goal of providing high-quality education for all students. Recently, we have noticed a significant drop in reading proficiency rates across specific student groups, with a significantly greater decline among ELLs.

In SY 2020-21, overall reading proficiency dropped by eight percentage points for all students and by 14 percentage points for ELLs. Accordingly, the district is accepting ideas for initiatives with potential to meaningfully improve reading proficiency for all students, including through increased classroom support and after-school tutoring. Initiatives should be sure to address reading proficiency rates for all student groups, especially ELLs.

Funding is available over the next five years to accelerate work with the greatest potential for student impact. Contact Deputy Superintendent Kennedy at Superintendent.Kennedy@districtschools.org to learn more.

Submissions are due by 8 p.m. on January 15.

We will also host a town hall to provide additional information to ensure that we get the best of our district's thinking to better support our students. Details will follow soon. We look forward to hearing your ideas and working together to better serve our students and community.

Step 2: Establish clear roles and responsibilities

One critical prerequisite for successfully implementing initiatives is having the right people and decision makers in place to inform initiative design and execution. Establishing effective governance ensures that each initiative receives the sponsorship and support it needs to be successful, with dedicated time to remove roadblocks. In addition, good governance systems and practices enable systems and leaders to respond quickly to crises, free up staff time, ensure needed input is received and acted upon, and facilitate the delivery of more powerful programs for students.

Leaders should also think critically about how to involve a broad set of team members to ensure that a wide range of perspectives and insights are integrated at each stage. To determine whether leadership teams have included the right people, system leaders can ask themselves:

- Do the team members and leaders who are involved represent different areas of the system (e.g., teachers vs. administrators, tenured vs. newer colleagues)?
- After roles and responsibilities are defined, will a broad range of voices – including new voices – be “in the room”?
- Will team members and leaders be representative of the student body they are serving? If not, what changes can be made to achieve this?
- What structures are in place to ensure that viewpoints and input from the school board, school leaders, school staff, students, families, community members, and others are incorporated into project governance?

Identifying decision makers

To establish good initiative governance, leaders can build on existing structures or create new ones. At minimum, leadership teams should ensure involvement of the decision makers outlined below, though they may choose to extend their governance structures beyond these groups if desired.

Leadership teams should also be intentional about which specific decision makers should be included across each of these groups to make sure that there is a variety of thoughts and perspectives when making key system-wide decisions (e.g., do decision makers come from different areas of the school? Do they span seniority levels? Do they bring the breadth of experience necessary to properly inform decisions?).

Diversity of thought is especially important at the decision-making stage, because these decisions can lead to significant ripple effects across all stakeholders. Whether via formal decision-making bodies or informal sources of input, leaders should ensure that this input is heard and integrated into decision-making processes throughout implementation.

Leaders can use this sample governance structure as a starting point to develop their own initiative governance systems and fill in the corresponding template in the [workbook](#).

EXISTING DECISION MAKERS*	School board	Leaders who review major investments and policy decisions for strategic initiatives
	Superintendent/cabinet/executive leadership team	Leaders who set strategy, define strategic goals and pillars, identify areas for strategic initiatives, and sign off on major investments
	Initiative owners	Individuals (e.g., director of the tutoring program, director of career readiness initiatives) who carry out day-to-day planning and implementation of individual initiatives on the ground and will be accountable for successfully implementing the initiative
	School leaders	Senior-level leaders (e.g., principals) responsible for coordinating with initiative owners to stand up initiatives in schools
POTENTIAL NEW DECISION MAKERS	Senior sponsors	<p>Members of the executive team appointed to oversee planning and delivery of distinct pillars of strategic initiatives, clearing roadblocks, and approving initiatives for launch (e.g., a senior sponsor for academic initiatives, a senior sponsor for enrichment initiatives). Leaders can appoint senior sponsors to oversee initiatives that fall under each pillar in their overarching strategy</p> <p><i>Note: Leadership teams can consider integrating one or more non-executive team representative(s) into this group to provide new perspectives and input in decision-making processes (e.g., teacher representative, counselor representative)</i></p>
	Workstream leads	<p>Leaders across departments who report directly to executive team members and are responsible for overseeing a “workstream” – i.e., a thematic or goal-specific collection of initiatives – as well as the work of the associated initiative owners. These leads are responsible for operationalizing decisions from the superintendent and senior sponsors, including by providing administrative support, conducting implementation training, doing first-pass reviews of plans for major initiatives</p> <p><i>Note: Leadership teams can consider integrating one or more non-executive team representative(s) into this group to provide new perspectives and input in decision-making processes (e.g., teacher representative, counselor representative)</i></p>

*Existing decision makers may vary by system.

Establishing roles and responsibilities

For each of the decision makers described above, school systems should define key responsibilities and decision rights for implementing initiatives. Doing so ensures clarity of ownership over tasks and key sources of approval, enabling quick, informed decisions and execution of initiatives.

There are four core categories of responsibilities and decision rights relevant to initiative implementation:

Initiative strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who sets the scope for new strategic initiatives? Who decides how initiatives will be implemented in schools? Who determines the “criteria for success” for initiatives or larger implementation efforts? How will those criteria for success be transparently communicated?
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who approves hiring decisions and the creation of new positions? Who approves stipends for staff who may take on new initiative-associated responsibilities? How will responsibilities be balanced and shared to ensure that owners do not take on unequal burdens?
Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who approves the allocation and release of funding?
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who monitors progress across initiatives? Who evaluates whether the system is meeting its strategic goals?

System leaders can use the sample responsibilities below as a starting point in defining their own governance responsibilities in the **workbook**. Local context and policies and the relationships among various groups influence these responsibilities and decision rights, and leaders should adapt the samples to fit each situation.

Sample responsibilities and decision rights		
Decision Maker	What are their responsibilities in strategic initiative management?	Which decisions can they make regarding strategic initiatives?
School board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holding the superintendent accountable, and respective cabinet member(s) accountable through the superintendent Making major policy and governance decisions Reviewing major investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signing off on high-level proposed investment themes and strategies Approving overall budget and large budget allocations

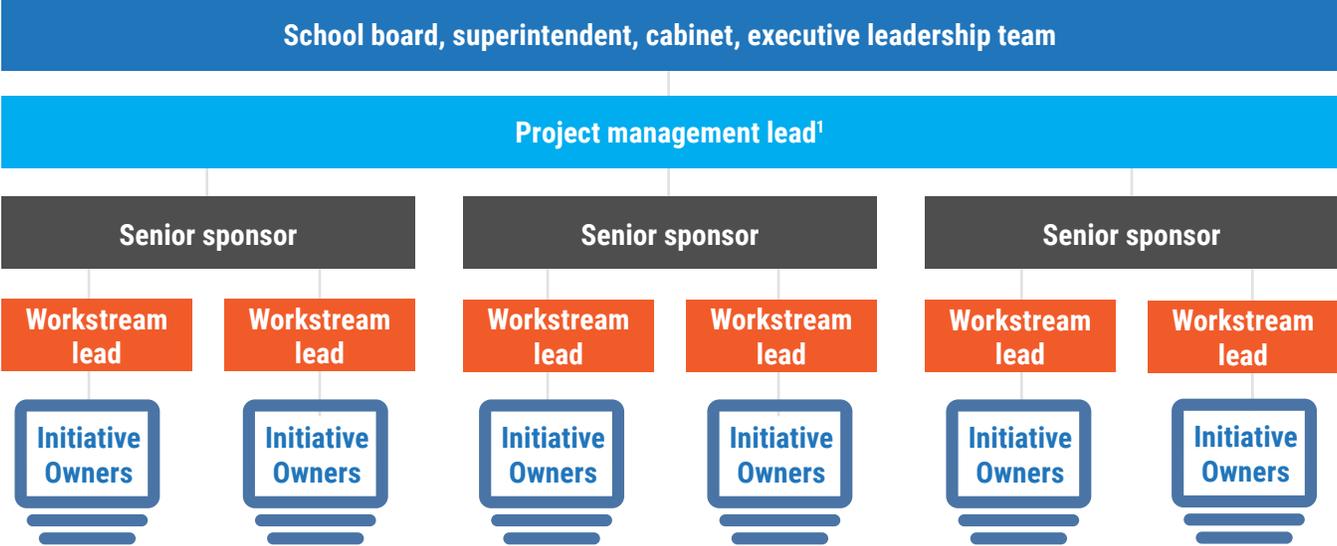
Sample responsibilities and decision rights		
Superintendent/ cabinet/executive leadership team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining system priorities and seeking approval from the board Identifying scope for new strategic initiatives Keeping board and external stakeholders engaged and informed Providing strategic guidance on biggest and highest-profile strategic initiatives, incorporating input and perspectives from wide range of stakeholders Weighing in on midyear and year-end review check-ins with major initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting or stopping major initiatives (e.g., ending an announced program) Approving new high-budget initiatives (potentially subject to board approval as well) Approving actions implicating policy or public review Approving staff allocations (e.g., approving new personnel, changing existing FTE allocations) Communicating the “why” of large initiatives
Senior sponsors <i>Executive team members (or representatives) accountable for delivery of one or more strategic initiatives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring alignment of resources with system goals and strategic priorities Overseeing strategic progress across a portfolio of initiatives and making necessary adjustments Removing barriers and building buy-in across the organization Escalating issues or roadblocks to superintendent Setting a standard for planning and implementation rigor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approving adjustments to the scope of existing initiatives (e.g., approving expansion of an existing middle school program to high schools) Approving new initiatives with large budgets Approving new standards and processes for planning and implementation
Workstream leads <i>Individuals across departments* (or representatives) who support senior sponsors</i> <small>*Departments represented within the group can include budgeting and finance; technology; data and evaluation; diversity, opportunity and access, and inclusion; human capital or human resources; communications; strategic initiatives or special projects; operations; academic affairs or leadership; student services and enrichment; and facilities management.</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationalizing decisions from superintendent and senior sponsors (e.g., communicating standards for planning and implementation) Promoting awareness and individual capabilities on implementation processes Providing problem-solving support to initiative owners Doing first-pass reviews of initiative proposals prior to submission to senior sponsors Escalating issues and making recommendations on major decisions to superintendent and senior sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approving minor operational changes in the delivery of existing initiatives Approving creation of new lower-budget initiatives

Sample responsibilities and decision rights		
Initiative owners <i>Staff responsible for day-to-day management of a specific strategic initiative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring on-the-ground delivery and planning of strategic initiatives • Engaging and coordinating with stakeholders (e.g., partner organizations, community groups, principals, students, families) • Collecting data and regularly monitoring initiative progress and impacts • Identifying successes and roadblocks to elevate to the workstream lead and senior sponsor • Managing data and ensuring that initiatives have a positive impact on all student groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting protocols and guidelines for initiative implementation on the ground (e.g., what happens on campuses)
Project management lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining an accurate, up-to-date source for all initiative updates • Convening key meetings so that they are accessible and convenient for all attendees • Supporting initiative owners in making required updates in a timely manner • Facilitating meetings in a way that ensures all attendees are heard and can effectively communicate, share relevant thoughts, and receive support where needed 	<p>N/A; primary responsibility is managing and overseeing the implementation “engine” itself, rather than specific initiatives</p>

Sample responsibilities and decision rights		
School leaders <i>Principals, assistant principals</i>	<i>As appropriate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating with parents, families, and students about the strategic initiatives available on their campuses • Providing input and feedback on planned and ongoing initiatives from the perspective of leadership and other key stakeholders • Staffing initiatives on campuses • Sending out communications materials provided by the central office regarding strategic initiatives • Appointing key contacts and staff members to liaise with the central office regarding strategic initiatives • Ensuring timely data collection and submission for strategic initiatives, as prompted by initiative owners (e.g., attendance data for programs) 	<i>As appropriate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying staff responsible for oversight of a strategic program on their campus • Recommending and identifying students for enrollment and participation in strategic initiatives • Determining methods for initiative facilitation (e.g., when tutoring is administered, where programs are held) • Determining how and when to communicate initiative progress to stakeholders

To better understand how these roles interact in an implementation effort, please see the example hierarchy below. As shown, various roles will roll up into each other to promote efficiency while providing system leaders with visibility across all initiatives. Note that smaller systems may have smaller teams and fewer individuals, with individuals playing multiple roles (e.g., one workstream lead across all initiative owners).

EXAMPLE – Potential major roles in an implementation effort



¹Project management leads may not be required in all efforts but should be strongly considered for large or long-term implementation programs.

Setting a standard meeting cadence

Meetings should occur at standard intervals to ensure consistent progress across all initiatives. Regular engagement with implementation teams can help leaders monitor progress, make adjustments, and support ongoing improvement efforts. If possible, leaders can integrate initiative implementation discussions into existing meetings as agenda items.

When determining a meeting cadence, organizers should ensure that all attendees can effectively and conveniently participate to share their thoughts and receive support where needed (e.g., are meetings scheduled around all attendees or only around leaders?)

Can school leaders attend? Can family members and community members conveniently attend and effectively contribute? Does the schedule acknowledge the various commitments of potential attendees? Who determines whether a meeting should be rescheduled or canceled, and why?).

Below is a sample standard cadence for meetings. **We encourage teams to alter these meeting cadences as needed to support effective implementation.** If an initiative is added after a strategic plan is adopted, meetings for the new initiative can be added to the existing cadence of strategic plan meetings. Consult the tool in the [workbook](#) to identify a standard meeting cadence and tailor it to meet the system's needs.

Senior sponsor and executive cabinet meetings

Cadence	1x per month (60 minutes or less) <i>(Integrate into existing meetings if possible)</i>
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent and cabinet • Senior sponsors • Select initiative owners (as requested) • Select representatives (as requested)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand progress of subset of initiatives and elevate any issues or key decisions that require cabinet approval
What happens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of overarching progress data across strategic initiatives (e.g., number of initiatives ongoing, total budget distributed to date) • Problem-solving on key items for approval (e.g., signing off on staffing allocations, budget items) • Planning for upcoming board and/or external community updates • Open forum to gather input from representatives of selected groups or communities

Senior sponsor and workstream lead meeting

Cadence	1-2x per month (60 minutes or less) <i>(Start with higher frequency and integrate into existing meetings if possible)</i>
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workstream leads • Senior sponsors • Select initiative owners (as requested) • Select representatives (as requested)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review implementation status of subset of initiatives and recent initiative sign offs by senior sponsors, identify potential gaps or issues, provide guidance, and identify decisions for elevation to superintendent's cabinet
What happens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of recent initiative approvals and progress • Review of overarching progress data (project management tracking/performance management system/dashboards) across strategic initiatives (e.g., number of initiatives ongoing, total budget distributed to date) • Discuss issues, concerns, and roadblocks escalated by initiative owners or other stakeholders to ideate potential mitigation strategies • Problem-solving on specific initiatives for de-bottlenecking • Open forum to gather input from representatives of selected groups or communities

Workstream lead and initiative owner meetings

Cadence	1x per week (60 minutes or less)
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workstream lead members • Select initiative owners (as requested) • Select representatives (as requested)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress on milestones and metrics, identify bottlenecks, escalate issues, and ensure execution of key steps
What happens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review initiative proposals and provide feedback to initiative owners • Approve movement of smaller initiatives across phases (e.g., those with budgets of less than a predefined threshold for low budget items) • Review of initiative progress against milestones (rotating set of initiative owners attend meeting each week) • Review relevant data and stakeholder input to evaluate how initiative outcomes are affecting student and stakeholder groups • Discuss how to address roadblocks for initiative owners

To help visualize the cadence of these meetings and how they might inform one another, school system leaders and teams can consult the sample implementation meeting calendar below and see the [attached workbook](#) for fillable templates.

March 2022				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1 Workstream lead and initiative owners	2	3	4
7	8 Workstream lead and initiative owners	9 Workstream lead and senior sponsors	10	11
14	15 Workstream lead and initiative owners	16	17 Senior sponsors and cabinet	18
21	22 Workstream lead and initiative owners	23 Workstream lead and senior sponsors	24	25
28	29 Workstream lead and initiative owners	30 Board update	31	

Role of a project management lead or team

In larger or long-term implementation efforts, a partially or fully dedicated staff member (or small team) can be integral to the success of the overall effort. This person or team does not need to be a member of the division/department implementing the initiative and can be responsible for many things, from facilitating meetings to managing the overall implementation program. In addition to general project management duties, this person or team can

play a particularly important role in ensuring that all voices are heard, engaged, and respected in meetings and throughout the implementation processes. This includes elevating a range of perspectives and input from beyond the immediate team, ensuring those views are part of the overall discussion.

The following is one way to manage these responsibilities on a two-week basis (aligned to the sample meeting cadence above):

Week 1

- **Tuesday:** Remind initiative owners to update initiatives by end of week
- **Thursday:** Share list of to-be-updated initiatives with workstream leads to facilitate follow-ups with initiative owners
- **Friday:** Prepare a snapshot of progress across initiatives to support the following week's discussions (e.g., phase, status, upcoming/late milestones, recent feedback from those involved)



Tip: Dashboards that automatically display information across initiatives (e.g., key metrics, available data, input from stakeholders, issues, or roadblocks) can be helpful. Dashboards can be developed through off-the-shelf project management software or through simple, widely available tools such as Google Sheets.

Week 2

- **Monday:** Prepare meeting agendas and share snapshots with attendees
- **Tuesday:** Distill key points for each workstream (with the workstream lead) to discuss with senior sponsors and/or the superintendent (e.g., recent progress in past two weeks, recent reflections from stakeholders, key priorities for the next two weeks, decision points, or support needed). Consider sharing these key points in a monthly board update.



Step 3: Adopt clear initiative approval processes

Once the strategic scope and governance responsibilities for initiatives have been established, leaders can adopt a multistage process with corresponding criteria to guide initiatives from initial idea to implementation. Evaluating initiatives after each phase using set, transparent criteria ensures that initiatives are thoroughly vetted and planned. In this document, the implementation process is segmented into six phases, which are defined in more detail on the following page.

A common implementation failure point is subjecting plans to insufficient review – both at the individual initiative level and across interdependent initiatives. This can hinder the ultimate impact and efficacy of an initiative. Even exciting initiatives that gain traction and launch quickly can ultimately fail to achieve their desired impact due to ineffective planning and insufficient pressure-testing of proposed plans. The following process seeks to help systems avoid that pitfall. For more information, please see the [risk anticipation protocol](#), a tool that supports the early recognition and mitigation of potential roadblocks in upcoming initiatives or projects.

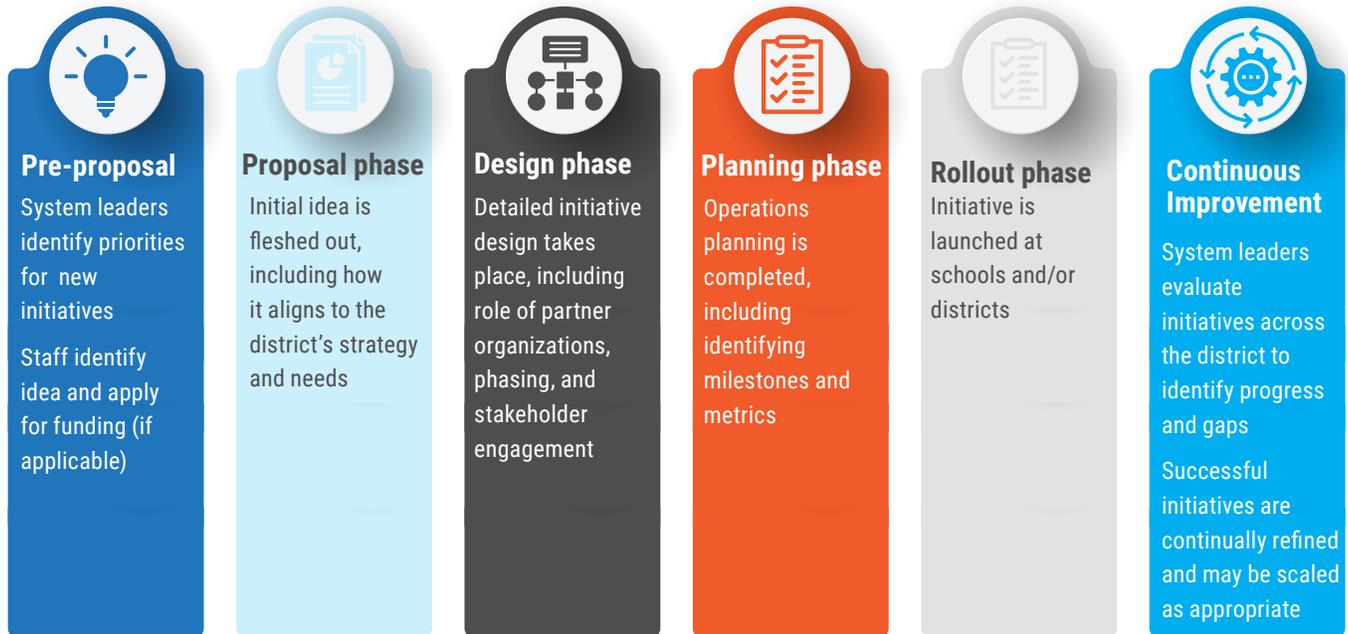
DEFINING CLEAR, DISTINCT PHASES

The implementation process encompasses six essential – and distinct – phases: pre-proposal, proposal, design, planning, rollout, and continuous improvement. It is critical to establish defined, specific criteria for each phase to move initiatives successfully through the implementation process.

This tool references the six-phase process throughout, describing the phases, sample decision

points, and more for the purposes of consistency. We encourage system leaders to use these phases as a starting point and tailor the approval criteria and processes to suit local needs. The [workbook](#) in this document includes a corresponding template that can be used to develop tailored approval criteria and processes to move initiatives from one phase to the next. Below are high-level descriptions of each phase.

Sample phases to support initiative implementation



Initiative owners submit plans for review to relevant sponsor at the end of each phase; sponsors determine which initiatives in their collective portfolio to move forward, ensuring implementation of complementary initiatives with high likelihood of success.

Pre-proposal phase

A system sets the scope for launching new initiatives and invites relevant interested parties to engage in the development process. Setting the scope for new initiatives should begin by seeking broad stakeholder input (e.g., students, educators, community members) to understand what is most relevant and important to stakeholders, including areas beyond the system's existing strategic priorities. It is especially important to include this input from stakeholders, since these groups are the intended beneficiaries of the initiative and they will likely be most affected by it.



Proposal phase

A potential new initiative is identified. Steps taken in the proposal phase ensure that key components of the initiative (e.g., owner, goals, target population, budget) are delineated, and that the initiative serves a clear need and is aligned with system strategy.



Design phase

Initiative owners provide additional details regarding their initiative and its implementation (e.g., key partners for the initiative, key stakeholders consulted, anticipated impact across student groups). Together, these details form the road map for subsequent planning, helping illuminate how the initiative will lead to student impact.



Planning phase

Initiative owners translate their "theory of change" into an actionable road map for implementation. By describing items such as key milestones and metrics for reflection, completion of the planning phase ensures that initiative owners have a clear path and timeline for launch, monitoring, and reflection.



Rollout phase

Initiatives are launched and implemented. In some cases, the rollout phase may refer to pilots, while in others, programs can be rolled out system wide. During

the rollout or pilot phase, initiative owners should seek input from a broad range of sources to understand the potential impacts or aftereffects from full initiative implementation. This phase offers unique opportunities for systems to gather data and insights on what is working well and what might change in the future.



Implementation and continuous improvement

Initiatives are continually refined based on data and feedback from a range of stakeholders. The continuous improvement phase is ongoing throughout the life of an initiative, helping systems determine whether an initiative will be continued in its current state, scaled up, scaled back, or shut down. Data should be collected in a manner that allows team members and initiative owners to assess the initiative's impact holistically (e.g., how will this initiative affect different student groups? Do the key metrics used measure different types of impact? Is there evidence that this initiative is negatively affecting any stakeholders? What else are we hearing from those involved?). Integrating a new initiative into the existing monitoring and accountability system and linked to the staff evaluation process can increase the likelihood of success. Failure to invest in continuous improvement processes is not uncommon and can be a key factor in the proliferation of initiatives that have minimal impact and divert time and attention away from initiatives that could have greater impact on students.

Note: In targeted implementation efforts, systems may move forward with predefined initiatives instead of sourcing ideas from the organization. In broader change efforts, skipping these steps risks missing a major portion of the impact: Often the "long tail" of smaller-budget initiatives contributes disproportionately to the results achieved. The stages below will help to refine promising proposals and weed out others to ensure that prioritized initiatives will be equitable and influential for students over time.

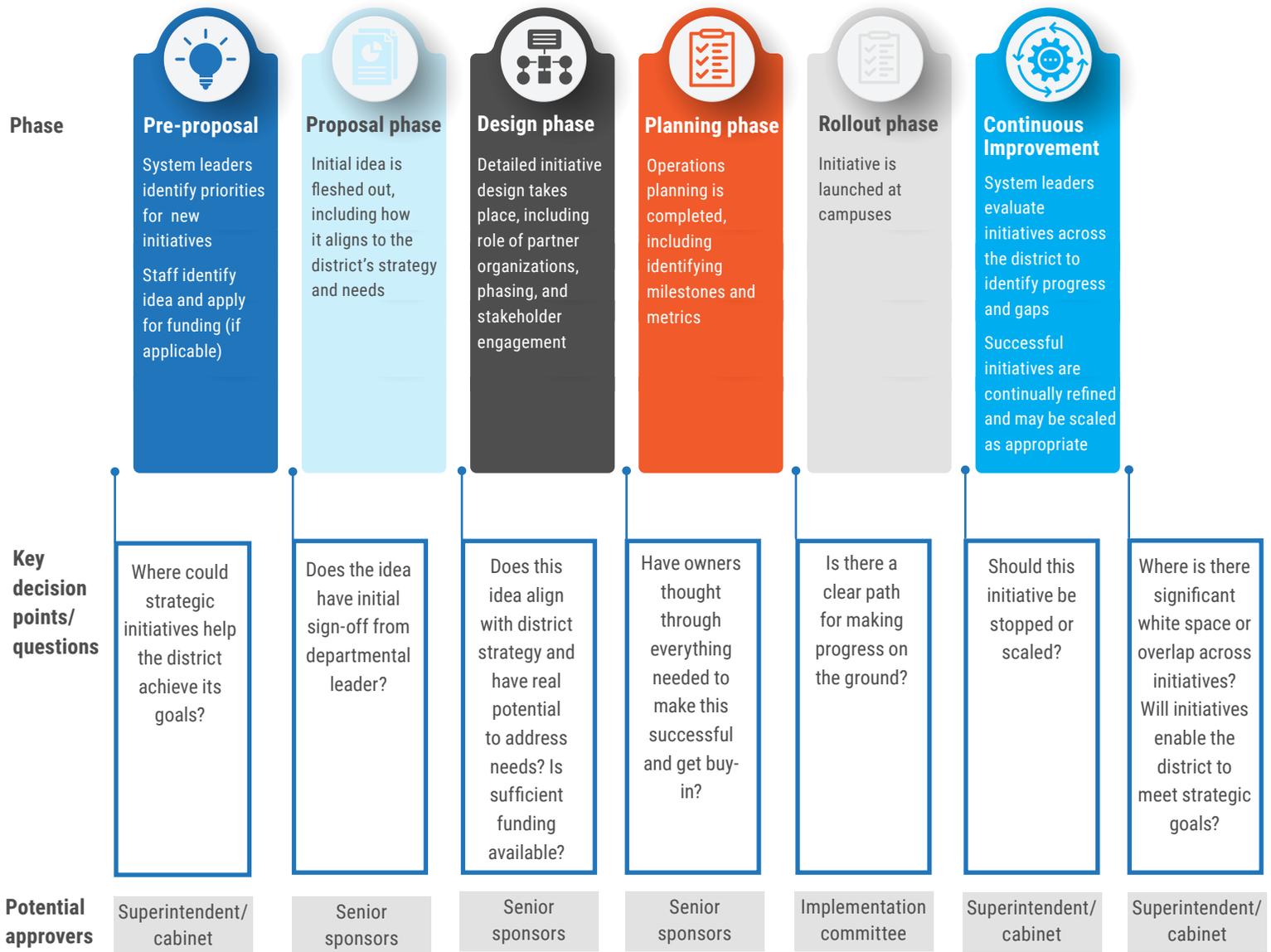
USING DISTINCT PHASES IN PRACTICE

After customizing the set of phases that support local needs, system leaders can develop a standard process and criteria for evaluating initiatives at each step.

Before the next phase, decision makers should ask themselves whether the initiative has sufficiently met the criteria for the *previous* phase and has completed planning for the *following* phase.

Leaders can use the tools and templates provided in Step 2 to determine who is responsible for evaluating initiatives at each phase as well as the appropriate cadence for review, and then use the **workbook** of this document to record this information.

EXAMPLE – Key decision points to determine whether an initiative should proceed to the next phase



SAMPLE PHASE REFLECTION CRITERIA

Below are key questions that can help reviewers determine whether initiatives should move from one phase to the next. Leaders can customize this checklist using the template provided in the [workbook](#) and should be flexible as necessary throughout initiative approval processes. Some initiatives that do not “check every box” may still be viable to proceed.

When drafting or customizing criteria approval questions, leaders can consider the following series of guiding questions:

- Do the selected approval criteria give preference to certain types of initiatives over others (e.g., financial impact vs. non financial impact)? Do they benefit specific initiative owners or leaders with specific expertise over others (e.g., technical knowledge, finance background)?
- Do selected metrics support a holistic assessment of initiatives, or do they anchor on specific metric types (e.g., KPIs only track financial or other highly quantifiable data, rather than other metrics like relationship building)?
- Is projecting and measuring the impact of initiatives across various affected populations (e.g., different student groups, teacher groups of varied tenures, external community subpopulations) built into the reflection criteria?

Phase	Detailed reflection checklist
Entering the proposal phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Will the initiative advance system priorities and goals and/or address a need demonstrated by students? <input type="checkbox"/> Does this specific need require a new initiative, or can we address it by restarting or updating an existing initiative? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the proposed initiative meet requirements outlined in our identified scope of strategic priorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the idea have sign-off from the relevant executive leader and/or senior sponsor? <input type="checkbox"/> Could an outside organization and/or partner meet the need this initiative is designed to address?
Proposal to design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the initiative target an identified or demonstrated need? <input type="checkbox"/> Is sufficient funding available to deliver initiative impact effectively while staying true to the initiative’s purpose? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the initiative compliant with funding guidelines (e.g., federal or state grant requirements)? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the initiative have a single, identified owner with the time and authority to execute it successfully? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there evidence that the initiative will deliver results and further progress toward strategic goals (e.g., academic research, case studies from other systems, examples of in-system success)? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it have SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound) performance objectives?

Phase	Detailed reflection checklist
Design to planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a demonstrated path to deliver on the SMART performance objectives identified in the proposal phase? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there capacity to plan, oversee, and implement the initiative (e.g., administration, team members, community partners)? <input type="checkbox"/> Do all relevant team members have available capacity to support the initiative? Is there a balanced workload across all team members? <input type="checkbox"/> Are additional resources or support services available for initiative owners (or other team members) who may need them to successfully lead and own an initiative? <input type="checkbox"/> What is the total cost of the initiative? What is the start-up cost and annual recurring cost? <input type="checkbox"/> Will all students have access to the initiative based on need? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the initiative consider how effects may differ across different student groups (or other affected groups)? <input type="checkbox"/> Will this initiative have accessible data and insights to measure effects across different student groups (or other affected groups)? <input type="checkbox"/> Has there been meaningful consideration of multiple stakeholder groups with a plan developed to engage stakeholders throughout implementation?
Planning to rollout (for individual initiatives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are the proposed metrics for measurement aligned with the system’s strategic goals and priorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a clear path to collecting data to monitor and evaluate progress (e.g., baselines, midyear, and year-end targets)? <input type="checkbox"/> Does this initiative include specific metrics to track impact across student groups? <input type="checkbox"/> Can the initiative be linked to the existing accountability system? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there potential for this initiative to exclude or negatively affect any specific student groups (or other stakeholder groups)? <input type="checkbox"/> Have Year 1 targets been set? Are they informed by data? How do Year 1 targets connect to the longer-term initiative goals (e.g., multi-year targets)? <input type="checkbox"/> Have clear milestones been identified (including milestones for stakeholder engagement, communication and training with staff, and monitoring and evaluation)? <input type="checkbox"/> Could this initiative be scaled if initiative rollout is successful?
Planning to rollout (across portfolio of initiatives for a strategic pillar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Where are the areas of overlap in our system’s initiatives? <input type="checkbox"/> Where are there gaps in progress, scope, and impact of this initiative for our system? <input type="checkbox"/> Taken together, will the system’s current portfolio of initiatives enable us to achieve our strategic goals?
Rollout to continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has significant progress been made against performance objectives, targets, and system strategic priorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Will this initiative continue to benefit and support all students in a consistent, balanced way? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there buy-in and support across stakeholders to continue? <input type="checkbox"/> Will continued funding be available?

Step 4: Plan and launch initiatives

INITIATIVE PLANNING TEMPLATE

Leaders can ask initiative owners to fill out standardized templates to support initiative planning (e.g., recent progress, major milestones, timelines). These templates can be mapped to the steps outlined above, with specific criteria and questions corresponding to each phase that designated reviewers can use to evaluate whether initiatives will move forward.

A draft initiative template can be found [here](#). We encourage leaders to tailor this template to suit

their local contexts and needs. Aligning questions with local reporting processes minimizes the administrative burden on initiative owners. At a minimum, leaders should ensure that initiative owners answer the following questions for each initiative.

A completed training-guide template can be found [here](#). For additional detail regarding the process of submitting and approving initiative templates, consult [Step 3 of this document](#) on initiative approval processes and criteria.

Category	Key questions
Owner	Who is responsible for day-to-day implementation and operations? Does this person have the available capacity to execute this initiative?
Sponsor	Which leader is accountable for supporting overall success and removing roadblocks for the initiative owner?
Alignment	What specific issue will this initiative solve? How is it aligned with our system's strategy or long-term goals (e.g., which pillar is this part of)?
Theory of change	What will the initiative do to address identified and demonstrated needs? How will meeting performance objectives translate to student impact?
Budget	What is the proposed budget of the initiative? Does it require a one-time or recurring funding allocation?
Target population	Who will experience the impacts and effects from this initiative? Will this initiative benefit students or stakeholder groups across these groups (e.g., grade levels, student subgroups, specific campuses)?
Performance objectives	What SMART goals does this initiative aim to achieve within the next five years? How will data be used to ensure impacts are distributed and balanced?
Stakeholder engagement plan	How will the initiative incorporate input from a broad set of stakeholders (e.g., principals, teachers, families, and students) throughout the initiative planning and implementation process?

Category	Key questions
Metrics (or other sources of insight)	What metrics will be used to track progress toward overall performance objectives, including leading and lagging indicators of success? How can metrics be used to ensure that initiatives are being measured holistically and account for effects felt by various stakeholder groups? What other sources of insight (e.g., interviews, surveys) can be used to understand performance and impact across groups?
Targets	For identified metrics, what targets should be reached by the end of Year 1? What does success mean – especially for specific student subgroups – and how will this positively affect students? Are the metrics included in the accountability system (e.g., department metrics, staff evaluations)?
Milestones	What are key milestones for the initiative in the upcoming year? Which steps can workstream leads and senior sponsors track to completion?

RISK ANTICIPATION PROTOCOL

As part of initiative planning, implementation teams can conduct “risk anticipation reviews,” which are conversations dedicated to exploring potential risks or roadblocks that may arise for a given initiative. These reviews can help team members identify root causes of potential roadblocks and brainstorm mitigation strategies to address those risks. They also provide an opportunity for leaders to consider where a given initiative may have varying effects on certain student groups or other stakeholder groups, allowing initiative owners to plan for and rebalance the anticipated impacts.

These findings can be incorporated into initiative planning to help ensure more robust, comprehensive initiatives that address potential risks (e.g., limited buy-in from staff, capacity, or data visibility). These findings can also be shared with the board and district leadership, as appropriate.

Risk anticipation protocol in action

A large, urban district held risk anticipation reviews with the senior leadership team on priority initiatives. The district identified staffing shortages as a potential point of failure in addressing students’ unfinished learning resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The general concern had already been raised, but the risk anticipation review helped the system realize the potential magnitude of the problem and develop a specific action plan – an outcome that wouldn’t have happened if leaders hadn’t taken the time for risk anticipation. In response, the district decided to increase salaries for substitute teachers to head off potential shortages down the line and developed a new task force to address talent pipeline and training needs.

For more information on risk anticipation protocols, including a sample workshop guide, see the [Risk anticipation tool](#).

Ongoing: Strive for continuous improvement

Once initiatives are rolled out, school systems need to engage in cycles of continuous improvement. Doing so ensures that feedback and learnings from implementation on the ground are incorporated into ongoing and future initiatives, and that system leaders regularly reflect on the impact of initiatives.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

System leaders can ensure continuous improvement of initiatives by adopting the practices described below. A template to help leaders tailor these continuous improvement processes is provided in the [workbook](#).

Cadence	What initiative owners can do	What workstream leads can do	What senior sponsors and the superintendent can do
Monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and record upcoming milestones in the initiative planning template Escalate key items for support or approval to workstream leads (if needed) Seek input from relevant stakeholders (e.g., students, families, community) to understand initiative impacts across groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do an initial review for new initiative proposal submissions (if applicable) Identify and escalate items for problem-solving Provide guidance or resources to initiative owners and team members who may need additional support, if applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve or deny initiative movement across phases (if applicable) Plan update on strategic initiatives for upcoming school board meetings
Semiannually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect expenditure information and future budgetary needs Review accountability system and assess key impact metrics across student and stakeholder groups Refine initiative plans based on recent input and available data Submit midyear impact update to workstream lead and senior sponsor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide problem-solving support to update initiative plans as needed Facilitate midyear initiative check-ins and provide feedback Assist senior sponsor in preparing initiative-wide update for senior staff and board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize and present initiative-wide update for senior staff and board

Cadence	What initiative owners can do	What workstream leads can do	What senior sponsors and the superintendent can do
Annually <i>Note: System leaders may find it helpful to conduct an annual “initiative planning cycle” to facilitate a cross-portfolio initiative review.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update initiative planning template for the subsequent year Incorporate input from stakeholders into Year 2 initiative planning Prepare Year 2 budget request Submit year-end impact report to workstream lead and senior sponsor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate year-end initiative check-ins and provide feedback Aggregate budget requests across initiatives Assess suite of initiatives holistically to ensure balanced impacts are felt by all student and other stakeholder groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review initiative portfolio and assess progress against strategic priorities Engage in initiative check-ins and provide feedback Approve budget requests and elevate to the board (if applicable) Approve scaling or sunseting of initiatives based on data Share an annual update of progress against goals (e.g., through State of our Schools)

MIDYEAR AND YEAR-END IMPACT UPDATES

Leaders should conduct thorough “step-back” check-ins or impact updates once or twice per year. These updates provide a collective opportunity for initiative owners and system leaders to review progress data, identify bottlenecks, and celebrate successes. Leaders should invite initiative owners to participate in check-ins annually or semiannually, depending on the size and complexity of initiatives. (Higher complexity investments such as launching a new tutoring program may benefit from semiannual updates, while more straightforward initiatives surrounding curricula procurement may be evaluated annually.)

These check-ins also provide a key opportunity to ensure initiative owners are gathering qualitative input from stakeholders (e.g., students, educators, families, community members) to understand the initiative’s impact on various groups. Initiative owners should then incorporate this feedback into future plans while helping leaders understand how to make resourcing trade-offs across initiatives and larger implementation efforts when planning for the following year.

Initiative owners can provide these updates to senior staff during regularly scheduled senior sponsor and executive team meetings, as described in Step 2 of this document.

To facilitate discussion in midyear and year-end check-ins, system leaders can use the **standard template**.

Ongoing: Engage stakeholders

To successfully implement initiatives that will meaningfully affect students, it is critical to seek input from and engage with broad groups of stakeholders who are representative of the student body and the community at large (e.g., students or families most affected by this initiative, particular student groups, teachers who will be involved). Seeking input from many stakeholder groups will offer a wide range of

perspectives and provide leaders or initiative owners with the insight required to design strong initiatives.

This document is not designed to support engagement with stakeholders beyond the scope of the implementation effort and does not cover general, overarching engagement (e.g., defining long-term strategic vision, receiving approval for future investments).

PROGRAM-LEVEL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Leaders should plan to inform and engage key stakeholders, including the school board, staff, families, students, community partner organizations, and the broader community. Existing relationships with external stakeholders should be used to communicate progress in ways that make sense for individual leaders. They should also engage with stakeholders in accessible ways to ensure that certain voices are not excluded from key decision-making processes (e.g., sharing surveys for input in multiple languages, providing public input opportunities beyond midday board meetings).

Please see below for potential engagement methods for program-level stakeholders, though actual materials and channels should be tailored to system preferences:

- **School board:** Monthly or quarterly updates on overall program progress toward strategic priorities, with relevant deep dives provided to share successes or solve problems (see below for a sample meeting cadence)

- **Educators, staff, and campus stakeholders:** Biweekly email updates with key highlights on current progress and initiatives to be implemented in the near term
- **Students and families:** Convenings of students and families who are representative of the school community, at accessible times and locations for these groups (e.g., after-school discussions, dedicated meetings for engagement)
- **Broader community:** Monthly or quarterly public-facing “newsletters” sent via mail/ email and published to website to share major successes, recent accomplishments, and plans for impact

For some systems, it may make sense to create an advisory board made up of representatives from the major stakeholder groups. This is an optional design choice but can help leaders understand the diverse opinions and needs of the multiple groups involved.

Advisory board meetings

Cadence	1x per month (or every other month) Program updates should be included as board agenda items
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior sponsors• Select initiative owners, team members, and representatives (as relevant or as requested)• Stakeholders (e.g., students, families, community members)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide transparency and solicit feedback on progress of initiatives
What happens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of progress across strategic initiatives and toward overarching strategic goals• Deep-dive updates on select high-priority initiatives (e.g., if a system launches a new multimillion-dollar tutoring program or gets its first results from a new system-wide assessment)• Open forum to gather input from representatives of selected groups or communities

INITIATIVE-LEVEL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Within the program itself, system leaders and relevant implementation leaders should plan to engage key stakeholders in various ways depending on the specific need. Engagement methods and cadences should be tailored to individual initiative needs but can often be segmented based on the complexity and impact of the initiative, as shown in the matrix below.

Leaders can consider the following key questions to determine how frequently to engage with stakeholders on each initiative:

- How does the initiative contribute to meeting the system's strategic goals and priorities? What is

the potential impact of this initiative, and how will it affect targeted or high-priority student groups identified by the system (if relevant)?

- How time sensitive are the rollout and implementation of this initiative? Does the initiative have particular significance given recent events?
- What level of involvement do different stakeholder groups have throughout the process (e.g., direct partners, indirect beneficiaries)?

*Note: Each initiative owner can leverage the **initiative planning template in Step 4** to determine the cadence and method of stakeholder engagement.*

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND UPDATE MATRIX

A simple framework that considers each initiative’s potential impact and complexity can help system leaders and initiative owners think about stakeholder engagement. This tool may be particularly relevant for leaders interested in identifying the frequency of initiative updates for the school board, but it is also helpful for other stakeholder engagement efforts. A sample version of this tool can be found below and is available in the [workbook](#).

Systems can update and engage stakeholders on progress based on the complexity and potential impact of each initiative

Potential criteria to help determine how often to engage stakeholders on each initiative

Higher complexity	Lower potential impact and higher complexity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower number of beneficiaries • Low to medium cost • Difficult to execute <p>Examples may include initiatives that benefit a smaller subset of students, but require significant cross-campus coordination</p>	Higher potential impact and higher complexity (or higher potential sensitivity/relevance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of beneficiaries • High cost • Difficult to execute <p>These are landmark, district-wide initiatives</p>
Lower complexity	Lower potential impact and lower complexity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower number of beneficiaries • Lower cost/budget • Easy to implement/execute <p>Examples may include single expenditures (e.g., purchasing new laptops) and initiatives that are able to use existing district infrastructure to deliver the initiative</p>	Higher potential impact and lower complexity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of beneficiaries • Medium to high cost • Easy to implement/execute <p>Examples may include programs that benefit the majority of district students, but are relatively easier to execute</p>
Lower potential impact		Higher potential impact

Potential stakeholder engagement cadence

 **Higher impact and higher complexity**
Engage monthly or quarterly

 **Lower impact and higher complexity/ higher impact and lower complexity**
Engage once per semester

 **Lower impact and lower complexity**
Engage annually or via written report

WORKBOOK

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES TOOL

[Link to content](#)

Directions: System senior leaders should answer the following questions to align on strategic priorities.

Note: It may be helpful to gather high-level performance indicators and progress reports on school system strategy prior to completing this exercise.

Initiative scoping tool	System leader reflections
How is our system and leadership team performing against the overall strategy? What does the data tell you?	
What specific goals should a new strategic initiative help advance?	
Are there existing initiatives that could be improved to meet these goals? Or is the new initiative needed? What might need to be stopped to support this effort?	
Is there funding to support this new initiative?	
Do team members have the capabilities and support needed to design and roll out the initiative? Are they managing multiple changes at once?	
Does the initiative address the needs of students directly, especially those in need of extra support?	

SOURCING NEW INITIATIVE IDEAS

[Link to content](#)

Directions: Edit the text below to draft a custom message to staff calling for initiative ideas.

Sample call for initiative ideas

Our district is currently seeking submissions from all staff to support the design, planning, and launch of strategic initiatives that will help the district reach its strategic goal of providing high-quality education for all students. Recently, we have noticed a significant drop in reading proficiency rates across specific student groups, with a significantly greater decline among ELLs.

In SY 2020-21, overall reading proficiency dropped by eight percentage points for all students and by 14 percentage points for ELLs. Accordingly, the district is accepting ideas for initiatives with potential to meaningfully improve reading proficiency for all students, including through increased classroom support and after-school tutoring. Initiatives should be sure to address reading proficiency rates for all student groups, especially ELLs.

Funding is available over the next five years to accelerate work with the greatest potential for student impact. Contact Deputy Superintendent Kennedy to learn more at Superintendent.Kennedy@schooldistrict.org.

Submissions are due by 8 p.m. on January 15.

We will also host a town hall to provide additional information to ensure that we get the best of our district's thinking to better support our students. Details will follow soon. We look forward to hearing your ideas and working together to better serve our students and community.

IDENTIFYING DECISION MAKERS

[Link to content](#)

Directions: System senior leaders should identify key personnel and stakeholders relevant to supporting strategic initiatives in each of the following groups. Be as specific as possible, including both names and titles. Enter multiple personnel in each category if needed. Blank lines are provided to include additional decision makers, if applicable (e.g., parent associations, student advisory groups).

Note: Roles and responsibilities will change in the specific context of initiative implementation, so leaders should think about adjustments that may be required. Local context and policies influence these responsibilities and decision rights, as do the relationships between various groups. Leaders should adapt the template below for each situation.

Decision maker	Description	Personnel in my school system
School board	Leaders who review major investments and policy decisions for strategic initiatives	
Superintendent/ cabinet/ executive leadership team	Leaders who set strategy, define strategic goals and pillars, identify areas for strategic initiatives, and sign off on major investments	

Decision maker	Description	Personnel in my school system
Initiative owners	Individuals (e.g., director of the tutoring program, director of career readiness initiatives) who carry out day-to-day planning and implementation of initiatives on the ground	
School level leaders	Senior-level leaders (e.g., principals) responsible for coordinating with initiative owners to stand up initiatives in schools	

Decision maker	Description	Personnel in my school system
Senior sponsors	Members of the executive team appointed to oversee planning and delivery of distinct pillars of strategic initiatives, clearing roadblocks, and approving initiatives for launch (e.g., a senior sponsor for academic initiatives, a senior sponsor for enrichment initiatives)	
Workstream leads	Leaders across departments who report directly to executive team members and are responsible for overseeing a “workstream” – i.e., a thematic or goal-specific collection of initiatives – as well as the work of the associated initiative owners. These leads are responsible for operationalizing decisions from the superintendent and senior sponsors, including by providing administrative support, conducting implementation training, doing first-pass reviews of plans for major initiatives	

Decision maker	Description	Personnel in my school system
<p>Project management lead</p>	<p>Staff member or small team responsible for ensuring that planning and monitoring processes proceed effectively. The lead will also support and encourage initiative owners to make required updates on time.</p>	
<p>External consultants</p>	<p>All external contractors should be considered when identifying key participants in system-wide implementation processes. External consultants may be specialized (e.g., strategic, IT, project management) or cross-cutting across strategic priorities and goals. Work and progress of external groups and contractors should be tracked as part of the overall initiative processes.</p>	

Decision maker	Description	Personnel in my school system
<i>To be filled in</i>		
<i>To be filled in</i>		
<i>To be filled in</i>		

ESTABLISHING CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Link to content

Directions: Once personnel in decision maker groups have been identified, determine key responsibilities and decision rights for each group. Be as specific as possible and use the **sample responsibilities** in the guidebook for inspiration. Once identified, these responsibilities and expectations can be communicated to personnel in each group.

Sample responsibilities and decision rights		
Who is it?	What are their responsibilities in strategic initiative management?	Which decisions can they make regarding strategic initiatives? Whose input do they need to do so?
School board		
Superintendent's cabinet/executive leadership team		
System leaders		
Senior sponsors		
Workstream leads		
Initiative owners		

ESTABLISHING A STANDARD MEETING CADENCE

[Link to content](#)

Directions: Once roles and responsibilities for decision-making entities are defined, systems can adopt a standard meeting cadence to oversee implementation across initiatives. Use the template below to answer key questions – e.g., whether to use existing or launch new meetings, how to identify key attendees, and how to determine set agenda items to support implementation.

Meeting	Will this meeting be new or use existing time?	Purpose	Attendees	Key agenda items
Directions	<i>Check the relevant box; if using existing time, provide detail on which standing meeting block will be used</i>	<i>Edit the prepopulated purpose to suit system needs</i>	<i>Include both roles and names of specific individuals, if possible</i>	<i>Reference sample agenda items included in the guidebook and tailor to system needs</i>
Board updates	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	Provide transparency and solicit feedback on progress of initiatives		
Senior sponsor and executive cabinet meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	Understand progress of subset of initiatives and elevate any issues or key decisions that require cabinet approval		

Meeting	Will this meeting be new or use existing time?	Purpose	Attendees	Key agenda items
Senior sponsor and workstream lead meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	Review implementation status of subset of initiatives and recent initiative sign-offs by senior sponsors, identify potential gaps or issues, provide guidance, and identify decisions for elevation to superintendent's cabinet		
Workstream lead and initiative owner meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	Monitor progress on milestones and metrics, provide problem-solving support, identify bottlenecks, escalate issues, and ensure execution of key steps		

DEFINING PHASES AND KEY DECISION POINTS

[Link to content](#)

Directions: Customize the template below. Identify who will review initiative plans at the end of each phase and what criteria will determine whether initiatives move forward. For criteria, consult the [checklist below](#) as a starting point, adding or removing criteria as relevant to system needs.



Key reviewers for this stage						
Key questions to determine completion of this phase						

PHASE REFLECTION CRITERIA

[Link to Content](#)

Directions: Use the checklist below as a starting point to determine the criteria initiatives must meet to move forward in the phased process. Leaders can customize this checklist and should be flexible as necessary throughout initiative approval processes. Some initiatives that do not “check every box” may still be viable to proceed.

Phase	Detailed reflection checklist
Entering the proposal phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the proposed initiative meet requirements outlined in our identified scope of strategic priorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Will the initiative advance system priorities and goals and/or address a need demonstrated by students? <input type="checkbox"/> Does this specific need require a new initiative, or can we address it by restarting or updating an existing initiative? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the idea have sign-off from the relevant executive leader and/or senior sponsor? <input type="checkbox"/> Could an outside organization and/or partner meet the need this initiative is designed to address?
Proposal to design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Is sufficient funding available to deliver impact effectively while staying true to the initiative’s purpose? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the initiative compliant with funding guidelines (e.g., federal or state grant requirements)? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the initiative target an identified or demonstrated need? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the initiative have a single, identified owner with the time and authority to execute it successfully? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there evidence that the initiative will deliver results and further progress toward strategic goals (e.g., academic research, case studies from other systems, examples of in-system success)? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it have SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound) performance objectives?

Phase	Detailed reflection checklist
Design to planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a demonstrated path to deliver on the SMART performance objectives identified in the proposal phase? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there capacity to plan, oversee, and implement the initiative (e.g., administration, team members, community partners)? <input type="checkbox"/> Do all relevant team members have available capacity to support the initiative? Is there a balanced workload across all team members? <input type="checkbox"/> Are additional resources or support services available for initiative owners (or other team members) who may need them to successfully lead and own an initiative? <input type="checkbox"/> What is the total cost of the initiative? What is the start-up cost and annual recurring cost? <input type="checkbox"/> Will all students have access to the initiative based on need? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the initiative consider how effects may differ across different student groups (or other affected groups)? <input type="checkbox"/> Will this initiative have accessible data and insights to measure effects across different student groups (or other affected groups)? <input type="checkbox"/> Has there been meaningful consideration of multiple stakeholder groups with a plan developed to engage stakeholders throughout implementation?
Planning to rollout (for individual initiatives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are the proposed metrics for measurement aligned with the system’s strategic goals and priorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a clear path to collecting data to monitor and evaluate progress (e.g., baselines, midyear, and year-end targets)? <input type="checkbox"/> Does this initiative include specific metrics to track impact across student groups? <input type="checkbox"/> Can the initiative be linked to the existing accountability system? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there potential for this initiative to exclude or negatively affect any specific student groups (or other stakeholder groups)? <input type="checkbox"/> Have Year 1 targets been set? Are they informed by data? How do Year 1 targets connect to the longer-term initiative goals (e.g., multi-year targets)? <input type="checkbox"/> Have clear milestones been identified (including milestones for stakeholder engagement, communication and training with staff, and monitoring and evaluation)? <input type="checkbox"/> Could this initiative be scaled if initiative rollout is successful?
Planning to rollout (across portfolio of initiatives for a strategic pillar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Where are the areas of overlap in our system’s initiatives? <input type="checkbox"/> Where are there gaps in progress, scope, and impact of this initiative for our system? <input type="checkbox"/> Taken together, will the system’s current portfolio of initiatives enable us to achieve our strategic goals?
Rollout to continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has significant progress been made against performance objectives, targets, and system strategic priorities? <input type="checkbox"/> Will this initiative continue to benefit and support all students in a consistent, balanced way? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there buy-in and support across stakeholders to continue? <input type="checkbox"/> Will continued funding be available?

INITIATIVE PLANNING TEMPLATE

[Link to content](#)

Directions: Use the initiative planning template provided [here](#) as a starting point to develop a tailored format that initiative owners will complete while moving through the phase process. Customize this template to local system needs and contexts, aligning questions with system reporting processes to reduce reporting burdens for initiative owners.

Once the template is finalized, it may be helpful to create a shared folder across system initiatives. Initiative owners should save their respective templates in the assigned folder with the naming convention “MM.DD.YY_Initiative Planning Template _ Initiative Name.”

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

[Link to content](#)

Directions: Fill in the chart below to identify the continuous improvement norms that leaders will adopt. Once finalized, communicate these guidelines across staff working to implement and oversee initiatives, reinforcing guidelines with role-modeling, regular communication, and positive feedback.

Note: Leaders may find it helpful to hold an annual review of all initiatives and seek submissions at specific times. For example, leaders may assess the initiative portfolio in November and December.

Cadence	What initiative owners can do	What workstream leads can do	What senior sponsors and the superintendent can do
Monthly			
Semiannually			
Annually			

MIDYEAR AND YEAR-END IMPACT UPDATES

[Link to content](#)

Directions: Customize the midyear and year-end impact templates [here](#) to support semiannual “step-back” check-ins and impact updates. At the start of each semiannual review, distribute the template to each initiative owner for completion. Leaders should also ensure that initiative owners are gathering qualitative input from key stakeholders and incorporating feedback into their midyear and year-end template documents.

The template can then support a cross-team discussion on initiative progress to review progress data, identify bottlenecks, and celebrate successes. Leaders can use this information to reallocate resources across initiatives.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND UPDATE MATRIX

[Link to content](#)

Directions: To ensure buy-in and support for initiatives, systems must engage stakeholder groups throughout the process of developing and implementing initiatives. The matrix below can help system leaders determine how often to provide stakeholder updates on each initiative, focusing on each initiative’s relative potential impact and complexity. Place each initiative in the appropriate quadrant of the template below based on these considerations.

Higher complexity	Lower potential impact and higher complexity <i>Provide quarterly updates on progress</i>	Higher potential impact and higher complexity (or higher potential sensitivity/relevance) <i>Provide updates on progress once per semester</i>
Lower complexity	Lower potential impact and lower complexity <i>Provide annual updates on progress</i>	Higher potential impact and lower complexity <i>Provide quarterly updates on progress</i>
Lower potential impact		Higher potential impact

