



Utah State Board of Education

2025



LEA Consolidated Needs Assessment & Improvement Guide

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Utah State Board of Education Strategic Plan

The LEA Consolidated Needs Assessment and Improvement Plan supports the Utah State Board of Education's (USB E) vision, mission, and goals for the education of all Utah students.

Vision

Academic and organizational excellence in Utah education

Utah graduates are prepared to

- participate in civic responsibilities,
- uphold and strengthen our constitutional republic,
- provide for themselves and their families,
- engage in post-secondary opportunities,
- pursue personal goals, and
- embody strong moral and social values.

Mission

To open doors of opportunity for all Utah children

The USB E:

- sets academic standards,
- protects information systems,
- manages public education funds,
- directs transparent operations,
- develops policy for education,
- advocates for Utah students, and
- provides support and oversight of schools.

Learn more about the [USB E Strategic Plan](#).

LEA Consolidated Needs Assessment & Improvement Plan

Background

The development of the LEA Consolidated Needs Assessment & Improvement Plan was driven by the desire to consolidate as many local education agencies (LEAs) funding streams as possible and to improve the tools and processes LEA leaders use to initiate and sustain continuous improvement for educational outcomes. The tool design and development was informed by the 2019 Performance Audit of Public Education Reporting Requirements conducted by the Office of the Legislative Auditor General and subsequent legislative action (HB 42, HB 134, HB 300). This work was accomplished through USBE staff collaboration with representatives from 21 LEAs, consultation with the Region 15 Comprehensive Center, and support from one of the Board's business partners, REI Systems (Utah Grants Management). Some of the expected benefits of the UCIP and associated processes include

- LEAs improved abilities to target funding to specific educational needs as a result of consolidation and improved tools,
- reduced burden on LEA leadership (i.e., time, personnel, fiscal) and elimination of duplications of efforts,
- improved collaboration within LEA leadership teams to strategically focus limited resources on the identified greatest needs, and
- accelerated educational improvements for all LEAs.

Many federal and state programs require the development and implementation of an improvement plan relative to the purpose and goals of the program (see Appendix A).

Federal Plans Included

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Program:

- Title I, Part A: Targeted Assistance Schools
- Title I, Part A: Parent and Family Engagement
- Title I, Part A: Children in Foster Care
- Title I, Part C: Migrant Education
- Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention for Students At- Risk
- Title II, Part A Preparing, Training, & Recruiting High-Quality Educators
- Title III Language Instruction for English Learners & Immigrant Students
- Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment
- Title IV, Part B 21st Century Learning Centers

LEA Consolidated Needs Assessment (CNA) & Improvement Plan Objectives

This tool is founded on the concept that monitoring and improvement are ongoing processes and includes an annual USBE review of state and individual LEA performance in pre-identified areas and annual performance report (APR) Indicators.

This plan includes the following underlying principles:

- **Continuity:** The monitoring process is continuous rather than episodic, is linked to systemic change, and is integrated with self-assessment, continuous feedback, and response.
- **Partnerships with stakeholders:** The LEA collaborates with diverse stakeholders, both internal and external, in the following areas: collection and analysis of self-assessment data; identification of critical issues and solutions to problems; and

development, implementation, and oversight of improvement strategies to ensure compliance and improved results for all students.

- **LEA accountability:** LEAs are accountable for identifying strengths and areas of need based upon data analysis; identifying, implementing, and revising strategies for program improvement; and submitting annual updates and progress reports.
- **Data-driven needs assessment process:** Each LEA works with stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) to review student outcomes using data aligned with state and district performance goals and the APR Indicators. Available data could include academic, demographic, attendance and dropout rates, school climate and culture, teacher and staff assignments, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, post-secondary readiness, health and wellbeing, stakeholder input, and other LEA improvement efforts and initiatives.
- **Technical assistance:** Since this process is continuous, technical assistance is a critical component of program improvement. USBE provides technical assistance to schools and districts, such as professional learning opportunities and coaching.

Purpose

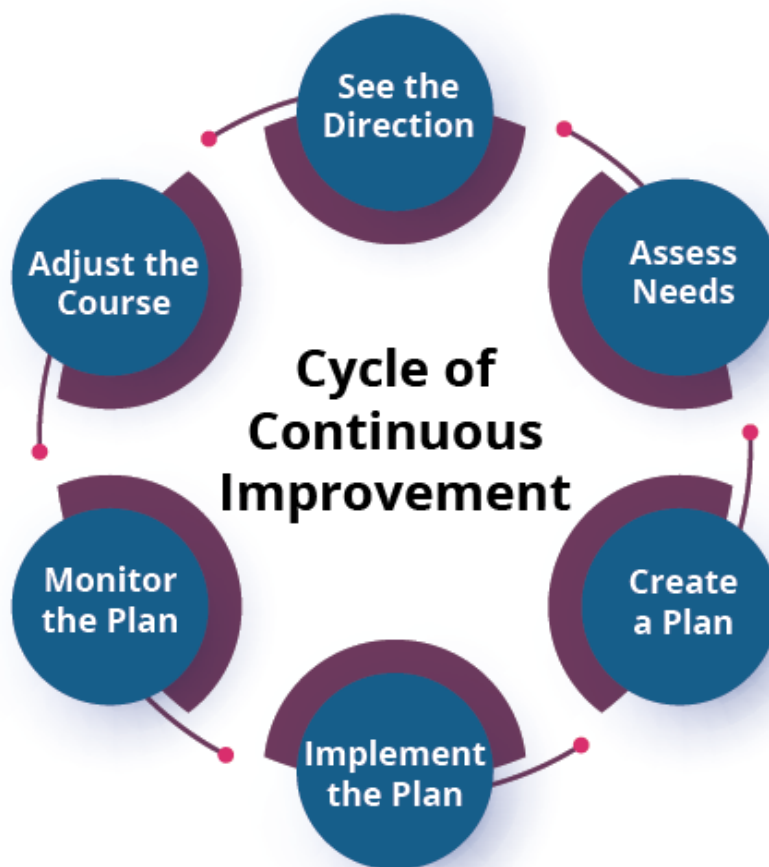
The purpose of the CNA is to assist LEAs in identifying areas for program improvement, prioritizing those areas, and developing meaningful plans that enable LEAs and schools to create connections between identified needs, evidence-based strategies, and resource allocation methods used to support the design of programs to improve student outcomes and the quality of the services. As LEAs develop their continuous improvement plans, high-leverage and evidence-based practices should be used to achieve these purposes.

Process

An effective continuous improvement plan requires LEAs to conduct a

comprehensive needs assessment with internal and external stakeholders to systematically identify areas of strength and areas of need. Once needs are identified, a root cause analysis assists LEAs in establishing rigorous yet attainable goals to establish strategies and interventions to support improvement. The delineation of each phase in the planning process outlines best practices intended to guide LEA leadership teams seamlessly through this critical procedure (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Cycle of Continuous Improvement



1. **Set the direction:** Establish the LEA planning team and Stakeholder engagement groups and review the vision and mission to prepare for creating the plan.
2. **Assess needs:** Complete the online CNA Tool to identify needs, complete a root cause analysis, and identify goals for improvement.

3. **Create a plan:** Develop goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART), as well as strategies and metrics to achieve the goals, and allocate available resources for the plan.
4. **Implement the plan:** Involve the appropriate staff and set regular check-ins to monitor and adjust the plan as needed.
5. **Monitor the plan:** Track successes and progress toward achieving the plan goals.
6. **Adjust course:** Based on the monitoring results, adjust the plan as needed to ensure the effectiveness of strategies and continuous improvement.

Set the Direction

LEA Planning Team

Build a planning team by starting with individuals directly involved with the LEA's improvement programs. Ideal team members possess program knowledge, the capacity to plan and implement the plan components, and the ability to ensure stakeholder involvement. Additional individuals can be considered as the group recognizes needs and establishes goals to meet those needs. Planning team members to consider include:

- Superintendent/charter director
- Assistant superintendent
- Human resource director
- Business administrator
- Curriculum director
- Special education director
- Assessment/accountability director
- Literacy director
- Career and technical education director
- Title I director (including parent engagement and foster care)
- Title II director
- Title III director
- Homeless liaison

- Migrant director
- Youth in care director
- School counseling representation
- Preschool representation
- School leader representation
- Teacher representation

Stakeholder Engagement Groups

Stakeholders have valuable experiences and perspectives and provide the team with important input, feedback, and guidance. Required stakeholders must be engaged in the process to meet the requirements of participating federal programs (see Appendix B). The LEA must maintain documentation of stakeholder involvement. Establish stakeholder engagement groups to provide input and feedback on the LEA's improvement programs. Additional individuals can be considered as the group recognizes needs and establishes goals to meet those needs. Additional stakeholder engagement groups to consider might include

- Parents and families
- Teachers and school staff
- School administrators
- Students
- Community organizations
- Business representatives
- Civic organizations
- Special populations

Assess Needs

USBE designed the LEA Consolidated Needs Assessment (CNA) to meet federal needs assessment requirements for the abovementioned programs. The online CNA Tool will guide LEA Planning Teams through conducting a comprehensive needs assessment. The needs assessment process includes a review of quantitative and qualitative data. State-level data will be auto-populated in the online CNA Tool. LEA Planning Teams are encouraged to include local data to supplement the needs assessment process.

The following data elements and reflection prompts are included in the CNA Tool.

Qualitative Data

Domains

- Leadership
- Talent
- Instruction
- Culture

Qualitative Reflection Prompts

- Identify trends and patterns for each domain
- Identify possible needs for each domain
-

Quantitative Data

Talent

- Teacher Experience
- Credentials
- Licensed FTE
- Classified FTE
- Salaries
- Retention

Instruction

- Academics: English language arts, math, science (grades 3–10)
- Proficiency
- Median growth percentile
- Acadience
- Multilingual learner
- Advanced coursework

Culture

- Student demographics
- Mobility rate
- Graduation Rate
- Dropout Rate
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Average daily membership
- Absenteeism

Quantitative Reflection Prompts

- What patterns or trends can be found in the data?
- What positives can be found in the data?
- What areas of need must be addressed based on the data?
- What can you infer from the data?
- What, if any, additional data is needed?
- What does the data tell you about your student groups?

After completing the CNA and reflecting on the data, use the guiding questions provided in the CNA Tool to prioritize which needs the LEA will address.

Within the CNA Tool, write a summary that includes the data used to determine the areas of strength and areas of growth and identify and prioritize the overarching needs identified by internal and external stakeholders; it should summarize the LEA's rationale for setting goals and help anyone reviewing the plan understand how and why the goals or focus areas were selected.

Conduct a Root Cause Analysis

Select the top three or four overarching needs identified in the CNA Summary. Conduct separate root cause analysis (RCA) for each selected need. An RCA is a systematic process designed to identify fundamental causes of risk or areas requiring improvement, ensuring program services yield more favorable long-term outcomes. While the CNA Tool includes an RCA Tool, LEAs can choose their preferred method for conducting RCAs. Here are some examples of RCA processes.

- **5 Whys:** This is a simple and intuitive technique where the team asks “Why?” repeatedly, typically five times, to drill down into the root cause of a problem. The idea is to keep asking why until the fundamental cause is identified.
- **Fishbone Diagram:** This method involves creating a visual representation of the potential causes of a problem. The main categories on the diagram include people, processes, equipment, materials, environment, and management. This helps identify possible root causes within each category.
- **Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA):** FMEA is a systematic approach for evaluating processes to identify where and how they might fail and assessing the relative impact of different failures. It assigns a risk priority number to each potential failure mode, helping prioritize issues for corrective action.
- **Bowtie Analysis:** Often used in risk management, this method visually represents the relationship between the causes, the event (problem), and the consequences. It helps to identify and assess potential barriers and preventive measures.
- **Pareto Analysis:** This technique involves identifying and prioritizing problems or causes based on the principle that 80 percent of problems are often caused by 20 percent of the factors. It helps focus efforts on the most critical issues.

Create a Plan

Crafting well-developed goals is essential for LEAs in formulating a continuous improvement plan. A robust goal should transparently convey what the LEA intends to achieve, articulate its actions, and explain how it will measure accomplishment. The goal statement, associated metrics, expected outcomes, and strategies must be aligned. The goal allows LEAs to communicate with stakeholders and the public effectively. It sheds light on the chosen metrics, expected outcomes, and strategies, clarifying the LEA's decision-making process and its commitment to targeted improvement.

Use the areas of identified need in previous steps to guide goal writing. The goals must use the SMART format.

- Each identified need or priority must align with a goal.
- When completing the goal-setting process in the UCIP, LEA teams should pay attention to the specific goal-setting requirements of individual programs, including those in the consolidated planning process.

The following outlines how LEAs can write SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) goals. It contains examples and is not an exhaustive list.

Specific (S)

Ask:

- Who is involved?
- What do we want to accomplish?
- Where will this happen (identify a location)?
- When will this happen (establish a timeframe)?
- Which requirement(s) will this satisfy? Are there any constraints?
- Why do we want to accomplish this (specific reasons, purpose, or benefits)?

Consider:

- Specific skills
- Specific behaviors (e.g., physical aggression resulting in suspensions)
- Specific data

Measurable (M)

Ask:

- How much?
- How many?
- How will the team know when it is accomplished?
- What is the baseline data?
- What is the target data?
- Is the progress monitoring plan specific to the data used to measure growth?

Consider:

- Baseline data
- Target data
- Numbers
- Percentages
- Timeframe
- Data sources to use

Attainable (A)

Ask:

- Do the action steps lead us to our goal?

- Do the action steps have people responsible?
- Do the action steps have a timeframe for accomplishing each step?
 - Note: Most goals are attainable when steps are planned wisely and a timeframe is established, allowing for those steps to be carried out.

Consider:

- Clear action steps that align with the goal.

Realistic (R)

Ask:

- Do the action steps lead us to our goal?

Example: With a baseline of 5 percent student proficiency, a target of 85 percent student proficiency in six months would not be realistic based on the identified skill.

Consider:

- The relationship between the skill, baseline data, target data, and timeframe.

Time-bound (T)

Ask:

- How much is needed to accomplish the goal?
- Is the goal based on results from the APR Indicator scores? If so, is the timeframe appropriate based on when the data will be reflected in the APR scores?
 - Reflection: Complete the action steps and re-evaluate the timeframe. Reset if appropriate.

Consider:

- Timeframe

- References to APR data have a timeframe of at least one year out (e.g., new goals can't refer to the current APR because the data is from a previous year and can't be impacted).

Develop Strategies

LEA leadership teams will use the Consolidated Pre-Application in the Utah Grants Management application to document the actions, resources, and funding needed to achieve their goals. LEAS should focus on a few goals and implement the strategies to accomplish them fully. The Consolidated Pre-Application provides a simplified approach to “braiding” federal and state funding streams to maximize resources, ensuring a more comprehensive and integrated approach to education that meets the diverse needs of students. It also empowers LEAs to shift from ‘planning the funds’ to effectively ‘funding the plan.’

Allocate Available Resources

Once goals are developed, the LEA must develop implementation strategies and allocate the appropriate resources.

- When allocating resources, it is important to consider how to coordinate and structure financial and non-financial resources.
 - Financial resources include state, federal, and local funds.
 - Non-financial resources include human resources; time organization; equipment, materials, and supplies; learning environments; programs and services; and community partnerships.
- It is also important to consider how resources are allocated to improve student outcomes at low-performing schools and align with each school's needs.
 - For schools that qualify for school improvement initiatives
 - What data collection methods will be used to measure progress?
 - What indicators would show progress?

Implement and Monitor the Plan

Each goal must include strategies and progress monitoring methods to assist the LEA in achieving the goal.

- When developing an improvement plan, the goal targets (desired outcomes) should be broken down into the strategic steps needed to accomplish the goal.

Program improvement implementation must have ongoing progress monitoring.

- What data collection methods will we use to measure progress?
- How will we know strategies are being implemented successfully?
- What indicators and evidence will show we are progressing?

Reflection on implementation will indicate if adjustment of strategies and actions may be needed due to accelerated progress or unexpected challenges.

- Are we progressing more quickly than expected, and must we “move the target” to continue growth?
- Are there unexpected challenges slowing progress toward the goal and, if so, what adjustments can we make to get us back on track?

Monitoring improvement plans is a crucial aspect of the continuous improvement process. It ensures that strategies are effectively implemented, progress is assessed, and adjustments are made as needed. Here are some guidelines for LEAs to consider when implementing and monitoring their improvement plans.

Plan for Monitoring

Establish clear protocols: As the plan is developed, clearly define the protocols and procedures for monitoring the progress and the effectiveness of strategies. Outline the frequency, responsibilities, and specific steps involved in the monitoring process. This clarity helps ensure consistency and accountability.

Employ performance indicators: Define key performance indicators aligning with the improvement plan objectives. The indicators should be specific, measurable, and directly related to the intended outcomes. Regularly assess indicators to gauge progress.

Create a schedule: Establish a schedule to regularly and frequently monitor improvement plan implementation. The frequency may vary based on the goals and strategies. Consider monthly or quarterly reviews to stay informed about progress and identify emerging issues promptly.

Implement and Maintain Monitoring Process

Implement formative assessments: Integrate formative assessments into the monitoring process. These assessments can provide ongoing feedback on the effectiveness of instructional practices and interventions. Adjust strategies based on formative assessment results.

Track progress using data: Leverage data to track progress toward the improvement plan goals. This may include academic achievement data, attendance rates, discipline data, and other relevant metrics. Data-driven decision-making is essential for assessing the impact of strategies.

Engage stakeholders: Involve key stakeholders in the monitoring process, including teachers, school leaders, parents, and community members. Their insights and perspectives provide valuable feedback on strategy effectiveness and contribute to a comprehensive assessment.

Use site visits and observations: Conduct site visits and classroom observations to gain firsthand insights into improvement strategy implementation. Observations help identify success, challenges, and refinement opportunities.

Employ feedback loops and continuous communication: Establish feedback loops and mechanisms for continuous communication. Regularly solicit input from teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. This open communication fosters a collaborative approach to improvement.

Utilize technology and tools: Explore using technology and monitoring tools to streamline data collection and analysis. Educational software, dashboards, and other tools can facilitate efficient monitoring and reporting.

Use Ongoing Monitoring Results for Continuous Improvement

Celebrate successes and address challenges: Acknowledge and celebrate

successes as milestones are achieved. Simultaneously, address challenges promptly by identifying the root causes and adjusting strategies. Continuous improvement involves a cycle of learning and refinement.

Document and reflect on lessons learned: Thoroughly document the monitoring process, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Regularly reflect on the data and feedback to inform future decision-making and improvement efforts.

Adjust strategies: Be prepared to adjust strategies based on findings from the monitoring process. If approaches are not yielding the expected results, consider modifying or replacing them with more effective interventions.

Adjust Course

Adjusting course after implementing improvement plan strategies is crucial in an LEA's continuous improvement. LEAs should continuously monitor and review data to assess the fidelity and impact of implemented strategies. If strategies are not producing the desired outcomes, conduct a root cause analysis to identify the underlying reasons for the challenges or lack of progress.

LEAs should maintain stakeholder engagement and be attuned to emerging trends, issues, or changes in the educational landscape so adjustments can be made. Leaders should watch for unintended consequences and mitigate them by modifying strategies and goals through a data-informed process. LEAs should obtain external support and expertise when faced with persistent challenges or slow progress.

Improvement plan adjustments are part of an interactive process, including documenting lessons learned to inform future goals and strategy development. Acknowledging and celebrating successes creates momentum and accelerates improvement. By adopting a proactive and responsive approach to adjustment, LEAs can enhance the effectiveness of their improvement plans and better meet the evolving needs of their students and communities.

Annual Review

Each year, LEAs will conduct an annual review of their plan. The purpose of the review is to

- 1.** Review and report progress towards the LEAs' goals over the past year.
- 2.** Identify the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the actions taken in making progress toward the goals.
- 3.** Identify the changes that will be made to the goals and strategies based on the review findings and ensure their ongoing alignment with the LEAs' needs.
- 4.** Consider new year funding priorities, establish the associated budgets based on measurable outcomes, and ensure its ongoing alignment with the identified LEA needs.

Appendix A: Legal Citations

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Section 1011(a)(2)(B):

“Each State educational agency (SEA) shall ensure that the local educational agency (LEA) plan is developed with timely and meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including parents, teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders (if applicable), administrators, other appropriate school personnel, and representatives of the community.”

Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Section 1402(a)(2):

“The local educational agency (LEA) shall develop a comprehensive needs assessment, in a timely manner, that identifies the needs of all students in the school, including the needs of low-achieving students, and that is based on multiple measures of student achievement and progress, as determined by the State educational agency (SEA). The needs assessment shall be developed with the participation of individuals who will be involved in the planning and implementation of programs and activities that address the needs identified in the needs assessment. Such individuals may include parents, teachers, administrators, and other members of the school community.”

Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction

ESSA Section 2002(c)(3)(B)(ii):

“The State educational agency (SEA) shall require that each local educational agency (LEA) that receives funds under this subpart develop, with the involvement of teachers, principals, and other appropriate stakeholders, a plan that describes how the LEA will use the funds to improve the quality of instruction in the LEA.”

ESSA Section 2002(d)(1)(B):

“Each local educational agency (LEA) that receives funds under this subpart shall develop, with the involvement of parents, teachers, principals, and other appropriate stakeholders, a plan for the use of funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

Title III: Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students**ESSA Section 3102(b)(1):**

“Each State educational agency (SEA) that receives a grant under this subpart shall develop, in consultation with parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives of the community, a State plan that describes how the SEA will use the funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

ESSA Section 3112(b)(2):

“Each local educational agency (LEA) that receives a grant under this subpart shall develop, with the involvement of parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives of the community, a plan for the use of funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants**ESSA Section 4002(e)(2):**

“Each local educational agency (LEA) that receives a grant under this subpart shall develop, with the involvement of teachers, parents, and other appropriate stakeholders, a plan that describes how the LEA will use the funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children

ESSA Section 1403(b)(2)(B):

“Each State educational agency (SEA) that receives a grant under this subpart shall develop, in consultation with parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives of the community, a State plan that describes how the SEA will use the funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

ESSA Section 1405(b)(2):

“Each local educational agency (LEA) that receives a grant under this subpart shall develop, with the involvement of parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives of the community, a plan for the use of funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

21st Century Community Learning Centers

ESSA Section 4204(b)(1):

“Each State educational agency (SEA) that receives a grant under this subpart shall develop, in consultation with local educational agencies (LEAs), parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives of the community, a State plan that describes how the SEA will use the funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

ESSA Section 4206(b)(1):

“Each local educational agency (LEA) that receives a grant under this subpart shall develop, with the involvement of parents, teachers, administrators, and representatives of the community, a plan for the use of funds to carry out activities consistent with the purposes of this subpart.”

Appendix B: Identification of Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those individuals with valuable experiences and perspectives who will provide the team with important input, feedback, and guidance. Required stakeholders must be engaged in the process to meet the requirements of participating federal programs. The LEA must maintain documentation of stakeholder involvement.

Table B1. Required Stakeholders

Program	Position/Role
Multiple Programs	Social Workers
Multiple Programs	Nutrition directors
Multiple Programs	School nurse
Multiple Programs	Community partners
Multiple Programs	Principal representatives
Multiple Programs	Other school leaders
Multiple Programs	Parents
Multiple Programs	Students (8th–12th grade)
Multiple Programs	Private school officials

Program	Position/Role
Migrant	Migrant out-of-school youth or dropouts
Title I, Part A	Parent representatives of Title I students
Title I, Part A - Foster Care	Local Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) contact
Title II, Part A	Principals
Title II, Part A	Teachers
Title II, Part A	Paraprofessionals
Title II, Part A	Specialized instructional support personnel
Title II, Part A	Other organizations or partners with relevant and demonstrated expertise
Title II, Part A	Private school officials (in LEAs with private schools within the geographic boundary)
Title III	Parents of students learning English

Table B2. Recommended and Additional Stakeholders

Program	Position/Role
Multiple Programs	Technical, college, or university personnel
Multiple Programs	School Community Council representatives, Parent-Teacher Association or Parent-Teacher Organization members
Multiple Programs	Boys and Girls Club representative
Multiple Programs	Local health department representative
21st CCLC	21st CCLC Advisory Council member
Migrant	Local Head Start representative
Migrant	Local farmer, grower, or employer
Migrant	Family connection representative
Neglected and Delinquent	Residential facility(ies) director(s)
Special Education	Parent of a student with a disability
Special Education	Parent Mentor

In addition to these specific requirements, a few general principles should guide stakeholder engagement in developing and implementing all ESSA programs. These principles include:

- Stakeholder engagement should be meaningful and ongoing. Stakeholders should not just be consulted once at the beginning of the planning process; they should be involved throughout the development and implementation of the plan.
- Stakeholder engagement should be inclusive. All stakeholders, including parents, teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals, specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders (if applicable), administrators, other appropriate school personnel, and community representatives, should have the opportunity to participate.

By following these principles, LEAs can ensure that stakeholder engagement is an effective way to improve the quality of ESSA programs and that they meet all students' needs.