

Navigating the Market: How State Education Agencies Help Districts Develop Productive Relationships with External Providers

from *The State Role in School Turnaround: Emerging Best Practices*

Julie Corbett

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About the Center on School Turnaround

The national Center on School Turnaround focuses on providing technical assistance to, as well as building the capacity of, states to support districts and schools in turning around their lowest-performing schools. The Center is led by WestEd in partnership with the Academic Development Institute, the National Implementation Research Network, and the Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education at the University of Virginia.

Focus Areas

- Developing SEA Staff Capacity and SEA Organizational Structures
- Building District Capacity
- Creating Policies, Incentives, and Partnerships to Ensure a Pipeline of Turnaround Leaders
- Promoting Cooperative Labor-Management Relations
- Promoting the Use of Expanded Learning Time
- Creating Systems and Processes to Ensure a Pool of High-Quality Turnaround Partners
- Ensuring the Availability and Use of Data Systems at the SEA Level
- Supporting Schools and Districts in Establishing a Positive School Climate
- Monitoring and Evaluating School Turnaround Efforts
- Improving Capacity of School Boards to Support Turnarounds
- Engaging Families and Communities
- Building Political Will for Dramatic Change

Navigating the Market: How State Education Agencies Help Districts Develop Productive Relationships with External Providers

Julie Corbett

Despite being perceived as wholly public entities, schools, districts, and states have long utilized private companies to provide specific educational, capital, and operational services (e.g., construction, curriculum development, after-school programs, food services, entire school management; Hill, 1997). In particular, external partners have joined forces with school districts in the effort to turn around persistently low-achieving schools for decades. Generations of school improvement efforts have utilized external partners to provide a variety of supports, such as instructional strategies, social and emotional health services, and tutoring services. The engagement of external partners for the purpose of turning around schools underwent a radical shift in 2010 with the advent of the revised federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. The revamped SIG program encourages the use of external partners in a different and more comprehensive way to support the implementation of the restart, turnaround, and transformation improvement models (Corbett, 2011a; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

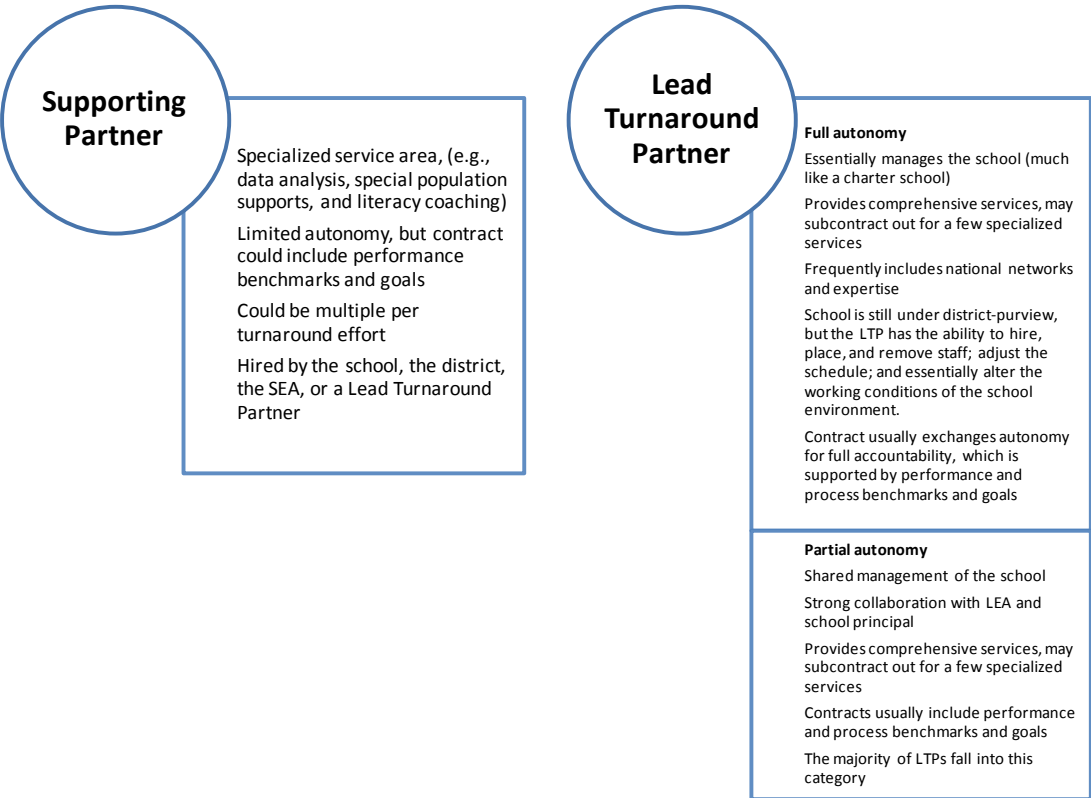
Lessons culled from contracting apply to external partners working in the turnaround environment, especially the use of performance contracts. Performance contracting ensures relationships between districts and their external partners are based on an explicit stipulation of desired outcomes and consequences for not meeting goals (e.g., cancellation of the contract). Several aspects of performance contracting are applicable to turnaround efforts and include: performance-based relationships; timelines for improvement; public reporting of results; consequences; and fiscal incentives (Center for Comprehensive School

Reform & Improvement, 2005). In effect, external partners are provided autonomy and financial profit for responsibility to meet achievement goals.

An important caveat underlying performance provisions is that these provisions are a first step, but consequences must be enforced to improve the quality of the market as a whole. With the additional scrutiny that accompanies federal grants to fund turnaround efforts, states and districts should begin to better enforce consequences for inaction or lack of improvement.

The revamped federal SIG program emphasizes the use of external entities that provide comprehensive services and are accountable for results, often referred to as a Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP).¹ LTPs are one of many types of external partners able to assist and/or facilitate turnaround. While a variety of external partners support school turnaround and many of the promising practices described in this chapter apply to all types of partners, several of the examples provided focus specifically on LTPs. The types of partners working at the school or district level have varying levels of responsibility and accountability and are described in the following graphic.

Types of Turnaround Partners for Schools & Districts



¹The concept of a Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) was first coined in Mass Insight Education & Research Group’s 2007 publication *The Turnaround Challenge* and is an external partner capable of managing a comprehensive school turnaround effort. While first explicitly mentioned in 2007, the LTP model resembles early contracts and partnerships between education management organizations (EMOs) and some school districts (e.g., Baltimore, Hartford, Philadelphia, Chester Upland; Rhim, 2005).

In addition to external partners working directly with schools and districts, SEAs also use external partners to support their turnaround efforts. With changes in the federal program, SEAs adapted their own practices, processes, and supports to better manage and support school turnaround efforts (Corbett, 2011a). Given limited financial and staff resources, SEAs leveraged their capacity by utilizing external partners to fill a number of specific turnaround-related roles. Such providers—companies, nonprofits, and individual consultants—assist SEAs with a variety of short- and long-term contracts, which could include:

- Developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to screen select LTPs;
- Grading and selecting preapproved LTPs;
- Scoring SIG applications from schools and districts;
- Providing technical assistance and support directly to schools or districts;
- Helping the SEA develop a Statewide System of Support (SSOS) for turnaround; or,
- Strategic planning for building a turnaround office or division (Rhim, 2011).

These consultants function much like supporting partners that work directly with schools or districts and assist with targeted, well-defined projects. In addition to the more traditional consulting role, some SEAs are providing external partners with significant responsibility and authority. A number of states have hired external partners to closely collaborate with the SEA to provide the state's system of support for schools identified as in need of improvement. In theory, the external partner manages some of the roles and tasks the SEA or regional offices performed in the past. For instance, Illinois recently awarded a contract to an external provider to support schools across the state (see more details below).

Defining the SEA Role

External partners play many different roles in school turnaround, but SEAs use similar—albeit with varying levels of intensity—practices to recruit and manage the use of external partners. On the light-touch side of the intensity spectrum, SEAs maintain a relatively hands-off approach and leave the selection of and contracting with providers to LEAs. With a moderate level of intensity, SEAs focus on recruiting and vetting partners, monitoring, and evaluating the implemented models. With increasing intensity, involvement, and oversight, a few SEAs also work to build the relationships among vendors, schools, and the state itself. While the intensity varies, the SEA's role typically falls into two primary categories:

- Recruiting and vetting external partners, and
- Monitoring relationships and holding LEAs accountable.

Recruiting and Vetting External Partners

A state-initiated RFP inviting external partners to become approved providers enables the SEA to set specific selection criteria and attract suitable, high-capacity providers for districts across the state. In addition, it allows districts to focus on establishing the right set of conditions for turnaround, as opposed to spending time recruiting and vetting partners on their own. Once an RFP is released, the SEA must evaluate the responses against an evaluation rubric aligned to the SEA's supports and needs.

Many states (e.g., Illinois, Massachusetts, Tennessee) that encourage or require districts to engage external partners for turnaround created a screened or approved list of providers from which districts choose (Corbett, 2011a; Rhim, 2011). However, SEA roles in recruiting and vetting external partners evolved throughout implementation of the revised SIG program. For example, some states that initially recruited and selected approved partners to work with their school turnarounds stopped providing that initial screening process for districts (e.g., Colorado; Corbett, 2011a). To maximize the potential for successful partnerships, states need to determine if they want to preapprove providers at the onset of the process to ensure a degree of quality control statewide.

States can increase the likelihood that the RFP process will lead to a comprehensive list of high-quality partners that can meet the needs of their schools and LEAs by:

- Engaging staff from multiple SEA departments in the creation and critique of both the RFP and the evaluation rubric to ensure they are clear, thoughtful, aligned to SEA goals and programs, and that they require the most relevant information from respondents, including providers' track records with similar projects;
- Setting a reasonable deadline and a response period of at least four weeks to allow for thoughtful submissions;
- Training reviewers for the application review process and ensuring they understand the role of external partners in turnaround and how to read between the lines and evaluate a high-quality partner versus a well-written response; and,
- Conducting a thorough and anonymous review of proposals.

Steps states have taken, and currently take, to evaluate potential providers include: holding in-depth conversations with key leaders, observing the organization in action, and discussing results with past clients. Conversations with former clients, especially those who have received similar services, are particularly valuable to determine whether partnerships succeeded or if contracts ended because services were no longer needed or if other issues led to the termination of contracts. While many partners collect performance data, such referrals and background checks are especially useful due to the lack of scientifically valid data for providers implementing the federal turnaround models. It is also useful

to assess the quality of the provider’s management team, as well as the proposed on-the-ground staff. The latter is a particular challenge as external partners maintain a limited “bench” of field staff.

A variety of resources that focus specifically on the development of RFPs and interview questions, as well as evaluating responses to RFPs, exist and are available to assist districts and states in this field. For instance, Mass Insight Education & Research Institute published documents that provide extensive detail on the creation of state-initiated RFPs and the evaluation of responses (Cunningham, 2011; Mass Insight, 2010). The state of Colorado published a guide that includes a variety of useful tools to evaluate, interview, and select external partners (Colorado Department of Education, 2011).

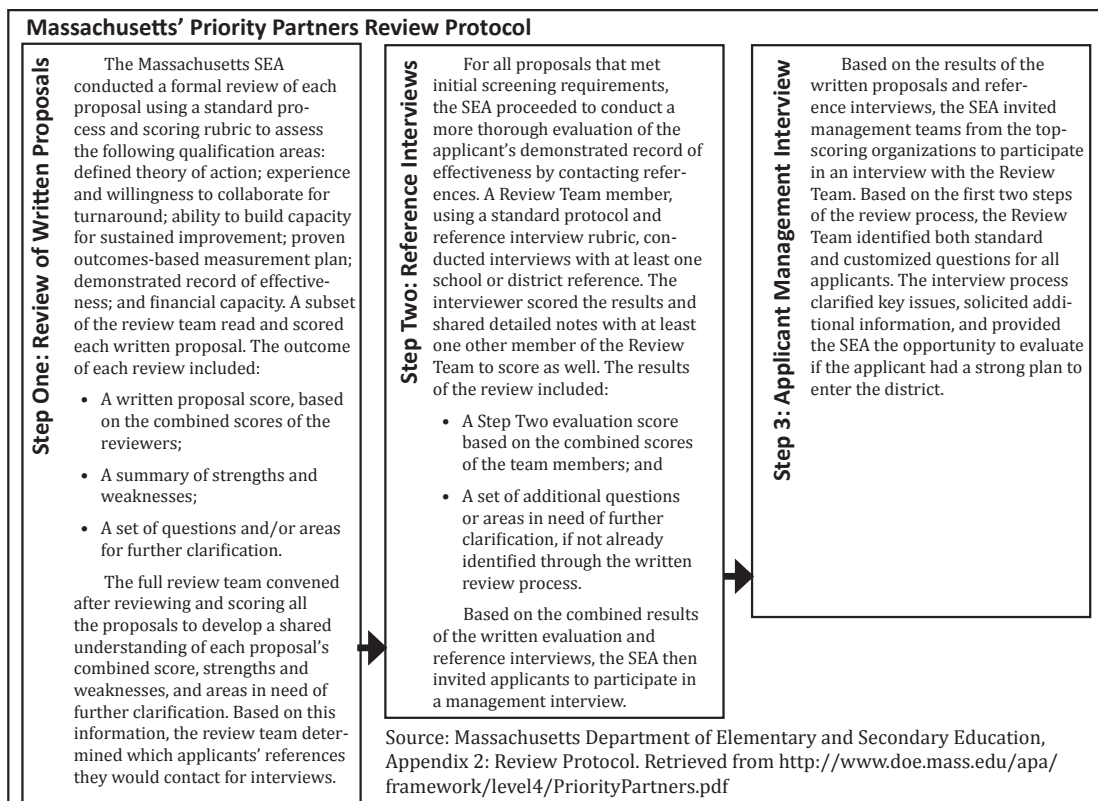
SEA Example: Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, the SEA created a network of prequalified and approved partners who demonstrated specialized expertise in specific areas of improvement and an understanding of Massachusetts’ guiding principles, known as the Conditions for School Effectiveness. The SEA vetted the Priority Partners through a rigorous three-step review process (see text box on next page). Partners must also take part in an annual evaluation process to assess if they added value to the school’s and district’s improvement efforts. Massachusetts created a comparison document to further assist school and district staff in understanding the differences between Priority Partners who specialize in turnaround and more traditional Title I service providers. The SEA website also includes a search function, which allows users to select specific areas of expertise and see which providers are preapproved.

After Massachusetts completed the review process, the SEA approved four partners to assist with social and emotional health, eight partners for maximizing learning time, 10 partners for the effective use of data, and five partners for district systems of support. All approved Priority Partners are included in a “Summary List and Profiles” published by the SEA that included philosophical and historical information, as well as a general cost structure. Understanding that turnaround requires a different set of skills than traditional improvement efforts, the SEA also created a comparison chart to help explain the difference between Partners for Title I Support and Intervention and Priority Partners for Turnaround. In addition, the Priority Partners Network meets with SEA staff quarterly to share concerns, network, and receive updates from the state.

Monitoring and Holding LEAs Accountable

Once the work with external partners begins, some SEAs closely monitor the relationships and the progress of the partnerships. Monitoring is crucial to ensure the turnaround team (i.e., external partner, school, and district) implements a model with fidelity, works together, equally contributes to the



partnership, meets goals, and builds local capacity. This monitoring can be done in a variety of ways, including:

- Tracking and reporting key indicators of progress;
- Analyzing data;
- Conducting partner network meetings; and,
- Planning for sustainability.

Most states require regular reporting from the schools and districts but not from the external partners themselves. SEAs could also require districts to build in a monitoring structure at the local level to better ensure accountability. When creating regular reports at either the district or state level, it may be useful to include specific questions that evaluate the relationships with external partners. Such questions could include:

- Please describe the relationship with each of your external partners supporting turnaround.
- How often do school leaders communicate with partner staff?
- How often do district leaders communicate with partner staff?
- Reflect on the progress towards the projected benchmark goals, including leading and lagging indicators that monitor climate and academic performance.

- How are you and the partner building a plan for sustainability (i.e., what steps are you and the partner taking to ensure growth is sustained once the current contract ends)?
- What are the major areas of concern about your external partner(s)?
- Are there areas of support the state could provide to facilitate the relationship(s) with your external partner(s)?

SEAs are also able to monitor implementation and plan for sustainability by analyzing budgets. If a district uses significant federal resources to fund numerous full-time—internally or partner-based—staff positions, it is unlikely the district is building sufficient capacity or planning an adequate phase-out process to sustain turnaround efforts. For example, if a school received a federal school improvement grant, funds are renewable for up to three years. In theory, contracts with external partners, especially an LTP, should decrease in total cost and intensity over the course of the three-year period. If a partner provides the same level of services in year three as it did in year one, the state could question if local capacity was built and if the partner met specified goals, in particular, the goal of sustainability.

In addition to planning for sustainability, LEAs and states should maintain focus on their lowest-achieving schools even after the relationships with the partner(s) ends. Without continued attention, schools shift from receiving significant external supports (e.g., staff, expertise, funding) to the receipt of no additional supports, and progress may backtrack. While the external partners may decrease their services, a small role may be continued, and the conditions for success should remain in place until the school is fully sustainable (e.g. staffing flexibility, consistent and stable leadership, extended time). In effect, altered practices become embedded throughout the system to the point that a change in school or LEA leadership or the removal of external partners does not derail the improvement or reverse growth (Corbett, 2011a).

Arguably, the most difficult challenge in monitoring relationships and building sustainable systems is creating a way to determine what to do when partnerships do not produce expected results. Frequent questions include, “When do we pull the plug?” and “Whose fault is it anyway?” These issues align with the SEA’s monitoring strategies, but most SEAs and LEAs also struggle with determining who is ultimately accountable for failures. Is the vendor providing less than adequate services? Is the school not implementing strategies completely or appropriately? Or, is the LEA preventing implementation or limiting school-based autonomies? If an LEA terminates a provider on the SEA’s approved list, how should the SEA respond? Are the partners removed from the state’s list automatically, or does the state complete additional analysis to ensure the provider has the right skills and resources to do the work to assess if they could succeed in another school or LEA?

SEAs can streamline the process of resolving performance issues if the SEA and schools carefully establish clear expectations and accountability provisions during the development of the RFP and subsequent contract and if there is ongoing communication between all entities. Ultimately, in the majority of SEAs, the responsibility falls most heavily on the LEAs, as they contract directly with the providers. An SEA can provide additional support by working directly with superintendents, encouraging LEA involvement and improvements, and serving as a mediator in negotiations between LEAs and providers. The more an SEA knows about a partnership during implementation, the more likely SEA staff can assist both the partner and the district in resolving problems as they arise.

Supporting Implementation

State agencies historically focused on monitoring and compliance, but the revised SIG program encourages SEAs to be more involved in the actual implementation and turnaround process (Corbett, 2011a; Rhim, 2011). In effect, SEAs support implementation in a variety of ways, from creating a “how to” guide to actively building relationships of and capacity in the turnaround teams.

SEA Example: Colorado

Colorado is one of the states that released an RFP for turnaround partners at one point, but ceased providing that service to districts in subsequent years. While the state no longer creates an approved provider list, leaders recognized the need for additional guidance to districts on how to recruit, select, and work with external partners. The resulting Resource Guide covers working with external partners, completing a needs assessment, releasing an RFP, evaluating responses, selecting a partner, performance contracting, best practices for implementation, and monitoring and evaluating performance. The descriptive and explanatory information is then supported by a variety of appendices that include additional resources and tools districts can use, including an RFP template, sample interview questions, and model contract language. While Colorado stepped back from providing a screened set of providers for districts, the SEA realized that districts and schools needed additional SEA supports to move forward on their own.

SEA Example: Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia developed a turnaround model that builds strong relationships with LTPs. Virginia first released an RFP and created a list of approved providers for all schools receiving SIG funds. All SIG recipients implementing the turnaround or transformation improvement models are required to select an LTP to assist in the development and the implementation of the model. After taking this first step, leaders at the Office of School Improvement (OSI) recognized that LEAs, school principals, and the external partners needed additional supports to build positive working relationships and to understand the

requirements of the federal improvement models—as implementing turnaround was a new role for most of the external partners as well. Many of the external partners also confirmed that Virginia provides some of the strongest supports to SIG teams of any of the states they work in as LTPs (Corbett, 2011b). The major components of Virginia’s system of support includes:

- **Technical Assistance Sessions**—Each SIG team (i.e., external LTP staff, school principal, and district representative) attends a series of TA sessions together throughout the course of the three-year grant.
- **State Facilitators**—SEA assigns each SIG team a State Facilitator to oversee the ongoing work and to act as a liaison between the school, district, external partner, and SEA (Corbett, 2011b).

In addition, the OSI works diligently to develop open communication with the districts, principals, and the external partners. OSI oversaw contract/MOU negotiations between districts and the LTPs, assisted districts if legal or personality conflicts with the LTPs occurred, and assisted the LTPs when district and/or school leadership undermined the turnaround efforts. To date, LTPs utilized this close relationship and contacted OSI when they encountered significant political issues with a district. In another case, SEA staff directly contacted a partner’s regional director to discuss statewide staffing concerns. OSI staff clarified to all entities that their role is to assist implementation, and they will work to remove whatever barriers—conditions or personalities—that stand in the way of improvement for students.

Building the External Provider Market

Several Education Management Organizations (EMOs) and charter school operators have utilized private social venture funds to incubate or scale up turnaround-type partners in specific regions, but SEAs mostly remained on the sidelines of marketplace development. Tennessee’s Achievement School District is piloting a program that combines venture capital with district needs, with support from the Investing in Innovation (I3) fund and New Schools for New Orleans, to build the marketplace of turnaround-capable charter operators at the district level (Tennessee, 2011). Recently, several states have taken a more active role in building the external partner marketplace. While using different strategies, Massachusetts and Virginia are building the external partner marketplace to support their turnaround efforts, and their efforts are profiled below.

SEA Example: Massachusetts’ Investment Fund

Ensuring an adequate supply of partners exists for the entire state and that those providers meet the specific needs of the LEAs and schools is a constant challenge. To expand the pool of both services and providers, Massachusetts allocated a portion of its Race to the Top dollars to increase the capacity of providers and to bring needed services to scale across the Commonwealth. Providers could apply for up to \$500,000 each in the following areas of need:

The State Role in School Turnaround

- Expansion of geographic focus;
- Specialized or expansion of services;
 - Targeted middle and high school interventions,
 - English language learner solutions,
 - Special needs services,
 - District-level support and coordination,
 - Support for districts/schools in providing effective tiered instruction,
 - Grade level expansion; or
- Collaboration between partners to better serve schools and districts.

As stated previously, Massachusetts first approved 23 Priority Partners in four service areas that align to the Massachusetts Conditions for School Effectiveness: 1) addressing students' social, emotional, and health needs; 2) maximizing learning time; 3) effective use of data; and 4) district systems of support (e.g., human resources, leadership, financial management). As the comfort level with the initial Priority Partners increased, an RFQ was released to apply for the Priority Partners Investment Fund (PPIF).

The selection process for the investment fund was less about proving a provider's data, as that was a primary consideration during the initial acceptance to the Priority Partners Network, but instead asked the partners to "sell" an idea. The review team first evaluated the written proposals and then called the specified partner districts to gauge the level of commitment to the initiative. The state used these calls to address: Was the district involved in the proposal creation? Did the district do more than write a letter of support? Is the district prepared to make systemic and sustainable changes? Is the initiative aligned to what the district is already doing? A total of 19 providers submitted proposals, and the review committee, which included experts who had previous experience with venture investment funds, approved seven awards totaling \$2.5 million (SEA staff, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Once the SEA approved the providers, it separated the proposed activities into a series of subsequent work orders. Dividing the funds over the course of each year allowed the state to increase its monitoring capabilities, and staff were able to proactively catch any issues or concerns as they arose. Each work order covered a span of time (usually three to six months), was customized to each provider, reflected the provider's proposal, highlighted the major proposed activities, expected deliverables, and noted whether the provider was responsible for providing the SEA with any information or tools (SEA staff, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Early analysis of the investment fund shows promising results. While year one focused on planning for the majority of projects, an SEA staff member reflected, "It's sometimes difficult to not get impatient, but we knew we were funding thoughtful planning. Other [partners] are doing really intensive work, and they are showing results that are more tangible. But, it's challenging work,

Quarterly Reports

In addition to regular contact with the SEA and the district, providers also submit a quarterly report to the state. Quarterly follow-up calls and/or meetings also occur to ensure all parties are on the same page and to triangulate information. Required report components include:

A. Project Tracker

- Goals and Objectives
- Activities
- Timeline
- Budget

B. Project Reflections

- Successes
- Challenges
- Upcoming Priorities
- Impact

**C. Supporting
Documentation (to
show additional
evidence of progress)**

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2012c). MA Priority Partner Investment Fund: 2nd Quarterly Progress Report.

and we asked them to target high-needs areas, meaning it's more difficult to get the right conditions for success in place" (SEA staff, personal communication, February 7, 2013).

Several suggested practices and early lessons learned from the Priority Partners Investment Fund include:

- Craft the RFQ/RFP broadly enough so that the providers come up with ideas that the SEA hasn't thought of, or wouldn't normally think of itself;
- Include external expertise on investing in new ventures;
- Prescreen applicants to eliminate applications and providers who do not understand the state context or who have not demonstrated success in the past;
- Truly evaluate a district's level of commitment before awarding funds;
- Chunk out work orders to track and monitor progress;
- Build sustainability into the application—that is, a focus on building capacity and district commitment; and,
- Develop a way to share what has been learned with both the SEA and the broader partner network.

State Example: Virginia’s Lead Turnaround Partner Partnership

Virginia also recognized the limitations of the current partner marketplace and worked with the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL) to develop a new LTP. VFEL acts as the LTP but subcontracts with other external partners to supply the various services to the schools. Some of the subcontractors utilized in this partnership already serve as LTPs in Virginia schools and therefore understand Virginia’s SIG program. The various initial partners and the skills or programs they contributed included:

- Cambridge Education—School Quality Reviews, principal and teacher observation training, and the Tripod survey;
- College of William & Mary—Principal and teacher observation training;
- EdisonLearning—Content coach training and supervision, professional development, and data analysis;
- National Institute for School Leaders (NISL)—Intensive training for coaches and key district staff; and
- Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)—Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.

While VFEL acts as the lead partner, each of the other supporting partners works with VFEL to develop a comprehensive set of services. While the partnership is still in its infancy and it is too early to evaluate the relationship or the results, it is a promising model to follow.

State Example: Illinois’ State System of Support

Illinois is in the process of launching a new organizational structure for its statewide system of support (SSOS). As opposed to running all supports, technical assistance, and monitoring of school improvement including turnaround through the SEA, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) released an RFP to external partners to manage and coordinate the state’s Center for School Improvement (Center). The Center is fully integrated within the SEA, but managed by an external partner. The Center Director is charged with overseeing a variety of divisions including: Curriculum and Support, Regional Supports (which include Content Directors and District Assistance Teams), Priority School Interventions (which includes Rapid Response Teams), and District Accountability and Oversight. The latter position also reports to the SEA’s Deputy Superintendent.

The primary functions of the Center include:

- Provide oversight and management to the SSOS with a focus on bringing coherence and coordination to the regional delivery systems and SSOS partners in the state;
- Work with the ISBE Roundtable to maintain alignment with the agency’s vision and reform initiatives;

- Deploy staff to work with identified districts on the development and implementation of customized continuous improvement plans;
- Design and support the use of a connected set of tools and resources to increase district-level capacity to improve teaching and learning; and
- Develop a robust system-wide evaluation process for the SSOS to promote its continuous improvement to better serve districts and schools (Illinois, 2012).

While communication between the Center and SEA leadership is crucial to the success of the Center, the SEA describes its role as the fiscal agent responsible for the contract with the winning bidder. ISBE will conduct all necessary fiduciary and fiscal audits and monitoring of work done under the contract. In addition, ISBE will have regular communication and ongoing collaboration with the Center Director and all other necessary personnel through the Roundtable (a cross-divisional advisory committee comprised of ISBE senior staff members that will set agency direction and provide leadership to the Center's governance; Illinois, 2012). While external partners provided significant turnaround supports to SEAs in the past, this is the first time an external partner is managing and coordinating an SSOS in collaboration with the SEA.

Emerging Lessons from the Field

Successful turnaround efforts must be sustained and supported with corresponding changes at all levels. Turnaround efforts will not be successful if they are only school-focused and not supported by district changes (Corbett, 2011; Kowal, 2011). External partners may help establish those systems and processes, but it is likely that their level of involvement may be restricted due to funding limitations and because the supports of external partners will decrease as the school, LEA, and SEA build their own capacity. External partners are often more nimble than SEAs and are able to make rapid organizational changes to respond to policy changes and the needs in the field. As a result of this flexibility, external partners will continue to be utilized in the ever-changing and ever-growing niche of school turnaround. SEAs and LEAs must work together and in collaboration with external partners to determine how to ensure the work moves forward as planned and that the sought after long-term gains in student achievement are achieved and sustained.

Over the past several years, SEAs have increasingly recruited, approved, and contracted with external partners for turnaround, but there is substantial room for growth. Areas for further improvement include tracking results of various providers, developing networks of external partners to share best and promising practices within and across states, and developing more capacity of turnaround providers themselves. As states develop plans for the use of external partners, leaders should consider the following action principles.

Action Principles

Acknowledge that supporting schools, districts, and external partners with contracting and implementation is a new role for SEAs

- Determine the level of involvement the SEA desires and has expertise to provide.
- Determine the extent the SEA should support development of external partner capacity.
- Develop strategies and practices to support a strong and positive working environment with shared accountability and structures.
- Align expectations and supports among all the SEA divisions or programs involved (e.g., Race to the Top, SIG, turnaround/innovation, school improvement, Title I, regional offices).
- Engage outside supports, organizations, national associations, or state-level partners to build SEA capacity.
- Determine which supports the SEA should phase out, maintain, or shift to a different division.
- Monitor engagements with external partners with fidelity, frequency, and consistency.

Develop quality control mechanisms throughout the system of support

- SEAs must be involved in some degree of quality control—either with a preapproval process, ongoing monitoring, and/or evaluating efforts prior to grant renewal.
- As a condition of SIG funding, require districts/schools to complete an MOU or scope of work with each external partner that clearly defines: proposed activities, responsibilities, expectations, benchmarks, goals, and consequences or termination for lack of performance.
- If the SEA has an approved provider list, it is important to update that list based on performance. In order to remove a partner due to a lack of performance, the SEA must monitor external providers' performance.
- Develop processes to accurately assess whom to attribute failing or unsuccessful strategies or partnerships (i.e., to ensure a partner is only removed from the list for their own performance and is not being used as a scapegoat for school or district problems).
- Be proactive and don't wait until problems arise—SEAs with ongoing internal communication as well as communication with external partners and districts are better able to address problems in a timely manner and proactively address concerns.
- Work with external partners to build their capacity to enhance services to existing schools or to scale up to additional schools.

Resources

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The State Role in School Turnaround

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