
Evaluation Design for DaSy

Evaluation Narrative

September 2014



The contents of this report were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H373Z120002. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officers, Meredith Miceli and Richelle Davis.



September 2014



Contents

Goals	1
Inputs/Resources	1
Activities and Outputs	2
Intermediate Outcomes: State Engagement in the Center’s Activities.	5
Long-term outcomes: Improved early childhood data systems	5

List of Exhibits

Exhibit 1.	Logic Model for the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy).....	7
Exhibit 2.	Evaluation Questions and Methods.....	8
Exhibit 3.	Evaluation Methods	12

Evaluation Design for the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy)

The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy) is funded to develop and enhance Part C early intervention and Part B Section 619 preschool programs' early childhood longitudinal data systems and to improve states' capacity to collect, analyze, and report the high-quality data required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The DaSy Center provides state agencies with technical assistance (TA) and resources to assist with the development or enhancement of data systems for early intervention and early childhood special education programs supported through IDEA. The DaSy Center works with states to enhance IDEA data systems and to assist states in developing systems that are coordinated with other early childhood data systems and have longitudinal linkages to data systems for older children. The Center logic model illustrates the organizing structure for this work, depicts the many critical relationships that lead to the long-term outcomes, and also serves as the foundation for the evaluation (Exhibit 1). The underlying assumptions for the Center are that states will participate in its overall TA activities and request TA, that the TA will be well received, and that the state capacity will be enhanced as a result of the TA. This increased capacity will, in turn, result in improvements in the states' Part C and Part B preschool data systems and in the quality of the data. Specifically, states that receive significant TA from the Center will have higher quality implementation of framework components (e.g., data governance, data quality), improved data systems for Part C and Section 619 evidenced by increased use of recommended data elements (e.g., unique ID, service data), increased ability to link child-level data (e.g., C to 619; C/619 to early childhood; C/619 to K-12; child data to workforce data), and increased use of data for decision-making, including APR improvement plans that are more data driven.

Goals

The Center has three main goals that it will carry out to achieve the long-term outcomes: (1) to provide national leadership and coordination for early childhood data systems to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of national and state resources, (2) to generate new knowledge and useful products for the field regarding the development and enhancement of statewide early childhood longitudinal data systems, and (3) to design and implement a continuum of technical assistance strategies that are evidence based, relevant, useful, and cost-effective to support states in developing and implementing early childhood (EC) longitudinal data systems to improve states' capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data required under IDEA.

Inputs/Resources

The Center inputs and resources include extensive knowledge about early childhood data systems, established relationships with key partners and clients, and resources from a variety of grants and centers. Center staff is knowledgeable about the requirements of IDEA, State Performance Plans and Annual Performance Reports (SPP/APR) reporting requirements, and early intervention and preschool special education systems and services. Additionally, the Center's staff has extensive expertise and experience in early childhood data systems. The Center has established relationships with national experts on data systems, state Part C and Section 619 coordinators and staff, and state staff in other EC programs such as statewide preschool programs, home visiting programs, Child Care, and Head Start. The Center also has key collaborative TA relationships with SLDS TA, RTT-ELC TA, CEDS, ECO, ECTA, CELO, PTAC, and RRCP. The Center has a history of participation in and leadership of national learning communities and communities of practice and has extensive resources for states regarding data systems development through SLDS and RTT-ELC grants.

Activities and Outputs

The Center will carry out a number of activities related to the goals and designed to achieve the intermediate and long-term outcomes.

Leadership and Coordination Activities. The Center will perform a number of activities related to the goal of providing national leadership and coordination for early childhood data systems to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of national and state resources. The Center will, for example, host and participate in national conferences and events, serve on advisory committees for other projects, and consult with representatives from multiple perspectives on related projects. The Center will collaborate with other organizations, including OSEP-funded project partners and states on activities related to the Center's mission in the delivery of general and individual TA. Key collaborators include the SLDS TA program, RTT-ELC, CEDS, PTAC, ECO, ECTA, IRIS, ECPC, CEELO, Comprehensive Centers, RRCP, TACC, and NDC/NICHCY. In addition, the Center will establish a National TA Network and will consult with representatives from multiple disciplines to guide and influence the Center's TA activities.

Evaluation of Leadership and Coordination Activities. The evaluation questions for these activities are as follows:

- * Did the Center provide national leadership in the area of early childhood data systems?
- * Which organizations and states did the Center collaborate with? What was the nature of the collaboration?
- * How much of the DaSy major TA was provided collaboratively? And how does collaboration with major organizations/projects influence subsequent TA?
- * How has collaborating with DaSy improved the efficiency and quality of the work of key collaborators?

The methods to be used to answer these questions include documentation of collaborative activities, questionnaires, and interviews. Exhibit 2 shows the Center's evaluation questions, the methods, and the linkages between them. Exhibit 3 provides additional information about each of the methods. The Center will document the amount and nature of Center leadership and coordination activities through a web-based documentation system in which staff enter information about the number and type of activities as well as the organizations, associations, and TA partners involved. Collaborative activities involving TA to specific states will be documented in another database designed to track individual and group TA to states. Annually, the Center will participate in at least five events demonstrating national leadership and will collaborate with at least 5 to 10 organizations related to the mission of the Center. Further, at least 50% of the annual major TA activities will be provided in collaboration with a federally funded partner. The external evaluator will conduct qualitative interviews in Years 3 through 5 with 5 organizations with which the Center collaborated. Questions will identify the strength of the relationships between DaSy and key collaborators and the extent to which working with DaSy improved the efficiency and quality of TA of both DaSy and the collaborator. Annually, the Center collaborations with at least 5 major organizations/projects (e.g., ECTA, ECPC, CEELO, PTAC, SLDS) will influence TA activities. The strength of the Center's connections to other organization will be graphically depicted by an influence map developed by the external evaluator, updated annually.

The Center will measure the perceived effectiveness of its leadership and coordination activities through an online survey conducted by the external evaluator. In Years 3 through 5 of the project, the external evaluator will survey key collaborators to evaluate the extent to which working with DaSy has improved the efficiency and quality of partners' TA.

Knowledge Development Activities. The Center will implement three primary activities related to the goal of generating new knowledge and useful products for the field regarding the development and enhancement of statewide early childhood longitudinal data systems. First, the Center will collect and analyze national data about Part C and 619 programs on their capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data and their capacity to link across data systems. The results will be summarized to

present a national picture of state Part C and Section 619 data systems. Second, the Center will develop, implement, and evaluate a statewide data systems framework for Part C and 619 programs, in collaboration with partner states and other relevant stakeholders. In Year 1, the Center will identify partner states through an application process and begin to review all relevant literature and compile the citations and annotations into reference lists to document the evidence base. The reference lists, with live links when possible, will be posted on the Center website to provide additional information for those seeking a more in-depth treatment of any topic. Finally, working from the framework, the Center will develop documents and resources on best practices and lessons learned that can be used to improve states' capacity to develop or enhance their data systems.

Evaluation of Knowledge Development. The evaluation questions for these activities are:

- * Did the Center conduct a needs assessment of Part C and 619 programs? When? What was the response rate for the survey?
- * Did the Center review state information from various sources (e.g., SPP/APR documents) to determine states' capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data and identify policies and procedures that facilitate or hinder linking across data systems? When?
- * Did the Center summarize national data (needs assessment results, APR/SPP review, etc.) to describe states' capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data and identify policies and procedures that facilitate or hinder linking across data systems?
- * Did the Center provide and update a national picture of state data systems?
- * Did the Center develop criteria for selecting framework partner states, and identify four framework partner states that meet the established criteria and are approved by OSEP?
- * Did the Center develop, implement, and evaluate a high-quality, relevant, and useful framework through an iterative process with framework states and other relevant stakeholders?
- * Did the Center develop documents and resources based on the framework on best practices and lessons learned that can be used to improve states' capacity to develop or enhance their statewide data system?

Many of these questions will be addressed by documenting that the planned activity happened. In Year 1, the evaluation will include documentation of when the needs assessment of Part C and Section 619 programs was conducted, who received the needs assessment, and who responded. Similarly, the summary of the results of the needs assessment and the display and update of the national picture of state data systems on the Center's website will be documented. For the evaluation of the development of the criteria for selecting framework partners and identification of partners, the selection of the partner states will be documented. The Center will document the framework development process and evaluate this process via a survey administered by the external evaluators to partner states and relevant stakeholders. Data on the website hits and information regarding the specific materials downloaded will be collected.

The Center will evaluate the effectiveness of the framework development process, the framework itself, as well as the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the resulting framework documents and related resources. When the framework development process is complete, the external evaluator will conduct a national survey in Years 3 through 5 on the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the framework. These questions will be part of a larger national state survey to be conducted in Years 3 through 5. This survey will be conducted by the external evaluator to measure the quality, relevance, and usefulness of key Center documents and resources related to the framework. In Years 3 through 5, the survey information will be supplemented with in-depth interviews conducted by the external evaluator with five to seven state representatives who have been significant users of Center TA.

Technical Assistance and Dissemination Activities. The major activity of the Center is to design and implement a continuum of technical assistance strategies that are evidence-based, relevant, useful, and cost-effective. The Center also will coordinate a national TA network to support states in their development and enhancement of data systems.

The TA strategies to be developed include

- * **General TA:** The Center will prepare and disseminate reports, documents, and other materials on statewide data systems and related topics; provide a continuum of general TA and dissemination activities (e.g., Center website, listservs, CoPs, conference presentations); and disseminate Center resources via Center website and other strategies in collaboration with TACC and NICHCY.
- * **Targeted TA:** The Center will provide targeted TA related to using data systems to improve capacity to collect, analyze, and report quality data, including supporting states in responding to performance and compliance indicators on SPPs/APRs.
- * **Intensive TA:** The Center will implement the DaSy framework with at least 10 states to assist them in achieving a fully implemented statewide data system. In Year 2, the Center will provide intensive TA to five states including ongoing communications via phone consultations, webinars, trainings, and on-site consultations. In Years 3 through 5, the Center will provide TA to the same five states along with an additional five states.

Finally, the Center will develop and coordinate a national TA network to provide additional support to states.

Evaluation of Technical Assistance and Dissemination Activities. The evaluation questions related to technical assistance and dissemination are:

- * What technical assistance strategies did the Center implement to build the capacity of states?
 - What general TA did the Center provide?
 - What targeted TA did the Center provide?
 - What intensive TA did the Center provide?
 - What focal topics did the Center provide TA on (e.g., framework/general system development, linking child-level data horizontally to other statewide data systems, linking vertically to other longitudinal education data systems, linking to provider-level data, increasing the use of recommended data system elements, establishing a data system interoperability plan)?
- * How did the Center use the information gathered through the evaluation and other sources to improve the delivery of technical assistance?
- * What is the cost of a TA service?
- * Did the Center conduct its activities in a timely manner?

The Center will document the amount and nature of TA activities through a web-based documentation system where staff enter information about TA services including state, age focus, topic of request, type of TA provided, and TA partners involved in the delivery of TA. Annually, the Center will provide at least 10 general and targeted TA events (products or major services) distributed across focal topics.

Annually, the Center will measure the cost of a TA service by selecting a specific TA service and identifying the relevant costs and dividing it by the number of participants. Also annually, the Center will develop a list of milestones to be completed and track them on a regular basis to ensure that the Center activities are completed in a timely manner within the approved timelines.

On an ongoing basis, the Center will review evaluation feedback and incorporate improvements into Center TA plan for the following year as evidenced by annotations to the work plan documenting the incorporation of evaluation findings and lessons into planned activities. This will include the tracking and review of web statistics, which will be incorporated into the annual formative evaluation report and used for decision-making and planning.

Intermediate Outcomes: State Engagement in the Center's Activities.

The intended intermediate outcomes of DaSy TA are that:

- * States will request TA and participate in the TA activities provided by the Center;
- * States will perceive the TA to be high quality, relevant, and useful; and
- * State participants will gain knowledge, resources and skills to build their individual capacity related to data systems.

Evaluation of Intermediate Outcomes. The evaluation questions that address the achievement of the intermediate outcomes are:

- * Did states request TA and use the Center's products?
- * Did TA recipients see the technical assistance as high-quality, relevant, and meeting objectives? If not, why not? What might the Center do differently to improve TA?
- * Did state participants gain knowledge, resources, and skills?

The number and type of TA requests will be tracked through the TA tracking database. Use of materials posted on the Center's website will be tracked through the web statistics. As part of the Center's ongoing formative evaluation, participant feedback will be collected via evaluation forms at the end of all major TA services. Evaluation forms will ask about the quality, relevance, and accomplishment of TA objectives including the knowledge and skills acquired by participants, and how TA could have been improved for all major TA services. For less extensive services, the Center will randomly select approximately 20% of TA services from which we will also gather feedback about the quality, relevance and accomplishment of TA objectives. Results of participant evaluation forms will be reviewed and discussed in order to determine recommended changes to improve quality, relevance, usefulness, timeliness, and effectiveness of TA. In addition to ongoing evaluations, the external evaluator will conduct a national survey in Years 3 through 5 on the quality, relevance, and usefulness of DaSy TA services and the knowledge and skills acquired by the participants. In Years 3 through 5 the survey information will be supplemented with in-depth interviews conducted by the external evaluator with five to seven state representatives who have been significant users of Center TA.

The external evaluator will collaborate with the Center and states receiving intensive TA over the course of the project to conduct case studies in five of the states receiving intensive TA. The case studies will describe the types of TA the states requested and used, as well as changes in state capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data. The external evaluation team will conduct interviews with state staff, Center staff, and others, as relevant, and will collect documents including framework self-assessment data or other documents. The case studies will document the nature of the TA provided by the Center and the success of the Center in addressing state needs relating to enhancing its early childhood data systems and improving its capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data required under IDEA. State staff will be asked to describe any linkages between the TA received and the changes to their integrated early childhood data system and their longitudinal data system.

Long-term outcomes: Improved early childhood data systems

The long-term outcomes of the Center's work are that Part C and Part B preschool state programs will have enhanced early childhood data systems and improved capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data required under IDEA. Specifically, states will have higher quality implementation of framework components (e.g., data governance, data quality), as evidenced by:

- * States will have improved data systems for Part C and Section 619 evidenced by increased use of recommended data elements (e.g., unique ID, service data).
- * States will have increased ability to link child-level data (e.g., C to 619; C/619 to EC; C/619 to K-12; child data to workforce data).

- * States will increase the use of data for decision-making, including APR improvement plans that are more data driven.

Evaluation of the long-term outcomes. The long-term outcomes of DaSy TA will be evaluated through pre/post assessment of the status of the states' data systems (with the needs assessment results providing the baseline data) and case studies conducted by the external evaluator in Years 3 through 5.

The evaluation questions that address the achievement of the long term outcomes are:

- * Did the strategies build the capacity of states systems to develop/enhance their data systems and improve their capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data required under IDEA?
- * What are case examples of the types of data system improvements that have been made as a result of Center TA?

For states that have received significant TA, the Center will measure a pre/post change in the capacity of their data systems and capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data required under IDEA. The project will look at the needs assessment data, framework self-assessment data, and other quantitative and qualitative data to examine the states' implementation of the framework components (e.g. data governance, data quality). Specifically, we will track changes in their ability to link child-level data across programs (e.g., C to 619; C/619 to EC; C/619 to K-12) and link child data to other data such as workforce data. We will examine APR or 618 data quality to determine whether the quality of the data has improved. We also will look at how many states have improved their data systems for Part C and/or 619 as evidenced by an increase in the number of key indicators in place. The 12 key Indicators are: (1) State has a child-level data system; (2) Child-level data elements are linked; (3) State has a data system with workforce information; (4) Child-level data can be linked to workforce data; (5) Same identifiers used for Part C and Part B preschool; (6) Part C data can be linked to Part B data; (7) Part C data can be linked to other early childhood data/Part B preschool data can be linked to other early childhood data; (8) Part C data can be linked to social services data/Part B data can be linked to social services data; (9) Part C data can be linked to health data/Part B data can be linked to health data; (10) Part C data can be linked to K-12 data/Part B data can be linked to K-12 data; (11) State has a data governance body that includes Part C and Part B preschool; (12) State, regional, and local administrators have real-time access to aggregated data on children in their jurisdiction from one or more state databases.

Final data collection for the case studies will include documenting the status of state capacity in Year 5 so that post-assessment data can be compared with baseline information on the state's ability to link data horizontally and vertically to other data systems, link child-level data to provider/workforce data, use recommended data system elements (e.g., unique child identifier, unique provider identifier), and develop/implement data system interoperability plan(s) that comply with privacy laws.

Finally, for all states (not just those that received significant TA from the Center), the Center will measure the increase in the percentage of states that have made it a priority to link Part C data to 619 data, Part C data to other early childhood data, and/or 619 data to other early childhood data as well as the percentage of states that have actually linked Part C data to 619 data, Part C data to other early childhood data, and/or 619 data to other early childhood data as measured on the Year 5 state survey conducted by the external evaluator.

Exhibit 1. Logic Model for the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy)

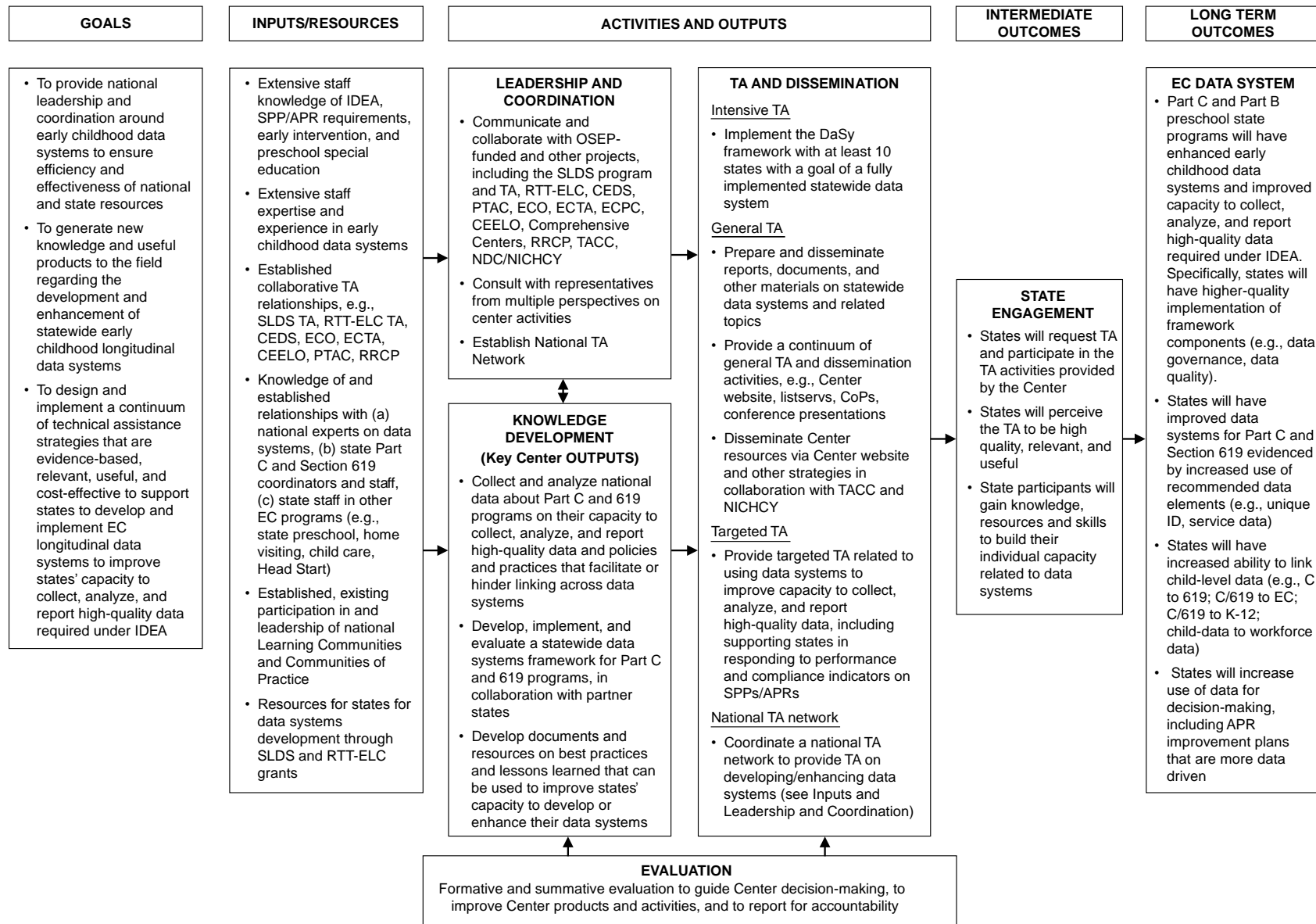


Exhibit 2. Evaluation Questions and Methods

	Collaboration documentation	Collaborator interviews	Collaborators survey*	Documentation	State survey*	State interviews*	TA documentation	Participant evaluations	Cost calculations	Case studies*	Web statistics
Activities and Outputs: Leadership and Coordination											
1. Did the Center provide national leadership in the area of early childhood data systems?	X	X	X				X				
2. With which organizations and states did the Center collaborate? What was the nature of the collaboration?	X						X				
3. How much of the DaSy major TA was provided collaboratively? And how does collaboration with major organizations/projects influence subsequent TA?	X			X			X				
4. How has collaborating with DaSy improved the efficiency and quality of the work of DaSy and the key collaborators?		X	X								
Activities and Outputs: Knowledge Development											
1. a. Did the Center conduct a needs assessment of Part C and 619 programs? When? What was the response rate for the needs assessment? b. Did the Center review state information from various sources (e.g., SPP/APR documents) to determine states' capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data and identify policies and procedures that facilitate or hinder linking across data systems? When?				X							

	Collaboration documentation	Collaborator interviews	Collaborators survey*	Documentation	State survey*	State interviews*	TA documentation	Participant evaluations	Cost calculations	Case studies*	Web statistics
2. Did the Center summarize national data (needs assessment results, APR/SPP review, etc.) to describe states' capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data and identify policies and procedures that facilitate or hinder linking across data systems?				X							
3. Did the Center provide and update a national picture of state data systems?				X							
4. Did the Center develop criteria for selecting framework partner states, and identify four framework partner states that meet the established criteria and are approved by OSEP?				X							
5. Did the Center develop, implement, and evaluate a high-quality, relevant, and useful framework through an iterative process with framework states and other relevant stakeholders?				X	X						X
6. Did the Center develop high-quality, relevant, and useful documents and resources based on the framework on best practices and lessons learned that can be used to improve states' capacity to develop or enhance their statewide data system?				X	X			X			

	Collaboration documentation	Collaborator interviews	Collaborators survey*	Documentation	State survey*	State interviews*	TA documentation	Participant evaluations	Cost calculations	Case studies*	Web statistics
Activities and Outputs: Technical Assistance and Dissemination											
1. What technical assistance strategies did the Center implement to build the capacity of states? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What general TA did the Center provide? • What targeted TA did the Center provide? • What focal topics did the Center provide TA on (e.g., framework/general system development, linking child-level data horizontally to other statewide data systems, linking vertically to other longitudinal education data systems, linking to provider-level data, increasing the use of recommended data system elements, establishing a data system interoperability plan)? 				X			X				
2. How did the Center use the information gathered through the evaluation and other sources to improve the delivery of technical assistance?				X							
3. What is the cost of a TA service?									X		
4. Did the Center conduct its activities in a timely manner?				X							
Intermediate Outcomes											
1. Did states request TA and participate in the TA activities provided by the Center?				X			X				X

	Collaboration documentation	Collaborator interviews	Collaborators survey*	Documentation	State survey*	State interviews*	TA documentation	Participant evaluations	Cost calculations	Case studies*	Web statistics
2. Did states perceive the TA to be high quality, relevant, and useful?					X	X		X		X	
3. Did state participants gain knowledge, resources, and skills that build their capacity related to data systems?					X	X		X		X	
Long-Term Outcomes											
1. Did the strategies build the capacity of states systems to develop/enhance their data systems and improve states' capacity to collect, analyze, and report high-quality data required under IDEA?					X	X	X	X		X	
2. What are case examples of the types of data system improvements that have been made as a result of Center TA?										X	

Exhibit 3. Evaluation Methods

Method	Timing	External Evaluator	Progress Measure	Additional Information
Collaboration documentation	Ongoing			Collaborative activities tracked with web-based database. Resulting data will be used by the external evaluator in the influence map.
Collaborator interviews	Annually, Yrs. 3, 4, 5	X		With a sample of 5 major collaborators in the collaboration tracking system and/or the TA tracking system.
Collaborator survey	Yrs. 3, 4, 5	X		With all collaborators in the collaboration tracking system and the TA tracking system.
Documentation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence of collaboration on TA 	Annually, Yrs. 2, 3, 4, 5			Evidence in TA work plan of collaborative influence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs Assessment (NA) 	Once - Yr. 1			Evidence needs assessment conducted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA report 	Once - Yr. 1			NA report.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National picture 	Annually			National picture on the website.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner state criteria, selection 	Once			Criteria, partner states.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework 	Once			Framework.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Products, services 	Ongoing			List of all TA products and services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center use of evaluation information 	Semi-annually			Minutes of staff meeting showing discussion and use of evaluation information; annual TA plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone tracking 	Annually			Comparison of completed activities for year to planned activities.
State survey	Yrs. 2, 3, 4, 5	X	X	All states.

Method	Timing	External Evaluator	Progress Measure	Additional Information
State interviews	Yrs. 2, 3, 4, 5	X		Sample of 5-7 states that have participated significantly in TA and all non-case-study states receiving intensive TA.
TA documentation	Ongoing			TA to states tracked with web-based database.
Participant evaluations	As needed		X	Survey of participants in all major TA events and a 20% sample of other TA events.
Cost calculations	Annually		X	Computed by dividing the cost to produce by the number of participants or users.
Case studies	Yrs. 3, 4, 5	X		5 states total.
Web statistics	Ongoing			Various indicators of website usage