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National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers

Interim Report

ies NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION EVALUATION AND REGIONAL ASSISTANCE

Institute of Education Sciences

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This report benefited from the work of a colleague whose loss we have felt keenly: Cynthia Sipe passed away, much too young, in March 2010. Her professionalism and good humor were priceless assets to Branch Associates, Inc., and to this study.

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In addition to the authors, other members of the participating organizations played important roles in study design, data collection, and analysis. Alvia Branch of Branch Associates, Inc. (BAI), provided steady leadership for the study team. Lynda Bell, Matthew Coll, Barbara Fink, Jennifer Gross, Ceane Rabada, Virginia Smith, and Jennifer Thompson were valued team members at BAI. Russell Jackson of Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR), was a source of wise counsel. Also at DIR, Nancy Dawson, Val Sheppard, Stella Weathersby, Frenetta Tate, and Pia White were stalwart contributors. At Policy Studies Associates (PSA), team members who made valuable contributions in data collection or coding included Erikson Arcaira, Tiffany Miller, Tandra Turner, and Yvonne Woods. Ben Lagueruela provided essential help in document production. Katrina Laguarda, formerly of PSA, made tremendous contributions to the study design and early activities.

The study and this report reflect the careful attention of many professionals in the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education.

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

The research team for this evaluation consists of a prime contractor, Branch Associates, Inc. and two subcontractors, Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (PSA), and Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR). None of these organizations or their key staff members has a financial interest that could be affected by findings from the evaluation of the Comprehensive Center program considered in this report. Additionally, no one on the Technical Working Group, convened by the research team to provide advice and guidance, has financial interests that could be affected by findings from the evaluation.

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Executive Summary

This first of two reports presents early findings from the National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers (Comprehensive Centers), a federally funded program that provides technical assistance to states in connection with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The law authorizing the Comprehensive Centers, the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002, mandated that a national evaluation of the program be conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). The legislation indicated that the evaluation should "include an analysis of the services provided…[and] the extent to which each of the comprehensive centers meets the objectives of its respective plan, and whether such services meet the educational needs of State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in the region." The program evaluation is conducted by Branch Associates, Inc., Decision Information Resources, Inc., and Policy Studies Associates, Inc.

This report addresses the first of the evaluation's three rounds of data collection, pertaining to the Centers' work of July 2006 through June 2007. It describes the program design and, drawing upon data provided by the Centers and their clients, program operations. It also describes assessments of Center activities and resources, reporting on quality as judged by panels of subject-matter experts, and on relevance, usefulness, and contributions to capacity as judged by practitioners (namely, state-level managers and also clients who participated directly in Center activities or received Center products). A final report will provide parallel findings for 2007-08 and 2008-09. In addition, it will present findings from case studies of capacity building at the state level and any changes in findings over time.

The main findings from the evaluation so far are:

- **The Comprehensive Centers reported planning their work in coordination and consultation with their clients with the work evolving during the year.** All 16 Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs) reported obtaining state input into their initial plans and engaging states in refinements to the plans through ongoing interaction and negotiation. Similarly, all five Content Centers (CCs) reported forming their work plans incorporating RCC input acquired through either RCC staff surveys or direct communication. In addition, all five CCs described working with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to learn of specific topics and tasks needed to advance ED priorities. A review of projects conducted indicates that both RCCs and CCs adjusted their work plans during the year.

- **The technical assistance activities were varied and consisted of ongoing consultation, research syntheses, planning of technical assistance with participants, training events, conferences, and support for task forces or for development of formal plans.** Consistent with the mission of "front-line" assistance, the majority of sampled RCC projects involved ongoing consultation and follow-up (82 percent). CC assistance most often focused on the delivery of research information, consistent with the CCs' prescribed focus on synthesizing, translating, and delivering knowledge on a particular topic. The delivery of research collections and syntheses occurred in 74 percent of the CC sampled projects.

- **The Comprehensive Centers program delivered technical assistance that, according to state managers: (1) served state education agencies' (SEAs') purposes in seeking technical assistance, (2) was aligned with SEAs' priorities for NCLB-related technical assistance, and (3) was perceived to expand SEA capacity.** Eighty-eight percent of state managers rated the technical assistance they received from Centers as at least "a good start" in serving their purposes, and 36 percent overall reported that it "served the state's purposes completely." For each of the four areas of NCLB implementation most widely identified as state priorities for technical assistance, at least 90 percent of those state managers who had identified the area as a priority had received assistance with it from the Centers. Overall, more than two-thirds of state managers (68 percent) reported a perception that assistance from the Comprehensive Centers had greatly expanded their state's capacity to carry out its responsibilities in at least one NCLB area.

- **Center projects in the evaluation sample were judged by clients to be on average in the "moderate" to "high" range of relevance and usefulness; panels of experts judged their quality to be in the "moderate" range on average.** On a scale of 1 to 5 with a 3 representing "moderate" and a 4 representing "high," the programwide average ratings for the sampled projects were 3.34 for technical quality (scored by panels of content experts), and 3.94 for relevance and 3.70 for usefulness (scored by participants).[1] The average quality rating was higher among CCs than RCCs by more than one-half of a standard deviation; the average relevance rating was higher among RCCs than CCs by at least one-half of a standard deviation; usefulness ratings were similar between the two Center types (i.e., did not differ by at least one-half of a standard deviation).[2]

[1] This averaging procedure across Centers and across projects was designed so that each Center contributed equally to the overall mean for the program (or for its type of Center, where RCC means were compared with CC means), and each project sampled from a Center contributed equally to the Center mean.

[2] Using Cohen (1988) as a conceptual framework, we estimated Cohen's d (an estimate of the effect size defined as the difference in means divided by the pooled standard deviation) and adopted the logic of Cohen for what is a moderate difference. Specifically, we adopted a difference in the means of one-half of one standard deviation (analogous to an effect size of .5) as our minimum threshold for highlighting differences. The "pooled standard deviation" for each computation varied with the unit of analysis. For analyses conducted at the Center level, the pooled standard deviation was computed as the standard deviation of the variable of interest (e.g., relevance) computed at the Center level. For analyses using the project as the unit of analysis, the pooled standard deviation was computed at the project level.

The Comprehensive Centers Program

In its authorization, the Comprehensive Centers program was given an overall charge of supporting state and local NCLB implementation. ED, using discretion provided in the legislation, established two major program features that differed from past Comprehensive Centers programs:[3]

- First, the primary focus would be on assisting states to expand and strengthen states' capacity to deliver assistance to schools and districts; ED specified that Centers could only work directly with districts or schools under special circumstances.

- Second, awards would be made in two tiers, to 16 RCCs and 5 CCs. They were instructed to work as follows:

  - Each RCC was charged with providing "frontline assistance" either to one large state or to a group of two to eight states and other jurisdictions.[4] The RCCs were also expected to deliver technical assistance to their assigned states, addressing the needs and building capacity of the states to assist their districts and schools.

  - Meanwhile, each CC would work on a nationwide basis within a particular substantive area: Assessment and Accountability, Instruction, Teacher Quality, Innovation and Improvement, or High Schools. CCs would facilitate access to, and use of, existing research and practices.

  - The absolute priorities for the two types of Centers indicated that they should work together: Regional Centers should draw information and resources from Content Centers as well as other sources; and Content Centers should both supply knowledge to Regional Centers and "work closely with Regional Centers to provide technical assistance to States."

Evaluation Topics and Methods

The research priorities for the evaluation were primarily driven by the statute and focused on the following key research questions:

- What are the objectives of the Comprehensive Center network and of each Center?

[3] Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year 2005. *Federal Register.* (2005, June 3). *70*(106), 32583-94.

[4] The nonstate jurisdictions that the Centers were to serve were the following: the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia [Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap], Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau. Throughout this report, the term "state" will be defined to include the 50 states as well as these other jurisdictions.

- What kinds of products and services are provided by the Comprehensive Center network and by each Center?

- How do Centers develop, refine, and carry out their plans for technical assistance? How do they define their clients' educational needs and priorities? How do Center clients (states or Regional Centers) define their needs and priorities?

- To what extent is the work of each Comprehensive Center of high quality, high relevance, and high usefulness?

- To what extent do states report that Center projects have expanded state capacity to address underlying needs and priorities and meet the goals of NCLB?

- To what extent have states relied on other sources of technical assistance besides the Comprehensive Centers? What other sources? How does the usefulness of Center projects compare with the usefulness of projects from other sources?

The evaluation gathered annual information from six data sources in order to address the research questions above. Data collection included:

- **Management plans**. The evaluation reviewed these as a data source for each Center's intended focus at the beginning of the year, drawing from the plans a list of topics as foci of Center objectives.

- **Center staff interviews.** Using structured response categories, Center staff were asked about how they planned their programs of work; how their plans evolved during the program year; and what they offered to clients with respect to the topics addressed, the delivery modes used, and their sources for content expertise. (See appendix C for the protocols and other structured response materials used during the interviews).

- **Survey of senior state managers.** SEA managers were surveyed about their state's technical-assistance needs and what the Centers (including their RCC and the CCs) had provided.

- **Project inventory forms.** The evaluation team assisted each Center in grouping related activities and deliverables into "projects," with the project defined as *a group of closely related activities and/or deliverables designed to achieve a specific outcome for a specific audience*. Projects were in turn classified by the Centers into major, moderate, and minor projects on the basis of the relative level of effort they reflected. The Centers and the evaluation team also classified the projects, according to the topics addressed, into 22 topical categories.[5]

[5] The 22 topics were: components of effective systems of support for states, districts, and schools; data use or data-driven decision making; formative assessment; reading; adolescent literacy; mathematics; dropout prevention; high school redesign or reform; transition to high school; special education curriculum, instruction and professional development; special education assessment; English language learners;" highly qualified teacher" provisions of NCLB; teacher preparation and induction; teacher professional development; supplemental educational services; Response to Intervention; migrant education; Indian or Native American education; data management and

- **Survey of project participants.** A representative sample of clients who had participated directly in the evaluation's purposive sample of major and moderate Center projects furnished descriptive information, through surveys, on the technical-assistance needs of their offices and on the activities and resources that the project had delivered to them. These clients included individuals working at the state level who had participated in RCC or CC projects and RCC employees who were among the clients of CC projects. They also rated the *relevance* and *usefulness* of the sampled projects.

- **Expert panel review.** The same sample of major and moderate projects was reviewed for quality by a panel of experts. Content experts were recruited and trained to use standard criteria to rate the *technical quality* of the sampled Center projects on the basis of a review of all project materials.

Operation of Centers

Before the beginning of the 2006-07 program year, each Center was required to submit a management plan, setting out objectives and planned activities for the coming year, for ED review and approval. Almost all Centers (20 of 21) reported that client input was used in writing the plan. The same number reported conducting needs assessment through meetings or other communication with clients.

In addition to initial needs assessments, to ultimately meet client needs Centers used planning and ongoing interactions with each other and with the SEAs to refine their needs assessments as indicated in exhibit ES.1. Fifteen of 16 RCCs reported forming work groups within state organizations that brought together staff from multiple departments to discuss service needs and delivery; the remaining RCC was 1 of 14 that reported working directly with the chief state school officer in their initial planning. Half of the RCCs (8) formed cross-agency work groups to discuss SEA service needs and delivery. All five CCs identified needs of their client RCCs primarily by conducting conference calls with designated RCC representatives, and three of the five CCs maintained communication about needs by forming workgroups that included RCC representatives. In addition, all CCs reported providing either large-group events or support of existing RCC programs and projects as additional ways to learn about and meet client needs.

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compliance; assessment design; and parent involvement. In addition, projects that addressed none of these 22 topics were categorized as "other."

Exhibit ES.1. Center strategies for planning and ongoing interactions with clients

Center strategy	RCCs (N=16)	CCs (N=5)	All (N=21)
Assess RCC needs through meetings or other communication with RCC staff		5	-
Included SEA input when writing annual management plans	16	-	-
Sponsor large events to make contact with many clients	13	4	17
Form work groups within client organizations that bring together staff from multiple departments/divisions to discuss service needs and delivery	15	1	16
Offer service to support existing client programs/ projects/ policies	9	4	13
Form work groups across client organizations to discuss service needs and delivery (e.g., different SEAs and/or RCCs)	8	3	11

EXHIBIT READS: All five CCs assessed RCC needs through meetings or other communication with RCC staff.

SOURCE: Verbatim summaries of Center interviews conducted during 2007 site visits, coded by evaluation team, with Center review of coding results

Although Centers reported providing technical assistance in a majority (80 percent) of the instances where identified topic areas were included in their management plans, Centers commonly adjusted the topic areas in which they conducted work, adding work in some areas and shifting away from work in other areas. Based on a review of each Center's inventory of projects against the topics that had been included in that Center's management-plan objectives, there were instances of the Center carrying out work on a topic not initially cited in its objectives. That is, in 19 of 22 topic areas Centers reported delivering technical assistance that was not in their original management plan. The most common shift toward topics were in the areas of Response to Intervention (seven Centers conducted work in this area that was not planned), English language learner issues (five Centers), highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB (five Centers) and supplemental educational services (five Centers). By the same token, Centers appeared to delete work in particular topic areas such as special education curriculum, instruction, and professional development (five Centers appeared to delete planned work); and data use or data-driven decisionmaking (four Centers appeared to delete planned work). Centers that set an objective in a topic did not report a project on the topic in their inventory for 10 of the 22 topic areas. The most common topic area for projects was that of statewide systems of support for educational improvement.

Regardless of whether they were originally specified in work plans or added later, an analysis of the projects that the evaluation team sampled for closer study across all Centers provides more in-depth information about the nature of Center technical assistance activities or resources. Although the sample of projects is not statistically representative of the Centers' work, the process of sample selection favored each Center's most dominant projects and included over half (56 percent) of that year's designated major or moderate projects. Most projects (84 percent) used more than one mode of delivery from a list that included conferences, training, delivery of research collections or syntheses, support for a task force, support for development of a plan or

policy, engagement of clients in project planning, and ongoing consultation and follow-up. Across all the sampled projects and also across the Regional Centers' sampled projects, the most frequent modes of delivery as shown in exhibit ES.2 were ongoing consultation and follow-up (84 of 122, or 69 percent of all projects and 79 of 96, or 82 percent of Regional Center projects) or delivery of a research collection or synthesis (71 of 122, or 58 percent of all projects and 52 of 96, or 54 percent of Regional Center projects). The Content Centers' projects most often included delivery of a research collection or synthesis (20 of 27, or 74 percent of their projects) or a conference (17 of 27, or 63 percent).

While some projects were worked on by both the RCCs and the CCs, coordination between CCs and RCCs when it did occur was asymmetrical. In providing assistance to states, RCCs used CC input more than CCs used substantive RCC input. Almost half of the sampled RCC projects had a substantive CC contribution (such as a product or a presentation by a CC staff member); in contrast, in 11 percent of the sampled CC projects an RCC contributed content or delivered assistance. More often (in 37 percent of the sampled CC projects), the CC enlisted the help of one or more RCCs to identify and recruit participants.

Exhibit ES.2. Sampled Center projects by types of participant activities and products

Activities and products ***(with clarifying definitions used by coders)***	**RCC projects** *(n=96)*	**CC projects** *(n=27)*	**All projects** *(n=122)*
Ongoing consultation and follow-up *(multiple contacts to same participants, that were part of a coherent and purposeful whole)*	79	6	84
Research collections and syntheses	52	20	71
Engagement of participants in project planning *(more than needs assessment or identifying participants)*	43	8	50
Training events *(focused on implementing a specific program or strategy)*	41	10	50
Task force meetings and work *(focused on addressing a specific problem, program, or policy)*	48	2	50
Conferences *(symposium, forum, institute; highlights a range of perspectives, strategies, or programs)*	26	17	43
Support development of a formal plan to implement a program or policy	18	2	20

EXHIBIT READS: Seventy-nine RCC projects included ongoing consultation and follow-up.

SOURCE: Project cover sheets prepared by Centers for the expert review of project materials; cover sheets coded by evaluation team. The total number of projects was 122. One project collaboratively conducted by an RCC and a CC was counted among both RCC projects and CC projects but was only counted once among the projects of all Centers.

The types of work emphasized in the RCC and CC sampled projects were consistent with their different charges. RCC assistance more often incorporated sustained interaction with participants: again, the majority of RCC projects in the sample involved ongoing consultation and follow-up (82 percent), whereas this was less so for the work of the CCs (22 percent of projects in the sample). Thus, this pattern of RCC activities was consistent with the mission of "front-line" assistance that would take clients' purposes and circumstances into account and provide ongoing support for their implementation of NCLB. For the CCs, the assistance more often focused on the delivery of research information, consistent with the CCs' prescribed focus on synthesizing, translating, and delivering knowledge on a particular topic. The delivery of research collections and syntheses occurred in 74 percent of the CC projects but 54 percent of the RCC projects. The sampled CC projects more often delivered technical assistance through conferences (63 percent of the CC projects but 27 percent of the RCC projects).

Ratings of Center Assistance

The sampled projects, all identified by the Centers as "major" and "moderate," were rated in order to assess the services provided by the Comprehensive Centers program. Each project was evaluated for relevance and usefulness by a sample of participants—state staff, intermediate agency staff, local educators working on behalf of the state, and RCC staff—who were the intended beneficiaries of the project and who had received at least some of the technical assistance it provided. Ratings of project quality were gathered from panels of experts with strong knowledge of the content or substantive focus of the specific projects they reviewed. Relevance was assessed with eight survey items and usefulness with 11 items; quality was judged on three items called dimensions (exhibit ES.3). Each overall measure (relevance, usefulness, or quality) was calculated as the mean of ratings assigned to each item. The item-level ratings themselves were based on 5-point rating scales.[6]

[6] Efforts were made to develop parallel wording and rubrics that would result in similar gradations between rating levels (e.g., very high vs. high vs. moderate) across the three measures. However, given the different content of each set of items within the three measures and the different contexts for the ratings (experts who underwent training for the rating process and reviewed identical packages of materials vs. survey respondents who typically participated in different subsets of project activities), the ratings across the three measures are not directly comparable.

Exhibit ES.3. Relevance, usefulness, and quality items

From expert panel scoring	From project participant surveys	
Technical quality	**Relevance**	**Usefulness**
Reviewers were directed to assign a score to each dimension and to include the basis for their ratings on the rating form, including the specific artifacts on which their score was based. The three dimensions are: a. Demonstrated use of the appropriate documented knowledge base – to include an accurate portrayal of the current state of information with prominence to those with the most accurate/rigorous evidence b. Fidelity of application of the knowledge base to the products and services provided – materials are consistent with the best/accurate information available and the presentation adequately conveys the confidence of the information c. Clear and effective delivery – information is well organized and written and accessible to the intended audience for easy use	Based on *your* experience, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***relevant*** to your work, in each of the following respects? a. Addressed a need or problem that my organization faces b. Addressed an important priority of my organization c. Addressed a challenge that my organization faces related to the implementation of NCLB d. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be directly applied to my organization's work e. Addressed our particular state context f. Addressed my organization's specific challenges (e.g., policy environment, leadership capacity, budget pressures, local politics) g. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be used to guide decisions about policies, programs, or practices h. Highlighted the implications of research findings (or information about best practice) for policies, programs, or practices	Based on *your* experience, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***useful*** to you, in each of the following respects? a. Provided resources that were easy to understand and easy to use b. Employed an appropriate format (e.g., a work group, a conference, individual consultation, written products) c. Provided adequate opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states d. Included adequate follow-up to support the use of new information and resources e. Were timely f. Helped my organization solve a problem g. Helped my organization maintain or change a policy or practice h. Helped my organization take the next step in a longer-term improvement effort i. Provided my organization with information or resources that we will use again j. Helped my organization develop a shared expertise or knowledge-base k. Helped individuals in my organization to develop skills that they will use again

Based on the ratings, Center technical assistance was judged to be in the "moderate" to "high" range of quality, relevance, and usefulness. On a scale of 1 to 5 with a 3 representing "moderate" and a 4 representing "high," the programwide average ratings for the sampled projects were 3.34 for technical quality (scored by panels of content experts), and 3.94 for relevance and 3.70 for usefulness (scored by participants) as indicated in exhibit ES.4.[7]

[7] This averaging procedure across Centers and across projects was designed so that each Center contributed equally to the overall mean for the program (or for its type of Center, where RCC means were compared with CC means), and each project sampled from a Center contributed equally to the Center mean.

Exhibit ES.4. Center Level Mean ratings of technical quality, relevance, and usefulness

	Technical quality	Relevance	Usefulness
All Comprehensive Centers *(N=21)*	3.34	3.94	3.70
All RCCs *(N=16)*	3.21	3.99	3.71
All CCs *(N=5)*	3.73	3.78	3.65
Difference of RCC and CC means	-0.52†	0.21†	0.06
Pooled standard deviation (all Comprehensive Centers)	*0.41*	*0.34*	*0.34*
Ratio of difference in means to pooled standard deviation	*-1.28*	*0.60*	*0.18*

NOTE: All ratings were on a 5-point scale, with 5 as the high value. The "technical quality" rating is the mean of the ratings for the three quality dimensions. A notation of † indicates that the difference in the mean ratings between the CCs and RCCs is at least one-half of one pooled standard deviation in the rating.

EXHIBIT READS: Among the 21 Centers, the mean technical quality rating was 3.34.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to project ratings; each project contributed equally to Center ratings; and each Center contributed equally to cross-Center ratings.

Given that the RCC and CC roles and activity emphasis differed, the evaluation looked at variation across Center types and projects that might provide information for program improvement. The average quality rating was higher among CCs than RCCs by more than one-half of a standard deviation[8]; the average relevance rating was higher among RCCs than CCs by at least one-half of a standard deviation; usefulness ratings were similar between the two Center types (differing by less than one-half of a standard deviation). The Content Centers received Center-level mean scores for technical quality that averaged 3.73, compared with 3.21 for the Regional Centers; the difference of 0.52 points exceeded one-half of one pooled standard deviation. The mean scores for relevance were 3.99 for the Regional Centers and 3.78 for the Content Centers. On usefulness, the mean score of 3.71 for the RCCs and 3.65 for the CCs were within one-half of a standard deviation of each other.

There was variation in the ratings across and within individual Centers. On each measure, at least 11 Centers had a mean rating that was at least one-half of a standard deviation above or below the overall mean for its type of Center (RCC or CC) for that measure[9] (i.e., 11 of 21

[8] For analyses conducted at the Center level, the pooled standard deviation was computed as the standard deviation of the variable of interest (e.g., relevance) computed at the Center level.

[9] For analyses using the project as the unit of analysis, the pooled standard deviation was computed at the project level.

Centers were this far above or below the mean for quality, 11 for relevance, and 14 for usefulness). One RCC was rated higher than others by at least one-half of a standard deviation on all three measures, and one CC and one RCC were rated lower than others on all three measures. Aside from these Centers, the other 18 Centers' ratings were not consistently higher or lower than the mean but varied across measures (Exhibit ES-5).

Exhibit ES.5. Mean ratings of technical quality, relevance, and usefulness, by Center

Center type	Technical quality	Relevance	Usefulness
RCCs *(N=16)*	3.78↑	3.78↓	3.42↓
	3.63↑	3.22↓	3.00↓
	3.46↑	4.18↑	3.94↑
	3.44↑	3.90	3.63
	3.36	3.97	3.63
	3.35	3.97	3.57
	3.35	3.93	3.51↓
	3.31	4.15	3.69
	3.21	4.08	3.82
	3.17	4.31↑	4.05↑
	3.15	4.12	3.93↑
	3.11	4.70↑	4.46↑
	2.98↓	4.07	3.92↑
	2.74↓	3.20↓	3.05↓
	2.74↓	4.01	3.54
	2.63↓	4.18↑	4.17↑
Average RCC rating	3.21	3.99	3.71
Pooled standard deviation (RCCs)	*0.32*	*0.37*	*0.38*
CCs *(N=5)*	4.24↑	3.76	3.54↓
	3.94	3.90↑	3.86↑
	3.88	3.99↑	3.84↑
	3.44↓	3.58↓	3.44↓
	3.14↓	3.68↓	3.56
Average CC rating	3.73	3.78	3.65
Pooled standard deviation (CCs)	*0.43*	*0.16*	*0.19*

NOTE: The arrow pointing upward indicates the accompanying value is at least one-half of one standard deviation above the group mean (e.g., 3.78 is at least one-half of one standard deviation above the mean for the RCCs). The arrow pointing downward indicates the accompanying value is at least one-half of one standard deviation below the group mean.

EXHIBIT READS: One of the RCCs had a mean rating for technical quality of 3.78, a mean rating for relevance of 3.78, and a mean rating for usefulness of 3.42, across the projects sampled from that Center.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to project ratings, and each project contributed equally to Center ratings

The evaluation also looked at the relationship between the three measures: quality, relevance, and usefulness. It was reasoned that the content experts rating quality and the participants rating relevance and usefulness might value and be better able to judge different qualities in a Center project, which is why we did not have content experts evaluate the projects for their utility or the participants assess the technical quality. An examination of the associations among the three dimensions was conducted by calculating correlation coefficients.[10] Such a statistic indicates the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two factors. A correlation coefficient can vary from positive one (indicating a perfect positive relationship), through zero (indicating the absence of a relationship), to negative one (indicating a perfect negative relationship). If the correlation is statistically significant ($p < .05$), we can have strong (95 percent) confidence that what we calculated is not due to chance.

Ratings of quality were unrelated to ratings of relevance and usefulness, although relevance and usefulness ratings were highly correlated with each other. The correlation coefficient for relevance and usefulness was +0.84, while the coefficient of relevance with quality was -0.12, and the coefficient of usefulness and quality was -0.04. In other words, the extent to which a project faithfully reflected the knowledge base on a topic and provided appropriate caveats about the quality of its evidence was unrelated to the extent to which participants deemed that project relevant or useful to their agency.

Given the variation in ratings across projects, additional analyses of project characteristics were conducted to explore whether there were any consistent patterns between ratings and the particular features of the projects. Such information may provide suggestions for possible program improvement. Specifically, if there is a consistent relationship between scale of the undertaking and the ratings, perhaps signaling more ambitious projects or projects that allow a greater focus of Center resources on the effort, then this might be suggestive of productive uses of Center resources for future emphasis. In fact, projects identified by the Centers as "major" were rated higher by at least one-half a standard deviation on the measures of relevance and usefulness but not on the measure of quality.

Projects with particular types of activities may be easier to carry out, may play to Center strengths, or may be seen as more productive to the ultimate clients. In addition, those RCC projects that included CC contributions might be expected to have higher quality ratings than other RCC projects, given the expected content and research focus of the CCs. Thus, the evaluation compared ratings of subgroups of projects (e.g., those with and without particular activities such as conferences, training, or research syntheses; RCC projects with and without CC involvement) to see if there were any consistent relationships between the ratings and particular Center activities or the incorporation of CC work. Across five of the seven project activities identified, comparisons of projects with and without the activities showed no differences in quality, relevance, or usefulness greater than one-half of a standard deviation. Ratings of RCC projects with CC contributions did not differ by more than one-half of a standard deviation on any measures, compared with those without CC contributions. Thus, these analyses do not suggest differences in ratings related to CC contributions or particular activities.

[10] For this analysis, the evaluation team used Spearman's rank order correlation, as this non-parametric rating is the appropriate statistical function to describe correlations between two variables where the values of the variables are not normally distributed and are on a scale (such as ratings).

It is also possible that Center technical assistance is viewed as more beneficial by some types of participants or that the extent to which participants are engaged in a project affects how they regard it. Therefore, the ratings of subgroups of individuals were examined for the relevance and usefulness measures. Involvement with the project design and time spent in project activities were both associated with statistically higher relevance and usefulness ratings. There was also evidence of statistically higher ratings among respondents whose job had a focus on NCLB-related responsibilities (defined as respondents who spent at least 25 percent of their time on the job on NCLB). This suggests that those who worked on the projects and were most likely to benefit from the work rated the projects higher.

State Capacity Building and the Use of Different Sources of Technical Assistance

Capacity building was prominent as a goal for the Comprehensive Centers program. The first priority for all Centers, articulated by ED in the Notice Inviting Applications, included "helping states build the capacity to help school districts and schools implement NCLB provisions and programs."[11]

Fifty-three percent of state managers reported that technical assistance from the program, including both their Regional Center and any Content Centers with which they had experience, had expanded state capacity to a "great extent" or "very great extent" for building or managing a statewide system of support. This was the area of NCLB responsibility in which extensive capacity building was most widely reported. In addition, the Centers were the top source used for help "to plan the initial steps in solving a problem," reported by 66 percent of state managers, and "to develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff," reported by 61 percent of state managers. A case study component of the evaluation will examine further the contribution of the Comprehensive Centers to building state capacity.

The Comprehensive Centers were one resource among several available to, and used by, state managers. On average, state managers ranked the Centers as one of the top three sources of technical assistance that they relied upon, along with professional associations and the ED-funded Regional Educational Laboratories. The Centers were not the resource used most widely for "working with districts and schools," a purpose that ED de-emphasized in the Centers' charge: colleges and universities were used for this purpose by 37 percent of state managers, and consulting firms by the same percentage; the Centers were used for this purpose by 22 percent of state managers.

Summary and Next Steps

This evaluation addresses questions about the technical assistance provided by the two types of Comprehensive Centers; how the Centers work with their clients; the match between client purposes and assistance delivered; and assessments of the quality, relevance, and usefulness of a sample of technical assistance projects. This interim report presents findings from

[11] *Notice Inviting Applications*, 32585.

2006-07, the Centers' second year of operation under a new design that ED established in 2005. The findings suggest that Centers attempted to strike a balance between adhering to their management plans for the year and accommodating client requests, and that state clients generally viewed Center technical assistance as serving state purposes. In addition, the study found that RCCs and CCs worked in the different ways that had been mandated in the design of the two types of Centers.

In this first round of project ratings, mean ratings across sampled projects and all Centers fell in the "moderate" to "high" range for quality (rated by expert panels) and relevance and usefulness (rated by participating clients). The CCs had higher mean ratings of technical quality for their sampled projects than did RCCs, while the RCCs had higher mean ratings of relevance than did CCs. There was no statistically significant relationship between ratings of quality on the one hand and relevance or usefulness on the other. These findings suggest that at least in the 2006-07 program year, achieving high technical quality was unrelated to delivering assistance that clients found highly relevant or useful.

The evaluation team is continuing to study Center operations, outputs, and outcomes for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 program years. By repeating the processes of expert panel reviews and surveys, the evaluation team will be able to report on changes over time in the quality, relevance, and usefulness of Center projects as well as on trends in state managers' perspectives on Center technical assistance and contributions to capacity building in SEAs.

1. Introduction and Background

The Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 authorized the Secretary of Education to award "not less than 20 grants to local entities, or consortia of such entities, with demonstrated expertise in providing technical assistance and professional development in reading, mathematics, science, and technology" (Section 203). The law mandated that these entities, called Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers, undergo independent evaluation under the direction of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) in the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

This is the first interim report of a multi-year evaluation conducted for NCEE by Branch Associates, Inc., Decision Information Resources, Inc., and Policy Studies Associates, Inc. The report addresses the second year of operation of the Center system, July 2006-June 2007. This introductory chapter provides background information on ED's purposes and design for the Center system. It also describes key state responsibilities included in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act with which the Centers were expected to provide assistance. The chapter concludes with a description of the major evaluation questions. The study methods are described in the second chapter of this report, followed by the findings in successive chapters.

The Center Program

The current Centers replaced 15 existing Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers established under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 (ESEA). The current system represented a departure from that previous system with respect to the targeting of services and the responsibilities of Centers.

The 1994 reauthorization of ESEA had charged the previous set of 15 Comprehensive Centers with delivering assistance to support standards-based reform as envisioned in other sections of the 1994 law. They were to provide training and technical assistance to states, local education agencies (LEAs), schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other ESEA grantees related to several areas of local responsibility. These included: (1) improving the quality of instruction, curricula, assessments, and other aspects of school reform; (2) implementing effective schoolwide programs; and (3) meeting the needs of children, especially children in high-poverty areas, migrant children, immigrant children, limited-English-proficient children (LEP), neglected or delinquent children, homeless children, Indian children, and children with disabilities [Section 13102 (a)(1)(A-L)]. In short, the previous Centers' mandate included a focus on a number of aspects of local educational practice.

A previous evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers,[1] based on surveys of clients conducted in 1999, found that the majority of direct participants in major Center training and

[1] U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division. (2000). *Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers Program: Final Report on the Evaluation*(Volume I). Washington, DC: Author.

technical assistance activities were school staff (either teachers or principals), and that the majority of clients who arranged for services from the Comprehensive Centers were also based in school districts or schools. At the state level, among those state education agency (SEA) staff members who had received assistance, 64 percent reported that the Centers had improved the ability of their SEA to provide assistance to districts and schools. The report noted that higher ratings for Centers were associated with more intensive technical assistance, based upon survey findings.

The Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 authorized a new group of Comprehensive Centers to provide technical assistance for NCLB implementation at the state, district, substate region, and school levels for the purposes of "improving academic achievement, closing achievement gaps, and encouraging and sustaining school improvement" (Section 203). It also gave ED discretion to "establish priorities" for the Centers (Section 207).

The current design of the Comprehensive Centers program reflects changes from the design of the predecessor program. In making its design choices, ED set up an advisory process to identify priorities for the new Centers: in 2004 the Secretary of Education appointed 10 Regional Advisory Committees that would conduct needs assessments in their regions and make recommendations regarding technical assistance. The committees said SEAs needed help making better use of scientifically based research in decisionmaking, and that strengthening SEAs' capacity to serve local school districts was critical to the success of NCLB reforms, according to a synthesis of their recommendations.[2]

Following this effort, ED identified states as the Centers' primary client base, although the program had in the past served local clients, as described above. ED charged the Centers to work in new ways to expand and strengthen states' capacity to deliver assistance to schools and districts. The new program would also consolidate and expand responsibilities for Comprehensive Center technical assistance in that it would replace the Regional Technology in Education Consortia, the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education, and the Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia.

Structure of the Comprehensive Center System

To implement the provisions of the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002, ED created a new, two-tiered Center system. The Notice Inviting Applications detailed the design of that system. Under the new system, the Secretary of Education would award grants to 21 Centers, each tasked with "provid[ing] technical assistance to States as States work to help districts and schools to close achievement gaps in core content areas and raise student achievement in schools. To accomplish this goal, ED stipulated that applicants had to "propose a plan of technical assistance specifically focused on helping States implement the provisions of NCLB applicable to States, and helping States build the capacity to help school districts and schools implement NCLB provisions and programs."[3]

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[2] Sheekey, A., Cymrot, D.J., and Fauntleroy, C. (2005, March). *A Report to the U.S. Department of Education: Overview and Synthesis of the Regional Advisory Committee Reports on Educational Challenges and Technical Assistance Needs.* Alexandria, VA: The CNA Corporation.

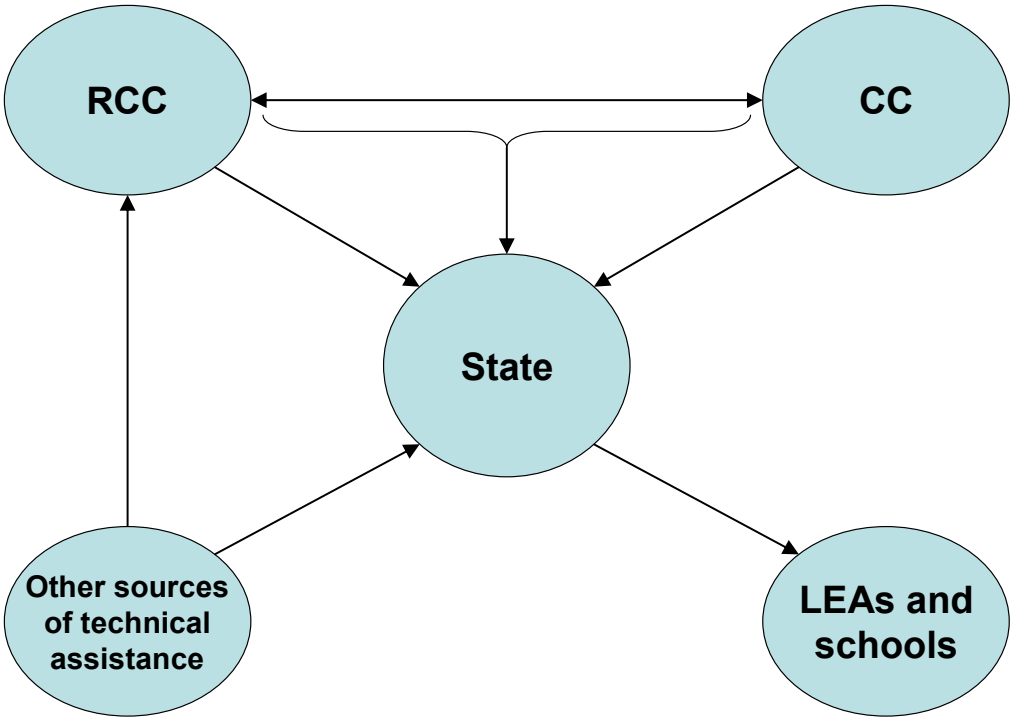
[3] Ibid, 32585.

While the overall goal of assisting states with NCLB implementation was common to all 21 Centers, the two-tiered system designed by ED created distinct roles for the two types of Centers. These are described next.

Distinct RCC and CC Roles

Within the 21 Centers, ED constituted 16 Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs) and five Content Centers (CCs). By design, RCCs and CCs were given different roles and functions in a system of NCLB technical assistance (exhibit 1.1). RCCs, embedded within distinct geographic regions across the United States and territories, would deliver technical assistance to the states and territories in their region, addressing their needs and building their capacity to assist their districts and schools. Meanwhile, each of the CCs would take responsibility for synthesizing knowledge from the research and promising practices within a particular substantive area. The CCs would build the capacity of the RCCs by providing research-based information, products, guidance, and knowledge on key topics. The CCs would also work with RCCs to provide technical assistance to states. In turn, each state would help its districts and schools meet NCLB requirements.

Exhibit 1.1. Center network design



Elaborating on the functions of RCCs, ED required them to work directly with states to "provide frontline assistance."[1] ED mandated that RCCs provide states with ongoing assistance and training that would draw from a range of knowledge sources, including but not limited to CCs; provide CCs with information about promising practices; convene states for collaboration;

[1] Ibid., 32585.

and deliver information based on both research and best practice. The specific list of RCC responsibilities included the following:[5]

- "Working closely with each State in its region on an ongoing basis"
- "Linking States with the resources of Content Centers, Department staff, Regional Educational Laboratories, The What Works Clearinghouse, and other entities"
- "Suggesting sources of appropriate service providers or assistance for State activities that are not within the core mission of the centers"
- "Assisting State efforts to build statewide systems of support for districts and schools in need of improvement"
- "Working to identify, broker, leverage, and deliver information, resources and services from the Content Centers and other sources"
- "Convening in partnership with Content Centers and others, as appropriate, States and districts to receive training and information on best practices and research-based improvement strategies"
- "Providing guidance and training on implementation of requirements under NCLB and other related Federal programs"
- "Facilitating collaboration at the State level to align Federal, State, and district school improvement programs"
- "Helping Content Centers to identify, document, and disseminate emerging promising practices"

The Notice Inviting Applications portrayed CCs as a central source of readily accessible knowledge, resources, and tools. Each CC was designed to consolidate in-depth knowledge in one of five key content areas: Assessment and Accountability, Instruction, Teacher Quality, Innovation and Improvement, or High Schools. The types of knowledge specifically mentioned included research, scientifically valid practices, and promising practices. The degree of emphasis on research and scientifically valid practice was heightened in this redesign of the Comprehensive Centers program. This was consistent with NCLB, which stated that scientifically based research must inform local practice.

Within their content areas ED tasked CCs to:[6]

- "Identify, organize, select and translate existing key research knowledge…and communicate the information in ways that that are highly relevant and highly useful to State and local level policy makers and practitioners"
- "Benchmark State and district practices for implementing NCLB provisions and school improvement interventions…and identify promising approaches that can be shared with States and districts"
- "Convene States and districts, researchers and other experts to learn from each other about practical strategies for implementing NCLB provisions and programs"
- "Train Regional Center staff on what is known about scientifically valid practices and programs"

[5] Ibid., 32585-6.
[6] Ibid., 32586-7.

- "Collaborate with Regional Centers to address specific State requests for assistance"
- "Communicate to the field…Department guidance related to the center's content focus"
- "Design needs assessment and data analysis tools that States and districts can use to benchmark their programs and progress"

Awards to the Centers

At the conclusion of the competition, new Regional Comprehensive Centers were located in 16 regions of the United States, covering all U.S. states and territories. Of the 16 RCCs, there were four that served only their respective state: New York, Texas, California, and Alaska. The remaining 12 Centers served from two to seven states and other jurisdictions. The non-state jurisdictions that the Centers were to serve were the following: the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia [Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap], Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau. Throughout this report, the term "state" will be defined to include the 50 states as well as these other jurisdictions. A full list of the grantees and subgrantees appears in appendix A of this report.

Comprehensive Center funding for FY 2006 totaled $56.3 million (exhibit 1.2). Individual Centers' funding ranged from a low of $850,000 for the Alaska and Pacific Comprehensive Centers, to a high of $5,912,997 for the California Comprehensive Center. Funding for each RCC was driven by a formula based on the region's total population and its number of poor children ages 5-17. Average funding across all RCCs was $2,876,640.

Content Center funding for FY 2006 ranged from $1,466,096 for the Assessment and Accountability Center and the Center on Innovation and Improvement, to $2,446,096 for the Centers on Instruction, Teacher Quality, and High Schools. The latter group of Centers was co-funded with an allocation of $1 million each from the Special Education Technical Assistance and Dissemination Act, authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The average amount of funding across CCs was $2,054,096.

Exhibit 1.2. Comprehensive Centers funding in FY 2006

Centers	States	FY 2006 funding
Total		**$56,296,713**
Regional Centers		
Alaska Comprehensive Center	AK	$850,000
Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center	KY, NC, TN, VA, WV	$3,829,927
California Comprehensive Center	CA	$5,912,997
Florida and Islands Regional Comprehensive Center	FL, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands	$3,788,289
Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center	IN, MI, OH	$3,592,771
Great Lakes West Region Comprehensive Center	IL, WI	$3,702,196
Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center	DE, MD, NJ, PA, DC	$3,388,147
Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center	AR, KS, MO, OK	$2,111,226
New England Comprehensive Center	CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT	$1,644,795
New York Comprehensive Center	NY	$2,886,970
North Central Comprehensive Center	IA, MN, ND, SD, NE	$1,286,458
Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center	ID, MT, WY, WA, OR	$1,630,818
Pacific Comprehensive Center	HI, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Palau	$850,000
Southeast Comprehensive Center	AL, GA, SC, LA, MS	$4,120,988
Southwest Comprehensive Center	AZ, UT, CO, NV, NM	$2,491,327
Texas Comprehensive Center	TX	$3,939,324
Content Centers		
Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center		$1,466,096
Center on Innovation and Improvement		$1,466,096
Center on Instruction		$2,446,096
National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality		$2,446,096
National High School Center		$2,446,096

EXHIBIT READS: The Alaska Comprehensive Center received funding in the amount of $850,000 for FY 2006.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education

Background on the State Role in NCLB

A basic premise of the Comprehensive Centers program as designed by ED was that NCLB assigned many tasks to states. The background section of the Notice itemized the following NCLB requirements for states:

> …set standards for student performance, implement statewide testing and accountability systems to measure school and student performance toward achieving those standards, adopt research-based instructional and program improvements related to teaching and learning in the classroom, ensure that all teachers in core subject areas are highly qualified, and improve or ultimately restructure schools that are consistently low-performing.[7]

With respect to consistently low-performing schools and also low-performing districts, NCLB mandated that all states establish and sustain statewide systems of support and improvement for school districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB. Districts and schools identified for improvement must receive assistance from support teams, institutions of higher education, and regional service centers in the state. This "statewide system of support" (SSOS) must include individuals who were knowledgeable about research and practice on teaching and learning and who could develop and implement comprehensive improvement strategies. "State support teams" (SSTs) were required to help schools plan for improvement and to evaluate the effectiveness of school personnel. The NCLB legislation also provided that these support teams should receive technical assistance from Comprehensive Centers and others.[8]

Research Questions Addressed in This Report

The current evaluation takes a global look at the Center program as designed by ED, tracking the ways in which the Comprehensive Centers interacted with clients (both states and other Centers) over three program years. This report presents data describing implementation and outcomes in response to the following research questions:

- What are the objectives of the Comprehensive Center network and of each Center?
- What kinds of products and services are provided by the Comprehensive Center network and by each Center?
- How do Centers develop, refine, and carry out their plans for technical assistance? How do they define their clients' educational needs and priorities? How do Center clients (states or Regional Centers) define their needs and priorities?
- To what extent is the work of each Comprehensive Center of high quality, high relevance and high usefulness?

[7] Ibid., 32584.
[8] No Child Left Behind, Title I, Part A, § 1117 (a) (1).

- To what extent have states relied on other sources of technical assistance besides the Comprehensive Centers? What other sources? How does the usefulness of Center projects compare with the usefulness of projects from other sources?

- To what extent do states report that Center projects have expanded state capacity to address underlying needs and priorities and meet the goals of NCLB?

Questions for Future Reports

Two additional research questions examining change over time are to be addressed in a final report; this report, based on data collection regarding the Centers' work in 2007-08 and 2008-09, will address the questions:

- Has the performance of the Centers in addressing the needs and priorities changed over the period of time studied?

- Has the quality, relevance, or usefulness of each Center's projects changed over the period of time studied?

The evaluation will also report on case studies of capacity building at the state level. These findings will provide additional insight related to the research question regarding the ways in which Center projects have expanded state capacity for NCLB implementation.

Organization of This Report

Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 describes the study's methods. Chapter 3 describes the ways in which the Centers planned and conducted technical assistance for the 2006-07 program year and it presents findings on the types of services and products they provided. Chapter 4 addresses the technical assistance needs and priorities reported at the state level and the ways in which Centers were reported to have addressed these needs and priorities, and expanded state capacity. Chapter 5 reports on the quality, relevance, and usefulness of selected Center projects as determined through expert review (for quality) and participant surveys (for relevance and usefulness).

2. Study Design

This chapter describes the data sources and analytic procedures used to address the report's research questions. Data collection for this interim report was conducted over a period from May 2007 through July 2008, and addressed the activities of Centers and their clients during the period from July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2007. A final report will include two additional rounds of data collection in 2008-09 and 2009-10 conducted to address activities in subsequent years, from July 2007 through June 2009.

The evaluation team used six data sources to address the research questions: documents produced by the Centers with assistance from the evaluation team, Center management plans, site visits to Centers, state manager surveys, expert panel reviews, and participant surveys (exhibit 2.1).

For the first three questions, which pertained to the operations of the Centers, the data were drawn from the Centers themselves. The team used Center management plans as a data source regarding Center objectives. In summer 2007 and summer 2008, the team conducted site visits to Centers; closed-ended prompts were used in face-to-face interviews to gather self-report data systematically on Center objectives, procedures for needs assessment and planning, and interactions with their clients. Two documentary sources were used as sources for descriptions of Center technical assistance: the project inventory forms and project cover sheets completed by the Centers with review and feedback from the evaluation team. The definition of a project and the procedures for gathering and reviewing these data are discussed in detail in this chapter.

A survey of state managers was the source for data on the states' technical assistance needs and priorities, on other sources of technical assistance used, ratings of the overall technical assistance received, and on perceived capacity change at the state level. The technical quality of Center technical assistance was assessed by a panel of experts on the topic of each technical assistance project. Finally, participants answered survey questions pertinent to the relevance and usefulness of Center technical assistance.

Each of these data sources is described in this chapter, and the analytic procedures specific to each source are discussed. The data collection instruments and further details regarding data sources and procedures can be found in appendices referenced throughout the chapter. The chapter concludes with a brief explanation of units of analysis for the reporting of quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings.

Exhibit 2.1. Data sources for the research questions

Research question	Project inventory forms and project cover sheets	Center manage-ment plans	Site visits to Centers	State manager survey	Expert review panels	Partici-pant surveys
What are the objectives of the Comprehensive Center network and of each Center?		✓	✓			
What kinds of products and services are provided by the Comprehensive Center network and by each Center?	✓		✓			
How do Centers develop, refine, and carry out their plans for technical assistance? How do they define their clients' educational needs and priorities?			✓			
How do Center clients (states or Regional Centers) define their needs and priorities?				✓		✓
To what extent have states relied on other sources of technical assistance besides the Comprehensive Centers? What other sources? How does the usefulness of Center projects compare with the usefulness of projects from other sources?				✓		
To what extent do states report that Center projects have expanded state capacity to address underlying needs and priorities and meet the goals of NCLB?				✓		
To what extent is the work of each Comprehensive Center of high quality, high relevance and high usefulness?				✓ (overall relevance and usefulness)	✓ (quality)	✓ (project-level relevance and usefulness)

Identification of a Sample of Center Work for Expert Review and Participant Surveys

A critical component of the evaluation was to rate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of Center products and services. Given available resources, it was not possible for the evaluation team to submit all of a Center's products and services to an independent review panel to rate quality. Nor was it feasible to survey all individuals who used Center products or participated in Center activities in the designated time period regarding relevance and usefulness. Therefore, the evaluation team developed and applied a strategy to select a sample of work from each Center for expert panel review and participant ratings.

The following sections describe: (1) the unit of analysis, (2) the sample frame, (3) the evaluation sample, and (4) materials obtained from Centers.

The Unit of Analysis: The Project

The evaluation team initially reviewed the Centers' 2006-07 management plans to understand the nature of the work the Centers were conducting and determine if the management plans might serve as an appropriate sampling frame for the evaluation. Based on this effort, the team determined that the sampling procedures could not be based on the management plans for two reasons. First, the Centers' plans and work continued to evolve over time. Consequently, the plans, which were prepared before the program year, did not comprehensively reflect the work actually being done by the Centers months later. Second, the Centers used different approaches to organizing and aggregating their work. For example, some presented their work by state while others organized it by topic area. For the purposes of this evaluation, the team identified "projects" as a common level of aggregation that would constitute units large enough for review and rating, but focused enough for coherence. A "project" was defined as ***a group of closely related activities and/or deliverables designed to achieve a specific outcome for a specific audience***. To ensure that projects would constitute units that were large enough for review and rating, but focused enough for coherence, the study team provided the following criteria:

- ***Complete and coherent whole.*** Because each project should be able to stand on its own in an expert panel review, it should include all related activities and products.

- ***Common intended outcome.*** Where a cluster of activities and deliverables was designed by the Center to lead to the same outcome for the same audience, those activities and deliverables should be grouped as one project.

- ***Topic area focus.*** With few exceptions, a project addressed just one topic area (for example, statewide systems of support, adolescent literacy, assessment of English language learners) around which there was a body of research or professional wisdom.

Since the project was a unit developed for this evaluation and was not necessarily how Centers divided up their work for programmatic or cost-tracking purposes, the evaluation team took several steps to ensure that the project concept was clear and used consistently across Centers. The evaluation team developed a standard Project Inventory Form (PIF) that Centers used to create an inventory of their work for each of the program years in this evaluation (see appendix B for a copy of the PIF) as well as written guidance in the instructions for completing the PIF (described in appendix B) and a sample inventory to serve as an example of the kinds of projects that should be listed by the Centers. The sample inventory included examples of activities or resources for defining projects at each level of effort—major, moderate, or minor. Members of the study team also invited Center staff to attend training sessions by conference call on completing the PIF, including defining projects. When draft inventories were received, the study team reviewed them to make sure the entries listed met the three criteria used to identify projects. They also reviewed the Center's reporting of the project level of effort for correspondence with the listed activities and resources and listing of the projects under each topic area for correspondence with the topic definitions provided in the written guidance. The study team provided technical assistance to Centers as needed to ensure that all projects conformed to the standards.

The Sampling Frame

The evaluation was designed to assess the quality, relevance, and usefulness of a sample of Center work. The PIFs served as the basis for identifying the sampling frame from which the study team drew the sample of projects that became the subject of expert panel reviews and participant surveys. For the 2006-07 data collection cycle, the evaluation team asked each Comprehensive Center to use the PIF to prepare an inventory of all the projects active during the grant period from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007. A total of 364 projects (110 major, 106 moderate, and 148 minor) were identified across the 21 PIFs.[20] The number of projects included on the 2006-07 PIFs ranged from a minimum of 6 to a maximum of 32 projects.

To be eligible for the sampling frame, projects first needed to represent a reasonable amount of effort (i.e., classified as "major" or "moderate" by the Center) and have a sufficient amount of material to give reviewers enough information to judge the quality of the work. Projects included in the sampling frame also needed to have identifiable participants since the evaluation design called for collecting relevance and usefulness ratings through surveys of project participants. All 148 minor projects were excluded from the sampling frame, along with 16 major or moderate projects that had produced few or no reviewable materials or did not have identifiable participants in 2006-07. A total of 200 projects met both eligibility criteria and were included in the sampling frame.

[20] Centers designated on their PIFs whether each project was "major," "moderate," or "minor" in terms of the level of effort and/or resources the Center devoted to it, relative to other projects in the same Center.

The Sample of Projects

To ensure that the final sample of projects reviewed reflected a range of each Center's work across topics and states and captured work that represented the largest investment of resources, the team implemented a sampling strategy that included a combination of Center-nominated projects and a stratified set of purposively-selected projects. The desired sample size at each Center was a function of that Center's budget amount. For 2006-07, the number of projects sampled for each Center ranged from three to eight depending on the size of the Center's annual budget (exhibit 2.2). Although the sample was not statistically representative in scientific terms, it was designed to include a high percentage of the major projects of each Center as well as projects that Centers thought best represented their work.

Exhibit 2.2. Sample size by budget

Center funding level—annual federal contract (number of Centers)	Total projects to be selected for review, per Center	Number of projects to be nominated by Centers, per Center	Number of projects to be selected purposively, per Center	Number of projects selected across Centers
Total				**122**
Less than $1 million *(N=2)*	4	1	3	7**
$1 to 1.9 million *(N=5)*	5	1	4	24*
$2 to 2.9 million *(N=6)*	6	2	4	35**
$3 to 3.9 million *(N=6)*	7	2	5	40**
$4 million or more *(N=2)*	8	2	6	16

* Does not include a collaborative project conducted jointly by an RCC and a CC that is accounted for in another category.

** In four cases, Centers did not have enough eligible projects in their sampling frame to meet the desired sample size.

EXHIBIT READS: There were four Centers whose annual funding level was less than $1 million. Three projects were selected for review for each of these centers, one of which was nominated by the Center for selection and two of which were selected for inclusion by the study team.

When completing their inventory forms, Centers were given an opportunity to nominate the one or two projects they felt best represented their work.[21] These Center-nominated projects

[21] The number of projects a Center was able to nominate depended on the size of its annual budget, as shown in exhibit 2.2.

were selected first for the sample, followed by major projects. For Centers with insufficient major projects to meet the predetermined sample size, moderate projects were selected. The study team used an iterative sampling process to randomly select projects while controlling for topic area and state.

Using these methods for 2006-07, the evaluation team selected a total sample of 122 projects[1]–93 major and 29 moderate (see exhibit 2.3). Overall, 61 percent of the projects that were eligible for the sampling frame (122 of 200) were selected. The sample predominantly included the most major work of the Centers (90 percent of the major projects) although the sample was not statistically representative in scientific terms, and covered 34 percent of all projects reported on the PIFs.

Exhibit 2.3. Project sampling process

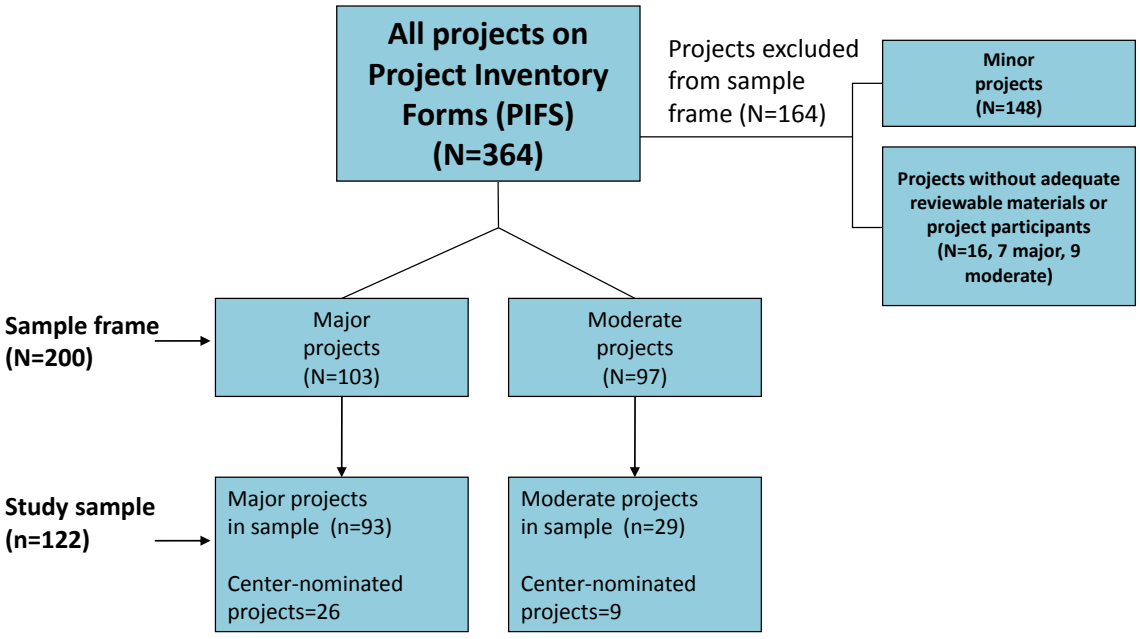


EXHIBIT READS: Of the 364 projects listed on the PIFs, 164 were excluded from the sample frame, leaving 200 eligible projects from which 122 were sampled.

Further detail on the sampled projects by topic in relation to all major and moderate Center projects appears in exhibit 2.4. For 17 of the 23[2] topics, 50 percent or more of all major and moderate projects addressing that topic were sampled.

[1] This total includes one collaborative project conducted by an RCC and a CC together that was classified as a major project by both Centers. At the end of this chapter, in the section detailing the study's analytic procedures, the handling of this project in analysis and reporting is described.

[2] Exhibit 2.4 includes the topic area of "other" as the 23rd topic area, as a small number of the sampled projects were included in that area. Subsequent discussions in the report use the 22 specific substantive topic areas.

Exhibit 2.4. Distribution of all major and moderate projects and projects in the evaluation sample, by topic

Project topic	Number of major and moderate projects on project inventories	Number of projects in the sample (all major or moderate)	Percent of all major and moderate projects in evaluation sample
Total	**216**	**122**	**56%**
Components of effective systems of support—state, district, school	54	36	67
Data use/data-driven decisionmaking	5	2	40
Formative assessment	5	1	20
Reading	17	7	41
Adolescent literacy	11	5	45
Mathematics	11	6	55
Dropout prevention	4	2	50
High school redesign/reform	10	5	50
Transition to high school	4	3	75
Special education—curriculum, instruction, and professional development	5	3	60
Special education—assessment	1	1	100
English language learners	17	11	65
Highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB	8	5	63
Teacher preparation and induction	6	4	67
Teacher professional development	8	7	88
Supplemental educational services (SES)	9	5	56
Response to Intervention (RtI)	7	3	43
Migrant education	4	2	50
Indian/native American education	2	1	50
Data management compliance	8	5	63
Assessment design	2	2	100
Parent involvement	6	3	50
Other	12	3	25

EXHIBIT READS: There were 54 major and moderate projects on the project inventories that focused on components of effective systems of support. Of these, 36 (or 67 percent) were in the project sample.

SOURCE: Project inventory forms submitted by the Centers.

Materials from Centers

The evaluation team notified the 21 Center Directors about projects selected for review and sent a standard *Request for Materials for Expert Panel Review* (see appendix B for a copy of the transmittal memo and request form). Centers were asked to assemble and submit a comprehensive set of pre-existing materials associated with each project (meeting agendas, briefing books, meeting summaries, training materials, white papers, web resources, etc.) that would fully describe the project and provide reviewers with a sufficient basis for rating the technical quality of the work. Centers were also asked to include a participant list and a standard cover sheet, using a format developed by the evaluation team, for each project. The participant lists were used to draw the sample for participant surveys.

When the project materials were received, they were reviewed by evaluation team members for completeness. If materials were missing or inaccessible (e.g., electronic files didn't open) or the cover sheet was incomplete, a follow-up memo was sent to the Center detailing the issued identified. Evaluation team members then worked with the Center to obtain the missing information and finalize the review package (see appendix B for a copy of the follow-up memo).

Describing Center Operations

The purpose of collecting data from the Centers was to describe Center operations and to address research questions regarding the objectives of the Centers, the kinds of products and services provided, how the Centers defined their clients' needs and priorities, and the extent to which the Centers met the objectives of their own plans. The description of Center operations in chapter 3 of this report is drawn from three sources of data: interview responses gathered in site visits to the Centers, PIFs, and the project cover sheets submitted for the sampled projects. The procedures used in gathering and analyzing data from these sources are described in the following pages.

Management Plans

Centers stated their objectives for the year in their annual program management plans. For the 2006-07 program year, Centers had developed their management plans in spring 2006, prior to the program year. The evaluation team relied on these management plans to gather information from statements of the Center's intended substantive focus for the year's technical assistance. The team coded each Center's stated objectives in their management plan by subject area, using the same list of 22 topic areas used to code the PIFs. Appendix C provides a description of the process used to code the management plans as well as an analysis of the intercoder reliability.

Site Visits to Centers

Site visits were conducted at two time points, first in summer 2007, followed by a visit in summer 2008 to capture descriptions of Center operations during the 2006-07 program year. As described earlier, the team reviewed Center management plans in 2006-07 to understand the nature of the work the Centers were conducting; this review provided a way of preliminarily identifying objectives, approaches, and procedures found in Center work. Structured site visit interviews were conducted with Center management teams in summer 2007, posing open-ended questions regarding the following topics (see appendix C for the protocols):

- Center organization (lead organization, subgrantees, ways of dividing responsibilities among staff)
- Major areas of focus
- Communication with client organizations (states in the case of RCCs, or RCCs in the case of CCs) regarding needs and assistance to be provided
- Modes of delivering technical assistance
- Sources of knowledge used
- Approaches taken in quality assurance
- Working relationships within the Center network (between RCCs and CCs, with other Centers of the same type, and networkwide)
- Barriers or challenges encountered

The team's review of the 2007 interview transcripts informed the development of closed-ended prompts that were subsequently administered to all Center leaders in interviews in the following summer. These second-round structured interviews included binary questions to follow up about Center objectives for 2006-07 and activities that had occurred during the program year (see appendix C for the interview prompts). It is the responses to these prompts that are reported, across Centers, in chapter 3.

Project Inventory Forms (PIFs)

While the main purpose of the PIFs was to build the sample frame (described earlier in this chapter), the evaluation team also used the PIFs to gain Center-level data on the work the Centers undertook in 2006-07. The projects sampled for quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings were classified by topic area (see appendix C). The evaluation team coded the topics of the remaining projects using the same 22 topic areas to provide a full picture of the topics covered by each Center's 2006-07 PIF. Appendix C provides a description of the process used to code the projects as well as an analysis of the intercoder reliability.

Project Cover Sheets

For projects included in the sample, the standard cover sheets provided by the Centers described project activities and cross-Center collaboration in the project. The project cover sheets were primarily collected from each Center to help orient expert panels to the purpose and content of the materials to be reviewed (see appendix B for a copy of the *Request for Materials for Expert Panel Review* transmittal memo and cover sheet).

The evaluation team used the cover sheets as a data source for an overall description of activities and collaboration in the sampled projects (reported in chapter 3) and for use in classifying projects into subgroups for which the ratings of relevance and usefulness could be analyzed (reported in chapter 5, as described below). The cover sheets provided descriptive information for each project, including the activities and deliverables associated with the project, and the contributions of other Centers to the project. Categories of Center activities and resources were drawn from review of the Center management plans and site visit interviews. These coding categories, thus, permitted a yes/no judgment of whether each project offered each of the following activities or resources to participants:

- Ongoing consultation and follow-up
- Research collections or syntheses
- Engagement of participants in project planning
- Training events
- Task force meetings and work
- Conferences
- Support development of a formal plan to implement a program or policy

The team also coded the type of contribution, if any, of any CC to each RCC project, and of any RCC to each CC project. All these elements of the cover sheets were coded by members of the evaluation team using procedures described in appendix C; the appendix also provides results of the analysis of intercoder reliability.

Survey of State Managers

The purposes of the survey of state managers were to obtain information on state priorities in terms of state responsibilities related to the implementation of NCLB, obtain the state perspective on the relevance and usefulness of Center assistance, and obtain a comparative judgment of Center assistance in relation to assistance available through other sources such as

professional associations. The survey instrument used for the survey of state managers appears in appendix D of this report.

In order to identify appropriate respondents for the survey of state managers, the evaluation team collected the names of each RCC's main points of contact in each SEA during the summer 2007 site visits to the RCCs. For 2006-07, the resulting list of state managers included a total of 132 respondents across the 62 states included in the study.[24]

To be fully reflective of all SEAs in the analysis of these data, it was critical that the study team receive completed surveys from state managers in each state. The final response rate for the state manager survey was 100 percent for the 50 states and 50 percent for the 12 outlying areas, for an overall response rate of 90 percent.

For 20 states, the evaluation team received completed responses from more than one state manager (exhibit 2.5). The state was the primary unit of analysis in analyzing data from the state manager survey for this report. The state managers' responses were weighted to ensure that each state was equally represented in all summary statistics while taking into account the variation in responses within each state. The weighting procedure, where each response was weighted by the inverse of the number of managers responding from that state, ensured that each state was equally represented when the evaluation team aggregated responses across states to describe the distribution of responses.

Exhibit 2.5. Number of responses to the state manager survey

Number of responses from the states	Number of states
Total	**56**
1	36
2	15
3	4
4	1

EXHIBIT READS: In 36 states, the survey of state managers was completed by a single respondent. There was one state where the state manager survey was completed by four separate respondents.

Across states, the offices, divisions, or departments represented by state managers were federal programs (in 68 percent of states), school improvement (64 percent), curriculum and instruction (53 percent), assessment and accountability (40 percent), and special education (30

[24] The Comprehensive Centers were expected to serve 62 jurisdictions including the 50 states and 12 other jurisdictions: the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau. For purposes of this report, the term "state" refers to the 50 states and the outlying territories listed here.

percent). In relation to managing technical assistance, state managers were most frequently responsible for identifying needs and priorities (84 percent of states) and managing others in their use of technical assistance services (80 percent). Other frequent job responsibilities included serving as point of contact or manager for specific technical assistance projects (66 percent), seeking out technical assistance providers (65 percent), and negotiating a scope of work with technical assistance providers (59 percent).

Assessment of Quality by Expert Panels

Given the Centers' charge to focus on scientifically based research and evidence-based practices to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps, one goal of the Comprehensive Centers evaluation is to assess the technical quality of work across the Center network using an independent panel of expert reviewers. Each sampled project was independently rated by a panel of three experts.[25] Reviewers assigned a score to each of three quality dimensions discussed below, using a 5-point rating scale.

In an effort to maximize interrater reliability, the evaluation team: (1) defined quality and developed a detailed scoring rubric that could be applied across all Centers and a range of projects; (2) recruited, trained and assigned highly qualified expert panelists; and (3) implemented a process for reviewers to discuss their findings with one another when scores were discrepant for particular projects. The following sections describe each of these steps, followed by a brief discussion of how the final technical quality ratings were calculated.

Define Technical Quality and Develop Scoring Rubric

Developing the definition of technical quality and the rubric used to measure it incorporated information from many sources, including federal legislation and ED specifications on what constituted scientifically based evidence and an example from another federal agency.[26] When defining technical quality and developing the scoring rubric, the evaluation team sought to ensure that the definition was relevant to the range of projects Centers would provide– recognizing that some projects might have a substantial research knowledge base and others might be guided more by promising practices (those that were supported by evidence but not yet rigorously studied) or legislative or regulatory requirements. Also, the definition of quality and the associated rubric had to be applicable to projects at varying points of development and implementation, from early-stage needs assessment and design work to fully-developed products and services. The evaluation team developed a quality scoring rubric, included in appendix E, to assess quality along the following three dimensions:

- Dimension 1: Demonstrated use of the appropriate documented knowledge base

[25] Two panelists were not able to complete their reviews in a timely fashion, resulting in nine projects having been rated by only two panelists.

[26] *Review of Instructional Materials for Middle School Science.* (1997, February). National Science Foundation, Retrieved from http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf9754/nsf9754.htm?org=NSF.

- Dimension 2: Fidelity of application of the knowledge base to the products and services provided

- Dimension 3: Clear and effective delivery

Reviewers assigned a score to each dimension, using a 5-point rating scale (where 1 meant "very low quality" and 5 meant "very high quality"), according to the indicators defined for each dimension and examples in the scoring booklet.

Recruit, Train and Assign Expert Panelists

To meet the selection criteria for this evaluation, expert panelists had to have current, rigorous work in the particular topic of interest (for example, publications in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals; presentations at relevant professional organization meetings; recent membership on advisory panels or task forces) and be free of conflicts of interest.[27] Nominations for panelists were made by staff in ED's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the Technical Work Group for this evaluation, members of the evaluation team, and Center staff. Based on the selection criteria, the evaluation team selected a total of 70 expert panelists, 94 percent with a doctorate degree and two-thirds (67 percent) with university affiliations, to review the Centers' 2006-07 sampled projects.[28]

The evaluation team sought to maximize interrater agreement in scoring of quality by training expert reviewers to systematically use a standard rubric. During the two-day training, experts worked in small groups to discuss how each of the three quality dimensions, and their corresponding indicators, applied to sample project descriptions that were provided by the study team. Reviewers independently scored one of two projects overnight and submitted their dimension-level scores at the beginning of the second day. Scores were posted and analyzed in terms of rater agreement at the dimension level. The panelists again worked in small groups to discuss their scores and identify possible reasons for any discrepancies in the results. During the small group discussions, evaluation staff circulated among the groups to assess whether reviewers had adhered to the standards of evidence discussed on Day 1.[29]

During the actual review process, expert reviewers were asked to score four to eight projects in their area(s) of expertise, with no more than three projects from any given Center. Since judgments about the state of the available evidence on a given topic and its applicability to

[27] Current Comprehensive Center staff, as well as individuals employed by organizations that had an ongoing financial relationship (for example, a contract or cooperative agreement) with a Comprehensive Center and who worked on a Center project, were not eligible to serve as reviewers.

[28] The final expert panels were made up of 67 expert reviewers. One of the initial trainees was removed due to a conflict of interest, and two reviewers were later dropped from the review process when they failed to complete their reviews in a timely fashion.

[29] During training, expert reviewers scored a sample project and discussed their scores in small groups, paying particular attention to areas where scores were divergent. This approach allowed the evaluation team to identify dimensions or indicators within the scoring rubric that seemed to be problematic (resulting in discrepant scores) or particular reviewers who needed additional training or appeared to be inappropriate to use. The goal was to have panelists leave the training with a common understanding of how to apply the quality rubric; the evaluation team did not intend to attempt to establish a specific interrater reliability criterion at training.

the project being rated relied heavily upon the knowledge of the expert reviewers, it was important that reviewers were assigned projects that matched their area(s) of expertise. The evaluation team was also careful when assigning projects to avoid known conflicts of interest.[30] When needed, the evaluation team reassigned projects when reviewers were unable to complete their reviews in a timely fashion, identified unforeseen conflicts of interest, or did not feel they had the requisite expertise to review the assigned projects.

Overall, 113 of the 122 projects sampled were reviewed by three panelists. The remaining nine projects were reviewed by only two panelists because the third assigned reviewer did not complete the review within a reasonable timeframe.[31]

Address Interrater Reliability

In addition to the detailed scoring rubric and training provided, a resolution process was used to help achieve a high degree of interrater reliability in scoring. If the reviewers' project-level scores (defined as the simple average of their three dimension-level scores) were found to differ by 2 or more points from each other for any given project, the evaluation team convened the panel by telephone to discuss the ratings.[32] The goal of the discrepancy conference calls was to give panelists an opportunity to understand the rationale behind their colleagues' scores and consider whether, on the basis of that discussion, any scoring revisions were warranted. The evaluation team emphasized to the reviewers that these discussions were not intended to achieve consensus among them.

Overall, 24 percent (29 of 122) of the projects had discrepancies in the project-level scores (exhibit 2.6). In 7 of the 29 discrepant cases, there were discrepancies in two of the three dimensions, while the remaining 22 projects had discrepancies in all three dimensions. After a discrepancy conference call, panelists were given the opportunity to submit a revised scoring form and narrative report of the project's strengths and weaknesses. Although panels were not required to reach consensus, the discrepancy was resolved in all but two cases, increasing the number of projects in agreement from 76 percent to 98 percent.

To estimate interrater agreement, we calculated the rWG(J) index.[33] Before the discrepancy calls, the average rWG(J) coefficient was 0.75.[34] After the calls were conducted, the value increased to 0.87.

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[30] For the purpose of assignments, the term "conflict of interest" meant any financial or other interest that appeared to conflict with or significantly compromise the service of the individual reviewer because it could significantly impair the individual's objectivity.

[31] In consultation with IES, the evaluation team decided to forgo the third review on these particular projects since there was interrater agreement (i.e., a difference less than 2 points) between the two scores that had been submitted by the other panelists assigned to these projects.

[32] The 2-point difference threshold was selected in an effort to identify projects with widely divergent scores that cut across qualitative categories (i.e., "low" quality versus "high" quality), while at the same time minimizing burden on expert panelists.

[33] James, L.R, Demaree R.G., and Wolf G. (1984). Estimating within-group interrater reliability with and without response bias. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *69*(1), 85-98.

Exhibit 2.6. Distribution of discrepancies and results of the discrepancy call process

Description	N (percent)
Total number of projects reviewed	**122**
Number of projects without a project-level discrepancy	93 (76 percent of 122)
Number of project-level discrepancies identified	29 (24 percent of 122)
Number of projects with discrepancies in 2 dimensions	7 (24 percent of 29)
Number of projects with discrepancies in 3 dimensions	22 (76 percent of 29)
Number of project-level discrepancies resolved* by panel calls	27 (93 of 29 calls conducted)
Number of project-level discrepancies remaining after panel calls	2 (7 of 29 calls conducted)

* Discrepancies were considered resolved when the project-level scores differed by less than 2 points.

EXHIBIT READS: Of the 122 projects reviewed, 93 (76 percent) had no discrepancies in the project level scores.

Calculate Aggregate and Dimension-Level Measures of Technical Quality

In order to analyze the technical quality of sampled projects, a series of steps was taken to combine individual expert ratings into aggregate scores. The first step was to combine the individual dimension-level scores into a single rating from each panelist. For each project reviewed, a simple average of the three dimension-level scores was computed to generate a project-level score for each reviewer. In the second step, the three reviewers' scores were averaged to determine the overall quality score for each project. In the third step, the overall project scores across the set of sample projects were averaged within each Center to calculate a Center-level quality score.

[34] We estimated interrater agreement using the rWG(J) index. Treating each dimension as an "item," we first calculated the score variance between raters on each dimension and then averaged the three variances. We assumed the random error variance to be 2.0 for a 5-point scale, as suggested by James et al. (1984). An rWG value between 0.71 and 0.90 is generally considered an indicator of "strong agreement" (LeBreton, J.M., and Senter, J.L. (2008, October). Answers to 20 questions about interrelated reliability and interrater agreement. *Organizational Research Methods*, *11*, 815-852. Retrieved from http://orm.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/11/4/815).

Center-level scores were aggregated to calculate the average quality rating across sampled projects for the Center program as a whole, as well as for two subgroups of interest, the 16 RCCs and the 5 CCs. Each Center was given equal weight in computing the overall programwide rating for technical quality, as well as the mean ratings for the RCCs and the CCs respectively, for the sampled projects; within Centers, each project was given equal weight.

Survey of Project Participants

The purpose of the participant survey was to obtain client views of technical assistance from the Comprehensive Centers, particularly in the areas of relevance and usefulness. As the primary role of the RCCs is to provide technical assistance to the states and territories in their region, the clients for the RCCs included state-level staff. The clients for the CCs included both RCC staff and state-level staff corresponding with the primary role of the CCs to build the capacity of the RCCs as well as to work with RCCs in providing technical assistance to states.

The evaluation team developed two parallel survey forms for project participants: one for state-level staff who participated in any Center project, and one for RCC staff who participated in a CC project. In sampling participants to respond to surveys focused on specific projects, the goal was to identify a sizable number of participants, drawn from complete lists of all participants, so that their responses would collectively provide a picture of all participants' views regarding the sampled projects. The evaluation team drew samples of participants in the 122 projects that were selected for expert panel review. In this way, expert panel ratings of quality and participant ratings of relevance and usefulness were gathered for the same set of projects. The survey instruments used for state-level and RCC staff are located in appendix E of this report.[35] A brief description of the process used to calculate the measure of relevance and usefulness is provided at the end of this section.

Centers were asked to furnish full lists of all participants and their contact information for each sampled project. These lists included individuals who had participated in projects in numerous ways including: (1) serving on task forces, school support teams, and work groups associated with the project; (2) attending conferences, technical assistance retreats, and other meetings held as a part of the project; or (3) receiving written materials or other disseminated resources. State-level participants included staff who were employed by SEAs as well as employees of intermediate agencies, LEAs, schools, or other agencies who had responsibilities for state-level implementation of NCLB and were participants in both RCC and CC projects. RCC staff, as clients of the CCs, were participants solely in CC projects. A total of 3,904 participants who met the participation criteria were eligible for the sampling frame.

After identifying the sampling frame, the team implemented a sampling strategy that combined random sampling from each project and a replacement strategy to minimize

[35] Since the survey asked respondents for their experiences with the Comprehensive Center system in relation to a specific project, the survey team provided each respondent with a list of the activities included in that project, based on the content of the project cover sheets provided by the Centers. For the on-line survey, this information was displayed on the first screen of the survey. For the paper version of the survey, the project-specific information was printed on yellow paper and inserted into the front of the booklet.

respondent burden. A sampling strategy was developed for selecting a sufficient number of participants to obtain fair representation of client views for each project, and across projects, while balancing respondent burden and data collection costs. The team drew a simple random sample of participants within each sampled project using the following sampling rules, based on the number of participants in the project:

- All participants in projects with 12 or fewer participants were sampled.
- A random sample of 12 participants was selected for projects with 13 to 25 participants.
- A range of 12 to 48 participants were randomly selected to represent 48 percent of participants for projects with 26 to 100 participants.
- For each project with more than 100 participants, a random sample of 48 participants was selected.

After drawing a random sample for each project, replacements were made for respondents who had been identified as a participant across multiple projects. To help reduce respondent burden, 13 percent of state-level staff and 14 percent of the RCC staff were replaced by alternates. These replacements resulted in 65 percent of the sample being requested to complete a single survey and 35 percent requested to complete more than one survey.

Exhibit 2.7 provides an overview of the participant survey sampling and administration. Of the 3,904 participants in the sampling frame, the resulting sample for the participant survey consisted of 1,658 participants across the 122 projects.

The evaluation team initially administered the participant survey to the sampled respondents online. Nonrespondents were contacted by phone, sent reminder cards, and sent paper survey forms, all in an effort to obtain completed responses. The final response rate for the participant survey was 73 percent across the 122 sampled projects. For two of these projects, no usable survey responses were received. Nonrespondents included participants who did not return a completed survey because they no longer worked for the state organization or RCC, as well as participants whose contact information was incorrect.

Exhibit 2.7. Survey of project participants sampling and survey administration summary

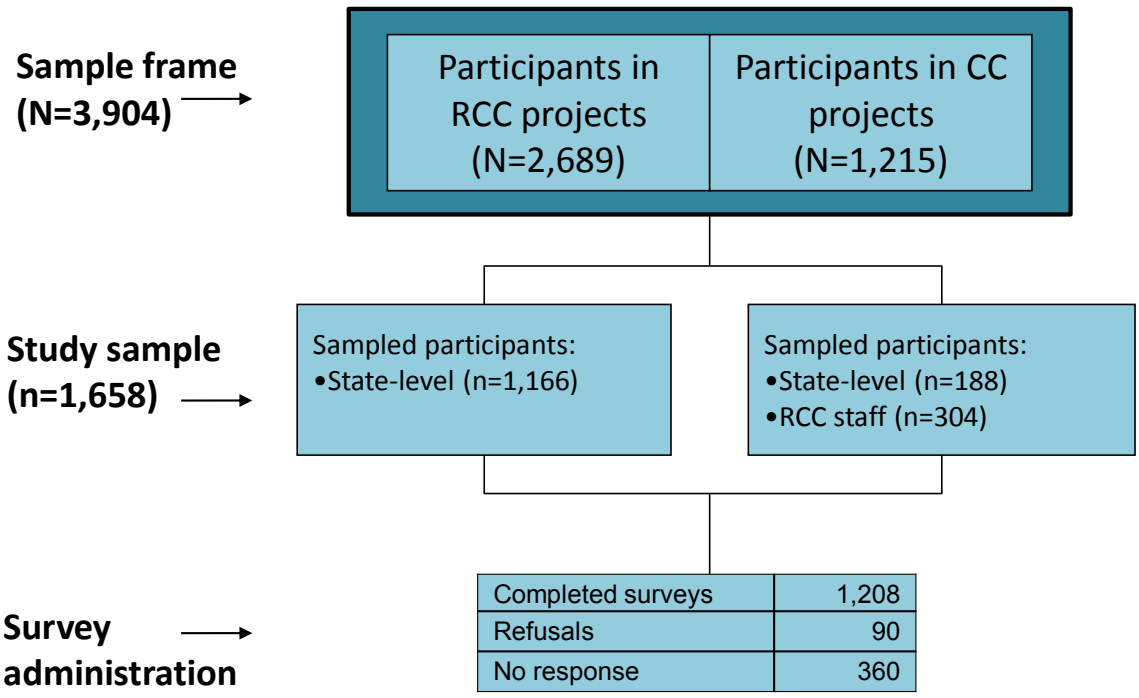

EXHIBIT READS: The sample frame of 3,904 project participants for survey administration included 2,689 participants in RCC projects and 1,215 participants in CC projects.

Calculate Measures of Relevance and Usefulness

For the relevance and usefulness questions in the participant survey, respondents were asked to rate each aspect of relevance and usefulness (exhibit 2.8) using a 5-point scale ranging from 5 (a very high degree) to 1 (a very low degree).[36]

A preliminary step in the analysis of responses was to assess the properties of the items included in the surveys for constructing indices of relevance and usefulness. Construction of these indices was based on item response from the 1,208 completed surveys. Principal components analysis with no rotation was conducted on each set of items in the relevance and usefulness scales to determine the underlying dimensions represented by these items. Among the items comprising the relevance scale, one factor was extracted with an eigenvalue of 5.4 and explained 67.6 percent of the variance (see exhibit 2.8 for factor loadings). Similarly, among the usefulness items, one factor was extracted with an eigenvalue of 7.6 and explained 69.2 percent of the variance (see exhibit 2.8 for factor loadings). The reliability of each of the scales was

[36] The response category, "Not able to judge," on the survey instruments indicated those respondents who were not appropriate for addressing the particular item and were, therefore, not included in analyses. None of the respondents had indicated "not able to judge" for the eight items of the relevance scale. A range of 3 to 4 percent of respondents across the 11 items of the usefulness scale had indicated "not able to judge."

evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. For the eight items in the relevance scale, the reliability coefficient is 0.93, and for usefulness the coefficient is 0.95 across the 11 items.

Exhibit 2.8. Relevance and usefulness items from the project participant surveys

Relevance	Loading on factor 1
Based on *your* experience, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***relevant*** to your work, in each of the following respects?	
a. Addressed a need or problem that my organization faces	0.83
b. Addressed an important priority of my organization	0.82
c. Addressed a challenge that my organization faces related to the implementation of NCLB	0.81
d. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be directly applied to my organization's work	0.86
e. Addressed our particular state context	0.80
f. Addressed my organization's specific challenges (e.g., policy environment, leadership capacity, budget pressures, local politics)	0.83
g. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be used to guide decisions about policies, programs, or practices	0.85
h. Highlighted the implications of research findings (or information about best practice) for policies, programs, or practices	0.78

Usefulness	Loading on factor 1
Based on *your* experience, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***useful*** to you, in each of the following respects?	
a. Provided resources that were easy to understand and easy to use	0.82
b. Employed an appropriate format (e.g., a work group, a conference, individual consultation, written products)	0.81
c. Provided adequate opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states	0.64
d. Included adequate follow-up to support the use of new information and resources	0.82
e. Were timely	0.84
f. Helped my organization solve a problem	0.87
g. Helped my organization maintain or change a policy or practice	0.83
h. Helped my organization take the next step in a longer-term improvement effort	0.85
i. Provided my organization with information or resources that we will use again	0.88
j. Helped my organization develop a shared expertise or knowledge base	0.88
k. Helped individuals in my organization to develop skills that they will use again	0.87

Mean ratings at the respondent level were averaged so that each respondent for a given project contributed equally to a project-level rating. Thus, the relevance or usefulness rating at the project level was a mean of the ratings provided by sampled participants in that project (ranging in number from 1 to 48) who returned surveys.[37] Next, the rating of each sampled

[37] Across the eight items on the relevance scale, the rate of item nonresponse ranged from 0.3 percent to 1.1 percent. The rate of missing data among the 11 usefulness scale items was slightly higher with the percent of item-level nonresponse ranging from 1.1 to 2.0 percent. For both relevance and usefulness calculations, respondents with missing data on more than two of the items were excluded from the calculation, resulting in a small number of

project contributed equally to the computation of the mean rating across projects for each Center. Finally, the team calculated an overall mean across the 21 Centers and overall means for the 16 RCCs and the 5 CCs, respectively, for the relevance and usefulness ratings of the sampled projects. In calculating these overall means, each Center's mean rating was weighted equally.[38]

Units of Analysis for Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness Data in this Report

The quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings of the sampled projects were used in analyzing and reporting data for several different units of analysis: the projects sampled from the program as a whole (all 21 Centers), the projects sampled for the 16 RCCs and the 5 CCs respectively, subgroups of the 122 projects, and (for relevance and usefulness) subgroups of the 3,652 sample-eligible participants. For a Center's mean rating on quality, relevance, or usefulness, the team weighted each sampled project from that Center equally; for a mean across the entire program or a set of Centers, the team weighted each Center's mean equally.

Several analyses were conducted for subgroups of projects across Centers—e.g., those projects that included a research synthesis among their products, or included training among their services. Each rater (an expert or survey respondent) had equal weight in the individual project's rating, and each project had equal weight in the subgroup mean rating.

Finally, some analyses were conducted for subgroups of participants across projects. For example, the ratings of relevance provided by participants who spent at least three days in a project activity were compared with the ratings provided by participants who spent less time. In these analyses, the unit was the participant, not the project, and the weighting was designed to permit generalization to all the sample-eligible participants across all the sampled projects. Thus the weight for each participant's response was the inverse proportion of the number of respondents compared with the total number of participants in the sample-eligible population for that project.

Number of Projects Varying with the Unit of Analysis

Readers will notice slight variations in the total number of projects shown in the exhibits and analyses throughout this report. These figures differ for two reasons, which are explained in detail here (exhibit 2.9).

First, there were two RCC projects for which the evaluation team did not receive any completed surveys. This meant that for any analysis incorporating participant data, the maximum

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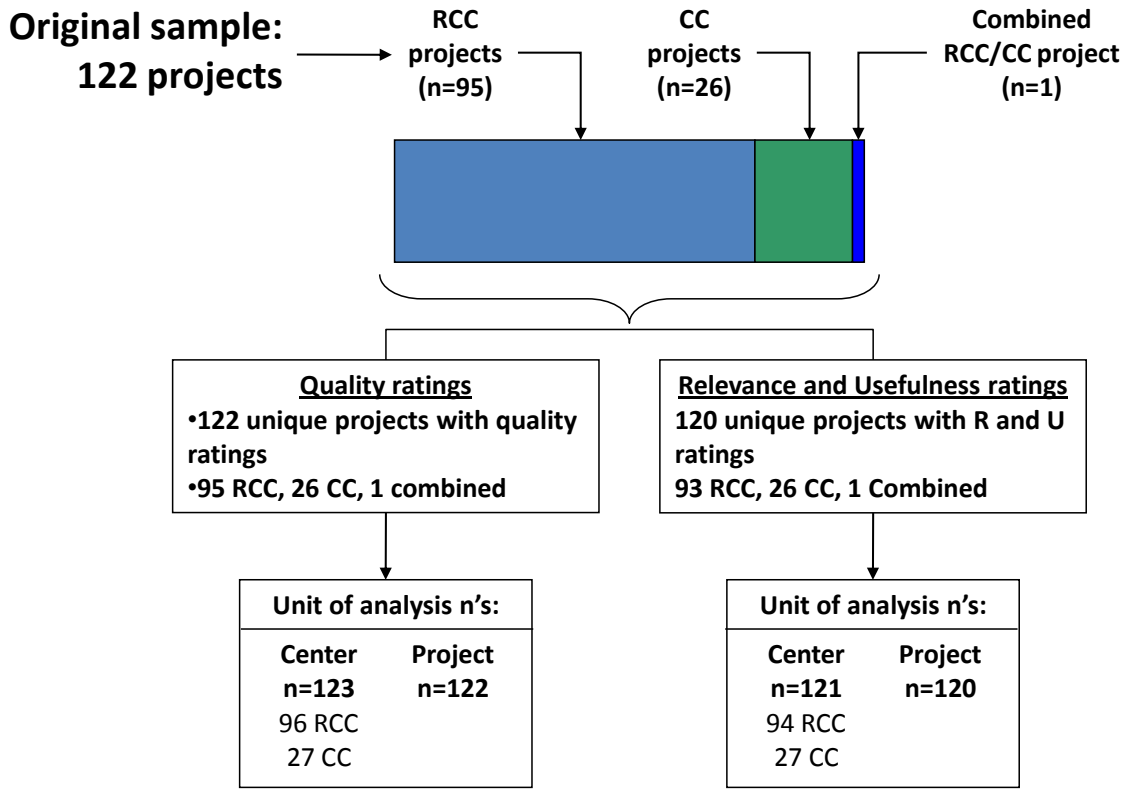
respondents being excluded (6 respondents [0.5 percent] for relevance and 18 respondents [1.6 percent] for usefulness).

[38] The evaluation team reviewed the differences in relevance and usefulness ratings between RCC staff and state-level staff (in ratings of those CC projects that served both types of staff) to address concerns of potential bias. No statistically significant differences were found in the relevance and usefulness ratings provided by RCC and state-level staff (see additional details presented in chapter 5, exhibit 5.17).

number of projects in the analysis was 94 RCCs projects and 120 total projects. For analyses that did not rely on participant data (e.g., the quality ratings), the team used 96 RCC projects and 122 total projects.

Second, as described earlier in this chapter, one project included in the sample was sponsored jointly by an RCC and a CC. This "combined project" was one of the projects counted in analyses specific to RCC projects, and *also* one of the projects counted in analyses specific to CC projects. For analyses across all projects or all participants, however, the joint RCC/CC project or its participants were counted only once in the analysis.

Exhibit 2.9. Project sample, by type of rating and unit of analysis



NOTE: Of the 95 RCC projects, relevance and usefulness ratings were not received from participants for two RCC projects. Thus, only 93 RCC projects were included in the analyses for the relevance and usefulness ratings.

EXHIBIT READS: Among the 122 Comprehensive Center projects in the sample, 95 were RCC projects, 26 were CC projects, and one project was sponsored jointly by a RCC and a CC.

3. How the Centers Operate

Understanding how Comprehensive Centers operate is an important part of assessing their performance. As described in chapter 1, ED established certain structures and expectations for the effective functioning of the Centers, including the split of responsibilities between the two types of Centers, the emphasis on using and applying scientifically based research to build state capacity to carry out NCLB, and the flow of communication between and among the Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs), the Content Centers (CCs), and state agencies.

This chapter examines how the Comprehensive Centers reported working with their client organizations to assess technical assistance needs and to formulate their annual work. It provides information about the range of technical assistance topic areas, products, and services delivered by the Centers and the processes by which these activities were determined. The analysis draws on information gathered from the Centers' submitted Project Inventory Forms (PIFs), Center annual management plans, and interviews with Center staff conducted by the evaluation team.[39]

The key findings include:

- ***The Centers reported planning their work in coordination with their clients***. All 16 RCCs reported obtaining state input into the initial plans and engaging states in refinements to the plans through ongoing interaction and negotiation. Similarly, all five of the CCs reported forming their work plans incorporating RCC input acquired through either RCC staff surveys or direct communication. In addition, all five CCs described working with ED to learn of specific topics and tasks needed to advance federal priorities.

- ***Centers conducted work in the topic areas that they identified among the objectives in their initial management plans (80 percent of the cases), although their activities evolved through the year to address client requests.*** For example, 14 of 21 Centers said they conducted work outside their initially planned scope of work. Refinements to the work plans included additional work in some topic areas, with response to intervention, English language learners, and supplemental education services the most common additions. Centers reported that added work was in response to emerging needs that were recognized in the process of carrying out planned work, and in response to requests from states. Survey data gathered from state managers also indicated a strong relationship (.95 correlation) between their reported priorities for Center technical assistance and the actual support they received.

- ***The kinds of support provided by the RCCs and CCs differed in ways that were consistent with the model of technical assistance envisioned by ED***. The

[39] See chapter 2 for more information about the data sources and the procedures for gathering, coding, and analyzing the data reported in this chapter.

majority of RCC projects involved front-line assistance activities such as ongoing consultation and follow-up (82 percent), whereas this was less so for the work of the CCs (22 percent). In contrast, the delivery of research collections and syntheses was a central part of the work of the CCs, occurring in 74 percent of their projects but 54 percent of the RCC projects.

- ***RCCs were more likely to draw on the work of the CCs than the other way around.*** All 16 RCCs (100 percent) reported drawing on CC expertise, and 48 percent of the sampled RCC projects had a CC contribution. In comparison, two of the five CCs (40 percent) reported that they used RCCs as a source in their work. Thirty-seven percent of the sampled CC projects reportedly had some input from an RCC; in all cases this included RCC help in identifying participants, and in 30 percent of these cases (11 percent of sampled CC projects) it also included assistance provision by RCC staff. To some extent, the RCCs and CCs relied on their respective networks, with 69 percent of RCCs using the expertise of other RCCs and 60 percent of CCs drawing on the knowledge base of other CCs.

- ***External review of Center work was more prevalent among the CCs than the RCCs.*** When asked how they reviewed the content of their technical assistance prior to delivery—i.e., what quality assurance process they used— all five CCs (100 percent) reported that they submitted all major publications to ED for review prior to public release and four of the CCs (80 percent) reported retaining outside experts to review draft products. In addition, two CCs described relying on other CCs for feedback on their own products as part of the five CCs developing a common vetting tool. In contrast, two (12 percent) of the RCCs said they used outside experts as a source for vetting.

Identifying State Needs and Priorities

A key expectation of the Centers was that they would organize their technical assistance work plans around the priorities and needs of the states. In the design of the Center program,[40] RCCs had the role of providing "front-line" assistance to a set of state clients and therefore were expected to communicate directly with those state agencies. The CCs, on the other hand, were charged with translating research and policy for a nationwide clientele and so were expected to primarily depend on the RCCs to provide input on aggregated state priorities. The CCs also received guidance from ED in order to advance federal priorities. For the 2006-07 year, which is the subject of this report, the Department approved Centers' management plans in late spring 2006. According to the Centers, they gathered information to develop and refine these plans in a variety of ways.

- ***RCCs conducted initial needs assessment in consultation with states (exhibit 3.1); CCs assessed state needs primarily through the RCCs (exhibit 3.2)***. All 16

[40] Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year 2005. (2005, June 3). *Federal Register, 70*(106), 32584.

RCCs reported including state input when writing their annual management plans. Fifteen of these Centers assessed needs through state client meetings or communications, with almost all of them (14 of the 15) communicating directly with the chief state school officers. Fewer RCCs conducted surveys of state agency staff (10), analyzed state performance data or accountability plans (9), or examined state and federal policy environments to identify priorities for technical assistance (7). All RCCs were able to conduct needs assessment by building on prior contacts with states, either from earlier existing relationships (13) or the development of the Center's grant proposal (11). All of the five CCs reported forming their work plans incorporating RCC input acquired through either RCC staff surveys or direct communication. In addition, all five CCs described ED as an influential client with specific requests to focus on certain topics and tasks to advance federal priorities such as communicating practical findings from key research on ELL or communicating promising practices in high school restructuring. Four of the five CCs also reported defining their initial work priorities by examining state or federal policy.

Exhibit 3.1. RCC strategies for assessing state needs and planning work

Strategy	RCCs *(N=16)*
Included SEA input when writing annual management plans	16
Assess needs through meetings or other communication with SEA staff	15
Communicate directly with the chief state school officer to plan the Center's work	14
Drew on SEA relationships or input as part of initial plans for work	16
Build on relationships with SEAs that existed prior to the Center's grant award	*13*
Included SEA input when writing the original grant proposal or cooperative agreement with ED	*11*
Assess needs through survey of SEA staff	10
Assess needs through analysis of state performance data or accountability plans	9
Assess needs through analysis of state and federal policy context	7

EXHIBIT READS: Sixteen RCCs included SEA input when writing annual management plans.

SOURCE: Center responses to standard response categories during site visits.

Exhibit 3.2. CC strategies for assessing RCC and state needs and planning work

Strategy	CCs (N=5)
Assess RCC needs through meetings or other communication with RCC staffs	5
Included RCC input when writing annual management plans	*4*
Communicate directly with the RCC Director to plan the Center's work	*4*
Assess needs through survey of RCC staff	*4*
Assess needs through analysis of state and federal policy context	4
Draw on RCC relationships or input as part of initial plans for work	2
Build on relationships with RCC staff members that existed prior to the Center's grant award	*2*
Included RCC input when writing the original grant proposal or cooperative agreement with ED	*1*
Assess needs through analysis of state performance data or accountability plans	0

EXHIBIT READS: Five CCs assessed RCC needs through meetings or other communication.

SOURCE: Center responses to standard response categories during site visits.

- ***Centers continued to interact with clients to refine their needs assessments and negotiate the implementation of their plans (exhibit 3.3).*** Fifteen of 16 RCCs reported forming work groups within state organizations that brought together staff from multiple departments to discuss service needs and delivery; the remaining RCC reported having worked directly with individual managers such as the chief state school officer at the planning stage. Half of the RCCs (8) formed cross-agency work groups to discuss common SEA service needs and delivery. All five CCs identified needs of their client RCCs primarily by conducting conference calls with designated RCC representatives, and three of the five CCs maintained communication about needs by forming workgroups that included RCC representatives. In addition, all CCs reported providing either large group events or support of existing RCC programs and projects as additional ways to learn about and meet both RCC and SEA needs. The five CCs maintained ongoing communication with ED regarding federal priorities and revisions to their work plans.

Exhibit 3.3. Center strategies for ongoing interactions and negotiations with clients

Strategy	RCCs (N=16)	CCs (N=5)	All (N=21)
Sponsor large events to make contact with many clients	13	4	17
Form work groups within client organizations that bring together staff from multiple departments/divisions to discuss service needs and delivery	15	1	16
Offer service to support existing client programs/projects/ policies	9	4	13
Form work groups across client organizations to discuss service needs and delivery (e.g., different SEAs and/or RCCs)	8	3	11

EXHIBIT READS: Thirteen RCCs sponsored large events to make contact with many clients.

SOURCE: Center responses to standard response categories during site visits.

- ***RCCs had direct state interactions to gathering information and keep in touch with states' needs (exhibit 3.4).*** In interviews, all 16 RCCs identified staff whose responsibilities included talking with top- or mid-level SEA managers. For the 12 multi-state RCCs, staff positions (termed state liaisons) were designated for each of the states they served. Of these 12, half hired former SEA employees (one of whom was hired in consultation with the state) and 4 embedded the state liaisons (two of whom were former SEA employees) within the SEA office space. Among the single-state RCCs, one hired a former SEA employee.

Exhibit 3.4. Formal connections with state clients through RCC staffing

Type of interaction	Multi-state RCCs (N=12)	Single state RCCs (N=4)	All RCCs (N=16)
Has staff whose responsibilities include communication with state managers	12	4	16
Has state-specific staff positions designated for serving as a liaison to a state client organization	12	1	13
Hires former employees of state client organizations	6	1	7
Has staff positions designated for serving as an in-house liaison to a state client organization, maintaining office space within the client's building	4	0	4
Involves clients in making hiring decisions about Center staff	2	0	2

EXHIBIT READS: Twelve multi-state RCCs had staff positions designated for serving as a liaison to a state client organization.

SOURCE: Center responses to standard response categories during site visits.

Planned and Conducted Center Activities

To be most helpful to the states, the Centers had to not only plan their technical assistance around the identified priorities but also provide services that addressed state needs that might shift during the year. Annual management plans written well in advance might in some ways be an asset to the Centers, enabling them to mount serious, coordinated, sustained efforts around their intended programs of work. At the same time, however, the plans might impose rigidity on Center technical assistance, impeding a flexible response to changing circumstances in particular states or nationwide. Whether the Centers delivered the technical assistance states asked for and what it looked like can be analyzed from reported Center activities and state agency managers' views.

Adapting or Adhering to the Management Plan Overall

At various points in the program year, Centers were confronted with new client service requests (up to100 new requests as indicated on their quarterly request logs) and learned about emerging client needs. As a result, Centers reported ongoing refinements to the general plan of work that they had laid out in the management plan.

- ***Most Centers reported providing services and products outside their original plan (exhibit 3.5)***. In retrospective interviews, 14 of the 21 Centers said that they conducted services that were outside their initially planned scope of work for the year. In fact, nine Centers indicated that they had never declined a client request during the year. RCCs indicated that they added work in response to emerging needs that they recognized in the process of carrying out planned work, and in response to requests from states (commonly new requests for quick-turn-around information) that the Centers viewed as consistent with or as an entrée toward their mission. Added work reported by the CCs was in response to requests from ED or the RCCs. Specific requests from ED included work in emerging topic areas such as work on response to intervention, high school restructuring, and alternate assessments. A total of 6 of the 21 Centers also reported having worked with primary service recipients who had not been identified in their planned scopes of work; providing assistance to different recipients was more common among CCs (four of five, or 80 percent) than among RCCs (2 of 16, or 12 percent).

- ***More than half (57 percent) of the Centers reported declining some client requests (exhibit 3.5).*** Twelve of the 21 Centers reported having declined to provide particular technical assistance services. Among the 12 Centers that declined work, 8 indicated that they, at some point, had discussed with their clients (i.e., RCCs with states and CCs with RCCs) what they were and were not authorized to do, based on the legislation and the original grant Notice Inviting Applications (e.g., Center declined request to work with districts directly). Eight Centers reported having declined requests because they judged that the work wasn't on target with the best use of their resources, particularly as it related

to building capacity (e.g., Center declined request to provide quick-fix help rather than longer-term capacity building); eight indicated they had declined requests because the work fell outside the parameters of their cooperative agreement with ED (e.g., Center declined request to work on topics that were narrow and/or unrelated to NCLB); and four Centers cited both of these reasons for having declined requests.

Exhibit 3.5. Center strategies for adapting or adhering to the plan of work

	RCCs (N=16)	CCs (N=5)	All (N=21)
Refer to parameters set by NCLB or the Center's authorizing legislation when negotiating with clients to plan its work	13	2	15
Provide service outside of initial planned scope of work	10	4	14
Work on topics outside of planned scope of work	*10*	*3*	*13*
Work with primary service recipients outside planned scope of work	*2*	*4*	*6*
Decline to provide a service	9	3	12
Center has a staff member and process for assuring that Center work is within its management plan	9	2	11

EXHIBIT READS: Thirteen RCCs referred to parameters set by NCLB or the Centers' authorizing legislation when negotiating with clients to plan their work.

SOURCE: Center responses to standard response categories during site visits.

Technical Assistance Delivered, in Comparison with Initial Plans and with Reported State Priorities

One way to measure the stability and flexibility in the Centers' work is to assess the extent to which Centers followed or adjusted their initial plans with respect to the topical coverage of the technical assistance. We examined Center perspectives to indicate the extent to which initially planned technical assistance matched the technical assistance the Centers delivered, by topic. The states' reports on their priorities and their receipt of Center technical assistance indicated the extent to which the technical assistance actually delivered was responsive to state priorities.

- ***State survey data revealed a strong association between their priorities and their receipt of technical assistance from the Centers, although for each priority area there were states that wanted technical assistance but did not receive it.*** Through a survey, managers in all the SEAs were asked to identify their technical assistance priorities from a list of state responsibilities in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. The bar chart in exhibit 3.6 compares the percentage of all state managers who expressed a priority for technical assistance on a

particular NCLB responsibility with the percentage reporting that Centers provided them with major or moderate technical assistance on those responsibilities. For example, 98 percent of state managers reported that building or managing statewide systems of support was a major or moderate priority for Center technical assistance, and 72 percent said that they received a major or moderate amount of Center technical assistance in this area.[41] An analysis of the similarity of the distributions of the two rankings of the 11 areas shows a statistically significant relationship, with a correlation coefficient of +0.95 (using Spearman's rho).[42]

Exhibit 3.6. State priorities for technical assistance and receipt of Center technical assistance, by area of NCLB responsibility

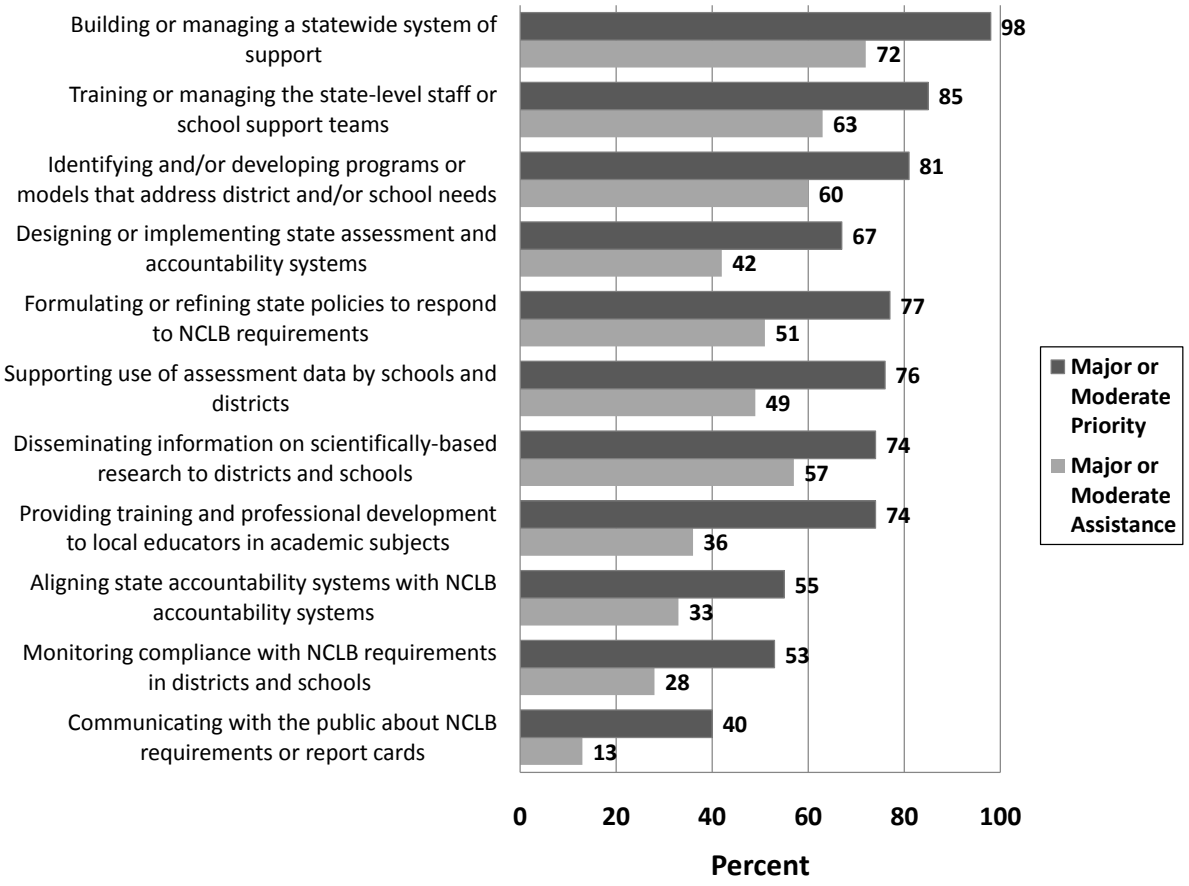


EXHIBIT READS: Ninety-eight percent of states reported that SSOS was a major or moderate priority for technical assistance. Seventy-two percent of states reported that they received a major or moderate amount of technical assistance in that area.

[41] Among the subgroup of state managers who reported a major or moderate priority for any particular state responsibility, at least 69 percent reported receiving some technical assistance with that responsibility from the Centers (a finding discussed in chapter 4; see exhibit 4.5).

[42] The Spearman's rho correlation statistic measures the degree of monotonic relationship between two variables that are arranged in rank order on ordinal scales. It differs from Pearson's correlation only in that the computations are done after the numbers are converted to ranks. It is a nonparametric statistic, and does not require that the distribution of the individual measures meet assumptions of normalcy or be interval data.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was represented by a composite in cases where more than one manager from that state responded

- ***Centers reported providing technical assistance in a majority (80 percent) of the instances where identified topic areas were included in their management plans (exhibit 3.7).*** Comparing the contents of the management plans with the annual PIFs) where Centers reported their delivered work to the evaluation team, of the 133 topic-related objectives in the plans, the Centers provided services and products on 107 of them. The fact that some planned cases[43] (133-107=26) were not listed on the PIFs indicates that 19 percent of the cases (26 of the planned 133) were not conducted. Looking at the work actually conducted, in 38 percent of cases ([172-107]/172) the Center provided technical assistance on a topic not initially cited in its planned objectives.

- ***The work of the CCs was spread across the topic areas (exhibit 3.8).*** Only in the area of English language learners did more than one CC (2) plan and deliver work products or services. This is consistent with the intent of ED in defining specific areas of expertise for each of the five CCs.

- ***Centers commonly expanded the topic areas their technical assistance covered by adding work on topics they did not initially include in their plans.*** Looking at exhibit 3.7 and comparing columns 3 and 2, there are 19 of the 22 topics in which technical assistance was not included in a Center's management plan but was delivered by that Center. The most common shift toward topics were in the areas of response to intervention (seven Centers conducted work in this area that was not planned), English language learner issues (five Centers), highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB (five Centers) and Supplemental Educational Services (five Centers). Based on exhibit 3.8, addition of work was more common among RCCs than CCs (in 19 of 22 topics, RCCs that did not have an objective in a topic conducted work on that topic; in comparison, in 7 of 22 topics CCs conducted work on a topic that that Center had not anticipated in its annual management plan).

[43] Using each Center's management plan, the evaluation team coded for each Center whether it had specifically stated an intention/objective to address work in each of the 22 topics (i.e., the first column of numbers in exhibit 3.7 indicates the number of Centers that stated an objective of conducting any work in each of the 22 topics, beginning with the topic of state systems of support). Using the PIFs, the evaluation team coded project topics to determine the number of Centers that actually did work in each of the 22 topics (i.e., the last column of numbers, by topic, in exhibit 3.7).

Exhibit 3.7. Topics on which Centers stated objectives and/or delivered projects

Topic	Number of Centers (N=21) Objective on topic was stated in management plan (1)	Objective on topic was stated in management plan AND at least one project on topic was reported on PIF (2)	At least one project on topic was reported on PIF (3)
Total cases of a Center setting an objective and/or reporting a project	133	107	172
Components of effective systems of support—state, district, school	15	15	17
English language learners	10	10	15
Highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB	8	5	10
Teacher professional development	6	5	8
Teacher preparation and induction	5	3	5
Data use/data-driven decisionmaking	8	4	7
Assessment design	6	5	5
Formative assessment	5	4	7
Special education—curriculum, instruction, and professional development	8	3	6
Response to Intervention (RtI)	3	3	10
Special education—assessment	3	3	3
High school redesign/reform	8	7	10
Transition to high school	2	2	5
Dropout prevention	2	2	2
Mathematics	7	4	8
Adolescent literacy	6	6	8
Reading	6	5	8
Supplemental educational services (SES)	7	7	12
Parent involvement	7	7	11
Migrant education	5	3	6
Data management compliance	5	3	5
Indian/Native American education	1	1	4

NOTE: Column (1) - column (2) =the number of Centers that deleted work in the topic area as indicated by number of Centers that had a topic-related objective in their management plan minus the number of Centers that had the topic area on their PIF and their management plan; column (3)- column (2) =the number of Centers that added work in the topic area as indicated by number of Centers that reported work on their PIF minus the number of Centers that had the topic area on their PIF and their management plan.

EXHIBIT READS: For the topic “Components of effective systems of support—state, district, school,” 15 Centers had a related objective in their respective annual management plans; of these, all 15 reported projects on the topic in their PIF; and a total of 17 Centers had projects on the topic, whether or not they had stated an objective related to it in their management plan.

SOURCES: Center management plans for 2006-07; PIFs prepared by Centers in consultation with evaluation team.

Exhibit 3.8. Topics on which RCCs and CCs stated objectives and/or delivered projects

	Number of RCCs *(N=16)*			Number of CCs *(N=5)*		
	Objective on topic in manage-ment plan (1)	Objective on topic in plan AND project(s) on topic on PIF (2)	Project(s) on topic on PIF (3)	Objective on topic in manage-ment plan (4)	Objective on topic in plan AND project(s) on topic on PIF (5)	Project(s) on topic on PIF (6)
Total cases	**112**	**89**	**146**	**21**	**18**	**26**
Components of effective systems of support—state, district, school	14	14	15	1	1	2
English language learners	8	8	12	2	2	3
Highly qualified teacher provisions of NCLB	7	4	9	1	1	1
Teacher professional development	4	4	7	2	1	1
Teacher preparation and induction	4	2	4	1	1	1
Data use/data-driven decisionmaking	7	3	5	1	1	2
Assessment design	5	4	4	1	1	1
Formative assessment	4	3	5	1	1	2
Special education – curriculum, instruction, professional development	6	3	5	2	0	1
Response to Intervention (RtI)	3	3	8	0	0	2
Special education– assessment	2	2	2	1	1	1
High school redesign/reform	7	6	9	1	1	1
Transition to high school	1	1	4	1	1	1
Dropout prevention	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mathematics	6	3	7	1	1	1
Adolescent literacy	5	5	6	1	1	2
Reading	5	4	7	1	1	1
Supplemental educational services (SES)	6	6	11	1	1	1
Parent involvement	6	6	10	1	1	1
Migrant education	5	3	6	0	0	0
Data management compliance	5	3	5	0	0	0
Indian/Native American education	1	1	4	0	0	0

NOTE: column (1)-column (2) =the number of RCCs that deleted work in the topic area as indicated by number of Centers that reported work on their management plan minus the number of Centers that had the topic area on their PIF and their management plan ; column (3)- column (2) =the number of RCCs that added work in the topic area as indicated by number of Centers that reported work on their PIF minus the number of Centers that had the topic area on their PIF and their management plan. These calculations are analogous for the CCs.

EXHIBIT READS: For the topic "Components of Effective Systems of Support—State, District, School," 14 RCCs reported a related objective in their management plans; of these, all 14 reported projects on the topic; and a total of 15 RCCs had projects on the topic, whether or not they had originally stated an objective related to it.

SOURCES: Center management plans for 2006-07; PIFs prepared by Centers in consultation with evaluation team.

- ***Centers also shifted away from providing work on originally planned topics.*** A comparison of columns 2 versus 1 in exhibit 3.7 indicates that in 10 of the 22 topics, Centers that set an objective in a topic did not deliver a project related to the topic—in other words, there was a shift *away from* initially stated objectives on these topics. The two topics in which the largest number of Centers planned to do work but did not deliver a project were special education curriculum, instruction, and professional development (five Centers); and data use or data-driven decision making (four Centers). As seen in exhibit 3.8, deletion of work was more common among RCCs than CCs (in 11 of 22 topics, one or more RCCs that reported having an objective in a topic in its management plan did not report a project on the topic in its PIF; in comparison, in 2 of the 22 topic areas, CCs that had planned work did not deliver a project in that topic).

It is not possible to ascertain from the data whether these shifts from initial objectives to projects delivered took place at the request of clients. Based on interviews with the Centers, 8 of the 16 RCCs said they changed the work they planned to deliver during the year because of changes in SEA priorities or leadership. One CC similarly said that, as a result of turnover of a key client in the state, it had to put on hold collaborative work it had with an RCC that was to be delivered to the SEA. In addition, the ratings of relevance and usefulness that state managers give to the Centers' work (see chapter 4) provide an indication that the changes in work plans may have been in response to evolving state needs.

Activities and Products Provided by the Centers

Regardless of whether they were originally specified in work plans or added later, what types of technical assistance did the Centers provide? As described above, the most common topics on which Centers reported delivering assistance were systems of support, English language learners, high school redesign/reform, supplemental education services, and parent involvement (exhibit 3.7).

An analysis of 122 sampled projects (described in more detail in chapter 2) provides more in-depth information about the nature of Center technical assistance activities or resources. Although the sample of projects is not statistically representative of the Centers' work, recall that project sample selection for review of each Center's work favored their most dominant projects and included over half (56 percent) of that year's designated major or moderate projects. A project is defined for this evaluation as "a group of closely related activities and/or deliverables designed to achieve a specific outcome for a specific audience."

- ***Most (102 of 122 = 84 percent) projects included the delivery of more than one type of activity or resource (exhibit 3.9).*** Projects with a single coded type of activity/resource were more common among the CC than the RCC sampled projects (9 of 27 = 33 percent and 11 of 96 = 11 percent, respectively), illustrating the differing nature of their work. The evaluation team coded the following seven types of activities and resources that Center projects could provide: ongoing consultation and follow-up, research collections and syntheses, engagement of

participants in project planning, training events, task force meetings and work, conferences, and support for development of a formal plan to implement a program or policy.

Exhibit 3.9. Sampled Center projects by number of activity or resource types provided

Number of activity or resource types:	RCC projects *(n=96)*	CC projects *(n=27)*	All projects *(n=122)*
Total projects	**96**	**27**	**122**
One	11	9	20
Two	22	8	30
Three	26	3	29
Four	16	4	19
Five	16	3	19
Six	5	0	5

EXHIBIT READS: Eleven RCC projects provided a single type of activity or resource for participants.

SOURCE: Project cover sheets prepared by Centers for the expert review of project materials. The total number of projects was 122. One project collaboratively conducted by an RCC and a CC was counted among both RCC projects and CC projects but was only counted once among the projects of all Centers.

- ***The kinds of support provided by the RCCs and CCs differed in ways that are consistent with the model of technical assistance envisioned by ED (exhibit 3.10).*** The guidance given by ED through the Center grant competition and afterwards laid out a particular structure for the Centers' work: CCs would specialize in activities that require content specialization while the RCCs would specialize in state client interactions. The majority of RCC projects involved front-line assistance activities such as ongoing consultation and follow-up (79 of 96 projects, or 82 percent), whereas this was less so for the work of the CCs (6 of 27 projects, or 22 percent). In contrast, research collections and syntheses were a central part of the work of the CCs, occurring in 74 percent of their projects but 54 percent of the RCC projects. The second most common project activity for CCs (63 percent) was conferences, an activity that also was consistent with the content specialization model promoted by ED.

Exhibit 3.10. Sampled Center projects by types of participant activities and products

Activities and products *(with clarifying definitions used by coders)*	RCC projects *(n=96)*	CC projects *(n=27)*	All projects *(n=122)*
Ongoing consultation and follow-up *(multiple contacts to same participants, that were part of a coherent and purposeful whole)*	79	6	84
Research collections and syntheses	52	20	71
Engagement of participants in project planning *(more than needs assessment or identifying participants)*	43	8	50
Training events *(focused on implementing a specific program or strategy)*	41	10	50
Task force meetings and work *(focused on addressing a specific problem, program, or policy)*	48	2	50
Conferences *(symposium, forum, institute; highlights a range of perspectives, strategies, or programs)*	26	17	43
Support development of a formal plan to implement a program or policy	18	2	20

EXHIBIT READS: Seventy-nine RCC projects included ongoing consultation and follow-up.

SOURCE: Project cover sheets prepared by Centers for the expert review of project materials. The total number of projects was 122. One project collaboratively conducted by an RCC and a CC was counted among both RCC projects and CC projects but was only counted once among the projects of all Centers.

Knowledge Base Used by Centers

An important part of Centers' operations is how and to what extent they draw on expertise to provide a solid foundation for recommended strategies and practices. We asked Centers about the sources they drew on in developing or reviewing their technical assistance, including their reliance on other Centers as sources.

Sources of Content Expertise

The analysis investigated the mix of in-house sources, scholarly sources, federally supported resources of various kinds, and state-level practitioners that were sources for each type of Center. A particular focus was the extent to which the RCCs used CC expertise, since that was a key component of how ED thought the Center system would operate. Of additional interest was the extent to which the CCs enlisted the RCCs or states as a source of knowledge since the Centers were charged with identifying and disseminating promising practices (exhibit 3.11).

- ***All 16 RCCs reported that CC expertise contributed to the knowledge base for their products and services, a finding consistent with the program design.*** To communicate with CCs and stay abreast of their activities, based on interviews

with the Centers, all 16 RCCs reported using the CCs in developing their products and services. In fact, the RCCs reported designating staff to serve as liaisons to the CCs, and all five CCs described activities that involved these liaisons. This organizational strategy may have contributed to RCC use of CC expertise.

- ***The CCs were less likely to draw on the RCCs as a source of expertise (exhibit 3.10).*** Two of the five CCs (40 percent) reported that they relied on RCCs in the process of developing their materials or services.

- ***Every RCC and every CC reported using in-house expertise from its own staff.*** For all Comprehensive Centers, the grantees and/or subgrantees were affiliated with larger organizations that also included personnel who were not officially part of the Center (all grantees and subgrantees are listed in appendix A). Of the 16 RCCs, 15 used the expertise of non-Center staff in their lead or subgrantee organizations, 13 used staff in their lead organization and 10 in their subgrantee organizations. Of the five CCs, three reported using non-Center staff from lead and subgrantee organizations.

- ***After drawing on their own organizations, the RCCs and CCs relied on different sources.*** Other than using the CCs, the RCCs most often reported turning to professional associations and other RCCs as sources of expertise (each type of source was reported by 11 of the 16 RCCs). The source most frequently cited by CCs, after internal Center staff, was consulting firms or other private contractors (four of the five CCs).

- ***RCCs were more likely than CCs to draw on state agency expertise***. Because Centers were charged with identifying and disseminating promising practices from practitioner sources, especially states, the evaluation assessed the extent to which knowledge flowed to the Centers from their state clients. Ten of the 16 RCCs (62 percent), those charged with working directly with the states, identified SEAs as a source of expertise. In contrast, one of five CCs (20 percent) identified SEAs as a source of expertise. Given the Center structure of the CCs working through the RCCs, the CCs could learn about state practices through the RCCs; however, three of the five CCs did not indicate RCCs as a source.

- ***Regional Educational Laboratories, with which the Centers were expected to cooperate, were reported as a source of expertise by 10 of the 16 RCCs and 1 of the 5 CCs.***

Exhibit 3.11. Sources of content expertise used in developing Center products and services

Source	RCCs *(N=16)*	CCs *(N=5)*	All *(N=21)*
Internal Center staff (lead organization and/or subgrantees)	16	5	21
Content Center(s) (CCs)	16	3	19
Other staff from lead and subgrantee organizations, who are not formally employed by the Center	15	3	18
Other staff in the lead organization	*13*	*2*	*15*
Other staff in subgrantee organization(s)	*10*	*2*	*12*
Professional associations (e.g., AERA, CCSSO)	11	3	14
Consulting firms or private contractors	9	4	13
Regional Center(s) (RCCs)	11	2	13
Other federally funded technical assistance providers (not part of the Center)	8	3	11
Regional labs (not part of the Center)	10	1	11
State education agencies (SEAs)	10	1	11
Universities	7	3	10
What Works Clearinghouse	7	1	8

EXHIBIT READS: All sixteen RCCs relied on internal Center staff as sources of content expertise used in Center products and services.

SOURCE: Center responses to standard response categories during site visits.

Extent of RCC-CC Coordination

As part of the assessment of the way the Centers functioned as a system, the evaluation also looked at the extent to which the two types of Centers coordinated with or informed each other, both at the Center level (as described above, in the description of Centers' reliance on one another as sources of expertise) and also at the project level. Thus, in the interviews Centers were asked how they informed each other of their work. The evaluation team also identified the sampled RCC projects in which a CC was a source of materials, advice, or in-person assistance to clients, and the CC projects in which an RCC participated by recruiting participants, brokering service, or delivering assistance to clients.

- ***Periodic conference calls and specific RCC requests to CCs were the primary mechanism for coordination between CCs and RCCs.*** All five CCs offered regular conference calls for their designated liaisons at the RCCs in order to

convey their work to the RCCs. In addition, all CCs used these conference calls, sometimes in combination with webinars, to conduct RCC staff training and to identify staff needs. All RCCs reported making direct requests for CC assistance when they felt it would be useful. Finally, ED sponsored bi-annual Directors' meetings that provided opportunities for RCCs and CCs to coordinate.

- ***Some informal coordination took place among RCCs.*** Although ED has few formal mechanisms for RCCs to share information about their work with each other, all RCCs reported in interviews that they communicated with other RCCs, most often those with which they had formal organizational relationships (i.e., the same parent organization, or a subgrant with the other RCC's parent organization). Reports of viewing other RCC websites, registering for webinars, and direct phone conversations were additional methods staff mentioned as informal ways to learn about other RCC work.

- ***Half (48 percent) of the RCC projects had a CC contribution of one or more kinds (exhibit 3.12)***. Forty-six of the 96 projects were found to have had input from a CC. The most frequent type of CC contribution to RCC projects was in material support (42 projects), including practice briefs, research syntheses, and implementation manuals. Seventeen RCC projects included CC staff providing technical assistance directly to project participants, such as to state workgroups or at conference events.

Exhibit 3.12. Sampled RCC projects by CC contribution

CC contribution	RCC projects *(n=96)*
RCC project had no CC contribution	50
RCC project had a CC contribution	46
CC provided materials used in this RCC project	*42*
CC provided advice to the RCC on this project	*16*
CC delivered technical assistance to project participants	*17*

EXHIBIT READS: In 50 RCC projects, a CC did NOT contribute.

SOURCE: Project cover sheets prepared by Centers for the expert review of project materials.

- ***A smaller proportion of CC projects had an RCC contribution of one or more kinds (exhibit 3.13).*** Ten of 27 sampled CC projects were documented to have input from the RCCs. In each of these 10 projects, RCCs recruited participants or brokered CC services. In 3 of them, or 11 percent of the sample of 27 CC projects, RCCs also delivered assistance to project participants (e.g., presented at

a conference, contributed content for a product, delivered follow-up assistance that continued work initiated by a CC).

Exhibit 3.13. Sampled CC projects by RCC contribution

RCC contribution	CC projects *(n=27)*
CC project had no RCC contribution	17
CC project had an RCC contribution	10
RCC recruited participants or brokered service	*10*
RCC delivered technical assistance to project participants	*3*

EXHIBIT READS: In 17 CC projects, an RCC did NOT contribute.

SOURCE: Project cover sheets prepared by Centers for the expert review of project materials.

Product Quality Control Procedures

The evaluation inquired about the procedures and types of individuals brought to bear in the process of reviewing products before release. Given that project quality is assessed as part of the evaluation, it is useful to understand the processes that the Centers themselves reported using to promote quality of the products used in their technical assistance.

- ***Most RCCs and all CCs relied, in part, on internal staff for quality control (exhibit 3.14).*** When asked about how they reviewed the content of their technical assistance prior to delivery—i.e., what quality assurance process they used—14 of the 16 RCCs and all five of the CCs described processes that included internal staff review of their work. Of the two that did not describe a vetting process that included internal staff, one relied on an external source and another did not clearly identify a process.

- ***CCs were more likely than RCCs to report having external sources review their products (exhibit 3.14)***. All five CCs (100 percent) reported that they submitted all major publications to ED for review prior to public release, as they were required to do. Also, all five CCs (100 percent) reported using other external sources for review, including four CCs (80 percent) that reported retaining outside experts to review draft products and two CCs (40 percent) that described relying on other CCs for feedback on their own products as part of the five CCs developing a common vetting tool. In contrast, two (12 percent) of the RCCs said they used outside experts as a source for vetting. As important context, the nature of the products and services conducted by the RCCs and the CCs differs, with the RCC work consisting of fewer formal products than that of the CCs.

Exhibit 3.14. Sources for vetting Center products and services prior to delivery

Source	RCCs (N=16)	CCs (N=5)	All (N=21)
Internal Center staff (lead organization and/or subgrantees)	14	5	19
Other staff from lead and subgrantee organizations, not formally employed by the Center	6	3	9
Other staff in the lead organization	*5*	*3*	*8*
Other staff in subgrantee organization(s)	*5*	*2*	*7*
External sources	10	5	15
U.S. Department of Education	*6*	*5*	*11*
Content Center(s)	*6*	*2*	*8*
Outside experts retained to review drafts	*2*	*4*	*6*

EXHIBIT READS: Fourteen RCCs relied on internal Center staff as sources for vetting Center products prior to release.

SOURCE: Center responses to standard response categories during site visits.

4. State Managers' Assessment of the Centers' Technical Assistance

In any evaluation, performance is judged by whether the program meets its goals and objectives. The Comprehensive Centers were expected to provide technical assistance that would build states' capacity to carry out their responsibilities under NCLB, supporting district and school efforts to close achievement gaps and raise student achievement. Given the diffuse and indirect relationship between state-level technical assistance and student outcomes, it is impossible to attribute changes in test scores to the work of the Centers. It is possible, however, to determine whether state agency managers felt the technical assistance addressed their agencies' purposes and expanded agency capacity.

This chapter examines how the work of the Comprehensive Centers was regarded by key clients, specifically senior managers in state education agencies. Although the assistance might vary in quality or utility across Centers or projects (see chapter 5), as a first step it is important to understand how states viewed the output of the Comprehensive Centers program in a broad sense. We asked state managers whether the technical assistance provided by their RCC and the Content Centers served their agency's purposes, whether it had addressed each of several specific areas of state responsibility under NCLB, to what extent it had expanded state capacity, and how it compared with technical assistance from other sources.

The key findings include:

- ***Eighty-eight percent of state managers (weighted)[44] reported that the Centers' technical assistance was at least "a good start" toward serving state purposes, with 36 percent overall indicating that the Centers' assistance "served the state's purposes completely."*** Managers who said the state's purposes were not completely served reported a variety of different issues. For 33 percent of them (or 21 percent of all state managers), the Centers were too slow in getting assistance up and going; 33 percent (21 percent overall) reported that the state's most important priorities for technical assistance were outside the scope of the Centers' work; and 31 percent (20 percent overall) reported that the state secured most of its technical assistance from sources other than the Centers.

- ***For each of the four areas of NCLB implementation most widely identified as state priorities for technical assistance (see chapter 3), at least 90 percent of the state managers who had identified that area as a priority had received***

[44] For 20 states, the evaluation team received completed responses from more than one state manager. As the state was the primary unit of analysis in analyzing data from the state manager survey for this report, the state managers' responses were weighted to ensure that each state was equally represented in all summary statistics while taking into account the variation in responses within each state. The weighting procedure, where each response was weighted by the inverse of the number of managers responding from that state, ensured that each state was equally represented when the team aggregated responses across states to describe the distribution of responses. See chapter 2 for a detailed description of the sampling and analysis procedures.

assistance with it from the Centers. In the area of building or managing a statewide system of support, 98 percent of the state managers who identified it as a priority said the Centers provided technical assistance with it; the corresponding figures were 95 percent for identifying programs or models for districts or schools, 90 percent for training or managing state support teams, and 97 percent for disseminating information on scientifically based research.

- ***Most (68 percent) of the state managers reported that Center assistance had "greatly" expanded their agency's capacity in at least one of 11areas of NCLB responsibility about which they were surveyed.***

- ***State managers reported that the Comprehensive Center network was one of multiple sources that they used for technical assistance.*** On average, state managers ranked the Centers as one of the top three sources of technical assistance that they relied upon, along with professional associations and the ED-funded Regional Educational Laboratories. The purposes for which states used the Centers more than other sources were "to plan the initial steps in solving a problem" (reported as a purpose for Center technical assistance by 66 percent of state managers) and "to develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff" (61 percent of state managers).

- ***Overall, on a scale of 1(very low degree) to 5 (very high degree), state managers gave the Centers' early technical assistance close to a 4.*** The average score for 'relevance" was 3.94 and the average score for the "usefulness" of the Center's work was 3.86. These scores fell just below the 4.0 threshold defined as "to a high degree" on the 5-point scale that state managers used to determine their responses.

Extent to Which Center Assistance Served State Purposes

ED placed a significant emphasis on having the Centers, both RCCs and CCs, deliver technical assistance that would advance state efforts to implement NCLB. In developing their work plans and delivering technical assistance, the Centers were expected to target their work on state concerns and priorities, as discussed in chapter 3. States' views of how well the assistance met their own purposes provided one perspective on the success of the program.

- ***More than one third (36 percent) of state managers reported that Center technical assistance "served the state's purposes completely," with another 52 percent reporting that "it was a good start."*** Six percent said the technical assistance "was a start, but some important priorities were not addressed"; the same percentage said that, "for the most part, it did not serve the state's purposes" (exhibit 4.1).

Exhibit 4.1. Extent to which technical assistance from the Centers served state purposes, as judged by state managers

Extent	Percent of state managers (weighted) *(n=56)*
It served the state's purposes completely	36
It was a good start	52
It was a start, but some important priorities were not addressed	6
For the most part, it did not serve the state's purposes	6

EXHIBIT READS: Thirty-six percent of state managers (weighted) reported that Center technical assistance served the state's purposes completely.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

- ***The two most common reasons cited for the Centers not fully serving state purposes were the length of time it took to get projects underway and the identification of state priorities that were outside the Center's line of work.*** The survey posed a series of follow-up questions asking why, to the respondents who did not report that Center assistance "served the state's purposes completely" (exhibit 4.2). These state managers were asked to check off as many as eight possible reasons that the assistance was less helpful to their state than it might be. Among these 30 state managers, more than half (56 percent) identified a single reason, a quarter (27 percent) identified two reasons, and 15 percent three or more reasons. Thirty-three percent (21 percent of all state respondents) cited (1) the process of negotiating a work scope and organizing projects took too long, and (2) the state's most important priorities for technical assistance fell outside the Center's scope of work. Out-of-scope requests for technical assistance would include, for example, working directly with local districts and schools.

- ***The next most common reasons reflected states' use of, or desire to use, sources other than the Comprehensive Centers for technical assistance.*** In 31 percent of states whose purposes were not fully served (20 percent overall), managers reported that the state filled most of its technical assistance requirements from other sources (exhibit 4.2). Asked whether the state would prefer to contract directly with experts and consultants rather than receiving technical assistance from the Comprehensive Centers, 19 percent of these respondents (12 percent of state managers overall) agreed. The survey responses of these managers did not suggest a high level of dissatisfaction with the Center assistance or a heavy reliance on other sources, however. Among those who had given either or both of these explanations for less than complete satisfaction with Center assistance, 50 percent nevertheless reported that they used the Centers "to a great extent." There

was no other source of assistance that this group of managers reported using more than they used the Centers, and no source that they reported using more than the other state managers did.

Exhibit 4.2. Reasons why Center assistance served some states' purposes less than completely

Reasons	Percent of those state managers (weighted) who reported Center assistance had not served their purposes completely *(n=36)*	
	Yes	No
The process of negotiating a work scope and organizing projects takes too long	33	67
The state's most important priorities for assistance fall outside the Comprehensive Center's scope of work	33	67
The state secures most of the technical assistance it needs from other sources	31	69
The state would prefer to locate and contract directly with the experts or consultants from whom it needs assistance, rather than working through the Comprehensive Centers	19	81
Comprehensive Center staff are not able to spend as much time working with the state as we would like	17	83
The Comprehensive Center does not have the expertise the state needs	15	85
A policy or priority shift at the state level caused the Center's assistance to be less helpful than it might	7	93
The state has been unable to develop a productive working relationship with the Center	3	97

EXHIBIT READS: Of the 36 state managers (weighted) reporting Center assistance served their state's purposes less than completely, 33 percent said a reason was that the process of negotiating a work scope and organizing projects takes too long.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Respondents limited to those who did *not* answer "It served our purposes completely" to the preceding question. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

Reported Assistance Delivery and Capacity Building for State NCLB Responsibilities

The primary aim of the Center program was to deliver technical assistance that would both address state priorities in implementing NCLB and build state capacity for NCLB

implementation. Senior state managers reported their perceptions of the extent to which the Centers had delivered assistance and built capacity in the areas of NCLB responsibility that were technical assistance priorities for their state.

- ***For each of the four areas of NCLB implementation most widely identified as state priorities for technical assistance, at least 90 percent of the state managers who identified that area as a priority had received assistance with it from the Centers.*** The corresponding percentage reporting at least a moderate level of assistance was at least 74 percent (exhibit 4.3) for each of four areas (building statewide systems of support, identifying programs, training statewide support teams, and disseminating information on scientifically based research). In the area of building or managing a statewide system of support, 98 percent of the state managers who identified it as a priority said the Centers provided technical assistance with it.

- ***There were four areas in which the Centers reportedly had not delivered assistance to 20 percent or more of the state managers for whom the area was a priority.*** These areas were communicating with the public (an area in which 31 percent of the 16 states identifying it as a priority had not received Center assistance), monitoring compliance with requirements (29 percent of 24 states), providing training to local educators in academic subjects (21 percent of 29 states), and designing or implementing state assessment or accountability systems (20 percent of 25 states) (exhibit 4.3). These four areas were also among the least widespread priorities for technical assistance among the states: the only one that was a moderate or greater priority for more than half of the states was training for local educators in academic subjects.

Exhibit 4.3. State priorities for technical assistance and assistance received from Comprehensive Centers

Priority area of state responsibility under NCLB	Among state managers reporting the responsibility as a major or moderate priority, the percent reporting they received:	
	***Any* assistance from the Centers related to the responsibility**	***Major or moderate* assistance from the Centers related to the responsibility**
Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB *(n=46)*	98	80
Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB *(n=41)*	90	78
Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs *(n=38)*	95	79
Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools *(n=36)*	97	74
Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts *(n=36)*	86	66
Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements *(n=34)*	94	74
Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science) *(n=29)*	79	59
Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems *(n=25)*	80	65
Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools *(n=24)*	71	50
Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems *(n=21)*	81	62
Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards *(n=16)*	69	33

EXHIBIT READS: Of the 46 state managers (weighted) that reported a major or moderate priority for technical assistance with building or managing a statewide system of support, 98 percent reported receiving technical assistance from the Centers related to that responsibility, and 80 percent reported that the technical assistance was major or moderate in scope.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

The intent of the Comprehensive Centers program was that technical assistance from the Centers would expand state capacity to carry out important responsibilities under NCLB. Although future data collection will look at this in more depth, the survey provided perceptions from managers on the extent to which state capacity had been expanded in each area of state NCLB responsibility.

- ***Overall, more than two-thirds of state managers (68 percent) reported that assistance from the Comprehensive Centers had increased their state's capacity "to a great extent" to carry out its responsibilities in at least one NCLB area.*** On average, state managers reported an improvement in capacity to "very great" or "great" extent in 3.6 out of 11 areas of NCLB responsibility listed on the survey instrument.

The evaluation looked not just at overall reports of state capacity expansion, but also at the capacity building reported in particular areas of NCLB responsibility by those states for which the area was a priority.

- ***For each of the four top-ranked areas of priority in NCLB (as described in chapter 3), at least two-thirds of state managers for whom that area was a technical-assistance priority perceived that Center assistance had expanded state capacity to a great or moderate extent.*** This level of capacity building was reported by 67 percent of the managers in building or managing a statewide system of support, 71 percent in identifying programs or models for districts or schools, 71 percent in training or managing state support teams, and 77 percent in disseminating information on scientifically based research. And in at least 49 percent of the states where any particular NCLB area was a major or moderate priority, managers reported great or moderate levels of capacity expansion for that area (exhibit 4.4).

State Uses and Perceptions of the Centers Compared with Other Sources of Technical Assistance

With many other sources available to states, the Comprehensive Centers were designed to fill particular niches—in particular, that of building capacity for state implementation of NCLB requirements—rather than addressing every purpose for which states might seek technical assistance. The responses of state managers confirmed that the states relied upon multiple sources of technical assistance in their practice.

Exhibit 4.4. Extent to which Comprehensive Center Assistance expanded state capacity for NCLB implementation, as judged by senior state managers

Area of state responsibility under NCLB	Percent of the state managers (weighted) who rated the area as a major or moderate technical assistance priority				
	Reporting capacity building in this area				NA, state has not sought assistance for this purpose
	To a very great or great extent	To a moderate extent	To a small or very small extent	Too soon to tell	
Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB *(n=53)*	53	14	18	8	7
Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB (*n=46)*	51	20	12	7	10
Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs *(n=42)*	47	24	8	11	10
Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements *(n=40)*	43	14	14	11	18
Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts *(n=40)*	42	16	11	2	29
Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools *(n=38)*	39	38	10	5	8
Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science) *(n=38)*	33	17	11	9	30
Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems *(n=35)*	33	25	5	4	33
Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems *(n=28)*	34	24	6	9	27
Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools *(n=25)*	34	22	21	8	15
Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards *(n=19*)	26	23	7	10	34

EXHIBIT READS: Among the 53 state managers (weighted) who reported that technical assistance in building or managing a statewide system of support was a major or moderate priority for their state, 53 percent reported that technical assistance received from the Comprehensive Centers expanded the state's capacity in this area to a great or very great extent.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

- ***Centers were ranked among the top sources of technical assistance overall.*** Thirty-five percent of senior state managers identified the Comprehensive Centers as "one of the state's most important resources," second to professional associations (37 percent) and above the Regional Educational Laboratories (33 percent) (exhibit 4.5).

Exhibit 4.5. States' use of external sources of technical assistance

	Percent of state managers (weighted) reporting:				
External source	**One of the state's most important resources**	**To a great extent, but not one of the state's most important resources**	**To a moderate extent**	**Minimally**	**No contact**
Professional associations (e.g., CCSSO, ASCD) *(n=54)*	37	24	28	9	2
Comprehensive Center network *(n=54)*	35	37	14	12	2
Regional Educational Laboratory *(n=53)*	33	29	21	12	5
U.S. Department of Education *(n=52)*	29	16	35	19	1
Colleges and universities *(n=54)*	18	15	34	30	3
Consulting firms or private contractors *(n=54)*	13	29	33	19	6
Senior managers in other SEAs *(n=54)*	9	29	37	23	2

EXHIBIT READS: Thirty-seven percent of state managers (weighted) said that professional associations were one of the state's most important technical-assistance resources.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

State managers' reports of the purposes for which they used each source of technical assistance shed light on the niches occupied by the Center program—the purposes for which the Centers were the most commonly used source. These responses also revealed some purposes for which other sources were the most widely used.

- ***The purposes for which the Centers were the source most often named by the state managers were consistent with the Center program's purpose, including help with start-up and capacity building for state tasks.*** Using Center assistance "to plan the initial steps in solving a problem" was reported as a purpose by 66 percent of state managers; using Centers "to develop the skills

of SEA or intermediate education agency staff" was reported by 61 percent of state managers (exhibit 4.6). Centers were tied with Regional Educational Laboratories as a resource "to complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise," with each of these two sources reported by 54 percent of states as a resource for this purpose.

- ***State managers did not cite Centers as a leading resource for three purposes that were peripheral to their charge: to gather information or keep current with new ideas, to complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more resources, and to work directly with districts and schools.*** To help states "keep current with new ideas," 96 percent of state managers reported using professional associations, 88 percent reported using managers in other SEAs, and 87 percent reported using the Centers. For "completing tasks the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources," 63 percent reported using consulting firms or private contractors, and 59 percent reported using the Centers. For working with districts and schools, colleges and universities were reported to be used by 37 percent of state managers and consulting firms by the same percentage; 22 percent reported using the Centers.

Exhibit 4.6. Purposes for which states used external sources of technical assistance

External Source	To gather information or to keep current with new ideas	To plan the initial steps in solving a problem	To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources	To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise	To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff	To work directly with districts and schools	Our state doesn't seek assistance from this source
	Purpose in seeking technical assistance (percent of state managers)						
Professional associations (e.g., CCSSO, ASCD) (n=52)	96	51	43	36	57	14	5
Comprehensive Center network (n=54)	87	66	59	54	61	22	4
Regional Educational Laboratory (n=55)	84	57	45	54	47	20	4
U.S. Department of Education (n=52)	85	40	22	20	21	12	7
Colleges and universities (n=54)	43	31	48	40	30	37	12
Consulting firms or private contractors (n=54)	30	35	63	47	30	37	15
Senior managers in other SEAs (n=54)	88	54	10	12	30	3	8

EXHIBIT READS: Ninety-six percent of state managers (weighted) said that they turned to professional associations for the purpose of gathering information or keeping current with new ideas.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

State managers also provided a rating of the usefulness of Center technical assistance, in comparison with other sources, with respect to particular areas of NCLB state responsibility (exhibit 4.7).

- ***With regard to the top four areas of NCLB implementation identified by the state managers as priorities for technical assistance (see chapter 3), at least half of state managers reported that the Centers' technical assistance was "much more" or "somewhat more" useful than that of other providers.*** When asked to compare the usefulness of Comprehensive Center assistance with that of assistance from other sources, at least half of state managers reported the Centers were more useful in providing assistance in the following areas: building and managing statewide systems of support (58 percent of state respondents); identifying or developing programs or models for districts or schools (57 percent); training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams (55 percent); and disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools (50 percent).

Exhibit 4.7. Usefulness of Comprehensive Center assistance compared with assistance from other sources

Areas of state responsibility under NCLB	Percent of state managers (weighted) rating Center technical assistance			
	Much more or somewhat more useful	About the same	Much less or somewhat less useful	Not able to judge
Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB *(n=54)*	58	16	14	12
Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs *(n=48)*	57	15	14	14
Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB *(n=49)*	55	17	11	17
Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools *(n=51)*	50	23	12	15
Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science) *(n=40)*	45	19	16	20
Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements *(n=49)*	44	20	12	24
Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts *(n=46)*	37	21	21	21
Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools *(n=39)*	33	22	18	27
Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems *(n=39)*	29	22	22	27
Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems *(n=39)*	27	27	17	29
Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards *(n=32)*	22	26	15	37

NOTE: States that chose the response, "not applicable, state has not sought assistance for this purpose," were excluded from the analysis.

EXHIBIT READS: Fifty-eight percent of state managers (weighted) reported that Comprehensive Centers were much more or somewhat more useful than other sources of technical assistance for the state responsibility of building or managing a statewide system of support.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

- ***For each area of state responsibility in NCLB implementation, there were fewer than one-fourth of state managers who reportedly considered the Centers' work***

less useful than that of other providers. The areas of NCLB responsibility in which the largest percentage of state managers reported that the Centers were less useful than other sources were the following: (1) designing or implementing state accountability systems (22 percent of respondents); and (2) supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts (21 percent).

Overall Rating of Center Assistance

As senior officials in their agencies, the state managers were in a position to provide overall judgments of the Center technical assistance their agency had received. The evaluation team gathered data on the degree to which Center technical assistance was seen as relevant and useful with respect to each of 9 indicators of relevance and 10 indicators of usefulness (exhibit 4.8). Ratings were based on a 1 to 5 scale,[45] and the scores for the individual items within relevance and within usefulness were averaged for each manager, and for multiple managers within a state, as described in chapter 2.

Exhibit 4.8. Relevance and usefulness items from the state manager surveys

Relevance	Usefulness
a. Addressed a need or problem that the state faces	a. Provided state staff with resources that were easy to understand and easy to use
b. Addressed an important state priority	b. Employed appropriate formats (e.g., work groups, conferences, individual consultation, written products)
c. Addressed a challenge that the state faces related to the implementation of NCLB	c. Provided adequate opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states
d. Responded flexibly to our state's changing needs	d. Included adequate follow-up to support the use of new information and resources
e. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be applied to the state's work	e. Were timely
f. Addressed the particular context in which our state operates	f. Helped the state to solve a problem
g. Addressed the state's specific challenges (e.g., policy environment, leadership capacity, budget pressures, local politics)	g. Helped the state to maintain or change a policy or practice
h. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be used to guide decisions about policies, programs, and practices	h. Helped the state take the next step in a longer-term improvement effort
i. Highlighted the implications of research findings (or information about best practice) for state-level clients' policies, programs, or practices	i. Provided state staff with information or resources that they will use again
	j. Helped state staff to develop skills that they will be able to exercise again

[45] The response options were: 5 (to a very high degree), 4 (to a high degree), 3 (to a moderate degree), 2 (to a low degree), and 1 (to a very low degree).

- ***On a scale of 1 (very low degree) to 5 (very high degree), on average state managers gave the Centers' technical assistance about a 4.*** The average relevance score was 3.94 and the average usefulness score was 3.86 (exhibit 4.9). On both measures, in other words, the mean response was near, but below, the 4.0 threshold defined as "to a high degree" on the 5-point scale. Fifty-seven percent of the states' ratings fell at or above 4.0 for relevance. Fifty percent fell at or above 4.0 for usefulness (exhibit 4.10). Twelve percent of state managers rated the relevance and usefulness of the Centers' work as below moderate.

Exhibit 4.9. Mean ratings of the relevance and usefulness of Center assistance, as judged by state managers

	Mean relevance rating *(n=54)*	Mean usefulness rating *(n=53)*
Comprehensive Center program	3.94	3.86

EXHIBIT READS: Fifty-four state managers (weighted) gave the Center program a mean relevance rating of 3.94.

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

Exhibit 4.10: Breakout of ratings of the relevance and usefulness of Center assistance, as judged by state managers

	Relevance				Usefulness			
	Percent of state managers (weighted) giving overall ratings in the following ranges:				Percent of state managers (weighted) giving overall ratings in the following ranges:			
	Very low to low (1.0-1.9)	Low to moderate (2.0-2.9)	Moderate to high (3.0-3.9)	High to very high (4.0-5.0)	Very low to low (1.0-1.9)	Low to moderate (2.0-2.9)	Moderate to high (3.0-3.9)	High to very high (4.0-5.0)
Comprehensive Center program	3	9	31	57	4	8	38	50

EXHIBIT READS: Three percent of state managers (weighted) gave the Center program an overall relevance rating in the very low to low range (1.0-1.9).

SOURCE: Survey of State Managers. Responses weighted so that each state was equally represented in instances where more than one manager from a state responded.

5. Variation in the Reported Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness of the Centers' Technical Assistance

While state managers' reports provide important input to an assessment of the overall work of the Comprehensive Centers program (chapter 4), additional perspectives are helpful in assessing the quality of the technical assistance projects and their relevance and usefulness to the offices and the teams of professionals directly served. A deeper look at variation across Centers and projects might also provide information for program improvement: additional support or oversight might be provided if quality, relevance, or usefulness appeared substantially weaker in particular groups of Centers or projects, or for particular types of participants. Thus, variation was investigated by features of project design (project scope and the type of activities offered) and by participant experiences in the project as well as participant background.

This chapter analyzes the ratings of relevance, usefulness, and quality given to the 122 Center projects sampled for the evaluation.[46] Each project was evaluated for relevance and usefulness by a sample of participants—state staff, intermediate agency staff, local educators working on behalf of the state, and RCC staff—who were the intended beneficiaries of the project and had received at least some of the technical assistance it provided.[47] Ratings of project quality were gathered from panels of experts with strong knowledge of the content or substantive focus of the specific projects they reviewed.[48] Relevance was assessed with eight survey items and usefulness with 11 items; quality was judged on three items called dimensions (exhibit 5.1). Each overall measure (relevance, usefulness, or quality) was calculated as the mean of ratings assigned to each item. The item-level ratings themselves were based on 5-point rating scales (exhibit 5.2).[49] The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the variation in ratings by project characteristics and by the participant experiences in projects.

[48] See chapter 2 for more information about the data sources and procedures for gathering, coding, and analyzing the data reported in this chapter, including discussions of the methods used for expert ratings and participant surveys.

[49] Efforts were made to develop parallel wording and rubrics that would result in similar gradations between rating levels (e.g., very high vs. high vs. moderate) across the three measures. However, given the different content of each set of items within the three measures and the different contexts for the ratings (experts who underwent training for the rating process and reviewed identical packages of materials vs. survey respondents who typically participated in different subsets of project activities), the ratings across the three measures are not directly comparable.

Exhibit 5.1. Quality, relevance, and usefulness items

From expert panel scoring	From project participant surveys	
Technical quality	**Relevance**	**Usefulness**
Reviewers were directed to assign a score to each dimension and to include the basis for their ratings on the rating form, including the specific artifacts on which their score was based. The three dimensions are: a. Demonstrated use of the appropriate documented knowledge base–to include an accurate portrayal of the current state of information with prominence to those with the most accurate/rigorous evidence b. Fidelity of application of the knowledge base to the products and services provided–materials are consistent with the best/accurate information available and the presentation adequately conveys the confidence of the information c. Clear and effective delivery–information is well organized and written and accessible to the intended audience for easy use	Based on *your* experience, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***relevant*** to your work, in each of the following respects? a. Addressed a need or problem that my organization faces b. Addressed an important priority of my organization c. Addressed a challenge that my organization faces related to the implementation of NCLB d. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be directly applied to my organization's work e. Addressed our particular state context f. Addressed my organization's specific challenges (e.g., policy environment, leadership capacity, budget pressures, local politics) g. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be used to guide decisions about policies, programs, or practices h. Highlighted the implications of research findings (or information about best practice) for policies, programs, or practices	Based on *your* experience, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***useful*** to you, in each of the following respects? a. Provided resources that were easy to understand and easy to use b. Employed an appropriate format (e.g., a work group, a conference, individual consultation, written products) c. Provided adequate opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states d. Included adequate follow-up to support the use of new information and resources e. Were timely f. Helped my organization solve a problem g. Helped my organization maintain or change a policy or practice h. Helped my organization take the next step in a longer-term improvement effort i. Provided my organization with information or resources that we will use again j. Helped my organization develop a shared expertise or knowledge base k. Helped individuals in my organization to develop skills that they will use again

Exhibit 5.2. Scales for rating of quality by expert panels and relevance and usefulness by participants

Rating	Quality ratings by content area experts	Relevance or usefulness ratings by project participants
5	**Very high**—All or almost all of the project meets the given indicators for a dimension	To a very high degree
4	**High**—Most of the project meets the given indicators for a dimension	To a high degree
3	**Moderate**—Some of the project meets the given indicators for a dimension	To a moderate degree
2	**Low**—Limited parts of the project meet the given indicators for a dimension	To a low degree
1	**Very low**—None or almost none of the project meets the given indicators for a dimension	To a very low degree

Based on these ratings, the key findings suggest:

- ***Center technical assistance was judged in the "moderate" to "high" range of quality, relevance, and usefulness.*** On a scale of 1 to 5 with a 3 representing "moderate" and a 4 representing "high," the programwide average ratings for the sampled projects were 3.34 for technical quality (scored by panels of content experts), and 3.94 for relevance and 3.70 for usefulness (scored by participants).[50]

- ***The average quality rating was higher among CCs than RCCs; relevance and usefulness ratings were similar between the two Center types***.[51] The Content Centers received Center-level mean scores for technical quality that averaged 3.73, compared with 3.21 for the Regional Centers; the difference of 0.52 points exceeded one-half of one pooled standard deviation. The scores for relevance and

[50] This averaging procedure across Centers and across projects was designed so that each Center contributed equally to the overall mean for the program (or for its type of Center, where RCC means were compared with CC means), and each project sampled from a Center contributed equally to the Center mean.

[51] Using Cohen (1988) as a conceptual framework, we estimated Cohen's d (an estimate of the effect size defined as the differences in means divided by the pooled standard deviation) and adopted the logic of Cohen for what is a moderate difference. Specifically, we adopted a difference in the means of one-half of one standard deviation (analogous to an effect size of .5) as our minimum threshold for highlighting differences. The "pooled standard deviation" for each computation varied with the unit of analysis. For analyses conducted at the Center level, the pooled standard deviation was computed as the standard deviation of the variable of interest (e.g., relevance) computed at the Center level. For analyses using the project as the unit of analysis, the pooled standard deviation was computed at the project level.

usefulness were 3.99 and 3.71 for the Regional Centers and 3.78 and 3.65 for the Content Centers; on these measures the two types of Centers scored within one-half of a standard deviation of each other.

- ***Mean ratings of quality, relevance, and usefulness varied across and within Centers.*** On each measure, at least 10 Centers had a mean rating that was at least one-half of a standard deviation above or below the overall mean for its type of Center (RCC or CC) for that measure (i.e., 11 of 21 Centers were this far above or below the mean for quality, 10 for relevance, and 14 for usefulness). However, few Centers showed consistently high or low ratings across measures: one RCC had ratings of quality, relevance, and usefulness for its sampled projects that exceeded the RCC means for each measure by at least one-half of a standard deviation; one RCC and one CC had ratings at least one-half of a standard deviation lower than those of all RCCs and CCs, respectively, on all three measures. Ratings varied across projects within Centers: at least one project was rated "high" (4.0 or above) for quality in 11 of the 16 RCCs and 3 of the 5 CCs; the same was true for relevance in 15 of the 16 RCCs and all 5 CCs; and for usefulness in 11 of the 16 RCCs and all 5 CCs.

- ***Across subgroups of projects, average project ratings differed by project scope but generally did not differ by the presence of particular types of activities.*** Projects that Centers had designated as large in scope ("major" projects), relative to the rest of that Center's own work, had relevance and usefulness ratings at least one-half of a standard deviation higher than those for the moderate projects sampled (exhibit 5.7). With respect to project activities, the differences in ratings for projects that either did or did not offer each of five types of Center activities or resources (research syntheses, training, task force participation, engagement of participants in planning, or development of a formal implementation plan) were less than one-half of a standard deviation (see exhibit 5.8). Those projects that offered ongoing consultation or support among their activities had lower quality ratings than did other projects, but higher relevance ratings; quality was rated higher for projects that included conferences among their activities, compared with projects that did not offer conferences. Each of the differences highlighted was at least one-half of a standard deviation in size.

- ***Ratings of quality were not statistically related to ratings of relevance and usefulness.*** The correlations between the scores for quality and relevance (-0.12) and between the scores for quality and usefulness (-0.04) are not statistically significant, meaning we cannot be sure that they are different from zero (no relationship). This indicates that the expert rating of technical quality was not related to the extent to which participants deemed the projects to be relevant or useful.

- ***Participants who reported more active and extensive experience with a project gave higher ratings for relevance and usefulness than did other participants.*** Because participant experiences could and did vary within projects as well as across projects, the descriptive comparisons here are at the individual participant

level. Higher ratings were found among participants who were involved upfront in project design (compared with those who were not), who spent at least three days in any project activity (compared with those who participated for fewer days in that activity), and who spent at least three days in each of a higher number of project activities (compared with those who spent that much time in fewer activities). These differences were statistically significant at the .05 level. These descriptive analyses merely show differences among participants, and should not be interpreted as implying that active or extensive experience with a project led to higher ratings.

Overall Ratings of Center Projects by Participants and Experts

The data gathered on individual projects were compiled to produce mean ratings of quality, relevance, and usefulness for the sampled projects across the program as a whole. In these averages, each Center contributed equally to the overall mean for the program. Given the different tasks that the RCCs and CCs were charged with, it is appropriate to examine whether there were differences in ratings between the two types of Centers.[52] In addition, the overall means for the two Center types potentially mask variation in the quality, relevance, and usefulness across individual Centers that would be useful to understand.

- ***Averaged across the Centers, the quality, relevance, and usefulness of sampled projects were judged in the "moderate" to "high" range.*** Overall, the mean ratings were 3.34 for technical quality (scored by the panels of content experts), and 3.94 for relevance and 3.70 for usefulness (as scored by participants in the sampled projects) (exhibit 5.3). The rating scales established a 3 as indicating a moderate degree of quality, relevance, and usefulness, while a score of 4 represented a high degree of relevance and usefulness (see exhibit 5.2). The average of the ratings for each measure fell between a score of 3 and 4.

- ***Compared with Content Centers, Regional Centers received a lower score from reviewers on technical quality, but a higher score from participants on relevance, while the usefulness score was similar between the two Center types.*** There was a gap of more than one-half of a standard deviation[53] between the two types of Centers on technical quality of -0.52, with the CCs receiving an average score of 3.73 and the RCCs receiving an average score of 3.21. The difference in the relevance score (0.21) exceeded one-half standard deviation, while there was no substantive difference in usefulness ratings.

[52] ED structured the Comprehensive Centers program to consist of 5 Content Centers charged with specializing in activities related to specific content areas and 16 Regional Centers charged with specializing in interactions with the states in a region.

[53] For analyses conducted at the Center level, the pooled standard deviation was computed as the standard deviation of the variable of interest (e.g., relevance) computed at the Center level.

Exhibit 5.3. Center Level Mean ratings of technical quality, relevance, and usefulness

		Quality dimensions:				
	Technical quality	Dimension 1 (use of knowledge base)	Dimension 2 (fidelity of application)	Dimension 3 (clear and effective delivery)	Relevance	Usefulness
All Comprehensive Centers *(N=21)*	3.34	3.22	3.20	3.60	3.94	3.70
All RCCs *(N=16)*	3.21	3.05	3.07	3.52	3.99	3.71
All CCs *(N=5)*	3.73	3.75	3.59	3.85	3.78	3.65
Difference of RCC and CC means	-0.52†	-0.70†	-0.52†	-0.33†	0.21†	0.06
Pooled standard deviation(all Comprehensive Centers)	*0.41*	*0.49*	*0.44*	*0.35*	*0.34*	*0.34*
Ratio of difference in means to pooled standard deviation	*-1.28*	*-1.42*	*-1.18*	*-0.95*	*0.60*	*0.18*

NOTE: All ratings were on a 5-point scale, with 5 as the high value. The "technical quality" rating is the mean of the ratings for the three quality dimensions. A notation of † indicates that the difference in the mean ratings between the CCs and RCCs is at least one-half of one pooled standard deviation in the rating.

EXHIBIT READS: Among the 21 Centers, the mean technical quality rating was 3.34.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to project ratings; each project contributed equally to Center ratings; and each Center contributed equally to cross-Center ratings.

- ***There was variation in the ratings across and within individual Centers.*** On each measure, at least 11 Centers had a mean rating that was at least one-half of a standard deviation above or below the overall mean for its type of Center[54] (RCC or CC) for that measure (i.e., 11 of 21 Centers were this far above or below the mean for quality, 11 for relevance, and 14 for usefulness). One RCC was rated higher than others by at least one-half of a standard deviation on all three measures, and one CC and one RCC were rated lower than others on all three measures. Aside from these Centers, the other 18 Centers' ratings were not consistently higher or lower than the mean but varied across measures (exhibit 5.4).

[54] For analyses using the project as the unit of analysis, the pooled standard deviation was computed at the project level.

Exhibit 5.4. Mean ratings of technical quality, relevance, and usefulness, by Center

Center type	Technical quality	Relevance	Usefulness
RCCs *(N=16)*	3.78↑	3.78↓	3.42↓
	3.63↑	3.22↓	3.00↓
	3.46↑	4.18↑	3.94↑
	3.44↑	3.90	3.63
	3.36	3.97	3.63
	3.35	3.97	3.57
	3.35	3.93	3.51↓
	3.31	4.15	3.69
	3.21	4.08	3.82
	3.17	4.31↑	4.05↑
	3.15	4.12	3.93↑
	3.11	4.70↑	4.46↑
	2.98↓	4.07	3.92↑
	2.74↓	3.20↓	3.05↓
	2.74↓	4.01	3.54
	2.63↓	4.18↑	4.17↑
Average RCC rating	3.21	3.99	3.71
Pooled standard deviation (RCCs)	*0.32*	*0.37*	*0.38*
CCs *(N=5)*	4.24↑	3.76	3.54↓
	3.94	3.90↑	3.86↑
	3.88	3.99↑	3.84↑
	3.44↓	3.58↓	3.44↓
	3.14↓	3.68↓	3.56
Average CC rating	3.73	3.78	3.65
Pooled standard deviation (CCs)	*0.43*	*0.16*	*0.19*

NOTE: The arrow pointing upward indicates the accompanying value is at least one-half of one standard deviation above the group mean (e.g., 3.78 is at least one-half of one standard deviation above the mean for the RCCs). The arrow pointing downward indicates the accompanying value was at least one-half of one standard deviation below the group mean.

EXHIBIT READS: One of the RCCs had a mean rating for technical quality of 3.78, a mean rating for relevance of 3.78, and a mean rating for usefulness of 3.42, across the projects sampled from that Center.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to project ratings, and each project contributed equally to Center ratings

Variation by Type of Project

Perhaps the Centers were more successful, at least from the perspective of the reviewers, at some types of projects compared with others. Thus, the evaluation looked at different groups of projects, across Centers, that might be expected to show higher quality, relevance, or usefulness than other projects. For example, projects that were larger in scope than others in the Center might have garnered higher ratings from the experts or the participants. Projects that offered particular types of activities or resources might also stand out for higher ratings.

These descriptive subgroup analyses were possible because there was variation in ratings among the individual projects within the sample (exhibit 5.5). On technical quality, 4 percent of the RCC and CC projects were judged "very low to low," 29 percent and 4 percent of RCC and CC projects respectively were scored in the "low to moderate" range, 50 and 52 percent scored in the "moderate to high" range, and 17 percent and 41 percent scored in the "high to very high" range. The ratings for relevance and usefulness also varied across projects.

Exhibit 5.5. Distribution of technical quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings – percent of projects

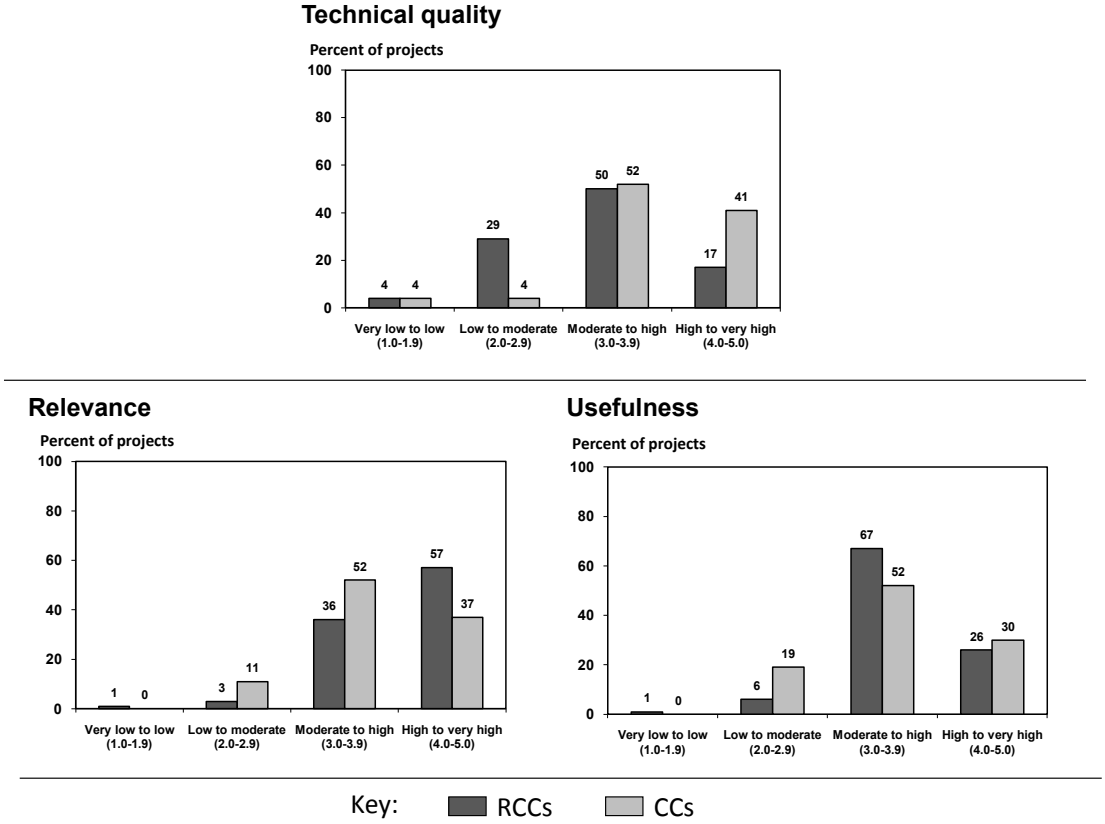


EXHIBIT READS: For technical quality, 4 percent of the projects sampled from RCCs had a mean quality rating of very low to low (between 1.0 and 1.9 on a 5-point scale).

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to the project rating.

These distributions of ratings across projects were wider than the distributions across Centers, which on all three measures were clustered in the "moderate to high" range as described above. At least one project was rated "high" (at least 4.0) for quality in 11 of the 16 RCCs and 3 of the 5 CCs; the same was true for relevance in 15 of the 16 RCCs and all 5 CCs; and for usefulness in 11 of the 16 RCCs and all 5 CCs. Among RCCs, four or fewer had at least one project rated "low" (2.0 or lower) on quality, relevance or usefulness. One CC had at least one project rated "low" for quality, but none of the CC projects received a "low" rating for relevance or usefulness (exhibit 5.6).

Exhibit 5.6. Technical quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings, by projects rated "high" and projects rated "low" and Center type

	Technical quality	Relevance	Usefulness
Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs) (N=16)			
RCCs with at least one project rated "high" (at least 4.0)	11	15	11
RCCs with at least one project rated "low" (2.0 or less)	4	3	3
Content Centers (CCs) (N=5)			
CCs with at least one projected rated "high" (at least 4.0)	3	5	5
CCs with at least one project rated "low" (2.0 or less)	1	0	0

EXHIBIT READS: For technical quality, 11 of the 16 RCCs had at least one project that received a "high" rating of at least 4.0.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to the project rating.

Ratings by Project Size or Level of Effort

The quality or utility of projects might be related to the scale of the undertaking. For example, more ambitious projects that extended over a longer period of time or included a larger number of participants might have been more challenging to carry out but might have been conceived to address a great need. Larger projects might allow greater focus on the effort and enjoy relatively higher levels of Center resources. Alternatively, the tighter focus possible in a smaller-scale project might have been conducive to higher quality, relevance, or usefulness.

The Centers were asked to consider the scope of each of the 122 sampled projects (i.e., its cost or level of effort) in relation to other projects of that Center and to designate each project as either "major" or "moderate."

- ***Projects identified by the Centers as "major" efforts were rated higher on the measures of relevance and usefulness.*** Participants gave the major projects a mean rating of 4.02 for relevance, which was one-half of a standard deviation higher than the mean rating of 3.76 that they gave the moderate projects (exhibit 5.7). The mean usefulness rating for the major projects was 3.77, exceeding the corresponding rating for the moderate projects (3.47) by more than one-half of a standard deviation.

- ***The quality ratings for major and moderate projects were within one-half of a standard deviation of each other, however***. The means were 3.37 and 3.25 respectively, both close to the "moderate quality" rating of 3.

Exhibit 5.7. Technical quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings, by project size

Project size	Technical quality	Relevance	Usefulness
Major projects	3.37	4.02	3.77
Moderate projects	3.25	3.76	3.47
Difference in means	0.12	0.26†	0.30†
Pooled standard deviation	*0.69*	*0.52*	*0.54*
Ratio of difference in means to pooled standard deviation	*0.18*	*0.50*	*0.55*

NOTE: For technical quality the overall number of projects was 122 with 93 major projects and 29 moderate projects. For relevance and usefulness the overall number of projects was 120, with 91 major projects and 29 moderate projects.

EXHIBIT READS: The mean technical quality rating for major projects in the sample was 3.37 while the mean technical quality rating for moderate projects was 3.25. The † indicates that the difference in the mean ratings between the major and moderate projects exceeds one-half of the pooled standard deviation in the rating.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to the project rating, and each project contributed equally to the mean rating for its category.

Ratings by Project Activities

The technical assistance provided by the Centers varied in delivery methods, including the types of activities offered. We examined whether the inclusion of certain types of technical assistance activities resulted in more favorable project ratings either by experts knowledgeable about the topic or by participants in the project (exhibit 5.8). The types of activities implemented by the Centers and coded by the evaluation team (first introduced in chapter 3) overlapped, in that

several could be included in a single project.[55] By comparing the ratings of projects that offered each activity with ratings of projects that did not, it may be possible to identify hypotheses for further exploration about strengths and weaknesses of particular modes of Center work.

- ***Across five of the seven project activities listed here, comparisons of projects with and without the activities showed no differences in quality, relevance, or usefulness ratings greater than one-half of a standard deviation (exhibit 5.8)***. Those projects that offered ongoing consultation among their activities had lower quality ratings than other projects, but higher relevance ratings; quality was rated higher for projects that included conferences among their activities, compared with projects that did not offer conferences. Each of the differences highlighted was at least one-half of a standard deviation in size. All other differences in exhibit 5.8 were within one-half of a standard deviation.

[55] For each sampled project, the Center furnished the team with a cover sheet intended to inform the expert reviewers about the project context, purpose, activities, and products. As described in chapter 2 and appendix C, the team coded the content of each project cover sheet to describe the activities and resources offered as part of the project. When a cover sheet indicated that the project had multiple components (which was the case for 84 percent of the projects), multiple codes were assigned.

Exhibit 5.8. Technical quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings of projects, by type of activity offered in the projects

Type of assistance activity offered				Technical quality			Relevance			Usefulness		
Ongoing consultation or support	Yes			3.25 *(n=84)*			4.03 *(n=82)*			3.74 *(n=82)*		
	No			3.59 *(n=38)*			3.79 (n=38)			3.60 *(n=38)*		
	Diff	*SD*	*Ratio*	-0.34†	*0.50*	*-0.68*	0.24†	*0.46*	*-0.52*	0.14	*0.54*	*0.26*
Research collections and syntheses	Yes			3.50 *(n=71)*			3.94 *(n=70)*			3.67 *(n=70)*		
	No			3.17 *(n=51)*			3.98 *(n=50)*			3.73 *(n=50)*		
	Diff	*SD*	*Ratio*	0.33	*0.67*	*0.49*	-0.04	*0.52*	*-0.08*	-0.06	*0.54*	*-0.11*
Engagement of participants in project planning	Yes			3.24 *(n=50)*			4.00 *(n=48)*			3.73 *(n=48)*		
	No			3.44 *(n=72)*			3.93 *(n=72)*			3.67 *(n=72)*		
	Diff	*SD*	*Ratio*	-0.20	*0.67*	*-0.30*	0.07	*0.52*	*0.14*	0.06	*0.54*	*0.11*
Training events	Yes			3.34 *(n=50)*			4.09 *(n=49)*			3.83 *(n=49)*		
	No			3.37 *(n=72)*			3.86 *(n=71)*			3.60 *(n=71)*		
	Diff	*SD*	*Ratio*	-0.03	*0.67*	*-0.05*	0.23	*0.52*	*0.44*	0.23	*0.54*	*0.43*
Task force meetings and work	Yes			3.23 *(n=50)*			4.05 *(n=48)*			3.71 *(n=48)*		
	No			3.45 *(n=72)*			3.89 *(n=72)*			3.68 *(n=72)*		
	Diff	*SD*	*Ratio*	-0.22	*0.52*	*-0.42*	0.16	*0.54*	*0.30*	0.03	*0.67*	*0.04*
Conference	Yes			3.60 *(n=43)*			3.83 *(n=43)*			3.61 *(n=43)*		
	No			3.21 *(n=79)*			4.03 *(n=77)*			3.74 *(n=77)*		
	Diff	*SD*	*Ratio*	0.39†	*0.67*	*0.58*	-0.20	*0.52*	*-0.40*	-0.13	*0.54*	*-0.24*
Support development of a formal plan to implement a program or policy	Yes			3.38 *(n=20)*			4.02 *(n=20)*			3.63 *(n=20)*		
	No			3.35 *(n=102)*			3.94 *(n=100)*			3.71 *(n=100)*		
	Diff	*SD*	*Ratio*	0.03	*0.67*	*0.04*	0.08	*0.54*	*0.15*	-0.08	*0.54*	*-0.15*

NOTE: For each type of assistance, the first two rows show the mean ratings and the number of projects in the sample for Yes (the activity or resource was offered) and No (not offered). The third row shows the difference in the means, the pooled standard deviation, and the calculated ratio of the difference in means to the pooled standard deviation. A notation of † indicates that the difference in the mean ratings is at least one-half of one pooled standard deviation.

EXHIBIT READS: The mean quality rating of projects that offered ongoing consultation or support was 3.25, while the mean quality rating of projects that did not offer this was 3.59.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to the project rating, and each project contributed equally to the mean rating for its category.

Ratings for RCC Projects by Whether They Drew on CC Contributions

Cooperation between CCs and RCCs was one element of the design of the Comprehensive Centers system, as discussed throughout this report. Thus, among the types of resources that RCC projects might offer to their participants were materials developed by CCs, activities developed with advice from CCs, or technical assistance from CC staff members. As indicated in chapter 3, 46 of the 96 sampled RCC projects had one or more of these types of CC contributions; the other 50 did not. One hypothesis for the evaluation was that the RCC projects incorporating CC contributions would be rated higher for technical quality than RCC projects that were developed without CC input, since the CCs were specifically charged with synthesizing the knowledge base in their areas of focus, and since the projects sampled from CCs had received a higher mean rating of technical quality than those sampled from RCCs.

- ***Among the RCC projects sampled, the ratings of those with CC contributions did not differ by more than one-half of a standard deviation on any measure, compared with those without CC contributions (exhibit 5.9).*** For example, the RCC projects with CC contributions had a mean quality rating of 3.40, which was just under one-half of a standard deviation (0.47) of the rating of those that did not include CC contributions (3.09).

Exhibit 5.9. Technical quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings by Content Center contribution to RCC projects

RCC projects with…	Technical quality	Relevance	Usefulness
CC contribution *(n=46)*	3.40	3.92	3.63
No CC contribution *(n=50)*	3.09	4.09	3.78
Difference in means (with CC contribution vs. without)	0.31	-0.17	-0.15
Pooled standard deviation	*0.67*	*0.53*	*0.56*
Ratio of difference in means to pooled standard deviation	*0.47*	*-0.32*	*0.27*

NOTE: For the technical quality ratings, there were 46 RCC projects reporting a contribution from one or more CC while 50 RCC projects reported no CC contribution. For the relevance and usefulness ratings there were 45 RCC projects with a CC contribution and 49 projects with no CC contribution.

EXHIBIT READS: The mean technical quality rating for RCC projects with a CC contribution was 3.40 while the mean technical quality rating for RCC projects with no CC contribution was 3.09.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to the project rating, and each project contributed equally to the mean rating for its category.

Relationships between the Relevance, Usefulness, and Quality of Center Projects

In our analysis of the relevance, usefulness, and quality of Center technical assistance, we observed that some groups of projects that received relatively high ratings for quality received relatively low ratings for relevance and usefulness, and vice versa. We hypothesized that differences in the rating and rankings (the rating relative to other groups of projects) could be due to the differences in the types of individuals who reviewed and scored projects for quality—content experts—and those who scored the relevance and usefulness—project participants. It was expected that these two groups might value and be better able to judge different qualities in a Center project, which is why we did not have content experts evaluate the projects for their utility or the participants assess the technical quality.

We examined the associations among the three dimensions more systematically by calculating correlation coefficients.[56] These statistics indicate the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two factors. A correlation coefficient can vary from positive one (indicating a perfect positive relationship), through zero (indicating the absence of a relationship), to negative one (indicating a perfect negative relationship). If the correlation is statistically significant ($p < .05$), we can have strong (95 percent) confidence that what we calculated is not due to chance.

- ***Participants' ratings of relevance and usefulness were closely related (exhibit 5.10).*** The correlation coefficient is +.84. This indicates that the extent to which participants rated the projects as relevant was associated with how they deemed the project to be useful to their agency.

- ***There was no statistically significant relationship between the ratings for the quality of Center projects and for their relevance or usefulness (exhibit 5.10).*** The results indicate correlations of -0.12 between quality and relevance, and -0.04 between quality and usefulness. Although the coefficients are negative, because they are not statistically significant we cannot be sure that they are different from zero (no relationship). Still, the correlations suggest that the expert rating of technical quality was not related to the extent to which participants deemed the projects to be relevant or useful. This was also the case for the dimension-level ratings within the overall quality rating: none was related to the rating of relevance or usefulness. This latter finding will be explored further in the final evaluation report.

[56] For this analysis, the evaluation team used Spearman's rank order correlation because this non-parametric rating is the appropriate statistical function to describe correlations between two variables where the values of the variables are not normally distributed and are on a scale (such as ratings).

Exhibit 5.10. Correlations between project-level technical quality, relevance, and usefulness ratings

Combination	Spearman's rho
Quality and relevance	-0.12
Quality and usefulness	-0.04
Relevance and usefulness	+0.84

EXHIBIT READS: The correlation between project-level ratings of technical quality and relevance ratings was a negative 0.12.

SOURCE: Expert panel ratings of sampled projects for technical quality and surveys of project participants for relevance and usefulness. Responses weighted so that each panelist or participant contributed equally to the project rating, and each project contributed equally to the mean rating for its category.

Variation by Participant Experiences and Roles

It is possible that Center technical assistance is viewed as more beneficial by some types of participants or that the extent to which participants are engaged in the projects affects how they regard it. These questions can be analyzed by examining whether the rating of relevance or usefulness given by participants was related to a participant's experience in the project or to his or her job responsibilities.[57] These analyses provided an opportunity to follow up on findings from the prior evaluation conducted on the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers established under the 1994 ESEA reauthorization (described in chapter 1 of this report).[58] The specific participant characteristics examined included:

- Whether the participant contributed to the design of the project
- How much time the participant spent with project activities or resources
- The participant's role in his or her job, and the extent to which the job focused on NCLB

In the following discussion, the unit of analysis is the participant, not the project. The mean ratings are those provided by a group of participants who had a particular type of experience or background; within the same project there could be and were participants with different experiences and backgrounds. In addition, participants could and did participate in quite different subsets of all activities offered in a project. A typical project comprised multiple types

[57] Within this section, the counts in the tables represent the weighted number of project participants who responded to that item. Because respondents were sampled at random from complete lists of participants in each sampled project, it was possible to draw inferences from their responses to the universe of participants in the 120 projects rated for relevance and usefulness. Accordingly, this section reports the results of tests of statistical significance.

[58] U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division. (2000). *Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers Program: Final Report on the Evaluation* (Volume I). Washington, DC: Author.

of activities. The median number of activities was 4.0, and ranged from 1 to 7. Thirty-two percent of participants took part in three or more activities, suggesting that it was unusual for the same individuals to participate in all of a project's activities. Just over half of project participants (52 percent) reported contributing to the design of the project. In the following analysis, we examine whether different patterns of participation in a project were associated with different ratings of the project's relevance and usefulness.

Ratings by Participants' Involvement in Project Design

An aspect of participation that was of particular interest, given the Centers' charge to work closely with their clients, was the extent to which participants were involved in the projects' design stages and, then, whether perceptions of relevance and usefulness might vary with a participant's involvement. The evaluation of the earlier program of Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers, based on survey results from a sample of participants, concluded: "Comprehensive Center technical assistance is more useful to customers if it is tailored to address their needs and interests."[59] For the current evaluation, the team analyzed participant responses to a question asking respondents whether they were personally involved in determining the goals or designing the content or format of the project.

- ***A higher proportion of participants in the sampled RCC projects reported being involved in some aspect of determining project goals or designing the project than did participants in the CC projects.*** The figures were 57 percent for participants in RCC projects and 42 percent for those in CC projects (exhibit 5.11). A chi square test found this difference to be statistically significant ($p<.01$).[60]

- ***Among participants in the sampled Content Center projects, RCC staff were more likely to be involved in some aspect of determining project goals or designing the project than were state-level staff (exhibit 5.12).*** Forty-five percent of RCC staff who participated in technical assistance provided by the CCs were involved in the project's design. The corresponding figure was 36 percent among "state-level" staff (a category that included not only SEA employees but also local educators and others working with a state team or task force (as described in chapter 2). A chi square test found this difference in proportions to be statistically significant ($p<.01$).[61]

[59] U.S. Department of Education, 2000, op cit.
[60] Unlike the analyses at the project level, which are based on a purposive sample of projects and thus could not use the tools of inferential statistics, these analyses at the participant level are based on random sampling of participants; thus they can be generalized to all participants in the sampled projects using conventional statistical tests.
[61] No parallel analysis could be conducted for CC participants in RCC projects because there were none; the RCCs did not provide technical assistance to CC staff.

Exhibit 5.11. Participants' involvement in determining project goals or design, by type of Center

Involved in determining the goals or design of the project	Percent of participants	
	RCC projects *(n=2,355)*	CC projects *(n=1,116)*
Total	**100**	**100**
Yes	57	42
No	43	58

NOTE: Difference in the proportion of participants involved in design by type of Center is statistically significant (p<.01, Chi Square).

EXHIBIT READS: Fifty-seven percent of participants in projects conducted by RCCs reported they were involved in determining the goals or design of the project.

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

Exhibit 5.12. Participants' involvement in determining project goals or design, by type of participant organization

Participant involvement	Percent of state-level staff *(n=455)*	Percent of RCC staff *(n=661)*
Total	**100**	**100**
Involved in determining the goals or designing the content of the CC project	36	45
Not involved in determining the goals or designing the content of the CC project	64	55

NOTE: Difference in the proportion of participants involved in design by type of participant organization is statistically significant (p=.01, Chi Square).

EXHIBIT READS: Thirty-six percent of the state-level staff who participated in Content Center projects reported involvement in determining the project's goals or design.

Source: Surveys of project participants. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

- ***Participants who reported being involved in determining the goals or designing the content of the project provided higher relevance and usefulness ratings than did other participants.*** The average ratings in projects sampled for the current study corroborate the survey findings from the prior evaluation of the Centers; participants who reported involvement in project design gave the projects a 4.06 average score for relevance and a 3.83 score for usefulness (exhibit 5.13). In contrast, average scores for participants not involved in project design were 3.81 and 3.56, respectively. These differences were statistically significant (with p<.01 for differences in both relevance and usefulness). This finding stands in contrast

to the one displayed in exhibit 5.8, which showed no difference in ratings among projects that offered some opportunity for involvement compared with projects that did not do so. This suggests that involving some participants in design work may make a difference in the ratings provided by those particular participants, although not in the ratings provided by all participants in the project.

Exhibit 5.13. Mean relevance and usefulness ratings, by respondent involvement in determining project goals or design

Respondent involvement	Relevance	Usefulness
Involved in project design *(n=1,802)*	4.06	3.84
Not involved in project design *(n=1,638)*	3.81	3.56
Difference	0.25*	0.28*
Significance	p<.01	p<.01

* Difference statistically significant at p<.05 using a one-way ANOVA.

EXHIBIT READS: Participants who indicated that they were involved in determining the goals or design of the project provided a relevance rating of 4.06, which was statistically significantly higher than the relevance rating of 3.81 provided by participants who indicated that they were not involved in determining the goals or design of the project.

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

Ratings by Time Spent in Project Activities

The literature on professional development suggests that the duration of training is associated with better outcomes.[62] Similarly, the previous evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers program, based on survey data from participants, concluded: "Comprehensive Center technical assistance is more useful to customers if it is intensive and if it extends over time."[63] Therefore, this study explored the possibility of a relationship between the time an individual spent in one or more project activities and the ratings he or she provided, assessing whether the same relationship persisted. [64]

[62] Desimone, L., Porter, A.C., Garet, M., Yoon, K.S., and Birman, B. (2002). "Does Professional Development Change Teachers' Instruction? Results from a Three-Year Study." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(2), 81-112; Garet, M., Porter, A., Desimone, L., Birman, B., and Yoon, K.S. (2001). "What Makes Professional Development Effective? Results from a National Sample of Teachers." *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(4), 915-945.

[63] U.S. Department of Education, 2000, op cit., p. 9.

[64] At the participant level, the variable measured in the survey was the amount of time an individual respondent reported devoting to each of eight activities in which a participant might engage. For each activity, respondents indicated the amount of time spent by selecting from the following five options: "More than 5 days," "3-5 days," "1-2 days," "Less than 1 day," and "Not applicable." The participant activities included counterparts of the seven activities and resources that were used to classify what the project offered (see, for example, Exhibit 5.13). In

- For each of eight project-related activities addressed in the survey, participants who reported spending at least three days in the activity rated the project higher on both relevance and usefulness than did participants who spent less time in that activity (exhibit 5.14).[65] For example, those who participated for at least three days in conferences associated with a project gave an average rating of 4.15 for relevance and 3.87 for usefulness. In contrast, participants who spent less than three days in conferences gave average ratings of 3.82 and 3.63 for relevance and usefulness, respectively. All of the differences were statistically significant at the $p<.05$ level using a one-way ANOVA.

- ***Participating for at least three days in a larger number of activities was associated with higher relevance and usefulness ratings.*** There was a statistically significant relationship between the number of activities in which the participant spent three or more days and the rating of project relevance. The correlation between the number of different project activities in which the respondent participated for three or more days and the rating of relevance was +0.41, while the correlation with the rating of usefulness was +0.34. These correlation coefficients were statistically significant at $p<.05$.

addition, participants were asked about time spent using "tools and other resources" provided by the project. This was a suitable item for differentiating among participants, since there was variation in the amount of time individual participants spent using tangible items that the project had provided. However, a corresponding item could not be used to differentiate among projects because the coding process revealed that all projects offered one or more tangible tools or resources to participants.

[65] Participant activities referred to in the text and presented in exhibit 5.14 are based on responses to the survey question on how much time individual participants had spent engaged in their own activities related to the project. These activity categories are not precisely aligned with the different set of codes used to categorize activities and resources that the Comprehensive Center offered, as reported on the project cover sheets.

Exhibit 5.14. Mean relevance and usefulness ratings, by time respondents spent in each activity

Type of activity or resource	Time spent	Relevance	Usefulness
Ongoing consultation on this topic	3+ days *(n=1,156)*	4.35	4.06
	<3 days (*n=1,115)*	3.81	3.59
	Difference	0.54*	0.47*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Reviewing general or background materials provided by the Comprehensive Center	3+ *days (n=1,105)*	4.32	4.07
	<3 days (*n=1,534)*	3.78	3.53
	Difference	0.54*	0.54*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Advance planning	3+ days *(n=731)*	4.37	4.08
	<3 days *(n=1,311)*	3.91	3.65
	Difference	0.46*	0.40*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Training	3+ days *(n=1,136)*	4.13	3.93
	<3 days (*n=1,219)*	3.94	3.72
	Difference	0.19*	0.21*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Task force meetings	3+ days (*n=581)*	4.29	3.94
	<3 days *(n=1,061)*	3.86	3.61
	Difference	0.43*	0.33*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Conferences	3+ days *(n=1,219)*	4.15	3.87
	<3 days *(n=1,556)*	3.82	3.63
	Difference	0.33*	0.24*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Follow-up and action plans	3+ days *(n=1,138)*	4.38	4.04
	<3 days *(n=1,307)*	3.81	3.57
	Difference	0.57*	0.47*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Using tools and other resources provided by the Center	3+ days *(n=1,450)*	4.34	4.10
	<3 days *(n=1,305)*	3.68	3.42
	Difference	0.66*	0.68*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01

NOTE: The types of activities and resources shown in this table are based on the types of activities presented in the participant survey and do not match categories presented in chapter 3 exhibits and exhibit 5.8, which were coded categories from the project cover sheets.

* Difference statistically significant at p<.05 using a one-way ANOVA.

EXHIBIT READS: The relevance ratings among project participants who indicated that they spent 3 or more days receiving ongoing consultation or support was 4.35 and statistically significantly higher than the ratings from project participants who spent less time receiving ongoing consultation or support (3.81).

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

Ratings by Participant Roles

Were the sampled projects rated differently by participants who occupied different roles in their day-to-day jobs? The team investigated the possibility of a relationship between the participant's place of employment or job responsibilities and the ratings he or she provided for a project's relevance or usefulness.

Given the intended emphasis of the Center technical assistance on building capacity at the state level, it is important to understand the extent to which the views of participants from state agencies might have differed from those of other participants. Of the sampled participants in RCC projects, 41 percent were employed by SEAs, 20 percent by schools, 15 percent by local education agencies (LEAs), 14 percent by intermediate education agencies, and 10 percent by other agencies or institutions.[66] Among the participants in the entire sample of CC projects, 59 percent were employed by RCCs, 38 percent by SEAs, and 3 percent by schools or LEAs (exhibit 5.15).

Exhibit 5.15. Where participants in RCC and CC projects were employed in 2006-07

	Percent of participants	
Employed by:	**RCC projects**	**CC projects**
Total	**100**	**100**
RCCs	N/A	59
State education agency (SEA)	41	38
Intermediate education agency	14	*
Local education agency (LEA)	15	1
School	20	2
Other	10	*

* Less than 0.5 percent.

EXHIBIT READS: Among the surveys completed by participants in RCC projects, 41 percent were completed by respondents who were employed in a state education agency.

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

- ***Participants employed in SEAs did not give significantly different ratings for relevance or usefulness of either RCC or CC projects, compared with other participants (exhibits 5.16 and 5.17).*** The RCCs and CCs targeted assistance to

[66] Participants who were employed by agencies other than the SEA were considered "state-level" participants because they carried out state-level responsibilities such as membership in a school support team or state-level task force (see chapter 2 for more discussion of the definition of "state-level" participants). For this analysis, however, we differentiate among participants by their place of employment.

different clients corresponding with their respective roles: the RCCs provided technical assistance to the states and territories in their regions, whereas the CCs targeted RCCs for capacity building as well as working with RCCs in providing technical assistance to states. Ratings of relevance and usefulness did not differ between state-level staff and other client groups. For example, state-level and RCC staff did not rate the relevance and usefulness of CC projects differently.

Exhibit 5.16. Mean relevance and usefulness ratings for RCC projects, by agency where respondent worked

Agency		Relevance	Usefulness
State education agency (SEA)	**Yes** *(n=977)*	3.99	3.68
	No *(n=1,409)*	3.94	3.68
	Difference	0.05	0.00
	Significance	p=.13	p=.93
Intermediate education agency	**Yes** *(n=345)*	4.03	3.67
	No *(n=2,045)*	3.95	3.68
	Difference	0.08	-.01
	Significance	p=.07	p=.90
Local education agency (LEA)	**Yes** *(n=365)*	3.87	3.72
	No *(n=2,022)*	3.97	3.67
	Difference	-0.10*	0.05
	Significance	p=.03	p=.30
School	**Yes** *(n=469)*	3.88	3.65
	No *(n=1,918)*	3.98	3.69
	Difference	-0.10*	-0.04
	Significance	p=.02	p=.44
Other	**Yes** *(n=188)*	4.01	3.67
	No *(n=2,201)*	3.95	3.68
	Difference	0.06	-0.01
	Significance	p=.25	p=.90

* Difference statistically significant at p<.05 using a one-way ANOVA.

NOTE: The category other included employees of institutions of higher education, nonprofits working with the state, and other RCCs. No CC staff members participated in RCC projects as recipients of technical assistance.

EXHIBIT READS: Across RCC project participants, the mean relevance ratings provided by respondents who worked at state education agencies was 3.99. This was not statistically significantly different from the mean relevance rating of 3.94 provided by respondents who worked in other types of agencies.

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Numbers reflect surveys returned, not individuals. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

Exhibit 5.17. Relevance and usefulness ratings for CC projects, RCC staff vs. state-level staff

Participant role	Relevance	Usefulness
RCC staff *(n=477)*	3.91	3.73
State-level staff *(n=669)*	3.92	3.81
Difference	-0.02	-0.08
Significance	p=.74	p=.14

EXHIBIT READS: Among CC project participants, the mean relevance ratings provided by respondents who worked in RCCs was 3.91. This was not statistically significantly different from the mean relevance rating of 3.92 provided by state-level respondents.

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Numbers reflect surveys returned, not individuals. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

- ***Participants who were employed in LEAs or schools (although they participated in Center assistance because they were working with the state) gave lower ratings for relevance to RCC projects, compared with other participants.*** In each case, the rating given was 0.10 points lower for relevance (exhibit 5.16) than was the rating given by other participants, and the difference was statistically significant at the $p<.05$ level using a one-way ANOVA. There were no other differences in ratings given to RCC projects by participants from different agencies.

- ***Comparing participants in CC projects who held different roles within RCCs, content specialists gave higher ratings for relevance and usefulness than did other RCC staff, while directors and assistant directors gave lower ratings (exhibit 5.18).*** The staff members who specialized in a content or topic area rated the CC projects 4.12 for relevance and 3.97 for usefulness, on average, compared with average ratings of 3.80 and 3.72 from other RCC staff. One possible explanation for this difference is that the CC emphasis on content areas was a good fit for the content-focused responsibilities of such staff members. The directors and assistant directors gave ratings of 3.54 for relevance and 3.52 for usefulness, compared with 4.04 and 3.90 ratings from other RCC staff. All of the differences were statistically significant at the $p<.05$ level using one-way ANOVA.

Exhibit 5.18. Mean relevance and usefulness ratings for CC projects, by RCC staff role of respondent

Participant role		Relevance	Usefulness
State liaison	**Yes** *(n=315)*	3.91	3.78
	No *(n=346)*	3.93	3.84
	Difference	-0.02	-0.06
	Significance	p=.80	p=.32
Content or topic area specialist	**Yes** *(n=254)*	4.12	3.97
	No *(n=415)*	3.80	3.72
	Difference	0.32*	0.26*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Center director or assistant director	**Yes** *(n=152)*	3.54	3.52
	No *(n=517)*	4.04	3.90
	Difference	-0.50*	-0.38*
	Significance	p<.01	p<.01
Other RCC staff	**Yes** *(n=187)*	3.75	3.58
	No *(n=482)*	3.99	3.90
	Difference	-0.24	-0.32*
	Significance	p=.07	p<.01

* Difference statistically significant at p<.05 using a one-way ANOVA.

EXHIBIT READS: Among participants in CC projects who were employed by RCCs, the mean relevance rating provided by respondents who identified themselves as state liaisons was 3.91.

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Numbers reflect surveys returned, not individuals. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

- ***Participants who, in their regular jobs, spent more than 25 percent of their hours on NCLB-related state responsibilities gave higher ratings to Center projects than did those whose jobs focused less on NCLB (exhibit 5.19).*** Because the Centers' charge focused on assistance related to NCLB, the team hypothesized that participants whose regular job responsibilities focused most heavily on that law might give relatively higher ratings for relevance and usefulness of the sampled projects.[67] We found that those who spent at least one quarter of their work time on NCLB gave significantly higher relevance and usefulness ratings to the projects, compared with those who spent 25 percent of their time or less (p<.01 for differences in both relevance and usefulness using ANOVA).

[67] Participants were asked in the survey to indicate what percentage of their hours on the job they spent working on any of the specific state-level responsibilities related to NCLB. They were given a choice of four percentage ranges: 0-25 percent, 26-50 percent, 51-75 percent, and 76-100 percent.

Exhibit 5.19. Mean relevance and usefulness ratings, by percent of time respondent spent on NCLB-related tasks in his/her job

Percent of time spent on NCLB-related tasks	Relevance	Usefulness
More than 75 percent *(n=908)*	4.05	3.87
51 to 75 percent *(n=541)*	3.98	3.78
26 to 50 percent *(n=493)*	3.94	3.72
25 percent or less *(n=476)*	3.72	3.47
Range	0.33*	0.40*
Significance	p<.01	p<.01

* Difference statistically significant at p<.05 using a one-way ANOVA.

EXHIBIT READS: The mean relevance rating of 4.05 provided by project participants whose job responsibilities included NCLB-related tasks more than 75 percent of the time was statistically significantly than the mean relevance ratings provided by project participants whose NCLB-related job responsibilities took up less of their time.

SOURCE: Surveys of project participants. Responses weighted so that respondents represented all sample-eligible participants for the project.

Appendix A
Comprehensive Center Lead Grantee and Subgrantee Organizations

Comprehensive Center Lead Grantee and Subgrantee Organizations

Center name	Lead grantee and subgrantees
Alaska Comprehensive Center	■ Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC of Alaska) ○ Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)
Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center	■ Edvantia ○ George Washington University - Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (CEEE) ○ Eastern Stream Center on Resources and Training (ESCORT) ○ National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) ○ University of North Carolina at Greensboro - SERVE Center ○ Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
California Comprehensive Center	■ WestEd ○ American Institutes for Research (AIR) ○ School Services of California
Florida and Islands Comprehensive Center	■ Educational Testing Service (ETS) ○ University of South Florida - David C. Anchin Center ○ Edvantia ○ Eastern Stream Center on Resources and Training (ESCORT) ○ Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA) ○ International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE) ○ JLM Professional Education Services ○ Robin Wheeler, LLC
Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center	■ Learning Point Associates ○ RMC Research Corporation ○ American Institutes for Research (AIR) ○ Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) ○ University of Michigan - Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center	■ Learning Point Associates ○ American Institutes for Research (AIR) ○ Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) ○ University of Wisconsin - Wisconsin Center for Educational Research (WCER) ○ University of Michigan - Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center	■ George Washington University - Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (CEEE) ○ Edvantia ○ Eastern Stream Center on Resources and Training (ESCORT) ○ Group Jazz ○ Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center	■ University of Oklahoma ○ Northrop Grumman Information Tech ○ Accion Social Comunitaria ○ Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC) ○ North Central Regional Resource Center (NCRRC) ○ Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC of Alabama)
New England Comprehensive Center	■ RMC Research Corporation ○ Education Development Center (EDC) ○ WestEd ○ Education Alliance at Brown University

Comprehensive Center Lead Grantee and Subgrantee Organizations (continued)

Center name	Lead grantee and subgrantees
New York Comprehensive Center	■ RMC Research Corporation ○ Education Development Center (EDC) ○ WestEd ○ Education Alliance at Brown University ○ United Federation of Teachers Teacher Center (UFTTC)
North Central Comprehensive Center	■ Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)
Northwest Regional Comprehensive Center	■ Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) ○ RMC Research Corporation
Pacific Comprehensive Center	■ Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL)
Southeast Comprehensive Center	■ Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) ○ Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP)
Southwest Comprehensive Center	■ WestED ○ RMC Research Corporation ○ American Institutes for Research (AIR)
Texas Comprehensive Center	■ Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) ○ Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP)
Assessment and Accountability Content Center	■ WestEd ○ National Center for Research on Evaluation Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST)
Center for Innovation and Improvement	■ Academic Development Institute (ADI) ○ Temple University - Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE) ○ Little Planet Learning
Center on Instruction	■ RMC Research Corporation ○ Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) ○ RG Research Group ○ Horizon Research ○ Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation and Statistics (TIMES) ○ University of Texas at Austin - Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts
National Comprehensive Center on Teacher Quality	■ Learning Point Associates ○ Education Commission of the States (ECS) ○ Educational Testing Service (ETS) ○ Vanderbilt University
National High School Center	■ American Institutes for Research (AIR) ○ Learning Point Associates ○ MDRC ○ National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) ○ WestEd

EXHIBIT READS: The Alaska Comprehensive Center was operated by the lead grantee organization named the Southeast Regional Resource Center (of Alaska) with support from the subgrantee organization named the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Source: U.S. Department of Education; individual RCC and CC websites.

Appendix B
Study Sample

Study Sample

This appendix section presents the Project Inventory Forms that were collected to identify the sample of projects to be included in the study as well as the documents sent to Centers requesting materials for expert panel review of sampled projects.

Project Inventory Form

The Project Inventory Forms (PIF) was developed by the study team as a standard way for Centers to provide an inventory of their work for each program year. When asked to complete the inventory forms, Comprehensive Center Directors were informed about the specific project year for which information was being gathered (July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007) as well as the purpose of this information to be used in the selection of a sample of projects for review of quality by expert panels to be conducted for the national evaluation. When completing the PIF, each Center was asked to nominate several projects that they believed best represented the work undertaken by that Center. Additional projects were purposefully sampled from the remaining projects on each center's inventory to reflect each center's overall portfolio of work, as well as the work of all regional or content centers in key topic areas. A sample PIF was provided including examples of the kinds of projects that should be listed by the centers and examples of activities and resources defining each project level of effort – major, moderate, minor. Examples of some projects, activities, and deliverables that should *not* be included on the inventory form were also provided, including the following:

- Training or professional development for Comprehensive Center staff
- Work on coordinating committees within the Comprehensive Center network
- Annual needs assessment activity or negotiations with states, unrelated to specific projects
- Other internal working meetings or documents

When completing the PIF, each center provided a list of each project under the appropriate topic heading (see list of topic areas and definitions included in PIFs, on p. B-11). For each listed project, Centers followed instructions to provide information describing the projects and listing the activities and deliverables associated with each project (see section of PIF, Instructions for Completing an Inventory of Projects, p. B-4 – B-8).

Letters Requesting Materials for Expert Panel Review from Centers

Each Center received a notification letter from the evaluation team that listed the projects from their PIF that had been selected for expert panel review followed by guidance in assembling the materials for panel review, compiling lists of project participants for the participant survey, and completion of the cover sheet for each

sampled project. The initial request for materials letter and supporting information starts on page B-19. The evaluation team reviewed the materials submitted by the Centers for accuracy and completeness and in cases where there were missing or incomplete materials or where further explanation was needed, followed up with Centers using the follow-up memo provided later in this appendix starting on page B-26.

Comprehensive Center Project Inventory Form

Dear Center Director,

Enclosed are a Project Inventory Form and instructions to be used to compile a complete list of your Center's projects during the current project year (July 1, 2006–June 30, 2007).

The national evaluation will use the completed project inventories to select a sample of projects for review by expert panels. Please designate several projects that you believe best represent the work of your Center; these projects will be included among the sample of projects to be reviewed by expert panels. These panels will rate nominated and sampled projects for their quality.

Please complete a **draft inventory** t**o review** with a member of the national evaluation team **during the site visit for the evaluation**, scheduled to take place between April and June 2006 when [EVALUATION STAFF MEMBER] visits your Center. A final version of the project inventory should be completed **as soon as possible after the site visit, but no later than June 30, 2007**. Please return the completed inventory form to your evaluation liaison, [name] at _____@_____.

If you have any questions about the inventory or the instructions for completing it, please contact _____ at 1-xxx-xxxx or by email at _____@_____.

Thank you for your continued support of the national evaluation of the comprehensive center program.

Instructions for Completing an Inventory of Projects

Each Comprehensive Center will prepare an inventory of all of the projects that were active during the current grant period. The first inventory will cover the period from July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007. The second inventory will cover materials from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008, and the third inventory will cover July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.

Projects that began in the current project year but will not be complete by June 30 should be entered in the inventory and noted as "ongoing."

Purpose

This inventory will serve as the sampling frame for the expert panel reviews to be conducted for the national evaluation. A sample of projects will be selected in two ways. Each Center will nominate several projects that they believe best represents the work undertaken by that Center. The remaining projects will be purposefully sampled from the remaining projects on each Center's inventory. Samples will be drawn to reflect each Center's overall portfolio of work, as well as the work of all Regional or Content Centers in key topic areas. Items selected for review will be rated by an expert panel for their quality.

If a project is nominated or sampled for expert panel review and rating, the evaluation team will ask your Center to collect and transmit all of the documents and other artifacts associated with that project (meeting agendas, briefing books, meeting summaries, training materials, white papers, web resources, etc.) for the expert panel to review.

Identifying Projects for Inclusion in the Inventory

The unit of analysis for the expert review panels will be the **project.** For the purposes of this inventory, a "project" will ordinarily comprise **a group of closely related activities and/or deliverables designed to achieve a specific outcome for a specific audience.** The Content Centers have some projects that consist of the development of a single product or deliverable, rather than a group of deliverables, but a project that comprises only a single product or deliverable will be the exception rather than the rule. The inventory should include *all* of the projects developed or delivered by the Center, including those developed or delivered in collaboration with other Centers, during the reporting period.

Because each project listed in the inventory could potentially be sampled for expert panel review, each project shown as an entry (or row) in the inventory form should be a relatively complete project that can be understood and rated on its own by expert panel members who may not know anything about other aspects of the Center's work. Although a single project may include a number of deliverables and activities, it will be designed to achieve a specific outcome and address (in almost all cases) a single topic. Where a group of activities and deliverables can be divided up into separate projects, each constituting a complete and coherent whole, the Center should list these as separate projects in the inventory.

The following criteria should guide the Centers as they identify projects (and their associated activities and deliverables) for recording in the inventory form. They have been developed to ensure that projects constitute units that are large enough for review and rating, but

focused enough for coherence. Each project entered in the inventory should satisfy ***all three*** of the following criteria:

- **Complete and coherent whole.** Each project listed in the inventory should be able to stand on its own in an expert panel review. Avoid listing activities and deliverables as separate projects in the inventory if they cannot be understood or evaluated without information about related activities and deliverables. For example, a training event may require extensive planning (e.g., needs assessment, materials development) and follow-up activities (e.g., evaluation of the training, consultation on action plans). These planning and follow-up activities would be very difficult for a panel to rate in the absence of information about the event itself. Therefore the Center should list these planning and follow-up activities and the event itself as a single project (one row) on the inventory form. Each phase of the project—planning, the event itself, and follow-up—will be described briefly in the "activities and deliverables" column. Similarly, ongoing work with a state-level task force should be listed as a single project rather than each meeting of the task force being listed as a project.

- **Common intended outcome.** Where a cluster of activities and deliverables is designed by the Center to lead to the same outcome for the same audience(s), those activities and deliverables should be grouped as one project in the inventory form. On the other hand, where a set of activities is intended to produce more than one distinct outcome—for example, helping the state to develop a strategic plan for improving reading instruction, and helping the same state recruit and train literacy coaches—those two activities should be listed as separate projects. Where the Center replicates the same set of activities in each of several different states, that set of activities should be listed as a single project if the intended outcomes and processes do not differ materially from one state to another. Where the intended outcomes do differ substantially from state to state, the work in each state should be listed as a separate project.

- **Topic area focus.** With few exceptions, a project addresses just one of the 14 topic areas described in Exhibit A at the end of this document (e.g., state systems of support, reading/language arts). Where it is possible to divide a group of related activities into two different projects according to the topic area addressed, Centers should do so. For example, a regional forum on interventions for low-performing students in reading and mathematics that offers separate strands of sessions in each subject area should be listed as two different projects, one under reading/language arts and one under mathematics. In this case, all of the sessions on reading interventions would stand on their own as a complete and coherent whole for rating by an expert panel and should be listed as a separate project; the same would be true for the sessions on mathematics. (If a project cuts across topic areas and the activities and deliverables which it comprises cannot be divided up by topic area into complete and coherent units that would make sense to a review panel, the project should be listed under the most relevant topic area with a note cross-referencing other topics, following the instructions for column IV below.)

The sample inventory form at the end of this packet includes examples of the kinds of projects that should be listed by the Centers.

Some projects, activities, and deliverables should *not* be included on the inventory form at all. These include:

- Training or professional development for Comprehensive Center staff
- Work on coordinating committees within the Comprehensive Center network
- Annual needs assessment activity or negotiations with states, unrelated to specific projects
- Other internal working meetings or documents

Completing the Inventory Form

Centers should use the attached form to complete their inventory of projects. Sample projects and examples of entries can be found in Exhibit B.

Centers might find it useful to review their annual project plans, technical assistance plans, management plans or technical assistance logs as a starting point since those documents typically provide an overview of the various projects and activities that were planned for or conducted during the year.

Once the inventory form is complete, Centers should designate which projects they would like to nominate for inclusion in the sample of projects reviewed by the expert panels, by inserting ** after the name of the project in Column II. Centers should designate several projects.

List each project under the appropriate topic heading. A list of topic headings, with definitions, is attached at the end of this document in Exhibit A.

Directions for completing each column are as follows:

Topic Area Headings	List items under the appropriate topic area heading. Where a project fits under more than one topic heading, list it once, under the topic heading that is most relevant. Note the project's relevance to other topics in Column IV. Add rows to the table as needed. Leave rows blank if your Center does no work in a particular topic area.
I. Project number	Assign consecutive numbers to each item listed in the inventory. (Centers may want to complete this column as a final step, after all of the items have been entered in the inventory.)
II. Name	Enter the name of the project. Projects nominated by Center staff for review should be followed by ** in this column.
III. Description	Provide a concise description of the project. (See examples for appropriate level of detail.)
IV. Additional topics addressed?	If the project addresses more than one topic area, note that here. Use the list of topic areas provided in the appendix (this list corresponds with the row headings in the inventory). Entering the appropriate number from the list will save space.
V. Activities and Deliverables	List all of the activities and deliverables associated with the project. (For products, include exact title, if applicable. For services, include location and type of participant.) Specific activities and deliverables may include: **Meetings/conferences** (includes items such as workshops, conferences, institutes, forums, webinars) **Expert consultation/technical assistance** (includes items such as assistance completing reports or applications, review of state plans, needs assessments, audits) **Facilitation/support of working groups or teams** (includes items such as planning meetings, participation in meetings, drafting summary documents) **Guidance/information resources** (includes items such as policy or issue briefs, fact sheets, congressional testimony, resource guides, planning tools, field guides, benchmarking rubrics, handbooks, exemplars, literature reviews/summaries, annotated bibliographies, case studies, websites) **Training** (includes items such as professional development materials/services, software, training materials) **Other**, specify _____
VI. Start Date	Enter the start date for the project, including month and year.
VII. End Date	Enter the end date for the project, including month and year. If the project is currently ongoing, enter the note "ongoing."

VIII: Major, Moderate or Minor Project	Indicate whether you consider this a major, moderate or minor project in terms of the relative level of effort and/or resources devoted to it.
IX: Target state(s), region(s), or regional center (s)	Regional Comprehensive Centers serving multiple states should note which state(s) participated in each project. Regional Centers serving a single state (Alaska, California, New York, and Texas) should note which region(s) within the state participated (e.g., New York City vs. rest of state). Content Centers should specify which Regional Centers participated in the project.
X: Collaborations and Sources: Other CCs	If the Center used materials developed by one of the Content Centers in the course of designing or delivering its own services, list this Content Center as a **source**. If the Center collaborated with another Regional Center or Content Center on the design, development and/or delivery of products and services, list this Center as a **collaborator**. Note collaborations with other Comprehensive Centers only in this column.
XI: Collaborations and Sources: Other TA Providers	Note collaborations with other technical assistance providers, such as Regional Educational Laboratories or universities, in this column. If the Center used materials developed by another TA provider in the course of designing or delivering its own services, list this provider as a **source**. If the Center collaborated with another TA provider on the design, development and/or delivery of products and services, list this provider as a **collaborator.**

National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers
Inventory of Projects

Center Name: _____

I. No.	II. Name	III. Description	IV. Additional topics addressed? (From list in Exhibit A—enter appropriate number)	V. Activities and Deliverables	VI. Start Date	VII. End Date (enter "ongoing" if project is not complete)	VIII. Major, moderate, or minor project	IX. Target state(s), region(s) within a state, or Regional Centers(s)	X. Collab-orations and Sources: Other CCs	XI. Collab-orations and Sources: Other TA Providers
1. State Systems of Support for Schools Identified for Improvement										
2. Building District/Local Capacity to Support School Improvement, or Address Corrective Action and Restructuring										
3. Assessment (excluding assessment of special education students or ELL students)										
4. Reading/Language Arts Curriculum, Instruction, and/or Professional Development (includes Adolescent Literacy)										
5. Mathematics Curriculum, Instruction, and/or Professional Development										
6. Other Content Area Curriculum, Instruction, Professional Development, Standards-Based and Research-Based Instructional Frameworks										
7. High School Reform										
8. Special Education										
9. English Language Learners										

I. No.	II. Name	III. Description	IV. Additional topics addressed? (From list in Exhibit A—enter appropriate number)	V. Activities and Deliverables	VI. Start Date	VII. End Date (enter "ongoing" if project is not complete)	VIII. Major, moderate, or minor project	IX. Target state(s), region(s) within a state, or Regional Centers(s)	X. Collab-orations and Sources: Other CCs	XI. Collab-orations and Sources: Other TA Providers
10. Highly Qualified Teachers										
11. Parent and Community Involvement										
12. Supplemental Educational Services										
13. Other NCLB-Related TA										
14. Other										

**Projects nominated by the Center for review by expert panels

Exhibit A
Topic Areas and Definitions

Topic Area	Definition
1. State Systems of Support for Schools and Districts Identified for Improvement	Work that supports an SEA and/or its service delivery system carry out state-level responsibilities related to supporting district and schools identified for improvement. Service may target School Support Teams (SSTs), Distinguished Educators (DEs), or regional education service centers (RSCs, ESCs).
2. Building District/Local Capacity to Support School Improvement, or Address Corrective Action and Restructuring	Includes any work designed to build district- and school-level capacity to carry out school improvement and to make AYP, as required under NCLB, including remedies taken for schools or districts in "corrective action" or "restructuring."
3. Assessment	Design and implementation of local assessment systems, such as benchmark assessments aligned to state assessments; classroom assessments designed to support instructional change; or support for analysis and use of data to drive instructional change. Includes consultation on the design and implementation of state assessment systems. Does NOT include alternate assessments for SPED or ELL.
4. Language Arts Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development	Includes all work at all levels that addresses ELA, reading, and literacy. Includes projects on adolescent literacy. May include work related to curriculum alignment, research-based models or programs, standards and policy reviews, and teacher professional development.
5. Mathematics Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development	Includes all work at all levels that addresses mathematics and numeracy. May include work related to curriculum alignment, research-based models or programs, standards and policy reviews, and teacher professional development.
6. Other Content Area Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development; Standards-Based and Research-Based Instructional Frameworks	Includes all work at all levels that addresses specific content areas other than language arts or math, such as science and social studies. May include work related to curriculum alignment, research-based models or programs, standards and policy reviews, and teacher professional development. Includes work on curriculum alignment and policies related to academic standards that are NOT content area-specific.

Topic Area	Definition
7. High School Reform	Includes work related to smaller learning communities, ninth grade or high school transition, dropout prevention, high school policies.
8. Special Education	Includes all work related to special education, such as alternate assessments for the "1 percent and 2 percent students" or instructional/assessment strategies that target needs of students with IEPs.
9. English Language Learners	Includes all work related to ELL (i.e. LEP) students, such as work on Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for ELL students and instruction/assessment of ELL students.
10. Highly Qualified Teachers	All work addressing the NCLB requirement that states have 100 percent of teachers licensed to teach in their subject area and 100 percent of paraprofessionals with 2-years of college.
11.	
12. Supplemental Educational Services	Includes work related to helping SEAs evaluate and monitor Supplemental Education Services, as well as setting up systems for notification and outreach to districts, schools, and parents.
13. Other NCLB-related TA	Completing miscellaneous federal applications or reports, convening SEA staff to address miscellaneous NCLB topics; ongoing consultation on NCLB topics, including migrant education.
14. Other	Includes projects that do not fit under any other topic area, including websites, membership on SEA committees, and ongoing phone support. Includes projects building general skills and knowledge of leaders at all levels. Includes projects that assist clients with the review, collection, and translation of research, where there is no specific topic. If the research addresses a specific topic area, put the project in the appropriate row. Does not include internal or network meetings—these types of activities should not be included in the project inventory.

Exhibit B
Sample Project Inventory

Center Name: _____

Note: All examples in the table were taken from Year 2 baseline management plans.

I. No.	II. Name	III. Description	IV. Additional topics addressed?	V. Activities and Deliverables	VI. Start Date	VII. End Date	VIII. Major, moderate or minor project	IX. Target state(s), region(s), or centers(s)	X. Collab-orations and Sources: Other CCs	XI. Collab-orations and Sources: Other TA Providers
1. State Systems of Support for Schools Identified for Improvement										
1.	State TA system for PI districts and schools	Designed an integrated SEA TA system that reaches "program improvement" districts and schools		• Convened coordinating council; • Created inventory of existing TA efforts; • Helped create TA plan; • Gave PD and TA to school support teams	7/2006	Ongoing	Moderate			
2.	Statewide system of support**	Supported development of Regional School Service Centers as a system of support for addressing NCLB		• Helped create a plan to guide the Regional Network Strategy for the next five to seven years; • Developed the next RFP for the RSSCs; • Supported RSSC implementation; • Developed and helped deliver PD; • Developed a protocol for collecting information on implementation	7/2006	6/2007	Major	State A		
3.	"Significant Change in School Improvement and Restructuring"	Developed a modular handbook and workshop on implementation of fast-paced significant school improvement, including restructuring	2 (Local capacity)	• Drafted 8 modules for handbook to be used with SEA systems of support; • Presented at institute; • Revised and added workshop materials; • Consulted at CC A regional meeting			Major	All Regional CCs	Regional CC A	

4.	Support to School Improvement Team	Helped the SEA School Improvement Team to identify resource and design training for schools in "monitored" and "priority" statuses		• Attended meetings organized by SIP team and provided reflective syntheses; • Brokered resources and services available through RRC and CC networks	7/2006	6/2007	Minor	State A		
2. Building District/Local Capacity to Support School improvement, or Address Corrective Action and Restructuring										
5.	District tools for monitoring schools	Helped the SEA develop processes and tools for districts to use in monitoring the implementation of school restructuring plans		• Prepared draft processes and tools for monitoring; • Met with SEA school improvement staff to review/revise tools	7/2006	10/2006	Minor	State A		
6.	Leadership Institute on Helping Districts Assist Low-Performing Schools	Designed and implemented a PD plan to support the Local Education Agency Assistance Program		• Convened planning team to design the Leadership Institute; • Helped conduct institute; • Provided ongoing support to participants as they work with districts and schools	7/2006	6/2007	Moderate			
7.	Guidance to districts on restructuring schools	Assisted SEA in developing guidance for districts with schools in restructuring		• Assisted state in writing guidance protocol; • Piloted guidance; • Collected and prepared research; • Provided initial training to districts with schools in restructuring	7/2006	12/2006	Moderate	State A		
3. Assessment (excluding assessment of special education students or ELL students)										
8.	Growth models	Built SEA understanding of assessment to help in decision making about accountability growth models		• Identified state needs and create plan for growth model; • Assisted states accepted as pilot states; • Assisted ongoing development for other states	7/2006	Ongoing	Major	All states in region		

9.	Assessment data analysis**	Built SEA and other staff capacity by helping them train districts and schools in analyzing state assessment results and using them for instructional planning		• Met with SEA staff to plan PD; • Helped host Statewide Assessment Conference; • Continued to plan and offered training in assessment analysis; • Established a cadre of educators to provide PD to districts	5/2006	6/2007	Major	State A	Content CC A	
4. Reading/Language Arts Curriculum, Instruction, and/or Professional Development (includes Adolescent Literacy)										
10.	Adolescent Literacy Cadres	Organized and delivered training of adolescent literacy cadres made up of SEA staff		• Convened SEA work teams to analyze research; • Reviewed literacy diagnostic tools; • Customized a literacy assessment; • Conducted PD for SEA work teams on customized assessments	10/2006	6/2007	Moderate	All states in region	Content CC A; Content CC B; Content CC C	
11.	Effective Leadership in Literacy	Built SEA capacity to support "effective leadership in literacy for grades 6-12"		• Convened work group to discuss research; • Provided SEA with PD on Strategic Instruction Model; • Developed state literacy plan	7/2006	6/2007	Major	State A; State B	Content CC A	
5. Mathematics Curriculum, Instruction, and/or Professional Development										
12.	K-2 Mathematics Inventory	Developed and provided PD to a cadre of educators to help schools implement the state K-2 Mathematics Inventory		• Helped SEA design PD; • Helped design team pilot workshop; • Revised PD; • Helped deliver regional trainings prioritized for schools in improvement; • Reviewed feedback to redesign PD	7/2006	6/2007	Major	State A	Content CC A	

7. High School Reform										
13.	Implementing High School Task Force Report	Developed capacity of SEA to implement recommendations of HS Task Force Report related to high school redesign		• Work group and Steering Committee met to consider task force recommendations, research, best practice, and review of prior initiatives; • Identified "knowledge management" components needed to support state implementation; • Identified policies and practices needed to promote redesign; • Developed multi-year implementation plan.	9/2006	4/2007	Moderate			
8. Special Education										
14.	Assessing special needs students	Supported SEAs in establishing assessment and accountability systems that include and support special education, ELL, and low-income students	10 (ELL)	• Collected information from Content CC A on research- based practices; • Conducted SEA Needs Assessment; • Provided regional training(s) on Scientifically Based Research on assessment and accountability systems for special needs students	7/2006	Ongoing	Major	All states in region	Content CC A	
15.	Developing an Alternate Assessment	Assisted SEAs in developing Alternate Academic Assessments for the "1" of students who have significant cognitive disabilities	3 (Assessment)	• Identified needs and broker assistance in developing assessment; • Provided TA on development of assessment; • Provided ongoing TA on implementation	7/2006	6/2007	Moderate	State A; State B	Content CC A	
16.	Research Synthesis on Special Needs Students	Published Research Synthesis 1 focusing on teaching special-needs students	12 (HQT)	• Identified and evaluated existing research and syntheses; • Conducted gap analysis to identify research synthesis needs; • Wrote synthesis (50-60 pages); • Posted on on-line resource forum.	7/2006	9/2007	Major	All Regional CCs		

9. English Language learners										
17.	District guidance on the education of ELL students	Helped develop a comprehensive framework for educating English Language Learners to guide district work, including guidance on the use of formative assessments to improve instruction and on family and community engagement	13 (Parents)	• Facilitated meetings of the SEA task force responsible for developing and disseminating a comprehensive framework for the education of ELLs; • Assisted in integrating effective formative assessment practices for ELL students; • Assisted in formulating guidance on ELL family and community engagement strategies; • Provided consultation and resources from Content CC A	7/2006	6/2007	Major	State A	Content CC A	
18.	Addressing AMAOs	Assisted SEA in aligning Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives, standards, and assessments for ELL students		• Conducted a study on alignment of English Language Proficiency standards for grades K-12 with the state assessment for ELL students • Helped state reconfigure AMAOs to align with state test	8/2006	12/2006	Minor	State A; State B; State C		
10. Highly Qualified Teachers										
19.	"TQ Source Project"	Developed online resource clearinghouse that provides clients with policy and research data specifically related to teacher quality, as addressed in NCLB		• Developed "interactive data tool" based primarily on NCES data; • Updated "policy database" for state-by-state policy areas, including policies related to PD and teacher prep, recruitment, retention, certification, etc.; • Published next issue of "Tips and Tools: Emerging Strategies to Enhance Teacher Quality"; • Enhanced "Publications database" focusing on teacher quality research	7/2006	Ongoing	Major	All Regional CCs		

20.	Teacher Preparation and Licensure in literacy	Assisted SEA in reviewing teacher preparation and licensure requirements related to literacy	4 (Language arts)	• Assisted the Task Force on Licensure/Professional Development in revisiting preparation and licensure requirements related to literacy instruction for school leaders and teachers; • Discussed findings and possible next steps related to engagements with representatives from institutes of higher education	10/2006	2/2007	Minor	State A		
12. Supplemental Educational Services										
21.	"State Evaluation of Supplemental Educational Services" Manual	Updated "State Evaluation of SES" manual and assist with its use by Regional CCs		• Drafted updates to SES evaluation manual • Presented at September 2006 Institute • Revised based on evaluations and usage • Submitted evaluation report to ED	9/2006	4/2007	Major	All Regional CCs	Regional CC A	
13. Other NCLB-related TA										
22.	Enhancing Schoolwide Planning Materials	Assisted SEA in updating resources and training for district Title I directors on the topics of schoolwide planning, plan implementation, and district monitoring of school plans		• Helped update T1 schoolwide application and evaluation rubric; • Ensured that North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement school improvement processes include schoolwide plan components; • Reviewed need assessment results from district/schools; • Updated materials based on needs	7/2006	6/2007	Major	State A		

**Projects nominated by the Center for review by expert panels

DECISION INFORMATION RESOURCES, INC.

REQUEST FOR MATERIALS FOR EXPERT PANEL REVIEWS

September 10, 2007

Dear [Center Director]:

I am happy to report that we have completed the sampling process for your site and have selected the following (n) projects for review:

Project Name	Project Description

These projects will be rated for *technical quality* by panels of expert reviewers, and for *relevance* and *usefulness* through surveys of project participants.

Assembling Panel Review Materials

Attached you will find a Request for Materials form that includes some basic guidance for assembling materials for the panel review process. This form also includes the project cover sheet, which should be completed for each project. This cover sheet will be provided to the review panelists and is an important source of background and contextual information about the project.

To facilitate the review process, we ask that you do the following:

- Submit 1 hard copy and 1 electronic version of all the materials that comprise the review packet for each project. The hard copy version will allow us to assess whether the volume of material is appropriate, and will serve as a quick reference source should questions arise about the review packet.

- If an item is not available in electronic format or if you would prefer the reviewers to have a hard copy version of a particular item (for example, a training binder with multiple tabs and color handouts included), please provide 3 additional hard copies of that item.

- Each review packet should include a cover sheet (using the attached template) that lists all of the materials included in the packet. Electronic versions of the materials should be filed together in a project folder that is clearly labeled with the project name. Feel free to use subfolders within the project folder if you think it will help reviewers organize the materials (for example, background/research base, meeting notes, training materials, etc.) in a more understandable way. You might also want to include the file name of each document referenced in question #5 of the cover sheet so that reviewers can easily sort through and match the documents on the cover sheet with the files they receive.

- Please send your hard copy materials (bundled by project with a cover sheet on each), along with a CD containing separate folders for each of the sampled projects to:

  DIR
  Attn: _____
  [address]

  Materials are due no later than Oct 19, 2007.

I have attached a copy of the quality scoring rubric so that you can see what the panelists will be looking for in the review process. As you begin to assemble the materials for panel review, we offer the following guidance:

- With the exception of the cover sheet and the participant list, all materials provided in the review package should be materials that already exist. We do not expect you to create any new materials for the review process.

- Materials included in the packet should focus on work conducted between summer 2006 and summer 2007. Materials developed before summer 2006 can be included if they provide relevant contextual or background information. Materials developed after summer 2007 will be considered in the next round of panel reviews (for the 2007-2008 program year), if that particular project is sampled again for review.

- Make sure you have documented the "knowledge base" upon which the project was developed. As you can see in the attached rubric, this is a very important factor in the quality rating. Depending on the topic area and nature of the project, the knowledge

base might include empirical research, laws and regulations, or professional wisdom[68].

- Provide enough materials to allow reviewers to understand the project substantively, with a particular focus on the work conducted in the 2006-2007 program year. This does not mean sending everything ever done or developed in connection with the project. You want to provide reviewers with a sufficient basis for their ratings but at the same time, not overwhelm them with materials.

- Focus more on the substantive materials than on those dealing with process or administrative issues alone. You do not need to include every e-mail message or set of meeting notes on a project unless it provides critical contextual information or speaks directly to the technical quality of the project. For example, if you are assembling materials about an annual forum or institute, you should not include meeting notes about conference logistics or attendee evaluation results, but you should include notes relating to the development of the agenda and selection of presenters.

If you have any questions about what materials to include in the review packet or how to complete the cover sheet, please contact your site visitor.

Compiling Lists of Project Participants

For each project selected for the evaluation, a sample of participants will receive a short, web-based survey from the national evaluation. This is the reason we are asking each Regional Comprehensive Center (RCC) and each Content Center to compile a list of *all* state-level staff who have participated in each project sampled for the evaluation. Content Centers should also include all RCC-based staff, as well as all state-level staff, on their lists of project participants. Compile a separate list of participants for each project sampled, allowing duplication of names across lists.

Defining "participants." "Project participants" include all those who have served on task forces and work groups associated with the project; state-level or RCC staff who have attended conferences, technical assistance retreats, consultations, and other meetings that are part of the project; and state-level or RCC staff who have received written materials or other resources disseminated under the project.

If the Comprehensive Center collaborated with state-level staff to provide a service to others, and that collaboration was intended to build the capacity of the state in some way, then all of the state-level staff who collaborated with the Center on the project should be

[68] Professional wisdom is the judgment that individuals acquire through experience and is reflected through consensus views on decisions on implementation. Grover J. Whitehurst. *Evidence-Based Education*, 2002.

included on the list of project participants. These collaborators will be included in the pool of potential survey respondents.

The same logic applies to Content Center projects that involve collaborations with RCC staff. Again, if the collaboration was intended to build the capacity of the RCC in some way, then all RCC staff who collaborated on the project with the Content Center should be included on the list of project participants and will be included in the pool of potential survey respondents.

Defining "state-level." For the purposes of this evaluation, "state-level" participants in Regional Center or Content Center projects may include the following:

- State education agency (SEA) employees and consultants
- Employees of other state agencies, such as governors' offices
- Employees of intermediate education agencies[69] who assist schools on behalf of the state
- Individuals who serve on school support teams as part of a statewide system of school support under NCLB, including local educators (school district administrators, principals, and teachers)
- Individuals who serve on state-level work groups or task forces, including local educators

Local educators who are not serving on school support teams and are not members of a state-level work group or task force should ***not*** be included in project participant lists.

RCC staff. Content Centers should include all RCC staff who have participated in each project, in addition to state-level project participants. Participant lists for some Content Center projects may include no RCC staff, some may include both RCC and state-level staff, and some may be made up entirely of RCC staff, depending on the nature of the project.

Contact information. For each project participant, please provide a name, title (if available), affiliation, email address, telephone number, and regular mail address. Because surveys will be administered via the web, with follow-up by regular mail and by telephone, all of this contact information is critical. Send a separate participant list for

[69] Intermediate education agencies are usually established by state statute, but their governance structures and funding sources vary from state to state. Depending on the state, they are known as Area Education Agencies (AEA), Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), Cooperative Education Service Agencies (CESA), County Offices of Education (COE), Education Service Centers/Cooperatives (ESC), Education Service Districts (ESD), Regional Education Service Agency (RESA), or Regional Education Service Centers (RESC). Association of Educational Service Agencies, "Questions Asked About Educational Service Agencies," downloaded from http://www.aesa.us/Q&ABro04.pdf on July 6, 2007.

each sampled project, following the template shown below (using either Word or Excel to create the file).

Project name: Really Important Project									
Last name	**First name**	**Title (if available)**	**Affiliation/ Organization**	**Email address**	**Telephone number**	**Street address**	**City**	**State**	**ZIP**
Doe	John	Title I Director	State Department of Public Instruction	jdoe@sea.k12.us	(101) 555-1234	99 State Street, Room 100	State Capital	ST	10001
Etc.									

Participant lists for each project should be included with your sample review materials and sent to DIR **no later than Oct 19, 2007**.

For additional information. If you have any questions about the participant lists, or if there are special circumstances pertaining to a project or to a group of participants that you would like to discuss, please contact _____ at Policy Studies Associates. _____ can be reached at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or by email at _____@_____.

Thank you for your continued cooperation. We look forward to receiving your materials.

Sincerely,

Vice President
Decision Information Resources

National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers
Request for Materials for Expert Panel Review

The projects below have been sampled from the Project Inventory Form that your Center completed for the most recent project year. These projects will be rated for **quality** by expert review panelists for the national evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers. Surveys of participants in these projects will collect client ratings of the projects' **relevance** and **usefulness.**

Project	**Activities and Deliverables**

In order to facilitate this process, **for each project** please provide us with:

(1) Copies of the materials that together fairly represent each of these items. This should include: documents (electronically, wherever possible) leading up to, or resulting from, these efforts–including plans, agendas, meeting notes, handouts, presentations, follow-up memos, resolutions, instruments, assessments, summaries, syntheses, papers, reports and memoranda of agreement. In other words, we are asking for materials that fully describe these products and services for the reviewers and give them a sufficient basis for rating their **quality**.

(2) A cover sheet (one per project) that provides background and contextual information about the project. (See attached page for specific questions to be answered on the cover sheet.)

(3) A list of the state-level participants in each project, including names, affiliations, and contact information.

Questions about what materials to provide and how to complete the cover sheet should be directed to your evaluation team liaison.

These materials will be the basis upon which the reviewers will make their ratings.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this data collection instrument is **1850-0823**. The time required to complete these worksheets is estimated to average four hours per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data sources, gather the data needed, and respond to the questions. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202-4651.

Cover Sheet to Accompany Materials Sent to Review Panel for Sampled Projects

Name of Comprehensive Center _____

Name of person completing this form _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Information about Sampled Projects:

Project Name _____

Project Inventory # _____

1. Describe the purpose of this project and its intended outcome(s).

2. Who is the customer/client?

3. Describe the circumstances that led to the provision of this project. In this description, be sure to indicate whether it was initiated by the Center or requested by the client.

4. List the activities and deliverables associated with this project, and describe how they relate to the overall project.

5. Please provide a list of the materials and documents you are sending for the review panel. For each, describe the Comprehensive Center's role and contribution to the materials associated with this project (i.e., the materials sent to reviewers for rating the quality and relevance of this project.) Please let us know if you used materials developed by another source and, if so, provide information about that source.

6. What is the research basis for the product or service? Where appropriate, please provide a citation for the research or practice literature upon which it is based.

Sample Follow-Up Memo

Dear [Center Director]:

Members of the evaluation team met in Houston last week to look over the review materials submitted by the Centers. In our cursory review of the PCC projects, we had trouble locating certain items that were either described on the project cover sheet(s) or that one would expect to see in the project materials.

Project Name	Issue Identified

If these items were included in your review package, please let us know where in the materials we can locate them so that we can make sure that the peer review panelists will be able to find them.

If you didn't intend to include them in the package, please let us know.

If you would like to send new copies of these items or additional materials to address the issue(s) identified, please forward copies electronically to _____@_____ for hard copies to [name], DIR, [address] no later than November 8, 2007.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Best,
[name]

Appendix C
Describing Center Operations

Describing Center Operations

This appendix contains a description of the process used to code the objectives within Center management plans, the PIFs, and the project cover sheets. This appendix also includes a description of the site visits, the open-ended interview protocols used for the 2007 site visits to CCs and RCCs, and the closed-ended prompts administered to the Centers in summer 2008.

Center Management Plan, Project Inventory, and Cover Sheet Coding and Intercoder Reliability

Data from the Center management plans, project inventory forms (PIFs), and the project cover sheets were coded by the evaluation team to build the sample frame and describe Center operations. Below is an explanation of the set of four procedures used in the coding process–(1) establish the code sets, (2) train coders, (3) code management plans, PIFs, and cover sheets, (4) resolve coding disagreements–as well as a summary of the level of intercoder reliability achieved through this process.

Establish the Code Sets

Based on initial review of the project cover sheets, the PIFs, and the other materials from the Centers (such as the Center management plans), the evaluation team established code sets to use during the coding process. One set of codes was used to code the objectives stated in the Center management plans and the topics of the projects on the PIFs. Another set of codes was used to code the project cover sheets.

Center Management Plan and PIF Code Set

The team developed codes to summarize the primary topics in which Centers were doing their work. Review of Center materials resulted in the identification of categories of distinct domains or topics. These 22 specific topic codes are described below in terms of the substantive knowledge base the evaluation team determined would be covered by that topic.[70] In the coding process, this set of possible codes was used to code the topic areas for the Center objectives as stated in their management plans as well as to code the topic area of each project that Centers submitted on their PIFs.

- ***Components of effective systems of support–state, district, school.*** This category included: (1) Design of state systems to meet NCLB requirements for statewide systems of support for districts and schools in corrective action or identified as in need of improvement [Sec. 1117(a)]; (2) Interventions for schools or districts in need of improvement or corrective action; (3) For schools, Centers' projects addressed a range of options for school leadership and organization, professional development and classroom practice, and development and implementation of school improvement plans. For districts, Centers' projects typically addressed district leadership and development as well as implementation of district improvement plans.

[70] Discussion in the report refers primarily to the 22 specific substantive topics. However, as a small number of sampled projects fell into the category of "other" topic area, description of all the projects in the study sample by topic as displayed in Exhibit 2.4 includes the topic area of "other" as the 23rd category.

- ***Data use/Data-driven decisionmaking.*** Use of data for educational program improvement.
- ***Formative assessment.*** Guidelines for implementing formative or benchmark assessment, comprehensive formative assessment systems.
- ***Reading***. Alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments with state standards in reading; teacher professional development in reading (not specific to adolescent literacy).
- ***Adolescent literacy.*** Policy and practices relevant to literacy at middle school and high school levels.
- ***Mathematics.*** Alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments with state standards in mathematics as well as teacher professional development in mathematics.
- ***Dropout prevention.*** Policies and practices specifically designed to keep high school students in school through graduation.
- ***High school redesign/reform.*** High school renewal, school organization, curriculum, and instructional practice.
- ***Transition to high school.*** Policies and practices designed to improve the preparation of middle-school students for success in high school.
- ***Special education–curriculum, instruction, and professional development.*** Curriculum, instruction, and professional development for service to students with disabilities.
- ***Special education–assessment.*** Implementation and interpretation of assessments for students with disabilities, including alternate assessments.
- ***English Language Learners.*** Curriculum, instruction, and professional development for service to ELL students; Title III improvement plans. This category also includes determination of ELLs' achievement of AYP through assessment of Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives; implementation and interpretation of ELL assessments.
- ***Highly Qualified Teacher provisions of NCLB.*** State plans and policies required in connection with the HQT provisions of NCLB, including HOUSSE and equitable distribution.
- ***Teacher preparation and induction.*** State policies and practices for pre-service teacher preparation and induction of novice teachers as well as activities targeting teacher retention.
- ***Teacher professional development.*** State policies and local practices for the planning and delivery of professional development for teachers (not specific to reading, mathematics, high schools, ELLs, or special education). Activities in the area of effective teaching are included in this category.
- ***Supplemental Educational Services (SES).*** Application process to select vendors, monitoring services, and evaluating performance of providers.
- ***Response to Intervention (RtI).*** RtI implementation, moving RtI into general education, RtI as a strategy for school improvement.
- ***Migrant education.*** Statutorily required state Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) process for migrant education.

- ***Indian/Native American education.*** Policies and practices to support the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; includes support of and compliance with ESEA Title VII.
- ***Data management compliance.*** Title I compliance, EDEN/EDFacts reporting requirements.
- ***Assessment design.*** Developing new assessments for use by clients; includes classroom, benchmark, and state grade-level assessments for federal accountability; activities may include design, item development, validation, reliability testing, alignment studies.
- ***Parent involvement.*** Title I and other parent involvement activities.

Cover Sheet Code Sets

The team developed codes to describe project activities and resources, contributions CCs made to RCC projects, and contributions RCCs made to CC projects. The development of these codes was informed by the team's review of the Center management plans, the transcripts of the interviews conducted in 2007, and a preliminary review of all project cover sheets. The code sets used to code the project cover sheets are shown below along with the criteria used to assign that code.

Types of Project Activities and Resources

- ***Engagement of participants in project planning*** was coded for projects that offered some or all of their participants the opportunity to take part in designing the project. This involvement went beyond merely expressing a need for technical assistance; rather, it included participant involvement in shaping the specific assistance that was delivered (who did what, when, and why in technical assistance) at various stages of technical assistance delivery).

  Project planning was different from "ongoing consultation and follow-up," though the same project may have had both components. "Ongoing consultation and follow-up" occurred when the Center provided service to clients on multiple occasions, whereas "engagement of participants in project planning" was specific to the Center working with the client to plan later service.

- ***Research collections or syntheses*** were research-based materials distributed to participants in a project. In some instances these products were developed by the Center conducting the project, but in others they were existing research materials that the Center collected and distributed.

- ***Training events*** were designed to impart skills to participants, equipping them to carry out a particular program or strategy. The content of trainings was discrete and specialized, and participants attended trainings expecting to learn something specific and be able to do something differently afterward. Participants and trainers assumed that the primary purpose of the training was for the participant to

learn something from the trainer. Projects with multiple trainings to the same participants over time were also coded as "ongoing consultation and follow-up."

- ***Conferences*** featured presentations of information to audiences from multiple speakers or discussants representing a range of perspectives. They focused on informing the participants, not training them, and they were single events rather than series of meetings. The conference scope was broader than trainings, in that presentations or discussions in a single conference could have addressed multiple issues, programs, or solutions; whereas a training focused on a single strategy or program. Conference participants varied in their type, interest, and expectation for what they wanted to learn at the conference. Conferences also included symposia and forums in which participants came at common questions with varying perspectives.

- ***Support for development of a formal plan to implement a program or policy*** referred to instances in which Center technical assistance supported work by participants that led to a plan for implementing a program or policy. A formal state plan codified activities that were expected to occur in the state in order to serve state purposes with the intention to guide individuals and units toward a common goal. Formal plans may have been required by the federal or state government, or may have been initiated within the SEA to address a specific problem. This activity did not include service plans.

- ***Task force meetings and work*** were engagements over multiple interactions in which a Center provided technical assistance to a work group who were themselves constituted as a task force to address a state problem. Center support of a task force meant that the Center was a regular participant in task force meetings, and Center support ranged from setting the agenda and facilitating meetings to providing input upon request. A project was coded as "task force meetings and work," when there was a task force that was trying to accomplish some purpose—not just to plan or follow up on Center technical assistance, but to do something for its state (or, occasionally, a group of states). Center participation in a task force was also coded "ongoing consultation and follow-up" if the Center provided assistance on an ongoing basis over time. If the Center was working with the task force to plan service, the project was also coded "engagement of participants in project planning."

- ***Ongoing consultation and follow-up*** was either a series of consultations (i.e., fulfilling repeated requests from participants for technical assistance) or sustained follow-up with individuals who had participated in some other kind of assistance (e.g., a conference or training). Ongoing consultation occurred when there were multiple service contacts over time, all related to the project goal or topic. The interactions focused on a client question or need. This code did not include projects with one-time contacts, such as projects that provided a large conference with no follow-up. It also did not include the production of publications that are not accompanied with follow-up assistance directly to the client.

RCC and CC Contributions to RCC and CC Projects

- ***RCC projects with CC contribution*** were projects in which the CC explicitly contributed a service or resource used by the RCC or its clients as part of RCC project activities. A CC could contribute to an RCC project in any of three ways:
  - ***CC provided materials used in this RCC project.*** The RCC must have used CC materials in specific delivery activities or in planning.
  - ***CC provided advice to the RCC on this project.*** The RCC consulted or collaborated with the CC when making decisions about what or how to deliver assistance to project participants. Participants may or may not have had direct interaction with the CC or CC materials.
  - ***CC delivered technical assistance to RCC project participants***. The CC provided service directly to the participants, whether face-to-face, by phone, or virtually, regardless of what role RCC staff had in this RCC project activity.
- ***CC projects with RCC contribution*** were projects in which the RCC explicitly contributed assistance used by the CC or its clients as part of CC project activities. An RCC could contribute to a CC project in either of two ways:
  - ***RCC recruited participants or brokered service.*** The RCC connected the CC and its clients for the purpose of participation in the project. The RCC may have been driven by the CC's need for participants who could benefit from a specific project, or by a client's need for specific services or products that a CC could deliver.
  - ***RCC delivered technical assistance to CC project participants***. The RCC provided service directly to participants, whether face to face, by phone, or virtually, regardless of what role CC staff had in this CC project activity.

Train Coders

All coders were senior members of the evaluation team and were trained to use the established code sets. As part of the training, coders discussed each of the codes in the code set to ensure all coders had a shared understanding of their meaning. They also coded sample items and reviewed, coded, and discussed the final codes using representative sample text. The evaluation team also used the discussions in the coder training to verify that the established codes were clear and well understood.

Code Center Management Plans, PIFs, and Cover Sheets

All of the objectives in the Center management plans, the PIFs, and cover sheets were independently coded by two coders. For the Center management plans, each coder reviewed the objectives section of the plan and determined the topic(s) in which the Center indicated they planned to work. For the PIFs, each coder reviewed the project description and assigned the project subject code for each of the 364 projects. The cover sheets were reviewed by each coder to categorize the project information submitted by Centers (i.e., project purpose, customer/client, project activities and deliverables, roles and contributions of Centers, research basis for products and services) and to assign codes according to the coding criteria described earlier (see p. C-5) for identifying the various types of project activities and resources and the ways Centers contributed to projects.

Resolve Coding Disagreements

Members of the evaluation team compared the coding worksheets from each coder to determine the final coded responses for each item. In cases where the coders agreed, the final response was clear. In cases where the first and second coders did not arrive at the same code, they met to review evidence for the codes and choose a final code. If the first and second coder were unable to reconcile their codes, a third senior study team member worked with the coders to determine the final code for that item. The product of this step was the final codes for the topic areas included in the Center management plan objectives, the topic areas for the 364 projects on the PIFs, and the three areas described above for the project cover sheets.

Analysis of Intercoder Reliability

The evaluation team calculated the percent agreement between the first and second coder as well as Cohen's Kappa analysis. The percent agreement calculation used the number of agreements divided by total number of possible responses. The Cohen's Kappa calculation used the number observed to agree minus the number expected to agree by chance divided by the number of items minus the number expected to agree.

For the topic area assignment of the Center objectives stated on their management plans, the first and second coder agreed on 452 of 462 possible topic area assignments (98 percent agreement across the 22 topic areas for each of 21 Centers). The overall Cohen's Kappa between the two coders was .96 for this coding activity.

For the PIFs, the first and second coder agreed 87 percent of the time (on 318 of the 364 subject codes) and the overall Cohen's Kappa between the two coders was .92. Chapter 3 of the report used this information at an aggregated level–work done by subject, by Center–showing whether or not each Center had at least one project listed on its PIF for each of the 22 subject areas. To determine the intercoder reliability at this aggregate level, the evaluation team examined the final 462 cell matrix (22 topic areas for each of 21 Centers) showing the subject

areas in which each Center reported projects on its PIF against the similar matrices for the first and second coder. When viewed at this level, the intercoder reliability was even higher. Of the 462 possible yes/no designations, 98 percent were the same for the first and second coder, with a Cohen's Kappa of .95.

For the project cover sheets, the first and second coder agreed on 1,572 of 1,830 possible codes (122 projects with a possible 15 codes for each project) or 86 percent of the time. The overall Cohen's Kappa between the two coders was .89.

Site Visit Interviews

Two rounds of site visits were conducted with the Center Director and other senior Center staff to gather information about the Center operations during the 2006-07 program year through structured interviews. The first round of interviews in summer 2007 were based on open-ended questions posed to RCC and CC staff about Center organization, major areas of focus, communication with client organizations, sources of knowledge used, approaches taken in quality assurance, modes of delivering technical assistance, and barriers they encountered (see page C-9 for the CC protocol and page C-12 for the RCC staff interview protocol). The protocol for the second interviews included closed-ended, binary questions to follow up specifically about activities that had occurred in 2006-07, topics that had been addressed, and work requests that had fallen outside their planned scope of work. Additional questions targeted the strategies that Centers had used for planning work and engaging clients, the sources for content expertise, and sources they used for vetting their products and services (see protocol on page C-15). Responses to the second interview prompts are reported in chapter 3 as part of the description of Center operations.

National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers

Content Center (CC) Staff Site Visit Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your professional background and areas of expertise. What is your primary role within this Center? Describe the tasks you might perform or decisions you might make during a typical one- or two-week period?

2. Give us an overview of your Center's internal structure and operations:
   --How are staff and consultants assigned, and work organized (e.g., by Regional Center, functional specialization)?
   --How is communication initiated and supported between the Center and its clients?
   --How are decisions made regarding the provision of services (e.g., the nature and duration of services)?

3. Describe your Center's relationship with your larger host organization. What are the advantages and disadvantages to the Center of being housed in the host organization? To what extent can you access expertise and other resources from your host organization to support the work of the Content Center?

4. Describe your Center's relationship with the Regional Centers (e.g., the frequency, methods, and content of communication). Do you interact with some Regional Centers more than others?

5. Describe your Center's relationship with other Content Centers (e.g., the frequency, methods, and content of communication). Do you interact with some Content Centers more than others? How do you work together with other Content Centers to define roles and responsibilities when there is overlap in your areas of expertise or organizational capabilities?

6. Can you give us some specific examples of ways in which other Content Centers or Regional Centers have helped or supported your Center to achieve a goal or objective?

7. Describe the major focus areas or initiatives your Center has addressed or engaged in during the past year. How did you determine these specific priorities? To what extent do you find it necessary to conduct formal needs assessments? [If applicable] How are these done?

8. Which of your current initiatives do you consider to be the largest or most significant (e.g., in terms of importance, amount of resources allocated, etc.)?

   Prompts:

--How and why did it begin?
--What products and services have you provided?
--What are the goals and objectives; how much progress have you made to date?
--What obstacles and challenges have you encountered?

9. To what extent do you plan and initiate the delivery of products and services to the Regional Centers versus respond to specific Regional Center requests?

10. To what extent have Regional Centers expressed needs that are different from your Center's priorities?

11. How and to what extent do Regional Centers vary in the nature (e.g., topics); frequency, and type (e.g., seminars, requests for materials, etc.) of assistance they request?

12. Other than the Regional Centers, whom do you serve? What needs and priorities have these other clients expressed? To what extent do you work directly with states? [If applicable] What products and services do you typically provide to states, and which offices do you work with? To what extent do you work with the U.S. Department of Education?

13. To what extent do needs and priorities overlap among different clients? Describe any strategies you may have developed for maximizing your Center's efficiency in responding to similar needs across multiple clients?

14. To what extent do your clients request products or services that address special education-related needs or questions?

15. What technical assistance methods do you rely on the most as you try to meet priority needs? Are there unique drawbacks or benefits associated with employing specific techniques?

    Prompts:
    --facilitating inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration (with whom?)
    --identifying and disseminating documents and other products
    --developing new products and plans
    --assisting clients to implement new plans or systems
    --hosting workshops, seminars, and other training events
    --identifying and using scientifically based evidence

16. Where and how do you get the substantive knowledge that you use in your products and services? How do you decide what to use and what not to use in your work with clients? What quality standards or guidelines, if any, do you apply?

17. Where does your Center turn for help when, for example: (1) you experience challenges or encounter obstacles that limit your effectiveness, or (2) you need to increase

institutional capacity (e.g., develop new expertise or sharpen your skills in a particular area)? [If applicable]:

--Give specific examples that illustrate how others have helped your Center.
--Indicate if you seek help on an as-needed basis, or whether there are regularly scheduled workshops and trainings?

18. What does your Center do best? What kinds of needs are you best equipped to address? As you consider your Center's many objectives, which ones do you believe you have met most satisfactorily?

19. In what ways, if any, has your Center changed in recent years (e.g., over the past one to two years)? Describe, for example, new developments in how you organize and operate, hire and deploy staff and consultants, use technology, allocate resources, or in how you otherwise plan, design, or deliver technical assistance. What motivated these changes and what kinds of effects or outcomes have resulted?

20. In what ways, if any, has the context within which you work changed in recent years (e.g., over the past one to two years)? Describe, for example, shifts in needs and priorities, new developments in your field, or changes in rules or regulations that affect your Center and the work that you do. What impact has this had on your Center, and on the nature and effectiveness of the work that you do?

21. With which Regional Centers do you work most frequently? How does your organization assess whether it is helping to build capacity within these Centers?

22. What factors and conditions obstruct or hinder your work in significant ways? How have you tried to address them and with what level of success?

23. The quality and effectiveness of technical assistance is dependent on many factors. Based on your experiences, what recommendations or suggestions would you make to the U.S. Department of Education, state policymakers, your clients, or others, regarding ways to improve or support the work of the current Content Centers?

National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers

Regional Center (RCC) Staff Site Visit Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your professional background and areas of expertise. What is your primary role within this organization? Describe the tasks you might perform or decisions you might make during a typical one- or two-week period?

2. Give us an overview of your Center's internal structure and operations:
   --How are staff and consultants assigned?
   --How is communication initiated and supported between the Center and its clients?
   --How are decisions made regarding the provision of services (e.g., the nature and duration of services)?
   --How do you organize your work (e.g., by state, functional specialization)?

3. Describe your Center's relationship with your larger host organization. What are the advantages and disadvantages to the Center of being housed in the host organization? To what extent can you access expertise and other resources from your host organization to support the work of the Regional Center?

4. Describe the major focus areas that your Center has addressed or engaged in during the past year. How did you determine these specific priorities? To what extent do you find it necessary to conduct formal needs assessments? [If applicable] How are these done?

5. Which focus area do you consider to be the largest or most significant (in terms of importance, amount of resources allocated, etc.)? Tell us about it.

   Prompts:
   --How and why did it begin?
   --What products and services have you provided?
   --What are the goals and objectives, and how much progress have you made to date?
   --What obstacles and challenges have you encountered?

6. In your work with states, what aspects of NCLB is your Center most often called upon to address within your region? Is there much variation among SEAs in this regard? Describe the specific kinds of help that are most often requested.

7. To what extent have states expressed different or additional needs to those described above?

8. Describe your relationships with each of the states in your region (e.g., the frequency, duration, and purpose of your interactions with them). To what extent do these interactions help to shape your Center's priorities and policies?

9. With which offices or departments within states do you work most frequently? Does this vary among the states in your region? Is there a coordinating body within each state or among the states that facilitates communication with your Center? Please name the senior managers with whom you coordinate your work in each state.

10. Other than states, whom do you serve? What priorities have emerged among these other clients? How often do you serve these nonstate clients? Are you able to be as responsive to them as you would like?

11. Describe your relationships with each of the Content Centers (e.g., the frequency, duration, and purpose of your interactions with them). To what extent do these interactions help to shape your Center's priorities and policies?

12. Consider the full range of needs and priorities that this Center, the states, and other clients within the region have identified. To what extent do needs and priorities overlap among different clients? Describe any strategies you may have developed for maximizing your organization's efficiency in responding to similar needs across multiple clients.

13. What technical assistance methods do you rely on the most as you try to meet priority needs? Are there particular drawbacks or benefits associated with employing specific techniques?

    Prompts:
    --facilitating inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration (with whom?)
    --identifying and disseminating documents and other products
    --developing new products and plans
    --assisting clients to implement new plans or systems
    --hosting workshops, seminars, and other training events
    --identifying and using scientifically based evidence

14. Where and how do you get the substantive knowledge that you use in your products and services? How do you decide what to use and what not to use in your work with clients? What quality standards or guidelines, if any, do you apply?

15. Where does your Center turn for help when, for example: (1) you experience challenges or encounter obstacles that limit your effectiveness, or (2) you need to increase institutional capacity (e.g., develop new expertise or sharpen your skills in a particular area)? [If applicable]:

    --Give specific examples that illustrate how the Content Centers and other organizations have helped your Center.
    --Indicate if you seek help on an as-needed basis, or whether there are regularly scheduled workshops and trainings.

16. Describe your organization's relationship with the Content Centers and other Regional Centers (e.g., the frequency, methods, and content of communication between organizations).

Do you interact with some Content Centers or Regional Centers more than others? Can you give us some specific examples of ways in which other Centers have helped to increase your capacity or effectiveness, or ways your organization has supported the work of other Centers?

17. What does your Center do best? What kinds of needs are you best equipped to address? As you consider your organization's many objectives, which ones do you believe you have met most satisfactorily?

18. In what ways, if any, has your organization changed in recent years (e.g., over the past one to two years)? Describe, for example, new developments in how you organize and operate, hire and deploy staff and consultants, use technology, allocate resources, or in how you otherwise plan, design, or deliver technical assistance. What motivated these changes and what kinds of effects or outcomes have resulted?

19. In what ways, if any, has all or parts of the region in which you work changed in the past two years? Describe, for example, any political, social, institutional, legal, economic, or demographic changes that have affected the education system in significant ways. What impact has this had on your Center, and on the nature and effectiveness of the work that you do?

20. To what extent have the states in your region changed (e.g., structurally or operationally) as a direct result of your Center's efforts? [If applicable] Give specific examples of changes that have occurred.

21. How does your Center assess whether it is helping to build capacity within the states in your region? If change has been difficult to achieve, why do you think that is the case?

22. What factors and conditions obstruct or hinder your work in significant ways? How have you tried to address them and with what level of success?

23. The quality and effectiveness of technical assistance is dependent on many factors. What recommendations or suggestions would you make to the U.S. Department of Education, state policymakers, your clients, or others, regarding ways to improve or support the work of the current Regional Comprehensive Centers?

National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers Interview Prompts

On-site, the site visitor asked the Center to respond to the items shown in the following tables, with respect to Center objectives and operations in 2006-07.

Table 1. Management Plan Objectives That Address Particular Topics

Topics	In management plan (Y/N)
a. Components of Effective Systems of Support --State, District, School	
b. Data Use / Data-driven decision making	
c. Formative Assessment	
d. Reading	
e. Adolescent Literacy	
f. Mathematics	
g. Dropout Prevention	
h. High School Redesign/Reform	
i. Transition to High School	
j. Special Education – curriculum, instruction and professional development	
k. Special Education – assessment	
l. English Language Learners	
m. Highly Qualified Teacher provisions of NCLB	
n. Teacher preparation and induction	
o. Teacher professional development	
p. Supplemental Educational Services (SES)	
q. Response to Intervention (RtI)	
r. Migrant education	
s. Indian/Native American education	
t. Data Management Compliance	
u. Assessment Design	
v. Parent Involvement	
w. Other	

Table 2. Center Strategies for Planning Work

Center strategies:	(Y/N)
a. Needs assessment through survey of client staff	
b. Needs assessment through analysis of state performance data or accountability plans	
c. Needs assessment through analysis of state and federal policy context	
d. Needs assessment through meetings or other communication with clients	
e. Center included client input when writing the original grant proposal or cooperative agreement with ED	
f. Center includes client input when writing annual management/work plan	
g. Center communicates directly with the director of client organizations to plan the Center's work	
h. Center builds on relationships with clients that existed prior to the Center's grant award.	
i. Center refers to parameters set by NCLB or the Center's authorizing legislation when negotiating with clients to plan its work	

Table 3. Center Strategies for Building Client Engagement and Buy-In

Center strategies:	(Y/N)
a. Work on topics outside planned scope of work	
b. Work on tasks outside planned scope of work	
c. Work with primary service recipients outside planned scope of work	
d. Sponsor large events to make contact with many clients	
e. Form work groups <u>within</u> client organizations that bring together staff from multiple departments/divisions to discuss service needs and delivery	
f. Form work groups <u>across</u> client organizations to discuss service needs and delivery	
g. Offer service to support existing client programs/projects/policies	
h. Hires former employees of client organizations (SEAs or RCCs)	
i. Involves clients in making hiring decisions about Center staff	
j. Has staff positions designated for serving as an in-house liaison to a specific client organization (SEA or RCC), maintaining office space within the client's building	

Table 4. Center Strategies for Managing Work Requests Falling Outside Their Planned Scope

Center strategies:	(Y/N)
a. Center preempted requests for work outside its planned scope by having introductory meetings with clients in order to define the parameters of work it would do	
b. Center refers to parameters set by NCLB or the Center's authorizing legislation when negotiating with clients	
c. Center agrees to work outside its planned scope in order to build a working relationship with clients	
d. Center has a staff member and process for ensuring that Center work is within its work plan	
e. Center submits a revised work plan for ED approval before responding to requests outside its plan	
f. Center has declined to provide a service because it was outside of its planned scope	

Table 5. Sources of Content Expertise

Source	(Y/N)
a. Center staff themselves (lead organization and/or subcontractors)	
b. Other staff in the lead organization, not formally employed by the Center	
c. Other staff in subcontractor organization(s)	
d. Content Center(s)	
e. Universities	
f. State education agencies	
g. What Works Clearinghouse	
h. Professional associations (e.g., AERA, CCSSO)	
i. Consulting firms or private contractors	
j. Other regional Center(s)	
k. Other federally funded technical assistance providers (not part of the Center)	
l. Regional labs	

Table 6. Sources for Vetting for Products and Services Prior to Delivery

Source	(Y/N)
a. Internal quality control by Center staff (lead organization and/or subcontractors)	
b. Other staff in the lead organization, not formally employed by the Center	
c. Other staff in subcontractor organization(s)	
d. U.S. Department of Education	
e. Outside experts retained to review drafts	
f. Content Center(s)	

Table 6. Center Strategies for Managing Work Requests Falling Outside Their Planned Scope

Center strategies:	From year 1 site visit (Y/N)
a. Center refers to parameters set by NCLB or the Center's authorizing legislation when negotiating with clients	
b. Center agrees to work outside its planned scope in order to build a working relationship with clients	
c. Center has a staff member and process for ensuring that Center work is within its work plan	
d. Works with primary service recipients outside planned scope of work	
e. Center has declined to provide a service because it was outside of its planned scope	

Appendix D
Survey of Senior State Managers

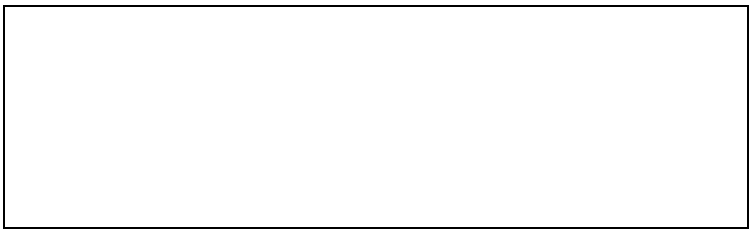
Survey of Senior State Managers

This appendix section presents the survey that was administered to Senior State Managers serving as RCC's main points of contacts (see page D-2). The survey was developed to obtain information from state managers about state-level needs and priorities for technical assistance, state perspectives of Center technical assistance, and comparative judgment of Center assistance in relation to assistance available through other sources.

Comprehensive Center Evaluation
Senior State Manager Survey

This survey is designed to gather data on technical assistance received by your state from a variety of external sources, including federally funded technical assistance centers, colleges and universities, professional associations, colleagues in other states, consulting firms, and private contractors.

In particular, the survey asks about assistance your state has received from the federally supported network of Comprehensive Technical Assistance Centers, which includes in your region the following Regional Comprehensive Center:



This Regional Center often collaborates with one or more Content Centers, which *may* also work directly with states:

- The **Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC)**, which is directed by Dr. Stanley Rabinowitz at WestEd in San Francisco, California.
- The **National High School Center (NHSC)**, which is directed by Dr. Joe Harris at the American Institutes of Research in Washington, DC.
- The **Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII)**, which is directed by Dr. Sam Redding at the Academic Development Institute, in Lincoln, Illinois.
- The **Center on Instruction (COI)**, which is directed by Ms. Angela Penfold at RMC Research Corporation in Portsmouth, NH.
- The **National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ)**, which is directed by Dr. Sabrina Laine at Learning Point Associates in Naperville, Illinois.

Questions about the Comprehensive Center network in this survey refer to all of the Comprehensive Centers that have served your state, including the Regional Center and any Content Centers with which your state has worked.

The term "technical assistance," as used in this survey, includes print and electronic information and other resources, consultation, advice, facilitation, and training.

Per the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183, responses to this data collection will be used only for statistical purposes. The reports prepared for this study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific organization or individual. We will not provide information that identifies you or your organization to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

Please return this survey using the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed to [name] of Policy Studies Associates (PSA) at:

[address]
_____@_____

Thank you for your feedback!

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this survey is 1850-0823. The time required to complete this survey is estimated to average 20 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data sources, gather the data needed, and respond to the survey questions. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202-4651.

Priorities for Technical Assistance

1. When your state requests technical assistance from outside sources, what are its priorities? To what extent is each of the following state responsibilities related to NCLB implementation a priority for the technical assistance the state requests? **(Select one response in each row.)**

   Note: Please consider the technical assistance that your state has sought from all sources, including federally funded technical assistance centers, colleges and universities, professional associations, colleagues in other states, consulting firms, and private contractors.

State Responsibilities	Major priority	Moderate priority	Minor priority	Not at all a priority
a. Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements	4	3	2	1
b. Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	4	3	2	1
c. Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	4	3	2	1
d. Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems	4	3	2	1
e. Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems	4	3	2	1
f. Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts	4	3	2	1
g. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools	4	3	2	1
h. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs	4	3	2	1
i. Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science)	4	3	2	1
j. Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools	4	3	2	1
k. Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards	4	3	2	1
l. Other (Specify: _____)	4	3	2	1

Sources of Technical Assistance

2. During the 2006-07 school year (beginning July 2006 and ending June 2007), to what extent has your state relied on each of the following sources of technical assistance? **(Select one response in each row.)**

Sources of Technical Assistance	One of the state's most important resources	To a great extent, but not one of the state's most important resources	To a moderate extent	Minimally	*No contact*
a. U.S. Department of Education (Specify office: _____)	4	3	2	1	0
b. Professional associations (e.g., CCSSO, ASCD)	4	3	2	1	0
c. Colleges and universities	4	3	2	1	0
d. Consulting firms or private contractors	4	3	2	1	0
e. Your counterparts in other SEAs	4	3	2	1	0
f. Comprehensive Center network	4	3	2	1	0
g. Regional Educational Laboratory	4	3	2	1	0
h. Other federally funded technical assistance providers (Specify: _____)	4	3	2	1	0
i. Other (Specify: _____)	4	3	2	1	0

3. For what purpose(s) does your state seek assistance from each of the following sources? **(Select all that apply for each source.)**

a. U.S. Department of Education (Specify office(s): _____)

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

b. Professional associations (e.g., CCSSO, ASCD)

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

c. Colleges and universities

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

d. Consulting firms or private contractors

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

e. Counterparts in other SEAs

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

f. Comprehensive Center network

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

g. Regional Educational Laboratory

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

h. Other federally funded technical assistance providers (Specify: _____)

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

i. Other (Specify: _____)

- ☐ To gather information or to keep current with new ideas
- ☐ To plan the initial steps in solving a problem
- ☐ To complete tasks that the state could do itself if it had more staff or resources
- ☐ To complete tasks for which the state lacks expertise
- ☐ To develop the skills of SEA or intermediate education agency staff
- ☐ To work directly with districts and schools
- ☐ ***Not applicable; our state doesn't seek assistance from this source***

4. Are there other purposes for which your state seeks assistance from outside sources, not mentioned in Question 3? To which sources do you turn for these purposes? Please describe briefly below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Technical Assistance Received from the Comprehensive Center Network

5. During the 2006-07 school year (beginning July 2006 and ending June 2007), with which responsibilities related to NCLB implementation did your state receive assistance from the Comprehensive Center network (your Regional Center and the Content Centers with whom your state has worked)? **(Select one response in each row.)**

Our state received assistance from the Comprehensive Center network with the following responsibilities:	**Major assistance**	**Moderate assistance**	**Minimal assistance**	**No assistance at all**	***NA, technical assistance not sought by the SEA***	***NA, this task is not relevant to my unit's work***
a. Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
b. Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
c. Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
d. Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
e. Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
f. Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
g. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
h. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

Our state received assistance from the Comprehensive Center network with the following responsibilities:	**Major assistance**	**Moderate assistance**	**Minimal assistance**	**No assistance at all**	***NA, technical assistance not sought by the SEA***	***NA, this task is not relevant to my unit's work***
i. Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science)	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
j. Conducting, designing, or overseeing parent outreach	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
k. Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
l. Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
m. Other (Specify: _____)	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

6. During the 2006-07 school year (beginning July 2006 and ending June 2007), to what extent did your state receive the following types of assistance from the Comprehensive Center network (your Regional Center and the Content Centers with whom your state has worked)? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

Our state received the following types of assistance from the Comprehensive Center network:	**Major assistance**	**Moderate assistance**	**Minimal assistance**	**No assistance at all**	***NA, technical assistance not sought by the SEA***
a. Reviewing state plans and policies	4	3	2	1	☐95
b. Designing, delivering, or convening professional development and conferences for local educators	4	3	2	1	☐95
c. Synthesizing and disseminating research findings	4	3	2	1	☐95
d. Collecting and disseminating information about policies and practices in other states	4	3	2	1	☐95
e. Analyzing data or conducting needs assessments	4	3	2	1	☐95
f. Responding to federal planning and reporting requirements	4	3	2	1	☐95
g. Developing tools for monitoring programs	4	3	2	1	☐95
h. Facilitating work groups or committees	4	3	2	1	☐95
i. Completing routine tasks more efficiently	4	3	2	1	☐95
j. Other (Specify:_____)	4	3	2	1	☐95

Relevance and Usefulness

7. Please consider ***all*** of the technical assistance that your state has received from the Comprehensive Center network during the 2006-07 school year (beginning July 2006 and ending June 2007). Considering just this set of products and services, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***relevant*** to your state, in each of the following respects? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

Comprehensive Center technical assistance:	**To a very high degree**	**To a high degree**	**To a moderate degree**	**To a low degree**	**To a very low degree**	***Not able to judge***
a. Addressed a need or problem that the state faces	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
b. Addressed an important state priority	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
c. Addressed a challenge that the state faces related to the implementation of NCLB	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
d. Responded flexibly to our state's changing needs	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
e. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be applied to the state's work	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
f. Addressed the particular context in which our state operates	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
g. Addressed the state's specific challenges (e.g., policy environment, leadership capacity, budget pressures, local politics)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
h. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be used to guide decisions about policies, programs, and practices	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
i. Highlighted the implications of research findings (or information about best practice) for policies, programs, or practices	5	4	3	2	1	☐95

8. Please consider ***all*** of the technical assistance that your state has received from the Comprehensive Center network during the 2006-07 school year (beginning July 2006 and ending June 2007). Considering just this set of products and services, to what degree was this set of activities and resources ***useful*** to your state, in each of the following respects? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

Comprehensive Center technical assistance:	**To a very high degree**	**To a high degree**	**To a moderate degree**	**To a low degree**	**To a very low degree**	***Not able to judge***
a. Provided state staff with resources that were easy to understand and easy to use	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
b. Employed appropriate formats (e.g., work groups, conferences, individual consultation, written products)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
c. Provided adequate opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
d. Included adequate follow-up to support the use of new information and resources	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
e. Was timely	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
f. Helped the state to solve a problem	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
g. Helped the state to maintain or change a policy or practice	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
h. Helped the state take the next step in a longer-term improvement effort	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
i. Provided state staff with information or resources that they will use again	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
j. Helped state staff to develop skills that they will be able to exercise again	5	4	3	2	1	☐95

9. How fully has the technical assistance your state has received from the Comprehensive Center network during the 2006-07 school year served the state's purposes for technical assistance? **(Circle one.)**

   a. It served the state's purposes completely **(Skip to question 11)**
   b. It was a good start
   c. It was a start, but some important priorities were not addressed
   d. For the most part, it did not serve the state's purposes

10. If the Comprehensive Center network assistance during the 2006-07 school year has been less helpful than it might be, what were the reasons? **(Circle all that apply.)**

   a. The state's most important priorities for assistance fall outside the Comprehensive Center's scope of work
   b. The Comprehensive Center does not have the expertise the state needs
   c. Comprehensive Center staff are not able to spend as much time working with the state as we would like
   d. The process of negotiating a work scope and organizing projects takes too long
   e. The state has been unable to develop a productive working relationship with the Center
   f. The state secures most of the technical assistance it needs from other sources
   g. The state would prefer to locate and contract directly with the experts or consultants from whom it needs assistance, rather than working through the Comprehensive Center network
   h. A policy or priority shift at the state level caused the Center's assistance to be less helpful than it might
   i. Other (Specify _____)

11. How could the technical assistance your state receives from the Comprehensive Center network be improved or made more useful to your state?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Comprehensive Center Assistance Compared with Assistance from Other Sources

12. ***Compared with the technical assistance your state has received from other sources*** (see list of sources in Question 2), how would you rate the usefulness of the technical assistance your state has received from the Comprehensive Center network for each of the following purposes? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

	Much more useful than assistance from other sources	**Somewhat more useful**	**About the same**	**Somewhat less useful**	**Much less useful than assistance from other sources**	***Not able to judge***	***NA, the state has not sought assistance for this purpose***
a. Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
b. Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
c. Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
d. Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
e. Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
f. Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

	Much more useful than assistance from other sources	**Somewhat more useful**	**About the same**	**Somewhat less useful**	**Much less useful than assistance from other sources**	***Not able to judge***	***NA, the state has not sought assistance for this purpose***
g. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
h. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
i. Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
j. Conducting, designing, or overseeing parent outreach	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
k. Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
l. Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
m. Other (Specify: _____)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

State Capacity to Carry Out Responsibilities Related to NCLB

13. To what extent has assistance from the Comprehensive Center network (your Regional Center and the Content Centers with whom your state has worked) expanded your state's capacity to carry out state responsibilities related to NCLB? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

State Responsibilities	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	To a very small extent	*Too soon to tell*	*NA, state has not sought assistance for this purpose*
a. Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
b. Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
c. Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
d. Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
e. Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
f. Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
g. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
h. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
i. Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

State Responsibilities	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a small extent	To a very small extent	*Too soon to tell*	*NA, state has not sought assistance for this purpose*
j. Conducting, designing, or overseeing parent outreach	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
k. Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
l. Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
m. Other (Specify: _____)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

Your Job Responsibilities

14. Please describe the functions of the office/division/department that you direct. **(Select all that apply.)**

    a. School Improvement
    b. Curriculum and Instruction
    c. Assessment and Accountability
    d. Special education
    e. Federal programs (Specify: _____)
    f. Other (Specify: _____)

15. Which of the following statements describe your job responsibilities related to managing technical assistance resources from outside your organization? **(Circle all that apply.)**

    a. Seeking out technical assistance providers for my organization
    b. Identifying needs and priorities that will be addressed by technical assistance
    c. Negotiating a scope of work with technical assistance providers
    d. Managing others within my office/division/unit in their use of technical assistance services
    e. Serving as point of contact or manager for specific technical assistance projects
    f. Participating in specific technical assistance projects
    g. Other (Specify: _____)
    h. ***None, I am not responsible for managing technical assistance resources***

16. Did you collaborate with any of your colleagues on your response to this survey? **(Circle one.)**

(We will refrain from following up with your colleagues if you collaborated on this response.)

a. Yes, I collaborated on this response with colleagues
b. No, I completed this survey without consulting colleagues

Thank you!

Please return this survey using the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed to [name] of Policy Studies Associates at:

[address]
_____@_____

Appendix E
Ratings of Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness

Ratings of Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness

This appendix section presents the expert panel review rating materials and the participant surveys that were collected to determine ratings of technical quality, relevance, and usefulness.

Expert Panel Reviewer Scoring Booklet Used for Quality Ratings

This appendix section presents the Scoring Booklet that was used by the expert panel reviewers. The goal in developing the scoring rubric was to provide uniform, objective criteria for rating technical quality. Because the evaluation of each project was based on the professional judgment of three panelists, differences among raters were inevitable. Providing a well-developed scoring rubric and training the panelists on the use of the scoring criteria was intended to maximize interrater agreement and reduce bias.

For the purposes of this evaluation, technical quality of Comprehensive Center projects was demonstrated through the comprehensive and balanced use of scientifically based research and the applicable nonresearch knowledge base. The best available research or knowledge base was expected to inform the delivery of technical assistance. Where rigorous and consistent evidence was lacking, there had to be an acknowledgment in the technical assistance provided of the lack of conclusive evidence and advice, and recommendations had to be appropriately tempered. Professional wisdom was expected to be integrated with the best available empirical evidence in planning for and delivering products and services. To be rated high quality, the materials were expected to be accurate, complete, and clear and should support use and implementation of the content.

Relevance and Usefulness Ratings from RCC and State-Level Participant Surveys

This appendix section presents the two forms of the Participant Surveys (starting on page E-11 of this appendix) that were administered to RCC and state-level staff to obtain client views of technical assistance from the Comprehensive Centers, particularly in the areas of the relevance and usefulness of Center products.

The evaluation team developed the two parallel survey forms included in this appendix. One version of the survey was written using text appropriate for state-level staff who participated in any Center's project. The second, similar version of the survey was written with wording appropriate for RCC staff who participated in a CC project. Both surveys asked questions in each of the following areas:

- Project Participation;
- Relevance and Usefulness;
- Priorities for Technical Assistance;
- Capacity to Carry out Responsibilities Related to NCLB, and
- Job Responsibilities.

National Evaluation of the Comprehensive Centers
Scoring Booklet for Expert Reviewers

Fall 2007

Policy Studies Associates

Dimension 1: Demonstrated Use of Appropriate Knowledge Base

Indicators	Definitions for Indicators	Evidence and Applicability to Project
1A. The knowledge base used is appropriately comprehensive, given the project's purpose.	• The most important research and knowledge are used when applicable and appropriate for the project. • Appropriate legal and regulatory guidelines are used when applicable for the project.	
1B. The knowledge base used is accurately described.	• The applicable knowledge base is accurately described in the project's materials. • Research findings, regulatory guidelines, or professional wisdom used in the project materials are accurately described.	
1C. The knowledge base used for the project is relevant.	• The research/knowledge base used is relevant to the topic. • Legal and regulatory guidelines that are presented are relevant to the topic.	

Dimension 1: Demonstrated Use of Appropriate Knowledge Base (Continued)

Indicators	Definitions for Indicators	Evidence and Applicability to Project
1D. The knowledge base represented in the project is balanced, when appropriate.	• More than one point of view is presented in the knowledge base used, if it is applicable and important. • Where the level of evidence warrants, the knowledge base used reflects the variety of valid perspectives appropriate for consideration in the field.	
1E. Prominence in findings and recommendations is given to current and best available scientifically based research, knowledge base, and professional wisdom	• Where available, prominence is given to research that is scientifically based. • Research and knowledge base used and reflected in the project represent the latest generation of findings. • Research studies that used appropriate designs, methodologies, and measures are given prominence over those with weaker designs, when available.	
1F. Limitations in the knowledge base are acknowledged in the project.	• Materials clearly note the strength (or limitations) of the knowledge or research base. • Findings or recommendations based on best practice only (rather than more empirical evidence) are accurately identified as such in the materials.	

Criteria for Scoring—Demonstrated Use of Appropriate Knowledge Base

Directions: Circle the number that best describes the demonstrated use of the appropriate knowledge base in the project, considering the project's performance on the various indicators identified.

	Very High Quality	High Quality	Moderate Quality	Low Quality	Very Low Quality
	5	4	3	2	1
1A	The research/knowledge base used or referenced in project materials includes an appropriate set of important sources in this field, pertinent to the project's purpose.		There is a research/knowledge base used or referenced in project materials, pertinent to the project's purpose, but some important sources are not included.		There is no research/knowledge base used or referenced in project materials, or the research/knowledge base used or referenced in project materials includes none of the important source materials in the field pertinent to the project's purpose.
1B	All of the research findings, legal and regulatory guidelines, or professional wisdom used in the project's materials is accurately described.		Some inaccuracies exist in the description of the research/knowledge base in the project's materials.		Inaccuracies exist throughout the project in describing the research/knowledge base.
1C	All of the information presented about the research/ knowledge base in project materials is relevant to the topic.		Some of the research and/or knowledge base reflected in the materials is relevant; however, some of the material presented is not relevant.		Most of the information presented for the research/knowledge base is not relevant to the topic.
1D	The research/ knowledge base used or referenced contains a balanced variety of valid perspectives in this field.		Some balance is provided in presenting the variety of valid perspectives in the field; however, some imbalance is evident.		No balance is provided in presenting the various valid perspectives in the field.
1E	The most current and rigorous research and knowledge available is given the most prominence in project materials.		The most current and rigorous research/knowledge base available is only partially reflected and given prominence in the project.		The most current and rigorous research/knowledge base available is minimally reflected and given little or no prominence in the project.
1F	Limitations in the available research/knowledge base are clearly described and acknowledged in project materials.		Limitations in the available research/knowledge base are only partially described and acknowledged in the project materials, although they exist.		No limitations in the available research/knowledge base are acknowledged in the project materials, although they exist.

Dimension 2: Fidelity of Application of the Knowledge Base to the Products and Services Provided

Indicators	Definitions for Indicators	Evidence and Applicability to Project
2A. The application of the research/ knowledge base is clear and accurate.	• Accurate application of the core findings from the available knowledge base is evident in the project's products, assistance, or advice. • The project's products, assistance, and advice clearly interpret and apply the research and/or knowledge base.	
2B. There is consistency between the strength of the research/knowledge base and its proposed application.	• The certainty and strength of recommendations in the project's products, assistance, and advice are consistent with and appropriate for the level of rigor and certainty in the available research/knowledge base.	
2C. Appropriate emphasis is given in application of the most rigorous and consistent research and knowledge base.	• Prominence is given to products, assistance, and advice derived from the most *rigorous* research and knowledge base. • Prominence is given to products, services, and advice derived from the most *consistent* research and knowledge base.	
2D. Application of nonempirical research and professional wisdom only are appropriately tempered.	• Products, assistance, and advice based on a weak research base, limited legal or regulatory guidance, or primarily nonempirical professional wisdom are appropriately tempered.	

Criteria for Scoring—Fidelity of Application of the Knowledge Base to the Products and Services Provided

Directions: Circle the number that best describes the fidelity of application of the knowledge base to the products and services provided, considering the project's performance on the various indicators identified.

	Very High Quality	High Quality	Moderate Quality	Low Quality	Very Low Quality
	5	4	3	2	1
2A	The products, assistance and advice provided through this project are consistently accurate and clear in interpreting and applying the available research and knowledge base used in the project.		The products, assistance, and advice provided through this project are accurate and clear in interpreting and applying the available research and knowledge base in the project used in some respects but not others.		The products, assistance and advice provided through this project are consistently inaccurate and unclear in interpreting and applying the available research and/or knowledge base used in the project.
2B	The products, advice, and assistance provided through this project are fully consistent with the available research and knowledge base.		The products, advice, and assistance provided through this project are partially consistent with the available research and knowledge.		The products, advice, and assistance provided through this project are not consistent and for the most part conflicts with the available research and knowledge base.
2C	The products, assistance, and advice provided through this project completely and consistently emphasize the application of findings derived from rigorous and consistent research and knowledge over the application of findings from less rigorous or consistent research or knowledge.		Some of the products, assistance, and advice provided through this project emphasize the application of findings derived from rigorous and consistent research and knowledge over the application of findings from less rigorous or less consistent research or knowledge in some instances, but some products, assistance, and advice provided emphasize less rigorous or consistent research and knowledge.		The products, assistance and advice provided through this project consistently emphasize the application of findings derived from less rigorous and less consistent research and knowledge over the application of findings from more rigorous or consistent research or knowledge.
2D	Products, assistance, and advice provided through this project that are based on weak research or knowledge base are consistently acknowledged and appropriately tempered.		Products, assistance, and advice provided through this project that are based on weak research or knowledge base are partially acknowledged and are tempered only in part.		Products, assistance, and advice provided through this project that are based on weak research or knowledge base are never acknowledged as such and are rarely if ever tempered.

Dimension 3: Clear and Effective Delivery

Indicators	Definitions for Indicators	Evidence and Applicability to Project
3A. Information communicated in the project products and services meets the project's purpose.	• Information contained in the project materials is clear in meeting the purpose of the project. • Information contained in the project materials is complete and applicable in meeting the purpose of the project.	
3B. The project contains meaningful learning experiences, appropriate for the intended audience.	• Where appropriate, products and services are designed to engage participants in effective learning experiences. • In the opinion of the reviewer, the audience should be interested in the information and recommendations because of the way in which they are delivered.	
3C. The products and services in the project are appropriate for the intended audience.	• The products and services as presented are relevant and well-suited for the intended audience. • The products and services as presented appear to be useful for the intended audience.	
3D. Ideas are effectively communicated.	• Clear and accessible language is used in project materials. • Project materials are well-written. • Information conveyed will be understood by intended audience.	

Criteria for Scoring—Clear and Effective Delivery

Directions: Circle the number that best describes clear and effective delivery considering the project's performance on the various indicators identified.

	Very High Quality	High Quality	Moderate Quality	Low Quality	Very Low Quality
	5	4	3	2	1
3A	Project materials and the information presented are complete and applicable for meeting the project's purpose.		Project materials and information are partially incomplete or not applicable for meeting the project's purpose.		Project materials and information is incomplete or not at all applicable to the purpose of the project.
3B	The project materials will engage participants or users in meaningful learning experiences or will be of interest to them because of the way in which materials are delivered or packaged.		Some of the project materials will engage participants in learning experiences or will be of interest to them, but some of the materials will not because of the way they are delivered or packaged.		The project materials lack meaningful learning experiences and are very unlikely to engage or interest participants or users because of the way in which they are delivered or packaged.
3C	The products and services produced for this project are very appropriate for the intended audience.		A portion of the products and services produced for this project are not appropriate or relevant for the intended audience.		The products and services produced for this project are not well-suited (neither appropriate nor relevant) for the intended audience.
3D	Ideas and information are effectively communicated throughout all of the materials in the project.		The ideas and information in the project materials are not effectively communicated and are confusing in some instances.		The ideas and information are not effectively communicated throughout the project materials.

National Evaluation of Comprehensive Centers
2007-08

Score Reporting Form for Expert Reviews

Project Title:_____

_____

Comprehensive Center Name:_____

Please list your scores below:

Dimension 1 Score: _____

Dimension 2 Score: _____

Dimension 3 Score: _____

I attest that the scores listed on this scoring sheet are based on my thorough review and objective assessment of the project cover sheet and project artifacts based on the scoring guidance and rubric provided by the evaluation contractor. I attest that I have not discussed these materials or this review with anyone other than the designated evaluation team contact prior to submission.
I have also provided a bulleted summary of this project's strengths and weaknesses.

I further attest that I do not have any undisclosed conflict of interest for this particular project.

Your Name (Print):_____

Your Signature:_____

Date:_____

Comprehensive Center Evaluation Client Survey – RCC Participants

This survey is designed to gather your feedback on a set of technical assistance activities and resources. Your name was included in a list of participants in one or more of the activities associated with the project in the box below. The specific activities are described on the yellow sheet in the front of this booklet.

Per the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183, responses to this data collection will be used only for statistical purposes. The reports prepared for this study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific organization or individual. We will not provide information that identifies you or your organization to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

Please return this survey using the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed to [name] of Policy Studies Associates (PSA) at:

[address]
_____@_____

Thank you for your feedback!

Participation

1. Did you participate in ***any*** of the activities described on the previous page? **(Circle one.)**

   a. Yes
   b. No (STOP HERE – RETURN SURVEY TO [name] AT PSA)
   c. Unsure/Don't remember (STOP HERE – RETURN SURVEY TO [name] AT PSA)

2. Did you work for a Comprehensive Center during the period from July 2006 through June 2007? **(Circle one.)**

   a. Yes
   b. No (STOP HERE. Call [name] at -xxx-xxx-xxxx for alternate survey form.)

3. Of this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of the survey), how much time did you spend participating in each of the following types of activities or making use of each of the following types of resources? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

	More than 5 days	**3-5 days**	**1-2 days**	**Less than 1 day**	***Not applicable; not part of this set of activities and resources***
a. Conferences	4	3	2	1	☐98
b. Training	4	3	2	1	☐98
c. Task force meetings	4	3	2	1	☐98
d. Reviewing general or background information provided by the Content Center	4	3	2	1	☐98
e. Using tools and other resources provided by the Content Center	4	3	2	1	☐98
f. Advance planning	4	3	2	1	☐98
g. Ongoing consultation on this topic	4	3	2	1	☐98
h. Follow-up and action plans	4	3	2	1	☐98

4. Were you ***personally*** involved in determining the goals or designing the content or format of the activities or resources described at the beginning of this survey? In what ways? **(Circle all that apply.)**

   a. Identifying the problem or need to be addressed
   b. Selecting or framing the content
   c. Providing data or other background information during the planning phase
   d. Identifying or recruiting project participants
   e. Identifying or recruiting presenters or resources
   f. Designing activities
   g. Planning for or leading dissemination of new ideas and information
   h. Coordinating this project with other work that my organization does
   i. Planning logistics
   j. Other (Specify: _____)
   k. ***I did not contribute at all to the design of this set of activities and resources***

Relevance and Usefulness

5. Based on *your experience,* to what degree was this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey) ***relevant*** to your work, in each of the following respects? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

This set of activities and resources:	**To a very high degree**	**To a high degree**	**To a moderate degree**	**To a low degree**	**To a very low degree**	***Not able to judge***
a. Addressed a need or problem that my Center's state-level clients face	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
b. Addressed an important priority of my Center's state-level clients	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
c. Addressed a challenge that my Center's state-level clients face related to the implementation of NCLB	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
d. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be applied to my Center's work or our state-level clients' work	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
e. Addressed the particular state context in which our state-level clients operate	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
f. Addressed our state-level clients' specific challenges (e.g., policy environment, leadership capacity, budget pressures, local politics)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
g. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be used by state-level clients to guide decisions about policies, programs, and practices	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
h. Highlighted the implications of research findings (or information about best practice) for state-level clients' policies, programs, or practices	5	4	3	2	1	☐95

6. Based on *your experience,* to what degree was this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey) ***useful*** to you, in each of the following respects? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

This set of activities and resources:	**To a very high degree**	**To a high degree**	**To a moderate degree**	**To a low degree**	**To a very low degree**	***Not able to judge***
a. Provided resources that were easy to understand and easy to use	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
b. Employed an appropriate format (e.g., a work group, a conference, individual consultation, written products)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
c. Provided adequate opportunity to learn from other states	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
d. Included adequate follow-up to support the use of new information and resources	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
e. Were timely	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
f. Helped my Center to help our state-level clients solve a problem	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
g. Helped my Center to help our state-level clients maintain or change a policy or practice	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
h. Helped my Center to help our state-level clients take the next step in a longer-term improvement effort	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
i. Provided my Center with information or resources that we will use again	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
j. Helped my Center to develop a shared expertise or knowledge-base	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
k. Helped individuals in my Center to develop skills that they will use again	5	4	3	2	1	☐95

7. How could this set of activities and resources (described on the yellow sheet inserted into this survey) have been made more relevant or more useful for your Center?

_____

_____

_____

Priorities for Technical Assistance

8. Please consider ***your Comprehensive Center's priorities*** for the technical assistance that it receives from outside sources. With which of the following tasks does your Center have the greatest need for technical assistance? **(Please circle your Center's three highest priorities from the list below.)**

   Our center has the greatest need for technical assistance with:

   a. Helping state leaders formulate or refine policies that respond to NCLB requirements
   b. Helping states build or manage a state-level system to support districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
   c. Training or helping to train or manage the state-level staff who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
   d. Helping state-level staff work directly with low-performing districts and schools on school improvement activities
   e. Helping state-level staff design or implement statewide assessment and accountability systems
   f. Helping state-level staff to align state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems
   g. Supporting the use of assessment data by schools and districts
   h. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to states, or helping state-level staff disseminate information on scientifically based research to districts and schools
   i. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address state, district, or school needs
   j. Helping state-level staff provide training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading language arts, mathematics, science)
   k. Helping state-level staff monitor compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools
   l. Helping state-level staff communicate with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards
   m. Other priorities (Specify: _____)

9. Did the set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey) address any of the following tasks related to NCLB implementation? **(Circle "yes" or "no" for *all* rows.)**

This set of activities and resources addressed:	**Yes**	**No**
a. Helping state leaders formulate or refine policies that respond to NCLB requirements	1	0
b. Helping states build on or manage a state-level system to support districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	1	0
c. Training or helping to train or manage the state-level staff who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	1	0
d. Helping state-level staff work directly with low-performing districts and schools on school improvement activities	1	0
e. Helping state-level staff design or implement statewide assessment and accountability systems	1	0
f. Helping state-level staff to align state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems	1	0
g. Supporting the use of assessment data by schools and districts	1	0
h. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to states, or helping state-level staff disseminate information on scientifically based research to districts and schools	1	0
i. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address state, district, or school needs	1	0
j. Helping state-level staff provide training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading, language arts, mathematics, science)	1	0
k. Helping state-level staff monitor compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools	1	0
l. Helping state-level staff communicate with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards	1	0
m. Other priorities (Specify: _____)	1	0

Capacity to Carry Out Responsibilities Related to NCLB

10. To what extent has the set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of the survey) expanded the capacity of ***your Comprehensive Center***, including your own capacity, to help states carry out their responsibilities related to NCLB? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

This set of activities and resources:	**To a great extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a small extent**	**Not at all**	***Too early to tell***	***Does not apply or unable to judge***
a. Confirmed what my Center was already doing to help states	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
b. Helped my Center to raise awareness of new developments in fields important to states	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
c. Helped my Center to help states define or understand a problem in new ways	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
d. Helped my Center to help states accomplish a goal or solve a problem	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
e. Helped my Center to help states improve or support an ongoing state program, policy, or practice	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
f. Helped my Center enhance states' ability to address NCLB requirements	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
g. Helped my Center improve states' ability to work with districts	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
h. Helped my Center improve states' ability to work with schools identified for improvement under NCLB	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
i. Put my Center in touch with other organizations engaged in similar tasks	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
j. Enabled my Center to carry out its work more effectively	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
k. Helped my Center to help states complete NCLB-related applications, plans, and reports	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
l. Helped my Center to help states make a tangible change to a policy or practice	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
m. Other (Specify:_____)	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

11. How could this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of the survey) have better helped to expand your organization's capacity to help states carry out responsibilities related to NCLB?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your Job Responsibilities at the Comprehensive Center

*Please consider **all** of your job responsibilities when responding to the questions in this section, not just those most closely related to the set of activities and resources described on the first page of this survey.*

12. Please describe your role at the Comprehensive Center during the period from July 2006 through June 2007: **(Circle all that apply.)**

    a. State liaison
    b. Content or topic area specialist (Specify: _____)
    c. Project-specific manager or specialist
    d. Center director or assistant director
    e. Support staff (technology, research, logistics, publishing, financial)
    f. Consultant
    g. Other (Specify: _____)

13. During the period from July 2006 through June 2007, which of the following statements best describes your job responsibilities related to NCLB implementation? **(Circle all that apply.)**

a. Helping state leaders formulate or refine policies that respond to NCLB requirements
b. Helping states build or manage a state-level system to support districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
c. Training or helping to train or manage the state-level staff who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
d. Helping state-level staff work directly with low-performing districts and schools on school improvement activities
e. Helping state-level staff design or implement statewide assessment and accountability systems
f. Helping state-level staff to align state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems
g. Supporting the use of assessment data by schools and districts
h. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to states, or helping state-level staff disseminate information on scientifically based research to districts and schools
i. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address state, district, or school needs
j. Helping state-level staff monitor compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools
k. Helping state-level staff communicate with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards
l. Providing technical assistance to SEA or other state-level staff
m. Other responsibilities (Specify: _____)

14. During the period from July 2006 through June 2007, what percent of your time was spent on the tasks you selected in Question 13 above, combined? **(Circle one.)**

    a. 0-25 percent
    b. 26-50 percent
    c. 51-75 percent
    d. 76-100 percent

15. Have you participated in any other technical assistance provided by this Content Center, **other than** the set of activities and resources described at the beginning of the survey? **(Circle one.)**

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure/Don't remember

Thank you!

Please return this survey using the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed to [name] of Policy Studies Associates at:

[address]
_____@_____

Comprehensive Center Evaluation Client Survey – State-Level Participants

This survey is designed to gather your feedback on a set of technical assistance activities and resources. Your name was included in a list of participants in one or more of the activities associated with the project in the box below. The specific activities are described on the yellow sheet in the front of this booklet.

Per the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183, responses to this data collection will be used only for statistical purposes. The reports prepared for this study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific organization or individual. We will not provide information that identifies you or your organization to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law.

Please return this survey using the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed to [name] of Policy Studies Associates (PSA) at:

[address]
_____@_____

Thank you for your feedback!

Participation

1. Did you participate in ***any*** of the activities described on the previous page? **(Circle one.)**

   a. Yes
   b. No (STOP HERE – RETURN SURVEY TO [name] AT PSA)
   c. Unsure/Don't remember (STOP HERE – RETURN SURVEY TO [name] AT PSA)

2. In your experience with this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey), how much time did you spend participating in each of the following types of activities or making use of each of the following types of resources? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

Type of activity or resource	**More than 5 days**	**3-5 days**	**1-2 days**	**Less than 1 day**	***Not applicable; not part of this set of activities and resources***
a. Conferences	4	3	2	1	☐98
b. Training	4	3	2	1	☐98
c. Task force meetings	4	3	2	1	☐98
d. Reviewing general or background information provided by the Content Center	4	3	2	1	☐98
e. Using tools and other resources provided by the Content Center	4	3	2	1	☐98
f. Advance planning	4	3	2	1	☐98
g. Ongoing consultation on this topic	4	3	2	1	☐98
h. Follow-up and action plans	4	3	2	1	☐98

3. Were you ***personally*** involved in determining the goals or designing the content or format of this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey)? In what ways? **(Circle all that apply.)**

   a. Identifying the problem or need to be addressed
   b. Selecting or framing the content
   c. Providing data or other background information during the planning phase
   d. Identifying or recruiting project participants
   e. Identifying or recruiting presenters or resources
   f. Designing activities
   g. Planning for or leading dissemination of new ideas and information
   h. Coordinating this set of activities with other work that my organization does
   i. Planning logistics
   j. Other (Specify: _____)
   k. ***I did not contribute at all to the design of this set of activities and resources***

Relevance and Usefulness

4. Based on *your experience,* to what degree was this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey) ***relevant*** to your work, in each of the following respects? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

This set of activities and resources:	**To a very high degree**	**To a high degree**	**To a moderate degree**	**To a low degree**	**To a very low degree**	***Not able to judge***
a. Addressed a need or problem that my organization faces	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
b. Addressed an important priority of my organization	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
c. Addressed a challenge that my organization faces related to the implementation of NCLB	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
d. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be applied to my organization's work	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
e. Addressed our particular state context	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
f. Addressed my organization's specific challenges (e.g., policy environment, leadership capacity, budget pressures, local politics)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
g. Provided information, advice, and/or resources that could be used to guide decisions about policies, programs, and practices	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
h. Highlighted the implications of research findings (or information about best practice) for policies, programs, or practices	5	4	3	2	1	☐95

5. Based on *your experience,* to what degree was this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey) ***useful*** to you, in each of the following respects? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

The activities and resources:	**To a very high degree**	**To a high degree**	**To a moderate degree**	**To a low degree**	**To a very low degree**	***Not able to judge***
a. Provided resources that were easy to understand and easy to use	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
b. Employed an appropriate format (e.g., a work group, a conference, individual consultation, written products)	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
c. Provided adequate opportunity to learn from colleagues in other states	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
d. Included adequate follow-up to support the use of new information and resources	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
e. Were timely	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
f. Helped my organization to solve a problem	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
g. Helped my organization to maintain or change a policy or practice	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
h. Helped my organization take the next step in a longer-term improvement effort	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
i. Provided my organization with information or resources that we will use again	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
j. Helped my organization to develop a shared expertise or knowledge base	5	4	3	2	1	☐95
k. Helped individuals in my organization to develop skills that they will use again	5	4	3	2	1	☐95

6. How could this set of activities and resources (described on the yellow sheet inserted into this survey) have been made more relevant or more useful for your organization?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Priorities for Technical Assistance

7. Please consider ***your organization's priorities*** for the technical assistance that it receives from outside sources. With which of the following tasks related to NCLB implementation does your organization have the greatest need for technical assistance? (**Please circle your three highest priorities from the list below.)**

   a. Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements
   b. Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
   c. Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
   d. Working directly with low-performing schools or districts on school improvement activities
   e. Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems
   f. Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability system
   g. Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts
   h. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools
   i. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs
   j. Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading, language arts, mathematics, science)
   k. Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools
   l. Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards
   m. Other priorities (Specify: _____)

8. Did the set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey) address any of the following tasks related to NCLB implementation? **(Select "yes" or "no" for *all* rows.)**

This set of activities and resources addressed:	**Yes**	**No**
a. Reformulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements	1	0
b. Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	1	0
c. Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB	1	0
d. Working directly with low-performing schools or districts on school improvement activities	1	0
e. Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems	1	0
f. Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems	1	0
g. Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts	1	0
h. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools	1	0
i. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs	1	0
j. Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading, language arts, mathematics, science)	1	0
k. Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools	1	0
l. Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards	1	0
m. Other priorities (Specify: _____)	1	0

Capacity to Carry out Responsibilities Related to NCLB

9. To what extent has the set of activities and resources described in the box on the first page expanded the capacity of ***your team, office, division, or unit*** to carry out its responsibilities related to NCLB? **(Circle one response in each row.)**

This set of activities and resources:	**To a great extent**	**To a moderate extent**	**To a small extent**	**Not at all**	***Too early to tell***	***Does not apply or unable to judge***
a. Confirmed what we were already doing	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
b. Raised awareness of new developments in fields important to my organization	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
c. Helped my organization define or understand a problem in new ways	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
d. Helped my organization take steps toward accomplishing a goal or solving a problem	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
e. Helped my organization maintain or improve an ongoing program, policy, or practice	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
f. Helped my organization plan or initiate a new program, policy, or practice	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
g. Enhanced my organization's ability to address NCLB requirements	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
h. Improved my organization's ability to work with districts	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
i. Improved my organization's ability to work with schools identified for improvement under NCLB	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
j. Put my organization in touch with other organizations engaged in similar tasks	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
k. Enabled my organization to carry out its work more effectively	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
l. Helped my organization complete NCLB-related applications, plans, and reports	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
m. Helped my organization make a tangible change to a policy or practice	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98
n. Other (Specify: _____	4	3	2	1	☐95	☐98

10. How could this set of activities and resources have better helped to expand the capacity of your ***team, office, division, or unit*** to carry out responsibilities related to NCLB?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your Job Responsibilities

11. Please indicate the type of agency for which you worked during the period from July 2006 through June 2007. **(Circle one.)**

    a. State education agency (SEA)
    b. Governor's office or other state agency (Specify: _____)
    c. Intermediate education agency (a regional resource center or area education agency serving a region within the state)
    d. Institution of higher education
    e. Regional Comprehensive Center
    f. Local education agency
    g. School
    h. Other (Specify: _____)

12. Did you participate in this set of activities and resources (described at the beginning of this survey) because you are a member of a state-sponsored school support team or a state-level task force? **(Circle one.)**

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Don't know/Not sure (Explain: _____)

13. Which of the following statements best describes your job responsibilities related to NCLB implementation, during the period from July 2006 through June 2007? **(Circle all that apply.)**

a. Formulating or refining state policies to respond to NCLB requirements
b. Building or managing a statewide system of support for districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
c. Training or managing the state-level staff or school support teams who provide support to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB
d. Working directly with low-performing schools or districts on school improvement activities
e. Designing or implementing state assessment and accountability systems
f. Aligning state accountability systems with NCLB accountability systems
g. Supporting use of assessment data by schools and districts
h. Disseminating information on scientifically based research to districts and schools
i. Identifying and/or developing programs or models that address district and/or school needs
j. Providing training and other professional development to local educators in academic subjects (reading, language arts, mathematics, science)
k. Monitoring compliance with NCLB requirements in districts and schools
l. Communicating with the public about NCLB requirements or report cards
m. Other (Specify: _____)

14. During the period from July 2006 through June 2007, what percent of your time was spent on all the tasks you selected in Question 13 above, combined? **(Circle one.)**

a. 0-25 percent
b. 26-50 percent
c. 51-75 percent
d. 76-100 percent

15. Have you participated in any other technical assistance provided by this Content Center, **other than** the set of activities and resources described at the beginning of the survey? **(Circle one.)**

a. Yes
b. No
c. Unsure/Don't know

Thank you!

Please return this survey using the self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed to [name] of Policy Studies Associates at:

[address]
_____@_____