

Vermont K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide Diagnostic Tool

Purpose

This Diagnostic Tool is designed as a companion resource for the [K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide](#) which outlines the components for implementing a comprehensive Evaluation Process. This Tool should be used as a resource to assist LEA decision makers in building and/or improving their existing Special Education Evaluation processes.

How to Use This Tool

LEAs should use these resources to support continuous improvement of their evaluation systems and processes. It is recommended that LEAs use the tool to drive those improvements and revisit it to check their progress at key points throughout the year (e.g., beginning of the year planning, middle of the year check-in and end of the year reflections/planning for the next year). This tool should be viewed as an opportunity to generate more discussion, get a better picture of the current state of your systems and/or a resource for planning improvements.

The components of this tool include:

- **Summary Assessment:** Teams can either use this tool as (1) a stand-alone exercise to engage staff or partners in general process quality conversations or (2) a wrap-up report following completion of the Implementation Review Worksheet as a way of summarizing the deeper analysis your team completed in the Worksheet. After completing the Summary Assessment, LEAs can access additional information and implementation guidance at the links provided to address the areas in need of improvement.
- **Implementation Review Worksheet:** LEAs looking to conduct a more detailed analysis of where they are on the components of a high-functioning Evaluation Process should walk through the parts of this Worksheet, which are aligned to the sections in the Implementation Guide. This may be completed in groups or independently (though if completing independently, further discussion to determine next steps may be helpful). If you are completing the Summary Assessment following the Implementation Review Worksheet, consider the average response in each area and use that to determine your 'Yes' or 'Not Yet' response (e.g., if you have more 'Partially Agree' or 'Disagree' responses in your Worksheet, you most likely would put 'Not Yet' for your Summary Assessment response).

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact:

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- Planning Tool: LEAs may use this Tool as a stand-alone activity or following the completion of the Summary Assessment and/or the Implementation Review Worksheet to engage in a discussion about prioritizing areas for improvement.

Teams should feel empowered to use any component of this Tool that feels best suited for their context as an opportunity to reflect honestly about their practices and engage in open discussion about where processes and systems can be improved. Additionally, where more information is needed to accurately respond to a particular element, the LEA should seek feedback from a wide array of voices and perspectives.

Summary Assessment

The items in this Assessment reflect key milestones in the implementation of a comprehensive Evaluation Process. If your LEA has achieved a given milestone, place a checkmark in the 'Yes' column. For areas where your LEA has not quite achieved that milestone, place a checkmark in the 'Not Yet' column. The resources linked in the 'Additional Guidance' column can support your team with strengthening any milestones marked 'Not Yet.'

Milestone	Yes	Not Yet	Additional Guidance
Big Picture: All leaders are aware of the federal and state regulations for Special Education, including their obligations regarding the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and the Vermont Special Education Rules and Regulations.			K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide: Understanding the Big Picture
Providing a System of Support: The LEA ensures that all students are receiving quality, differentiated classroom instruction and, when necessary, interventions to help them progress as part of a clearly defined, organized, and data-driven System of Support.			K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide: Providing a System of Support for all Students
Initial Referral: The LEA has a clear process for ensuring that all students with disabilities who may need Special Education services receive an Initial Referral, including publicly available information about making a Request for Evaluation and training for staff about appropriate next steps such as convening the Evaluation Planning Team (EPT) and obtaining Parental Consent.			K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide: The Initial Referral
Assessment Process: The LEA has a clear process for ensuring all EPT members have the knowledge and skills to plan for and conduct a thorough Assessment Process for all students engaged in the Evaluation Process.			K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide: The Assessment Process
Eligibility Determination: The LEA has developed the processes for, trained all relevant staff members about, and created tools to assist a purposeful discussion and determination as to whether a school-aged student is eligible for Special Education services.			K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide: Eligibility Determination
Planning for Services: The LEA has systems to align the Evaluation Process with the process for developing a student's Individualized Education Program, including ensuring that critical information from the Assessment Process and Eligibility Determination is transitioned to the IEP Team.			K-12 Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide: Planning for Services

Implementation Review Worksheet

This Worksheet will guide teams through a closer look at specific elements of the key components of an Evaluation Process. Teams should read through each Implementation Indicator of Success to identify whether it accurately describes your LEA's current context. For every indicator, your team is also asked to list the evidence that supports the rating you selected. As your team completes each indicator, it may be helpful to identify areas of strength, areas for improvement and areas where more information may be helpful.

Response Protocol

Use the descriptions below when completing the Implementation Review Worksheet. If using your responses to complete the Summary Worksheet, use your responses to determine your responses for each milestone.

A: Agree - Use this response to designate that the LEA has practices as described in the Indicator of Success, and implementation is consistent across virtually all settings and staff. For a process related indicator, "Agree" means the process is documented, shared widely and staff members are trained in implementation of the process. For a knowledge and skills related indicator, this means staff members have been provided with the necessary training and resources and that is reflected in their practice.

PA: Partially Agree - Use this response when the LEA has some practices described, but implementation is inconsistent across settings and staff. Or if completing in a group, select this rating if some team members agree, while others disagree. This rating designates that the LEA is partially ready.

D: Disagree - Select this response when the LEA does not have the practices described or there is disagreement with the Indicator of Success. This response designates that the LEA is not yet ready in this area.

Big Picture

Milestone Description: All leaders are aware of the federal and state regulations for Special Education, including their obligations regarding the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and the Vermont Special Education Rules and Regulations.

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Rationale and Evidence
Least Restrictive Environment	<p>We have the processes to ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate to meet a student’s needs, children with disabilities are educated with their general education peers in the school and classroom the student would attend if the student did not have a disability.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA with a documented LRE review process that is shared widely, and staff members are trained in the process.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: Child Count LRE data compared to state average, number of students in out of district placements etc., results of Ed Benefit review process, LRE review process.)</p>
Child Find	<p>We have a process for Child Find that addresses students entering the LEA, as well as those who are already enrolled and students who are not yet of school age.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA with a documented Child Find process that is shared widely, and staff members are trained in the process.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: Child Find questions included in student registration forms, internal benchmarks for monitoring student progress on universal screeners.)</p>
Parents	<p>We have a process for engaging a student’s parents in their child’s learning process to help strengthen the effectiveness and quality of the support a student receives.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA a documented process for parent engagement that is shared widely, and staff members are trained in the process.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: regular progress reports and report cards, notifications when students are receiving interventions, regular parent-teacher conferences.)</p>

Providing a System of Supports

Milestone Description: The LEA ensures that all students are receiving quality, differentiated classroom instruction and, when necessary, interventions to help them progress as part of a clearly defined, organized, and data-driven System of Support.

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Educational Support Team (EST)	<p>We have a process for assembling and maintaining an Educational Support Team to manage a comprehensive System of Support including facilitation of EST meetings to develop support plans for students as needed.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA has a documented EST process that is shared widely, and staff members are trained in the process.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: EST agendas, intervention plan templates, etc.)
Use of Data	<p>We have established clear processes across our System of Support to identify any students in need of additional support (e.g., benchmarks across Universal Screener data, behavioral data, etc.).</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA has a documented process for implementing their System of Support that is shared widely, and staff members are trained in the process.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: Benchmarks for identifying students in need of support via classroom grades, universal screeners, behavioral records, etc.)
Providing Supports	<p>Our staff members have the knowledge and skills to deliver differentiated instruction and classroom support (Tier 1) and are knowledgeable about next steps for recommending a student for additional support.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Staff members have been provided with the necessary training and resources to deliver differentiated instruction and Tier I interventions and this is reflected in their practice.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: staff professional development sessions, instructional rounds and feedback, shared strategy banks for differentiation, collaborative planning between specialists and general education teachers.)

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Suspected Disability	<p>Our staff members have the knowledge and skills are well-versed in the early signs of suspected disabilities and understand the dangers of over- or misidentification for Special Education.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Staff members have been provided with the necessary training and resources to identify the early signs of suspected disabilities and their practice reflects their knowledge of the dangers of over-or misidentification of Special Education.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: staff summer training on identifying suspected disabilities, shared benchmarks for identifying students in need of support, regular reviews of referrals for trends in student profiles.)
Making a Referral to Special Education	<p>Our staff members have the knowledge and skills to submit an Initial Referral.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Staff members have been provided with the necessary training and resources to submit an Initial Referral.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: staff receive annual training on submitting an Initial Referral, the LEA has documents that outline the process available for all staff.)

Initial Referral

Milestone Description: The LEA has a clear process for ensuring that all students with disabilities who may need Special Education services receive an Initial Referral, including publicly available information about making a Request for Evaluation and training for staff about appropriate next steps such as convening the Evaluation Planning Team and obtaining Parental Consent.

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Request for Evaluation	<p>We have publicly available resources to help parents, school staff, administrators and others understand how to submit a Request for Evaluation (e.g., whom to make the request to, what information might be helpful to include).</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA has posted the resources in several locations and shares information with families and staff members on a regular basis throughout the year.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: resources on how to submit a Request for Evaluation posted on school websites, in school common areas (e.g., main office) and shares them periodically with families at parent-teacher conferences.)
Determining Next Steps	<p>We have processes for ensuring that all Requests for Evaluation are followed up on within the required 15 school day timeline by either (1) Requesting the parent consent to initiate the evaluation; (2) Convening the EPT; or (3) Providing written notice of the reasons for denying the request.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: The LEA has a documented process for responding to Requests for Evaluation that is shared widely and staff members are trained in implementing the process.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: The Special Education Director is the designated recipient of all requests, and they have a system for tracking the requests and responding to them according to the timeline.)
Evaluation Planning Team	<p>We have a process for ensuring all relevant staff members are trained on EPT procedures, including who required members are, assembling a time for an Evaluation process and making decisions to initiate Special Education Evaluations.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: The LEA has a documented process for training on EPT that is shared widely, and staff members are trained in the process.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: EPT operating procedures are housed in a manual, staff receive annual training on EPT procedures.)

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Documentation and Timelines	<p>We have processes to ensure all relevant documentation is sent and consent obtained following a Request for Evaluation in adherence to the required timelines.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: The LEA has a documented process for delivering all relevant documentation and obtaining consent that is shared widely, and all staff are trained in the process.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: Special Education operating procedures are housed in a manual, case managers are trained in all necessary documentation, timelines, and consent requirements.)</p>
Procedural Safeguards	<p>We have a process and procedures for ensuring that parents are informed and knowledgeable about their rights as it pertains to the Special Education Evaluation Process.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA has a documented process for ensuring parents are informed and knowledgeable about their rights that is shared widely, and all staff are trained in this process.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: published Procedural Safeguards manual is available online and provided at every meeting with parents throughout Special Education processes.)</p>
Parental Consent	<p>Our staff have the knowledge and skills to facilitate and obtain informed parental consent in the parent’s native language, with a translator, or via other forms of communication based on the parent’s needs.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Staff members have been provided with the necessary training and resources to facilitate and obtain informed parental consent and the knowledge is reflected in their practices.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: Staff are trained in the requirements for parental consent and these requirements are outlined in the Special Education procedures manual.)</p>

Assessment Process

Milestone Description: The LEA has a clear process for ensuring all EPT members have the knowledge and skills to plan for and conduct a thorough Assessment Process for all students engaged in the Evaluation Process.

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Effective EPT Meetings	<p>Our staff have the knowledge and skills to manage the technical requirements in the Evaluation Process and facilitate effective completion of the necessary components of the Evaluation Process.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Staff have been provided the necessary training and resources to manage the technical requirements in the Evaluation Process and their practices reflect this training.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: Annual staff training on managing the Evaluation Process, all key information on the process is outlined in the Special Education operating procedures manual.)
Systems and Data Access	<p>Members of the EPT have access to systems to obtain and update relevant documentation about students (e.g., progress monitoring data systems, student information systems, etc.) and/or ways of obtaining that information if not through direct access.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: EPT members have access to special education technology, student information system, and any other programs used by the LEA and know who to call for help if needed.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: Documents used in the evaluation process.)
Assessment Process	<p>EPTs have the knowledge and skill to effectively manage a comprehensive Assessment Process, including Assessment Planning and Conducting/Analyzing assessment results.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: EPT members have been provided the necessary training and resources to manage the Assessment Process and their practices reflect this training.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: Annual training for staff members, Special Education Director shadows EPT meetings throughout the year to provide feedback and support.)

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Assessment Planning: Clarify Suspected Disability	<p>EPTs have the knowledge and skills of disability categories and how to clarify a student’s Suspected Disability to inform Assessment Planning.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: EPT members have been provided with the necessary training and resources to identify a Suspected Disability and their practices in Assessment Planning reflect this training.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: EPTs are provided guidance on completing the Evaluation Process in the operating procedures manual, each EPT includes a trained School Psychologist.)
Assessment Planning: Identify Areas to Assess	<p>EPTs have the knowledge and skills required to identify all areas of concern to assess, including the identification of Basic Skill Areas, Developmental Areas of Concern, and Educational Performance.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: EPT members have been provided the necessary training and resources to identify areas of concern and their practices reflect that training.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: EPTs are provided guidance on Assessment Planning in the Special Education operating procedures manual.)
Process for Assessment of SLD	<p>The LEA has selected a model for determining Suspected Learning Disability that is either: based on whether a student responds to scientific, research-based intervention or one based on other alternative research-based procedures (e.g., Patterns of Strengths, Weaknesses, Response to Intervention, etc.).</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: LEA has selected a model for determining SLD and EPT members have been provided the necessary training and resources to administer assessments with fidelity.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: EPT data collected for higher intensity interventions.)

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Assessment Administration	<p>EPTs have a process for identifying members who are trained in administering and interpreting a variety of unbiased, evidence-based assessments. Assessments should include batteries for linguistically diverse students as well as assessments aligned to the LEA's selected model for determining SLD.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA has a process for identifying EPT members who are trained in administering and interpreting assessment data, and all EPT members are trained in that process.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: School Psychologists are members of all EPTs, EPTs are required to select those trained in assessments and in interpreting results.)
Selection of Assessment Batteries	<p>All relevant staff have access to a well-rounded set of assessments and tools for gathering and interpreting multiple sources of evidence about a student's area of suspected disability (including trained EPT members who can administer assessments/interpret results).</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA has compiled a comprehensive set of assessments (cognitive, behavioral, etc.) and they are available for use by all EPTs.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: List of assessments, logins for tech-based tools.)
Documentation and Timelines	<p>All members of the EPT understand and adhere to documentation and timeline requirements during the Assessment Process, including how to obtain and record informed Parental Consent.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: EPT members are provided with the necessary training and resources on documentation and timeline requirements and their practices reflect this training.)</p>		(Sample Evidence: All documentation and timeline requirements are outlined in the Special Education operating procedures manual, Special Education Director provides training on all practices annually and conducts periodic audits of documents to ensure EPTs adhere to them.)

Eligibility Determination

Milestone Description: The LEA has developed the processes for, trained all relevant staff members about, and created tools to assist a purposeful discussion and determination as to whether a school-aged student is eligible for Special Education services.

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Disability Determination	EPTs have the knowledge and skills to use multiple sources of data to determine if a student has either the Suspected Disability or another disability as defined by IDEA. (Ex. for Agree: EPT members have received the necessary training and resources to determine if a student has a disability, and their practices reflect this training.)		(Sample Evidence: Guidance on determining eligibility is outlined in the Special Education operating procedures manual, Special Education Director shadows meetings throughout the year to provide support and feedback.)
Determining SLD	EPT members have the knowledge and skills necessary to use information collected through their selected assessment model to determine whether the student has a Specific Learning Disability. (Ex. for Agree: EPT members have received the necessary training and resources to determine if a student has a Specific Learning Disability based on the LEA's chosen method, and their practices reflect this training.)		(Sample Evidence: School Psychologists are trained in eligibility for SLD; the LEA has systems in place to support data analysis.)
Adverse Effect	For all disability categories except for SLD and Deaf-blindness, EPTs have the knowledge and skills to review multiple types of data to determine if a student's disability has an Adverse Effect on their educational performance. (Ex. for Agree: EPT members have received the necessary training and resources to determine Adverse Effect, and their practices reflect this training.)		(Sample Evidence: Guidance on determining Adverse Effect is outlined in the Special Education operating procedures manual, Special Education Director shadows meetings throughout the year to provide support and feedback.)

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Special Education is Required	<p>EPTs have the knowledge and skills to engage in a purposeful discussion about whether the student (1) requires Special Education services or (2) does not require Special Education services but may benefit from continued support through other available resources (e.g., school wide System of Support, Section 504 plan, etc.).</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: EPT members have received the necessary training and resources to determine if a student requires Special Education, and their practices reflect this training.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: Guidance on determining the need for Special Education is outlined in the Special Education operating procedures manual, Special Education Director shadows meetings throughout the year to provide support and feedback.)</p>
Specially Designed Instruction	<p>Our designated staff (e.g., Special Educators, Interventionists, etc.) have the knowledge and skills to provide Specially Designed Instruction to students receiving Special Education services to ensure access to the general curriculum to meet Vermont educational standards.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Designated staff members have received the necessary training and resources to provide Specially Designed Instruction, and their practices reflect this training.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: Special Educators receive ongoing training and feedback on SDI from administrators and Special Education leaders.)</p>

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Documentation and Timelines	<p>The LEA has processes to ensure EPTs are held accountable for (1) making appropriate Eligibility Determinations, (2) documenting its process in an Evaluation Plan and Report or other statutorily compliant form, and (3) sending that documentation to the student’s parents within 60-calendar days of a Request for Evaluation (unless the parent consents to extend the timeline).</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: The LEA has documented processes for Eligibly Determination, documentation and communication within the required timelines that are shared widely, and all staff are trained in the processes.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: Special Education Director conducts monthly reviews of all report timelines, all Special Education processes and timelines are outlined in the operating procedures manual.)</p>
Student Ineligible for Special Education	<p>The LEA has processes in place to ensure that students who have been found ineligible for Special Education receive continued support to meet their needs (e.g., continued support through the System of Supports, the creation and implementation of a Section 504 Plan, etc.)</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: The ELA has documented processes for continuing to meet the needs of students who are found ineligible for Special Education that are shared widely, and all staff are trained in the processes.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: EPT guidance in the Special Education operating procedures manual provides next steps for student found ineligible, including notification of Special Education Director.)</p>

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Independent Educational Evaluation	<p>The LEA has processes to ensure parents, school staff and others know how to request and obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation in accordance with State regulations.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: The ELA has documented processes for how to request and obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation that are shared widely, and all staff are trained in the processes.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: LEA developed an IEE information sheet that is shared with all families, posted in the Special Education office, and on the school website; guidance on providing this information is outlined in the Special Education operating procedures manual.)</p>

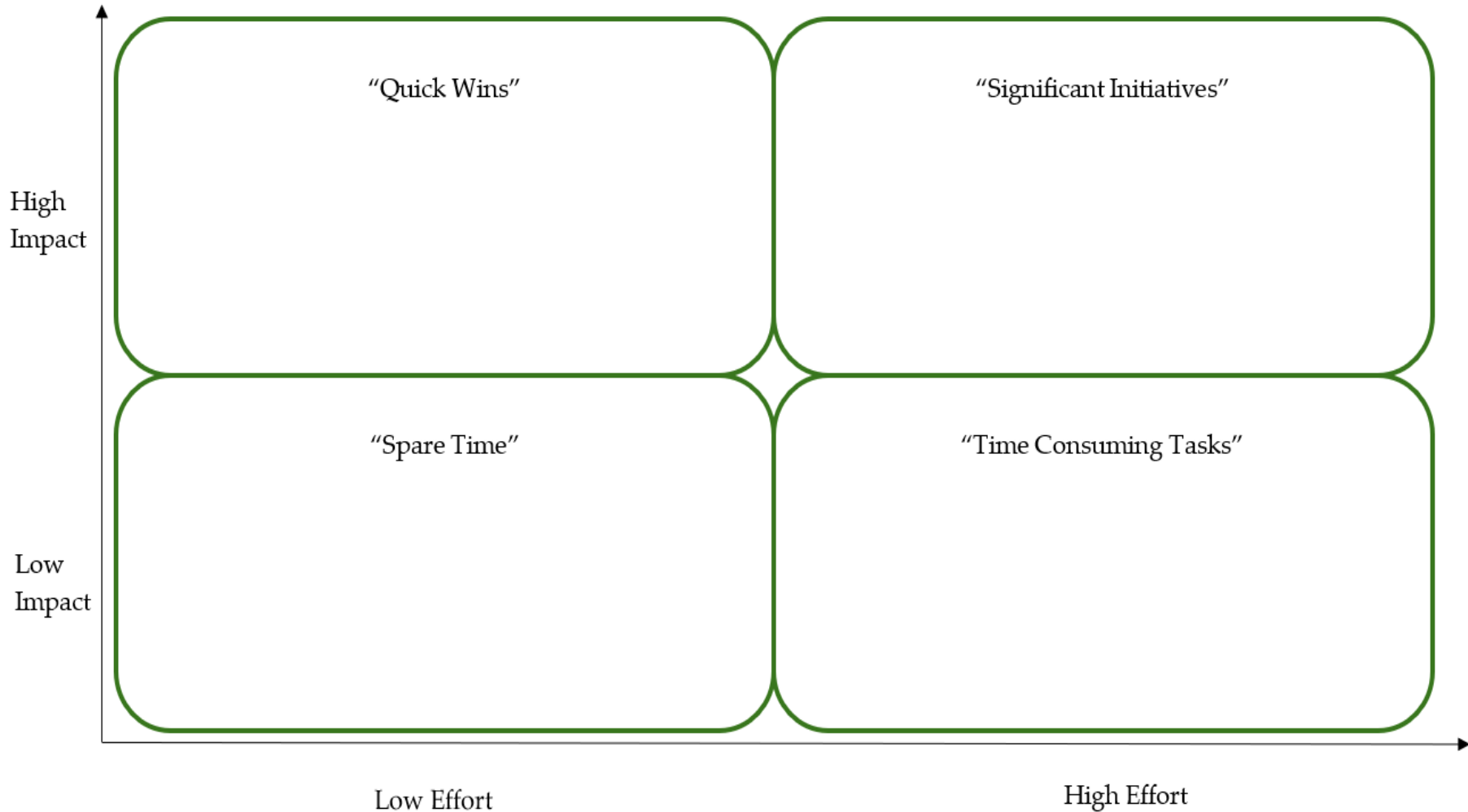
Planning for Services

Milestone Description: The LEA has systems to align the Evaluation Process with the process for developing a student’s Individualized Education Program, including ensuring that critical information from the Assessment Process and Eligibility Determination is transitioned to the IEP Team.

Factor	Indicator of Success	Response	Evidence
Documentation Transfer	<p>The LEA has processes to ensure that in every case, the Evaluation Plan and Report are sent to the parents and the IEP team to help inform the IEP creation process.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: The LEA has a documented process for sharing the Evaluation Plan and Report to parents and the IEP team that is shared widely, and all staff are trained in the process.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: EPT and IEP team collaboration is outlined in the Special Education operating procedures manual, case managers are responsible for sharing EPT reports with families and serve on IEP and EPT teams and ensure reports are shared with the IEP team.)</p>
IEP Development	<p>Our staff have the knowledge and skills to leverage Evaluation Reports and other data from the EPT to inform the development of a quality, data-driven IEP.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Staff have received the necessary training and resources to develop quality, data-driven IEPs with information from the Evaluation Process, and their practices reflect this training.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: IEPs include data from Evaluation Reports in present levels of performance, goals are aligned to student needs outlined in the Evaluation, services reflect the recommendations from the Evaluation.)</p>
Meeting Participation	<p>The LEA has processes by which all IEP team members have time and coverage to participate in all required meetings.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: An LEA has a documented process for coordinating coverage for all IEP participants that is shared widely, and all team members are trained in the process.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: school administrators coordinate to provide coverage for IEP team members to participate in meetings, Special Education Director provides additional support as needed.)</p>
Trained Professionals	<p>Our staff have the knowledge and skills to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in the Special Education process.</p> <p>(Ex. for Agree: Staff have been provided with the necessary training and resources to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and their practices reflect this training.)</p>		<p>(Sample Evidence: All staff are provided an outline of their roles and responsibilities annually; leadership provides ongoing support and feedback to strengthen staff practices and staff engage in professional learning on an ongoing basis.)</p>

Planning Tool

Using either the Implementation Review Worksheet or your own notes, plot the Indicators of Success on the matrix below. Plot the indicators according to how much effort they take compared to the potential impact of addressing that indicator. Then answer the discussion questions that follow.



Discussion Questions

After your team has completed the Planning Tool matrix above, use the following questions to guide you through identifying your high-leverage priority areas:

1. Based on the matrix above, what is the most important Indicator of Success to begin with? Are there other related Indicators that naturally flow once we have addressed the most important Indicator?
2. How can we tap into our existing strengths to build upon areas in need of improvement?
3. What are the biggest challenges that must be anticipated? How might we plan with those challenges in mind?
4. What resources, training, and assistance do we need in order to become ready in this area? What community partners can be engaged to support us? Who from our staff must be involved?

Notes: