

Current practices in professional learning

Use the open-ended questions in this tool to gather information on stakeholders’ perspectives on current professional learning practice. Some questions may not be appropriate for certain stakeholder groups since some stakeholders will have more experience with professional learning than others.

The primary purpose of this process is to *understand* current practice, *not* to determine what it *should* be. Focus respondents on what exists and remind them that the overall purpose of this policy review is to strengthen the quality and effects of professional learning. If it is difficult to get answers to all questions, use the goals of the policy review and the nature of the audience as factors to determine which questions take priority.

PURPOSE	To gather information on the current practices of professional learning.
NON-PURPOSE	To identify the strength and weaknesses of the current practice; to identify problems with the current practice; or to suggest strategies to address the problems with current practice. These purposes will occur later in the analysis phase.
TIME	30-45 minutes
QUESTIONS/PROBES	Use the questions in the table on page 44 to elicit information about current practice. Seek clarification if any response is unclear by simply asking the respondent(s) to provide an example or more information. The following additional probes might be useful: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To how many other educators does this apply? • Which specific educators, e.g. teachers, principals, instructional support staff, etc.? • What is the estimated range of implementation through practice? High? Low? Average? • Give a specific example from your own experience. • What is one example of effective professional learning? • What is one example of ineffective professional learning? • What else is important to know about current practice in professional learning that I haven't asked?

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CURRENT STATE
<p>1. Vision, mission, and beliefs for professional learning: Describes the vision, mission, and beliefs for effective professional learning and its relationship to educator effectiveness and student achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the vision, mission, and beliefs for professional learning in the state or district? • What are the current goals for professional learning and its purpose(s)?
<p>2. Definition of professional learning: Defines professional learning and positions it as a comprehensive system of improvement, occurring continuously, and engaging educators in collaborative learning primarily at their worksite with additional opportunities outside their worksite.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you define professional learning? • Who participates in professional learning?
<p>3. Standards for professional learning: Delineates research-based standards for professional learning that are used to monitor and measure effectiveness, efficiency, and equity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What ensures that professional learning meets standards for high quality?

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<p>4. Purposes for professional learning: Specifies three distinct purposes for professional learning including individual growth and development, team and school improvement, and program implementation, all linked to increasing student achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the purposes of professional learning? • How do those purposes influence how professional learning occurs?
<p>5. Governance for professional learning: Delineates lines of authority for professional learning and defines processes for decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What rules, policies, or expectations govern professional learning? • Who has final authority for professional learning? • Who has primary responsibility for the professional learning program?
<p>6. Roles and responsibilities for professional learning: Delineates the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and other contributors to effective professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is typically involved in decisions about professional learning? What kinds of decisions do they make? • How is professional learning planned, implemented, coordinated, and evaluated?
<p>7. Requirement for professional learning: Delineates the expectations and/or requirements for professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much professional learning is available and required for teachers? Principals? Central office staff? Other education staff? Support staff? • How much professional learning do educators typically engage in? • Does the amount vary by roles, e.g. teachers, principals, new teachers, central office ? What reasons exist for this variation?
<p>8. Alignment with other systems: Links professional learning with educator, both teacher and administrator, effectiveness or evaluation systems, major reform initiatives, and other learning-focused and operational systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does professional learning contribute to or interact with other systems such as hiring and retaining educators, curriculum, assessment, and instruction, performance evaluation, student and educator data, educator effectiveness, etc.? • How does professional learning link to major initiatives or goals? • How do those initiatives or goals influence the content, form, and amount of professional learning?
<p>9. Data-informed professional learning: Uses student, educator, and system data to inform decisions about needs, content, designs, and effects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data are typically used to inform decisions about the content, form, and length of professional learning? • What is the most common content of professional learning? • Who determines the content?
<p>10. Leadership for professional learning: Requires leaders and facilitators of professional learning to be well prepared for their leadership roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what degree are leaders and facilitators of professional learning prepared for their leadership roles?
<p>11. Plans for professional learning: Requires individual, team, school, district, and state professional learning plans that align with individual, team, school, system, and state improvement goals, components of the plans, and process for developing and approving plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there plans for professional learning at the state, school system, school, team, and individual levels? • How are these plans developed? • Are they required? Reviewed? Approved? How?

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CURRENT STATE
<p>12. Licensure/Certification: Specifies the role of professional learning for initial, additional, and advanced licenses or certificates that prepare educators for their new roles and develops the disposition of continuous learning and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What special programs or certifications earn educators awards, additional compensation, or other incentives?
<p>13. Dedicated time for professional learning: Allocates time for professional learning within the workday several times per week and sets aside additional days, approximately 10 per school year, for learning associated with school, system, and state improvement goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is dedicated time set aside for professional learning within the workday? Outside the workday? • Has time for professional learning increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the last five years? • How is the time allocated? • Who determines when it occurs and how it is used?
<p>14. Dedicated funding for professional learning: Requires set aside and/or adequate funding to ensure application of learning to achieve full implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has funding for professional learning increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the last five years? • Is there a designated amount or percentage of funding specifically set aside for professional learning? • Who determines how much funding and how the funds are used?
<p>15. Other resources: Requires other resources such as staff, technology, and materials to increase access to, efficiency of, and effectiveness of professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other resources (staff, technology, and materials) support professional learning? • How are those resources acquired and allocated? • Where do most of these resources reside?
<p>16. Flexible designs: Supports flexible designs for professional learning to differentiate learning for experience, background, learning preference, and other factors that influence learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of professional learning do educators experience?
<p>17. Job-embedded collaboration: Promotes job-embedded collaboration among peers within professional learning and during application and refinement of practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time is devoted to collaborative learning? • How does collaboration occur among peers to support professional learning? • What preparation and support do educators have for effective collaborative learning? • Who supervises job-embedded collaboration? • What supports effectiveness of collaborative learning time?
<p>18. Mentoring and induction: Provides multiyear mentoring with induction to support novice educators, those assuming new positions, or those with new certifications or licenses as they transition to their new work responsibilities, receive personalized support for success and acculturation; and solidify the disposition of continuous improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are novice educators supported to become highly effective? • How are educators in new roles supported? • How long does mentoring support last? • What is included in the induction program for staff members? • How does mentoring and induction align with both systemwide goals and individual educator needs?
<p>19. Incentives and recognition for professional learning: Uses application and impact of professional learning as criteria for incentives or recognition for professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What incentives exist for participation in professional learning? • How are those incentives awarded or earned? • Are the incentives based on application and impact of the learning? • Who determines if the incentives will be awarded?

POLICY AREAS	QUESTIONS TO ELICIT CURRENT STATE
20. Evaluation of professional learning: Requires formative and summative evaluation of the equity, effectiveness, and efficiency of professional learning for both accountability and improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is professional learning evaluated? By whom? How often? • Who uses evaluation results? • How are results used?
21. Third-party providers: Establishes criteria for engaging third-party partners in the professional learning system to maintain effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and alignment with specified outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What processes are in place to ensure that third-party providers meet the state's requirements for effective professional learning and provide high quality services and products?
22. Learning management system: Uses a technology solution that links with educator and student databases to manage and increase access to professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is professional learning managed? • Who is responsible for and how is record keeping for professional learning done? • How is technology used to contribute to equitable access, efficiency, and accountability for professional learning?

Source: Killion, J. (2013). *Professional learning policy review: A workbook for states and districts*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.

SIX PHASES OF A POLICY REVIEW	
Phase 1: Initiation	Addresses initiation of the policy review and includes recommendations for setting up the process, identifying members of the review committee, and outlining their responsibilities. It also includes guidelines for the scope and length of the review process and confirming criteria for analysis.
Phase 2: Discovery	Discusses discovery. During this phase, policies related to professional learning are located for future analysis.
Phase 3: Analysis	Covers analysis. During this phase, members of the task force review and analyze the policies discovered using established criteria. Task force members use available data and evidence to make judgments about policies.
Phase 4: Recommendations	Focuses on recommendations for changes that the task force believes will leverage policies to increase the effectiveness and results of professional learning. It also includes sources of professional learning policies.
Phase 5: Reporting	Provides guidance on reporting and disseminating information on the policy review process, findings, and recommendations.
Phase 6: Follow-up	Provides guidance for follow-up one year after the review report and for annual reviews in the interim between comprehensive policy reviews.

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TRANSFORMING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional Learning Policy Review: A Workbook for States and Districts was created as part of Learning Forward's Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common Core initiative, a multidimensional initiative focused on developing a comprehensive system of professional learning that spans the distance from the statehouse to the classroom. The project is supported by Sandler Foundation, MetLife Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Learn more at www.learningforward.org/publications/implementing-common-core.

