Session 1G: Preparing for Assessment Peer Review

Panelists: *Phoebe Winter, Meagan Karvonen, Nathan Dadey, Zach Warner, Chris Rozunick, Brooke Nash*

[Session 1G Preparing for Peer Review slides 4–22]

After providing an overview of the session, Dr. Karvonen pointed participants to the 2018 peer review guidance (available on the conference website; also on the ED website at https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/saa/assessmentpeerreview.pdf) as the ultimate source on this topic for states. States typically provide their initial peer review submissions within a year of the first operational administration or based on ED's schedule. She noted the CEs reviewed in Focus Area 1 sessions and distinguished between requirements and helpful examples that could address them.

Summarizing the key takeaway messages from Focus Area 1, Dr. Karvonen emphasized that it is possible to use multiple innovative approaches and meet the peer review requirements in the CEs. However, the document probably will not look like your traditional summative submission. The key to success is demonstrating coherence across decisions about assessment while building the system (along with other components). The sequence of the state's decisions will not always follow best practices, but ultimately, it needs to develop a coherent system that operates as a whole and fulfills the purposes and intended uses. States should understand the relationships between these decisions, as well as what questions to answer and when. They also should confirm the boundaries of peer review requirements (e.g., by identifying the evidence that supports summative uses) and consult ED long before the submission deadline. Planning for peer review as early as possible is crucial, and states should identify the staff members responsible for producing the necessary evidence and writing the responses. It can be helpful to create a peer review response plan as a living document that is updated as needed.

Other essential components of the process include collecting and organizing evidence as the state develops its assessment system and leaving sufficient time to refine and synthesize the supporting information. Someone must be responsible for the whole peer review submission, and states should track its status and make corrective actions as necessary. The peer review submission must present logical evidence, so chains of evidence must infuse staff members' thinking and writing. It should describe intended content relationships, procedural evidence, the external alignment study, and how the state interprets and responds to assessment findings. States should educate peers about their assessment designs, addressing each CE succinctly and providing the background needed to evaluate the evidence. Help peer reviewers cross-reference the CEs in the index of responses. The submission should explain all atypical evidence and provide a summary of the program. To make the case for the assessment program, states should explain the rationale within the indices, cite the evidence correctly and completely, and consider obtaining critiques prior to submitting for peer review. States can make their case through direct evidence from the assessment program, examples of similar methodologies, published research, and evidence of TAC advice (e.g., meeting minutes). Ultimately, peer review is the responsibility of the state rather than a consortium or vendor. States should always contact ED's Office of School Support and Accountability for guidance.

[Session 1G Preparing for Peer Review slides 23–25]
Dr. Warner reviewed two examples of using the index to frame the evidence that does not fit common peer assumptions. These examples—the New York State Regents Examinations and DLM—use language that educates peers and a combination of evidence to make the case for their respective assessment systems. States may need to manage expectations among their stakeholders about the likelihood of passing peer review on the initial attempt. This does not happen often, but the feedback is a review, not a verdict. Peer reviewers use an additive model to offer the state the credit it has earned with the submission.

Taking the example of the New York State Regents Examinations' depth and breadth, Dr. Warner noted that it is not possible to cover all the learning standards in a single assessment. Therefore, the state explains that it will cover all standards every three assessment cycles but always includes each domain and has to organize the domains in particular ways. The peer review details what New York will do (e.g., sample the domain) and provides item maps, explaining that it rotates standards until all are covered over the course of three test administrations. Teachers receive defined levels of complexity, which are tagged in the item map, and the submission explains the approach.

[Session 1G Preparing for Peer Review slides 26–40]
Dr. Karvonen discussed the example of DLM, explaining the reverse engineering of CE 2.1 (Test Design and Development). She emphasized that peer review submissions can respond to CEs in an innovative way, although the state may need to provide more evidence than usual. Some of the information from CE 2.1 will carry forward to CE 3.1 (Overall Validity). In a small-group activity, participants discussed possible responses to CE 2.1 using assessment approaches their states were considering or pursuing and consulted the 2018 guidance. They considered three guiding questions: (1) What evidence makes sense for this CE, given the assessment you are thinking about? (2) What are some potential stumbling blocks when thinking about how to respond to this CE? (3) What additional examples would help you understand how to prepare a submission for this CE?

Regarding the evidence that makes sense for CE 2.1, a representative of an assessment organization, explained that the team plans to add a competency-based supplement to the state summative assessment and accountability system. This will be an exhibition or portfolio model. Small-group participants focused on the model and its purpose in their discussion. Another small group focused on legislative mandates (e.g., interim assessments) and their influence on meeting peer review requirements. Dr. Warner suggested that states addressing legislative mandates consider ESSA and articulate the strategy of their assessment systems, perhaps explaining that programs use the information to maximize achievement. Both interim products and local assessments have their place in overall validity and should fit within the assessment strategy to provide the most accurate picture of students' abilities. Components that are not part of the summative assessment require the state to articulate how they fit in and their purpose and use.

Participants engaged in the same activity focused on CE 4.2 (Fairness and Accessibility). Another representative of an (assessment organization) reported that her group discussed the challenges that CE 4.2 presents to states using TYA designs (e.g., the time associated with particular accommodations). They also focused on increased time testing and decreased time on instruction as a fairness issue, as well as special populations of students (e.g., those in the juvenile justice system). Shaun Bates, Director of Assessment at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, remarked that his group discussed remote proctoring and assessments. Some states are legislating virtual school and testing centers, which involves accessibility concerns. For example, visually impaired students cannot take assessments in Braille remotely. A member of an assessment organization noted that his group talked about accessibility standards and the interaction between student profiles and content standards in a portfolio assessment model.

Regarding the security of assessment materials, Dr. Peasley explained that the assessment peer review process offers states the opportunity to mark their submissions "secure/proprietary." ED treats those materials accordingly. In theory, this proprietary information could be obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, but ED has never had such a request for a peer review submission. Any inquiry made to ED regarding a state's peer review submission is sent to that state first. ED has retained secure materials as part of its digital government records since 2017. ED no longer has paper records submitted prior to 2017. Peer reviewers sign an agreement that they will not retain any information after their review.

Dr. Peasley emphasized that ED works with states when they want to discuss issues or have special circumstances (e.g., staff shortages) that may require extending the time frame for peer review submissions. Generally, ED is in a better position to help states that have communicated problems meeting the deadline far in advance. He suggested that states facing challenges let ED know as soon as possible, although an accommodation is not always possible. ED aims to improve the timeliness of providing peer review notes to states.