Session 3A: The Basics of IADA
Panelists: *Scott Marion (smarion@nciea.org), Carla Evans (cevans@nciea.org)*

[Session 3A The Basics of IADA slides 7–12]
Dr. Evans opened the session, encouraging attendees to anonymously share knowledge of IADA and ask questions via a QR code or a URL. She explained that IADA allows for a pilot for up to seven states to use competency-based or other innovative assessment approaches for use in making accountability determinations. ED may expand the IADA to beyond seven states after the initial IES evaluation report. An attendee asked whether the assessment system needs to be used for accountability. Dr. Evans answered that yes, the system itself needs to be used for accountability. However, things such as optional state resources that are outside of the assessment system could be considered nonaccountability.

Additionally, IADA's initial demonstration period is five years with a two-year extension and the potential of additional one-year extensions via additional ED waivers. The program requires rigorous assessment, participation, and reporting requirements and is subject to a peer review process. IADA requires participation that is representative of the state in terms of demographics. Annual performance reports (APRs) are also required. APR templates are available online and collect information on scaling, technical quality, evidence, and stakeholder engagement. APRs also include an opportunity for discussion of training to create a comprehensive report on the demonstration's progress, as well as how it is adjusting and looking forward. Peer review does not happen during the demonstration authority but should be planned for during this time. A system developed under IADA may be used with a subset of districts based on strict "guardrails," with a plan to move statewide by the end of the extension.

Dr. Evans went on to discuss the fundamental tensions within IADA (flexibility, innovation, classroom-level information versus standardization, scalability, and comparability). IADA is for states that see a need to try something new, not for those that are satisfied with their current system.

An attendee asked, "What is the actual flexibility? Why do this?" Dr. Evans answered that there are two flexibilities offered. The first is that the innovative assessment system need not be the same assessment; students can take the state assessment or a pilot assessment, and states may run more than one pilot. Pilots can also be operated in a subset of districts, not statewide. The second is that the innovative assessment system need not be operated annually.

Kinge Mbella, a Psychometrician at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, asked how the requirements of some states for annual testing would be met if testing were not operated annually. Dr. Marion answered that to meet state requirements, students would take the state assessment in years that the innovative assessment system was not operated. A representative of an education technology company, asked whether flexibility allow states to conduct full-scale assessment from the start. Dr. Evans explained that going full scale from the start would not require a demonstration project because the two tests would not be offered in parallel; a state would switch out an old assessment for a new one, which would trigger peer

review just like any new state assessment program. An attendee asked whether a state that left the program could return. Drs. Marion and Evans answered that the state could probably reapply.

Dr. Evans then highlighted the four major guardrails (quality, comparability, scale, and demographic similarity) and asked the attendees to discuss which of the guardrails is hardest to deal with in their state. A representative from an assessment organization commented that grant fatigue is real and can prevent smaller school districts from pursuing an interest in IADA; if only larger, more affluent school districts are able to participate, demographics could be disparate. Dr. Marion responded that IADA is driven by law and that there could be a concern that only affluent districts would participate. In Dr. Marion's experience, affluent districts are content with their systems. Dr. Marion stated that the programs should work with multiple segments of a state's population. Dr. Evans added that if the initial adopters are not perfectly representative of a state's population, applicants may qualify if they can show a plan to bring others on board.

[*Session 3A The Basics of IADA slides 12–24*]
Dr. Marion went on to discuss comparability. ESSA requires producing "comparable annual determinations." A report by the National Academy of Education, *Comparability of Large-Scale Educational Assessments*, examines the issue and provides recommendations on and examples of comparability. Day 2 sessions 3D and 3G addressed comparability in greater detail. Dr. Marion stated that scaling statewide in five to seven years (or eight, if an extension is granted) is a short time for educational change. There is research on scale (adoption, replication, adaptation, and reinvention). Innovation can be a catalyst for further innovation. Dr. Marion encouraged attendees to think about the need for an innovative demonstration program and the degree to which they want to be ambitious and the degree to which they want to test out some new ideas that could be part of their state assessment system. Information learned from the innovation could be folded into the statewide assessment. If a project manages scale, "orderly transition," going from a demonstration project to a statewide system, occurs.

There is more than one approach to scaling. One can take an incremental approach, tweaking the design and then switching over to the entire state (as Massachusetts did). One can also "fail fast" to try out ideas and innovate rapidly. This is easier to do with 10 or 20 willing districts than statewide. If one keeps iterating, one can have a system at the end of five or seven years. All things being equal, Dr. Marion advises that states constantly prototype and work with a group of districts that can manage it; even though they are taking on a new program, they probably would not have more staff members to take on another large assessment program. It is hard to manage one statewide assessment program; managing two of equal size is much more difficult.

Dr. Marion discussed real and perceived barriers to applying for the IADA (lack of dedicated funding, requirements in general, and ED's peer review process). He stated that peer review is not a hurdle to overcome; it is something to plan for as you work. Dr. Marion discussed changes in leadership, which matter a lot and should be kept in mind. Would a new leader continue to support the project? Dr. Evans shared sections that should be covered in a state's APR

(submitted APRs are on ED's website at https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/iada/). She also addressed quality control and quality assurance, which can be challenges for programs with a great deal of flexibility. It's important to have processes set down.

Dr. Marion addressed the questions of why and how to innovate. To him, the most compelling reason is the ability to test an idea with little disruption to the statewide testing system. It's a huge advantage to try something out in a subset of districts and see whether an idea works. He surmised that all of the attendees get complaints about state assessments and that people conflate ideas about accountability and assessment, and he said that it is likely that there are more issues with accountability. There could be ways of providing richer pictures of student achievement, better information to use for program evaluation for planning purposes, and other information. These can be tested.

Dr. Marion went on to share an excerpt from Montana's theory of action (TOA) (Slide 24). If you make a claim about an assessment's ability to inform instruction, it's best to have evidence or logic to support the claim. The TOA is one component of what it takes for an assessment to inform instruction. A TOA can help one think through how an assessment becomes a defensible inference about what students know, what they need to know, what a school system can do about it, and the recommended course of action.

Questions and Comments

Becca Velikaneye, Assessment Supervisor at the Wyoming Department of Education, asked Dr. Marion to discuss more IADA successes. He responded that representatives from several states would present in the next section and that he did not want to "sell anyone" on IADA. It is a lot of work, but the best reason is being able to try new ideas without resetting standards or encountering peer review as one would if attempting to insert an idea into state standards—and without double-testing. Dr. Evans added that the desire for IADA often comes from the ground up when something is broken and people want something different. If that isn't happening in your state, there may not be a reason to try IADA. Allison Timberlake, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability at the Georgia Department of Education, said to think of IADA as a tool to help make ideas about adjustments happen.

Dr. Schwartz asked about novel approaches to learning, such as the influence of chess on math skills, and attempting to measure impact. Dr. Marion responded that there is no escape from content standards; IADA can help prioritize, but it cannot eliminate content standards. Jim Blevins of New Hampshire asked about sampling. Dr. Marion responded that there are many ways to do comparability; it doesn't have to be all students.

Diana Clapp, Education Coordinator at the Wyoming State Board of Education, asked about addressing misperceptions about performance-based assessments. Dr. Evans responded that if a state is going to create a program that is more performance-based, it should determine what the trade-offs are, such as the number of performance assessments needed to get a

generalizable estimate of individual student achievement, which is the current law. Some states might be willing to take the trade-off to incentivize and achieve learning environments that are more performance-based. Dr. Marion added that statewide assessment evaluates programs, not individual achievement, and needs to serve accountability. If you want an assessment to serve an instructional purpose, create a separate assessment to do so. One system cannot address every need (program evaluation, instruction, long-term monitoring, accountability).

The session concluded with Dr. Evans noting that several session attendees submitted comments that mentioned connecting IADA to innovative accountability measures. There is currently no innovative accountability demonstration authority in law. Patrick Rooney, Director of School Support and Accountability at ED, added that if states have ways they want to think about different accountability systems, ED is happy to talk with them and advise them on ways to stay within the law. Dr. Marion added that several states run state and federal systems.