# Evaluating Infrastructure Improvements

## Key Terminology and Definitions

Please review this glossary of terms and definitions. These terms will be commonly used throughout the workshop series.

* **Logic Model:** A systematic and visual way to present and share your understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan, and the changes or results you hope to achieve.
* **Improvement Strategies:** Strategies in the SSIP that outline the course of action in achieving the Theory of Action.
* **Activities:** Initiatives, programs, policies
* **Outputs:** Direct, observable evidence that an activity has been completed as planned
* **Outcomes: Statement of the benefit or change you expect as a result of the completed activities**. Outcomes can vary based on two dimensions:

1) When you would expect the outcomes to occur, i.e., short-term, intermediate or long-term (impact); and

2) The level at which you are defining your outcome, e.g., state level, local/program level, practitioner, child/family.

### Examples:

* EI practitioners have an improved understanding of child-level standards that support assessment and IFSP development (practitioner, short-term).
* The state has an improved PD infrastructure in place for ongoing statewide training and coaching in social-emotional development and evidence-based practices (system, intermediate).
* **Evaluation Plan:** A written document describing what will be measured and how, the methods used to collect and analyze data, and how the results will be used.
* **Evaluation Questions:** The key questions the state wants to learn and answer with the evaluation, usually focused on two main areas:
	+ Process/Implementation: How’s it going? Are we effectively implementing our planned activities?
	+ Outcomes: What good did it do? Are we achieving the results we intended?

### Examples:

* + To what extent are service providers and service coordinators accessing and using the new IFSP guidance?
	+ What impact has the guidance had on the quality of IFSP outcomes, activities, and strategies?
* **Performance Indicator:** An item of information that provides evidence that a certain condition exists or that certain results have or have not been achieved.[[1]](#footnote-1) There are a number of types of indicators, including those that measure inputs, process, outputs and outcomes. Good performance indicators identify specific, observable and measurable pieces of information and require the use of such terms as number of, percent of, mean of, or similar phrases.

### Examples:

* + At least one quality indicator will increase on the Systems Framework Self-Assessment for the Personnel/Workforce component.
	+ The state improves its Medicaid collection by 20%.
* **Measurement/Data Collection Methods:** Identify the source of the data and the methods that will be used to collect data for each indicator.

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## Pre-Work for Session 1

Please complete one response per state team.

### A. Review one area of infrastructure you are struggling most to evaluate:

* Based on your original infrastructure analysis and/or current knowledge that led to identifying this as an area of infrastructure for improvement, what result(s) do you intend to accomplish by implementing the changes? Please briefly describe:
* Have you identified the intended output(s) and outcome(s) for this area of infrastructure? (Y/N)
	+ If so, what are those?
* Are your intended outputs and outcomes aligned with your improvement activities? Please describe:

### B. Does your evaluation plan include performance indicators related to the infrastructure area identified above?

* If so, do these indicators meet each of the criteria of high quality using the S.M.A.R.T. definitions below? (Check all that apply)
* If not, review the S.M.A.R.T. Performance Indicator criteria below to begin to consider how to develop a performance indicator(s).

Infrastructure Performance Indicator SMART critieria[[2]](#footnote-2):

* *Specific*. Are the terms included in the performance indicator clear and commonly understood? Would a stakeholder with basic knowledge of the program know what the indicator means?
* *Measurable*. Does your indicator begin with words such as number of, percent of, increase in, or similar phrases? Have you identified a feasible process for collecting the data? Is your measure defined the same way over time?
* *Achievable*. Is it possible? How does the expected change or target relate to your baseline data? Will meeting the indicator help you achieve a goal toward meeting your SIMR?
* *Relevant*. Is the performance indicator aligned to the intended outcomes of the SSIP? How well will this indicator support you in explaining your outcomes to stakeholders, OSEP, and the public?
* *Time-bound*. Does your performance indicator include information about when it will be
	+ accomplished (e.g., by 2020 or within 6 months of initiation)? Will the timeframe for your performance indicator enable you to report data to OSEP for your SSIP in a timely manner?

Comments:

1. Brizius, J. A., & Campbell, M. D. (1991). *Getting Results: A Guide for Government Accountabiblity*. Council of Governors Policy Adivisors. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From: Refining Your Evaluation: S.M.A.R.T. Performance Indicator Worksheet <http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/ssip/Refining_SMART_Performance_Indicators.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)