

Rhode Island Education Accountability Act of 2019: Guidance Document

Division of System Transformation
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State of Rhode Island
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
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An Important Update to Our K-12 Education Community:

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that our learners experience a safe, nurturing, engaging, and rigorous education every day. This document provides guidance on the Local Educational Agency (LEA) requirements that stem from the [R.I. Education Accountability Act \(SO6084\)](#), which will be referred to as the *Act* hereafter. This act intends to provide for greater site-based management at the school level, expand the duties of school improvement teams (SITs), and establish a new chapter on education accountability for all stakeholders serving our learners.

With this in mind, we have created this ***Rhode Island Education Accountability Act of 2019 Guidance Document***. The purpose of this document is to offer guidance and support around the shifts in governance responsibilities, development of school and LEA plans, and reports that must be submitted to RIDE as outlined in the Act.

We are grateful for the many educators and community leaders who have given feedback and provided thoughtful questions, which have helped shape this guidance document. We hope you see your feedback reflected. Additionally, we would like to thank the school and LEA leaders who participated in the numerous work and feedback sessions used to shape this important work. The guidance will be released in phases as we finalize our statewide systems of support, work to streamline how data and information is collected from LEAs and finalize the systems that allow LEAs and RIDE to meet the needs of our diverse learners effectively and efficiently. In closing, thank you for your hard work, dedication, and commitment to do what is needed for the students of Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner of Education

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Purpose

The [R.I. Education Accountability Act \(SO6084\)¹ of 2019](#) allows for site-based management at the school level, creating an expansion in the responsibilities of school leaders and School Improvement Teams (SITs). This shift in governance structure within a Local Education Agency (LEA) also led to shifts in the roles and responsibilities of LEA administrators and School Committees/Boards. Additionally, the Act expanded upon the ways in which LEAs and individual schools will be assessed, monitored, and held accountable for reporting on progress and performance. Finally, RIDE was tasked with providing guidelines around school and LEA planning, reporting, and sharing of resources and best practices. The main components of the Act and this guidance document are organized by the following categories: site-based management, strategic planning, and reports.

Given the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic placed on communities, RIDE has supported schools and LEAs with a gradual implementation of the requirements outlined in the Act. RIDE facilitated work groups of school and LEA leaders, as well as Rhode Island legislators, and held several feedback sessions to shape the planning templates and the accompanying supports needed for implementation. Based on our numerous field engagements, this guidance is meant to:

- Summarize the requirements of the Act in a succinct and user-friendly manner.
- Provide schools and LEAs with more support to create plans given the additional responsibilities, decisions, and circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Create accompanying templates and samples that are user-friendly and allow for consistency within and across LEAs.
- Reduce the burden on LEAs and schools by streamlining the reports and data requests required within the Act.

Planning tools and resources are linked throughout this document to further assist users. We will continue to update and refine this guidance document and the accompanying supports based upon field feedback. Questions or requests for additional support can be sent to the Office of School and District Improvement: OSDI@ride.ri.gov

¹ For the remainder of the guidance document, the Education Accountability Act of 2019 will be referred to as “the Act”.

Part 1

1a: Site-based Management

RIDE: Shifting from Compliance to Support

In general, the Act provides an increase in the decision-making at the school level by broadening the responsibilities of the school leader and SITs. The theory of action behind this approach is that if school decisions are made by those closest to students, then those decisions will be more likely produce outcomes which meet the needs of students and families. As schools take on more responsibilities, RIDE must also adjust the way in which we provide guidance and support. Based on requirements within the Act and RIDE's commitment to shift to an agency centered around supporting the field, RIDE will:

- **Establish a state-level strategic plan** to guide LEAs as they set their priorities, goals, and accompanying initiatives.
- **Create an online platform** to support the creation and submission of the LEA and school level plans required in the Act.
- **Provide additional supports** to leadership teams in recognition of the increased responsibilities outlined in the Act.
- **Re-evaluate and prioritize supports for underperforming schools and LEAs**, keeping equity at the center of RIDE's decision-making.
- **Minimize administrative burdens** on schools and LEAs by using existing or readily available data sources and streamlining plan requirements.
- **Continue to create guidance and support** based on the evolving and differing needs of schools and LEAs, by collecting and using feedback and data to drive decisions around the types and levels of support provided.

LEAs: Shifting to Site-based Management

As previously noted, the Act outlines several shifts in the responsibilities and decisions made at each level of an LEA – from School Committees/Boards to School Improvement Teams. **Table 1. Changes in Site-Based Management** outline the level of responsibility or decision-making within an LEA for the main job functions outlined within the Act. Some of these responsibilities are directly stated in the Act, while others have been interpreted based on the intent of the law.

For many LEAs, these shifts may contradict existing policies or practices. For example, an LEA's current policies may require the School Committee to appoint school-level personnel, a responsibility the Act shifts to superintendents. While the Act indicates that the actions stated in Table 1 must be in accordance with LEA policies, collective bargaining agreements, and budgets, RIDE strongly encourages LEAs to revise their current policies and practices to align with the intent of the Act.

The following shifts should be taking place now, or by the close of the 2022-2023 school year.

Table 1. Changes in Site-Based Management

	School Committee/Board	Superintendent	Principal	School Improvement Team (SIT)
Policies	Approve policies	Recommend and implement policies	Develop policies using participatory decision making	May collaborate on policy creation or revision with Principal when possible and appropriate
Budgets	Adopt and maintain budgets	Prepare budgets, authorize purchases, and provide updates to the School Committee/Board	In consultation with the SIT, prepare school-level budgets for the Superintendent	Provide input to Principals
Facilities & Operations		Oversee the care, operations, and maintenance of buildings within the LEA	Oversee the care of equipment/materials within the building(s) they are assigned to. Recommend facility needs to Superintendent.	
Hiring of Personnel	Approve policies for employment of personnel	Appoint personnel	In consultation with the SIT, recommends school-level personnel for hiring	Provide input to Principals
Evaluation of Personnel	Approve policy or procedure(s) for the evaluation of personnel	Evaluate or create a plan for the evaluation of LEA-level personnel	Evaluate or create a plan for the evaluation of school-level personnel and initiate performance reviews	
School Improvement Plans (SIPs)		Evaluate and approve SIPs, review measures outlining school performance (Ex. SIP, School Report Card) and report progress to the School Committee	In consultation with the SIT, create SIPs and submit SIPs to the Superintendent	Provide input to Principals
School Improvement Team Selection	Establish policy for selection of SIT members, ensure SITs meet requirements of the Act and may establish a LEA-level SIT		Select members for their SIT through fair and equitable process	
Discipline	Establish policy for the discipline of school department personnel	Oversee the LEA-wide disciplinary system	Oversee the school-level disciplinary system	

School Improvement Teams (SITs): An Integral Part of Site-based Management

Each school must have a SIT to assist in the planning and decision-making at the school as outlined in Table 1. SITs are required to meet specific membership requirements, which vary based upon the grade span of the school. School Committees/Boards are required to establish policy for the election and selection of SIT members that aligns with the requirements of the Act. Additionally, School Committees/Boards must ensure that the composition of the SIT at each school meets the membership requirements of the Act. See below for further guidance and resources on creating and facilitating a SIT:

- Online modules to assist with [establishing a SIT](#) and [facilitating SIT meetings](#)
 - Please note the resources of the online modules are outdated, do not use.
- SIT Model Policy (coming soon)

1b: School and LEA Level Plans

LEA Strategic Plans will be submitted to RIDE by June 1, 2023, and School Improvement Plans will be approved by the superintendent **and** submitted to RIDE by July 1, 2023. Both plans will be submitted through the Strategic Planning System (more information below). LEAs should establish their own internal plan submission process to accommodate these deadlines. See below for suggested timelines for the creation and submission of plans:

[Timeline for creating LEA Strategic Plan](#) (Link will be live on October 20, 2022)

[Timeline for creating a new School Improvement Plan](#) (Link will be live on October 20, 2022)

[Timeline for creating a School Improvement Plan for schools with an existing plan](#) (Link will be live on October 20, 2022)

The Statewide Strategic Planning System (SPS)

In response to the Act, RIDE has created a Statewide Strategic Planning System (SPS) that aligns with the [Rhode Island Department of Education Strategic Plan](#). The system allows schools and LEAs to create plans that meet the requirements outlined in the Act and satisfy the requirements for schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). The SPS will also allow LEAs and schools to access assessment and accountability data, similar to what is available on the [RIDE Data Portal](#) and the [RI Report Card Portal](#) to create goals, set annual targets, and monitor progress.

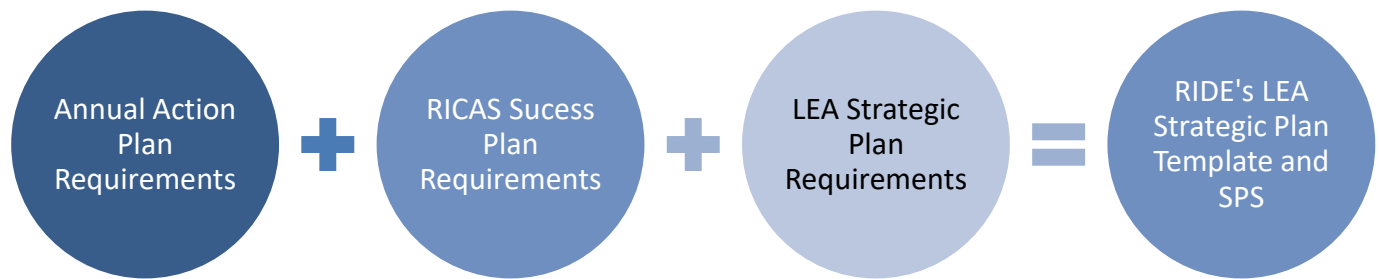
After a school or an LEA has finalized a plan within the SPS, they will be able to convert the plan into a PDF which can be shared with stakeholders. LEAs and schools will have the ability to customize portions of the public facing plans to ensure sensitive school/LEA information, such as information protected by FERPA, remains on the internal system only. RIDE expects schools and LEAs to engage their communities throughout the creation and implementation of each plan. All plans should be posted on school and LEA websites to inform the public of the goals and initiatives being prioritized each year. Additionally, communities should be regularly updated on the progress LEAs and schools are making towards their annual goals.

The SPS is currently in its pilot phase with a cohort of LEAs. It has been created to mirror the planning templates linked in this document and has undergone several rounds of feedback from our pilot group. During the pilot, RIDE will identify best practices that will guide statewide rollout in the spring of 2023. Support and a technical assistance manual will be provided to all interested schools and LEAs as they create and submit their plans through the SPS.

LEA Strategic Plan

Each LEA must create and submit a three-year strategic plan. The Act also requires LEAs to create an Annual Action Plan and a RICAS Success Plan each year. To streamline the strategic planning process, RIDE has incorporated the requirements of these two annual plans within the LEA Strategic Plan template and SPS (*see Visual 1: The Creation of One Comprehensive Plan*). LEAs will be required to reflect upon the success of their plan each year and revise their plan based on the achievement of their annual goal targets, initiatives, and action steps.

Visual 1. The Creation of One Comprehensive Plan



RIDE recognizes that many LEAs have an existing strategic plan. However, we recommend that every LEA assess their current plan to ensure it meets the requirements of the Act and the Strategic Planning System. Below you will find the LEA Strategic Planning Template, sample, and FAQs. If LEAs complete all the required components within the template, their plan will meet the Act and SPS requirements. LEAs must have their plans completed and submitted to RIDE within the SPS by **June 1, 2023**.

LEA Strategic Plan Resources

[LEA Strategic Planning Template](#)

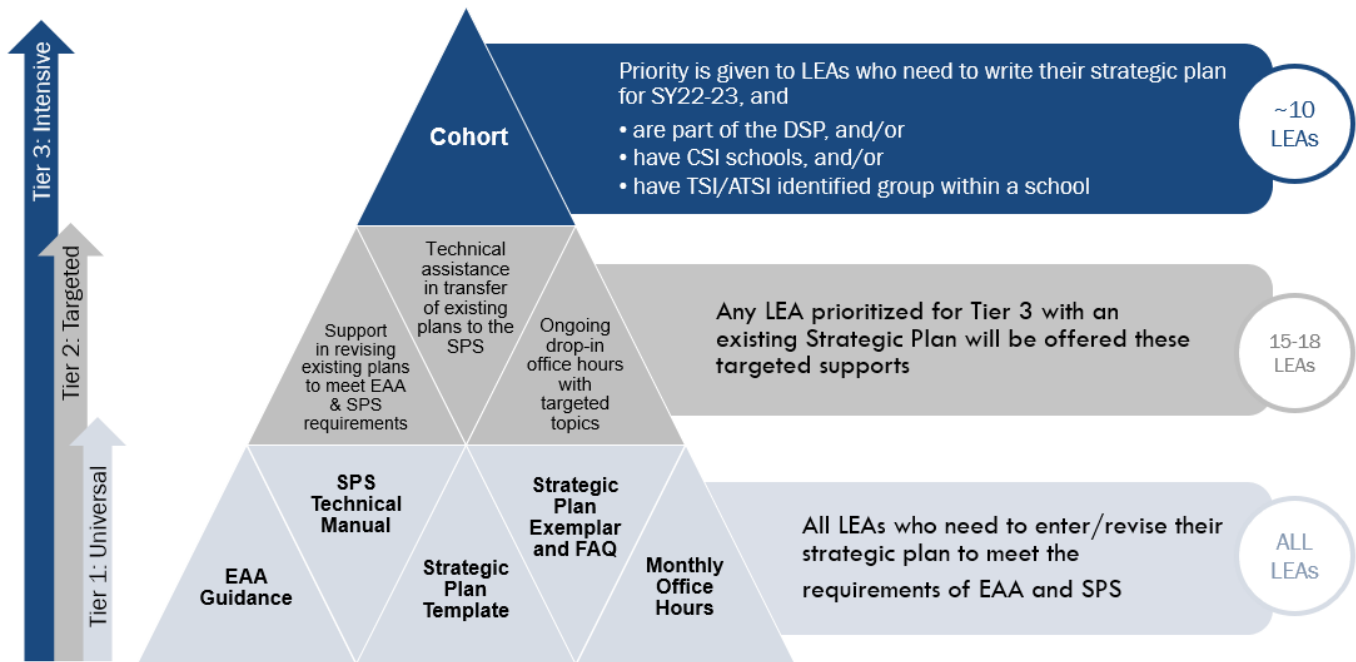
[Sample LEA Strategic Plan](#)

[LEA Strategic Plan FAQ](#)

LEA Tiered System of Support

To support LEAs in the creation of their LEA Strategic Plans and with entering their plan within the SPS, RIDE has created a Tiered System of Support (see **Visual 2: Tiered System of Support**). LEAs can select the level of support that best matches their current context and needs. See Appendix B. for a detailed explanation of the Tiers Systems of Support.

Visual 2. Tiered System of Support



School Improvement Plan

Each school within an LEA is required to have a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that is specific to that school’s needs and context, while also aligning to the LEA’s Strategic Plan. Per the Act, SITs should be utilized to create, review, and revise each school’s SIP. RIDE recognizes that many schools have an existing SIP. However, we recommend that every school use this current school year to develop a plan for the 2023-2024 school year that meets the requirements of the Act and Strategic Planning System. Below you will find the School Improvement Plan Template, sample, and FAQs. If schools complete all the required components within the template, their plan will meet the Act and SPS requirements. Please note that there are designated components of the SIP template that are only required for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools. Schools must have their School Improvement Plan entered within the SPS so it can be approved by their superintendent no later than **July 1, 2023**. See **Visual 3: Approval Process for SIPs** for the sequence of submission and approval of a school’s plan.

School Improvement Plan Resources





[School Improvement Plan Template](#)

[Sample School Improvement Plan](#)

[School Improvement Plan FAQ](#)

[Webinars on using your SIT to create a SIP](#)

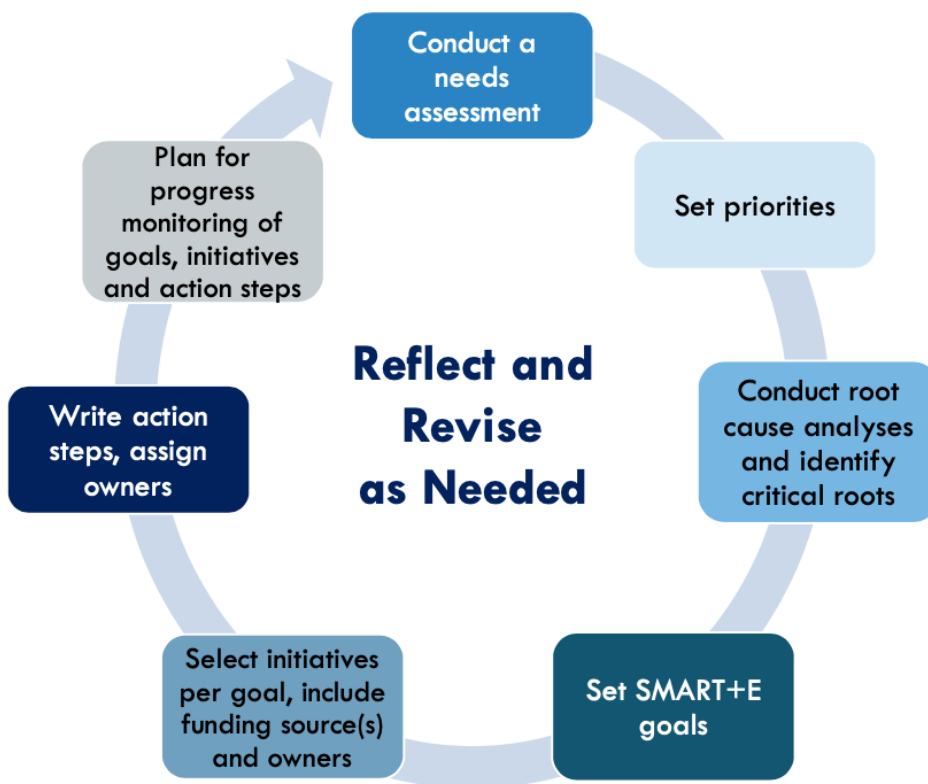
Visual 3: Approval Process for SIPs

School Improvement Team	Principal	Superintendent	School Committee
 <p>Assists Principal in formulation of SIP</p>	 <p>In consultation with the SIT, develops an annual SIP for improving school outcomes and submits to the superintendent</p>	 <p>Reviews and approves SIPs by Jul 1st, after consultation with the school committee</p>	 <p>Consults with the superintendent prior to the superintendent’s approval of the SIP</p>
<p>When revisions are required, groups are consulted. Note that the final approval of the SIP rests with the superintendent.</p>			

Using the Continuous Improvement Process

RIDE recommends the use of a continuous improvement process as LEAs and schools create, review, and revise their plans. Each step of the continuous improvement process outlined below in **Visual 4: Continuous Improvement Process** aligns with an element of the LEA or school level plan. LEAs and schools that utilize this process throughout the course of the school year will ensure these plans move from static documents to dynamic resources that drive improvement efforts for the school and LEA. A crucial element in the continuous improvement process is the regular monitoring of progress using formative and summative data as they become available. This process will allow schools and LEAs to adjust their efforts throughout the year, as needed, instead of solely conducting an end-of-year evaluation of the plans' success.

Visual 4: Continuous Improvement Process



Contact Information

The work of the Education Accountability Act spans several offices at RIDE; however, the Office of School and District Improvement (OSDI) will be the liaison for LEAs and schools requiring additional support or clarification. OSDI can be reached at OSDI@ride.ri.gov. Please visit the OSDI website for additional updates, resources, and information.

Part 2 – Data Reporting: Coming Soon

Appendix A

Crosswalk of key plan requirements of the Education Accountability Act and how LEAs and schools will meet these requirements.

Table A1. LEA Strategic Plan

The Act states the plan shall:	The requirements will be met by:
"Be developed and submitted in a manner and form prescribed by the department of education"	SPS and template have been designed to include the components as required by the EAA and the way the information will be housed
", to the extent feasible, be designed to fulfill all planning requirements of state and federal education laws"	SPS is designed through consultation with multiple RIDE offices
"Include an analysis of student and subgroup achievement gaps in core subjects"	SPS and the template require LEAs to complete a needs assessment; SPS has a data wizard which allows LEAs to access student data and set goals
"Include identification of specific improvement objectives"	SPS and template require LEAs to submit priorities and goals
"Include a description of the strategic initiative the district will undertake to achieve its improvement objectives"	SPS and template require LEAs to include initiative and action steps to achieve each goal
"Include performance benchmarks and processes for evaluating the effect of district improvement initiatives"	Guidance document and the template offer a tool for LEAs to set short-term benchmarks and progress monitor using formative assessments. The accountability system achieves the evaluation of the effects of LEA's initiatives
"Describe the professional development activities that will support each district's improvement activities and the teacher induction and mentoring activities that will be undertaken to support successful implementation of the district's improvement efforts"	Guidance document and the template direct LEAs to include PD activities to support initiatives/goals and identify teacher mentoring and induction as applicable.

Table A2. LEA Annual Action Plan

The Act states:	The requirements will be met through:
"On an annual basis...each district shall prepare and have available for state review an annual action plan"	The SPS requires LEAs to reflect on the previous year's initiatives, actions steps, and goal targets annually. Progress monitoring of goal attainment happens throughout the year as part of the SPS.
"Enumerate the specific activities, persons responsible, & timelines for action to be taken as part of the strategic initiatives set forth in the district's 3-year improvement plan"	SPS and the template require action steps to include description, person(s) responsible, and year(s) of implementation
"Identify the staff and financial resources allocated to support these activities"	SPS and the template require initiative owners & funding source

Table A3. LEA RICAS Success Plan

The Act states:	The requirements will be met through:
"Required for each school district in which more than 20% of students do not meet grade level expectations of at least proficient or its equivalent on the RI comprehensive assessment system exam"	Guidance document and template require LEAs and schools to create goal(s) to address any population of students in which more than 20% do not meet expectations on any state assessment
"Plan shall describe the school district's strategies for helping each student to master the skills, competencies, & knowledge required for the competency determination"	SPS and template require including initiatives and action steps connected to these goals
"Plan to assess each student's strengths, weaknesses and needs"	Guidance document, template, and SPS require inclusion of needs assessment summary for LEA and school plans
"Plan to use summer school, after school, & other support to provide each child with the assistance needed"	Guidance document, and template reference the inclusion of extended learning time as a part of initiatives and action steps when appropriate
"A plan for involving the parents of students"	Guidance document recommends LEAs engage stakeholders in the creation and review of their plan, as well as communicating progress towards plan goals and initiatives

Table A4. School Improvement Plan

The Act states:	The requirements will be met by:
<p>“Principal in consultation with SIT, established pursuant to this chapter, shall, on an annual basis, develop and submit to the district superintendent a plan for improving student performance”</p>	<p>Suggested timeline in RIDE resources</p>
<p>“Plans shall be prepared in a manner and form prescribed by RIDE and shall conform to any policies and practices of the district consistent therewith.”</p>	<p>SPS system, template, and sample provide the form and manner</p>
<p>“If the superintendent does not approve a plan submitted by the principal, the plan shall be returned to the principal”</p>	<p>Suggested timeline in RIDE resources</p>
<p>“Formulate a school plan to advance such goals and improve student performance. The school's plan to support improved student performance shall: Include, but not be limited to, the same components required for the district improvement plan;”</p>	<p>Template, sample, and the SPS reflect these requirements</p>
<p>“Be submitted to the superintendent who shall review and approve the plan, after consultation with the school committee, not later than July 1 of the year in which the plan is to be implemented, according to a plan development and review schedule established by the district superintendent”</p>	<p>Suggested timeline in RIDE resources</p>

Appendix B

The Tiered System of Supports visual describes the options LEAs can select as they decide the level of support and revision necessary to create their LEA Strategic Plan.

- Tier One is the universal support. All LEAs will be provided with the EAA Guidance Document, SPS Technical Manual, LEA Strategic Plan template and sample, and an FAQ document. They are also able to attend monthly RIDE office hours.
- Tier Two is offered to approximately 15-18 LEAs with an existing strategic plan. These supports provide technical assistance through drop-in office hours with targeted topics. In addition to office hours, participating LEAs will have support determining if revisions to their current plan are necessary to meet the EAA requirements and will have access to technical assistance specific to entering their existing plan into the SPS. Additionally, these LEAs have access to all Tier One support and resources.
- Tier Three is the intensive support tier. This cohort of about 10 LEAs will work with Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) and RIDE. The cohort will go through a series of workshops to learn the components of strategic planning and how the continuous improvement process is used to create a plan. These LEAs will leave with a completed strategic plan by completing assigned tasks between workshops. LEAs were eligible for this tier if they were writing a new strategic plan in school year 2022-23, and part of the District Support Program, or had a school identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or had TSI/ATSI identified group(s) within a school.

