

# External Provider Pipeline Toolkit

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## Introduction

Welcome to the External Provider Pipeline Toolkit. This Toolkit is designed to help districts make informed decisions about recruiting, screening, selecting and monitoring external service providers. This brief introduction will help you understand and navigate the tools and resources available to support this work.

## What is the Toolkit?

The process of recruiting, screening, selecting, and monitoring external service providers involves the consideration of a number of factors, and should only be undertaken in a district that has assessed its own needs and formulated a school improvement strategy. This Toolkit can help a district identify external providers, determine whether an external provider's model fits with the district's school improvement strategy, assess the quality of the services that an external provider offers, and evaluate whether an external provider's services continue to meet the needs of the district it serves over time.

## How Can the Toolkit Help Our District?

External providers offer a number of services, such as professional development for teachers and school leaders, the provision of wraparound services to address students' social, emotional and health needs, and the development of data systems to assess student performance and provide targeting interventions based on this performance. Screening, selection, and monitoring processes are critical to ensure providers' services align with districts' needs assessments and that these services are consistently high quality and meet targeted goals in a cost efficient manner.

The External Provider Pipeline Toolkit can help districts:

- Identify external providers who offer services responsive to the district's needs;
- Screen external providers to ensure that their services are high-quality and cost-effective;
- Select external providers with track records of success in similar schools and with models of change aligned with the district's school improvement strategies;
- Monitor external providers to ensure that their services are high quality and move the district to meet its performance goals in a timely way.

## How Should the Toolkit Be Used?

The Toolkit is designed for district-level leadership and staff, to help them make initial assessments about external providers, and to evaluate the quality of these services over time. Before using this toolkit, district leadership should have performed a self-assessment and developed a school improvement strategy for each school that will be utilizing the services of external providers. Once the district has done so, this toolkit can be used to assist in identifying, evaluating, and monitoring external providers that align with these strategic goals. In addition to offering general guidance about the process of hiring and monitoring external providers, the toolkit provides samples of the types of evidence a district may request to evaluate providers and their performance.

### Step 1: Recruit External Providers

Identify external providers who offer a variety of school-improvement services.

### Step 2: Screen External Providers

Obtain information about external providers that may fit your school's needs.

Assess the quality of external providers.

### Step 3: Select External Providers

Evaluate whether external providers have models that are aligned with the district's school improvement strategy.

Determine whether the external provider has been successful in the past in similar types of districts/schools.

Ensure that the external provider agrees to ambitious yet attainable performance benchmarks that are tailored to your school's needs.

### Step 4: Monitor External Providers

Using agreed upon performance targets, assess whether external are meeting expectations towards reaching district/school reform goals.

Evaluate whether the providers' models continue to be aligned with district strategy.

The Appendix to the Toolkit identifies additional questions districts should consider asking providers that relate directly to specific Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness. In this section, questions are separated into two categories: (1) Screening and Selecting External Providers and (2) Monitoring External Providers. The questions in the Appendix may be used to supplement the questions provided in the Toolkit.

For guidance on conducting self-assessments, see the Conditions for School Effectiveness Assessment Guidance and the District Standards Self-Assessment.

For questions or comments about the External Provider Pipeline Toolkit, please contact **districtassist@doe.mass.edu**.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK AND WHERE TO LEARN MORE****Recruiting**

1. How can districts identify providers that can address the specific needs of their school(s)? (p. 5)
2. How can districts find information about providers that have already been approved by the state to offer services under the Conditions for School Effectiveness RFR? (p. 5)

**Screening**

3. What is the external provider's model of change? (p. 6)
4. What types of communities does the provider have experience working with? (p. 6)
5. **Does the provider commit to achieving measurable performance goals and benchmarks, and what have the results been? (p. 6)**
6. **What evidence does the external provider have that its actions produce the desired results? How does the provider measure its program's effectiveness? (p. 6)**
7. Is the provider solving the problem it was created to address? (p. 7)
8. What quality controls does the provider have in place, i.e., what is its internal monitoring system, including mechanisms for holding staff accountable? (p. 7)
9. Does the external provider have a thorough understanding of the Massachusetts context and state standards? (p. 8)
10. What is the standard timeframe for the provider's engagements? (p. 8)
11. Under what circumstances has the provider been the most successful in the past? Least successful? (p. 8)
12. What have been the weaknesses of the provider's program and how have they been addressed? (p. 8)
13. Where applicable, how does the provider engage different stakeholders? (p. 8)
14. **How has the provider integrated its services with those of other providers in the past? How has the provider communicated with appropriate district and school personnel in the past? (p. 9)**
15. **Are the external provider's services reasonably priced and cost-effective, and do they diminish over time? (p. 9)**
16. **Is the provider's model financially viable? (p. 9)**
17. What is the provider's organizational capacity, and how does it address changes in key personnel? (p. 10)
18. What is the provider's problem resolution mechanism? Does the provider have an explicit arrangement for identifying and resolving problems that may arise? (p. 10)

**Selecting**

19. **Does the provider's model of change align with the district's school improvement strategy? What are the underlying principles of the model? (p. 11)**
20. **Do the provider's performance goals and benchmarks align with the district's goals for its school(s)? (p. 11)**
21. Does the provider have a process for data collection and self-assessment, including the use of feedback from the district and its school(s)? (p. 11)

22. Is the provider's area of focus one of the primary areas for improvement under your district's school improvement strategy? (p. 11)
23. Is the provider's internal monitoring system for holding its staff accountable sufficient to address concerns that may arise at your school(s)? Can the provider tailor its monitoring system to meet your school's individual needs? (p. 11)
- 24. Does the external provider have a clear understanding of the needs of the district's school(s) and have the ability to meet those needs? How has the provider "learned" those needs? Is the provider willing to work with the district's school improvement initiatives? (p. 11)**
25. What is the timeframe for the work the provider will perform at your school(s)? (p. 12)
26. Do the provider's pre-conditions for success align with the conditions present at your school(s)? (p. 12)
27. If applicable, does the provider have a plan for engaging different stakeholders at your school(s)? For what purpose? (p. 12)
- 28. Does the provider have a plan for integrating its services with those of the district and school as well as other providers at your school(s)? (p. 12)**
29. Has the provider presented a budget tailored to your school(s)? Does the cost seem reasonable for the services your school will receive? (p. 12)

#### Monitoring

- 30. Has the district's school improvement strategy changed in response to data? If so, is the provider's model of change still aligned with the district's school improvement strategy? (p. 13)**
- 31. Is the provider meeting its stated performance goals and benchmarks? (p. 13)**
- 32. Are the provider's services having measurable effects? (p. 13)**
33. Do the provider's services continue to be of high quality? When appropriate, is the provider implementing and adjusting based on feedback received by the district, school staff and parents? (p. 13)
34. Are the provider's services delivered such that they are consistent with state standards and the district's school improvement initiatives? (p. 13)
35. Is the provider performing its work within its previously stated timeframe? (p. 14)
36. Are any of the weaknesses in the provider's program – whether previously stated or newly identified – limiting the success of implementation at your school(s), and is the provider addressing this problem? (p. 14)
37. Where applicable, is the provider successfully engaging different stakeholders? (p. 14)
- 38. Is the provider successfully integrating its services with those of the school and district, as well as other providers? (p. 14)**
- 39. Is the provider staying within its projected budget, i.e., have the costs per task AND overall costs for the contract stayed within budget? (p. 14)**
40. Does the provider's model continue to be financially viable? (p. 14)
41. Does the provider have a mechanism in place to inform the district and school of changes in its own personnel? (p. 14)

**\*KEY QUESTIONS ARE IDENTIFIED IN BOLD**

**Step 1: Recruiting External Providers**

Strategic Questions	Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider
<p>1. <b>How can districts identify providers that can address the specific needs of their school(s)?</b></p>	<p>Consider hosting a “vendor fair,” either live or over the web.</p> <p>Designate an individual at the district to research top providers from around the country.</p> <p>Speak with other superintendents with similar needs to see what providers have been most successful in their districts.</p> <p>Put out an RFR, request for proposals (RFP), or request for information (RFI) tailored to your district’s specific needs. Consider using the ESE’s RFR as a model.</p> <p>An RFR communicates a specific need to interested providers and solicit responses as to how these providers would address the district’s needs, together with pricing information. An RFR is generally more open-ended than an RFP, and can be used to identify different types of services providers may offer that may meet a district’s needs.</p> <p>An RFP specifies the scope of work that needs to be performed (the RFP) and solicits responses from providers detailing how they would go about executing the project, including the price for their services.</p> <p>An RFI is designed to collect information from a provider with no commitment to engage in its services in a particular project. It focuses on a provider’s capabilities, skills and experience, rather than its fit for a particular project.</p> <p>A request for quote (RFQ) asks a provider to offer specifics around how they would execute a project. The primary focus of the RFQ is financial, and other elements of performance are less significant. For this reason, an RFQ is likely not the best way to solicit high quality external providers.</p>
<p>2. In Fall 2009, the ESE’s Center for Targeted Assistance issued a request for responses (RFR) built around the Conditions for School Effectiveness to identify third party vendors capable of serving as effective partners for districts and schools seeking to make strong and sustained improvement. <b>How can districts find information about providers that have already been approved by the state to offer services under the Conditions for School Effectiveness RFR?</b></p>	<p>A list of the providers that have been approved under the RFR is included in the Toolkit, with each provider listed by the Conditions for School Effectiveness for which their supports most appropriately align. To obtain the narrative detail for approved providers, please contact <b>districtassist@doe.mass.edu</b> at the ESE. Links to the narratives will be available online in the near future.</p>

**Step 2: Screening External Providers**

<b>Strategic Questions</b>		<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
3.	<b>What is the external provider’s model of change?</b> For example, if the provider offers tiered instruction services, is the provider’s model to provide the instruction with its employees or to build teacher capacity to provide tiered instruction services internally?	Request and review the provider’s foundational documents and frameworks, e.g., handbook, annual report, etc.  Consider the district’s long term capacity to partner with the provider and the sustainability of the particular model being offered.
4.	<b>What types of communities does the provider have experience working with?</b> For example, has the provider primarily offered its leadership services in low-poverty, suburban schools with few English language learners?	Request information about the student populations the provider has served, the reasons the provider worked with these communities, and how the provider’s services addressed the particular needs of the populations served.
5.	<b>Does the provider commit to achieving measurable performance goals and benchmarks, and what have the results been?</b> For example, if the provider offers services addressing students’ social, emotional and health needs, does the provider commit to reducing absenteeism among students referred for its services by X% by X date?	Request and review the provider’s potential performance goals and benchmarks for work within the district to ensure that their goals are aligned with the district/school needs.  Goals and benchmarks should articulate what will change, for whom, how much, and by when.  Be sure to analyze evidence of previous goals the provider has committed to and whether they have been achieved in other districts.

	<b>Strategic Questions</b>	<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
6.	<p><b>What evidence does the external provider have that its actions produce the desired results?</b></p> <p><b>How does the provider measure its program’s effectiveness?</b> For example, if the provider works with principals to improve their ability to effectively recruit staff, has an independent evaluator attributed improvements in student achievement to the principal’s increased capacity?</p>	<p>Ask the provider for data that demonstrates they have met their goals and benchmarks in the past. Review data the provider has collected. Data should be a driving force in external provider selection, and student achievement data is often the best measure of provider effectiveness. Other important evidence of success: attendance data, teacher retention data, teacher perception data, graduation rates, and family and community involvement.</p> <p>Also consider the rigor of the data collection: external evaluations may produce more reliable data than internal evaluations and surveys. The district should exercise extreme caution in hiring a lead partner that is unable to tie its programming to achievement data.</p> <p>Request information on <u>all</u> schools and districts the provider has served, not just a finite list of references. A provider that has been successful in less than half of the schools it has served may be a gamble your district is unwilling to take.</p> <p>Speak with select school and district leaders that have used the provider’s services. The absence of references, or multiple negative references, may indicate that the provider’s services will not meet your district’s needs.</p> <p>Observe the provider in action: attend one of the provider’s professional development sessions, visit a school that the provider operates, or shadow the provider’s coordinators. Resistance to allowing district personnel to observe staff in action may be a sign of serious problems.</p>
7.	<p><b>Is the provider solving the problem it was created to address?</b> For example, if the provider’s program was created to develop and support teachers in low-performing schools with high poverty rates and large populations of English language learners, are the majority of the teachers in the provider’s program currently serving in schools that match this description?</p>	<p>This is a particularly important consideration for providers that do not currently have achievement data but are able to provide other indicators of success.</p>
8.	<p><b>What quality controls does the provider have in place, i.e., what is its internal monitoring system, including mechanisms for holding staff accountable?</b> For example, for principal coaching services, does the provider match new staff with more senior staff to provide a one-on-one model of oversight?</p>	<p>Make sure that any quality control system includes procedures for how to address unsatisfactory performance. Ask for examples of how the provider holds unsatisfactory employees accountable.</p> <p>Make sure the provider solicits client feedback for the purpose of program improvement and monitoring.</p> <p>Consider whether and to what degree district policies empower the provider to hold school personnel accountable for implementation.</p>

<b>Strategic Questions</b>		<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
9.	<b>Does the external provider have a thorough understanding of the Massachusetts context and state standards?</b> For example, if the provider offers student assessment services, is there a high correlation between student performance on the provider's benchmarks and performance on the MCAS?	<p>If they have done work in Massachusetts, ask for examples of how they have tailored their services to meet state standards.</p> <p>Be wary of selecting a provider that does not tailor its services to state standards, or providers that claim their services are suitable for all.</p>
10.	<b>What is the standard timeframe for the provider's engagements?</b>	<p>Request examples of the scope of work in similar schools and evidence of phased out programs.</p> <p>Ask about the provider's plan for building capacity to sustain the program after its departure, and consider the district's ability to sustain the efforts initiated by the provider in the years to come.</p>
11.	<b>Under what circumstances has the provider been the most successful in the past? Least successful?</b> For example, is there a specific set of expectations for the principal's ongoing role and commitment for this provider to be effective, and has the provider made this explicit?	<p>Speak with the provider's staff about optimal working conditions and challenges the provider has encountered in the past.</p> <p>Identify district policies that may hinder or support the providers' success.</p> <p>Consider asking when the provider's program has been unsuccessful in the past, and what the provider attributes this to.</p>
12.	<b>What have been the weaknesses of the provider's program and how have they been addressed?</b> For example, for tiered instruction, if the provider had no experience with English language learners, has it hired staff to fill this gap?	<p>Exercise caution if it appears that the provider is trying to accomplish too many things, lacks the human capital to meet some its goals, and/or does not know its own weaknesses. These characteristics may indicate inconsistency in the provider's services.</p>
13.	<b>Where applicable, how does the provider engage different stakeholders?</b> For example, if the provider offers after-school services, how does it engage parents and teachers to ensure the alignment of its services?	<p>For external providers that will play a major role in the district's school improvement efforts, consider requesting examples of how the provider has engaged key stakeholders: (1) principals and administrators, (2) families, (3) students, (4) teachers, (5) community members, and (6) school districts.</p> <p>Request to speak with different stakeholder groups from other schools and districts to which the provider has offered its services.</p>

<b>Strategic Questions</b>		<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
14.	<p><b>How has the provider integrated its services with those of other providers in the past?</b> For example, if the provider offers professional development services, does it convene meetings with (1) relevant district and school personnel, (2) other professional development providers and (3) social and emotional support providers to coordinate efforts and align goals?</p> <p><b>How has the provider communicated with appropriate district and school personnel in the past?</b></p>	<p>Facilitate joint meetings across providers to ensure that there is alignment rather than overlap or contradictions between services being provided.</p> <p>Create clear pathways of reporting between the external providers and the district and school and coordinate a point person to oversee these efforts.</p> <p>If the provider has coordinated services with other providers in the past, request to speak with these other providers.</p> <p>Be wary of providers that claim that they do not need to coordinate services because they can provide all the services that a school needs. Also exercise caution when providers claim that integration of services is “too complicated.”</p>
15.	<p><b>Are the external provider’s services reasonably priced and cost-effective, and do they diminish over time?</b></p>	<p>Contact the ESE’s Office of Targeted Assistance for a determination on the reasonableness of the provider’s fees.</p> <p>Review the prices for the provider’s services carefully. If the fees appear to be excessive and/or increase over time, there may be inefficiencies in the provider’s model.</p> <p>Consider the financial sustainability of both the partnership and the district’s/school’s ability to continue the interventions the provider has introduced. One way to address this may be partnering with another district (when possible) to economize.</p> <p>Compare the fees proposed by the provider to at least one other company providing similar services.</p>
16.	<p><b>Is the provider’s model financially viable?</b> For example, if a large percentage of the provider’s budget comes from grant funding, would it be able to continue providing services at the same level and price if its grant funding were terminated?</p>	<p>Request a copy of the provider’s most recent financial audit.</p> <p>Has the provider ever received a qualified opinion on its audit?</p> <p>Have any of the last three audits identified substantial concerns with internal controls?</p> <p>What proportion of the provider’s annual revenues is from client fees? What proportion is from grants and other funding sources?</p> <p>Consider the provider’s financial capacity carefully: a provider that lacks financial capacity may be unable to offer consistent services for the contract period.</p>

<b>Strategic Questions</b>		<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
17.	<b>What is the provider’s organizational capacity, and how does it address changes in key personnel?</b> For example, if the provider offers school leadership training through consultants, does the provider have enough consultants available to serve the district’s needs?	Make sure that the provider has a mechanism to ensure the consistency of its services through changes in staff. Consider asking whether the provider allows districts to interview key personnel prior to hiring, and the weight that is given to the district’s assessment of interviewees.
18.	<b>What is the provider’s problem resolution mechanism? Does the provider have an explicit arrangement for identifying and resolving problems that may arise?</b> For example, if a provider of family-school relationship services is not meeting its stated goals for family engagement because of perceived resistance on the part of families or school staff, how would it resolve this issue?	Ask the provider how it has resolved problems in the past and evaluate the degree to which the provider has concrete systems in place to address problems in the future.  If the district/school has faced problems in the past with rolling out initiatives aligned with the provider’s services, ask the provider how it may have addressed these problems.

### Step 3: Selecting External Providers

	<b>Strategic Questions</b>	<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
19.	<b>Does the provider’s model of change align with the district’s school improvement strategy? What are the underlying principles of the model?</b> For example, if the provider’s model promotes distributed leadership, this may be incompatible with a school improvement strategy favoring strong centralized authority.	Even if the provider has a proven track record, if its model of change does not align with your school improvement strategy and/or the overarching values of the district regarding equity and access, the provider should not be selected.
20.	<b>Do the provider’s performance goals and benchmarks align with the district’s goals for its school(s)?</b> For example, if a provider of social and emotional services has a performance goal of reducing police-reported incidents by X% each year, is this a priority for your school(s)?	Request an action plan with measurable performance goals and benchmarks tailored to your school(s) and utilize these goals and benchmarks in the monitoring process.  Review benchmarks prior to finalizing the contract to ensure rigor and alignment.
21.	<b>Does the provider have a process for data collection and self-assessment, including the use of feedback from the district and its school(s)?</b> For example, if the provider offers services to improve instruction, how does it determine instructing is improving? How does it get stakeholder input?	Request copies of the feedback forms and other tools the provider will use to assess and modify the quality of its services. Do you agree with their measures?
22.	<b>Is the provider’s area of focus one of the primary areas for improvement under your district’s school improvement strategy?</b> For example, if your district identified the absence of skilled math and science teachers as a top priority to be addressed, does the provider’s program address this?	Make sure that the district has (1) developed a list of priorities for intervention and (2) researched which of the priorities can be best addressed internally. The remaining highest priority items which require external intervention should be those for which the district looks for external providers.
23.	<b>Is the provider’s internal monitoring system for holding its staff accountable sufficient to address concerns that may arise at your school(s)? Can the provider tailor its monitoring system to meet your school’s individual needs?</b>	Ask the provider to give you a list of the staff members that will be working with the school(s) and their qualifications.  Request that the provider share with the organization’s turnover statistics and its process of bringing on new employees and how it trains them to effectively enact their roles.
24.	<b>Does the external provider have a clear understanding of the needs of the district’s school(s) and have the ability to meet those needs?</b> For example, if a large percentage of the students at your school(s) live at or below the poverty level, does the provider have an understanding of special challenges it may face in promoting family engagement.  <b>Is the provider willing to work with the district’s school improvement initiatives?</b>	Make sure the provider has experience working successfully in schools with populations comparable to the district’s school(s).  Keep in mind that not every good provider has experience working in every type of school: a provider with high rates of success with native English speakers may not be equipped to address the needs of a school with a high percentage of English language learners.

	<b>Strategic Questions</b>	<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
25.	<p><b>What is the timeframe for the work the provider will perform at your school(s)?</b> For example, if the provider offers data assessment services, does it have a schedule for rolling out its services, training school staff in how to use its assessment services and embed them in classroom practice, and reducing the need for its services over time?</p>	Request a scope of work for the school(s) the provider will serve, including a plan for phase out of the provider's services.
26.	<p><b>Do the provider's pre-conditions for success align with the conditions present at your school(s)?</b> For example, if the provider's success is contingent upon a majority of the teaching staff participating in a week-long professional development training during the summer, are there the requisite funds to pay teachers to participate in the professional development, and are a sufficient number of teachers available to do so over the summer?</p>	The district should exercise extreme caution in hiring a provider that has not been successful in working with populations similar to those at the school(s) in your district.
27.	<p><b>If applicable, does the provider have a plan for engaging different stakeholders at your school(s)? For what purpose?</b> For example, if a provider offers after-school services supporting students' social and emotional health, does it have a plan for engaging families, counselors and teachers in order to coordinate the most effective services?</p>	<p>Ask the provider to articulate the role of stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of its interventions.</p> <p>Request that the provider present a plan for engaging stakeholder groups to introduce the substance of their intervention/program and solicit feedback.</p>
28.	<p><b>Does the provider have a plan for integrating its services with those of the district and school as well as other providers at your school(s)?</b> For example, does a provider of effective instruction services have a plan for coordinating with professional development and aligned curriculum providers to ensure consistency, including a schedule for periodic check-ins?</p>	<p>Facilitate joint meetings across providers and school based personnel to ensure that there is alignment rather than overlap or contradictions between services being provided.</p> <p>Create clear pathways of reporting between the external providers and the district and school and coordinate a point person at the school to oversee these efforts.</p>
29.	<p><b>Has the provider presented a budget tailored to your school(s)? Does the cost seem reasonable for the services your school will receive?</b></p>	<p>Make sure that the provider doesn't present a laundry list of the cost of services: the budget should be clearly linked to the provider's plan for your school, and should align with the district's school improvement strategy.</p> <p>Consider whether and to what degree both the partnership and the interventions/programs introduced by the provider are financially sustainable over time.</p>

### Step 4: Monitoring External Providers

	<b>Strategic Questions</b>	<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
30.	<p><b>Has the district's school improvement strategy changed in response to data? If so, is the provider's model of change still aligned with the district's school improvement strategy?</b></p> <p>For example, if student performance data after the first year indicates that the school's area of greatest need is improvement of math and science instruction, does a provider offering services to improve ELA performance by English Language Learners continue to be a good fit for your school(s)?</p>	Using student performance data and other appropriate additional measures of performance, reevaluate the school improvement strategy at least annually to confirm alignment.
31.	<p><b>Is the provider meeting its stated performance goals and benchmarks?</b> For example, if the provider's stated goal was to increase parent engagement levels by X% every year, has the provider met its goal, or ramped up its programming if it appears that the goal will not be met?</p>	<p>Request that the provider give monthly updates on its progress towards agreed upon benchmarks.</p> <p>Request that the provider produce quarterly data demonstrating that it is meeting its stated performance goals and benchmarks. Insist on immediate corrective action if the provider is not on track.</p> <p>The district should not renew a provider that fails to meet its performance goals and benchmarks and does not get back on track.</p>
32.	<p><b>Are the provider's services having measurable effects?</b></p> <p>For example, if the provider offers aligned curriculum services, are at least X% of the teachers implementing the new curriculum with fidelity? Has student performance improved by at least X% in the newly targeted areas?</p>	<p>Require that the provider collect data relevant to the services that it provides, including achievement data.</p> <p>Plan time to review periodically throughout the year.</p> <p>Request an annual reapplication that includes submission of data.</p>
33.	<p><b>Do the provider's services continue to be of high quality? When appropriate, is the provider implementing and adjusting based on feedback received by the district, school staff and parents?</b> For example, if a wraparound service provider receives feedback from schools that its services do not align with the school's curriculum, has the provider rectified the problem?</p>	<p>Require that the provider collect feedback from teachers and school leaders on a quarterly basis and that it be made available to the district.</p> <p>Require that the provider presents an overview of the changes it has made to its services, the reasons for these changes, and their alignment to the state standards and district and school goals.</p>
34.	<p><b>Are the provider's services delivered such that they are consistent with state standards and the district's school improvement initiatives?</b> For example, if the provider offers ESL category training and has recently updated its training, does this professional development meet state standards and has the ESE approved the provider's syllabus, when this is required? Contact <a href="mailto:mgriffin@doe.mass.edu">mgriffin@doe.mass.edu</a> for more information on this process.</p>	If the provider has made any changes to its programming since it was initially hired, the provider should provide an overview of how the new programming remains consistent with state standards.

	<b>Strategic Questions</b>	<b>Suggested Actions/Issues to Consider</b>
35.	<b>Is the provider performing its work within its previously stated timeframe?</b> For example, if the provider builds the capacity of school staff to implement tiered instruction, have teachers refined their plans for instruction and remediation based on the provider's services, and does it appear that the provider's services can be phased out within the time set in the provider's proposal?	Assess the effectiveness of the provider's services on a quarterly basis, including whether those services are being offered in the prescribed timeframe. If it appears that the provider is not on track for completion of its services within the agreed upon time, request the provider's plan for getting back on track.
36.	<b>Are any of the weaknesses in the provider's program – whether previously stated or newly identified – limiting the success of implementation at your school(s), and is the provider addressing this problem?</b> For example, if the provider had no experience offering tiered instruction to English Language Learners and hired new staff to address this weakness, have these new staff members been successful in implementing the providers model, and are they effective with both native and non-native English speakers?	Pay special attention to areas in which the provider previously identified weaknesses or those that emerge, and evaluate whether the steps it has taken to address the issue are sufficient. If not, promptly communicate with the provider about alternative steps to be taken.
37.	<b>Where applicable, is the provider successfully engaging different stakeholders?</b> For example, if the provider offers professional development, have the school's leadership and parents been given the opportunity to observe a mini-session to familiarize themselves with the content and how it will impact student learning?	Request that the provider provide evidence of engaging stakeholders, the feedback the stakeholders gave, and any modifications the provider made as a result.
38.	<b>Is the provider successfully integrating its services with those of the school and district, as well as other providers?</b> For example, do teachers report feeling that they are receiving inconsistent or conflicting messages from multiple providers on the same issues?	District personnel should engage with teachers and administrators at provider sites to analyze the degree of coherence among initiatives including a whether there is a clear reporting system of how providers interact with the school and with each other.  Based on this analysis, request that the provider(s) create a plan to more successfully work together towards the school and district goals.
39.	<b>Is the provider staying within its projected budget, i.e., have the costs per task AND overall costs for the contract stayed within budget?</b>	Request quarterly reports on budget expenditures and any changes to future spending needs.
40.	<b>Does the provider's model continue to be financially viable?</b>	Request annual updated audit information.  If the provider ceases to receive grant funding, request immediate notification and a written explanation of how this will impact its provision of services.
41.	<b>Does the provider have a mechanism in place to inform the district and school of changes in its own personnel?</b>	Request prompt reporting of key personnel changes and opportunity to interview any personnel who will have close contact with school staff, students, or other key stakeholders.

## Appendix

### Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness

In addition to the general questions above, which may apply to a broad array of providers, when seeking a provider to offer services related to specific Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness, consider some of the following questions:

<b><u>Condition for School Effectiveness #1: Effective District Systems for School Support and Intervention</u></b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	How does the provider help districts recruit, screen and support highly qualified candidates? Will these services align with the district's needs?
b.	How does the provider support district-level staff in responding to school needs? Do the provider's methods align with the district's capacity-building needs?
c.	How does the provider support districts in establishing job expectations for all instructional staff?
d.	How does the provider support districts in creating plans for the equitable distribution of teachers based on school data/needs?
e.	How does the provider support district-level staff in implementing district policies, allocating resources, etc.?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Has the district improved its ability to recruit, screen and support highly qualified candidates? Can this improvement be attributed to the provider's services?
b.	Has district-level staff's ability to respond to school needs improved? Can this improvement be attributed to the provider's services?
c.	Has the provider supported the district in establishing job expectations for all instructional staff?
d.	Has the provider supported the district in creating plans for the equitable distribution of teachers based on school data/needs?
e.	Has the provider supported district-level staff in implementing district policies, allocating resources, etc.?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #2: Effective School Leadership</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	How does the provider build principals' capacity to act strategically and purposefully in pursuit of a clear educational mission? How do these services align with the district's school improvement strategy?
b.	What experience does the provider have developing plans focused on instructional improvement and student learning? Does this experience include building capacity of school leadership?
c.	What experience does the provider have developing school improvement plans that (1) reflect input from all staff, (2) are based on data, (3) accurately reflect the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, and (4) set actionable and measurable goals that target school improvement? Does this experience include building the capacity of school leadership?
d.	What experience does the provider have assessing how time, personnel, funds, and other resources will be used to achieve the school's mission? Does this experience include building the capacity of school leadership?
e.	What experience does the provider have using data and current research to drive decisions and measure progress toward school goals? Does this experience include building the capacity of school leadership?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Has school leadership improved its ability to act strategically and purposefully in pursuit of a clear educational mission? Can this increased ability be attributed to the provider's services?
b.	Has the school developed an improvement plan focused explicitly on instructional improvement and student learning, that reflects input from all staff, is based on data, accurately reflects the academic, social, and emotional needs of students, and sets actionable and measurable goals that target school improvement? Can the development and/or quality of this plan be attributed to the provider's services?
c.	Has school leadership improved its ability to determine how time, personnel, funds, and other resources will be used to achieve the school's mission? Can this increased ability be attributed to the provider's services?
d.	Have school leadership and staff improved their ability to use data and current research to drive decisions and measure progress toward school goals? Can this increased ability be attributed to the provider's services?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #3: Aligned Curriculum</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	What experience does the provider have accessing and "unpacking" standards to determine what all students need to know and be able to do in order to be proficient?
b.	What experience does the provider have developing and implementing lessons based on curriculum maps/curricular guidance that reflect high expectations for all students?
c.	What experience does the provider have aligning assessments and evaluating student work based on a common understanding of what mastery looks like?
d.	What experience does the provider have developing lesson plans that are aligned to curriculum maps and pacing guides?
e.	What experience does the provider have creating and refining curricula?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Are instructional staff more able to access and "unpack" standards so that they have a working knowledge of what all students need to know and be able to do in order to be proficient? Can this improvement be attributed to the provider's services?
b.	Have instructional staff improved their ability to develop and implement lessons based on curriculum maps/curricular guidance that reflect high expectations for all students? Can this improvement be attributed to the provider's services?
c.	Are assessments more aligned to state standards, and are instructional staff better able to evaluate student work based on a common understanding of what mastery looks like? Can these improvements be attributed to the provider's services?
d.	Are lesson plans aligned to curriculum maps and pacing guides? Can this alignment be attributed to the provider's services?
e.	Is the provider supporting instructional staff in creating and refining curricula?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #4: Effective Instruction</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	What experience does the provider have increasing the capacity of instructional staff to provide students with lessons that are 1) appropriate to their developmental and language proficiency levels, 2) engage them with content and address academic and social/emotional needs, and 3) promote higher-order thinking?
b.	What experience does the provider have increasing the capacity of instructional staff to develop student assignments that contain rigorous, embedded learning objectives that reflect high expectations?
c.	What experience does the provider have using multi-modal pedagogical techniques, as well as a range of instructional tools, technologies, and supplemental materials, to meet the needs of all learners?
d.	What experience does the provider have developing universal screening and formative assessment tools that align instruction with student learning needs?
e.	What experience does the provider have developing criteria for research-based effective instruction focused on pedagogy and content knowledge?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Have instructional staff improved their ability to provide students with lessons that are 1) appropriate to their developmental and language proficiency levels, 2) engage them with content and address academic and social/emotional needs, and 3) promote higher-order thinking? Can this improvement be attributed to the provider's services?
b.	Have instructional staff improved their ability to develop student assignments that contain rigorous, embedded learning objectives that reflect high expectations? Can this improvement be attributed to the provider's services?
c.	Are instructional staff better able to use multi-modal pedagogical techniques, as well as a range of instructional tools, technologies, and supplemental materials, to meet the needs of all learners? Can this improvement be attributed to the provider's services?
d.	Has the provider developed high-quality universal screening and formative assessment tools that align instruction with student learning needs?
e.	Has the provider developed criteria for research-based effective instruction focused on pedagogy and content knowledge?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #5: Student Assessment</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	What experience does the provider have (1) developing assessments (formative and benchmark) that are aligned to state standards and grade-level learning outcomes and (2) building the capacity of school staff to use these assessments?
b.	What experience does the provider have developing formative and benchmark assessments that are predictive of student performance on MCAS and other summative assessments?
c.	What experience does the provider have aligning common formative and benchmark assessments both horizontally and vertically?
d.	What experience does the provider have building the capacity of instructional staff to work collaboratively to develop assessments, analyze assessment data, and draw meaningful conclusions from results?
e.	What experience does the provider have building the capacity of instructional staff to embed formative assessments in daily classroom practice and use results to target and modify instruction?
f.	What experience does the provider have developing well-defined processes to periodically collect, analyze, review, and report results of assessments of student learning?
g.	What experience does the provider have building the capacity of school leaders and instructional staff to use assessment data for individual and organizational learning, not just external compliance?
h.	What experience does the provider have building the capacity of school leaders and instructional staff to use assessment data to place students, monitor progress, and drive timely interventions as part of a system of tiered instruction?
i.	How does the provider use assessment data to target professional development activities?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Has the provider built school capacity to create and use a range of assessments (formative and benchmark) that are aligned to state standards and grade-level learning outcomes?
b.	Does student performance on formative and benchmark assessments developed by the provider predict performance on MCAS and other summative assessments?
c.	Are common formative and benchmark assessments aligned both horizontally and vertically? Can this be attributed to the provider's services?
d.	Do instructional staff work collaboratively to develop assessments, analyze assessment data, and draw meaningful conclusions from results, and can this be attributed to the provider's services?
e.	Have instructional staff improved their ability to embed formative assessments in daily classroom practice and to use results to target and modify instruction, and are these practices attributable to the provider's services?
f.	Has the provider developed well-defined processes to periodically collect, analyze, review, and report results of assessments of student learning?
g.	Is the provider building the capacity of school leaders and instructional staff to use assessment data for individual and organizational learning, not just external compliance?
h.	Is the provider building the capacity of school leaders and instructional staff to use assessment data to place students, monitor progress, and drive timely interventions as part of a system of tiered instruction?
i.	Has the provider created a mechanism for using assessment data to target professional development activities?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #6: Principal's Staffing Authority</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	How does the provider build principal capacity to recruit, deploy, promote, and retain those with qualifications and proven results in serving the school's mission?
b.	How does the provider build principal capacity to work within district guidelines to effectively support or remove staff whose performance does not meet the needs of the school?
c.	How does the provider build principal capacity to assign (and revise) roles, responsibilities, and duties in a way that best supports the school improvement plan and meets student needs?
d.	How does the provider assist schools in developing clear processes for evaluating staff, offering feedback, developing professional improvement goals, and providing support in meeting those goals?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Is the provider building principal capacity to recruit, deploy, promote, and retain those with qualifications and proven results in serving the school's mission?
b.	Is the provider building principal capacity to work within district guidelines to effectively support or remove staff whose performance does not meet the needs of the school?
c.	Is the provider building principal capacity to assign (and revise) roles, responsibilities, and duties in a way that best supports the school improvement plan and meets student needs?
d.	Is the provider assisting the principal in developing a clear process for evaluating staff, offering feedback, developing professional improvement goals, and providing support in meeting those goals?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #7: Professional Development and Structures for Collaboration</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	Does the provider offer professional development that aligns with state standards for school performance and student achievement as well as district priorities and school priorities?
b.	How does the provider build capacity of coaches and teacher leaders to effectively engage/teach adults?
c.	Does the provider have experience developing professional learning communities?
d.	What is the provider's experience in developing systems and protocols to guide collaborative discussions?
e.	How does the provider develop leadership capacity to evaluate the quality and impact of professional development and collaborative time to ensure that they result in strengthened practice and student success?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Is the provider's professional development aligned with state standards for school performance and student achievement as well as district priorities and school priorities?
b.	Is the provider building capacity of coaches and teacher leaders to effectively engage/teach adults?
c.	Is the provider assisting in developing professional learning communities?
d.	Is the provider developing systems and protocols to guide collaborative discussions?
e.	Is the provider building leadership capacity to evaluate the quality and impact of professional development and collaborative time to ensure that they result in strengthened practice and student success?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #8: Tiered Instruction and Adequate Learning Time</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	How does the provider build the capacity of schools to provide high-quality, challenging core instruction for all students?
b.	How does the provider build the capacity of instructional staff to provide lessons integrating differentiated instruction so that 80-90% of students learn key concepts through core instruction and without the need for tiered support?
c.	What experience does the provider have developing tools for school leadership to monitor the effectiveness of core curriculum/instruction?
d.	What resources does the provider offer to support students with a range of academic needs?
e.	What opportunities for academic and other support outside school hours does the provider offer?
f.	Are the provider's services research-proven, taught by qualified professionals, and aligned to student needs and district and state frameworks?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Is the provider building the capacity of schools to provide high-quality, challenging core instruction for all students?
b.	Is the provider building the capacity of instructional staff to provide lessons integrating differentiated instruction so that 80-90% of students learn key concepts through core instruction and without the need for tiered support?
c.	Is the provider developing effective tools for school leadership to monitor the effectiveness of core curriculum/instruction?
d.	Are the resources the provider offers to support students with a range of academic needs effective?
e.	Is the provider offering high-quality opportunities or academic and other support outside school hours?
f.	Do the provider's services align to student needs and district and state frameworks, and are course offerings taught by qualified professionals?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #9: Students' Social, Emotional and Health Needs</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	How does the provider build the capacity of school leaders and staff to create a safe and supportive climate conducive to learning?
b.	What academic and non-academic approaches does the provider employ to ensure that students feel respected, respect others, and are ready to learn?
c.	What experience does the provider have assisting staff in understanding the issues arising in the lives of students (for example, poverty, mobility, family dynamics) and their potential impact on learning?
d.	What experience does the provider have offering social and emotional supports that are clinically, linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate for students?
e.	What types of supports does the provider offer for students who are in crisis, at risk of dropping out, or who otherwise require intensive support?
f.	What types of professional development does the provider offer to enhance the school's capacity to improve students' behavioral, emotional, and physical health?
g.	How does the provider support school-family collaboration in order to increase the school's capacity to address students' social, emotional, and health needs?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Is the provider building the capacity of school leaders and staff to create a safe and supportive climate conducive to learning?
b.	Is the provider effectively employing academic and non-academic approaches to ensure that students feel respected, respect others, and are ready to learn?
c.	Is the provider assisting staff in understanding the issues arising in the lives of students (for example, poverty, mobility, family dynamics) and their potential impact on learning?
d.	Is the provider offering effective social and emotional supports that are clinically, linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate for students?
e.	Is the provider offering effective supports for students who are in crisis, at risk of dropping out, or who otherwise require intensive support?
f.	Do the provider's professional development offerings enhance the school's capacity to improve students' behavioral, emotional, and physical health?
g.	Does the school have greater capacity to address students' social, emotional, and health needs based on school-family collaboration the provider has supported?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #10: Family-School Engagement</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	What experience does the provider have working with school leaders to develop and implement school improvement plans?
b.	How does the provider support schools in overcoming barriers to family engagement and participation?
c.	What experience does the provider have working with families and planning meaningful events and programs that include families?
d.	How does the provider build relationships with families to support student learning and students' social, emotional, and physical well-being?
e.	How does the provider build the capacity of school leadership to evaluate the school's efforts to communicate with and engage families?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Is the provider working with school leaders to develop and implement school improvement plans?
b.	Is the provider supporting schools in overcoming barriers to family engagement and participation?
c.	Is the provider working with families and planned meaningful events and programs that include families?
d.	Is the provider building relationships with families to support student learning and students' social, emotional, and physical well-being?
e.	Is the provider building the capacity of school leadership to evaluate the school's efforts to communicate with and engage families?

<b>Condition for School Effectiveness #11: Strategic Use of Resources and Adequate Budget Authority</b>	
<b>Step 1: Screening and Selecting External Providers</b>	
a.	How does the provider build the capacity of school leadership to use data to inform decisions related to budget, time on learning/scheduling, staffing/human resources, materials, and the physical plant?
b.	How does the provider build the capacity of school leadership to seek, coordinate, and leverage resources that support the school improvement plan, in accordance with district policies?
c.	How does the provider build the capacity of school leadership to align budget, staffing, and other resources to student needs and school goals?
d.	How does the provider build the capacity of school leadership to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of resource allocations?
e.	How does the provider offer supports for school leadership to engage in ongoing communication across school and district units, as well as within the school, regarding the need, availability, and allocation of resources?
<b>Step 2: Monitoring External Providers</b>	
a.	Has school leadership's ability to use data to inform decisions related to budget, time on learning/scheduling, staffing/human resources, materials, and the physical plant improved as a result of the provider's services?
b.	Has the ability of school leadership to seek, coordinate, and leverage resources that support the school improvement plan, in accordance with district policies, improved as a result of the provider's services?
c.	Has school leadership's ability to align budget, staffing, and other resources to student needs and school goals improved as a result of the provider's services?
d.	Has school leadership's ability to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of resource allocations improved as a result of the provider's services?
e.	Is the provider offering supports for school leadership to engage in ongoing communication across school and district units, as well as within the school, regarding the need, availability, and allocation of resources?