

ISEE Action Plan – District Playbook

The following information is designed to assist key stakeholders with the Idaho School Districts and Idaho State Department of Education staff members as they work with the districts in the ISEE data upload process. Not only will the information provide insight to commonly overlooked areas, but it will also provide the framework for establishing processes that will assist in automation and data quality. Where to begin?

Data Identification

Identify what data is required

As laws change, Federal reporting becomes more robust, a new grant is received, or any other reason that data is needed, requirements may change. The data drives school funding, enrollment information, staffing information, pay for performance calculations, and much more. The SDE's IT team makes every effort to provide an update, highlighting these changes to various groups within each district. Also available is a website dedicated to ISEE and data reporting information. Contact information for the SDE Technology team is listed on the site and they are an excellent resource for the district and schools. The website is located at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/isee>. For the data elements required for reporting, there is a definition outlining what the element is, the format necessary, as well as option sets which contain the only valid responses available for the reporting.

Identify source systems

This may seem like an easy task and even an unnecessary one however it is the foundation for building any process and documenting the process. Until all systems of source data are defined, it is impossible to evaluate, identify gaps, and eliminate duplication of data. There are the usual places you find data such as the student information system, the payroll/HR system, special education system, food/lunch program system. However there are many other areas where data is stored for specific purposes. Such areas may be the team that works with the migrant students, immigrant student, LEP, homeless/delinquent and your discipline/crime & violence, and other crucial programs within the school district. Often overlooked is the Excel spreadsheet sitting on a staff member's hard-drive that contains pertinent information about a program or students involved in the program.

Locate "Data Fields" in each system

Understanding where the individual data element lives is critical in developing a system that reduces redundancies and repetitive data entry. Past practices may have allowed for

independent information to be stored in various systems with no cross validation or expectation of consolidation within the key systems at a district or school. The process of locating, identifying, and documenting the data and where it is stored is the first step in reviewing where gaps and redundancies may exist.

Identify data stewards (owners and authors of the data)

It is important to understand where the data originates for each of the data elements. Once it is understood where the data is gathered and how it has been used, a data steward can be identified. The data steward may be the program director or another person within the district that is in charge of the reporting of this data and of the uses within the district.

Identify the known gaps, which is the first step in a gap analysis process. There are five steps to comprehensively think through gaps, to create simple tracking methods and ultimately get to the actions that will close the gaps.

- Isolate – Trends
- Monitor – Triggers
- Identify – Potential Gaps
- Track – Known Gaps
- Execute – Actions

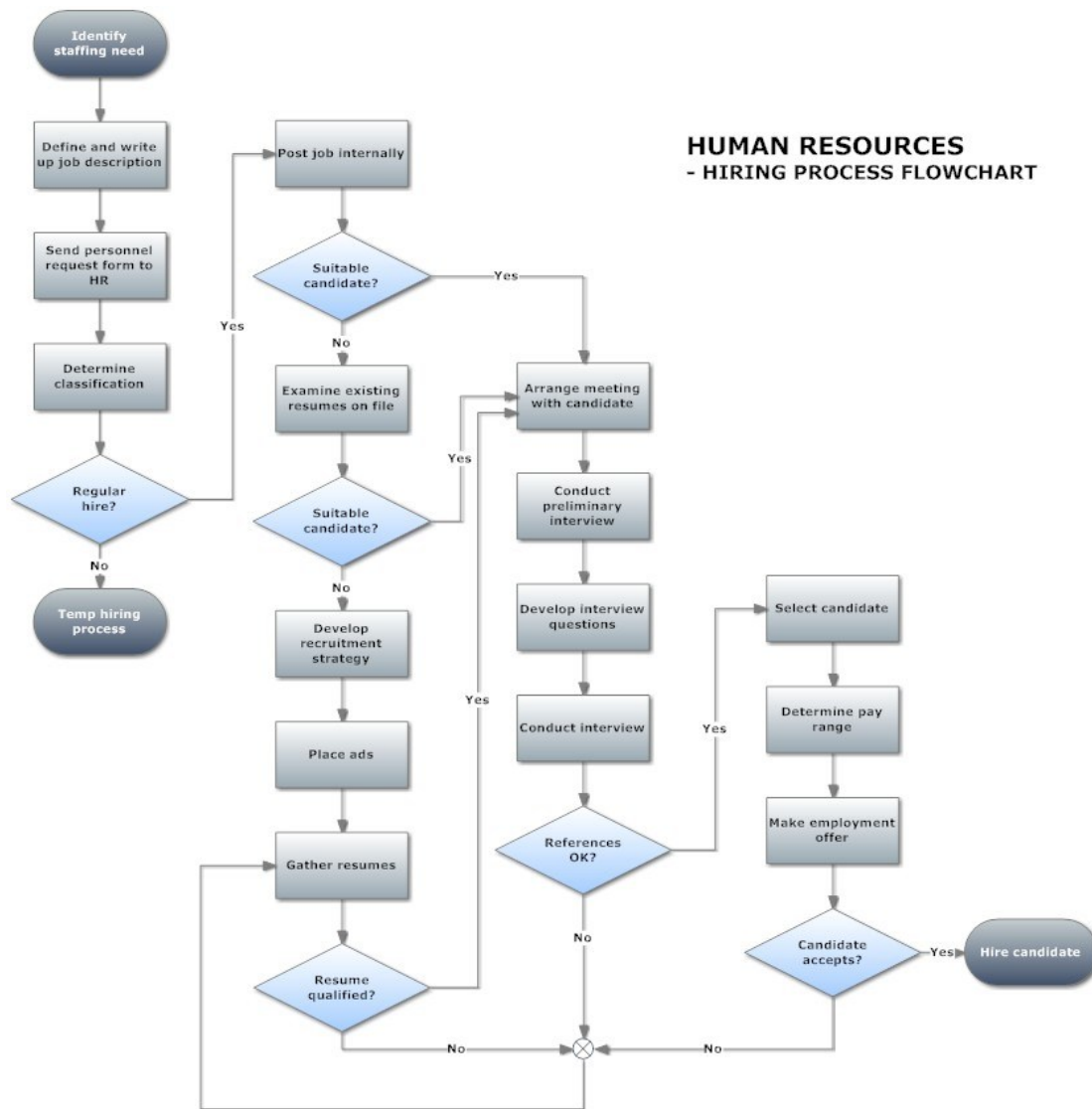
Start with known gaps, which are the ones where there is general agreement about their identity and significance. Create a list of known gaps. Solicit input from district leadership and data stewards. Look at the current processes and identify the impact. Do the same for potential gaps, as potential gaps may not be viewed as having the same risk as known gaps, however they can derail the creation of a process for data quality. Once gaps are identified, assign action for each area where a gap exists. Assign specific stakeholders to create a plan to “close” the gap. Gap analysis is an effective solution for business process improvement.

Document the workflow

Once source systems, data elements and data stewards have been identified, document this process. A straight-forward way of doing this is by creating a workflow diagram. A workflow diagram is a simple form of a flowchart that depicts the flow of tasks, data or actions from one system, person or group, to another. Typically a workflow diagram consists of a set of symbols representing actions or individual groups connected by arrows indicating the flow from one to another. Different symbols represent different aspects of the workflow. For example, a process is represented by a rectangle, while a diamond is used to depict a decision, and so on.

Below is a sample of a workflow for hiring a new staff member. This same process should be utilized for each of the processes within the district, including but not limited to:

- Registering a student
- Defining various programs for students
- Hiring staff, both certified and classified
- Documenting the Special Education identification process
- Documenting the Incident tracking/crime & violence tracking process
- Tracking teacher attendance and replacement (substitute) processes
- Evaluation processes
- Attendance and enrollment processes



Skills Analysis

Assess the team that is currently available to work on the numerous projects and data uploads. The thought of taking on another task for many team members can be overwhelming, but in the end if processes are streamlined may actually alleviate some of the workload. When identifying the team, take into consideration the number of tasks that are performed manually or outside of the current systems. Such manual tasks may include pulling data from one system, merging with data from another system and manually adjusting information. The manual adjustment leaves open the propensity for making errors and having inaccurate data uploaded monthly or inconsistent data being provided. Analyze the team member's strengths, education, experience, and career choices (path). Many team members take on tasks that have changed over time and may not be the best fit for the person. This causes undue stress and a greater potential for data quality issues to develop. Identify team members that desire to take a leadership role in fixing known issues, have ideas that may introduce new processes regardless of their current title or position. Try to avoid duplicating processes that were in place before just because they are familiar, but rather look at what must be done and design processes to accomplish the end goal.

Hire, contract or appoint a Business Analyst

To identify the best solutions for real business needs one must identify the tools and techniques for use in business analysis work. The business analyst skill set should include critical and analytical thinking, elicitation techniques and project management. Equally important are communication and relationship building skills, whether it is in person or virtual environments. Expertise with analysis tools and techniques becomes even more necessary in today's fast-paced environment. It is further complicated by the use of dispersed or outsourced teams, complex business processes, time-driven business initiatives, new agile software development approaches, and poorly integrated legacy applications.

Regardless of the person's title, the need for strong business analysis skills is necessary for education agencies to remain efficient. Through education and practice, business or technical professionals will develop and enhance their analytical skills and provide significant value to projects and the district or school.

- Analyze and scope the area of analysis, working with project managers and business sponsors to clarify the level and complexity of the business analysis effort needed for the project.
- Select the appropriate elicitation technique to efficiently identify critical requirements.
- Analyze and refine business and functional requirements.
- Ask the *right* questions through the use of interviewing templates developed specifically for business analysis elicitation.

- Identify the five core components necessary to analyze a business area.
- Plan an approach for analyzing, categorizing, and managing requirements. Determine the level of formality required and consider options for documenting and packaging requirements based on project type, priorities, and risks.
- Identify techniques and documentation options appropriate for various software development approaches and project types (COTS (commercial off-the-shelf), maintenance, business process improvement, new development, etc.).
- Define testing objectives and verify requirements are testable.
- Conduct effective requirements reviews to improve the quality of requirements deliverables.
- Build strong relationships with project stakeholders.
- Apply new communication strategies for eliciting and interacting with virtual teams.
- Anticipate issues, think proactively, and use critical thinking skills to plan stakeholder elicitation sessions.

Create accountability through ownership

Once identification has been established of which person and team “owns” the data and processes it is important that person(s) understands the importance of the data elements and its uses. Work with each data team to integrate with other data stewards to identify redundant data sources. Encourage the consolidation of the data and identify the actual steward of the data. The steward must understand that others may need and use the data they are the steward of, but one person or team must take ownership. This person or team is the driving force to ensure proper changes and data flow is documented and part of the overall process. Drive to eliminate silos within the district and schools, and encourage program teams to work with and understand the role of information technology and the importance of securing the data in one area.

Change Management

Define and develop a change management process for all procedures and processes. It is imperative that prior to making changes that all stakeholders understand the purpose and impact of the change. Who can make changes, who can request changes, do you have a process for out of pattern changes, emergency changes and standard upgrade-new implementation changes. Technology professionals are likely to view change management as a formal process for tracking and documenting changes to software or hardware systems and code. HR professionals may view this as an intangible process that deals with how an organization deals with opportunities associated with change. At an organizational level, a change management plan means defining and implementing the best strategic and tactical plans to deal with changes in the agency and to benefit from the opportunities. Change can

be threatening to individuals and organizations. Understanding this, successful adaptation to change is crucial to the success of the organization. It is common for leadership to focus attention on creating the best strategic and tactical plans, sometimes failing to consider the human side of change management. Employee resistance and lack of proper training are key hindrances to successful change management. While there is no single change management plan that fits every organization, there is a set of best practices that can be used for a variety of situations. Listed below are five ideas that can be implemented to create a solid foundation for successful change.

- **Ownership/Involvement.** For change management to be successful, key stakeholders must model the way. Senior leadership must visibly embrace the new approaches to motivate and challenge the rest of the organization. Pushing responsibility for design and implementation down so that change can “cascade” through the organization helps to ensure that all involved feel that they have a stake in the plan’s success.
- **Communication.** Leadership must focus on creating a communication plan that clearly articulates the vision of where they want to go and the benefits of doing so. The best change programs reinforce core messages through regular, timely communications that are both practical and motivating. In order for the team to embrace the process changes, they must understand the potential benefits to them.
- **Training.** Training early allows employees to build greater skills and confidence which will reduce stress and resistance. In addition to understanding the new technology or process, managers should be trained on the skills that help them manage resistance to the initiatives.
- **Feedback & Recognition.** It is important to provide clear goals on what is expected, but it is equally important to set up necessary changes in a manner that allows for some early wins.
- **Stay on course.** New processes that are left unmanaged or improperly measured deteriorate over time. If leaders wish to institutionalize change, the change must become part of the organization’s culture. Change and processes cannot be viewed by staff as a “flavor of the month” and if we resist long enough it will go away and a new process will take its’ place. Study after study has shown that successful change management demands more than plans, but requires processes, and staff adherence to the new processes.

Once a change management process has been established remember to pay attention to the many details that can create challenges. Common challenges are taking on too many projects in a short time frame, lack of accountability on one or more of the stakeholders, and integrating projects with current operations. The benefits of implementing and making change

management part of the culture are worth the time and effort. You will experience a performance driven team, engaged leadership and an overall well respected organization.

Choose the right people to build and maintain the information and systems

Review the elements of the district and schools data system.

- Automate/Validate – After defining the processes, test them and build a validation process to ensure that what you are automating creates the correct output.
- Implement Policies to help data quality (e.g. holding the Principals accountable at each school through the evaluation process and tying this score to data accuracy and completeness).
- Test the processes with the state – Work with the Regional Education Technology Coordinators to ensure the processes and procedures that are being implemented provide correct data, correct format, and accurate information.
- Produce a training guide – Document what is being done and how it is being done. This provides excellent cross-training tools and assists with the consistency of processes over time.
- Create standard checklists for key tasks – make the checklist a part of the routine. Airline pilots go through this process each time before they take off, no matter how familiar they are with the aircraft, flight plan and weather conditions. It is the same for processes within an IT group, or other data teams.
- Create succession planning – with the economy being less than stellar and budget constraints, most districts and schools only have one person that performs a specific task. It is important to have a systematic approach to build and develop a successor in ways that best fit their strengths. Identify the best candidates for position areas. Concentrate resources on the talent development process.
- Produce a plan for sustainability – long term success is based on a solid strategic plan and investment in the future. Understand how the district can benefit from the data and promote the analyst and usage of the information.
- Develop a monthly process

Plan monthly meetings with key stakeholders to review the data and document any issues they foresee with having all the data in your systems. Pay close attention to special education files, and other special program groups to ensure that all newly identified or status changes have been documented and updated in all systems in a timely manner.

Create audit reports – Take time to look at the information being submitted to the state and set up simple audit reports. The audit report can be a valuable tool to identify key issues early and

provide time to correct the information. Distribute the audit reports to all key stakeholders and set up a process to review.

Incorporate a “Root Cause analyst and resolution” documentation process. If critical issues are identified in the audit reports, define what the root cause was and what the proper resolution is. Document this information to ensure the actual process is modified to correct the issue long-term.

Review and list all contracts within the district and schools – Review to identify redundancies and possible reduction in the overall number of contracts for systems and programs. Review maintenance agreement and look at making any necessary modifications prior to renewal time. Specifically analyze any contractual time constraints for updating systems that are critical for the day-to-day operations of the district.

Project Management

Project management is an important component for any organization that is looking at modifying, enhancing or redefining processes. Understanding the scope of the project, the timeline to implement the program/process and the cost to complete the project along with tracking the tasks, risks and issues is crucial for any project to be successful. There are many tools that will assist in project management, but choosing the right person with solid project management skills is one of the most effective ways to have a successful project with stellar results. A good project manager can easily pay for themselves by keeping projects on track, within budget and ensure successful implementation.

Consider Implementing RACI

What is RACI? A responsibility assignment matrix (RAM), also known as RACI matrix or Linear Responsibility Chart (LRC), describes the participation by various roles in completing tasks or deliverables for a project or business process. It is especially useful in clarifying roles and responsibilities in cross-functional/departmental projects and processes. RACI is an acronym derived from the four key responsibilities most typically used: *Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed*.

RACI Defined

R – Responsible, Those who do the work to achieve the task. There is typically one role with a participation type of responsible, although others can be delegated to assist in the work required. Many times you also have RASCI, where the added S stands for separately identifying those who participate in a supporting role.

A – Accountable, The one who ultimately is answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the deliverable or task, the one from who the responsible is delegated the work. Accountable is also the approver, and has final approving authority. Accountable must sign off on the work that the responsible party provides. There is only one accountable for each task or deliverable. Basically accountable is the person where “the buck stops here”.

C – Consult, The team members whose opinions are sought, typically the subject matter experts, and with whom there is two-way communication. This person is in the role of counsel and in the loop on decisions and actions.

I – Inform, Those who are kept up-to-date on progress, often only periodically or at the completion of the task or deliverable; and with whom there is one-way communication. In other words, keep the team members in the picture.

Very often the role that is accountable for a task or deliverable may also be responsible for completing the task.

Why consider RACI? It is a basic way to examine a process step, task, activity, effort, decision or inspection to determine who is responsible, who is accountable, who should be consulted and who needs to be informed. RACI can be used to determine fundamental issues with a process where the wrong people are involved and/or no one is accountable. The benefits include:

- Encourages teamwork by clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Eliminates duplication of effort
- Reduces misunderstanding
- Improves communication – making sure people are not “left out”
- Determines ownership
- Helps clarify activities and tasks in a process
- Reduces bad decisions by ensuring the correct people are involved
- Clarifies boundaries
- Improves cross-functional view for all employees

RACI can help eliminate the “too many cooks in the kitchen” mentality where everyone thinks they are responsible and accountable resulting in duplications of effort and in-fighting. In turn, many times no one thinks they are responsible and some steps are not owned and are missed. People, when roles are not defined, believe that they need to be consulted when they really need to be told after the fact (informed), subject matter experts need to be consulted for the process to move forward properly but they are left out of the process which leads to tasks and processes being skipped, all of which lead to poor communication and poor or virtually no process definition. Typical steps in a RACI process are:

RACI Tips and Tricks and Considerations

- Each vertical column should have only ONE Accountable.
- Too many A's? - Probably a sign of confusion - no one will be sure who really had the task and each individual will probably have a different approach and/or expectation(s).
- Each vertical column should have one Responsible, but can have more in some situations of shared responsibility.
- With no R's a gap occurs - Is the task being completed? Assign Responsibility.
- If a column has more than one R can we subdivide the task?
- With too many R's an overlap can occur.
- Minimize the number of Consults - Make sure the consult is necessary and not just a 'feel good' contact.
- Too many I's? Maybe some people only need to be informed if exceptional circumstances occur.
 - Build the appropriate criteria into the process.
- No empty spaces in a row - Does this person need to be involved in every step? Try to reduce C's and I's First.
- Lot's of R's - The individual may have too much to do - can the activities be broken into small sections and split out to others?
- No A's or R's - Should this role be eliminated from this process? Has the process changed over time where they may not be needed? Try to eliminate.
- Many A's - Is this person a bottleneck? Can these tasks be shared or segregated?
- Completely empty row - Why was this function included? Are we missing including them when they should be? Can the function be correctly eliminated from the process?

Existing process documentation

Define and document all processes that collect or have an effect on the data and data usage. For critical areas such as student enrollment, program participation, etc., consider checklists as part of the process. Some key areas where process documentation and training for each school within the district would be beneficial:

- Define and document the teacher hiring and background verification of qualifications process, including accurate information on teaching experience, legal documentation, certification and endorsement verification.
- Define and document the student enrollment process. Address the common issues such as interruptions, what fields are required or optional within your

student information system, what data is required by the state, etc. Set up a “tickler” system in the event that all the proper documentation is not available on the day of registration, to ensure you have complete legal names of students and verification of same such as a birth certificate or other legally accepted documentation.

- Define and document your system ‘Access Process’. Who should have access within the district to specific information? Persons within the schools and classrooms should be clearly documented and have a process to ensure that only those persons who have access are the ones actually accessing the data. Work with all stakeholders to understand if there are specific Federal guidelines for specific programs that are more stringent than others, such as Free/Reduced Lunch programs. Prepare forms and the correct paperwork to have employees sign off acknowledging the understanding of the laws associated with the specific data elements.
- Define and document your network mapping and where everything related to your network is housed. Include routers, cameras and other wireless devices that may utilize 802.11b as this will possibly affect other, more updated wireless device performance. Look at any “data closets” and equipment that may be on the network, including phones equipment on the network. Include cables, ports, switches, access points, open ports, access overloads, potential risks, age of hardware and build a plan and budget for necessary equipment/hardware and software life-cycle upgrades.
- Define and document your disaster recovery plan – We have all become dependent upon the information technology systems within our workplace. Servers house the data, and processes to enter, track and provide reports are all critical to operational processes. Make sure you have a solid disaster recovery plan. How is the data and software systems backed-up, has the back-up process been tested, does the back-up only take the data which may be close to useless without a program to extract. Take the time to define the process, the key stakeholders, the responsible team members and the role of each. Review the plan to ensure it is being followed properly and is relevant to any potential equipment, process or software changes and upgrades. Analyze and define what can you live without, what is mission-critical, who can house your data and still ensure that it is secure, safe and meets all FERPA and other guidelines and regulations.
- Define and document the District’s Acceptable Use Policies – as new technology, programs and processes are rolled-out, review the acceptable use policies to

ensure no changes are necessary based on the upgrades. Specifically pay attention to wireless access, access to school/district servers, etc.

- Identify and document any service level agreements with all contracted providers, such as your special education system, SIS, payroll/HR, etc. Consider including lists of any renewals that must be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that a service, program or operation does not expire (such as network certificates) unexpectedly.
- Define and document your wireless infrastructure. As more and more facets of technology are deployed throughout the district, schools and classrooms you will depend upon the infrastructure and wireless capabilities.
- Define and document system log on processes and consider training annually any changes, updates and best practices. Post the registration process for access to all state applications. Train on who should have what accesses and how each access is provided through the Administration Tool (an SDE application) which is managed by the superintendent of the district or designee. The complete process documentation for registering and accessing is located at: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/isee> under "Documents".

Periodically review the processes and update as necessary. Set-up time to accurately evaluate all systems and procedures associated with the ISEE data uploads. It is crucial that all data is submitted in a timely manner (monthly at the very least) to comply with laws, display accurate information in the Instruction Management Systems and calculate numerous funding and compliance components.

The Technology Team has been put together to specifically support the ISEE initiatives and to provide assistance for the districts and schools throughout Idaho. Do not hesitate to contact the team if questions arise.