

Building Regional Capacity for Curriculum Implementation

How Regional Service Centers Can Strengthen Sustainable Implementation Infrastructure



Litsy Witkowski

Principal Author

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Regional service centers (RSCs) exist in nearly every state, and they're often capable of providing a wide range of services, from grant writing and technology support to special education services and school improvement plans.

Despite their ubiquity, they're a fairly underutilized resource. In a 2026 survey conducted by Rivet Education, most education leaders reported that their district either did not receive support from an RSC or they weren't sure if they did.

RSCs represent an untapped professional learning resource and a unique opportunity for state leadership to cultivate a new key player in the state's broader statewide strategy for high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) implementation.

RSC support can fall, generally, into one (or more) of three models:



Each of these roles requires a different level of preparation, skills, and capacity. State departments of education play a pivotal role in creating a strong marketplace of RSCs through three key moves:

- 1 Articulate the implementation-specific roles RSCs can play**
Identify implementation support needs and how RSCs are best equipped to support moving forward. Define clear expectations for how RSCs contribute to statewide HQIM strategy.
- 2 Create incentives that encourage RSC's support of implementation**
Use funding, certification, and policy to encourage RSCs to invest in the expertise and services districts need for strong implementation.
- 3 Provide training, tools, and ongoing support**
Equip RSCs with shared frameworks, practical tools, and ongoing learning so they can confidently support districts over time.

Supporting HQIM Implementation

The Challenging Task of Sustained Implementation for Schools and Districts

To see the biggest return on their high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) investment, district and school leaders must take on sustained and complex change management work, including:

- setting and communicating expectations for implementation,
- supporting teachers through multiple years of implementation,
- onboarding new staff,
- strengthening coaching and observation practices,
- aligning multiple complex systems (e.g., intervention, assessment, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), principal management),
- monitoring implementation quality, and
- continuously adapting based on data and changing needs.

Moreover, district and school leaders must do all of this while simultaneously managing staffing shortages, competing initiatives, accountability pressures, and limited time for professional learning. It can feel like an insurmountable task. Districts need reinforcements.

Creating a Marketplace for Implementation Support: The Role of the SEA

State education agencies (SEAs) face a parallel challenge. SEAs rarely have the capacity to provide sufficient ongoing implementation support directly to every district in the state. However, they play a critical role in ensuring districts have the support they need by **defining** and **pointing to quality** options for support. Districts should never be in doubt of where to turn for trusted help with their implementation.

Most importantly, the solutions the state endorses and fosters must be **sustainable** and **scalable**. For this to be true, support from outside the district is often non-negotiable. But **recent data** (see pp. 21 and 25 of the data) show that few school systems sustain the use of external support over time, especially after grant funding runs out. Instead, most districts rely on their internal staff after the initial launch of a curriculum.

The concern with relying on internal capacity to support HQIM is that these materials are often new to everyone in the district and school. Even several years post-adoption, leadership turnover often means that the people responsible for designing and facilitating high-quality curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL) often lack the curriculum and change management expertise needed to support teachers and school leaders. This lack of deep curriculum knowledge delays improvements in teacher practice and student outcomes.

This raises an important question for states:

How can states build scalable, sustainable implementation infrastructure to help districts strengthen curriculum implementation over time—not just during the first year of a grant or adoption cycle?

Increasingly, we believe part of the answer lies in an underleveraged resource that many states already have: regional service centers.

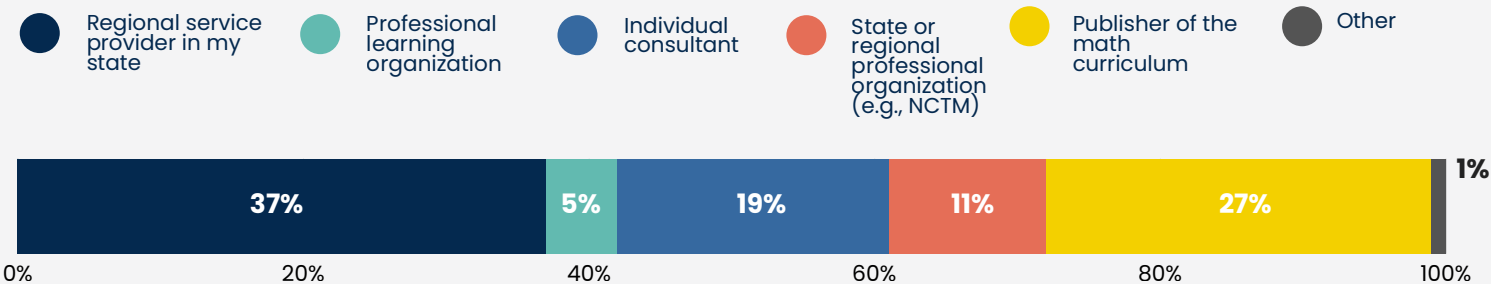
An Overlooked Component of the Marketplace

RSCs are uniquely positioned to support HQIM implementation and address the fact that there simply aren't enough hands to support this work across capacity-strapped states and districts. Many RSCs already provide professional learning, support district leadership teams, convene educators across systems, and maintain long-standing, trust-fueled relationships with local districts and schools.

They are geographically close to districts, often staffed by former educators and leaders from the region, and generally more affordable than national providers. For these reasons, districts tend to trust them.

RAND's American School District Panel Survey (Fall 2025), showed a strong readiness among district leaders to work with their RSCs. Among district leaders *not* currently using an external provider for middle or high school math curriculum professional learning, 37% said they would be most likely to partner with a regional service provider in their state—compared to only 5% who would use a traditional professional learning partner organization.

If you were to use an external provider for your middle or high school math curriculum professional learning, which would you be most likely to use?



Data Source: RAND American School District Panel Survey Fall 2025

That finding is important because it suggests that many states may already have the beginnings of a scalable, sustainable statewide implementation infrastructure. The challenge for states, therefore, is not necessarily creating a new system from scratch. The challenge is aligning and equipping the existing regional infrastructure to effectively support HQIM implementation.

What Roles Can RSCs Play?

The roles that RSCs can play in supporting HQIM implementation fall along a continuum, with some requiring more expertise, skill, or capacity than others, and some being a better fit for some state contexts than others. States do not need every RSC to play every role—or even the same role across the state—instead, they can cultivate different strengths across RSCs to build a coherent statewide vendor marketplace.

Role	What It Looks Like	Preparation Effort	Expertise Required	Capacity Required
Implementation Illuminator	Help districts understand the phases of implementation, what progress looks like, and role-specific actions correlated with implementation success.	Minimal	Moderate	Low
Implementation Partner	Help districts identify strengths, gaps, and next steps. Connect districts to vendors, tools, and resources, to help them make implementation progress.	Moderate	Substantial	Moderate
CBPL Partner	Deliver coaching/training on HQIM.	High	High	High



Role 1: Implementation Illuminator

At the most foundational level, RSCs can help districts understand what strong HQIM implementation entails by using a resource such as **Rivet's Instructional Materials Implementation Tool**. This role isn't about RSCs coaching districts through the journey. It is simply about helping districts understand:

- HQIM can provide a strong foundation for teaching and learning.
- Implementation matters, so it's imperative that leaders focus here.
- Strong implementation requires complex, sustained change management across several phases; the first couple of phases, in particular, are challenging and require planning and tenacity.

RSCs can also connect their districts with resources and qualified experts who can help, rather than providing deep coaching and support themselves.



Preparation Effort: Minimal

This role requires relatively modest levels of effort to develop the expertise and capacity to fulfill this role. With clear frameworks, tools, and training, many willing RSCs could begin playing this role relatively quickly.



This kind of support is about more than helping a district understand what strong implementation requires. It's also an opportunity to build the relationships and trust that make deeper work possible.

When teachers and principals are navigating a major instructional shift, they need confidence that the people supporting them understand the work and can help them move forward. Done well, even this foundational level of service builds both knowledge and trust.



—Caryn Zietlow

Educational Service Unit 2,
Nebraska

What they did



Educational Service Unit 2 facilitated an introductory session to help district and school leaders understand the phases of HQIM implementation, anticipate common challenges, and identify next steps.

In addition to building leaders' knowledge and confidence, the session helped ESU staff establish their credibility and develop the trusting relationships needed for future support.

Role 2: Implementation Partner

Even when leaders understand the importance of strong implementation and the major steps in the implementation journey, many do not know where their system currently stands, or what to prioritize next.

RSCs can help districts assess their current implementation strengths and gaps and identify practical next steps. This might include:

- helping districts collect and analyze implementation data,
- supporting leaders in prioritizing high-leverage next actions,
- helping systems build stronger internal implementation routines, and
- facilitating partnerships between the district and qualified national CPBL providers to augment local expertise and capacity.



Preparation Effort: Moderate

This role requires more knowledge, skill, and ongoing support than simply illuminating the implementation journey. RSC staff will need to upskill on implementation monitoring and measurement (including the landscape of available tools), as well as data analysis and how to connect data to system-wide actions. Still, this role requires far less staff capacity than delivering ongoing CBPL across multiple subjects and grade bands.



No single organization can provide every type of support districts need to implement high-quality instructional resources effectively.

Kentucky's strategy has been to build a network of complementary partners, bringing together curriculum-specific providers with deep expertise in particular instructional materials and regional coop staff who know their districts, have established relationships, and can help leaders assess progress, prioritize next steps, and connect with additional support when needed.



— Micki Marinelli
Chief Academic Officer,
Kentucky Department of Education

What they did



Alongside funding that enabled districts to work with qualified CBPL providers, KDE created a complementary funding stream for its regional coops.

Through training, coaching, and shoulder-to-shoulder practice with Rivet Education, coop staff learned how to assess local implementation and translate evidence into practical next steps. Certification as an Implementation Insights Partner makes certified staff eligible to provide grant-funded support. Districts also now have increased confidence in certified coops' implementation expertise.

Role 3: Curriculum-Based Professional Learning Partner

At the most intensive end of the continuum, RSCs may directly provide CBPL themselves. In this role, RSC staff must become deeply knowledgeable about specific HQIM in use in the state as well as the principles of effective professional learning. They may choose to pursue accreditation, such as certification in the [Professional Learning Partner Guide](#), to demonstrate which HQIM they are prepared to support and which types of services they provide.



Preparation Effort: High

This level of support requires substantial specialization, especially in states where districts use many different HQIM.

For that reason, states should not expect all RSCs to become comprehensive curriculum-specific professional learning providers, especially in states or regions where districts have adopted a wide variety of HQIM. Instead, states should think about how regional infrastructure, districts, and external providers can work together in complementary ways. For example, RSCs could develop expertise in the most widely adopted HQIM in the state, providing CBPL to teachers and leaders on those curricula, while external providers and in-district staff support the remaining HQIM.



Holly's guidance has been vital in taking our CKLA practice to full implementation. Her success comes down to a rare combination of having a deep understanding of strong literacy instruction, a clear vision of what it takes to implement HQIM with integrity, and a true understanding of our local community. From launching our Professional Learning Communities to coaching staff through lesson internalization, our teachers trust her implicitly as an expert, mentor, and partner.



— Raechel Purdon
Superintendent
Blanchester Local Schools, Ohio

What they did



Blanchester's ESC coach saw an opportunity to strengthen the coaching she provided to district leaders, school leaders, and teachers by grounding it in the district's adopted curriculum.

She helped leaders identify and prioritize strengths and areas for growth in implementation, develop a strong plan, and conduct HQIM-focused walkthroughs. She also increased the effectiveness of Blanchester's PLCs by focusing that time on internalizing lessons and units from their curriculum.

National publishers, providers, and expert organizations still play an important role—particularly in specialized training, early implementation support, and capacity-building. But states should consider how those partnerships can help build durable regional capacity over time rather than permanently substitute for it. For example, publishers and national providers can help RSCs stay up-to-date with the latest curriculum updates and adjustments in best practice for supporting that curriculum, or train new staff as inevitable turnover means some expertise leaves the RSC.

Historically, RSCs have played diverse, yet critical support roles—and this can continue, but with new focus: harnessing the professional learning and leadership support capacity of RSCs to drive toward a common goal of strategic HQIM implementation.

What SEAs Can Do to Build Regional Implementation Infrastructure

Big picture: SEAs create the conditions for implementation support by doing two things: **pointing to quality support** where it exists (and cultivating it when it does not) and **making the right choice, the easy choice** by leveraging incentives and reducing noise.

If states want RSCs to play a more robust role in their overall implementation strategy, they should:

- Articulate the Implementation-Specific Roles RSCs Can Play
- Create Incentives That Encourage RSC Use
- Provide Training, Tools, and Ongoing Support

1 Articulate the Implementation-Specific Roles RSCs Can Play

Many RSCs already provide professional learning, coaching, and consulting services to teachers, school building leaders, and district leaders. But states are often unclear—or inconsistent—about what role they actually want regional infrastructure to play in HQIM implementation.

This results in RSCs that are ready and willing to play a role in state-wide HQIM implementation efforts, but are not being integrated into a strategic state-wide plan.





SEAs should begin by answering a few key questions.



Where are the biggest gaps in statewide implementation support?

Focus on key aspects of curriculum change management that aren't currently addressed by district staff.



What are RSCs currently equipped to do well?

Determine what different RSCs are already equipped to do well, what they could evolve into, and their appetite for upskilling and altering their service offerings.



What services are districts already seeking from RSCs?

Determine how existing services can be enhanced and amended to focus on HQIM and strategic implementation instead of content-agnostic support.



What is the state equipped to incentivize?

Identify what incentives, such as certifications, training, grants, etc., the state can leverage to support RSC development and district use of RSCs.



How can RSCs support statewide implementation?

Articulate the types of responsibilities RSCs would ideally fulfill in the future—even if they're not equipped to do so today. Which model(s) should they fulfill: Implementation Illuminator, Implementation Partner, and/or CBPL Partner?

It is important for SEAs to keep a few things in mind as they begin these conversations:

- Though SEAs need to have an informed opinion on what RSCs should do, it is not within most SEAs' purview to dictate which services RSCs will provide.
- Not all implementation support requires the same level of expertise, skill, or capacity, and not all states have the ideal conditions for all roles.
- States do not need every RSC to become a full-service curriculum expert for regional infrastructure to become dramatically more useful and effective. Instead, states can think more strategically about the different roles RSCs might play within a broader implementation ecosystem.
- States do not need every RSC to play the same role. Some may focus primarily on convening and implementation monitoring. Others may develop stronger expertise in coaching or curriculum over time. The goal is not uniformity. The goal is to build a coherent, statewide vendor marketplace.

2

Create Incentives That Encourage RSC Use

States can incentivize RSC–district partnerships through both supply- and demand-side levers.

Supply-Side Efforts

States can help shape the market, making RSCs an appealing, intuitive, and cost-effective option for support. Some options are:

- issuing grants directly to RSCs, allowing districts to use them at no additional cost,
- issuing grants to districts that can be used to partner with approved RSCs,
- requiring use of RSCs for specific state initiatives, such as implementation monitoring, and
- offering certification or badging systems as a way to point to qualified RSCs.

These levers are highly effective, but can be difficult to sustain financially, so they must be balanced with demand-side efforts.

Demand-Side Efforts

Creating an environment that calls for high-quality implementation will naturally create a market for RSC services. Via state initiatives, states can hold district leaders accountable for implementation measurement, monitoring, and progress. They can also communicate a clear and consistent picture of the implementation journey and what is expected at each stage. These levers will help districts understand where additional expertise and support are needed from an RSC marketplace.



STATE SNAPSHOT

Kentucky's Approach to Incentivizing RSC Participation

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) partnered with Rivet Education to create an “HQIM Implementation Insights Partner” pathway for coop (Kentucky’s term for RSCs) staff who completed intensive implementation training and demonstrated their ability to support districts using Kentucky’s implementation dashboard.

KDE then allowed districts to use portions of their Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) funding to partner with approved coops for implementation monitoring and support.

This approach did several things simultaneously:

- ✓ Signaled quality
- ✓ Created incentives for coops to deepen their expertise
- ✓ Expanded district access to support
- ✓ Strengthened statewide implementation visibility

3

Provide Training, Tools, and Ongoing Support

Even relatively modest implementation support roles require some training and infrastructure. RSCs need:

- a shared HQIM implementation framework,
- implementation monitoring tools and systems,
- opportunities to calibrate with peers, and
- ongoing coaching and support.

This is particularly important because many district leaders don't know what they don't know about implementation. RSCs cannot help districts navigate the journey unless they themselves have clarity about what strong implementation looks like.



STATE SNAPSHOT

Kentucky's Use of the HQIM Implementation Dashboard

In Kentucky, **Rivet's HQIM Implementation Dashboard** became an important part of the state's strategy because it:

- ✓ Clarified what effective implementation entails.
- ✓ Helped coops gather consistent implementation data that school, district, coop, and SEA leaders could use to identify strengths and gaps.
- ✓ Created a common language across KDE, coops, and districts.

The dashboard also helped shift implementation conversations away from vague perceptions and toward more concrete evidence and next steps.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The task is not to build statewide implementation infrastructure entirely from scratch. The opportunity is to align, equip, and strengthen the existing infrastructure.

For states seeking to scale HQIM implementation in ways that are both effective and sustainable, RSCs may be among the most important—and most overlooked—pieces of the puzzle.

A photograph of four women in a professional setting, likely a meeting or collaborative work session. They are gathered around a table with laptops and notebooks. In the background, a whiteboard lists 'Plan' with sub-points: 'Training', 'Coaching', 'Collaboration', and 'Data'. A yellow star is drawn on the whiteboard. The image has a blue overlay.

Case Study Kentucky's Emerging Model

Kentucky's work offers one example of how a state can begin building regional implementation infrastructure over time. Importantly, KDE did not begin this work assuming that coops were already fully equipped to independently lead HQIM implementation support. Instead, the strategy focused on gradually strengthening and aligning existing regional infrastructure around curriculum implementation.

Years 1–2: Building a Shared Foundation

Rivet's early work with Kentucky coops focused on establishing a common understanding of:

- what qualifies as HQIM,
- the HQIM implementation journey,
- the role of CBPL, and
- possible service models coops could adopt.

At the same time, KDE and Rivet identified a smaller group of “pioneer” coops for deeper support. These coops participated in:

- monthly coaching,
- communities of practice, and
- more advanced implementation learning focused on topics like curriculum-focused observation, coherent assessment systems, and supporting diverse learners.





The certification process was an opportunity to build meaningful relationships rooted in trust and a shared commitment to supporting educators. Through authentic collaboration, our team felt prepared and confident to partner with districts in ways that truly meet their unique needs around high-quality instructional resources implementation. The experience reinforced the importance of connecting with others, growing together through continuous learning, and serving schools with purpose and integrity.

Emily Giles, Assistant Director of Learning and Empowerment
Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services

One important lesson emerged early in the work: not every coop needed to become a full curriculum expert in order to provide meaningful implementation support. In many cases, helping districts understand the implementation journey, identify high-leverage next steps, and connect with additional expertise when needed proved both highly valuable and far more scalable than direct CBPL delivery.

Years 3–4: Creating a More Formalized Infrastructure

Over time, KDE and Rivet Education expanded the work into a more structured “certification” pathway.

The goal was not compliance. Instead, the certification model aimed to:

- create clearer incentives for coops to strengthen implementation support,
- point districts to trusted regional partners, and
- improve statewide visibility into implementation progress and needs.

To earn certification, each participating coop staff member had to:



Demonstrate foundational knowledge in HQIM and implementation.



Use site visits to collect data about HQIM implementation using the Implementation Dashboard.



Analyze that data and draw accurate conclusions about implementation strengths and weaknesses.



Identify a few high-leverage next steps for their districts.

Many coops had not engaged in this type of work before, so Rivet Education provided robust support through HQIM implementation convenings, one-on-one coaching, shoulder-to-shoulder site visits, and explicit modeling of implementation monitoring practices.

“

The certification process strengthened both my knowledge and my ability to support districts in moving from learning to meaningful implementation. It equipped me with clear structures and tools, as well as a deeper understanding of how to provide responsive, job-embedded support based on each district's unique needs. Through our partnerships, we are already seeing growth in how school and district teams plan, collaborate, and implement high-quality instructional resources. Most importantly, that learning is beginning to translate into stronger classroom instructional practices and positive outcomes for the students we serve.

Natasha Smith, Learning Acceleration Specialist

Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services

Rivet's partnership with KDE and the Kentucky coops continues to grow and evolve in response to state needs. Kentucky's strategy now includes:

- additional certification pathways,
- deeper and targeted support for coops at different stages of readiness, and
- ongoing strategic advising for KDE to strengthen its HQIM infrastructure.

This is an example of how states can begin building more sustainable implementation infrastructure by strengthening regional capacity over time rather than relying exclusively on short-term external partnerships.



Thank You

High-
In



Aligned
Instruction

Workshop Goals

• Share

• Learn

• Collaborate

• Apply

Implementation Success

- Strong instructional materials
- Effective professional learning
- Time to collaborate
- Ongoing coaching + support

Student
Outcomes