SCHOOL DISTRICT OUTCOMES BASED CONTRACTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT GUIDE & TEMPLATES

This document was produced by the Southern Education Foundation and Third Sector - July 2022

OBC OUTCOMES BASED CONTRACTING

a project of the Southern Education Foundation

Outcomes based contracting (also known as performance based contracting) seeks to drive public resources toward high-performing programs and services that achieve measurable, long-term student outcomes. A fundamental component of OBC is tracking progress, sharing data across stakeholders, and collaboratively making changes to improve outcomes.

This Continuous Improvement Guide provides districts, schools, and vendors a structured approach to using data to drive improvement in your program. It establishes processes for districts, schools, and vendors to work together to remove barriers and try new approaches to improving student outcomes.The guide includes checklists, templates, and resources for your use and customization.

The guide is part of a toolkit to help K-12 district leaders learn about and execute outcomes based contracts. Other elements of this toolkit include the OBC Playbook, OBC RFP Template, and Rate Card Calculator. All resources are available at the OBC for K-12 Districts hub.

What is continuous improvement? Why does it matter?

Continuous improvement is using data to measure impact and support informed, collaborative, and transparent decision-making between districts and vendors. Well-designed continuous improvement processes strengthen school district-vendor collaboration, empower vendors with the flexibility to unlock creativity and programmatic innovations, and inform school district decisions on performance improvement efforts and resource allocation. Outcomes based contracts formally embed continuous improvement processes and structures in the contract and aim to shift how contracts are managed and how data is used. Ultimately, continuous improvement allows stakeholders to move beyond a compliance and monitoring structure towards a meaningful and active use of data to inform improvements that will benefit student learning.

What are the guiding values of continuous improvement?

- **Learning Mindset:** Initial under-performance is not bad, but rather an opportunity to understand why achievement is limited and to uncover new insights leading to better results in the future. Learning requires humility, maintaining curiosity, and adapting when new information becomes available.
- **Trust & Shared Accountability:** Effective and ongoing continuous improvement work builds trust and shared accountability between stakeholders around common goals. All parties involved should be accountable to uncovering insights and removing barriers. The learning process is transparent and inclusive of multiple stakeholders and perspectives. There is clear co-ownership and shared responsibility.
- **Engagement, Equity, & Empowerment:** Data, and the insights they generate, are jointly viewed and engaged as opportunities for discovery, curiosity, ideation, and iteration. All stakeholders involved in the process are empowered to elevate challenges and recommend best practices and/or action steps to improve programming.
- **Collaborative Problem Solving:** Ultimately, continuous improvement processes are intended to be actionable. Districts, schools, and vendors work together to remove barriers and try new approaches in pursuit of improved student outcomes.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CHECKLIST

The continuous improvement process can be broken down into four steps:

1. **Collect Data**
2. **Analyze Data**
3. **Share Results**
4. **Improve Performance**

This checklist includes actions districts need to take at each step of the continuous improvement process. Later sections of this guide provide exercises for completing certain steps.

1. Collect Data

- ☐ [Set-up] Use the Data Map Tool to identify all relevant data sources and systems for measuring payment and process outcomes and metrics, leveraging existing systems, where possible
  - ☐ [Set-up] Double check that data is collected to inform process throughout the program (progress monitoring) and all data collected does not require waiting until the end of services
  - ☐ [Set-up] If new data collection is required (e.g., attendance data, exit tickets from students, etc.), determine process for collecting data, timeliness expectations, and format in which data will be shared with district (e.g., entered into existing student information system, reports exported from vendor system to Excel, etc.)
- [Set-up] In addition to quantitative data (attendance, growth data, etc.), make a plan for collecting qualitative data directly from students through surveys, interviews, or focus groups
- ☐ [Set-up] Align with vendor on process for collecting required data to measure payment and process outcomes & metrics
- ☐ [Set-up] Align with vendor on timeline for collecting required data to measure payment and process outcomes & metrics
- ☐ [Set-up] Identify key questions to answer with the data (both payment and process outcomes); ensure plan is in place for accessing all required data
- ☐ [Set-up] Determine comparisons or supplemental data needed to support answering those questions, leveraging existing reports, where possible
- ☐ [Over time] Validate data quality and timeliness
- ☐ [Over time] Offer training and technical assistance to vendors to improve data quality and/or timeliness (as needed)

2. Analyze Data

- ☐ [Set-up] Determine the frequency of analysis needed to support informed decision-making
- ☐ [Set-up] Organize results in a format that vendors, schools, and stakeholders can interact with (e.g., data tables, charts, data dashboards, etc.), leveraging existing reports, where possible

- ☐ [Over time] Analyze data and interpret results, including:
  - ☐ Aggregate analysis of OBC payable and process metrics, including disaggregation by race, gender, student SES, school, baseline performance, etc. (district-wide results)
  - ☐ [If multiple vendors providing same services] Vendor-level analysis of OBC payable and process metrics, including disaggregations (vendor-specific results)

3. Share Results

- ☐ [Over time] Share results regularly with vendors, schools, and other stakeholders; include relevant information to highlight trends or support interpretation (e.g., what's the story the data is telling?)

4. Improve Performance

- ☐ [Set-up] Designate Continuous Improvement Structure, including one or more workgroups (or other dedicated space) to regularly review results and discuss action steps to take to improve performance
- ☐ [Over time] Engage vendors, schools, and other stakeholders in conversations about interpreting the data and continuously improving results
  - ☐ Identify areas for outcomes improvement, with the help of stakeholders
  - ☐ Identify root causes for low performance or outcomes disparities, with the help of stakeholders
  - ☐ Identify solutions to test and actions to take, with the help of stakeholders
  - ☐ Implement/test solutions to improve performance
- ☐ [Over time] Ensure District, vendor, and school staff understand how to interpret and use the data collected
- ☐ [Over time] Repeat process

SUMMARY

A successful continuous improvement process repeats on a regular cadence and creates a feedback loop whereby districts, vendors, and schools are mutually accountable to their agreed upon next steps to support program improvements. With each subsequent meeting, all stakeholders can see if the changes and actions identified at previous meetings improved performance as desired. If not, new or additional changes and actions should be discussed and agreed upon. If the values of the continuous improvement process are upheld, all stakeholders will value and continue engaging with the process because they learn from it and see improvement in student performance as a result of the collaboration.

TEMPLATES FOR SETTING UP THE FOUR STEPS OF THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

1. Prepare to Collect Data: Mapping Data Sources & Planning for Access & Integration

Data is a core component for any Outcomes based contract. It will be used to assess the achievement of payment outcomes and trigger vendor payment, as well as to support the continuous improvement feedback loops that drive improved services. An Outcomes based contract may include access to previously siloed data across data owners as part of the contract agreement and/or may require vendor collaboration to collect and integrate student data from multiple sources. As part of planning for the continuous improvement process, it is important to:

- Identify the data you want to collect and analyze
- Get specific about the measurement instrument(s)
- Name who is responsible for collecting and sharing the data
- Specify the timing of data measurement and collection
- Identify the system(s) for storing and accessing data
- Consider how to monitor and improve data quality

The table below is a tool that can be used in collaboration with vendors to think through who, how, and when data will be collected to support the continuous improvement analysis.

Data Map Example

Outcomes & Metrics	Measurement	Data Access	Data Timing	Data Accuracy
List both payment and process outcomes	***How is this metric measured?***	***Is this data already collected? Where is it stored? How will the district access data? If new data is collected, can it be recorded in an existing system?***	***How frequently is the data measured? Any delays between measurement and data access?***	***Is this data consistently collected and reliable?***
Payment Outcome Example: *Student Growth Percentile (SGP)*	*STAR Renaissance MAP assessment, taken 3x/year (Fall, Winter, Spring)*	*Yes, the District has planned testing windows. Data is reported through STAR portal.*	*3x/year; Receive data ~2 weeks after testing*	*Yes, we have used this assessment for years*
Process Outcome Example: *Student Identity*	*Exit Ticket Questions adapted from NSSA resource*	*No. Vendor will be responsible for collecting this data and entering into SIS weekly.*	*1/week; Expected that vendor inputs responses within 48 hours of session*	*TBD - New measure*

OBC OUTCOMES BASED CONTRACTING
a project of the Southern Education Foundation

2. Prepare to Analyze Data: Brainstorm Questions Data Analysis Will Answer

Once you've determined what you will measure and how, it's important to consider how you will display this information so that it is readily accessible and useful to the vendor, schools, and other stakeholders participating in the continuous improvement process. As you build this data dashboard or report, consider building on existing district- and school-level analysis by using data and reports staff are already familiar with to help deepen the understanding of the progress of the tutoring program. You may also need to work with your data team, vendors, and other partners to determine the most useful comparisons and best visuals to easily understand trends at-a-glance. After all, you want continuous improvement conversations to be about digging into the "why" behind what is driving the trends, rather than debating if there is a trend in the first place. The questions below are intended to support the conversations with the data team, vendors, and other partners to inform the creation of actionable data dashboards or reports that can be shared regularly with all stakeholders to feed the continuous improvement process.

Data Analysis: Guidance & Prompts for a Tutoring Engagement

Measurement	Measurement
For All Metrics	• *How are you going to verify/validate the data received?* • *What form does the data come in? How will it be integrated, aggregated, and/or disaggregated to support analysis?* • *What disaggregation should be done (by school, grade, baseline performance, race, ELL, etc.)?* • *For each outcome, what comparisons would be helpful (over time, across groups, etc.)?*
Tutoring Attendance	• *How does tutoring program attendance compare with school attendance?* • *Do attendance rate changes align with any external factors (Covid Rates, Snow Days, etc.)?* • *How are students who are persistently absent flagged for follow-up and potential dis-enrollment/substitution?*
Growth	• *How does the data compare to expected growth without tutoring, including historical data?*
Proficiency	• *How are the data trends seen in proficiency supported (or not) by trends in growth metrics (for districts using both)?*
SEL (Identity, Efficacy)	• *Do we see any correlation between SEL measures and other factors (growth, attendance, etc.)?*
Student Engagement &/or Satisfaction	• *How might patterns here be connected with trends in other outcomes such as growth and proficiency?*

3. Prepare to Share and Discuss Results: Drafting a Continuous Improvement Structure

What is a continuous improvement structure? Continuous improvement processes, to be outlined in the contract, must include the data shared, stakeholders engaged, timing, and process for making decisions based on the data. Some Outcomes based contracts have one workgroup; others have multiple levels of workgroups that meet with different frequency and focus on different nuances of the program. Using the continuous improvement structure components below and referencing the stakeholders listed, draft a continuous improvement structure. Look to the examples for ideas on content, structuring, and potential approaches. Where possible, consider existing meetings or working groups that regularly review data that could add this program to the agenda prior to creating new meetings and groups.

Continuous Improvement Structure	
Purpose	Set a **clear purpose for each continuous improvement workgroup** (i.e. to analyze data, collect feedback, assess areas for improvement, identify opportunities for change, implement changes) and **what data** should be shared
Stakeholders	Identify **who should be a member of each workgroup** (who data should be shared with), and whether any broader stakeholders should be kept informed or consulted throughout continuous improvement processes. (See stakeholder table below)
Timing of touchpoints	Determine **how frequently data should be discussed,** including how often specific workgroups will meet (i.e. monthly, quarterly, etc.). Determine also h**ow the workgroup will meet** (virtual, in-person).
Decision- Making	Determine **what types of decisions will be made** during continuous improvement workgroups, how information will be shared, and how workgroups will engage with other decision-making groups.

Sample Continuous Improvement Structure			
	1) District Data Review Meeting	**2) District-Vendor Coordination Meeting**	**3) District-Vendor-School Data Review Meeting**
Purpose	-To discuss monthly data analysis, highlight trends, align on story, prepare to share with all relevant stakeholders	-To troubleshoot tutoring implementation challenges -To review process outcomes data and make real-time program adjustments	-To support school-level data review & data story -To identify best practices, challenges, and changes to support CI
Stakeholders	-District Data Team -District Academics Team	-District Academics Team -Vendor Program Coordinator	-District Academics Coordinator -School Program Coordinator -Vendor Program Coordinator
Timing of touchpoints	Monthly, 1 hour	Weekly, 1 hour (data review once a month)	Monthly, 15-30 min per school
Decision-Making	-Determine analyses to share, stories to highlight -Approve report for release -Align on topics to discuss with vendor	-Interpret data and data story together -Elevate challenges and align on changes (at school, vendor, and district level)	- Elevate challenges and align on changes -Determine what to share with school academics team and teachers

Key Stakeholders for a Tutoring Engagement

CI Stakeholders	Responsibilities
District Team "Owning" Contract	Manage contract; coordinate among all stakeholders; support in developing and implementing changes
District Procurement/ Contracting Team	Support contract execution and ongoing management
District Data Team	Lead data integration and analysis; support identifying data stories
Vendor Program Coordinator	Liaise between tutors, schools, districts; participate in developing and implementing changes
Vendor Leadership	Support development and implementation of real-time program changes
Tutors	Deliver services; submit data; share qualitative input with coordinator
School Program Coordinator(s)	Support day-to-day tutoring implementation; participate in developing and implementing changes
School Dept. Leadership	Support alignment of tutoring with curriculum; support data storytelling and learnings
School Teachers	Support implementation of tutoring; liaise with coordinator/tutors to support students
Students	Participate in tutoring; provide feedback on program to support improvement
Parents	Review individual student results; provide feedback on program

4. Prepare to Improve Performance: Create a Continuous Improvement Meeting Agenda

How do I integrate continuous improvement into my regular operations? During meetings focused on continuous improvement, it is important to use data to align on an understanding of what processes work to improve student outcomes and what processes need improvement. Below is a sample agenda, with key questions and considerations.

Sample Continuous Improvement Meeting Agenda
1. **Operations:** Have there been program changes since the last meeting? What operational barriers currently exist in the process of enrolling and serving students effectively?
2. **Outcomes Data:** Are there data gaps or delays? What is outcome data revealing? Are there any trends in the process metrics that help us understand the payment metrics? How will the data insights be used by vendors, schools, and districts to drive improvement of tutoring services? How will partners know if services have been improved?
3. **Partnerships and Communications:** How can vendors, schools, and districts better work together? Have there been any communications difficulties or barriers to effective partnerships?
4. **Next Steps:** What actions do vendors, schools, and districts commit to and on what timeline?

APPENDIX

Continuous Improvement Resources

1: More Background on Continuous Improvement

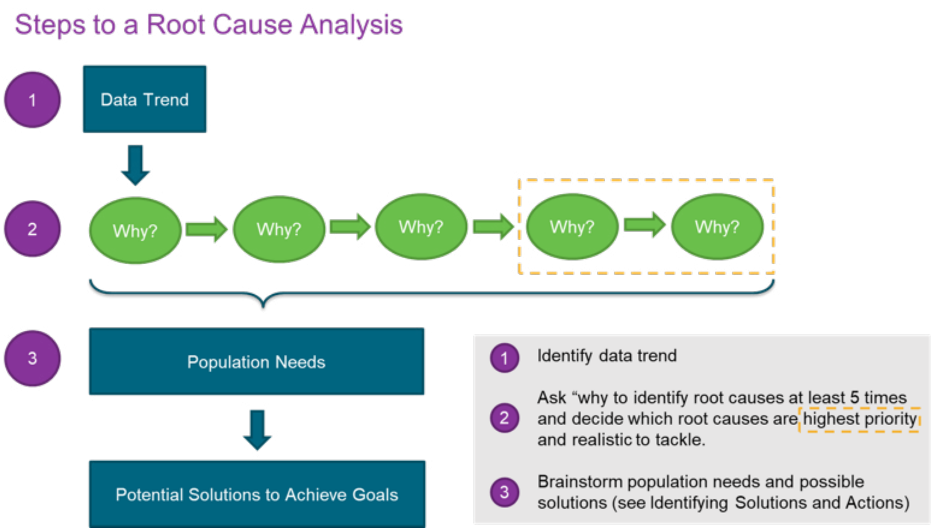
For additional continuous improvement inspiration, see Third Sector's blog series on the topic:

- Part 1: Building a Data Dashboard
- Part 2: Collaborative, Data-Driven Conversations
- Part 3: Case Study: Santa Cruz Human Services Department's Journey

2: Sample Exercise for Digging into Data Trends: Root Cause Analysis

When you identify a data trend that might have multiple, complex drivers, conducting a Root Cause Analysis (RCA) in collaboration with your continuous improvement partners, as well as other stakeholders, can be helpful. RCA is a tool to help identify the underlying reasons for an outcome or data trend by repeatedly asking "why?" questions. During an RCA, workgroups don't stop at the answer to the first "why" question, but delve into at least 5 levels of "why" to help uncover the root causes of an outcome. Some of the roots will likely be outside of your control, and that's okay. Once the root causes are better understood, identify the ones that by working together the district and vendor can influence and brainstorm solutions that are informed by context and subject-matter-expertise that both the district and vendor bring.

How is the "5 Whys" analysis done? Identify a data trend to investigate. Ask why this trend is happening at least 5 times for each "why" the group investigates. Decide which root causes are within the district and vendor's control, are of highest priority, and are realistic to tackle. Then, brainstorm priority needs and possible solutions (see Identifying Solutions and Actions for additional ways to brainstorm solutions).



Don't forget your stakeholders: The best RCAs are done by a diverse group of stakeholders, *especially those with the most at stake in the project, so aim to include students, parents, and/or teachers as often as possible when facilitating RCA.* Different perspectives will provide different answers to the "why" questions and result in better, more informed solutions.

3: Sample Exercise for Identifying Solutions & Actions: “How Might We” Exercise

What is a “How Might We” exercise? A “how might we” activity takes a root cause or other challenge identified and moves to the next step of developing solutions. By reframing root causes as “How Might We” statements, both districts and vendors can work together to turn problems into questions that they can design solutions to address. For example, “Fewer students of color are consistently attending tutoring sessions than white students” becomes *“How might we* layer new/more/better supports into our tutoring program (adjusting time of day, setting, location, structure, model, cultural relevancy) to enable/encourage more students of color to attend?”

When should you use the “How Might We” exercise? Once an outcome or data trend has been identified and after a potential root cause is better understood, the How Might We Exercise will help to identify solutions.

How do you do a “How Might We” exercise?

- **STEP 1:** Begin by reframing a root cause into a “how might we” statement to turn the problem into a question that the workgroup can design solutions to address. With a diverse group of stakeholders, draft a “how might we question” based on your root cause of interest.
- **STEP 2:** Once the group has drafted the “how might we” question, it is time to start thinking of solutions. Brainstorming, brainwriting, and reverse brainstorming are all great ways to engage a group in coming up with solutions.
- **STEP 3:** Group solutions into themes for further discussion to build on each other’s ideas.
- **STEP 4:** Select potential solutions to build, test out, and iterate.