

# How the Network of Education Technical Assistance and Research Centers Can Complement ESA Efforts

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To meet student, parent, educator, and community needs, educational service agencies (ESAs) must navigate a variety of topics, systems, and policies. For example, ESAs provide support as districts plan and apply for funding under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Research and technical assistance centers funded by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) has several resources available at no charge to support education staff. A network of federally funded regional educational laboratories and centers work with states, districts, and schools to research high-priority topics and implement practices that can make education more effective. These centers can work with ESAs to support regional goals around technical assistance and school support.

This network of support includes the following:

- **[Regional Comprehensive Centers](#)**. These 15 centers are organized regionally around the country and provide direct support to state and local education agencies. Comprehensive centers provide resources and tools on evidence-based practices, along with training and coaching on ESSA implementation.
- **[Federal Content Centers](#)**. These seven centers develop research-based resources to inform policy and practice on a variety of topics:
  - College and career readiness
  - Early childhood education
  - Improving state-level capacity to support districts
  - Learning innovations
  - School turnaround
  - Standards and assessments
  - Teacher and education leader quality
- **[Regional Educational Laboratories \(RELs\)](#)**. These 10 laboratories partner with state and local K–12 education agencies and with higher education, early education, and other stakeholders interested in education to increase their ability to use data and research evidence to implement relevant, field-driven policies and practices.
- **[State Support Network](#)**. The Network brings together states, districts, and technical assistance partners to support state and district efforts around school improvement. States and districts can use Network resources to improve student outcomes, scale up effective solutions, share knowledge, increase the use of evidence-based practices, and build partnerships.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) houses several of these centers, including four regional comprehensive centers, two content centers, two RELs, and the State Support Network. These federally supported centers can work with ESAs to improve school capacity and student outcomes. For example, Andrea Stewart, consultant for the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency and director of The Center on Collaboratively Building Iowa’s Learner-Centered Future, is providing expertise about competency-based education (CBE) and microcredentials for the CBE Cross-State Conversation Series, an initiative of

the [Midwest Comprehensive Center](#). The Cross-State Conversation Series connects four participating states to discuss CBE approaches and conduct collective inquiry projects to inform CBE implementation. By participating in the series, Andrea and other partners are learning from each other's CBE implementation pilots and professional development efforts.

In addition, the [Southeast Comprehensive Center](#) (SECC) interviewed North Carolina's Regional Education Service Alliance (RESA) directors to explore the services offered across the state RESA network. The center also interviewed district staff to explore how different RESAs work with districts and share information. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction used the information collected by SECC to coordinate RESA efforts and connect RESAs that are doing related work.

To learn more about the network and possible ways we can support your ESA's goals, contact Cortney Rowland at [crowland@air.org](mailto:crowland@air.org).

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