



American Youth  
Policy Forum

Informing Youth Policy,  
Improving Youth Outcomes

# **Building a Research Office that Supports Continuous Improvement under ESSA**

October 29 – 30, 2018

# ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO USE RESEARCH OR THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

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Director, National Center for Research in Policy and Practice  
October 29, 2018



## RESEARCH USE IN COMPLEX ORGS

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  - How policy makers and practitioners *should* use research

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- Our approach:
  - Understand patterns by which policy makers *actually* use research in decision making
  - Investigate how intentional efforts to foster research use (like research-practice partnerships) influence these processes

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  - How policy makers and practitioners *should* use research
- Our approach:
  - Understand patterns by which policy makers *actually* use research
  - Investigate how intentional efforts to foster research use influence these processes
- We ask:
  - What is the nature of decision making in public agencies?
  - What role does research play in this process?
  - How do intentional efforts to promote research use influence decision making?

DEPARTMENTS,  
AND PARTNERSHIPS,  
AND RESEARCH USE...  
OH MY!



# ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY

- An organization's ability to identify, assimilate, and transform knowledge from the environment
- Is associated with:
  - Increased organizational performance
  - Greater innovation
  - Greater flexibility to adapt to changing environments
- Greater absorptive capacity leads to greater absorptive capacity:  
The rich get richer

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**Research Ideas from  
External Partner**



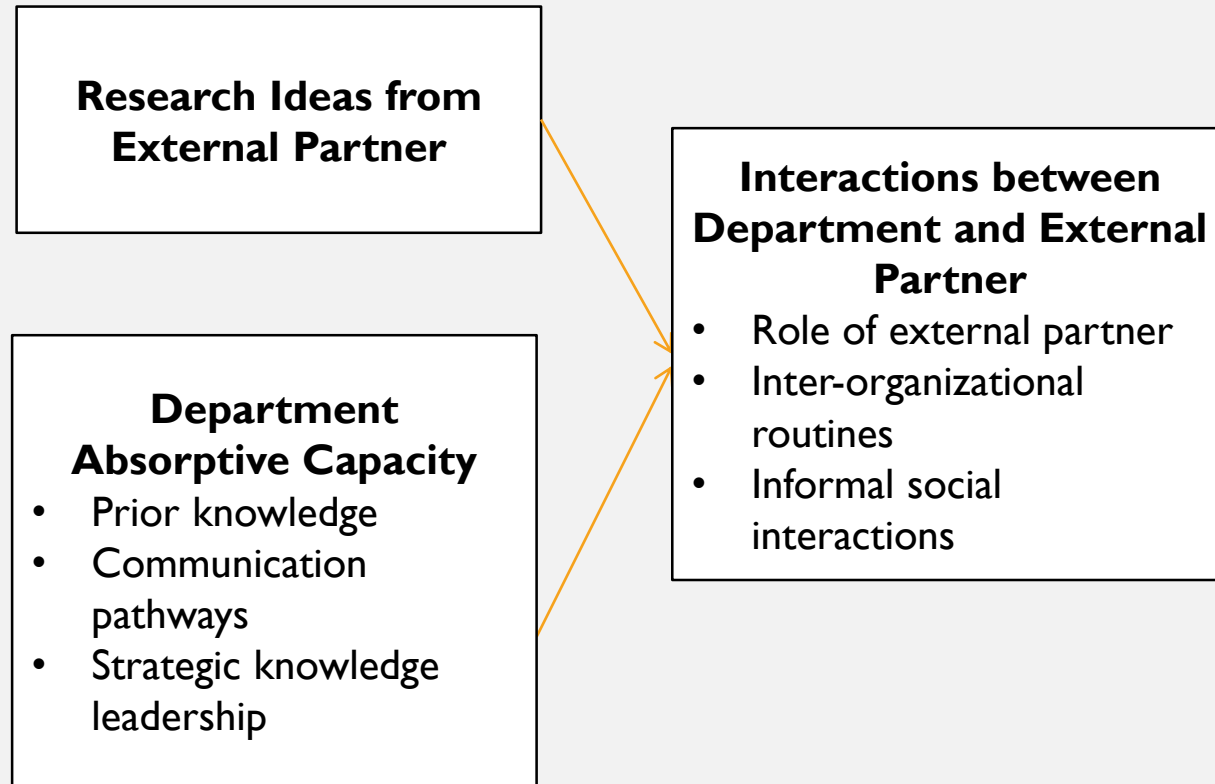
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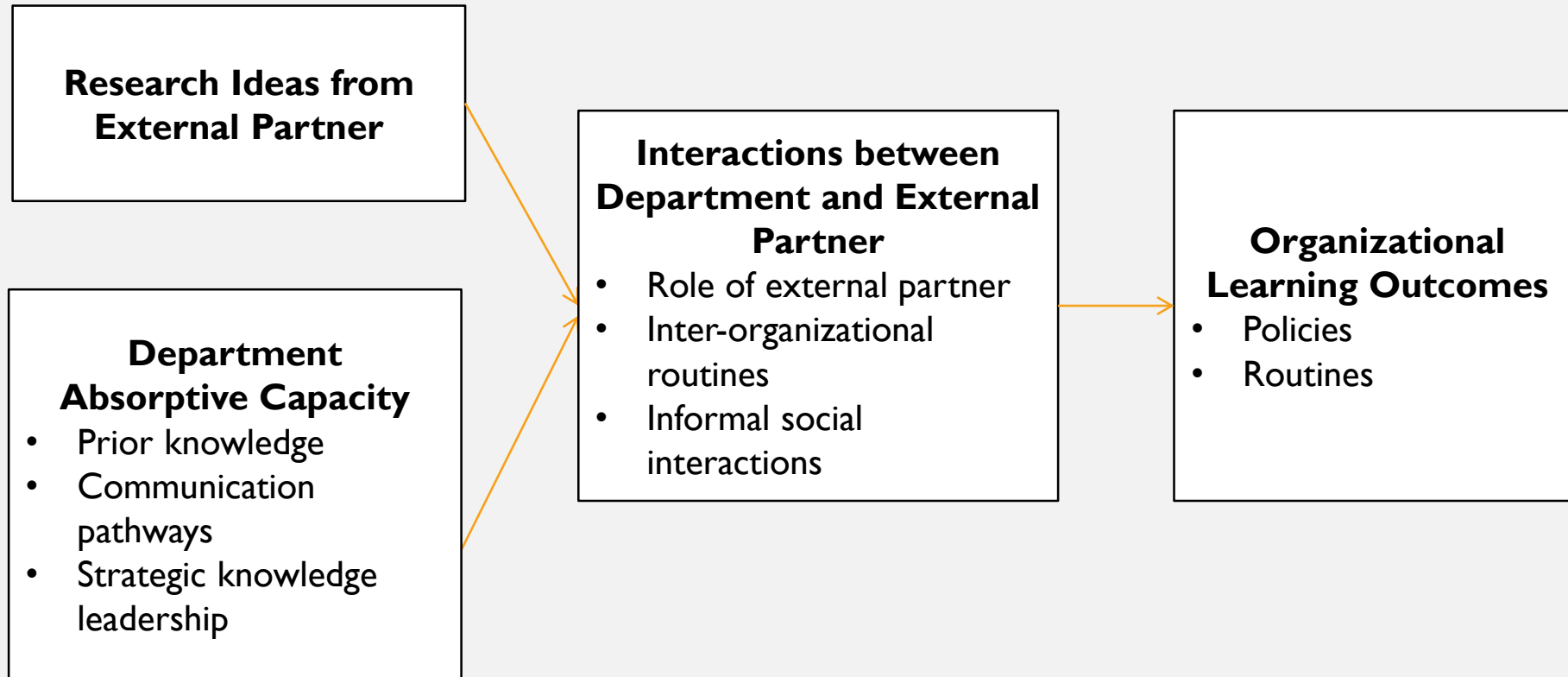
**Department  
Absorptive Capacity**

- Prior knowledge
- Communication pathways
- Strategic knowledge leadership

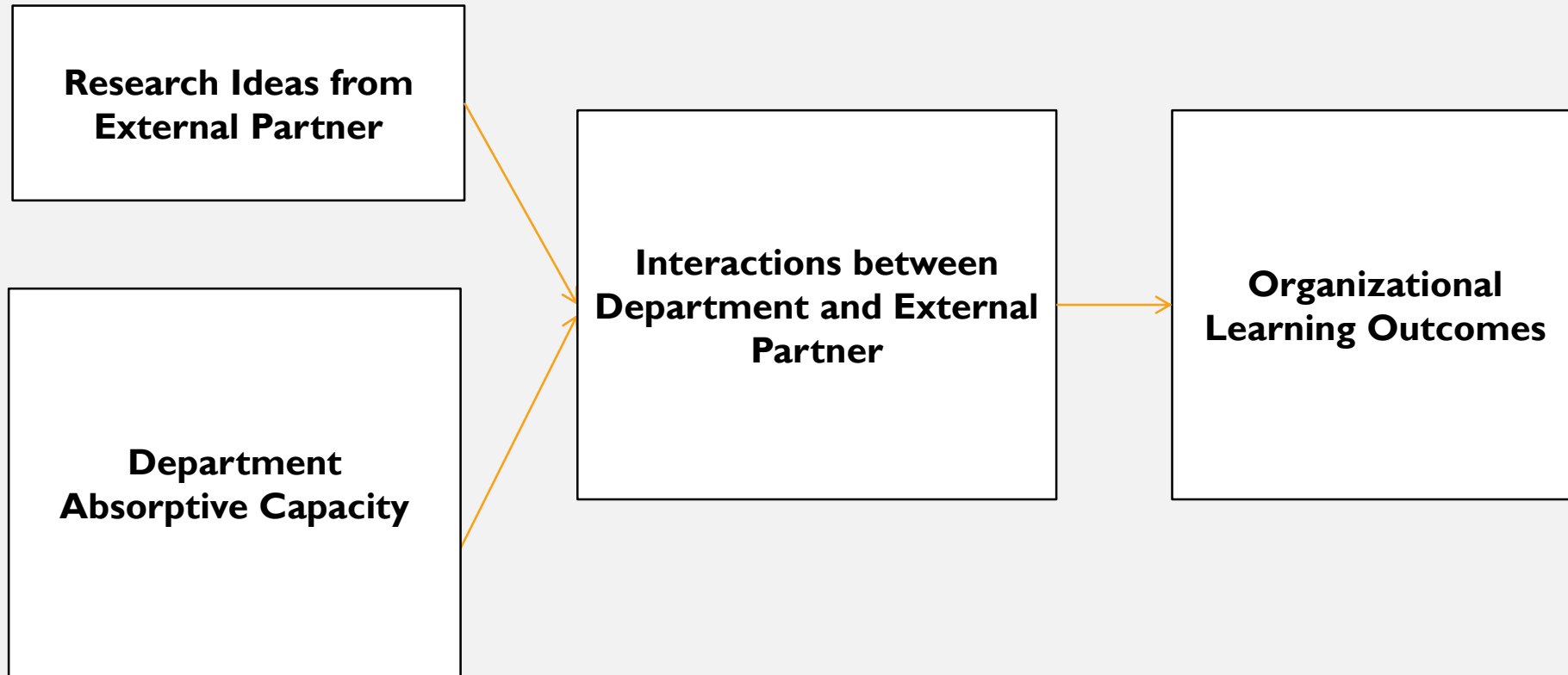
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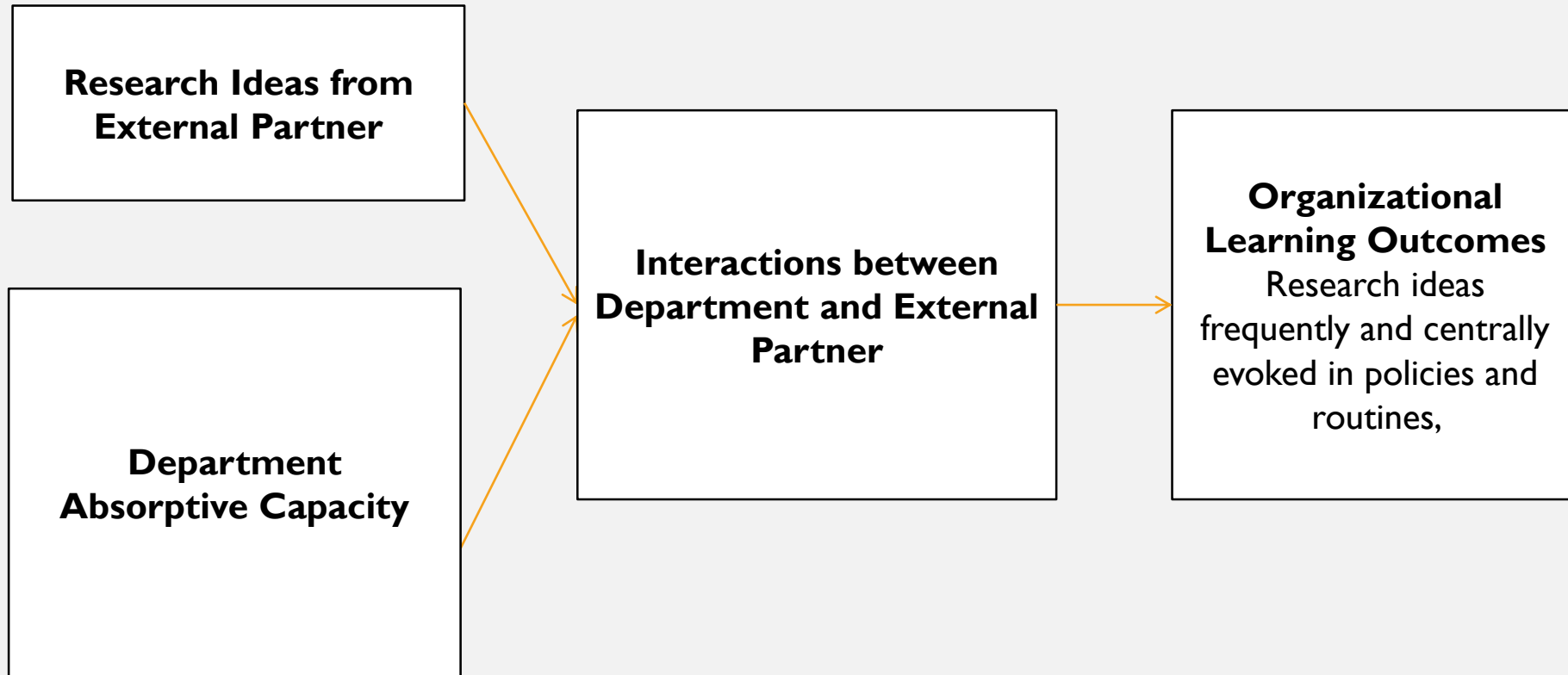
# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



# CASE: MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT



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## CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORTED ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY

- Internal expertise related to the work of the partnership

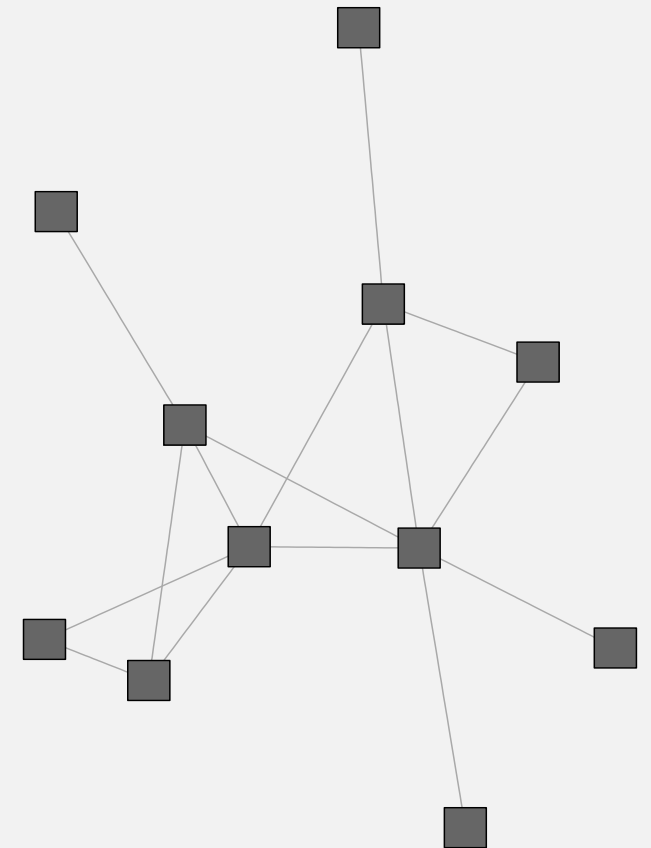
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Individuals with expertise in this domain</b>
Mathematics content or pedagogical knowledge	Multiple
Professional development	Multiple
Teaching English Language learners	Multiple
Working systemically with schools at scale	Absent

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- Many internal meetings for mathematics department leaders

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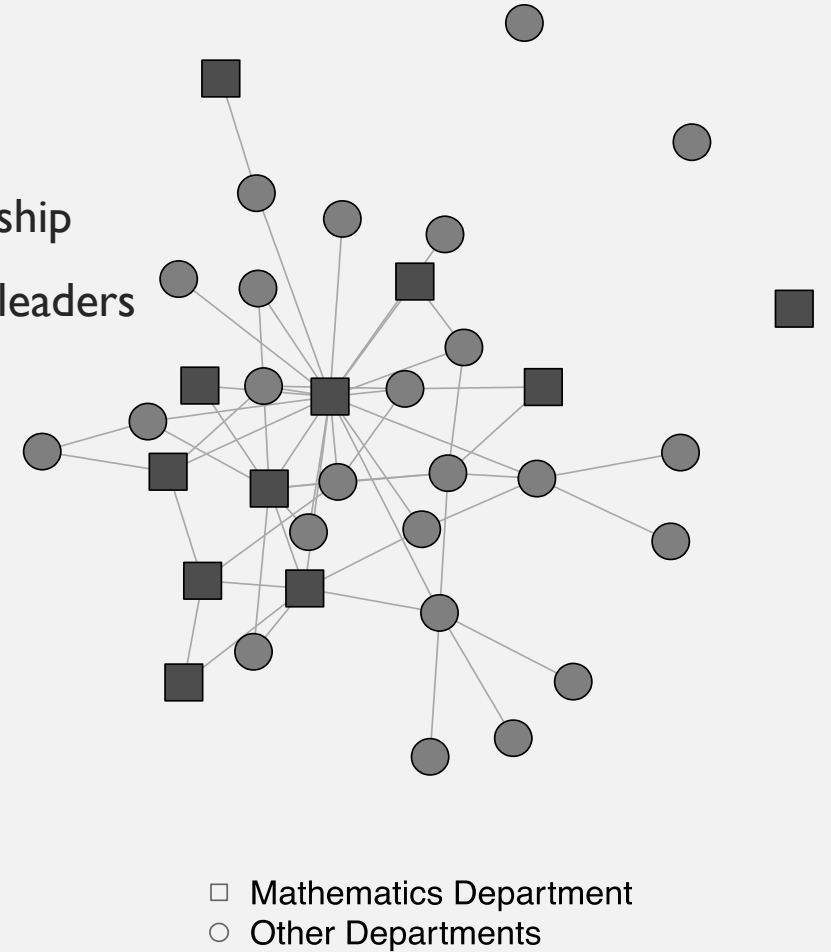
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- Internal expertise related to the work of the partnership
- Many internal meetings for mathematics department leaders
- Multiple informal ties to one another
- Ample informal ties to other relevant departments
- Mathematics department leaders intentionally encouraged inter-department collaboration

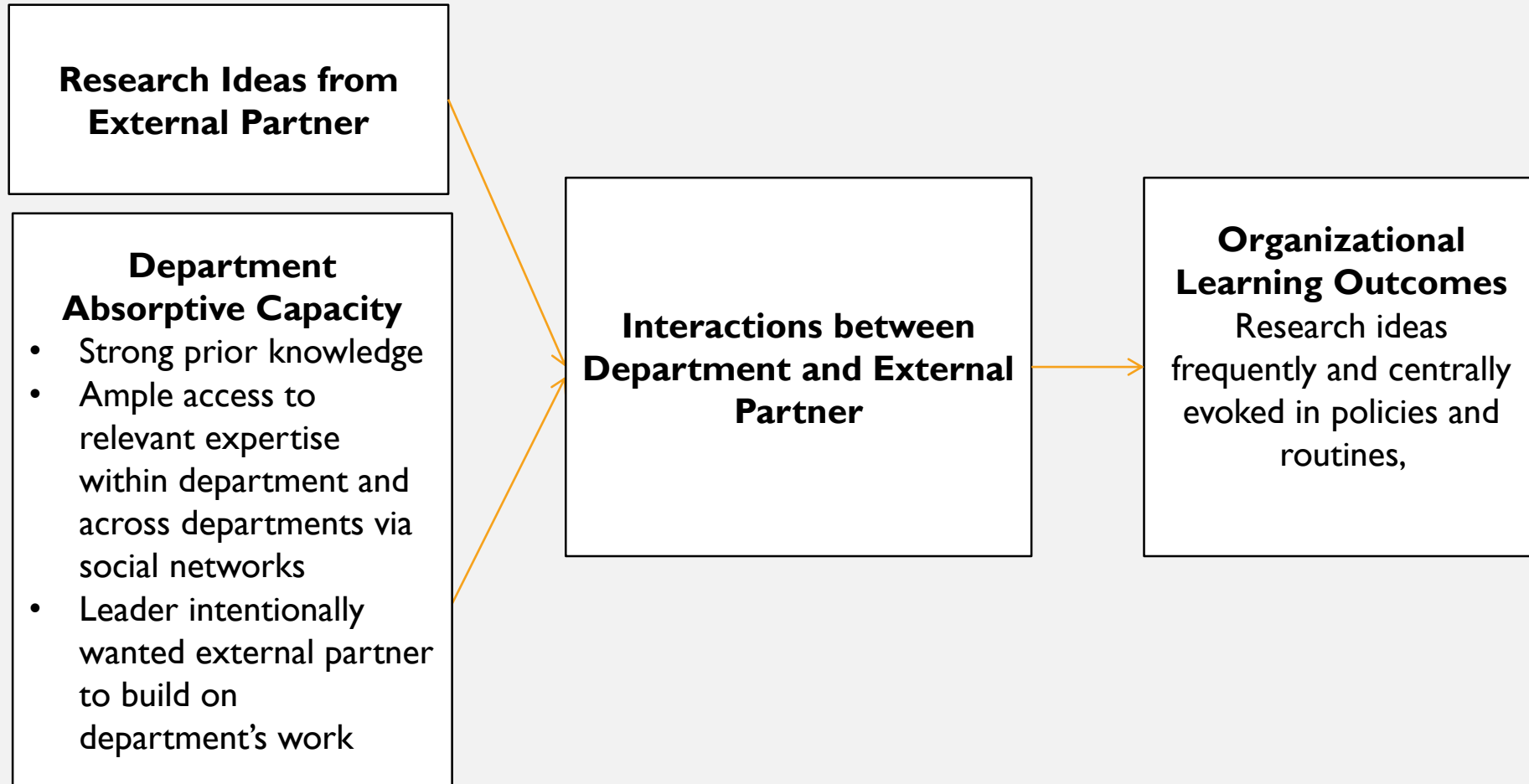
# CASE: MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT

**Research Ideas from  
External Partner**

- Department  
Absorptive Capacity**
- Strong prior knowledge
  - Ample access to relevant expertise within department and across departments via social networks
  - Leader intentionally wanted external partner to build on department's work

**Interactions between  
Department and External  
Partner**

**Organizational  
Learning Outcomes**  
Research ideas  
frequently and centrally  
evoked in policies and  
routines,



## INTERACTIONS BETWEEN DEPARTMENT AND PARTNER LIKELY SUPPORTED LEARNING

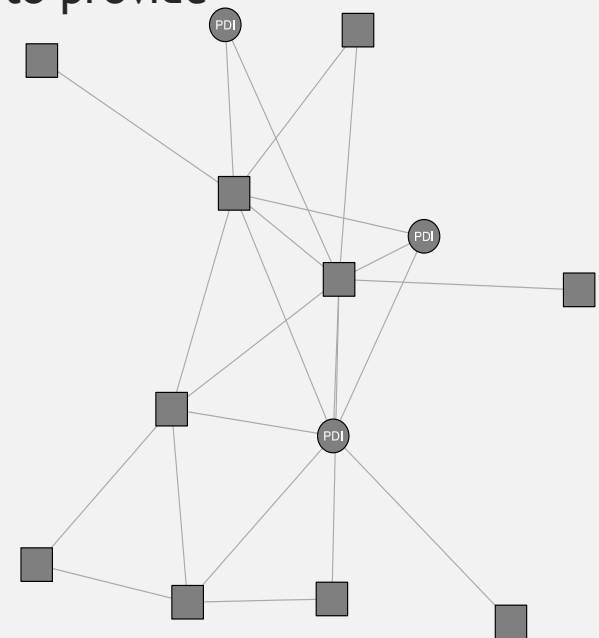
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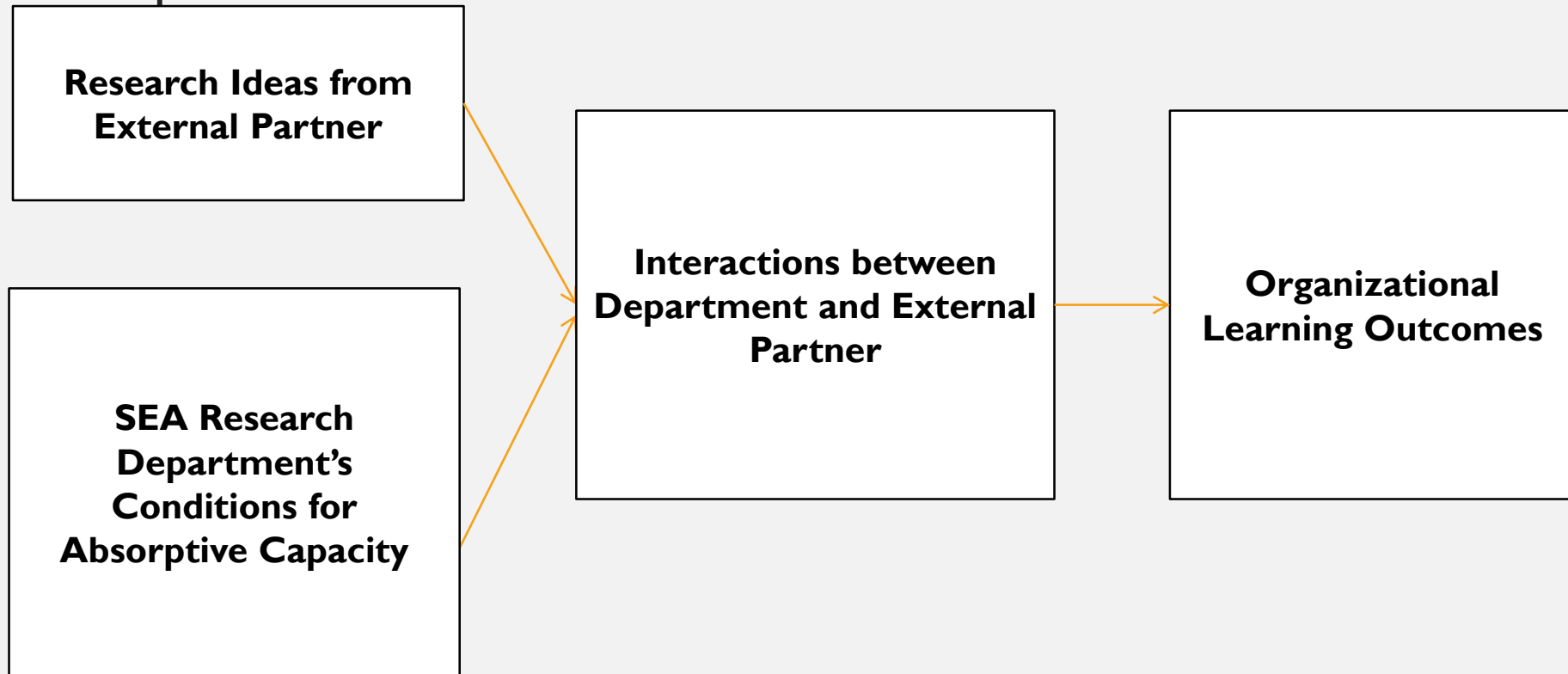
## Interactions between Department and External Partner

- Structured as advisor
- Work within mathematic department's central planning meetings
- Many informal connections to external partner

**Organizational Learning Outcomes**  
Research ideas frequently and centrally evoked in policies and routines,

# THOUGHT EXPERIMENT #1

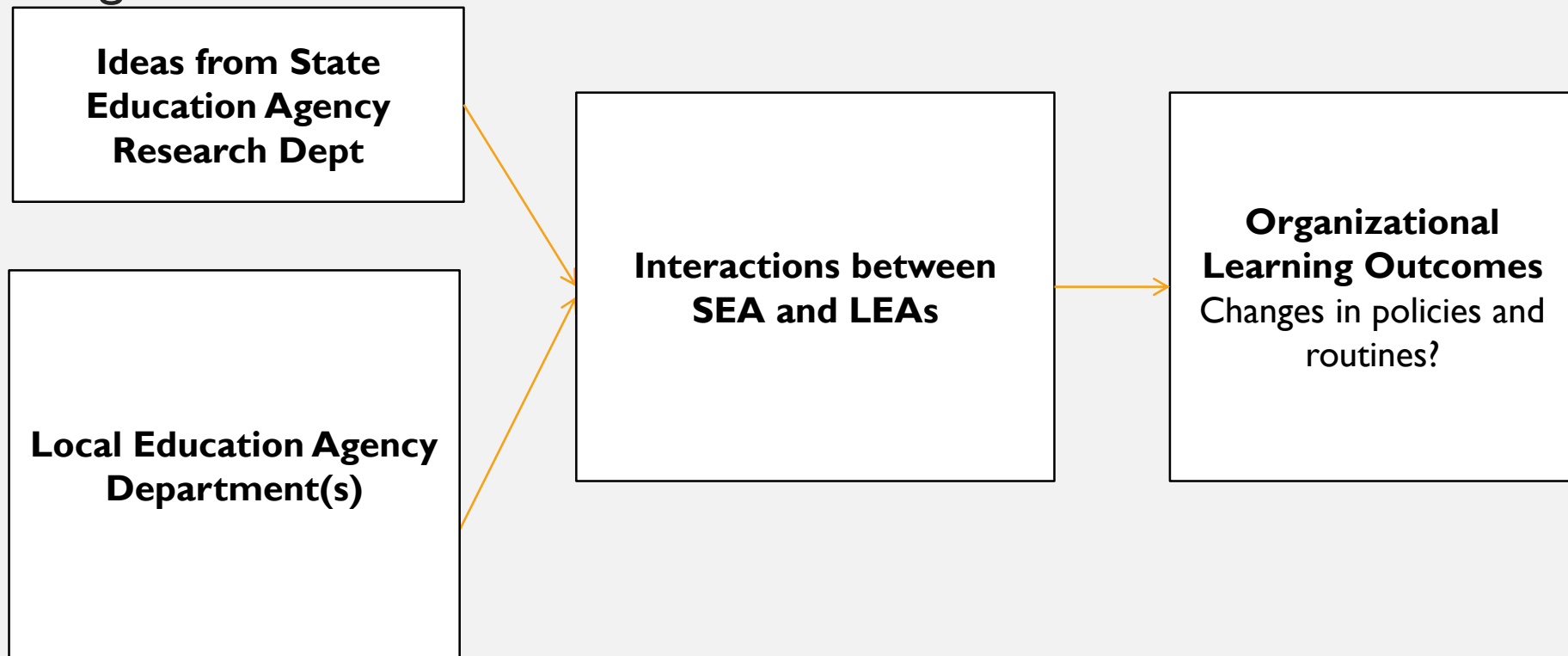
- Do these ideas resonant within your SEA research department context? What else would we need to consider?

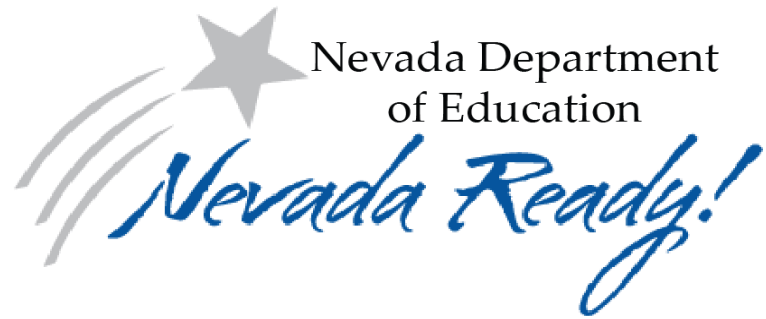




## THOUGHT EXPERIMENT #2

- Could this be useful for thinking about how LEAs take up guidance from SEAs? What else would we need to consider?





# **ESSA Implementation in Nevada: Leveraging Research and Evaluation with Limited Resources and Capacity**

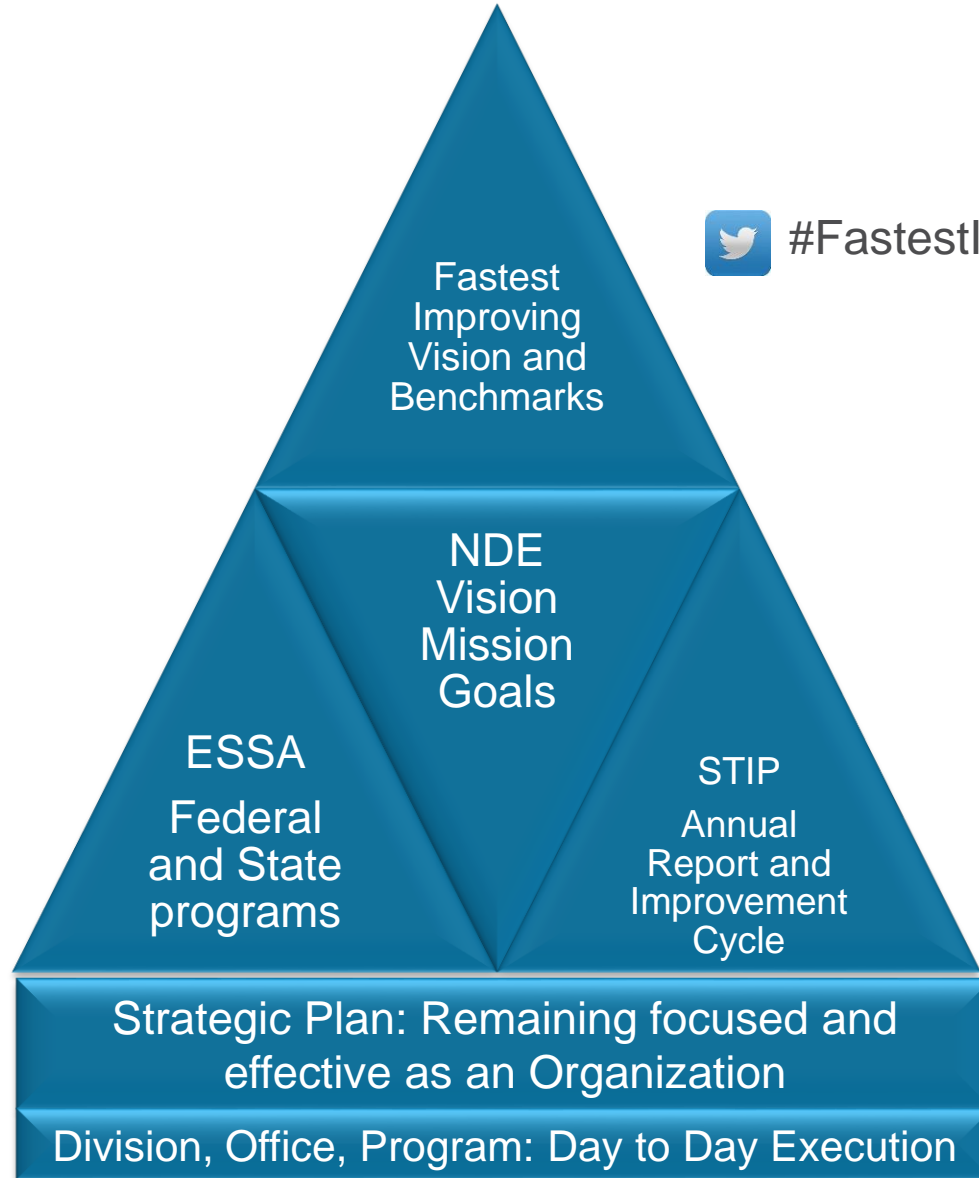
October 30, 2018

Office of Student and School Supports

# Fastest Improving State in the Nation



 #FastestImproving





## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

### Focus on Lowest Performing Schools

- ✓ Place all one and two star schools on a path to three stars in three years
- ✓ Provide planning and funding support
- ✓ Involve parents and families as partners in improvement strategies with a focus on student achievement results

### Great School Leaders

- ✓ Provide high quality professional development to school leaders
- ✓ Drive significant impact on student success with qualified principals who set school culture and high expectations
- ✓ Build the capacity of the education system through networks, collaboration, and knowledge sharing

### Data

- ✓ Focus on results and make data-driven decisions
- ✓ Celebrate and share success
- ✓ Be transparent with families and educators
- ✓ Present easy to understand data
- ✓ Utilize/employ a college and career-focused accountability system that puts students on a path to post-secondary success

# Case Study: Nevada

## Problem of Practice

NDE does not have an office focused on research and evaluation or staff members who are responsible for this work. With ESSA implementation and the State's focus on strengthening our education system, the expectations have now changed—without many of the supports needed for this change in practice.

# Case Study: Nevada

## Approach: Year 1

- Redesigned our competitive grants application process to prioritize ESSA Evidence Levels 1-3 and our “Big Bets”
  - Started with Title I 1003(a) School Improvement
- Created an evidence-based list as a resource to districts and schools
- Support and technical assistance webinars, meetings, and guidance documents (shared with the SEA, LEA and school leaders, and partners/providers)
- “Speed dating” to help district and school leaders identify and match with an evidence-based intervention
- Passed AB7, Nevada’s ESSA bill

# Case Study: Nevada

## Approach: Year 2

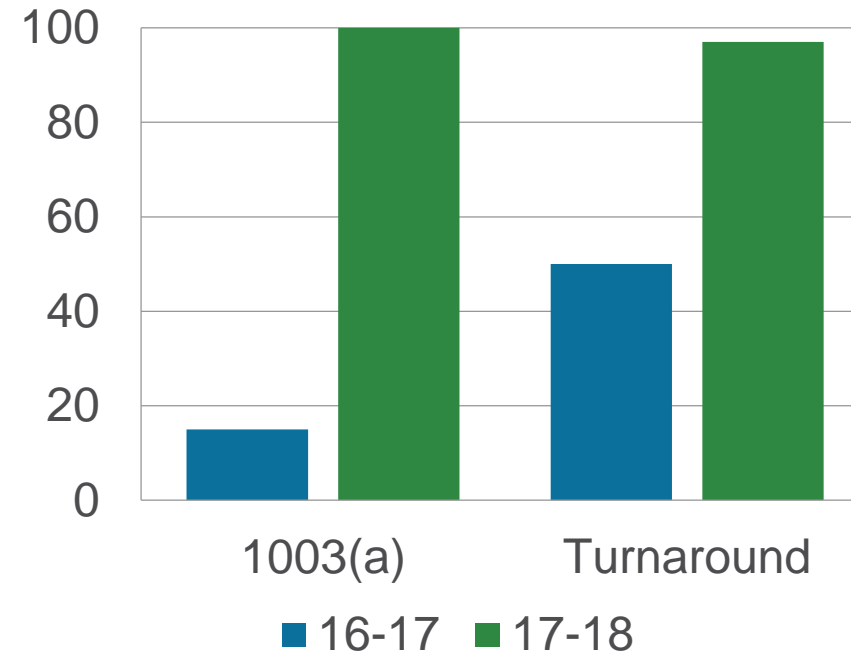
- Refining the redesign of our competitive grants application process
  - Piloted a statewide consolidated competitive grant application (federal and state grants)
  - Prioritized ESSA Evidence Levels, monitoring, and evaluation
- Launched the Partnership Network, a state-district-school partnership
- Expanding evidence-based list
- Continued support and technical assistance webinars, guidance documents, and meetings—  
with support from national experts
- NDE Evidence and Equity Convening in fall 2018 – the moral imperative

# Case Study: Nevada

## Outcomes

- More effective and efficient usage of public funds
- Greater understanding of evidence-based interventions
- A shift in practices and mindsets
- More challenges

Percentage of Funds Meeting  
ESSA Evidence Levels 1-3





# Case Study: Nevada



## Lessons Learned

- Communicate a clear state vision and plan
- Leverage networks and partnerships with highly reputable researchers.
- Learn from others.
- Live and demonstrate the values of evidence-based interventions, research, data, and continuous improvement.
- Anticipate resistance to change and build that into your strategy plan.
- Listen and learn from the stakeholders impacted by state policies. Use this to continuously improve.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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