



Assessing the health of your research-practice partnership



Research-practice partnerships (RPPs) bring together multiple perspectives to address challenges, conduct research, test solutions, and improve K–12 education. RPPs can include researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders across organizations at the school, district, or state level. Throughout the RPP process, formative assessments can indicate whether the partnership is effectively working toward its goals.



The Regional Educational Lab (REL) Southwest developed a formative [Tool for Assessing the Health of Research-Practice Partnerships](#) to help RPP members streamline their RPP's structures and processes. Using this tool and the formative assessment process enables RPP members to use their time more efficiently and to accelerate progress toward achieving their goals.

The REL Southwest tool complements and extends the commonly cited framework featured in [Assessing Research-Practice Partnerships: Five Dimensions of Effectiveness](#) (Henrick et al., 2017). The framework's five dimensions and related indicators are “intended to guide the development of more specific protocols and measures that could contribute to a body of evidence related to partnership effectiveness” (Henrick et al., 2017, p. 2).

REL Southwest's tool can help RPP members address the following five dimensions of their work (as outlined in the framework by Henrick et al., 2017):

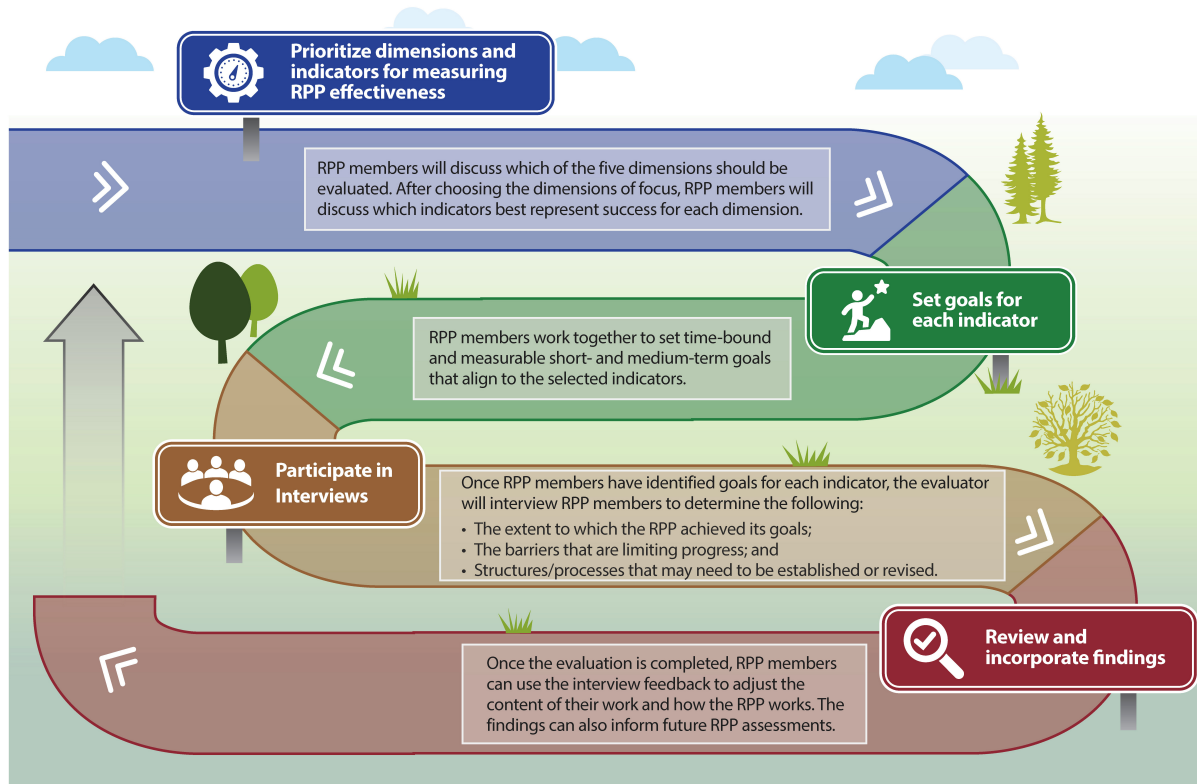
- ▶ Building trust and cultivating partnership relationships;
- ▶ Conducting rigorous research to inform action;
- ▶ Supporting the partner practice organization in achieving its goals;
- ▶ Producing knowledge that can inform education improvement efforts more broadly; and
- ▶ Building the capacity of participating researchers, practitioners, practice organizations, and research organizations to engage in partnership work.

The tool provides guidance on setting and monitoring progress on RPP goals aligned to the framework's five dimensions and related indicators. In addition, the tool includes an interview protocol to gather feedback on how the partnership's work aligns with the five dimensions.

The graphic on the next page outlines how you can use REL Southwest's tool to formatively measure and continuously improve your RPP's structures and processes.






About the continuous improvement cycle for research-practice partnerships

The following graphic outlines how teachers, administrators, and other practitioners can participate in the continuous improvement cycle. As an RPP member, you will have a say in the scope and timing of each step of the process. RPP members can improve the outcomes of your partnership work by sharing your experiences with your RPP evaluator.



How much time is required?

Evaluating the health of your partnership does not require a large time commitment. Below, we have estimated the time for each phase:

-   ▶ RPP members can expect to spend 1.5 to 2 hours on **prioritizing dimensions** and **setting goals** for the RPP's chosen cycle (for example, once each quarter). This includes reviewing the dimensions that were prioritized in the last cycle and feedback from previous interviews.
-  ▶ Each **RPP member interview** will last approximately 30 minutes.
-  ▶ Your RPP evaluator will spend some time **summarizing the interviews** so that RPP members can review and discuss action steps based on the findings.
-  ▶ **Reviewing and incorporating the findings** can happen during existing RPP meetings.

Access the tool and guidance document: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=6712>

References

Henrick, E. C., Cobb, P., Penuel, W. R., Jackson, K., & Clark, T. (2017). *Assessing research-practice partnerships: Five dimensions of effectiveness*. William T. Grant Foundation. <http://wtgrantfoundation.org/library/uploads/2017/10/Assessing-Research-Practice-Partnerships.pdf>

Scholz, C., LaTurner, J., & Barkowski, E. (2021). *Tool for assessing the health of research-practice partnerships* (REL 2021–057). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>