HOW-TO GUIDE

Creating a Teacher Retention & Recruitment Action Team

Introduction

Alaska faces increasing challenges in maintaining its teacher workforce. Addressing the complex issue of teacher retention and recruitment (TRR) often requires systemic change. Since 2020, the state has identified six essential areas for improving statewide TRR efforts, such as strengthening working conditions, creating certification pathways, and enhancing recruitment. The Alaska TRR Playbook outlines multiple groups that can collaborate in addressing these six areas. This team approach has many benefits for TRR work:

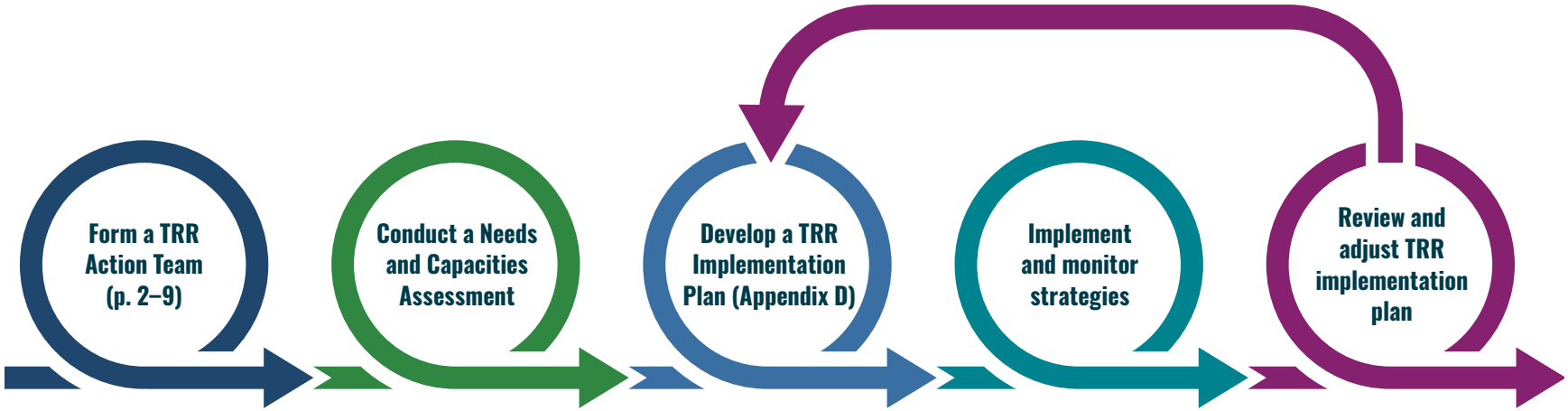
ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This guide helps district staff members establish a coordinated team to plan, lead, and support TRR efforts. This guide draws from the Alaska TRR Playbook, which provides guidance on the early stages of creating a district TRR Action Team. It is also informed by research and examples from other districts and states. These materials can be used in conjunction with *How-To Guide: Assessing Needs and Capacities to Guide Teacher Retention & Recruitment Efforts* to inform the team's early data-gathering and planning work.

- **Proactive coordination and reduced silos.** Different agencies and organizations often manage the policies, practices, data, and resources associated with the six identified essential areas, but a coordinated action team can work together.
- **A more holistic view of TRR challenges and ideas for improvement.** Perspectives within a district can widely vary. Staff members at the district and building levels experience TRR issues differently. Additionally, school staff members' experiences differ based on where they teach and their community connections. Community members such as parents, Tribal leaders, and Elders also carry insight into what draws people to a community and what pushes them away. Gathering these diverse perspectives can lead to more tailored responses.
- **Enhanced sustainability.** A team approach can help districts keep TRR efforts going by sharing work and ensuring that a single individual or entity's resources are not depleted.

The first part of this guide covers the roles, responsibilities, and functions of a TRR Action Team. The second part consists of a quick-start guide with suggested steps and templates that districts can use and modify as they build their own teams.

Suggested TRR Planning Sequence



WHAT THE TRR ACTION TEAM DOES

The TRR Action Team has primary responsibility for organizing and moving the district's TRR efforts forward. The team meets regularly with the goal of accomplishing the following activities:



Individual team members contribute to these activities by:

- Gathering relevant TRR-related information (e.g., teacher data, teacher stories, existing programs and partnerships, available resources)
- Bringing their perspective and insight, based on their position in the community, to reviews of relevant TRR-related information
- Serving as a liaison between the TRR Action Team and the broader community
- Dedicating time and resources (either personal or organizational) to support the completion of planned TRR activities

Defining challenges, gathering information, and identifying solutions make up the core of a needs assessment. See our *How-To Guide: Assessing Needs and Capacities to Inform Teacher Retention & Recruitment Efforts* for practical activities and tools to help your team through this process.

WHO TO INVOLVE IN THE TRR ACTION TEAM

Even when districts recognize the value of an Action Team, it can be difficult to find the time, staffing, and political bandwidth to launch and sustain one amid competing priorities. The most effective Action Teams will have a clear lead organizer with the political and organizational ability to move the work forward. The lead organizer should also be positioned to convene others across the district, such as superintendents, human resource leads, or hired consultants.

Other invested team members who have a diversity of experiences can also help ensure that the Action Team accomplishes its goals. Having an additional five to seven people ensures a manageable range of perspectives to tackle discrete tasks. The team will benefit from the perspectives of both the people in charge of resources and those directly affected by TRR efforts, such as building-level educators or community members. For example, an Action Team may include:

- Fiscal or budget representative
- Human resources representative
- Labor or union representative
- School board member
- Building administrator and/or teacher
- Family or community representative, particularly from Native communities
- Higher education or alternative pathways representative

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

District staff members can use these questions to brainstorm potential TRR Action Team members, such as teachers, principals, or support staff members. The questions may suggest specific individuals, organizations, or general characteristics.

- **Who has been engaged in this work in the past and/or has expressed interest in better teacher recruitment and/or retention?**
- **In our district, who is responsible for …**
  - **Hiring staff (including those who manage partnerships with higher education)?**
  - **Managing staff benefits?**
  - **Collecting and/or maintaining data about teaching staff (e.g., general administration data, staff surveys, exit interviews)?**
- **What teacher perspectives (new to the community, Native teachers, early-career, and late-career) could be better understood?**
- **What local government agencies and/or community groups ensure people's basic needs, such as housing or food, are met?**
- **Whose support is needed to build trust with the community, especially among teaching staff members?**
- **Whose support is needed to ensure that resources, staff, and policies needed for TRR activities are in place?**

HOW TO FOSTER COLLABORATION FOR AN EFFECTIVE TRR ACTION TEAM

An effective TRR Action Team goes beyond getting the right people in the room. Teams need structures and practices to allow them to work together effectively, make progress on plans, and adapt when challenges arise. The table below includes some key, research-based[i] features of collaboration within effective teams and how they might look in practice.

Feature	How it looks in practice
Common vision. Team members have a shared understanding of the issues and how the group is working together to address those issues.	• Intentionally seeking out different perspectives to understand the district's challenges and potential solutions • Having a process for coming to consensus while leaving space to revisit ideas • Doing a crosswalk of each organization or participant's capacities and how they contribute to overall TRR goals or objectives • Reviewing the district's strategic plan and highlighting where and how TRR is prioritized or adjusting the plan to include TRR as a goal

Feature	How it looks in practice
Ongoing communication. Team members share information openly and frequently to facilitate decision making and participation.	• Having an expected cadence and structures for sharing information across the group (e.g., a time for updates in monthly meetings that are logged in the notes, a biweekly round-up sharing progress for the week) • Having a place where important information is housed so people can refer to it as needed (e.g., a shared folder or drive that all members can access) • Defining norms of respectful communication across cultures, both synchronously (i.e., during a meeting) and asynchronously (e.g., via email or text)
Coordinated activities. Team members' work reinforces TRR goals without duplicating efforts.	• Establishing processes for assigning or signing up for work based on each member's strengths and current capacity • Ensuring members understand their roles in a given TRR activity • Mapping how activities and outputs flow into one another and having people responsible for transitions
Regular reflection. The team has access to and reviews data to assess progress and finetune efforts.	• Engaging individuals who have access to data and/or who can support data analysis and reporting in TRR efforts • Setting aside meetings specifically for data review • Conducting a crosswalk of available data • Ensuring that process and outcome metrics are collected

Many of the practices described above reflect how TRR activities are completed and supported behind the scenes. This soft work of building relationships grounded in trust and developed over time through consistency and consensus. TRR Action Teams must attend to practices that foster collaboration, particularly at some critical points in the team development life cycle:

- **When a TRR Action Team is initially established.** New teams can expect an upfront investment in the effort of setting up norms and infrastructure to accommodate participating organizations and individuals. Team members may have histories that inhibit trust, which should be recognized and addressed through strategies like having a skilled, neutral facilitator. Ideally, attention to team dynamics and previous histories happens in the early stages to prevent discouragement.

TIP

Because TRR activities are focused on supporting teachers, TRR Action Team activities will likely follow the school calendar. The start and end points of the school year, quarter, or semester are natural times to check in on whether the group is functioning effectively. Periodic review of stated practices and norms provide the opportunity to decide if they are helpful or need to be adjusted.

- **When new members are onboarded to the TRR Action Team.** New members may benefit from a mentor and/or point person to share information and support relationship building that fosters trust. Most importantly, the teams should rely on guidance documents and formal records so that information is delivered consistently and serves as reminders over time.

The following Quick-Start Guide offers checklists and templates to help you put these foundational practices into action as you build your own TRR Action Team.

Quick-Start Guide to Create Your TRR Action Team

Use the following checklists and templates to establish and move forward with your TRR Action Team. These resources are offered as a starting point for your team to adapt to your district and community needs.

GETTING STARTED

Four actions you can take in the next 1–2 months to begin forming your TRR Action Team:

- Come up with a list of 5–7 people or organizations to invite
  - **Supporting resource.** "Questions to consider" under "Who to involve on the TRR action team," above
  - To narrow down a long list of potential invitees, prioritize a mix of perspectives and people and organizations who are trusted by school staff members and are willing to collaborate
- Set a date and time for your first meeting
  - Give yourself a little room in case some invitees want or need an introductory or informational call to decide if they can come
  - Consider teacher schedules and the school calendar
  - Use scheduling software to find a time that best suits everyone
- Send an outreach email and/or post an invitation flyer
  - **Supporting resources.** Appendix A. Inviting Potential TRR Action Team Members
  - Make sure any outreach clearly states the purpose of the TRR Action Team, the time commitment, and what they might bring as an individual
- Host your first meeting
  - **Supporting resource.** Appendix B. Sample First Meeting Agenda
  - Keep the first meeting simple and focused on introducing the goal of TRR and the potential members to each other

WHAT COMES NEXT

After a first meeting to orient everyone to the purpose of convening a TRR Action Team and introductions, the next few months can be focused on working toward developing a district-level TRR Implementation Plan. Appendix C: Establishing TRR Action Meetings offers some guidance for how to plan meetings, including a suggested four-session schedule and template for agendas. Appendix D: Implementation Plan Template is a fillable document for TRR Action Team plans and next steps in the coming year(s).

Appendix A. Inviting Potential TRR Action Team Members

Outreach strategies can range from formal, one-on-one contact to a general call. The best approach will likely depend on the following factors:

Level of specificity
Do you know a particular person who should join or is it more general?

Existing relationship
Do you have a history with this person or group? Is it positive, negative, or neutral?

Procedures
Is the organization hierarchical? Is formal approval needed?

For example, your invite list might include a program lead that you have worked with on multiple education/community partnerships, your superintendent, and first-year teachers. You may opt for an informal, direct email for the program lead; a formal, direct email to the superintendent and their assistant; and a blurb distributed by principals to their teaching staff.

OUTREACH ESSENTIALS

Any outreach, whether individualized or general, should provide the following information:

- The purpose of the TRR Action Team
- A general sense of time commitment
- Date and time for a first meeting
- Why the individual or organization would be a good fit to join

OUTREACH TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- **Allow for multiple touchpoints.** This is especially true for new partners who don't have an existing connection with the district. It might take a couple of tries to get connected to the right person. A one-on-one introductory call can give people the chance to ask questions and get more information, which can be especially helpful when engaging high-profile individuals with limited time (e.g., a superintendent).

- **Be flexible if possible.** A person with an essential perspective or access to resources may have limited capacity to be part of a TRR Action Team. In this case, it might be helpful to offer more specific, limited scopes of engagement with the TRR Action Team than that of a core team member. Additionally, if the leader of an organization is not available or is constrained, suggest another representative as an alternative. Flexibility in engagement can build goodwill for the future and can often be worked out in a one-on-one call.

SAMPLE INVITATION EMAIL

Subject: Invitation to Join a Team to Improve Teacher Retention & Recruitment in [District]

Dear [Recipient Name],

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to invite you to participate in an important community effort focused on strengthening teacher retention and recruitment in [District].

We are convening a team of educators, community leaders, partners, and collaborators or shareholders from both inside and outside the school system who share a common goal: to support, attract, and sustain a thriving educator workforce. By bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise, we aim to share best practices, identify challenges, and develop actionable strategies that will make a meaningful impact for both current and future teachers.

Your insights and experience would be highly valued in this collaborative effort because [insert specific reason this individual or organization would be a good fit, e.g., their expertise, past partnership with the district, or unique perspective on the community].

This team will meet [insert frequency, e.g., monthly/quarterly], with the initial meeting scheduled for [insert date and time]. Meetings will provide an opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussion, align priorities, and contribute to solutions that benefit our schools and students.

We hope you will consider joining us in this important work. Please let us know your interest by [insert RSVP date], or feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Thank you for your commitment to education and for considering this opportunity to make a difference in our community.

Warm regards,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Title/Organization]

[Your Contact Information]

Appendix B. Sample First Meeting Agenda

The main goal of the first meeting should be to introduce people to the concept of a TRR Action Team, introduce attendees to each other, and come to some initial consensus for communicating and continuing to meet.

TEACHER RETENTION & RECRUITMENT ACTION TEAM INITIAL MEETING AGENDA

Meeting Objectives

By the end of this meeting, participants will:

1. Understand why we are establishing a Teacher Retention & Recruitment (TRR) Action Team in [district]
2. Get to know other individuals and entities that might engage in TRR efforts
3. Decide on a cadence for meeting and initial norms for working on a team together

Agenda

Duration	Agenda Item
5 minutes	Welcome & Purpose
15 minutes	**Introductions.** Share your name, organization/role, and your connection to TRR (e.g., what brought you here, what you hope might change).
15 minutes	**Team norms.** What are some practices and/or ways of working together that we want to try to uphold, especially around communication and decision-making?
15 minutes	**Open discussion.** What are some of our key observations about TRR in our district right now? If there have been similar efforts, what are some lessons learned?
10 minutes	Close & next steps
30 minutes	Open meet & greet time

Important Reminders

If you have any questions, please contact [District TRR Action Team Lead], [email]

Appendix C. Establishing TRR Action Team Meetings

A core part of the TRR Action Team is regularly meeting to support continuous engagement in efforts and to coordinate activities. The following tables provide sample scope and sequences to begin establishing a new TRR Action Team and to continue through the steps to developing a district TRR Implementation Plan.

The options below are neither exhaustive nor the only way to approach launching TRR activities. District leads should adjust their meeting scope and sequence with consideration of the following:

- Any past collaboration efforts directly related to TRR or tied to the education sector
- Existing infrastructure, including existing meetings scheduled and/or groups that can support convening efforts around TRR
- District leads' personal facilitation strengths

SUGGESTED MEETING SCHEDULE—OPTION 1 (EXPANDED TIMELINE)

This meeting schedule is for TRR Action Teams in districts that may prefer shorter meetings. This meeting structure may be useful if the district has an existing committee structure that is being leveraged for TRR efforts. The schedule is written to accommodate 60–90-minute meetings. Assuming a monthly or bi-monthly cadence with one meeting per session, a TRR Action Team could develop a district TRR Implementation Plan in 2–4 months.

Session	Session Description and Objectives	Suggested Agenda
0	**Introductory Q&A sessions.** These 30-45-minute calls can be held one-on-one or as informal informational sessions and serve as a recruitment tool to encourage participation in a TRR Action Team.	• Team introductions • Quick overview of TRR Action Team—why it is being convened and anticipated time commitment and logistics • Open Q&A from attendees

Session	Session Description and Objectives	Suggested Agenda

1	**Formal launch of TRR Action Team.** This initial meeting should help people understand TRR in the district, provide an initial introduction to the TRR Playbook, and offer space for people to get to know each other and articulate norms for interacting.	• Welcome and outline district's perspective on strengthening TRR and hopes for convening a TRR Action Team
		• Overview of TRR Playbook—what it is and how the district envisions using it to support its TRR efforts
		• Attendee introductions, including what brought you here and what you hope to change
		• Initial discussion about practices and norms that can foster trust among partners, including:
		  • Strengths/Weakness/Opportunities/Threats analysis in relation to the partners gathered and TRR overall
		  • Suggest and approve principles and/or norms for discussion and sharing perspectives
		• Open networking

2	**Understanding TRR in the district, part 1.** This meeting can focus on gathering and interpreting data related to TRR to understand who is coming into and staying in the district, periods of high entry and exit, and other patterns. See *How-To Guide: Assessing Needs and Capacities to Inform Teacher Retention & Recruitment Efforts* (Section 1: Assessing needs across the six essential areas of Alaska's TRR Playbook) for support.	• Icebreaker
		• Defining areas of interest and/or concern
		• Inventory of available data sources
		  • *Suggested prework: Ask participants to bring quantitative and qualitative data they have related to teacher experiences*
		• Data review for initial patterns
		• Root cause analysis and identification of additional lines of questioning
		  • *Suggested follow-up work: Ask participants to see if other data are available and/or to check in with constituents about initial interpretations*

3	**Understanding TRR in the district, part 2.** This meeting can focus on gathering information about existing capacity to address some of the needs elevated in the previous session. See *How-To Guide: Assessing Needs and Capacities to Inform Teacher Retention & Recruitment Efforts* (Section 2: Assessing district capacity to respond to needs) for support.	• Icebreaker • Recap findings and updates on any follow-up work from previous session • Community mapping of resources, initiatives, and organizational priorities/efforts • Discussion to link available resources, initiatives, and organizational priorities/efforts to the issues identified by the needs assessment

Session	Session Description and Objectives	Suggested Agenda
4	**Defining goals and objectives.** This meeting will focus on more clearly articulating the vision of the TRR Action Team for the next 3–5 years and on short-term objectives (i.e., can be completed in the next year).	• Icebreaker • Share throughlines across needs and capacities assessment sessions • Develop a goal or mission statement that describes what impact the team wants to make in the next 3–5 years, based on the needs and capacities assessment sessions (including potentially filling in existing gaps in TRR data and/or improving quality and consistency of existing TRR data) • Create up to four SMART objectives that can be completed in the next 12 months (or next school year) and that can lead to realization of the overall vision
5	**Prioritizing actions and developing teams.** This meeting will focus on delving into the actions described in the TRR Playbook and deciding what actions the district team wants to take to move toward its goals. As much as possible, the meeting can also be a space to begin articulating which individuals and entities will work together.	• Icebreaker • Review vision and objectives Presentation of 16 actions within the TRR Playbook • *Suggested prework: Review and/or skim through the TRR Playbook* • Plot actions based on level of effort needed to complete action, potential for impact based on stated short-term objectives, and what is known about existing capacity • Select 2–3 priority actions to work on for the next year (most likely at least those with potential for high impact and reasonable level of effort) • Break down actions into smaller activities and begin developing timelines and work plans

SUGGESTED MEETING SCHEDULE—OPTION 2 (CONDENSED TIMELINE)

This schedule is for districts where travel and/or schedules may make convening TRR Action Team members in short bursts challenging. It is also a good format for generating momentum quickly. This kind of schedule requires the primary convener of the TRR Action Team to do some prework by gathering existing sources of data. This schedule assumes a two-day convening with each day encompassing approximately 4–6 hours of work time.

Day	Day Description and Objectives	Suggested Agenda
1	This day is focused on level setting and getting a sense of the current issues and potential resources for TRR efforts. Core objectives for this day include ensuring all team members know each other, setting norms for engaging in the group, and reviewing existing data and resources related to TRR. Depending on time, an additional objective might include coming to consensus on the key challenges to be addressed as part of TRR efforts.	• Icebreaker • Review objectives and agenda for the day • Introductions • Setting of norms for engagement • Overview of TRR in district and TRR Playbook • Needs and capacities assessment • Root cause analysis • Optional discussion about prioritized issues (can be structured as Day 1 close out) • Optional networking time
2	This day is focused on forward thinking and drafting the district's TRR Implementation Plan. Core objectives for this day include synthesizing analyses and reflections from Day 1 into a cohesive vision of TRR implementation for the district and setting up the structures for ongoing collaboration. Depending on time, additional objectives might include developing an external communications plan or identifying additional groups to engage before finalizing efforts.	• Icebreaker/check-in • Reflections on Day 1 (either asking if people's perspectives on what issues to prioritize have shifted or having a starting discussion on which issues to prioritize) • Developing an overarching vision statement and short-term objectives for coming year • Brainstorming activities to work toward short-term objectives, using the TRR Playbook as a starting point • Refining activity ideas and developing a final slate of activities • Filling out implementation plan (either using the template or district's own resource) that connects activities to goals and provides basic information about who will work on different activities • Set up a plan for following up and maintaining contact about TRR activities as the team begins work • Optional: Develop an external communications plan • Optional: Identify other potential partners or communities who need to be engaged before plan is finalized • Close out

The agenda templates on the following page complement the meeting sequence table above. Agendas help participants orient themselves to meetings and processes. They also serve an important record-keeping function that can support continuity as TRR Action Teams change over time. The template below is an external-facing agenda, designed to be sent to the full team. However, it may also be helpful for team leaders to create an internal-facing agenda that outlines key ideas, resources, and roles for facilitating team members.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources may be helpful as districts' TRR Action Teams transition from developing their district TRR Implementation Plan to executing it:

- **Center on Great Teachers & Leaders Resource Library (American Institutes for Research)**
- **About Working Conditions (REL Northwest)**
- **A Toolkit for School Systems to Advance Comprehensive School Employee Wellness (Child Trends)**

TEACHER RETENTION & RECRUITMENT ACTION TEAM AGENDA TEMPLATE

Meeting Objectives

By the end of this meeting, the TRR Action Team will recommend:

1. An objective related to new information people will learn
2. An objective related to something people will reflect on or a decision to be made
3. An objective that moves TRR work forward

Agenda

Time	Agenda Item
X:XX am/pm	Welcome and Icebreaker
X:XX am/pm	Activity 1
X:XX am/pm	Activity 2
X:XX am/pm	Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Important Reminders

- Name of TRR Action Team Lead/Coordinator, email@institution
- Link and instructions to any pre-work

Appendix D. Creating a TRR Implementation Plan

An important goal of the TRR Action Team is to create and execute a TRR Implementation Plan to drive the work. At its core, an implementation plan is a reference document for the TRR Action Team and others that describes the district's overall goals and objectives around TRR and the actions that will be taken to meet those objectives. Depending on the district, the implementation plan may also need review or approval from the school board or other governing body before implementation.

Alaska's TRR Playbook highlights 16 recommended strategies to improve TRR efforts. This can be a starting place for districts to generate ideas.

Implementation plans help make discussions concrete by communicating the "what, who, when, and how" of the different activities the TRR Action Team will complete to work toward its goals. Multiple templates exist for action plans, but they generally include the following components:

- An articulation of the goals and SMART objectives for the work being accomplished
- A list of strategies or activities that will be undertaken, usually connected with a specific objective
- Details about the activities, including subtasks, people, and resources involved in making the activity happen, timeline, and implementation considerations
- Importantly, a communication plan identifying key touchpoints for sharing processes and gathering feedback from those outside the core team (e.g., school board, district leadership, educators, families)

Some implementation plans also include specific metrics related to processes and outcomes to support active reflection on progress. Our needs and capacities assessment resource can be a valuable resource for these metrics. TRR Action Teams can either use the implementation planning template provided on the following page, pick another plan template (see "Other Implementation Plan Templates" box), or develop their own. However, you choose to make the plan, TRR Action Teams should confirm that the format meets these two conditions:

- Teams can easily understand what they are doing, when activities are happening, and who is in charge
- Teams can easily update this information when things are completed and/or conditions change

OTHER IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TEMPLATES

Many of these templates also offer specific facilitation guides and/or reflection questions to support filling in a plan template.

- **Constructing an Effective Action Plan (WestEd)**
- **SMART Goal and Action Planning Template (Iowa Department of Education)**
- **Tools: Developing an Action Plan (Community Tool Box, University of Kansas)**

TRR Action Teams should plan on working through the implementation plan over the course of a couple of different meetings. It can take time to settle on priorities, especially when grounding those priorities in data and community feedback.

[District] Teacher Retention & Recruitment Team Implementation Plan Template

This template can be filled out over the course of initial planning sessions and should be updated regularly (e.g., monthly, quarterly, or annually).

GOAL STATEMENT

Within the next 3–5 years, [District] will … [Describe what will be different for your district through stronger teacher retention and recruitment. Examples might include reduced turnover in teaching positions, reduced vacancies, or longer average tenure.]

OBJECTIVES FOR SY20XX–XX

By the end of the next school year, our district will have …

1. [SMART objective 1 that describes an improvement in teacher experience]
    a. *Data driving this objective:* [What data or findings from your needs assessment point to this as a priority?]
2. [SMART objective 2 that describes an improvement in teacher experience] (optional, add as needed)
    a. *Data driving this objective:* [What data or findings from your needs assessment point to this as a priority?]

PRIORITIZED ACTIONS

To work toward our objectives, we are focused on the following actions from Alaska's TRR Playbook:

1. Action 1
2. Action 2 (optional, add as needed)

Action 1 Key Information

Lead: [Name], [email]

Additional members: [Name, email]

Associated objectives: [denote which objectives this action addresses]

Tentative timeline

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Subtasks				
Milestones				

Needed resources:

Action 2 Key Information (optional, add as needed)

Lead: [Name], [email]

Additional members: [Name, email]

Associated objectives: [denote which objectives this action addresses]

Tentative timeline

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Subtasks				
Milestones				

Needed resources:

Endnotes

[i] These features are informed by the following models: Tuckman's Stages of Group Development, the Partnership Life Cycle, the Collective Impact Framework, and Wilder Collaboration Inventory.

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