

HANOVER RESEARCH

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE IN PRACTICE

Prepared for the Overdeck Family Foundation | Qualitative Analysis

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METHODOLOGY

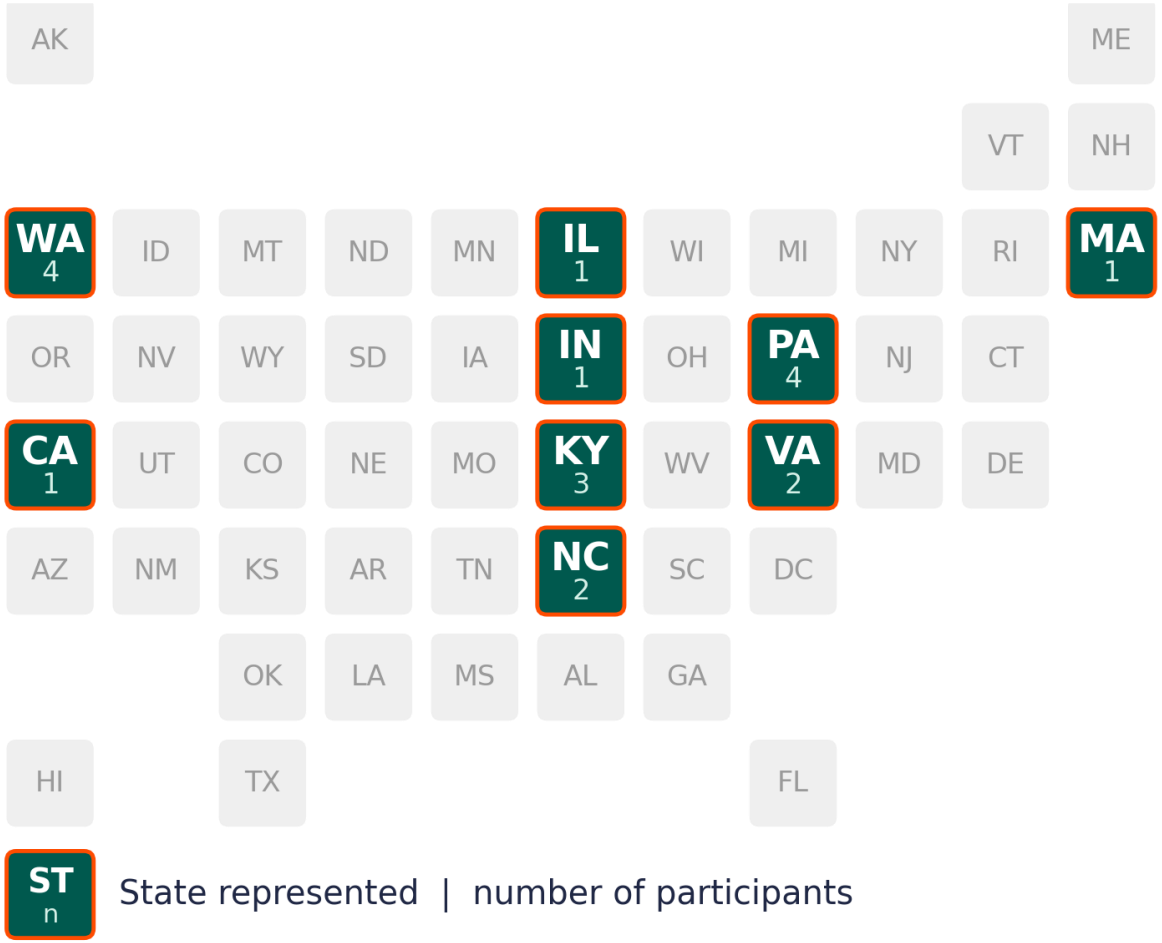


This report draws on focus groups and in-depth interviews with 20 state and district leaders across 10 states and implementation stages: 6 state education agency (SEA) leaders and 14 district leaders.

Note: This qualitative report synthesizes participant experiences and recurring patterns. It establishes what participants are experiencing, not what works. It does not evaluate a single model, define universal best practices, or produce statistically representative findings.

PARTICIPANT GEOGRAPHY

20 participants: 6 state agency leaders, 14 district leaders. Nine states are shown; one participant's state is withheld at their request.



PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The Overdeck Family Foundation (Overdeck) partnered with Hanover Research to understand how state and district leaders are implementing, operationalizing, and measuring Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) frameworks. Building on Hanover's national scan, this study captures leaders' perspectives on alignment between state guidance and district practice. It also identifies supports needed to strengthen implementation, measurement, and reporting. Findings will inform Overdeck's Future Readiness strategy, partnerships, and place-based grantmaking.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are SEA and district leaders in selected states currently implementing and measuring their Portrait of a Graduate frameworks, including the use of indicators, performance tasks, portfolios, rubrics, surveys, and administrative data?
2. How do SEA and district leaders perceive the alignment between state-level PoG guidance (competencies, indicators, reporting expectations) and district-level frameworks, practices, and local priorities?
3. What supports, tools, and partnerships do SEA and district leaders identify as most needed to strengthen PoG implementation and measurement, and where do they see opportunities for innovation and future investment?

RECOMMENDATIONS (1/2)



1

Invest in shared measurement infrastructure. Participants consistently identify competency measurement as one of the most significant barriers to advancing PoG implementation. While districts are collecting evidence through rubrics, portfolios, and performance tasks, many continue to struggle with consistency, calibration, and reporting. Shared measurement resources and evidence frameworks could help reduce duplication while increasing confidence in how future-ready competencies are assessed across contexts. Participants' experiences suggest this remains one of the most important opportunities for field-level investment.

2

Strengthen the conditions that sustain implementation. Participants frequently associate implementation progress with dedicated leadership, educator support, coaching, and protected collaboration time. Districts further along in implementation often describe intentional structures that help maintain momentum beyond the initial launch phase. Rather than focusing on new PoG development efforts, future investments may have the greatest impact when they help districts build organizational capacity needed to sustain and scale work already underway.

RECOMMENDATIONS (2/2)



3

Expand access to practical models of future-ready learning. Participants describe challenges translating broad competencies into classroom practices and meaningful demonstrations of student learning. Leaders express a need for concrete examples that illustrate what future-ready competencies look like in instruction, student work, and assessment. Field-accessible resources, exemplars, and implementation models could help make these competencies more actionable for educators while reducing the burden of local development. Such efforts may accelerate the spread of promising practices across diverse implementation contexts.

4

Cultivate a stronger learning ecosystem around PoG implementation. Participants describe tackling similar implementation and measurement challenges while often working independently. Leaders express interest in learning from peers, sharing resources, and adapting approaches developed in other states and districts. Stronger connections among practitioners, researchers, intermediary organizations, and system leaders could help accelerate learning across the field while reducing duplication of effort. Participants suggest that shared learning structures may be as valuable as new tools or frameworks.



THE PORTRAIT IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY

THE POG IMPLEMENTATION LIFECYCLE



WHERE PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS ARE

Participants generally describe vision as established and momentum as thinning through operationalization and measurement; they less often cite buy-in as the primary constraint.

"When we initiated our Portrait of a Graduate, we also set up a performance rubric, in thinking about what all of those components would look like on an early, developing, proficient, and exemplar level." – District Leader

WHAT LEADERS SAY IS DIFFICULT

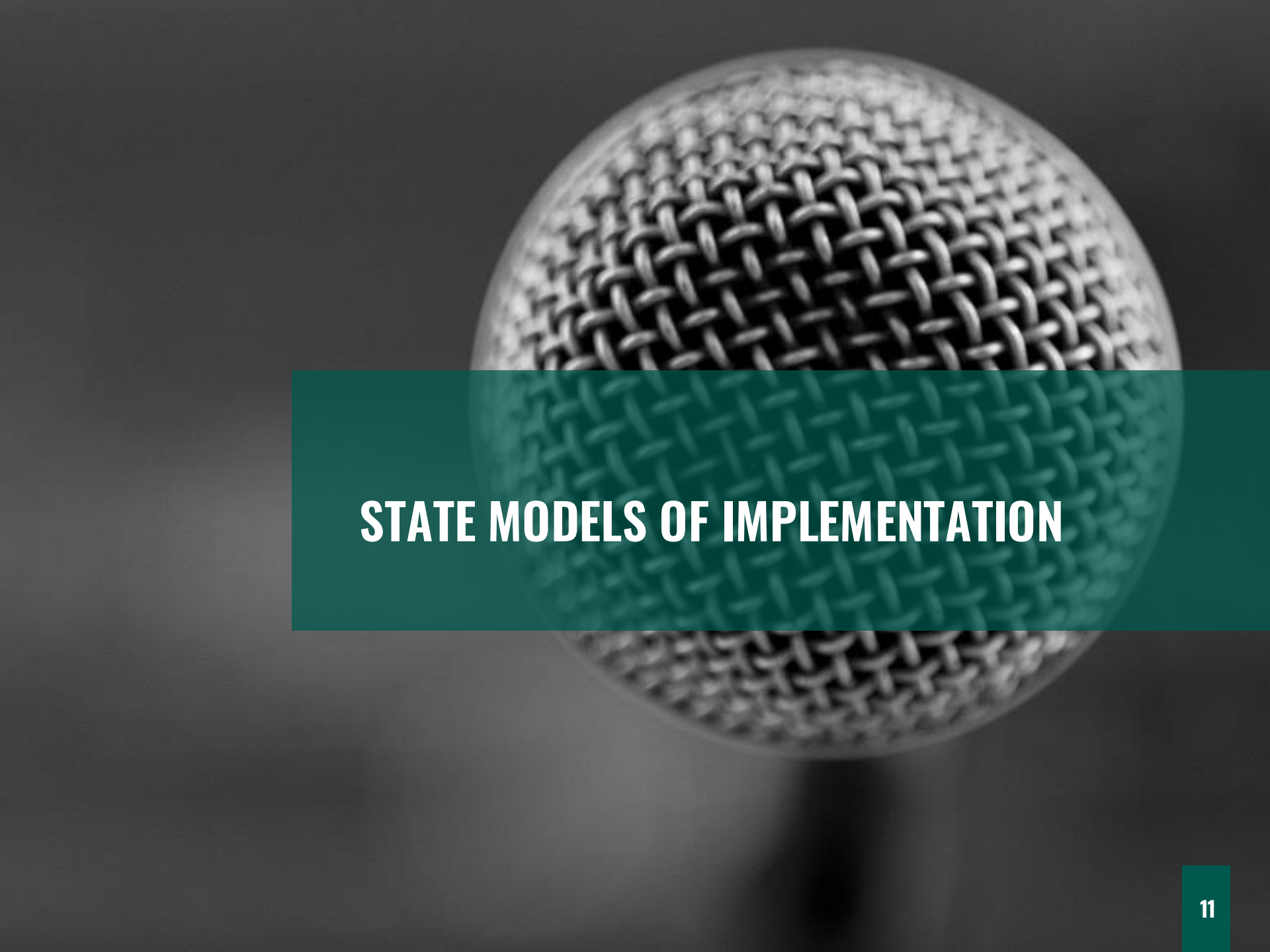
"The creation of the portrait was easy. The implementation of it and the sustainability of it is a lot harder." — District Leader

"This year, they worked on what do those outcomes look like. Now that we've got the four divisions, now that we know what goes under each one, now we're kind of getting a rubric together, and it's mostly done, but each of the four sections now has a rubric." — District Leader



Across interviews, leaders rarely identify vision or buy-in as the hardest aspects. They more often cite measurement and time: building usable rubrics, calibrating judgment, and protecting planning time. Participants affirm the PoG while describing the daily work of evidencing it as heavier than anticipated.

These accounts suggest implementation strain shifts from securing buy-in to sustaining day-to-day measurement.



STATE MODELS OF IMPLEMENTATION

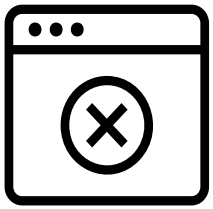
EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXTS

These four contexts illustrate distinct approaches to PoG implementation that participants describe across the sample. Each reflects governance and capacity, not performance.

State-Led	Hybrid	Plan-Integrated	District-Led
North Carolina	**Kentucky**	**Illinois & Indiana**	**Pennsylvania**
Participants associate state alignment and guidance with faster coherence.	Participants describe state direction with local adaptation, balancing coherence and ownership.	Participants describe PoG integration within district strategic plans as underway.	Participants describe district-led design with limited state scaffolding.

MORE STATE DIRECTION →→→ MORE DISTRICT AUTONOMY

STATE-ALIGNED: NORTH CAROLINA



Participating North Carolina leaders associate stronger state alignment with shared language, lower local burden, and faster coherence. One district leader described embedding durable skills directly into school improvement planning expectations, illustrating how state-level frameworks can become part of existing district processes rather than a separate initiative. Leaders also emphasize local ownership and the need to adapt a state-defined frame to classroom practice.

Benefits participants associate with alignment: shared language, faster coherence, lower local burden

"We've worked so diligently several years ago to embed those durable skills within school improvement planning expectations." – District Leader

What leaders are working on next: local ownership and measurement guidance

"We're constantly working to norm or calibrate how we utilize those rubrics." – District Leader

HYBRID & PLAN-INTEGRATED: KENTUCKY AND ILLINOIS

Participants describe two routes to durability without a full state mandate. A Kentucky participant valued statewide expectations while stressing district flexibility to tailor competencies and implementation to local students and community priorities. In Illinois, one leader described using the strategic plan as the implementation vehicle—linking PoG competencies to staffing, budget, and accountability rather than treating them as a separate initiative.



Kentucky: state direction and support; districts adapt locally



Illinois: districts integrate the PoG into the strategic plan



Shared participant priority: common calibration to support comparability

"When you're trying to make an assessment framework for an entire state…it's certainly not individualized to the extent that it should be, and I think that's where something like Profile of a Learner really fits in, because you can tailor it to individual students and to individual communities." – District Leader

DISTRICT-DRIVEN: PENNSYLVANIA

Participating Pennsylvania leaders characterize the context as largely district-driven, with districts designing local PoG frameworks, rubrics, and measurement approaches in the absence of a statewide frame. Their accounts convey strong local ownership alongside implementation, use, and sustainability challenges. These experiences suggest that coordination challenges extend beyond any single district, even where local ownership is strong.



What leaders seek: coordination and continuity support

★★★

Strength participants perceive: local innovation and ownership

"In Pennsylvania, we don't have anything… guidance from the state on this project. It's been very much grassroots here in Pennsylvania, with organizations like Remake Learning, we have a foundation in western PA called Grable, who helps support a lot of this work." – District Leader

STATE AND DISTRICT LEADERS DESCRIBE DIFFERENT CHALLENGES

STATE LEADERS FOCUS ON

- Establishing common frameworks and language
- Balancing coherence with local flexibility
- Providing guidance, resources, and policy support
- Encouraging adoption across diverse districts
- Supporting implementation at scale

DISTRICT LEADERS FOCUS ON

- Translating competencies into classroom practice
- Building common language among staff and families
- Developing rubrics and performance indicators
- Collecting and managing evidence
- Sustaining implementation amid competing priorities

KEY INSIGHT

State-level partners may be best positioned to support common language, policy alignment, and shared infrastructure, while district-level partners may need more direct support for classroom translation, educator capacity, evidence collection, and sustainability routines.



PATTERNS IN ADVANCED IMPLEMENTATION

CAPACITY PATTERNS ACROSS PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS

Several participants contrasted districts where PoG work was added to existing responsibilities with districts that employed dedicated directors, coaches, or implementation teams. One superintendent described carrying the work alongside multiple existing priorities.



Participants from earlier-stage districts often describe adding the work to existing roles and relying on individual champions.

Participants associate greater capacity with stronger measurement support. Those from smaller districts often describe carrying the work alongside existing roles.

Participants in districts further along commonly describe directors, coaches, and cross-functional teams.

CAPACITY CHALLENGES DIFFER BY DISTRICT SIZE

SMALLER DISTRICTS

- Easier to build shared vision
- Faster community engagement
- Strong local relationships
- Limited staffing and resources
- Reliance on key champions

LARGER DISTRICTS

- Easier to build formal systems
- More implementation infrastructure
- Dedicated teams and specialists
- Greater coordination challenges
- Risk of inconsistent implementation

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SUGGEST

Small systems often need turnkey resources and implementation support.

Large systems often need calibration, coherence, and consistency mechanisms.

KEY INSIGHT

Across district sizes, participants describe a capacity tradeoff: smaller systems may have stronger relational coherence but fewer staff to carry the work, while larger systems may have more infrastructure but greater need for consistency, calibration, and coordination.

DEDICATED ROLES IN LATER-STAGE IMPLEMENTATION

Among participants, districts further along commonly use three dedicated roles.

Innovation / Portrait Director	Competency Coaches	Cross-Functional Team
Owns strategy, sequencing, and cross-department alignment.	Builds teacher capacity to assess competencies and calibrate scoring.	Connects curriculum, assessment, data, and communications around the PoG.

WHY IT MATTERS

Across interviews, participants rarely pointed first to platforms or tools. They more often described dedicated leadership and coaching as the conditions that allowed implementation to continue beyond initial launch.



THE MEASUREMENT CHALLENGE

THE MEASUREMENT FRONTIER

Among participants, vision is generally established; measurement systems are still maturing.

Across interviews, measurement emerges as a shared implementation challenge.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAY IS NEEDED NEXT

- Building Rubrics
- Calibrating Scoring
- Capturing Evidence
- Reporting Competencies

WHY IT MATTERS

Participants frequently describe measurement as a point where progress slows. Their accounts suggest this is a shared implementation bottleneck rather than an isolated district problem.

CURRENT MEASUREMENT APPROACHES

Participants describe authentic tasks and portfolios as common approaches and associate confidence in results with rubric quality, calibration, and staff capacity.

APPROACH	HOW IT IS USED	CHALLENGES
Performance tasks & capstones	Authentic projects and presentations to surface applied competencies.	Variable local scoring and limited state aggregation.
Rubrics	Turns broad competencies into observable criteria.	Uneven use and participants cite time and staffing as calibration constraints.
Portfolios & evidence	Combines artifacts to show growth over time.	Inconsistent storage, scoring, and aggregation.
Self-assessment & surveys	Supports reflection and track dispositions or SEL.	Supplements to other evidence, not standalone proof.

WHERE PARTICIPANTS SEE INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

1. Rubrics + exemplars
2. Calibration protocols
3. Integrated e-portfolios
4. Validated measures

KEY INSIGHT

Participant accounts suggest the larger gap lies not in identifying evidence, but in interpreting, scoring, and reporting it consistently.

RUBRICS AND CALIBRATION

"There's rubrics that really outline if a student is demonstrating collaboration. Well, what does that look like? How would you evaluate if a student is doing something that demonstrates that?" – State Leader

"Sometimes I go and I observe these [student portrait] presentations, and I've actually had teachers ask me, 'How should I score this? Because it's not really what I wanted.'" – District Leader

Some participants characterize teachers as the measurement instrument because rubric scores and portfolio judgments depend on teacher interpretation. Leaders describe rubrics as more common than calibration and say similar work may receive different scores across classrooms.

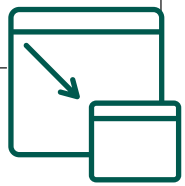
Participants in districts further along describe:

- Protected time for collaborative scoring
- Shared anchor exemplars
- Regular calibration cycles
- Shared interpretation and trust in teacher judgment

What this suggests: confidence in competency evidence depends on shared interpretation, not simply on having a rubric.

PORTFOLIOS AND BODIES OF EVIDENCE

Leaders describe portfolios as authentic evidence of competencies over time—and difficult to operationalize at scale. What this suggests: maintaining usable evidence across grades is part of the measurement challenge.



***Participant priority**: shared platforms and protocols that allow portfolios to travel across grades and districts.*

***Friction participants describe**: labor-intensive storage, tagging, and review; insufficient tooling.*

"I helped develop the systems for documenting and maintaining the portfolios and making sure that they were transferred grade to grade as the students progressed from junior high to the senior year." – District Leader

WHAT REMAINS DIFFICULT TO MEASURE

Participants note that many tools capture a moment rather than growth over time.

"There's rubrics that really outline if a student is demonstrating collaboration. Well, what does that look like? How would you evaluate if a student is doing something that demonstrates that?" – State Leader

Participants question cross-classroom confidence in scores when calibration is limited.

Participants perceive self-reports as limited and observation as difficult to scale.

Leaders commonly describe durable, transferable competencies as easy to name but difficult to score reliably across contexts. What this suggests: the measurement challenge centers on consistent interpretation across settings, not simply on defining competencies.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS WANT NEXT

Cross-district networks to compare approaches and adapt lessons to local context.

Participants prioritize adaptability, not prescription.

Shared, validated rubrics and competency definitions they do not have to build alone.

Calibration protocols and portfolio platforms that work across grades and districts.

Taken together: *The opportunity areas that follow synthesize participants' requests for shared measurement, learning, and infrastructure that remain adaptable to local context.*

"When I say we partner with other schools, we then invite another school to send in some of their leadership so that we're constantly working to norm or calibrate how we utilize those rubrics." – District Leader



OPPORTUNITIES FOR OVERDECK

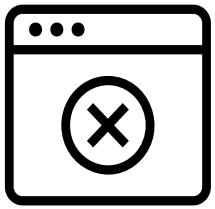
PARTICIPANT PRIORITIES



- **Implementation infrastructure, not more vision.** Participants consistently report that creating a PoG is easier than sustaining it. As a result, participants most often describe a need for tools, systems, and supports that help translate competencies into instruction, assessment, and long-term practice.
- **Capacity that sustains.** Participants from smaller and earlier-stage districts frequently describe PoG work being carried alongside existing responsibilities, while those further along more often describe dedicated leadership and coaching roles.
- **Connectivity across the field.** Participants describe districts solving similar implementation and measurement challenges independently. Shared resources, networks, and common approaches could reduce duplication across contexts.

Participants' experiences suggest four potential areas for investment: measurement infrastructure, implementation capacity, cross-district learning networks, and competency evidence systems.

MEASUREMENT



Participants across contexts describe shared rubrics, calibration methods, and scoring protocols as potential ways to strengthen measurement quality, and many characterize assessment as a less mature aspect of PoG implementation and a priority for external support.

At the field level, an intermediary or research partner could advance this work over a three- to five-year period, with adoption of shared rubrics, rather than independent development, serving as the participant-informed signal of progress.

***Potential outcome participants anticipate**: competency data used with greater confidence*

***What it can fund**: shared rubric banks, calibration training, reliability studies*

"An A in, you know, school A, on paper, would be comparable to an A in school B, but they may not necessarily be the same." – District Leader

CAPACITY INVESTMENT HYPOTHESES

Dedicated implementation roles

Hypothesis: funding dedicated leads may improve continuity in early-stage and lower-capacity districts.

Leadership fellowships

Hypothesis: cross-district cohorts may develop and retain implementation leaders.

Teacher-facing coaching

Hypothesis: coaching may build assessment and calibration capacity closest to practice.



PARTICIPANT-INFORMED HYPOTHESIS | Pair tools with 2–3 years of capacity support, then test whether adoption, educator practice, and dedicated roles persist beyond funding.

NETWORKS

Four ways participants say networks can support shared learning

01 Communities of practice

Participants suggest communities of practice connecting districts with similar measurement challenges.

02 Convenings

Participants suggest convenings could connect isolated pilots and support shared learning.

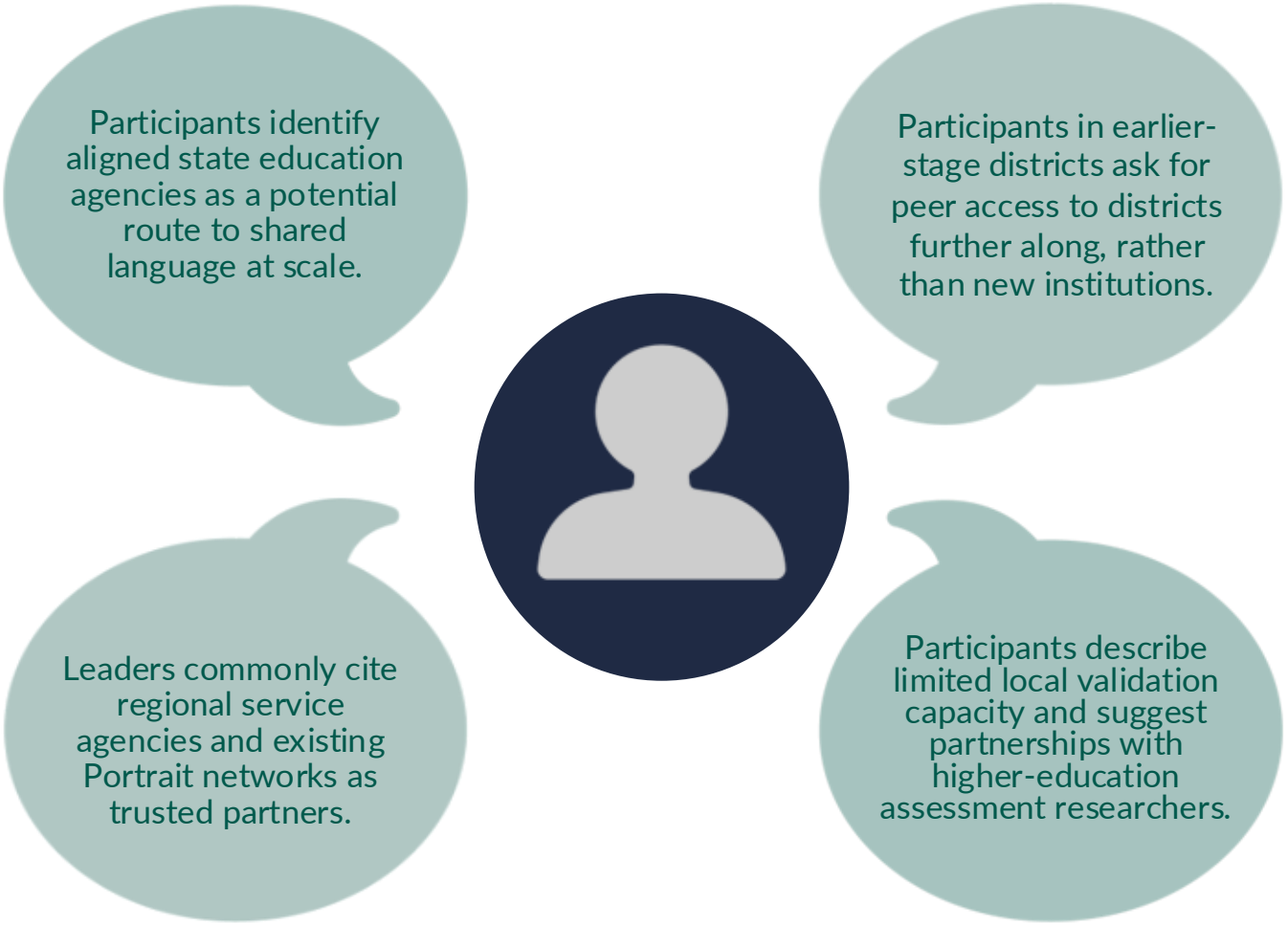
03 Cross-state exchanges

Leaders express interest in cross-state exchanges comparing state-led, hybrid, and district-led models.

04 Shared repositories

Participants propose shared repositories with implementation exemplars across curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

PARTNERSHIP LANDSCAPE



DATA SYSTEMS

Participants describe competency evidence as spread across LMSs, spreadsheets, and disconnected portfolio systems, and express interest in a shared approach to defining, storing, and reporting competency attainment.

"Our secondary team would be like, 'You're messing with my grade pass back from Canvas? Like, what are you doing? Like, you're gonna make me restructure everything for what?'" – District Leader

PARTICIPANT PRIORITY: more portable competency evidence.

Transcript integration



Common data model



Portfolio platforms



Interoperable systems so student evidence travels across grades and districts.

A RESEARCH AGENDA

Three questions remain beyond the evidence in this study

01	**Reliable scoring**	Open measurement-science question: How can dispositions and transferable competencies be scored reliably across contexts? *Participant accounts suggest tooling and calibration could improve cross-classroom comparability and tracking of growth over time.*
02	**Student experience**	Absent from this study: Participants do not describe how students perceive or use competency evidence.
03	**Cost and outcomes**	Also unaddressed: cost of implementation, and whether PoG implementation improves student outcomes.



WHAT PARTICIPANTS STILL NEED

NEED #1: MEASUREMENT CONFIDENCE

Participants describe evidence as available but confidence as uneven. They seek shared criteria, common interpretation, and systems that make competency evidence usable across classrooms and over time.

Shared Criteria	Common Interpretation	Usable Evidence
Observable competency indicators Shared rubrics and definitions Clear performance levels Low-burden use in practice	Anchor examples of student work Collaborative scoring time Calibration across classrooms Confidence in teacher judgment	Portfolios and evidence systems Growth visible across grades Consistent reporting Evidence districts can act on

WHAT PARTICIPANTS NEED

Not simply more evidence, but greater confidence that competency evidence is interpreted and reported consistently.

NEED #2: IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

Participants associate implementation progress with educator time, coaching, dedicated leadership, and ongoing learning. They describe capacity strain as recurring across contexts—not as a one-time launch challenge.

Protected Time	Teacher Coaching	Dedicated Leadership	Ongoing Learning
Make room for the work	**Build practice close to classrooms**	**Coordinate across functions**	**Sustain beyond launch**
Participants describe planning, scoring, and collaboration time as scarce.	Participants seek ongoing support to translate competencies into instruction and assessment.	Participants associate named roles with stronger continuity and momentum.	Participants want professional learning that persists through turnover and competing priorities.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS PRIORITIZE →→→ Protected educator time, teacher-facing coaching, dedicated implementation leadership, and sustainable professional learning.

NEED #3: SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE



- **Fragile momentum.** Participants describe grant-funded roles and individual champions as vulnerable to turnover or funding changes.
- **Funding horizon.** Participants suggest short cycles can make it harder to establish routines and retain implementation capacity.
- **Shared infrastructure.** Participants seek evidence systems and reusable resources that reduce local reinvention.
- **What participants still need.** Funding pathways, shared tools, peer access, and structures designed to survive personnel changes.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES SUGGEST

Across states and implementation contexts, participants rarely question the value of PoG work. Instead, they describe a common challenge: translating a shared vision into sustainable instructional, measurement, and reporting practices. Participant experiences suggest that many districts are moving beyond PoG development and into a phase that requires stronger implementation infrastructure.

Measurement remains the next frontier

Participants describe challenges creating comparable evidence of competency growth. Districts use rubrics, portfolios, and performance tasks, but still seek consistent scoring and reporting.

Capacity sustains implementation

Participants link progress to dedicated leadership, educator support, coaching, and protected time. Districts further along describe ownership structures and staff responsible for sustaining the work.

Shared infrastructure reduces local burden

Participants develop measurement approaches, implementation resources, and competency evidence systems independently while seeking peer learning. Shared resources and learning opportunities may reduce duplication and support adaptation across contexts.

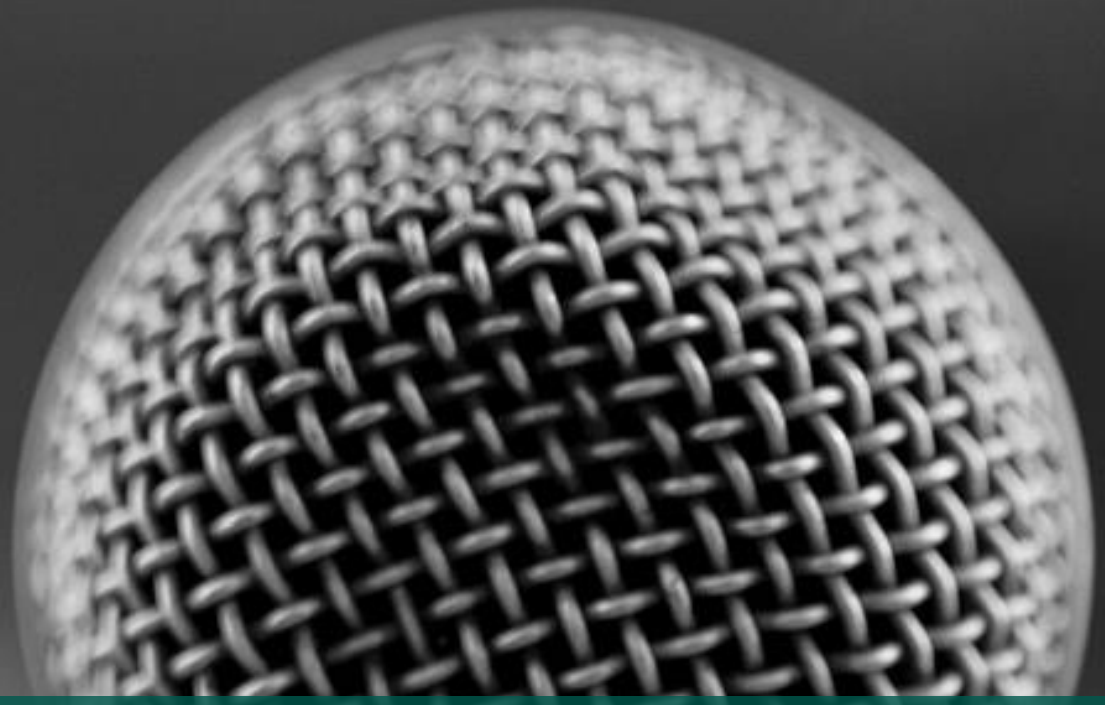
The near-term opportunity is not to promote PoG adoption broadly, but to help the field solve the implementation problem: making competencies measurable, teachable, portable, and sustainable across different district contexts.



APPENDIX

PARTICIPANTS

Role/Title	Organization/District	State	Leadership Level
Educational Supervisor	N/A	PA	District Leader
Coordinator of Assessment & Research	N/A	MA	District Leader
Director of Humanities	Department of Education	VA	State Agency Leader
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction	State Education Agency	VA	State Agency Leader
Retired Director of Special Education / Adjunct Professor	Pennsylvania Education System	PA	District Leader
Kentucky Department of Education Representative	Johnson County	KY	State Agency Leader
State Leader	N/A	N/A	State Agency Leader
Superintendent	Woodland School District	WA	Superintendent
Superintendent	West Valley School District	WA	Superintendent
Superintendent	Sequim School District	WA	Superintendent
Project Coordinator, Skills for the Future	North Carolina DPI	NC	State Agency Leader
Superintendent	Deer Park School District	WA	Superintendent
Superintendent	Pennsylvania District	PA	Superintendent
Director of Secondary Education	Indianapolis-area District	IN	District Leader
School Administrator	N/A	KY	District Leader
Senior Leader	Los Angeles County Office of Education	CA	State Agency Leader
Assistant Superintendent of School Performance	Philadelphia-area District	PA	District Leader
District Counseling Director	Kentucky District	KY	District Leader
Director of MTSS	Guilford County Schools	NC	District Leader
Director of Student Services	La Grange School District 105	IL	District Leader



HANOVER RESEARCH

Thank you.

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