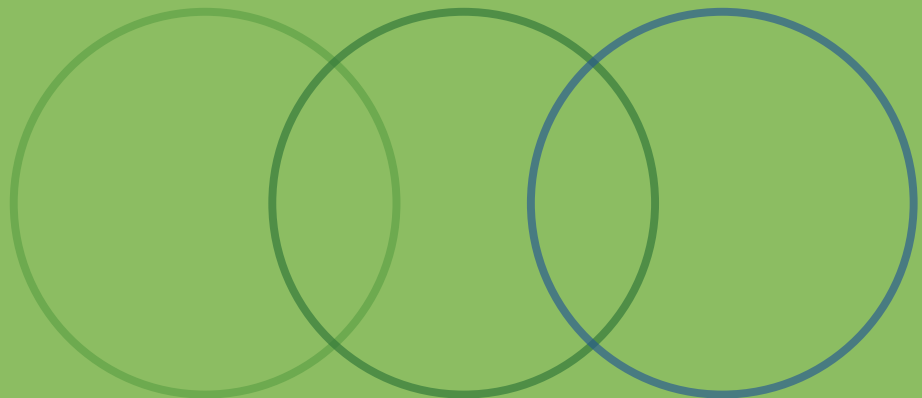


Using delivery approaches to improve learning outcomes in low-and-middle income countries

Practical guidance and toolkit
October 2024

Working Document - Pilot Phase



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Sources used in this toolkit

Much of the content of this guidance draws from the following DeliverEd reports:

DeliverEd Final Report, [Deliberate Disruptors: Can Delivery Approaches Deliver Better Education Outcomes?](#)

Bell, S., Leaver, C., Mansoor, Z, Mundy, K., Qarout, D., & Williams, M. (March 2023). [The Role of Delivery Approaches in Education Systems Reform: Evidence from a Multi-Country Study](#). DeliverEd Initiative Working Paper.

This is supplemented by drawing on some of the more widely published analyses of the use of delivery approaches in education. Where other sources are used, a full reference is given.

Introduction

About this guidance note and toolkit

There is an urgent need to address the global learning crisis. World Bank research carried out after the COVID-19 pandemic found that 70 percent of 10-year-olds in low-and-middle income countries (LMICs) were unable to read or understand a simple story. Even before the pandemic, 57 percent of 10-year-olds in LMICs were not able to read and understand a simple text.¹

This toolkit provides a short, practical guide for government officials (and other education system actors) in LMICs on how “delivery approaches” can be used to tackle the learning crisis through improving the implementation of education policies and programs.

The content of this toolkit is based principally on insights from DeliverEd, a major research program led by the Education Commission (now known as the Learning Generation Initiative). DeliverEd strengthened the evidence base on how governments can achieve their policy priorities through delivery units and other delivery approaches through researching the use of delivery approaches in Ghana, Jordan, Pakistan (Punjab), Sierra Leone, and Tanzania.

This guidance note and toolkit aim to support the adaptation and replication of successful delivery approaches in other contexts. The tools and concepts that the toolkit sets out may also be helpful to policymakers thinking more broadly about how they improve delivery within the education system.

¹ World Bank, UNICEF, FCDO, USAID, & Gates Foundation. (2022). The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update.

Within the toolkit, you'll find:



An overview of what delivery approaches are and how they can help your education system to achieve its goals



A step-by-step guide to designing and implementing delivery approaches within your education system



Guidance on the key choices and design decisions that will impact on success



Examples of how delivery approaches were applied in the DeliverEd countries



Links to practical tools that you can use in your implementation of delivery approaches



An “at a glance” checklist to assess your progress in implementing a delivery approach

While other publications also provide guidance on implementation of delivery approaches in education systems,² this toolkit covers the full life cycle of developing, implementing, and sustaining delivery approaches in education systems in LMICs, and it is grounded in the findings of the empirical academic and policy research conducted through DeliverEd.

The toolkit sets out general principles, and it is designed to give an indication of what “good” looks like in the use of delivery approaches in education systems. Each education system is different, however, so you will need to consider how each step may need to be adapted to the complexities and dynamics of your own education system. There may be sections of the checklist where your system already has many of the core elements in place, or sections where more intensive development and improvement will be required. It will be helpful to identify these through working through the checklist at the outset to establish a baseline, and to identify areas for particular focus.

The toolkit focuses on aspects that are different or central in the use of delivery approaches, rather than aspects that are more common to the design and implementation of education policy and programming.

² See the “Other resources and further reading” section for details on other guides available.

What is a delivery approach?

A delivery approach is an institutional unit or structured process within a government bureaucracy that aims to rapidly improve bureaucratic functioning and policy delivery by combining a set of managerial functions in a novel way to shift attention from inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes.³

Delivery approaches are used to manage the implementation of improvements to a system of public service delivery. It is unlikely, however, that a delivery approach could be used to deliver the entirety of an Education Sector Plan (ESP). Delivery approaches require relatively intense data collection and performance management routines that may be difficult to apply to every aspect of the education system simultaneously. Delivery approaches also require prioritizing the most consequential components of an education system and deprioritizing others. A delivery approach could, however, be used to manage the implementation of a subset of the most important reforms identified within an ESP.⁴

Many of the most high-profile delivery approaches have taken the form of a delivery unit, a dedicated unit specifically established to focus political and bureaucratic attention on eliminating barriers to public service delivery. Delivery approaches can, however, take different forms^{3,4} and can, for example, be integrated into existing bureaucratic structures. In this guidance, the term delivery approaches, rather than delivery units, is used to reflect the broader range of forms that delivery approaches might take.

Delivery approaches can also be led from different levels. Those reviewed during DeliverEd included national approaches led by the center of government (i.e., the president or prime minister's office); national approaches led by relevant ministries or agencies; and subnational approaches led by states or provinces.

3 Williams, M., Leaver, C., Mundy, K., Mansoor, Z., Qarout, D., Asim, M., Bell, S., & Bilous, S. (2020). Delivery Approaches to Improving Policy Implementation: A Conceptual Framework. DeliverEd Initiative Working Paper.

4 Todd, R., & Waistell, D. (2019). Overview of the delivery approach. (Report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). Cambridge Education.

There are five core functions that are common to delivery approaches:

- 1 Establishing priorities and setting targets:** Establishing a set of key priorities and objectives, creating measurable indicators to characterize progress against these objectives, and/or setting benchmark levels of performance to be achieved in a specified time period.
- 2 Measuring and monitoring performance:** Collecting and reporting information about the performance of divisions, districts, teams, schools, and/or individuals, in order to inform evidence-based planning and decision-making.
- 3 Leveraging political sponsorship:** Leveraging and communicating high-level political backing for policy and service delivery, internally (to add pressure to the bureaucracy itself) or externally (serving as a commitment device for government to hold itself accountable).
- 4 Creating incentives and accountability mechanisms:** Establishing a system of rewards and/or sanctions, “carrots and sticks,” linked to performance. This can include monetary incentives; the threat of firing or other formal career incentives; and reporting through high-stakes meetings, which creates strong reputational concerns, “naming and shaming,” or negative social perceptions.
- 5 Solving problems:** Setting up dialogue, coordination, and problem-solving routines to improve performance through better sharing of information and ideas. This includes collaboration across teams, sectors, or actors, as well as bottom-up approaches to catalyzing organizational learning through local problem-solving, adaptation, issue escalation, and feedback.

Where are delivery approaches most effective?

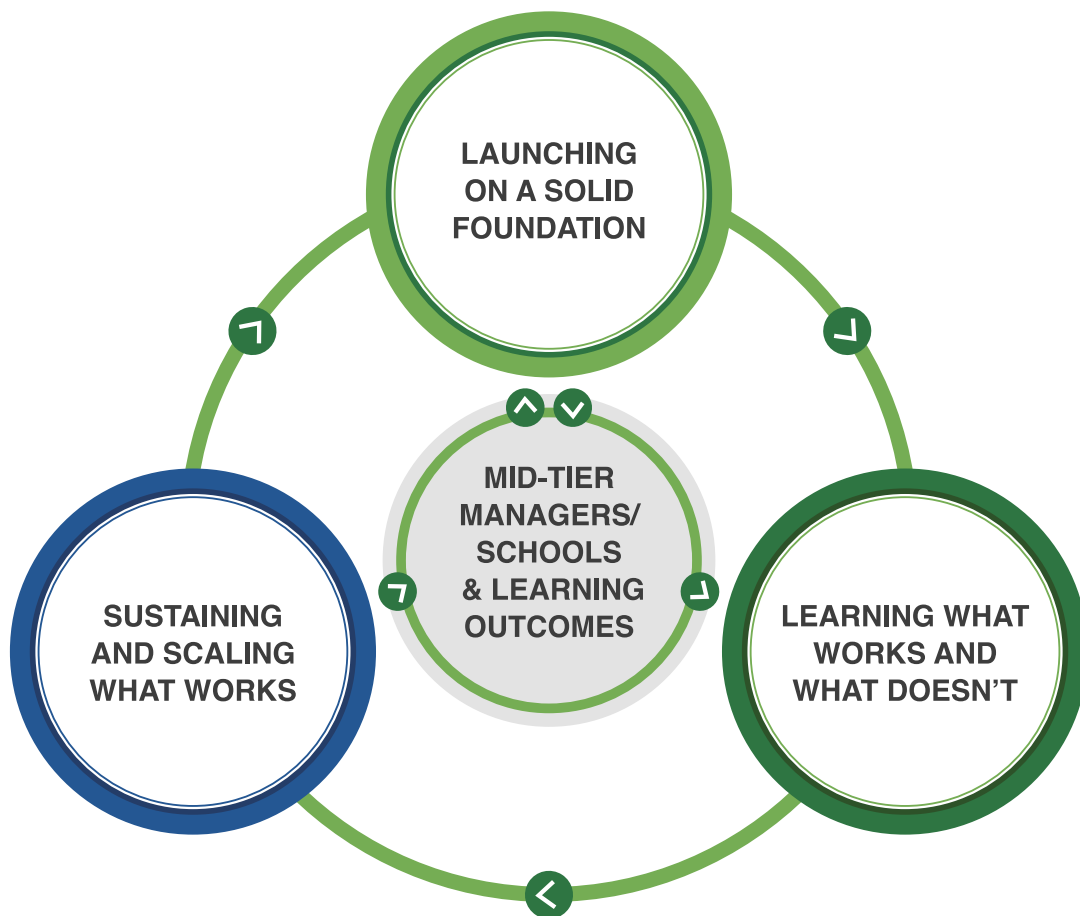
The DeliverEd research program found that the delivery approaches had notable successes in driving educational reforms, with several aspects proving to be effective mechanisms for change. In some cases, however, where impact was less pronounced, this was often due to how they were designed or implemented. By intentionally addressing these areas, new implementations of delivery approaches can be even more effective. This toolkit offers guidance to help policymakers strengthen these aspects and enhance the overall impact of delivery approaches. Table 1 shows where the delivery approaches were more or less effective.

Table 1: Areas where the delivery approaches analyzed in DeliverEd were found to be more or less effective

Delivery approaches were more effective at	Delivery approaches were less effective at:
Leveraging political and bureaucratic sponsorship to shift attention toward key national priorities and results	Changing behaviors among downstream actors, building middle-tier capacity, or addressing local constraints to ensure implementation at the school level
Clarifying roles and responsibilities and improving coordination and alignment among national agencies and donors	Ensuring strong linkages between intermediate (process) targets and the ultimate goals of improving learning outcomes
Achieving input and process targets at the central level including unclogging legal, structural, procurement, funding, and legislation bottlenecks	Using data to drive analysis, problem-solving, organizational learning, and adaptation at all levels, particularly at the subnational, middle-tier, and school levels
Packaging and strengthening data and linking them to indicators and targets to make monitoring and reporting easier, particularly at the central level	Mainstreaming accountability and understanding and addressing its negative or unintended consequences
Introducing top-down accountability and incentives, both rewards and sanctions, which are usually high stakes and linked to performance	Ensuring enduring changes in managerial knowledge, behavior, and norms after political changes or the end of donor support

Launch-Learn-Sustain-Scale: A framework for implementing delivery approaches

The DeliverEd final report sets out a simple framework for harnessing delivery approaches: Launch–Learn–Sustain–Scale. It is designed to help political leaders, policymakers, practitioners, and donors to be able to plan, design, evaluate, and operate delivery approaches more effectively. Launching, learning, and sustaining and scaling are core elements of an iterative process with each element supporting and reinforcing the others.



Stage 1 - DESIGN AND LAUNCH: Diagnose the challenges that need to be addressed, and launch on a solid foundation with strong ownership

This initial stage involves putting in place the enablers that will be necessary for successful implementation of the delivery approach. The steps in this stage are designed to engender ownership of the delivery approach (and the reforms⁵ being made to the education system), and to ensure that the design of reforms is based on solid analysis of underlying challenges.

The steps involved in Design and Launch are:

1. Ensure you have strong political and bureaucratic support for reforms and the delivery approach
2. Set up the delivery function and recruit staff
3. Engage relevant stakeholders at all levels
4. Undertake analysis to understand the root causes of challenges in your education system
5. Identify focus areas and develop targets
6. Develop a costed Annual Action Plan for delivery
7. Develop the data systems required for progress tracking
8. Communicate the purpose and value-add of the delivery approach
9. Develop a sustainability plan

Stage 2 - LEARN: Learn what works and what doesn't

After launching a delivery approach, it is important to actively monitor its implementation to assess whether it is working effectively. This stage involves learning continually from the operation of the delivery approach and adapting it based on data, evidence, feedback, and problem-solving at all levels of the education system.

The steps involved in Learn are:

1. Collect, analyze, and use performance data
2. Develop routines to support accountability, learning, and problem-solving
3. Review and (if necessary) revise your approach
4. Build capacity within the education system

⁵ In this toolkit, the term reform or reforms refers to substantive changes made to the education system (or strategies for improvement of education outcomes) rather than to use of the delivery approach.

Stage 3 - SUSTAIN AND SCALE: Sustain and scale what works

This stage involves embedding delivery approaches or practices in how the education system works so that a focus on delivery, and the reforms initiated, persists beyond the lifespan of a delivery unit or delivery approach.

Nearly all delivery approaches have been short-lived—with even the most successful delivery units tending to be abolished after a change of government. You should consider carefully whether your delivery approach will be used as a time-bound catalyst for system-strengthening (i.e., set up at the outset to run for a certain number of years), or whether it can be set up in a way that enables its functions continue over a longer time period.

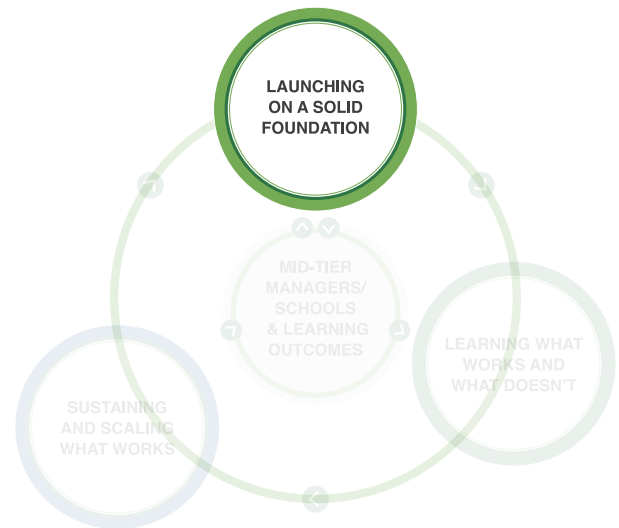
The steps involved in Sustain and Scale are:

1. Communicate results to help build support for continuation of delivery approaches
2. Embed routines and ensure that structures are mainstreamed
3. Create an institutional culture based on prioritization, performance, and use of data for student learning
4. Plan for a smooth transition

The sustainability of delivery approaches needs to be considered from the outset—and designed into the changes you make to the education system. Design choices that support sustainability are therefore highlighted throughout this toolkit, not just in the Sustain and Scale section.

DESIGN AND LAUNCH

This stage involves putting in place the enablers that will be necessary for successful implementation of the delivery approach. Many of these steps will need to be done simultaneously, and some must be completed before the delivery approach is officially announced and launched publicly. There is no one single model for delivery approaches; many variations exist. During the design and launch phase you will have to make several important design choices about the exact shape and focus that will impact on its likelihood of success.



1. Ensure you have strong political and bureaucratic support for reforms and the delivery approach

A key feature of a delivery approach is the leverage of political sponsorship for reform efforts. The involvement of a political leader increases the political salience of improving learning outcomes. This helps to focus attention and resources on the issue by bureaucrats and the media. Depending on the structure of the education system, the political sponsor can be drawn from key leadership at the national and subnational levels. In the countries studied in DeliverEd, sponsors of reforms at the national level included a president (Tanzania), a prime minister (Jordan), and education ministers (Sierra Leone, Ghana). In Pakistan the reforms were sponsored at the subnational level by the chief minister of the province of Punjab.

It is important that the political sponsor is aware of the time commitment likely to be involved in spearheading a delivery approach. The political sponsor typically chairs regular “stocktake” meetings, where attendees review the progress of reforms, and is actively involved in communications related to the delivery approach. The political sponsor is also actively engaged in resolving problems at a political level. For example, a head of government can resolve intractable disagreements among different ministries. Similarly, education ministers may be able to resolve issues with other ministers and departments at a political level, which officials have not been able to resolve among themselves.

Getting buy-in for delivery approaches from ministry officials makes implementation easier and has potential to help to sustain the approaches in the longer term, beyond the political lifespan of the delivery function. In the DeliverEd program countries, officials and schools often initially perceived delivery approaches to be a threat. In some cases, delivery units were able to overcome these perceptions through communication and demonstrating the value-add that they brought.

It is also essential for the political and bureaucratic leadership to be able to articulate the purpose and intended outcomes of the reforms to the education system. Ideally, the articulation of purpose should be ambitious, focused, shared by the leadership, and easily understandable.⁶

⁶ Barber, M., Moffit, A., & Kihn, P. (2011). Deliverology 101: A Field Guide for Educational Leaders. Corwin/US Education Delivery Institute/Ontario Principal's Council.

2. Set up the delivery function and recruit staff

Ensure you have staff with the skills and competencies needed to implement a delivery approach

The organizational design of a delivery function will depend on the exact tasks you expect it to take on. Delivery functions will typically have staff with expertise in:

- Planning
- Implementation
- Communication
- Data collection, analysis, and visualization
- The relevant subject matter—in this case, education expertise

The appointment of a credible leader for the delivery function is a crucial decision. A global review of delivery units by the Institute for Government (IfG) recommended hiring a leader with a track record in frontline delivery or program turnaround, and the interpersonal skills required to forge effective working relationships with sometimes skeptical partners and bureaucrats.⁷ The IfG also recommends ensuring that the organizational structure of the function is not too top-heavy, and has enough junior-level analytical capability to be able to make use of the data being collected.

Recruitment needs to start in good time to avoid delays in commencing implementation of the delivery approaches due to unfilled vacancies. Retention of staff is also crucial, particularly for those in senior roles, or in roles that require development of strong working relationships with stakeholders and organizations in the delivery chain.⁸

It is also important to plan carefully for the onboarding of delivery approach staff, particularly if any staff have been hired externally. This includes ensuring that staff are clear on their roles and initial priorities and ensuring that they have the resources that are required to do their jobs effectively. In Sierra Leone, the team at the delivery unit reported that they “initially struggled to understand their roles” and did not have immediate access to office space and equipment.⁹

Tools, Templates, and Resources

[Do Delivery Units Deliver? Assessing Government Innovation](#) a review by the Inter-American Development Bank identifies the staff roles (and associated professional profiles) that are common to delivery units implemented in Latin America. The roles identified include team head, priority managers, report producer, information validator, trajectory builder, and budget manager.

⁷ Gold, J. (2017). Tracking delivery: Global trends and warning signs in delivery units. Institute for Government.

⁸ Gold, Tracking delivery.

⁹ Anderson, A., Ibarra, A., & Javaid, N. (2022). A Case Study of the Sierra Leone Delivery Unit. DeliverEd Initiative Policy Note.

Consider the balance between existing officials (whom you are more likely to retain long term) and external staff (who can provide fresh perspectives and skills)

A key early decision for you will be how to staff the delivery function. DeliverEd’s global mapping of delivery approaches found that 52 percent of approaches were staffed exclusively using existing civil servants, though delivery approaches in LMICs were more likely than in high-income countries to make use of external consultants or advisers.¹⁰

External staff can bring in a fresh perspective and specialist skills that may not be present within the existing pool of civil service staff. Some countries have found however that the different backgrounds of external staff, and their lack of familiarity with how government functions, can lead to culture clash with existing officials. Use of external staff also creates additional risks around sustainability. Externally hired staff tend to be more expensive: they are frequently paid more than standard civil service pay scales, which can be a source of resentment among permanent officials. They are also less likely to be retained in government in the long term, leading to a loss of expertise when they leave. Relying solely on existing officials, however, may mean that delivery unit staff are “stuck in the existing ways of thinking.”¹¹ The IfG notes that in many delivery unit implementations a mix of external hires and existing civil servants has worked well.¹²

The majority of implementations of delivery approaches also include drawing on advice, support, or capacity building from technical assistance providers. DeliverEd’s global mapping found that 69 percent of the delivery approaches identified had used external technical assistance. This could include advice on design or implementation of the delivery approach, skills training for staff, or additional human resources to supplement the government’s core team.¹³

Risks around sustainability in the use of external staff or external technical assistance can be addressed through specifically tasking external staff to build capacity among permanent civil servants alongside their other duties, and through exploring whether external staff are willing to join the delivery unit on standard civil servant terms, conditions, and salaries.

¹⁰ Mansoor, Z., Qarout, D., Anderson, K., Carano, C., Yecalo-Teclé, L., Dvorakova, V., & Williams, M. (2021). A Global Mapping of Delivery Approaches. DeliverEd Initiative Working Paper.

¹¹ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

¹² Gold, Tracking Delivery

¹³ Mansoor et al., Global Mapping of Delivery Approaches.

Consider whether delivery functions could be embedded into existing structures within the bureaucracy

Decisions about where in the government’s organizational structure a delivery function sits can have a significant impact on the function’s effectiveness and sustainability. DeliverEd’s global mapping found that the majority (80 percent) of delivery functions had been housed in new units within the government. The other 20 percent of the initiatives reviewed used existing structures within the bureaucracy to execute the key functions of the delivery approach.¹⁴ In Punjab (Pakistan), for example, delivery functions were initially embedded into the government’s existing Programme Management and Implementation Unit (PMIU).

New structures are, however, highly vulnerable to being closed if there is a change of government. Even the most successful delivery units, such as the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) in the UK have turned out to be time limited. Locating the delivery approach functions within a pre-existing unit may help to sustain and embed the use of the practices that the delivery approach introduces beyond the lifespan of a particular delivery approach program. There is also a risk that new units end up creating parallel structures that duplicate or substitute for work that is done elsewhere in government (e.g., through establishment of separate data collections), which ends up actually weakening delivery capacity.¹⁵

The IfG advises that the physical office location of the delivery function is also important so that staff can have access to both the political sponsor of the unit, and to staff in the rest of government working on education issues, in order to progress issues and resolve problems informally outside of formal mechanisms and meetings.¹⁶

3. Engage relevant stakeholders at all levels

It is essential that stakeholders are involved in every stage of the design and implementation of the delivery approach, including in the analysis of system challenges, the development of targets, and delivery planning.

Delivery Associates recommends convening a “guiding coalition” of experts, NGOs, and civil society organizations, who are able to guide, support, champion, and defend the reforms.¹⁷ You should also consult with the delivery chain, the organizations and individuals who will be involved in direct delivery of the reforms. This is likely to include agencies responsible for specialized functions such as assessment or inspection, state or district education offices, and schools. Teachers, principals, and community representatives can also provide valuable frontline perspectives on delivery challenges, help identify solutions and best practices at the school level, and act as a useful sense-check on whether proposals are implementable.

¹⁴ Anderson, K., & Bergmann, J. (2022). Design Choices for Delivery Approaches in Education. Education Commission.

¹⁵ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

¹⁶ Gold, Tracking Delivery.

¹⁷ UNICEF in partnership with Delivery Associates. (2021). What Would It Take to Help Governments Achieve Their Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Goals: A Guide to Effective Delivery for Public Sector Practitioners.

A different approach to stakeholder involvement is the “Delivery Lab” approach. Pioneered in Malaysia, and subsequently used in South Africa, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Uganda, this approach involves bringing participants together for several weeks to work intensively on a facilitated program of prioritization, problem-solving, and implementation plan development. This approach, though, can be expensive to host and facilitate, and it requires a significant commitment of time from stakeholders.

Tools, Templates, and Resources

The [UNICEF Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Playbook](#) produced in partnership with UNICEF’s Foundational Literacy & Numeracy Initiative (J-PAL, Pratham, Delivery Associates, World Bank Group, and Global Partnership for Education [GPE]) includes further guidance (and worksheets) on how to convene members of your guiding coalition.

Chapter 14 of the [Education Sector Analysis guidelines](#) - produced by UNICEF, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) UNESCO, GPE, and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office provides guidance on how to map the key stakeholders involved in education systems—and understand how their incentives, perspectives, and dynamics shape education systems. It includes detailed guidance on how to conduct stakeholder analysis.

4. Undertake analysis to understand the root causes of challenges in your education system

Analysis provides you with a good understanding of exactly what the underlying problems in your system are, enabling you to make decisions on the solutions and strategies that are likely to work in addressing them. You may already have valuable insights into the strengths, areas for growth, and key challenges within your system from the ESP process. If further exploration is needed, conducting a problem analysis and institutional analysis can help. Problem analysis will uncover opportunities to address barriers and enhance educational performance within your system, while institutional analysis will provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics, incentives, and performance of the various elements of the education system.

Problem analysis provides an opportunity to review current performance on the key performance indicators for your education system. Relevant key indicators include learner access, participation, achievement, and progression. Other indicators that also have a direct material impact on these key performance indicators will also need to be analyzed. This requires disaggregating data, and identifying any disparities in participation or outcomes among different groups of learners. Factors that are commonly associated with inequality include gender, location, wealth, and ethnicity. Where disparities are identified you can undertake root cause analysis to uncover the underlying causes of the differentials, and identify potential focus areas for enhancing outcomes.

It may be necessary to do a further round of analysis after you have identified the potential focus areas for your efforts to improve the education system, in order to explore different determinants of better outcomes in your priority focus areas in more detail using more specific diagnostic tools. It is important to ensure that the analysis is high-quality, and rooted in the realities of the implementation challenges faced in the education system. The analysis needs to be based on the latest available data, and include inputs and perspectives from civil society organizations and other external stakeholders. Any assumptions used during the production of the analysis need to be carefully tested.

Tools, Templates, and Resources

Root Cause Analysis

USAID's [Applied Education System Diagnostic Toolkit](#) provides a step-by-step guide to identifying root causes of development challenges and potential leverage points for meaningful interventions. This diagnostic approach places a significant emphasis on understanding stakeholder perspectives on challenges, through a structured process of stakeholder consultation, workshops, and validation of findings. The [FHI Health System Rapid Diagnostic Tool](#) also contains helpful guidance on the key steps of root cause analysis, including identifying weaknesses, generating hypotheses on root causes, and assessing evidence.

Problem Analysis

The World Bank's [Systems Approach for Better Education Results \(SABER\) framework](#) allows you to benchmark key aspects of your education system against global best practice. The framework covers 13 separate topics:¹⁸ setting out global evidence on best practice in that area, a rubric that you can use to assess your performance, and questionnaires for collecting data. The SABER modules would best be used for undertaking deep dives into particular areas of focus within your education system.

The [Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines](#), published by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and GPE, provides methodologies and applied examples for diagnosing education systems and informing national education policies and plans. Areas covered in the first volume include enrolment, cost and financing analysis, quality and assessment, system capacity, the teaching workforce, and equity considerations.

If you need to undertake more detailed analysis of a particular area of your education system, the mapping of diagnostic and analysis tools produced by USAID and the Building Evidence in Education (BE2) working group may help you to identify a suitable tool.

Institutional Analysis

IIEP UNESCO has developed an [Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool](#).¹⁹ The tool provides a framework for analyzing the functions and performance of educational administrations at four different levels:

- Individual staff – including incentives; staff qualifications, experience, and training; alignment of staff profile to requirements
- Organizational units within the administration (e.g., education ministry's planning department) – including mandate, structure, internal management and accountability, availability of human and financial resources
- Functioning of the wider public administration – factors that impact on government performance including level of autonomy enjoyed by ministries; coordination, collaboration, and communication among government entities; existence and use of national plans; rules and management of civil servants
- Relationships with external partners – including mutual understanding of roles, exchange of information, coordination of activities; efficacy of forums for exchange with partners.

¹⁸ Early Childhood Development; Education Management Information Systems; Education Resilience; Engaging the Private Sector; Equity and Inclusion; Information and Communication Technologies; School Autonomy and Accountability; School Finance; School Health and School Feeding; Student Assessment; Teachers; Tertiary Education; Workforce Development.

¹⁹ IIEP UNESCO. (2022). It's not me, it's the system: A framework for analysing planning and management capacities; UNESCO, UNICEF, GPE, & FCDO. (2021). Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines Volume III.

5. Identify focus areas and develop targets

Identify focus areas

Having identified the core challenges within your education system, the next step is to identify a small number of focus areas where you will look to make changes to policies or practices, or where you introduce new policies or practices to better meet needs. The focus areas selected need to be clearly tied to improving learning outcomes: it should be possible to clearly identify how making progress in the focus area will lead to improvement in the learning outcomes achieved by children.

Strategic and intentional prioritization is required to enable focus. This means deprioritizing other areas that are less important to achieving your objectives. In Punjab (Pakistan), for example, the Education Sector Roadmap in Punjab initially prioritized school enrolment, teacher attendance, and school infrastructure. Over time, these priorities evolved to include learner outcomes. The selection of your focus areas will need to be informed by the best available evidence. You will also need to consider the financing that is available for your reforms^{3/4}and select focus areas that are likely to be cost-effective and sustainable in the long term.

There is increasing interest among both governments and funders (sometimes drawing on the emerging field of implementation science) in “scaling what works”^{3/4}that is, identifying and testing promising education reforms that have the potential to be delivered at scale. Delivery approaches have generally been used to drive implementation of changes to the education system at scale.

Tools, Templates, and Resources

The [Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel](#) (convened by the World Bank, UNICEF, and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) regularly summarizes the best and most up-to-date evidence on the cost-effectiveness at scale of different interventions, sorting the “great buys” for improving learning from the “bad buys.”

Well-performing districts in your own country may have also developed practices that appear to be promising as ways to improve educational outcomes. Careful consideration will need to be given, however, as to what and how to codify and test these practices, prior to more widespread scaling. VVOB’s [Education Scalability Checklist](#) provides guidance on how to identify how easy or hard it will be to scale up a particular education initiative.

Develop success indicators and targets that will allow you to assess whether your reforms are working

The next stage of the process is to develop success indicators and targets that will allow you to measure progress of reforms.

Targets need to be SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-limited:

- Specific – Indicators are intuitive, not convoluted, and understandable by those tasked with delivering them.
- Measurable – Indicators are capable of being monitored using existing or new data.
- Attainable – Indicators are capable of being achieved in the time frames set out with the available resources.
- Relevant – You should limit the overall number of targets to a small number of measures, which, if achieved, will make a meaningful contribution to the objectives of the reforms. There needs to be a strong linkage between the targets you set—and the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes.
- Time-limited – Delivery approaches tend to adopt goals with mixed time frames. Global mapping by DeliverEd found that delivery approaches were most likely to focus on medium-term goals spanning three to five years.²⁰

To set the headline performance targets, you could consider:²¹

- The intended level of ambition of your reforms
- The anticipated impact of each aspect of your plan for reform on the measure
- Relevant benchmarks—for example, the results achieved by the best performing schools within your system, or by education systems in comparable countries, or historical trends
- Views from stakeholders and the delivery chain on what they think may be attainable

In large education systems, particularly those with multiple layers of government involved in the administration of education, you will then need to develop sub-targets for each region or district, being cognizant of the current performance, circumstances, and resources available in each district.²²

Where your analysis has identified differences in access, participation, and outcomes among different groups of learners, you may also want to consider developing indicators and targets focused on disadvantaged groups of learners (e.g., girls, learners with disabilities, or learners from the poorest households).

²⁰ Mansoor et al., Global Mapping of Delivery Approaches.

²¹ Barber, M. (2016). How to Run a Government. Penguin Books.

²² Barber, M. (2016). How to Run a Government. Penguin Books.

Examples of targets and performance indicators in DeliverEd countries

Country	Target
Ghana ²³	<p>Percentage of West African Senior School Certificate Examination and Basic Education Certificate Examination candidates achieving pass in core subjects</p> <p>Percentage of P4 learners with proficiency in maths and English in the National Standards Assessment Test</p> <p>Percentage of secondary high school heads/basic school heads/regional directors/district directors demonstrating effective leadership</p>
Punjab (Pakistan)	<p>100% enrolment rate among school-age children</p> <p>100% teacher attendance rate</p> <p>Fixing missing school facilities and infrastructure</p>
Tanzania ²⁴	<p>Increased pass rates in primary and secondary examinations to 60% in 2013 and 80% in 2015</p> <p>Ranking 100% of all schools in the annual official school ranking (to improve transparency in assessing student and school performance)</p> <p>Rewarding 4,000 most improved schools every year with monetary and non-monetary incentives and recognize top 200 performers</p> <p>Training 12,300 teachers on the 3Rs, and train 17,000 primary and 8,000 secondary teachers to support remedial students</p> <p>Construction of facilities in 1,200 secondary schools</p> <p>Ensuring 100% timely delivery of books and materials to students</p>

²³ Bell, S., Asim, M., Mundy, M., Pius Nuzdor, H., Boakye-Yiadom, M., & Mensah Adosi, C. (2023). How Do Regions, Districts and Schools Respond to the Introduction of a Delivery Approach? Evidence from Ghana. DeliverEd Initiative Working Paper

²⁴ Opala, K. (2024 forthcoming). Using Delivery Approaches to Improve Public Services: Education Sector Reforms in Tanzania, 2013-2023. DeliverEd Initiative Working Paper.

6. Develop a costed Annual Action Plan for delivery

Develop detailed and flexible roadmaps to meet targets

Once you have clarity on the intended goals of your reforms, the next stage is to work with key stakeholders to identify the key activities, such as new practices or changes to existing practices, which will need to be implemented in order for the goals to be met. Detailed roadmaps are then developed for the implementation of these activities. The aim of the roadmaps is to clarify exactly how initiatives are to be delivered, to remove uncertainty on responsibilities and time frames, and to identify milestones.

The roadmaps will need to clearly identify:

- What activities need to be delivered—and who will deliver each activity
- Any interdependencies in the plans—and how these will be managed
- Any risks to the delivery of the plans—and how these will be mitigated

It is helpful to also develop data trajectories, alongside the roadmaps. Trajectories are evidence-based estimates of likely progress against targets over time. For example, if your headline target is to improve an examination pass rate to a certain level over the next four years, a trajectory for that target could involve identifying the target pass rate for each of the intervening years.

While you are developing the roadmaps, it may be helpful to consider the following questions:

- **Do you have the right balance between banking “early wins” and making long-term progress with more challenging issues?** While some outcomes can be achieved rapidly, others will take longer to deliver. In Sierra Leone, the delivery unit at the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) ended up focusing its time and efforts mainly on short- and medium-term issues at the expense of long-term progress.
- **Are these plans too prescriptive?** It is important to get the right level of prescription in the plans and allow leeway for the plans to be adapted during the implementation process. In Tanzania, it is reported that some of the plans developed were overly detailed, were not grounded in local realities, and quickly became outdated.²⁵

²⁵ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

Assess the capacity of the system to deliver the proposed activities

To successfully deliver changes to the education system, it is essential to ensure that the teams tasked with managing the implementation of reforms have the capacity required to execute change. It is therefore crucial to undertake a realistic assessment of whether the system, beyond the staff working directly on the delivery approach, has the capacity required to implement the activities and reforms that you are planning.

Barber, Moffit, and Kihn set out four relevant components of capacity:²⁶

- **Structure:** “Is the system structurally organized to do what needs to be done effectively?”
- **Competencies:** “Do system actors have the skills and abilities they need to do what is asked of them?”
- **Motivation:** “Do system actors have a delivery mindset?”
- **Resources:** “Do system actors have the necessary time and/or funding to address the tasks at hand?”

Understanding exactly what capacity gaps exist will enable you to develop strategies to improve capacity. Where there are insufficient resources (and it is not possible to obtain further resources from the finance ministry or donors), it will be important to prioritize and focus on those that are likely to have the greatest impact on learning outcomes. In Tanzania, for example, there was a disconnect between the plans developed and the financing available, with a 58 percent funding gap reported in the first year of implementation.²⁷ Where there are gaps in competency or motivation, you may be able to support officials or staff within the delivery chain to develop new knowledge and skills through training and coaching.

Tools, Templates, and Resources

The UNICEF [Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Playbook](#) contains several worksheets that policymakers may find useful in this stage, including worksheets to use in developing options for reform, and matrices for prioritizing competing options by comparing impact and ease of implementation.

²⁶ Barber et al., *Deliverology 101: A Field Guide for Educational Leaders*.

²⁷ Opala, *Using Delivery Approaches to Improve Public Services: Education Sector Reforms in Tanzania, 2013-2023*.

7. Develop the data systems required for progress tracking

It is essential to have a data system in place that is able to provide reliable data on the progress of implementation against your goals. This will allow you to have early sight of implementation difficulties.

It is preferable to use and build upon existing data infrastructure and data collection processes if possible.

This helps to avoid duplication of functions and reduces the data burden on frontline staff and delivery organizations. In Pakistan, the delivery team was able to utilize a strong existing data capability within the Punjab government, and an existing network of data. In Tanzania, Big Results Now! (BRN!) relied principally on existing data sources—supplemented by a simple reporting template that was completed monthly by districts, which was low burden but provided data of variable quality.²⁸ Conversely, in Jordan, the monitoring arrangements that were put in place added another layer of reporting that officials were required to manage and comply with, in addition to existing reporting mechanisms. Where existing data systems are used, it is important to ensure that clear roles and responsibilities are defined around data production, accessibility, and use.

Where data infrastructure is not in place, the delivery team may need to actively help to build improved capability for data collection

In Sierra Leone, the delivery unit designed, piloted, and scaled the One Tablet Per School program. This was a real-time data management system that collected and verified teacher data (e.g., attendance) and pupil data (including enrollment and attendance) through tablet computers. The unit also supported the ministry's planning directorate to optimize the timely use of the Annual School Census data.²⁹

Where new data infrastructure and systems are built to support data collection, it is important to ensure that resources are earmarked to maintain the new systems.

Tools, Templates, and Resources

The Data section of the UNICEF [Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Playbook](#) provides a tool for assessing your current data systems against six characteristics of a strong data system (frequency, granularity, reliability, engagement, utilization, and transparency).

EdTech Hub has published a learning brief setting out key insights on how [education management information systems](#) (EMIS) can be optimized to provide relevant and actionable data for decision-making. Similarly, IIEP UNESCO has developed the [EMIS Readiness Assessment Tool for Transformation](#) to help governments to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses in their EMIS capacities.

The Brookings Institute has published an [analysis and curated set of digital tools for real-time data collection](#) in education.

²⁸ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

²⁹ Anderson et al., Case Study of the Sierra Leone Delivery Unit.

8. Communicate the purpose and value-add of the delivery approach

Communicate with staff in the delivery chain on what they are expected to deliver

On a practical level, it will be important to communicate to system actors in the delivery chain on what the priorities are, the targets that they will be accountable for, and how progress will be monitored. Communications will also need to address any questions or concerns about the reforms and the delivery approach that you anticipate staff may have (e.g., through the development of a set of Frequently Asked Questions). Communications need to be two-way, clear, and frequent. If a delivery approach has been used previously in your education system, you may also need to consider any preconceptions that staff and delivery partners may have about the approach that may shape their perspective on it. Attention will also need to be paid to ensure that delivery organizations cascade relevant information to their staff. In Ghana, DeliverEd's research found that levels of awareness of the targets and goals that had been set varied significantly across districts.

Communicate with staff, stakeholders, and the wider public on the wider purpose and value-add of the reforms and the delivery approach

Communication is also an important way of leveraging political support for the reforms and the delivery approach. By communicating the objectives and purpose (including through the media), momentum and excitement can be created, additional public pressure to deliver is created, and stakeholders are encouraged to come together to work toward achieving a common goal. The BRN! program in Tanzania is a good example of the value of effective communication. The program was the president's flagship policy toward the end of his term. The communications around the policy gave it a profile that meant ordinary members of the public were aware of it, and frontline staff in schools developed their own approaches to implementation in an effort to achieve the intended results.³⁰

9. Develop a sustainability plan

From the outset, you will need to consider how the key elements of the delivery approach could be sustained in the longer term. You will need to carefully consider whether your delivery approach will be used as a time-limited catalyst for system-strengthening, or whether it can be set up in a way that enables its functions continue over a longer time period. Sustainability needs to be a key factor in the design choices that you make.

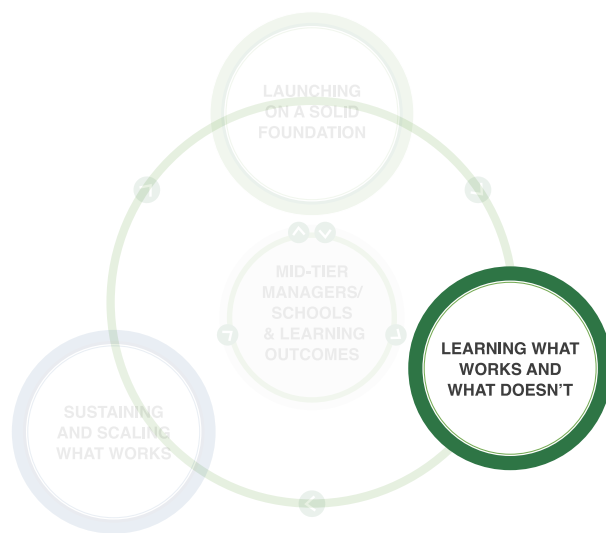
Ideally, your approach to sustainability should be crystalized in a sustainability plan that is developed during the design and launch phase, and actively monitored and iterated during implementation of the delivery approach. Developing a sustainability plan at the outset (rather than toward the end of the life cycle of the delivery approach) also helps to focus all parties on the long-run impact of the approach.

³⁰ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

STAGE

2 | LEARN

After launching a delivery approach, it is crucial to actively monitor implementation to evaluate whether the approach is working optimally, and, where necessary, to use learnings and insights from data collection to iterate or refine its design or implementation. This stage involves learning continually from the operation of the delivery approach and adapting it based on data, evidence, and problem-solving at all levels of the education system.



1. Collect, analyze, and use performance data

Identify methods required for data collection

The methods you choose for data collection will need to align with the success indicators you have chosen. A combination of **administrative data** collected and reported by schools or other agencies (e.g., quantitative data covering attendance or student assessment results), as well as qualitative and/or quantitative **data exploring how the reforms are being experienced, will provide a comprehensive picture.** This could be collected through surveys, interviews, or focus groups with staff, students, parents, or district officials. You could also consider external data sources that could be used to complement or validate the data being provided by the ministry.³¹ The data collected need to include measures of learning, or proxy measures for learning.

It is crucial to ensure that the data available are of sufficient quality and reliability to base decisions on; issues with data quality have the potential to undermine the credibility of your reforms. The following areas will strengthen your reform efforts:

- Coverage – Do the data cover all relevant groups? For example, do they include education delivered through non-state providers (who are often missing from EMIS systems), and all geographical areas?
- Recency – Are the data up-to-date? Do they reflect the current situation?
- Representativeness – Is the sample used for data collection representative of the wider education system, providing an accurate view of performance?

Tools, Templates, and Resources

IIEP UNESCO's [Policy Toolbox](#) contains further guidance on collecting education data, including advice on [learning assessments](#), household surveys, administrative data, and guaranteeing data quality.

³¹ Harrison, T. (2016). The role of the centre in driving government priorities: The experience of 'delivery units.' Oxford Policy Management Limited.

It is helpful to set up feedback mechanisms that enable frontline staff to share insights and feedback on how the reforms to the education system are being experienced at the classroom or school level. Depending on the culture within your education system (e.g., a tendency not to openly criticize practice, or factors related to power imbalances or other social hierarchy), these mechanisms may need to be designed carefully to encourage staff to be frank.

One recommended option for data collection is conducting spot checks or site visits. This involves visiting schools and other sites to observe whether and how the reforms are being implemented on the ground.

Ensure the data collected are analyzed

Collecting data is only valuable when the data are used to provide insights that drive improvements in the implementation of reforms. Analyzing data promptly after collection ensures that users have timely insights to inform decisions and guide progress. This was a challenge in Sierra Leone, where despite substantial improvements being made to data collection infrastructure, researchers found little evidence to indicate that the data collected were being used to systematically track results against specific indicators.³²

It is important to analyze and present the collected data in a way that helps system leaders and managers at all levels to understand the performance of the education system elements they oversee. This can help to identify insights that guide decision-making. In several countries where delivery approaches have been used, online dashboards (and even mobile apps) have been developed that present the latest available data in near to real time.³³ In order to do this, it is vital to build capabilities within government to analyze the data collected in good time.

In Pakistan, the data collected were used to create heat maps that showed the relative progress each district had made against its targets, and that flagged clusters of underperforming schools for the attention of district education officers. The DeliverEd research found, however, that this flagging system had no effect on outputs, outcomes, or metrics, perhaps because district education offices (and the wider reform program) were not equipped to tackle the deeper structural issues that were driving poor performance.

³² Anderson et al., A Case Study of the Sierra Leone Delivery Unit.

³³ Gold, Tracking Delivery.

Ensure the data collected are shared and used at all levels of the education system

Analysis and insights also need to be shared with other levels of the education system—and used to drive problem-solving and learning. The DeliverEd research found that the delivery approaches studied were less good at using the data collected to drive analysis, problem-solving, organizational learning, and adaptation at all levels. This was a particular omission at the subnational, middle-tier, and school levels.

Simply giving staff access to the data is unlikely to be sufficient to encourage their use. Co-designing dashboards that provide frontline managers with insights relevant to their work, providing training, and encouraging changes to administrative practices can all help to support uptake. There may be a need for leaders at each level of the education system to establish their own routines to review the data analysis made available related to the schools they are responsible for, and work through implications.

2. Develop routines to support accountability, learning, and problem-solving

Consider whether an approach focused primarily on accountability is appropriate

In high-income and middle-income countries, delivery approaches tend to use either approaches that are more driven by accountability, approaches that are more driven by problem-solving, or a mix of the two approaches. In low-income countries, however, DeliverEd’s global mapping identified only accountability-driven or mixed approaches.³⁴

Accountability-focused models link the achievement of delivery targets to rewards or sanctions. Rewards used in previous delivery approaches have included financial bonuses, professional recognition, or promotion. Sanctions used have included “naming and shaming” of underperforming areas and officials, publicizing failures to hit targets, and in some cases the threat of dismissal. These models tend to make heavier use of monitoring mechanisms, “high stakes” stocktakes with the political sponsor, and publication of performance data.³⁵

Accountability-focused models work best when the change required is less technically complex and focused principally on improving inputs, or where improvements to operational inputs are clearly linked to the outcomes that the reforms are trying to achieve. Examples of changes in this category could include reducing teacher or student absenteeism, driving uptake of in-service teacher training, or improving the disbursement of school grants.³⁶

For more complicated reforms, a focused problem-solving approach is likely to be more appropriate. Where a school leader has less control over factors impacting on the success of the reforms, or where reforms are primarily focused on improving learning outcomes, it will be important to support teachers, principals, and officials to solve the problems that arise in implementation of reforms, including developing feedback loops to the delivery unit so that the bigger factors can be addressed.

³⁴ Mansoor et al., Global Mapping of Delivery Approaches.

³⁵ Mansoor et al., Global Mapping of Delivery Approaches.

³⁶ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

Review competing lines of accountability

A common challenge in the implementation of delivery approaches has been that officials remain subject to other forms of accountability and reporting. This limits their ability to respond to the clear priorities and targets set out by the delivery function, and this can cause delay, duplication, and inefficiency. You could therefore review existing accountability and reporting requirements faced by officials and delivery organizations and consider whether any of them could be simplified or removed. In case these fall outside the purview of the authority concerned, there needs to be a plan in place on how you would need to work with these multiple accountabilities. This could also include having discussions with donors on whether any existing and new donor-funded programs could be aligned to the targets and reporting routines that you will be using for the delivery function.

Tools, Templates, and Resources

The [RISE Education Systems Diagnostic Toolkit](#) sets out a process for identifying misalignments among the main accountability relationships within your education system (identifying where accountability is focused on a purpose other than learning, or where there are misalignments among different actors, or different processes).

Create a regular cadence of routines that create opportunities for learning, problem-solving, and iteration.

A core part of the delivery approach is the introduction of “routines,” scheduled points when you review the progress made against targets. The key routine used in delivery approaches is establishing regular stocktake meetings with the political sponsor (and all other key actors and decision makers) to assess performance and make decisions on what actions may be necessary to make progress. Stocktake meetings, which are generally held quarterly, help to drive the pace of delivery, by holding officials accountable for the progress of matters they have been tasked with previously.

Routines could also include:³⁷

- Update notes that provide the political sponsor with an update on current performance and potential solutions—generally sent monthly
- Performance dashboards that present or visualize the most recently collected data on performance
- Working meetings with teams, held weekly or fortnightly
- “Mini-stocktakes” undertaken without the political sponsor for lower order priorities³⁸

³⁷ UNICEF in partnership with Delivery Associates, What Would It Take to Help Governments Achieve Their Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Goals.

³⁸ Gold, Tracking Delivery.

It is important to strike the right balance between accountability and problem-solving. Where the reforms being implemented are relatively technically simple, the routines can be accountability-focused, providing focal points that incentivize and support actors in the education system to ensure that the required change happens. Even in this scenario, there will still be a need to create space in the routines for problem-solving—for example, in unblocking emerging legal, structural, procurement, funding, and legislation bottlenecks.

For more technically complex reforms, routines will need to be more intentionally focused on problem-solving and structured to emphasize dialogue, coordination, sharing of information and ideas, and identifying potential solutions to bottlenecks in delivery of the planned activity and outcomes. Careful consideration needs to be given to who participates in these routines, and what support they need from higher officials to be effective. It is also important to ensure that the delivery function remains focused on the priorities established and does not get pulled into too many operational tasks that distract their focus from core delivery functions.³⁹

EXAMPLES:

Routines identified in DeliverEd studies

In Jordan, stocktakes were held with donors, the education minister, and the head of the education ministry every week. The Policy, Planning and Coordination Committee and working groups of the officials responsible for implementation of the reforms met every month. Every quarter, progress was reported to a steering group for the reforms, as well as to the king and queen. The results were published annually. DeliverEd research found that Jordan's delivery units were able to unblock financial, legal, and political barriers to implementation—including, for example, expediting procurement processes and supporting progress in passing of new legislation.

In Ghana, accountability meetings with the education minister were held quarterly, convening the heads of key agencies and the delivery function to update on whether targets had been achieved. The director general of the education ministry had also convened forums for districts to share good practices and their insights on challenges. A working group of technical specialists from the agencies was also established to help improve coordination among agencies, and to work out further details of how the reforms would need to be implemented. Independent evaluations of agencies' performance against agreed targets were also undertaken annually, ranking each agency, and categorizing their performance on a range running from excellent to unsatisfactory.

In Punjab (Pakistan), the chief minister chaired quarterly high-stakes stocktake meetings, which brought together officials from all 36 districts to review data curated by the delivery function. In preparation for these stocktakes, district review committees met in each district each month to problem-solve and try to address issues highlighted in the school performance data. Punjab also introduced financial incentives, with the executives responsible for the three top-performing districts receiving bonuses.

3. Review and refine your approach

Keep strategies and planned activities under review

Based on data from implementation, insights from the accountability and problem-solving routines, and deviation from expected trajectories, it may become apparent that it is necessary to adapt and iterate your strategies for education reform, or adjust the implementation methods.

Use of the delivery approach enables continual review of the strategies that have been set to achieve policy objectives, the resources available to achieve the objectives, and the education administration's capacity to deliver the objectives.⁴⁰ Michael Barber, who pioneered the delivery approach at the PMDU in the UK, argues that part of the value of stocktake meetings is that they can be used as an iterative learning process. You can make a provisional decision on how to solve a particular challenge in one stocktake meeting, and then review whether that decision has had the anticipated impact (and if necessary, refine your approach to that challenge) in the following stocktake meeting.⁴¹

Learnings from implementation may also require you to update goals and targets to reflect changes made to policy or program priorities, and/or to account for emergencies that will impact on ability to meet targets.

Monitor for, and address, any unexpected negative consequences

In several countries, the focus on accountability used in delivery approaches has been observed to have led to practices that negatively impact on learners. In Tanzania, this included weaker schools excluding students before they were due to sit examinations. In Punjab (Pakistan), teachers were overly focused on the content that would be covered in assessments, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum.⁴² It is important to be vigilant to these risks—and to design accountability measures in a way that does not incentivize gaming or cheating.

Assess the operation of the delivery mechanisms and processes

You will also need to keep the operation of the delivery and accountability structures under review, and be prepared to make changes to these if they do not appear to be working optimally, or if results are not being achieved.

To support this review process, you may wish to establish mechanisms that allow you to regularly get feedback from stakeholders (and from the function's own staff) on their experiences of the delivery functions, and their perspectives on what is and isn't working. In Ghana, for example, the functions of the National Education Reform Secretariat (the delivery function) shifted from being more focused on high-stakes accountability to being more focused on problem-solving and improving coordination across agencies.

⁴⁰ Lafuente & González, Do Delivery Units Deliver?

⁴¹ Barber, How to Run a Government.

⁴² Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

Scale the aspects of the reforms that are working

From the progress review it may be apparent that certain aspects of the changes you have made to the system (or approaches that you are trying in certain areas) are proving effective. You could look to scale and spread these approaches so that they are being used more widely across your education system. In the same vein, it is advisable to stop or refine approaches that have not proved successful.

Using the delivery approach to rapidly scale up successful approaches helps to build public support reforms, which, as discussed in the next section, can help to sustain the changes made and delivery approaches through changes in administration and other transitions.

4. Build capacity at the subnational level

To date, delivery approaches have been more effective at driving changes to the management of education reforms at the central government level. Delivery approaches have been less effective at working at the subnational level to change management practices, build capacity, and address local issues.

At the outset, it is important to ensure that officials at the subnational level and school principals are aware of the delivery approach, the reforms that have been introduced, and their role in them. Assessing and addressing training needs or capacity gaps will empower principals and officials to play their roles effectively. Designing and delivering a tailored package of support will further strengthen their ability to lead and implement changes successfully.⁴³

At the subnational level, capacity-building support could involve:

- Identifying whether additional training is required. In Brazil, for example, the Lemann Center has initiated a leadership program designed to change the attitudes and management practices of school principals and municipal officials. The program has supported 3,000 officials to be better equipped to provide pedagogical leadership and make use of educational data for decision-making.
- Giving subnational leaders opportunities to interact and collaborate with other stakeholders in other parts of the delivery chain to support problem-solving and information sharing (which also has the benefit of building their understanding of how the education system works).
- Providing additional practical support to middle-tier leaders to use data to identify and resolve implementation problems.
- Making additional effort to ensure staff have clarity on the goals, targets, and priorities that have been set—and what their roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities are.

⁴³ Barber, *How to Run a Government*.

Constraints at a subnational level may not be related to the capacity of officials or principals, but to the broader functioning of the education system. Addressing these could include:

- Considering whether managers and leaders at the subnational level have the resources and authority needed to drive the required changes in the education system. In Ghana, for example, district offices did not have control over the allocation of new teachers, which prevented them from assigning additional staff to the most challenging schools.
- Considering what level of autonomy to give to middle-tier leaders to achieve target outcomes. Where the optimal approach to implementation is less easy to identify and define, it is likely to be beneficial to give managers more discretion on the means through which targets are met.⁴⁴
- Reviewing and reconciling any competing accountability lines that may be causing subnational actors to focus on other matters.

⁴⁴ Adelman, M., & Lemos, R., (2021). *Managing for Learning: Measuring and Strengthening Education Management in Latin America and the Caribbean*. World Bank Publications.

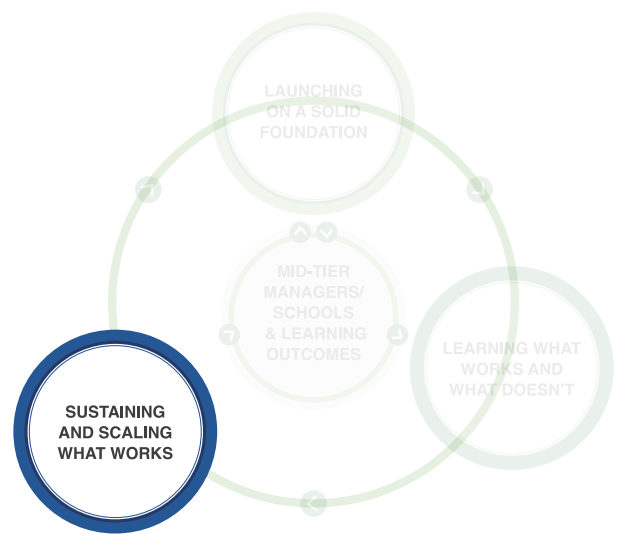
STAGE

3

SUSTAIN & SCALE

Delivery units and approaches have often been short-lived, heavily dependent on the political leader who drives them, resulting in their discontinuation with changes in administration. Similarly, other delivery approaches struggle to sustain themselves after external funding ends. By building sustainability strategies, these approaches can thrive beyond external support, ensuring long-term success.

A key goal is to embed delivery-focused practices within the education system, so they endure even if the delivery unit doesn't. Scaling successful reforms, addressing systemic issues like data and subnational capacities, and demonstrating impact can build support, increasing the chances that changes will be sustained.



1. Communicate results to help build support for continuation of delivery approaches

The likelihood of sustaining delivery approaches can be increased through building awareness of their impact and successes. Sharing evidence of improved learning outcomes, and improvements to the delivery of education, including through the media, helps to generate support and momentum. This is particularly important in politically contested environments, where demonstrating tangible results can solidify backing for the approach.

The truth is that for any major reform, you have to win the battle twice: once on the ground to make the change real, and once on the airwaves to convince people that it is real. (Michael Barber, *How to Run a Government*)

To build support within government and the delivery chain, it may be helpful to also collate, share, and celebrate examples of where use of delivery approaches has helped to solve implementation challenges and improve coordination.

2. Create an institutional culture based on prioritization, performance, and use of data

To sustain change in the longer term, it's important to go beyond introducing new routines and processes. Lasting transformation requires a shift in institutional culture, as well as the knowledge, behavior, and attitudes of both management and staff.

The DeliverEd research highlighted some challenges in achieving deeper changes in managerial knowledge, behavior, and norms. It is advisable therefore to thoughtfully consider how best to foster a positive cultural shift in your education system, setting the foundation for enduring success.

Fostering a cultural change might include:

- Leaders in the education system consistently communicating and reinforcing the importance of key priorities, accountability for performance, problem-solving, and data-driven approaches to improve learning outcomes
- Providing targeted training to staff to ensure they have the knowledge, understanding, and skills required to effectively implement delivery approaches
- Considering how education system staff might be incentivized to focus on these behaviors, attitudes, and skills, through mechanisms such as performance management, pay, and promotion

In Ghana, following the appointment of a new education minister, the focus of the delivery approach was shifted from national-level change to coordinating action at the subnational level, with the establishment of a Communities of Excellence program, funded by the Jacobs Foundation. This program aims to improve capacity for problem-solving and coordination across schools and districts, by fostering a culture focused on improving learning. It ensures clarity on priority actions, promotes the effective use of data, and equips staff with the tools and skills required to deliver results.⁴⁵

In Punjab (Pakistan), there were varying views on the culture created by the delivery approach. While senior officials reported that they were motivated by the incentives created, junior officials complained of a culture of “fear and foreboding,” stress, and excessive meetings—which led to a lack of ownership of delivery approaches at junior levels.⁴⁶

Cultural change can also be encouraged through building bottom-up demand for accountability and quality learning outcomes from parents and communities. In Punjab, for example, the expectations of stakeholders and parents on key aspects of education (e.g., teacher absenteeism) have been increased.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ <https://it-tel.org/our-work/gdcp/>

⁴⁶ Malik, R., & Bari, F. (2023). Improving Service Delivery Via Top-Down Data-Driven Accountability: Reform Enactment of the Education Road Map in Pakistan. DeliverEd Initiative Working Paper.

⁴⁷ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

Building accountability from communities and parents can be done through making information on priorities and performance more widely available. In Punjab, the results dashboard was freely available online. In other countries, governments have published their priorities and included the public as additional audiences for communications on the delivery approach.⁴⁸

3. Embed routines and ensure that structures are mainstreamed

The DeliverEd research highlighted that most changes and routines introduced during the implementation of delivery approaches were not fully sustained. Integrating these practices and engaging staff early in the process at all levels of the bureaucracy, however, can significantly enhance the likelihood of long-term success and help sustain changes over time.

Practical ways of doing this could include:

Considering how parallel structures and mechanisms that have been established could be integrated into existing government processes that are likely to persist, leading to enhanced sustainability and streamlining operations. In Ghana, for example, it has been suggested that data and monitoring functions previously managed by the National Education Reform Secretariat could be transitioned to the education ministry's Planning, Budget, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit in order to support sustainability, and remove overlaps and duplication.

Ensuring that any external or temporary staff who have been engaged to support the delivery function are actively working to transfer knowledge and skills to permanent officials.

EXAMPLES:

Sustainability of routines in DeliverEd countries

Tanzania. The delivery units that had been created by President Jakaya Kikwete during the BRN! initiative at the national level were abolished shortly after a change of government in 2015. At the sub-regional level, BRN! had relied on existing structures, which were less affected by changes. Education Programme for Results (EP4R), a successor results-based financing program, funded by DFID, meant that a focus on outcomes remained, but this was dependent on financial incentives rather than delivery mechanisms. More broadly, some of the permanent officials who were involved in BRN! have been observed to continue to use a “delivery mindset.”^{49, 50} Eight of the nine interventions initiated under BRN! were continued, in part because they were externally funded by donors; these interventions include, notably, an official public ranking of schools, which was sustained until 2022.

Punjab (Pakistan). Punjab is a rare example of where the delivery approach mechanisms have survived a change of government. In part this is due to the delivery mechanisms being embedded within programs of support provided and financed by the World Bank and the UK government. Some changes have been made, however, to the substance of the education reform program.

⁴⁸ Gold, Tracking Delivery.

⁴⁹ Todd & Waistell, Overview of the delivery approach.

⁵⁰ Opalo, Using Delivery Approaches to Improve Public Services: Education Sector Reforms in Tanzania, 2013-2023.

4. Plan for a smooth transition

If the delivery function faces potential risks (e.g., upcoming elections, or the end of the current funding period), it's important to proactively review and refresh the sustainability plan to ensure a smooth and seamless transition, allowing the delivery function to continue its impact without disruption.

Depending on the exact circumstances, this could include:

Evaluating the impact of the interventions that have been implemented (and the delivery approach itself), so that informed decisions can be taken on which interventions it would be valuable to continue.

Developing clear plans to transition any continuing donor-funded interventions into the ministry operating budget. To maximize the likelihood of interventions being incorporated into ministry operating budgets at the end of donor funding periods, there needs to be careful attention paid from the outset to the cost-effectiveness of intervention. In Sierra Leone, for example, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education has set a maximum cost of US\$36 per child for provision being supported through the Sierra Leone Education Innovation Challenge in order to create a “program to policy pathway” that will allow for successful provision to be scaled and sustained beyond the end of the funding period.⁵¹

Identifying potential sources of funding to support sustainability. It is possible that donors may make funding available to support orderly transition and to implement plans for sustainability.

⁵¹ <https://www.educationoutcomesfund.org/post/the-education-outcomes-fund-and-the-government-of-sierra-leone-launch-innovative-partnership-to-imp>

Conclusion

Delivery approaches have substantial potential to support policymakers to strengthen education systems and structures, build the capacity of educators and administrators to implement improvements to the education system, and, ultimately, enable tangible improvements in learner outcomes.

While this toolkit acknowledges that the effectiveness of delivery approaches is varied, it provides valuable insights into both successes and areas for growth, allowing policymakers to navigate challenges and risks more effectively.

As with any reform initiative, delivery approaches come with their own set of risks, which policymakers will need to be conscious of. These include:

Political and policy risks – such as resistance from stakeholders, shifts in policy direction or political leadership, or resource limitations

Implementation risks - such as capacity gaps, legal changes, staffing challenges, or challenges in responding to logistical complications or unforeseen disruptions

Sustainability risks including concerns about the long-term viability of delivery approaches - such as the risk of reforms not being institutionalized or financial constraints affecting the continuation of programs

The Launch-Learn-Sustain-Scale framework presented in this toolkit offers a clear, actionable roadmap for the successful implementation of delivery approaches. By emphasizing the need for a solid foundation during the design and launch phase, continual learning and adaptation during implementation, and maintaining a strong focus on sustainability and scalability, this framework demonstrates how delivery approaches can be designed and implemented in a way that has lasting, impactful change in education systems.

This toolkit underscores the importance of a structured, well-supported process that focuses on achieving measurable outcomes. Through its comprehensive overview, step-by-step guides, and real-world examples, it equips policymakers with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively integrate delivery approaches into their unique educational contexts.

We hope you find this toolkit to be a valuable and practical resource as you consider the opportunities and challenges of designing, implementing, and sustaining delivery approaches. For any questions or feedback, please email LGComms@edc.org

Other resources and further reading

Tools, Templates, and Resources

Deliverology 101: A Field Guide for Educational Leaders, by Michael Barber, Andy Moffit, and Paul Kihn. Published 2011.

This book was written to support educational improvement in the United States during the Obama administration, and it provides over 250 pages of detailed guidance on each stage of deploying a delivery approach.

[What Would It Take to Help Governments Achieve Their Foundational Literacy & Numeracy Goals? A Guide to Effective Delivery for Public Sector Practitioners](#), by Hafsa Iqbal, Mariam Aamir, and Muqueet Shahzad. Published 2021.

Produced through the UNICEF Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Partnership, this playbook looks at how a delivery approach could be applied to the challenge of improving foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes.