



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

Jumpstart Your Solutions: Fire Jumper's Guide to Problem-Solving Grants Administration

Brought to You By Fire Jumper Bootcamp



The Fire Jumper Bootcamp is a process under which LEAs receive **one-on-one** guidance sessions and tools to address systemic issues in their federal funds administration.

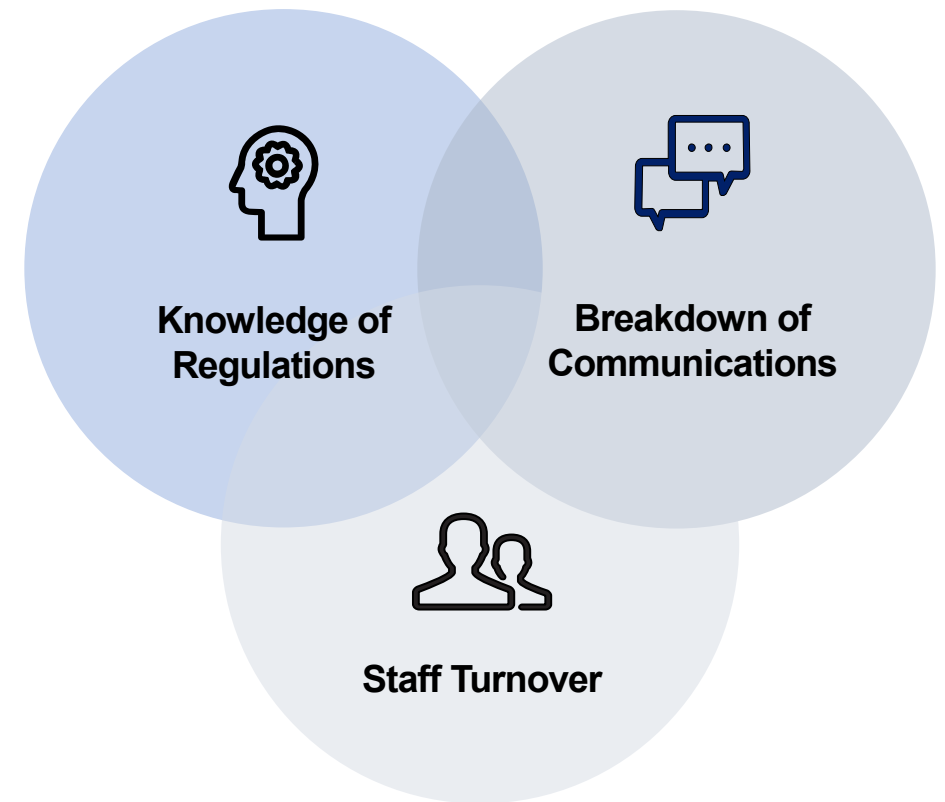
Since **January 2025**, 5 LEAs have participated in the bootcamp and are receiving guidance and support in developing and implementing strategic plans.



Introduction To Fire Jumper

The **Fire Jumper Bootcamp** aims to provide Local Education Agencies (LEAs) with **customized trainings and collaborations** to effectively manage federal funds.

Common Areas of Improvement



Before We Begin...



Reminder: Today's presentation is brought to you by the Fire Jumper Bootcamp Team.

Note: We don't want this to be confused with Technical Assistance (TA). The Fire Jumper Bootcamp helps LEA **identify issues**, as well as help them put together a **strategic plan**.



Agenda

1 Preparing For and Adapting to a Grant

- Grant setup
- Internal evaluation
- Framework creation

2 Addressing Observations

- Understanding noncompliance
- Identifying an observation's root cause
- Implementing corrective action

3 Managing with Staff Turnover

- Determine staff responsibilities
- Unexpected vs expected turnover
- Post departure considerations



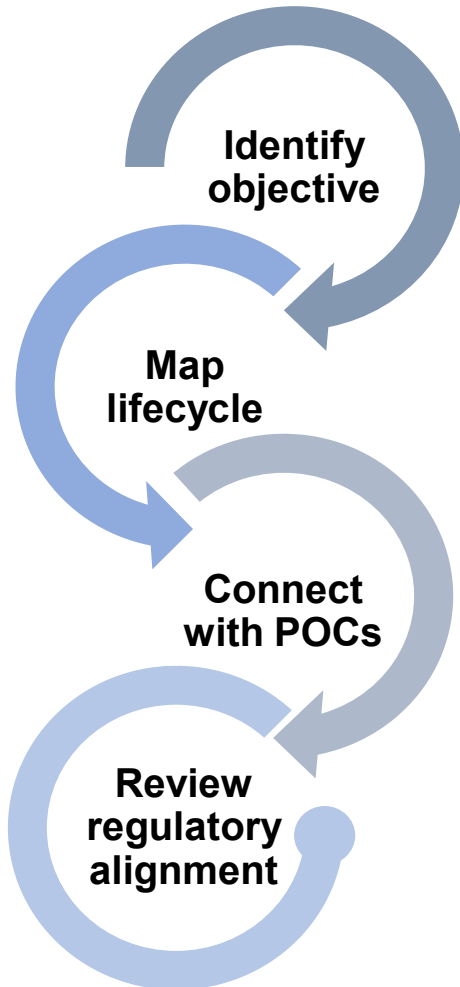
Preparing For and Adapting to a Grant

- Grant Setup
- Internal Evaluation
- Framework Creation

Grant Setup



When preparing for a grant award, evaluate its specific terms, conditions, and allowable uses. This allows the school district to effectively apply the grant and remain compliant throughout its lifecycle, including closeout. Here are common steps to prepare for a new grant:



Identify the objective of grant to consider allowable uses

- Review the grant or subgrant agreement to establish what the school district is allowed to spend the funding on under the grant terms.
- Identify specific restrictions on items funding cannot be spent on or specific types of expenditures it **SHOULD** be spent on.

Map out the grant lifecycle with specific dates and align with your budgeting process

- Understand the timeline of the grant to maintain compliance and confirm the district can expend and utilize the grant. Determine that the following are clearly established:
 - Align grant period of performance with your **budget**, keep both **obligation** and **liquidation** dates in mind
 - Intermediate deadlines for documentation of program, interim/final reporting or other requirements

Connect with POCs from awarding agency

- Connecting with administration personnel at the awarding agency can help establish relationships and gain insight into grant requirements
- Be sure to document relevant conversations and share details with the appropriate team at your school district

Review and align to regulatory framework

- Determine regulatory frameworks and awarding agencies requirements applicable to the grant.
- Compliance requirements will differ between programs and awarding agency (i.e., federal, state or local)

Internal Evaluation



Once a grant has been evaluated by an LEA, it is important to **perform an internal evaluation** of the LEA's **grant management practices** to determine if they **align** with the **new grant terms** and **requirements**. Use this as an opportunity to align your systems and policies with the applicable grant to allow for a smooth grant lifecycle. Below are four focus areas to go consider when completing an internal evaluation:

01 Identify Applicable Roles and Staff

Identify applicable roles and the staff to create accountability. Applicable roles can include:

- Business Manager (BM)
- Federal Programs Coordinator (FPC)
- Superintendent
- Grant Administrator



02 Evaluate and Align Financial Systems

Align financial management systems to match the grant framework, and accounting and reporting requirements.

- PA Chart of accounts
- Allowability of costs
- Internal coding structures



03 Review Procurement Processes and Policies

Review procurement processes and policies and update to align with grant guidelines.

Define the following during your review:

- Current procurement procedures
- Procurement thresholds
- Responsible personnel



04 Determine Required Documentation

Create a documentation retention process to support the grant program and related expenditures to account for:

- Closeout documents
- Financial and procurement documents
- Programmatic documents
- Relevant communications



Framework Creation



Frameworks are set up to **establish** the **expectations** and **timelines** to have **effective grant implementation** over the grant lifecycle. Here are some potential focus areas to consider when creating your team's foundation and framework:

Examples of Performance Goals:

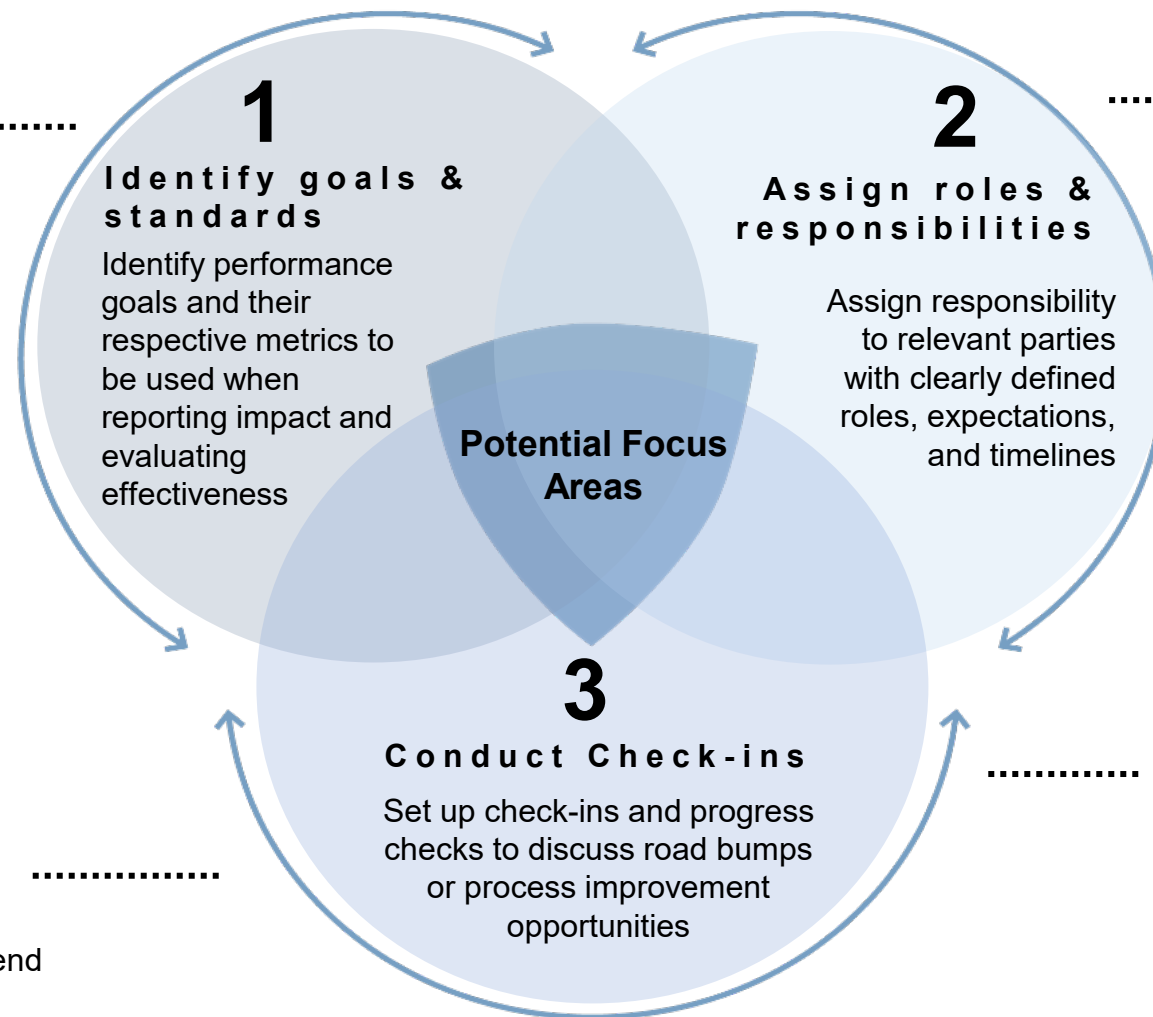
- **Timely Milestones:** Determine specific project milestones are met on schedule.
- **Budget Adherence:** Monitor spending to stay within budget.
- **Outcome Achievement:** Measure grant impact and outcomes.

Standards to Measure Results:

- **Quantitative Metrics:** Use measurable indicators (e.g., beneficiaries served)..
- **Qualitative Metrics:** Gather stakeholder and beneficiary feedback to assess impact.

Effective Times for Check-ins:

- **Quarterly Reports:** Align with quarterly report submissions.
- **Year-End:** Conduct a full year-end review and reconciliation.



Leading Practices for Assigning Responsibility:

- **Role Clarity:** Define each role and its responsibilities.
- **Backup Plans:** Identify backups for continuity.
- **Regular Updates:** Certify progress updates are provided regularly.

Set Reoccurring Check-Ins In Order To:

- **Progress:** Review achievements and deviations.
- **Challenges and Roadblocks:** Discuss encountered obstacles.
- **Improvements:** Brainstorm and implement process improvements.

Reflection Corner 1...

How many state, local, and federal programs does your team manage?





Addressing Observations

- Understanding noncompliance
- Identifying an observation's root cause
 - Implementing corrective action

Understanding Noncompliance



Instances of noncompliance identified during monitoring visits serve to **inform** Subrecipients of existing **compliance gaps** and areas of improvement. Leveraging the information contained within these documented instances and recommended practices can act as a guide for improving compliance with grant program requirements. Below is the framework utilized for ESSER Monitoring observations and its intended purpose.

GRANT PROGRAM	AREA OF REVIEW	OBSERVATION	BACKGROUND DISCUSSION	REGULATORY GUIDANCE	ASSOCIATED RISK	RECOMMENDED PRACTICE
This information includes:						
Designates the regulatory framework required to be followed	Provides a general category of practice that requires review	Outlines a compliance gap with standardized language from regulations	Provides additional context to the observation, which may help identify a root cause	Cites applicable regulations by grant type, area of review, and/or relevant leading practice	Outlines the outcome of nonaction and serve as a gauge of potential consequences	Illustrates the compliant practice
Leverage the information to:						
Assess the regulatory requirements	Identify deficient functions	Pinpoint required improvements	Identify root causes of the observation	Learn leading and regulatory practices	Provide compliance insight	Goal-set and target changes



Identifying An Observation's Root Cause

Using cited regulatory guidance, identify policies, procedures, and leading practices relevant to the observation and area of review. Reconcile written policies against practiced and documented procedures to identify inconsistencies in existing grants administration practices.

Evaluate existing grant infrastructure

1

- *What existing department does the observation fall under?*
- *How does information flow through the organization?*
- *Are there clearly established communication channels?*

Identify and define task responsibility

2

- *Have main points of contact been identified within the workflow?*
- *Is information and/or responsibility siloed?*
- *Is there a balanced separation of duties?*

Explore associations among contributing factors

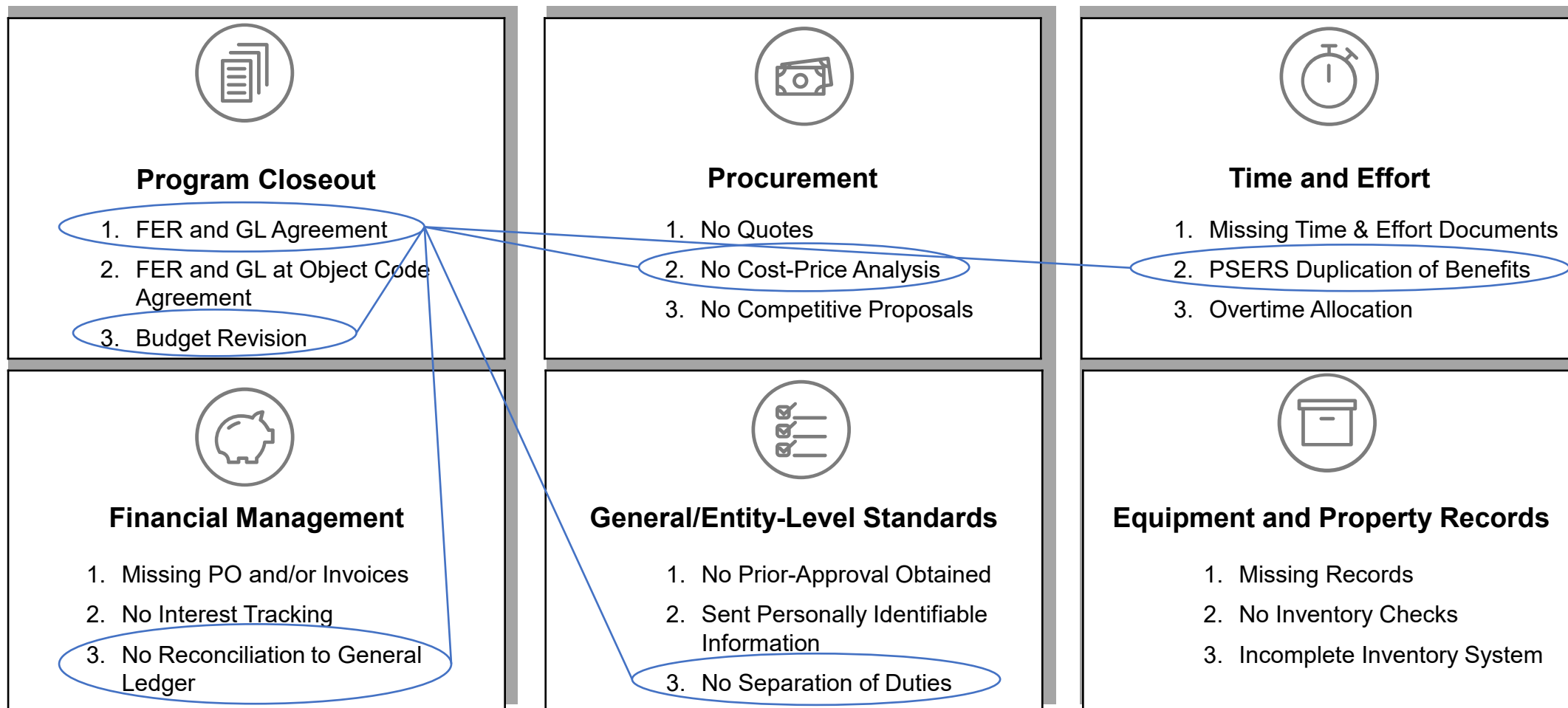
3

- *Does one compliance gap create or exacerbate another?*
- *Have previous risk assessments identified weakness in other areas?*
- *Will a short-term fix create a long-term problem?*

Identifying The Root Cause



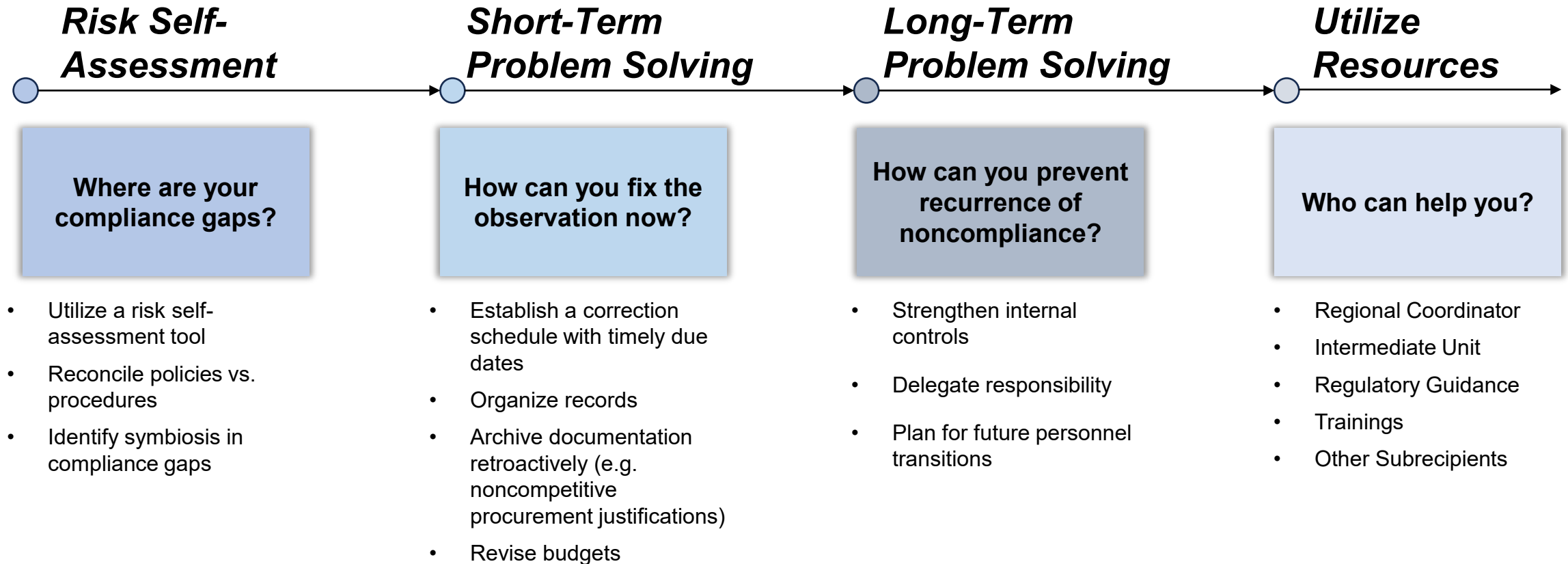
Observations are categorized by **Area of Review**. However, these **observations** can often be **traced back** to one or more other **control gaps**, meaning that **sometimes one gap creates or influences another**. Below are examples of common observations that are occasionally associated with one another:



Implementing Corrective Action



Building on the lessons learned, gather the tools and resources to create a strategic response plan. Assign responsibilities, monitor timely progress is achieved, and empower the team to act.



Which of the following is a recommended practice for improving compliance with grant program requirements?

- a) Ignoring minor discrepancies
- b) Leveraging documented instances of noncompliance and recommended practices
- c) Reducing the number of monitoring visits
- d) Increasing staff workload without additional resources





Managing Staff Turnover

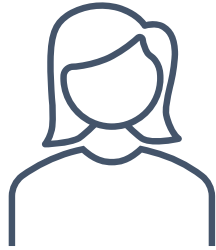
- Determine staff responsibilities
- Unexpected vs. expected transition
 - Post departure considerations

Reflection Corner 2...

Have you directly
experienced staff turnover
in your business office?



Determine Staff Responsibilities



Business Manager at XYZ School District

Possible Roles:

- (a) Fulfill Reporting Requirements
- (b) Track Interest Earned
- (c) Maintain Documents



Green Flags

(a)

Developing written procedures for drafting cash on hands

(b)

Training staff on how to update the interest tracking calculation monthly

(c)

Retaining documents in a central depository with appropriate authorized access



Red Flags

Conducting cash on hand reconciliations independently each quarter

Calculating interest earned once a year independently

Retaining individual paper copies in their office in unlabeled filing cabinets

Unexpected Vs. Expected Turnover



Unexpected Turnover

Your Business Manager puts in their 2 weeks



Timeline

- Initiate transition of roles and responsibilities upon notification



Documents

- Gather documents or reports maintained by staff member
- Reconcile currently available documents to compliance requirements



Procedure

- Transfer user access rights
- Update POCs and other systematic changes

Similarities



Gather relevant files and reports



Collaborate across departments



Leverage risk assessment tool

Expected Turnover

Your Business Manager is retiring next school year



Timeline

- Phase transition of roles and responsibilities across fiscal year



Documents

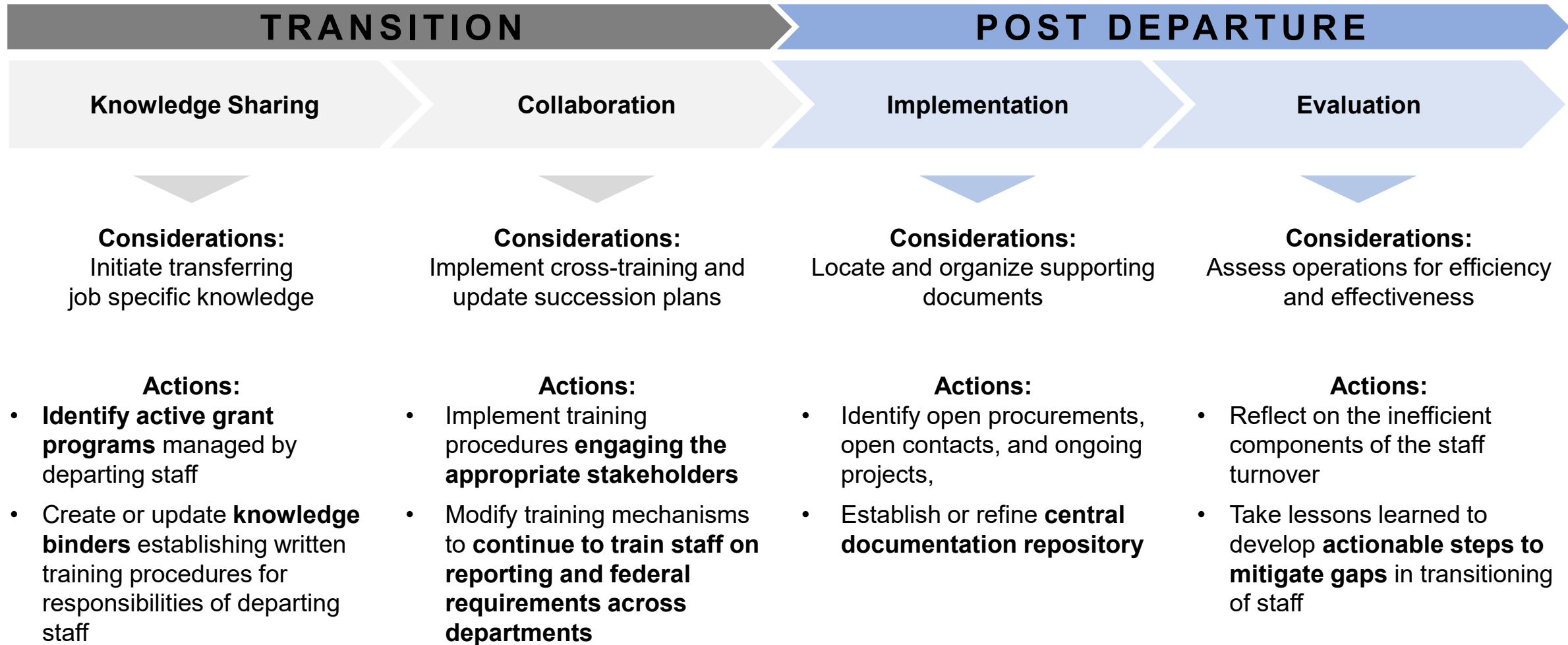
- Assess document repository for complete grant records and identify existing gaps
- Trace employee's paper/electronic trails to find missing documentation



Procedure

- Conduct cross training to explain nuances and lessons learned
- Evaluate ERP systems for opportunities to modernize

Post Departure Considerations



Reflection Corner 3...

What have you learned
from this Fire Jumper
Bootcamp session?





Capturing Our Journey

Preparing For And Adapting to a Grant

- Evaluate the landscape of allowable uses and specific dates
- Equip yourself with the required tools, policies and procedures
- Solidify the foundation that will keep you compliant until the end

Addressing Observations

- Assess the summary report to gain understanding of the situation
- Identify the symbiosis of contributing factors to identify root cause
- Implement corrective measures to prevent further noncompliance

Managing Staff Turnover

- Monitor for red flags that could put your program integrity at risk
- Take precautions to enable smooth transition
- Reflect on areas for improvement in a post departure environment



Questions?



Contact/Mission

For more information on the (the topic of the presentation) please visit PDE's website at www.education.pa.gov

The mission of the Department of Education is to ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. Further, the Department seeks to establish a culture that is committed to improving opportunities throughout the commonwealth by ensuring that technical support, resources, and optimal learning environments are available for all students, whether children or adults.