



# Target Recovery Funds to Support Sustainable Change

## How states, districts and schools can harness SREB's Problem-Solving Process

As schools, districts and states plan to use a massive infusion of recovery funds, the **Southern Regional Education Board's research-based, classroom-tested problem-solving process** can help you ensure your efforts to improve student engagement and achievement have a lasting impact.

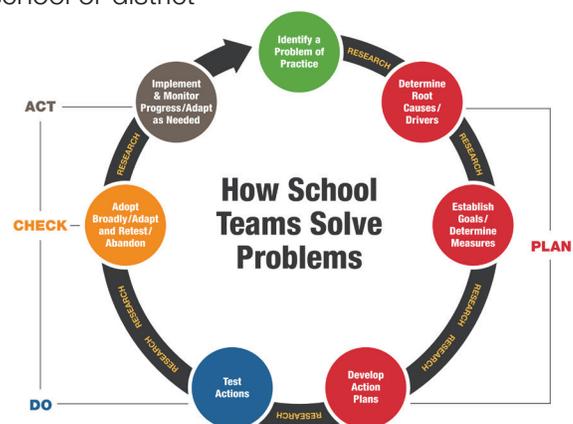
With support from SREB, school focus teams explore the **root causes** of their unique instructional problems, draw on **educational research** to identify potential solutions to those problems, **test strategies** to determine which have measurable impacts and **share what works** — and what doesn't — with their colleagues.

### Why It Works: Harness the Power of Focus Teams

Magic happens when focus teams ([see our Focus Teams Guide](#)) of school leaders dig deep into school data to find potential barriers to student success. Based on the Deming model, SREB's Plan, Do, Check, Act problem-solving cycle allows for rapid, simple, small-scale tests to determine whether potential solutions lead to measurable improvement.

SREB's structured protocols and evidence-based processes promote diversity and empower each team member to contribute their voice and talents to tackle tough problems. Teams:

- Develop a shared, student-focused goal
- Build a deep understanding of complex, challenging problems and the systems that produce them
- Develop potential solutions and test and refine those solutions
- Share successful solutions with others in the school or district



## How It Works: Explore the Problem-Solving Process

### **PLAN: Identify problems, find root causes, set goals and measures, and develop a plan**

Focus teams look for the probable causes of problems and seek out opportunities to effect change. By asking what they're trying to accomplish, which changes might result in improvement and how to recognize whether change has occurred, teams can identify:

- The root causes of the problem
- The factors that drive improvement
- Research-based evidence of what works
- Essential questions that need answers
- How to learn from failures to improve plans and strategies

### **DO: Test planned actions**

The next step is for focus teams to test potential strategies in a classroom or school setting. Tests are small and nimble, allowing team members to quickly document their observations, collect data, identify stumbling blocks and spotlight unexpected findings. Teams ask:

- What strategy can we try?
- What specific activities are part of this strategy?
- What data should we collect?
- How can we easily organize and share our data with the full focus team?



### **CHECK: Study test results**

During this phase, focus teams assess their strategy to determine what they've learned and compare results to what they hoped to achieve. Members then use this knowledge to better understand their problem and later adjust, adopt or abandon the tested strategy. Teams ask:

- How are our strategies working?
- What does the data tell us — or not tell us? Could other factors impact our data?
- What can we celebrate? Did we achieve our goal?
- What can we improve, based on the data and outcomes we observed?

### **ACT: Adapt, adopt, abandon**

During this phase, focus teams use their data and learning to decide whether to:

- Adapt: Modify the changes and repeat the cycle
- Adopt: Consider expanding the changes to additional individuals, teams or classrooms
- Abandon: Change the team's approach and repeat the Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle

### **Learn More**

At SREB, we've spent decades investigating what works to build and sustain lasting capacity for change in schools nationwide. Let us help you harness the power of our problem-solving process to meet bold goals for student achievement. To get started, contact [maw@creb.org](mailto:maw@creb.org).