RAND/MPR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Secondary/Post-Secondary Differences

Clarify the appropriate “level(s)” for the interview. Is the respondent knowledgeable about secondary vocational education, post-secondary, or both? Is s/he willing to discuss secondary issues, post-secondary or both? [Adjust questions accordingly.]

Nature of statewide measures and standards

I mailed MPR’s summary description of [state’s] standards and measures and asked you to update it to reflect any errors or changes. [Show document] Are any revisions necessary?

Are these measures or standards likely to change this year? If so, how?

Are there plans to review or revise the measures / the standards in the future? If so, what will be done?

States can use their measures and standards for many purposes, for example, evaluating instructor effectiveness; which purposes are most important in [state] at the secondary / post-secondary level?

(Other purposes: monitoring statewide performance, holding programs accountable for outcomes, allocating resources, providing individual student information)

Can you rank the purposes in order of importance? How do you know?

Importance of measures and standards vis-à-vis other vocational education initiatives

How important are measures and standards relative to other vocational education efforts?

— relative to other Perkins requirements, such as Tech Prep, integration of academic and vocational education, special populations, etc.?
— relative to other state-initiated vocational efforts?
— important in terms of actions (e.g., staff activities, resource commitments)

What kinds of activities have occurred? Can you give examples?
— important in terms of long-range impact (e.g., broader reform agenda)

Which changes will be the most lasting? Why do you think this is so?

Note: Clarify secondary / post-secondary differences

Clarify importance in terms of the interests of special populations

Would [state] have taken these actions if there had not been a federal requirement?

What evidence is there that [state] was moving in this direction on its own?

Are measures and standards supportive of or antagonistic to other vocational education reform efforts?

Which other vocational initiatives? How are they complementary or how do they conflict?

Integration of vocational education accountability with other educational reforms

Looking at educational reform more broadly, what are [state’s] current reform efforts in general and academic education?

How do these initiatives relate to accountability in vocational education?

For example,

Is accountability an important issue in general and academic education? What is being done to promote accountability?

How have vocational education measures and standards affected this process? Why or why not?
Is reform of assessment an important item in general and academic education? What assessment reforms are occurring? How do they relate to vocational education measures? Why or why not?

Is [state] trying to develop or improve its student data system for general and academic education? What efforts are under way? How do these relate to vocational education data collection? Why or why not? Can you identify special populations in your current data system?

Are there new programs to provide services to handicapped students, disadvantaged students or students with limited English proficiency? What is the nature of these programs? How do they relate to the requirements for service to special populations in vocational education? Why or why not?

(Possibilities: general and vocational reforms contradict, are not related at all, are using similar approaches but remain separate, are integrated into a single system)

Do you think vocational education accountability will play a greater or lesser role in general education reform in the future? Why?

**Implementation of measures and standards**

What steps have been taken to implement performance measures and standards in [state] from the time they were adopted until the present?

What have state agencies done in the areas of:

- Dissemination of information about the measures and standards?
- Staff Development and Technical Assistance?
- Data Collection?
- Reporting?
- Monitoring state and local actions?

Which agencies/personnel have been involved?
What actions have they taken?
How do these activities differ from the activities they were doing in the past?

What level of resources is being devoted to the implementation of standards and measures? (e.g., How many staff are involved?)

What have local programs done in these same areas? How does this differ from what they did in the past?

What are the major problems that have been encountered in implementing measures and standards?

How have attitudes toward measures and standards changed as the system has been developed and implemented? Improved? Grown more hostile?

**Technical issues regarding measures and standards**

What is the state doing to assess the reliability and fairness of the measures?

Do you have any specific information about the quality of the measures?

How important is comparability of data between programs?

Will your system provide comparable data at the program level? How do you know?

What is the state doing to assess the validity of the standards?

How were standards set?

Do you plan to review or revise the standards in the future?

Do you permit local modifications to standards? Why or why not? If so, how well are they working?

What is being done to encourage service to special populations?

Are you using incentives or adjustments? Why or why not?
Use of measures and standards

How are measures and standards supposed to be used at the state level (e.g., for monitoring, accountability, funding)?

How will they be reported, and to whom?

How will data be reported, and to whom?

What use will be made of the information?

What use will be made of the information?

What is the state doing to affect the local use of this information?

Are people concerned about the possible abuse of the measures and standards (e.g., creating incentives for programs to admit only the most qualified students)?

What problems do you foresee? Why or why not?

Assistance and Support for Measures and Standards

What kinds of technical support do state offices need to implement measures and standards (e.g., specialized training)?

Have you tried to obtain outside support? From whom?

What kinds of technical assistance is needed at the local level?

What is the state doing to provide it?

What support will be provided specifically to encourage the use of measures and standards for local program improvement?

What is the state’s role in local program improvement?
Effects of measures and standards

What effects have the measures and standards had so far (e.g., shifting responsibility from the state to the local level)?

— on state agencies?
— on local programs?
— on the relationship between state agencies and local programs?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of standards from the point of view of:

— your agency?
— other state agencies?
— local programs?
— business and industry?