



**Collaboration for Safe and Healthy  
Schools: Study of Coordination Between  
School Climate Transformation Grants  
and Project AWARE**



# **Collaboration for Safe and Healthy Schools: Study of Coordination Between School Climate Transformation Grants and Project AWARE**

## **FINAL REPORT**

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Policy and Program Studies Service

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# Executive Summary

Safe schools with positive climates cannot be achieved by any one education office or department alone; professionals across disciplines, including instruction, counseling, and mental health, must work together to achieve this goal (Barrett, Eber, and Weist 2012; Osher et al. 2014). The purpose of this study was to examine the nature and extent of coordination occurring in school districts and state departments of education that were awarded federal grants related to improving school climate and increasing access to mental health services. These awards were made as part of the Now Is the Time initiative, which was established in response to the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in December 2012.

The federal agencies involved in the initiative designed three grant programs to increase the capacity of staff in state education and school district offices to better coordinate with one another. One such grant program, the U.S. Department of Education's School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) program, aims to promote safer schools and more positive school climate and safer schools by using an evidence-based framework known as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is a schoolwide approach to behavior and learning that emphasizes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behavior to create positive school environments. The second program, the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Project Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education (Project AWARE), aims to promote better student access to mental health services by training school staff to notice, understand, and respond to signs of psychological distress among students. The third program, the Department of Justice's Keep Kids in School and Out of Court, also was part of the Now Is the Time initiative, but it had only one grantee in common with the SCTG program and is not included in this report.

Coordination across these grantees was expected to occur within the MTSS framework, which organizes behavioral and instructional interventions for students into tiers based on the group of students served: Tier 1 supports all students, Tier 2 supports groups of students at risk, and Tier 3 supports individual students who have more intensive service needs. All supports aim to promote positive behavioral outcomes (personal, health, social, and family) and learning outcomes for all students. State grantees were expected to coordinate their technical assistance to school districts, particularly regarding the integration of comprehensive school climate and mental health services into MTSS. District grantees were expected to coordinate by developing, enhancing, or expanding MTSS in schools in ways that would improve the processes through which students would be identified and referred for service and would provide school staff with training in mental health awareness and literacy.

This study examined how the nine states and 27 school districts that participated in both SCTG and Project AWARE used the two programs to provide coordinated services and supports. More specifically, the study examined the mechanisms and practices used in coordination, grantee perceptions regarding the value of coordinating, and the challenges and lessons learned from collaborative efforts. The study used a conceptualization of coordination as a continuum, with simple information sharing at the low end and mutual responsibility and accountability at the high end, to examine the degree to which training, planning, communication, and shared organizational structures were implemented in the study sites. The study involved 136 telephone interviews with state and district staff in sites that received both SCTG and Project AWARE grants, as well as reviews of grant applications and federal reports.

## Key Findings

Key findings from this study include the following:

- Grantee coordination involved joint training, coordinated planning, communication, and the development of shared organizational structures. Most grantees (69 percent) were involved in at least a moderate level of coordination.
- Better integration of efforts to improve school climate with mental health services (e.g., by training staff in student identification and referral practices) was the most commonly reported accomplishment of coordination for grantees (75 percent).
- Regarding factors that inhibited coordination, districts most often described limited resources (including time, staff, or funds), whereas states more often reported lacking common goals or understanding and having different philosophies.
- Planning activities that grantees stated they wished they had done differently included establishing a team as soon as feasible, leveraging existing teams, clarifying goals early on, and mapping resources to determine which services and strategies were already in place to avoid redundancies.
- Lessons learned about communication included the importance of messaging, helping stakeholders understand the need for and goals of the grant, and connecting these goals to the district's mission and other initiatives and strategies.

## Study Methods

### **Sample**

This study focused on coordination that occurred in sites that received both an SCTG from the Department of Education and a Project AWARE grant from the Department of Health and Human Services. Therefore, only those state education agencies and school districts that were awarded both grants were asked to participate. Nine state education agencies and 27 school districts received awards from both programs, for a total of 36 sites that were included in the study.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The study was informed by extant data and semistructured interviews with project staff. Telephone interviews were conducted between December 2016 and February 2017 and explored whether and how these grantees reported coordinating their work, what benefits they perceived by coordinating multiple grants, and the challenges and lessons learned from coordination. At each site, the study team interviewed between three and six individuals, including the project directors for each grant. In total, 136 people across both the state and district groups (97 district staff and 39 state staff) participated in the interviews.

Extant data collected from the two grants included grantee applications and coordination plans, which provided contextual information and grantees' proposed plans for coordination across the grant

programs. *Government Performance and Results Act* data also were examined for grants from the Department. These data included performance measures for the outcomes of the grants.

Data analysis used a qualitative coding scheme to extract relevant information from the applications, reports, and transcripts of the interviews. All interview transcripts were coded both within (by interviewee) and across grant sites. State and district grant sites were analyzed separately and are reported separately and combined as “all grantees.”

## Study Limitations

The findings reported for this study are limited to some degree by the fact that although respondents were identified for interviews based on their role in coordination, not all respondents were knowledgeable about work and coordination activities occurring beyond their immediate responsibilities. In some instances, personnel most knowledgeable about coordination were no longer employed by a site.

## Summary of Findings

### ***How SCTG and Project AWARE Grantees Coordinated***

**Grantee coordination involved joint training, coordinated planning, communication, and the development of shared organizational structures.**

To address the question of how grantees coordinated, the study gathered data on the activities that consistently composed coordination efforts. **Joint training** was the most common strategy identified by 21 of 27 school districts and all nine states. It involved incorporating content from one grant into the training of the other or training staff from each grant program together.

**Coordinated planning** was mentioned by 14 of 27 school districts and seven of nine states and included activities such as creating or redefining positions; establishing or revising the scope of work for leadership teams; engaging community stakeholders, families, and youth; scheduling training; supervising implementation; and monitoring data. Promoting alignment and minimizing duplication across school services (e.g., bullying prevention, social skills development, attendance support, and school climate) were key examples of coordination.

**Communication** as a coordination strategy included attendance at meetings with representatives from both grants, cosponsored parents’ nights, regular correspondence in the form of newsletters or updates, and the sharing of collected data. Of the 27 school districts, 14 highlighted communication as a coordination strategy, and all nine states noted that communication was one means of coordinating.

Finally, eleven of the 27 school districts and all nine states indicated that they used **organizational structures** to coordinate work across grants. This mechanism involved using a staff position, team, or office to coordinate information, work, and responsibility across two or more organizations. Examples included the intentional overlap of positions across grants, a dedicated team or committee that involved representatives from the two federal grants, and external partnerships (e.g., community groups and mental health clinics).

**Most grantees were involved in at least a moderate level of coordination. Overall, states exhibited a higher level of coordination activities than did districts.**

More than half of the districts and all state sites (69 percent of the grantees) were engaged in at least moderate levels of coordination; only two grantees had low levels of coordination. The degree of coordination was determined not by the type of activity but by the degree to which it was shared. At the low level, grantees shared information about their work. At the moderate level, staff across both grants worked together and planned events and activities, and their relationships were altered to some degree by the shared nature of their work. Grantees in the high range shared goals and resources and were mutually responsible and jointly accountable for success.

**The SCTG applications did not provide many details about what coordination would entail or how sites would work with other projects.**

All grantees indicated that their SCTG application addressed the competitive preference priority for coordination with Project AWARE or other funding opportunities. However, beyond reporting that coordination would take place, coding and analysis of the grant applications showed that grantees generally did not provide details about what this coordination would entail or how they would work with other projects. When specific coordination mechanisms were noted, they most commonly included training staff (such as training on the YMHFA curriculum) to build capacity or share resources across projects, such as having a single coordinator or a team with representatives from both grants.

### ***The Value of Coordination***

**Better integration of efforts to improve school climate with mental health services (e.g., by training staff in student identification and referral practices) was the most commonly reported accomplishment of coordination for grantees (75 percent).**

When Project AWARE and SCTG projects work together, the focus of the overlapping efforts is the integration of a schoolwide behavioral support framework with a systematic approach to identifying students in need of mental health services. This integration of efforts produced a positive, safe school climate and array of mental health services that the interview respondents identified as the primary accomplishment of grantees' coordination efforts. Grantees at the district (20 of 27) and state levels (seven of nine) indicated that through collaboration, they could enhance interventions for students, create teams, and more effectively meet students' needs than they could with either grant operating in isolation.

**Slightly more than half of the grantees (53 percent) described increased efficiency in the delivery of services as the primary advantage of grant coordination, followed by stronger relationships (42 percent) and working across disciplines (42 percent). States were consistently more likely to report these advantages than were districts.**

Other advantages reported by states and districts included better professional networks with community groups or feeder schools. For states, the creation of state management teams provided opportunities for staff to work with community partners and with staff across disciplines; this would not have happened had states not received funding for both grant programs.

## **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

**Regarding factors that inhibited coordination, districts most often described limited resources (including time, staff, or funds), whereas states more often reported lacking common goals or understanding and having different philosophies.**

Examples cited by the district respondents included not having enough funds to pay people for participating in training or pay for the substitute teachers that would allow them to attend the training required for MTSS or Project AWARE. Time also was a limiting resource, with multiple demands on time making it hard for school staff to attend training and meetings. A state-level Project AWARE respondent said,

*I think the only way that collaboration for us was inhibited was in having some murky understanding of what the outcomes or expectations [of collaboration] were. It's hard to feel like what you've done was effective. . . when you're not entirely sure of all the goals.*

**Grantees reported that federal officials expected coordination across grants, and about half (53 percent) reported receiving federal support specifically designed to help them achieve this goal.**

Grantees acknowledged that federal agencies communicated their expectation of coordination by providing additional points in scoring applications, helping them make local contacts, and including all grantees in annual national meetings. Thirteen of 27 school districts and six of nine states had respondents who indicated that the funding agencies provided direct support for coordination, including reflecting on coordination plans, providing feedback and suggestions, and following up on progress.

**The importance of planning and the value of communication were the most commonly reported lessons learned for grantees (56 percent each).**

Planning activities that grantees stated they wished they had done differently included establishing a team as soon as feasible, leveraging existing teams, clarifying goals early on, and mapping resources to determine which services and strategies were already in place to avoid redundancies. Grantees also noted the importance of engaging key stakeholders early in the process and educating them about the grant (e.g., plans and progress updates). Lessons learned about communication included the importance of messaging, helping stakeholders understand the need for and goals of the grant, and connecting these goals to the district's mission and other initiatives and strategies.





## Introduction

Schools can work toward achieving safe, positive environments by integrating a behavioral support framework for students with a systematic approach to identifying students in need of mental health services. This study of the U.S. Department of Education’s School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) program examined how participating states and school districts worked to achieve this goal by coordinating services and supports with Project Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education (Project AWARE), which is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Findings were based on data gathered through two sources: (1) telephone interviews with grantees to explore the ways in which services were coordinated, the benefits experienced from program coordination, and challenges and lessons learned and (2) grantee applications and reports to understand how coordination was originally conceptualized and the extent to which grantee goals were being met. Grantee districts and states were assigned ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 for the degree to which their grant activities were shared; these ratings contextualized the descriptions provided in interviews and documents to help understand the intensity of coordination. This study described the coordination that occurred, related the perceived value and benefits of coordination, and presented challenges and lessons learned.

## Background

Schools in the United States have shown steady declines in violence and victimization since the early 1990s, when the Department began tracking these indicators. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics reported there were 841,000 violent victimizations<sup>1</sup> in schools in 2015 (Musu-Gillette et al. 2017), down from 1.4 million in 2005 and 3.8 million in 1995 (Dinkes et al. 2006). However, following the school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012, a comprehensive initiative titled *Now Is the Time* was introduced to promote a safe learning environment for students in schools (White House 2013). Among [this initiative’s goals](#), two were directly relevant to this study: (1) making schools safer and more nurturing and (2) increasing access to mental health services so that students and young adults who need supports or interventions receive them.

*Now Is the Time* laid a foundation for the federal grant programs that were the subject of this study. The Department created and administers the SCTG program, which aims to create a safer climate at schools by supporting the development, enhancement, or expansion of systems of behavioral support at both the state and local levels. HHS aims to address the *Now Is the Time* goal of promoting access to mental health services through Project AWARE, which trains adults in school systems to notice and address signs of mental health distress among young people. At the state level, Project AWARE also funds a variety of initiatives to assist states in supporting district implementation of school safety and student development programming (e.g., bullying prevention, social and emotional learning, and conflict resolution). A third federal program, the U.S. Department of Justice’s (DOJ’s) School Justice Collaboration Program: Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court, aims to address both *Now Is the Time* goals by using evidence-based reforms to create positive school climates, promote positive discipline, minimize exclusionary discipline, and avoid unnecessary referrals from schools to juvenile justice and law enforcement. Although the study team collected data from a DOJ grantee, only one DOJ site overlapped with an SCTG grant, so it was

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<sup>1</sup> “Violent victimizations” include simple assault (threats and attacks without a weapon or serious injury) as well as rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

excluded from the analyses presented in this report. The Department contracted the study described in this report to examine how states and school districts participating in the SCTG program and Project AWARE were coordinating services and supports across both grant programs (U.S. Department of Education 2015).

The purpose of the SCTG is to develop, enhance, or expand a multi-tiered behavioral framework,<sup>2</sup> known as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), to promote a more positive school climate and safer schools for all students. Although MTSS frameworks often include tiered instructional supports (e.g., response to intervention), the SCTGs included a focus on the behavioral aspects of student support. Effective interagency coordination at the district and state levels is important for supporting school-level implementation of MTSS (Algozzine et al. 2014). The primary goal driving this study was to better understand the ways in which SCTG and Project AWARE conducted their work in a coordinated manner and learn about the perceived benefits and challenges of coordination.

The conceptualization of coordination used for this study looked at a fixed set of activities (training, planning, communication, and having shared organizational structures) and rated reports of how these were coordinated along a continuum from simple information sharing at the low end to shared responsibility and accountability at the high end (Osher 2002). Grantee sites were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the degree to which these activities were shared.

Focusing on the nine states and 27 school districts that had both grants, the study was informed by interviews with 136 state and district staff from both grants. The interviews were conducted by telephone between December 2016 and February 2017 and explored whether and how these grantees reported coordinating their work, what benefits they perceived from coordinating multiple grants, and the perceived challenges and lessons learned from coordination. In addition, federal program offices supplied extant data (grant applications and grantee reports). The specific evaluation questions were as follows:

1. How did grantees coordinate the SCTG program with Project AWARE?
2. What did grantees report about the value of coordination?
3. What were the challenges and lessons learned?

## ***Description of the Grant Programs***

### ***School Climate Transformation Grants***

The SCTG program, administered by the Department's Office of Safe and Healthy Students and initially authorized by Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2, Section 4121 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, as amended by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, provides support for the implementation of an evidence-based MTSS framework. MTSS is a framework for schoolwide behavior management that emphasizes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behavior to create positive school environments. Instead of using piecemeal individual behavior management plans, a continuum of positive behavior support for all students in a school is implemented in both classroom and nonclassroom settings (e.g., hallways, buses, and restrooms). Supports for student behavior are

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<sup>2</sup> A "behavioral framework" is a way of organizing actions in a school to support students' positive behavior and provide appropriate and effective consequences for disruptive or other problematic behavior. In some schools, mental health supports also are part of a behavioral framework.

organized into tiers based on the group of students served: Tier 1 supports all students, Tier 2 supports groups of students at risk, and Tier 3 supports individual students who have more intensive service needs. All supports aim to improve behavioral outcomes (personal, health, social, family, recreation) for all students by making negative behaviors less effective, efficient, and relevant and desired behavior more functional.

At the school district level, the goals of the SCTG program are to connect students and families to appropriate services and supports; improve conditions for learning and behavioral outcomes for school-age youth; and increase awareness of and the ability to respond to mental health issues among school-age youth.

At the state level, the SCTG program aims to support the enhancement and expansion of MTSS frameworks in schools and districts throughout the state. The state-level goals of the SCTG program are to develop, enhance, or expand statewide systems of support for school districts and schools implementing MTSS. Both state and district grantees are required to develop or enhance existing evidence-based MTSS behavioral frameworks toward achieving more positive school climates, greater school safety, fewer disciplinary actions, and improvement in learning environments.

In September 2014, the Department awarded 71 school districts and 12 states five-year SCTGs. Fiscal year 2014 awards totaled \$36 million for school districts and \$7 million for states, with a maximum annual grant amount for both states and districts of \$750,000 per year (U.S. Department of Education 2015). Applicants could receive competitive preference points if they included in their plans the coordination of the SCTG with related programs, such as the HHS-funded Project AWARE. Thus, the SCTG program included an explicit expectation that work would be coordinated in support of the MTSS framework.

### ***Project AWARE***

Project AWARE is administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in HHS and is authorized by Section 520A of the *Public Health Service Act*, as amended. It provides training in Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) to teachers and other adults who regularly interact with students. The YMHFA training is a mental health literacy program that introduces participants to the risk factors and observable symptoms of mental health problems in adolescents and teaches adults how to help youth who are in crisis or experiencing mental health or substance use issues. The training uses role playing and simulations to demonstrate how to assess a mental health crisis and connect young people to professional, peer, social, and self-help services. The goal of YMHFA is to train adults to recognize young people in need of help and provide referrals to appropriate mental health services.

Funding at the school district level supports the training of teachers, counselors, other school personnel (e.g., administrators, school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, playground attendants, athletic coaches, and trainers), emergency responders (e.g., police and firefighters), parents, caregivers, and other youth-serving adults in YMHFA.

Funding at the state level supports building and expanding districts' capacities to promote comprehensive school mental health and safety. Activities include helping districts increase the awareness of mental health issues among school-age youth and providing training for school personnel and other adults who interact with school-age youth to detect and respond to mental health issues. Project AWARE required that state grantees create a state management team with representatives from

education, state mental or behavioral health agencies, and other child- and family-serving agencies. The purpose of this team was to promote coordination; therefore, coordination for state grantees was hypothesized to be higher than for district grantees.

Each of the 20 Project AWARE state grantees was required to identify three school districts in their respective states that would implement YMHFA and serve as local laboratories for coordinated safe school efforts. The 60 districts in the state program were funded to engage in both comprehensive safe school efforts and YMHFA-focused work that paralleled the work of the 99 school districts funded through the Project AWARE district program.

In September 2014, HHS awarded five-year Project AWARE grants to 20 states and two-year grants to 99 school districts. The awards totaled \$34 million for states and \$9 million for school districts. The maximum annual grant amount was \$1.95 million per state grantee, \$50,000 per school district grantee, and \$125,000 per community grantee (U.S. Department of Education 2015). The HHS required that every Project AWARE applicant apply for an SCTG and also encouraged applicants to apply for the School Justice Collaboration Program grant.

## The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework

The MTSS framework organizes a continuum of services at multiple levels of intensity within a school. Services for all students may include teaching behavioral expectations or developing positive character traits. At higher levels of student need, such as those experiencing mental health issues, services may involve providers outside the immediate school setting. The processes of student identification, screening, referral, and care management that are necessary for effective service provision require strong coordination within schools and between schools and community-based providers and families (Barrett et al. 2012). This study explored whether districts and states that received federal grants to (1) build MTSS frameworks and (2) promote greater access to mental health services could develop the coordination necessary to integrate school mental health and the MTSS framework.

MTSS is not a program itself; it is a system of organizing programs or interventions so that they are delivered to appropriate students. Services can be provided to all students in a building (Tier 1), students who are at risk (Tier 2), or students in high need (Tier 3; see Exhibit 1).

Tier 1 in MTSS refers to the set of programs, interventions, and overall environments provided to all students in a building. Behavior management, bullying prevention, and family engagement are examples of practices or approaches that all students receive. School counselors may visit classes to provide structured lessons in social and emotional learning or character education. Schoolwide interventions supporting a positive school climate and promoting positive relationships also belong in Tier 1. Such interventions may include establishing norms; promoting strengths and positive adaptation; and preventing problems such as bullying, suicide, or substance abuse.

At Tier 2, schools provide services to students having some problems functioning successfully in school. Most school systems have counselors, social workers, or school psychologists on staff who can provide these services. Schools generally provide these services to small groups of students outside the regular classroom setting. Tier 2 services include social skills groups, peer mediation, or behavior plans that may involve a daily note home. In some instances, community-based organizations may be contracted to provide Tier 2 services in schools that have a limited capacity for student behavioral support. In these

cases, the school and the service provider would engage in some coordination to arrange the logistics for the services, as well as potentially integrating the service plan with the student’s schooling.

**Exhibit 1. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Description of tiers and examples of intervention activities**

Tier	Portion of target population	Examples of intervention activities
Tier 1: Supports for all students	All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set behavioral expectations collaboratively with students</li> <li>• Teach and reinforce positive behavior</li> <li>• Engage families</li> </ul>
Tier 2: Supports for students at risk	Approximately 5%–15% of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted social skills instruction</li> <li>• Peer-based supports or mediation</li> <li>• Daily note home</li> </ul>
Tier 3: Supports for the highest need students	Approximately 3%–5% of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional behavioral assessment and person-centered planning</li> <li>• Wraparound services</li> <li>• Coordination with youth-serving agencies (e.g., juvenile justice and child welfare)</li> </ul>

**Exhibit reads:** Tier 1 in MTSS targets all students in a school. An example of a Tier 1 intervention is setting behavioral expectations collaboratively with students.

Tier 3 refers to a more intensive level of services, such as individual therapy, functional behavioral assessment, wraparound services, or supervisory support for youth on probation. A student identified as needing additional supports may receive either Tier 2 or Tier 3 services or both. The level of coordination between school staff and mental health or other agency personnel tends to be higher at Tier 3 (Debnam, Pas, and Bradshaw 2012). Teachers may receive support or training from a specialist to implement behavioral interventions in the classroom, or teachers may be invited to attend treatment-planning meetings. Therapists may make recommendations to be implemented by school staff regarding behavior support for students at high risk, or counselors may be asked to coordinate in-school visits for youth in juvenile justice diversion programs.

An important point of connection between educators and personnel who promote access to mental health services (and between SCTG and Project AWARE) occurs in the process through which students in a school’s general population are identified and referred to school teams to receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 services. All sites in this study trained adults who work in and around a school to notice signs of mental health challenges, engage with the youth, and make appropriate referrals to Tier 2 or Tier 3 services.

**Continuum of Coordination**

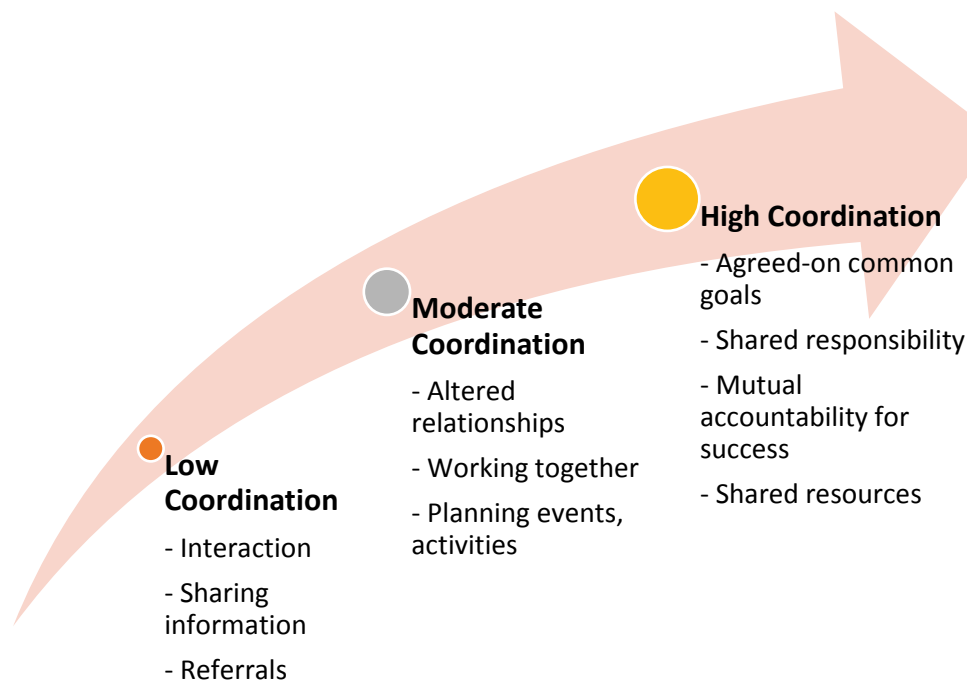
The focus of this evaluation was on the nature of coordination within sites implementing both SCTG and Project AWARE. To conceptualize levels of coordination for this study, the evaluation team examined the degree to which training, planning, communication, and organizational structures were implemented in separate ways or in a shared manner. The study applied a model that described a continuum of coordination ranging from low coordination at the more superficial end to high coordination at the more substantive end (Osher 2002).

- *Low coordination* involves simple agency interaction, implying agencies are aware of one another and interact to provide general information, support, or referral. For example, agency staff (e.g., mental health workers or school counselors) may know about each other and, in some cases, may even make referrals to each other without in any way altering the way they (or their agencies) conduct their business.
- *Moderate coordination* involves altering the relationships of independent organizations, staff, or resources. This level of coordination involves agency staff working together to plan and conduct activities.
- *High coordination* involves efforts to unite organizations and people to achieve common goals that could not be accomplished by a single individual or an organization acting alone. This level of coordination involves four key elements: (1) agreed-on common goals, (2) shared responsibility, (3) mutual accountability for success, and (4) shared resources.

The categories of coordination used in this report may be conceptualized as existing along a continuum (Exhibit 2).

### Exhibit 2. The continuum of coordination

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**Exhibit reads:** The continuum of coordination reflects progressive activities from simple interaction and information sharing at the low end toward agreed-on common goals and shared responsibility at the high end.

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This conceptualization served as a foundation to understand and code the responses that respondents provided to the interview questions posed for this study. Coordination ratings were independent of the types of activities described. The same activity, such as training, communication, or establishing a team, could be done in a way reflecting low, moderate, or high coordination. For example, if respondents described communication as primarily consisting of referrals or information sharing, this then constituted a low level of coordination. If communication involved shaping messages together with staff

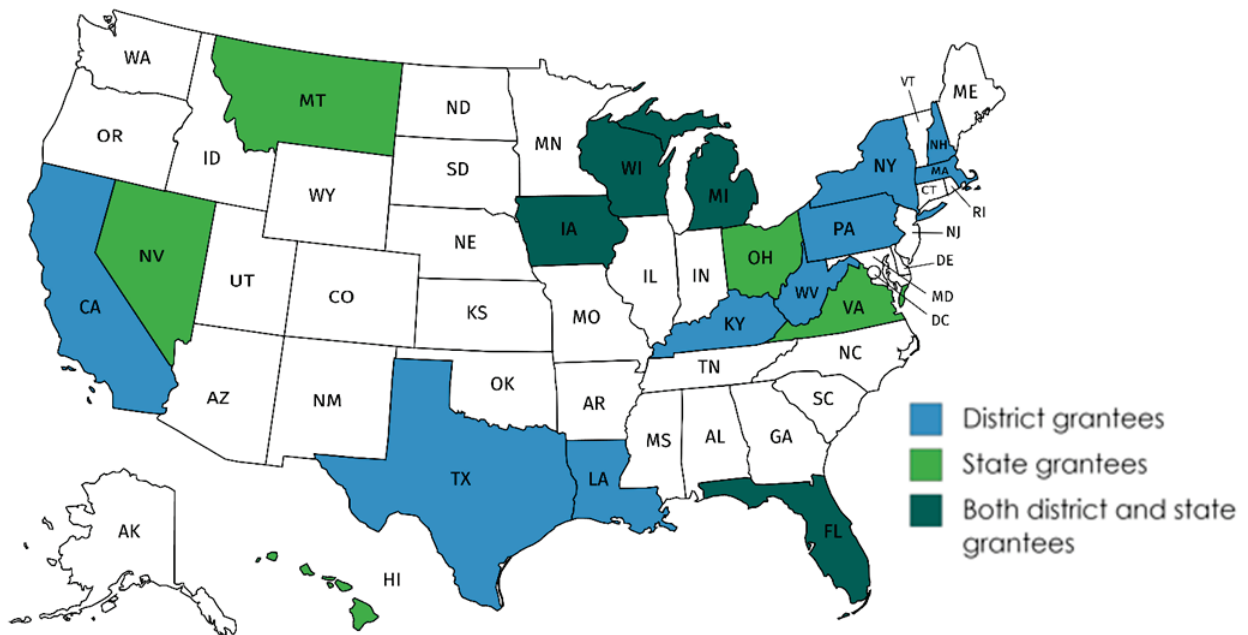
from another office, then a moderate level of coordination would be present. If communication involved jointly preparing a presentation or brief describing practices or outcomes that offices worked toward together, then a high level of coordination was present. These three levels of coordination served as ratings of 1, 3, and 5 on a 5-point coordination scale. A rating of 2 was given to sites for which activities were characterized as falling between low and moderate levels. A rating of 4 was given to sites falling between moderate and high coordination. The rubric used by study raters to assign coordination levels is described in Appendix A.

## Study Methods

### Study Sample

All states and school districts that were awarded both an SCTG and a Project AWARE grant were invited to participate. Twenty-seven school districts and nine states were eligible and all participated. Study participants were geographically distributed across 18 states (see Exhibit 3).

**Exhibit 3. Geographic distribution of district and state grantees**



**Exhibit reads:** State and district grantees participating in this study came from 18 states across the United States.

**Note:** The map created for this study used free software from Mapchart.net.

### Data Sources

Information for this study came from two data sources: extant data and semistructured interviews with project staff. Each data source is described in this section.

### ***Extant Data***

Federal program offices for the SCTG and Project AWARE programs supplied extant data as they became available. The grantees were required to submit the following data as part of their participation in the federal grant programs:

- *Grantee applications and coordination plans:* Applications and coordination plans provide contextual information and grantees' proposed plans for coordination across grant programs.
- Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) *data:* Grantees report GPRA performance measures established to assess the outcomes of the SCTG annually.

The GPRA data provide information about grantees' progress toward meeting SCTG goals. One indicator for district grantees was the number and percentage of schools implementing MTSS with fidelity (to the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports [PBIS] Technical Assistance Center's fidelity instrument). Data from this indicator were used to examine the association between coordination and MTSS implementation fidelity. Appendix B presents descriptive data on GPRA indicators for the grantees in this study.

### ***Staff Interviews***

At each of the 36 sites, the analysis team interviewed between three and six respondents, including the project directors for each grant. In total, 136 people across the state and district groups (97 district staff and 39 state staff) participated. All participant recruitment and interviews began with the project director identified in extant documents. Project directors are generally district office staff members who coordinate MTSS or work in the field of student support, such as counseling or school social work (or, in some districts, special education). We interviewed the project directors of both programs (in one of the nine states and in 11 of the 27 districts, one individual served as the project director for both grants) and asked them to recommend one to three potential staff to interview who fit the following characteristics:

- The most directly involved staff in coordinating activities with or collaborating with the other federal grant
- Staff actively engaged in implementing grant activities

We generally interviewed three people from district-level sites and four people at state-level sites. Interviews were recorded (with permission), and audio files were transcribed for analysis.

## **Analysis Methods**

The approach to analyzing the data consisted of coding the extant data (grantee applications and coordination plans) to gain a better understanding of the context and planned activities for each grantee and coding all interview transcripts.

### ***State- and District-Level Analyses***

Data were analyzed separately for district- and state-level grantees. Although the SCTGs awarded were the same size and duration at the district and state levels (\$750,000 per year for five years), the Project AWARE grants differed. State grants were much larger than the district grants (up to \$1,950,000 per year for states versus \$50,000 per year for districts) and longer (five years versus two years). In addition, the Project AWARE state grants mandated the creation of a state management team, which includes



representatives from education, state mental or behavioral health agencies, state criminal or juvenile justice agencies, youth and family representatives, and representatives from districts participating in the state grant. The explicit purpose of this organizational structure was to promote coordination. For this reason, ratings of coordination for state grantees were hypothesized to be higher than for district grantees.

### ***Data Coding***

The coding scheme for this study was based on the study questions. It included several high-level constructs, followed by low-level variables nested within them. The analysis team organized and coded data using NVivo analysis software, adhering to widely accepted qualitative methodological practices (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2013). These included assessing interrater agreement and establishing standards of evidence. Appendix C presents a series of tables showing the counts of codes related to the state and district findings for each research question.

To promote the integrity of the study findings, all study staff people were trained on the coding system. Interrater agreement was established by having all coders independently code a sample of the same document or transcript and then examine the results collectively. In cases of disagreement, the team referenced any applicable data sources and refined the code definition in question. This process was repeated until interrater reliability of at least 80 percent agreement was achieved. As coding proceeded, new constructs emerged and, with team consensus, were added to the coding scheme.

To develop the findings, the team integrated data across sources using standards of evidence to arrive at the results. That is, specific criteria had to be met to characterize a finding as reportable. Building on interrater agreement established during coding, groups of coded statements needed to (1) be salient to the research question, (2) unambiguously fit a specific category, and 3) be conspicuous in its prevalence across sites (e.g., consistent across all sites, prominent among states but not districts, or the reverse). For example, when asked about the advantages to grant coordination, comments concerning increased efficiency were found to be directly related to the research question of perceived value of coordination, fit the category of increased efficiency, and were reported by more than half of the states and districts. Throughout the process, the team engaged in ongoing consensus building on key themes and findings. When interviewees within a site disagreed with each other, we accepted each statement as valid to that respondent's perspective and developed findings for a site based on a combination of individual and consensus statements. The study team documented the analytic process by maintaining a record of coding queries and kept a record of changes made to the coding scheme.

### ***Coordination Ratings***

The study team constructed a rubric that produced an overall rating on a 5-point scale for each grantee site along the coordination continuum. Appendix A presents technical details of the rubric and sample quotes reflecting different points on the continuum. The lead analyst rated each interviewee's responses about training, planning, communication, and shared organizational structures for the degree to which information, execution, and accountability were shared for these activities (see Exhibit 4). The ratings were based only on respondents' description of coordination activities. Perceived value of coordination and challenges resulting from coordination were outcomes of coordination, not a basis for ratings.

**Exhibit 4. Levels of the coordination continuum, typical activities, and representative quotes**

Level of coordination	Typical activities	Representative quote
<b>Low</b> (rating of 1)	Interaction among grantee staff	“There’s kind of community of practice too because some districts share that information and we’re part of the PBIS Coalition so you get together with a lot of folks and share things.” [SCTG respondent]
	Sharing information across agencies	
	Referrals for mental health or other services	
<b>Moderate</b> (rating of 3)	Altered relationships among agencies	“Most of it was information sharing across the grants and making sure we understood what was happening in our partner districts . . . and how we might be able to offer a Youth Mental Health First Aid training through Project AWARE for those staff.” [Project AWARE respondent]
	Working together across agencies	
	Planning events and activities together	
<b>High</b> (rating of 5)	Agreed-on common goals	“When we’re doing our annual strategic planning for my department, although [name] and behavioral health, which encompasses [Project] AWARE, is technically a separate sub-department from mine, we come together to do that planning and talk. We set our vision for what our charge was for the year and sort of on board stars so to speak, what we’re working towards this year in terms of our efforts. We set that together. We sat down and spent hours going through what would schools look like and sound like and feel like? What are some of the different metrics and data points?” [SCTG respondent]
	Shared responsibility	
	Mutual accountability for success	
	Shared resources	

After each interviewee’s statements were scored for the degree to which they reflected coordination, an average was computed for that respondent. Next, the scores for all respondents within a grantee site were averaged. This average score represented the degree of coordination for the grantee site.<sup>3</sup>

**Study Limitations**

The findings reported for this study are limited to some degree by the fact that although respondents were identified for interviews based on their role in coordination, not all respondents were knowledgeable about work and coordination activities occurring beyond their immediate responsibilities. In some instances, personnel most knowledgeable about coordination were no longer employed by a site.

<sup>3</sup> Site coordination scores based on arithmetic averages across all respondents in a site were reviewed. For nine of 36 ratings, these scores were adjusted based on other evidence from the interview. Appendix C contains examples of the evidence used to adjust the ratings.

## Findings: Coordination Between SCTG and Project AWARE Grantees

SCTG grantees coordinating with mental health services through Project AWARE must confront the long history of disciplinary separation between schooling and mental health. Mental health services in schools are traditionally separate from instruction, even from special education (Atkins et al. 2010). The vision for coordination advanced through Now Is the Time is that mental wellness and access to services is promoted by not only a few adults in a school but also all staff. A district SCTG director reflected on the ways that Project AWARE helped him achieve his MTSS goals, noting how novel it was for school staff to address mental health issues:

*We learned that more than 20 percent of our kids may need additional help with mental health. We've trained over 600 people and referred over 2,000 kids that we would not have seen. We saw a decrease in high school [discipline] referrals. That was our biggest "aha" in secondary [schools].*

When a state or a district has both an SCTG and a Project AWARE grant, coordination involves, at a minimum, meetings. When implemented with fidelity, MTSS involves a leadership team that meets regularly to assess needs and select interventions, ensure implementation fidelity, manage resources, and use data to make decisions. In the absence of Project AWARE, respondents indicated that these teams did not always include a mental health representative. For example, in some districts, counseling, social work, and other mental health supports were administratively separate from MTSS, which often was housed in either the academic office or special education. By integrating Project AWARE with SCTG, mental health staff “crossed the aisle” and joined the leadership or implementation team for MTSS. District grantees reported that MTSS served as the overarching organizational framework into which their Project AWARE work fit.

The first question addressed by this study was how grantees achieved this coordination. In this chapter, key findings about the nature of the coordination are described, and examples from interviews are provided.

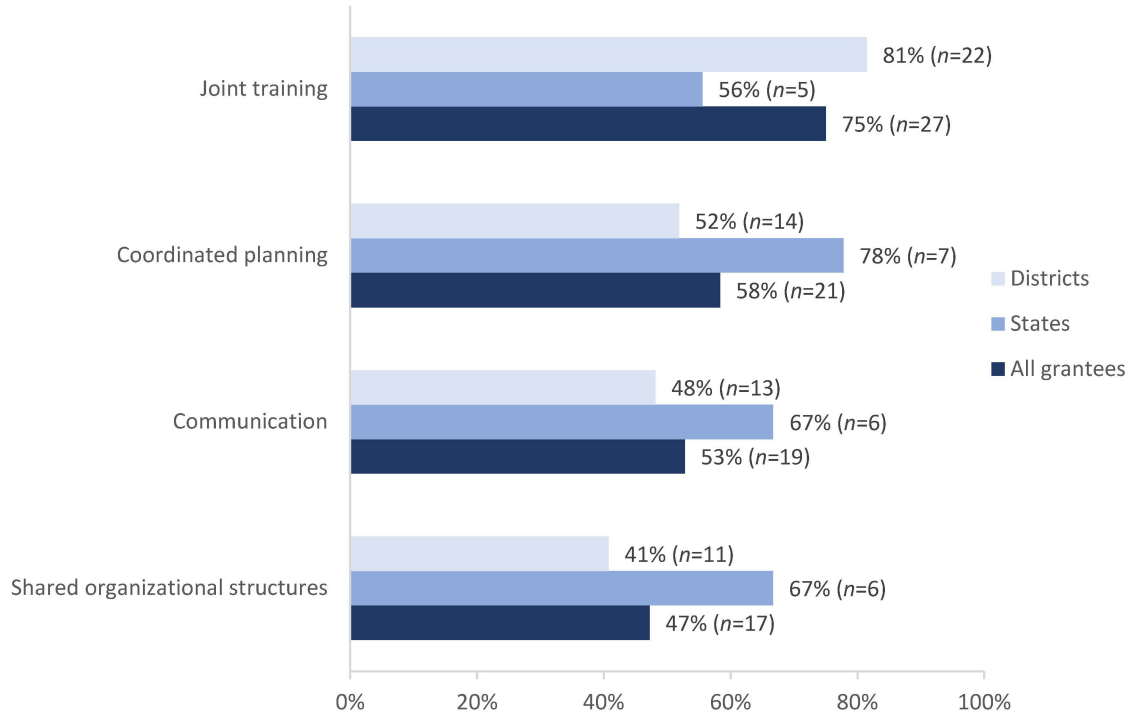
### How SCTG and Project AWARE Grantees Coordinated

**Grantee coordination involved joint training, coordinated planning, communication, and the development of shared organizational structures.**

To address the question of how grantees coordinated, the study gathered data on the activities that consistently composed coordination efforts. **Joint training** was the most common strategy identified by 21 of 27 school districts and all nine states (see Exhibit 5). This strategy involved incorporating content from one grant into the training of the other or training staff from each grant program together. For example, training SCTG personnel on Project AWARE’s YMHA would represent joint training. The interview respondents cited a variety of training topics in which both instructional staff implementing MTSS and mental health staff implementing Project AWARE were both trained, such as trauma-informed educational approaches, restorative justice practices, and social and emotional learning. A Project AWARE staffer stated, “We started giving out MTSS information within the Youth Mental Health

First Aid training so that people could connect the dots and see how [MTSS and mental health] came together.”

**Exhibit 5. Coordination strategies and mechanisms for MTSS reported by school districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Eighty-one percent ( $n = 22$ ) of the school districts reported that they used joint training among their coordination activities for MTSS.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of coordination strategies are in Appendix C.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

**Coordinated planning** was mentioned by 14 of 27 districts and seven of nine states, suggesting that coordination began before the grant activities were implemented. Coordinated planning may include creating or redefining positions; establishing or revising the scope of work for leadership teams; engaging community stakeholders, families, and youth; scheduling training; supervising implementation; and monitoring data to promote alignment and minimize duplication across school services (e.g., bullying prevention, social skills development, attendance support, and school climate). Rather than establish new teams, the work of existing teams often was reframed. For most grantees in this sample, this meant using the Project AWARE mental health trainings to expand the knowledge and skills of existing MTSS teams so that mental wellness could be addressed along with student behavior. A state Project AWARE coordinator reported the following:

*We’ve got our state management team with representation from those various groups as well as other agencies. I think a lot of what we’re trying to do is [to] figure out how to ride the coattails of all of those efforts but also to really bring it together so that you have less replication of efforts and a better understanding of what everyone is doing and [the] alignment of this work.*

**Communication** (defined as any information sharing) included attendance at meetings with representatives from both grants, cosponsored parents' nights, regular correspondence in the form of newsletters or updates, and the sharing of collected data. Of the 27 districts, 14 highlighted communication as a coordination strategy, and all nine states noted that communication was one of their means of coordinating.

At the most fundamental level, communication involved sharing information across grant programs to increase awareness of grant activities. This involved updates about the progress of the grant programs or providing information about scheduled trainings.

At some sites, grantees had more in-depth conversations about the work of the two grant programs. A state SCTG supervisor described the content of their meetings:

*We look at . . . how both of our efforts are working toward an integrated MTSS in which schools don't see school culture work or mental health support as ancillary, but they see it as really a fundamental aspect of their structures for working towards student achievement.*

The category of **shared organizational structures** was defined as using a staff position, team, or office to coordinate information, work, and responsibility across two or more organizations. Examples included the intentional overlap of staff positions across grants, a dedicated team or committee that involved representatives from the two federal grants, and external partnerships (e.g., community groups and mental health clinics). Eleven of 27 districts and all nine states indicated that they used shared organizational structures to coordinate work across grants. For example, a state-level Project AWARE respondent said, "We run an executive team, whereby the leaders of Safe Schools, AWARE, and School Climate Transformation meet regularly, weekly even, to talk about how our initiatives overlap."

## **How One Sample State Coordinated Through Joint Training, Communication, and Shared Organizational Structures**

In this state, the SCTG and the Project AWARE grant were coordinated through a state management team, with representatives from relevant agencies, and an internal integration team, with representatives from both state-level grants and each district served by those grants. The state management team met monthly and included staff from multiple state education departments (Superintendent's office, Health Enhancement, Neglected/Delinquent and Homeless), multiple state health and human services departments (Early Childhood Services, the Children's Mental Health Bureau, Addictive and Mental Disorders Division/Suicide Prevention, and Child and Family Services), as well as the Youth Services Division of the State Supreme Court and representatives from networks of community-based service providers. In addition, representatives from the superintendents' offices and grant leaders from all participating districts were part of the state management team.

The internal integration team was a local innovation and involved leaders of the SCTG and the Project AWARE grant who met weekly. Monthly, the meeting included representatives from the Indian Education division, Homeless coordinators, Title I, Health Enhancement, and Special Education. The grant leaders reported that including division administrators were necessary because some decisions required their authority, so these meetings were scheduled on the same day as division administrator meetings so that those leaders would more likely attend.

Another mechanism was through joint training: the state encouraged MTSS personnel at the state and district levels to complete Project AWARE YMHFA training. Enrollment in trainings related to behavior and mental health was offered to grantee districts from both federal programs before any remaining seats were opened statewide.

The state promoted coordination at the local level by facilitating communication through a community of practice for district staff engaged in work related to school safety and behavioral health. For example, the community of practice that addressed Tier 3 supports included staff across offices who worked in special education, crisis mental health, Medicaid, corrections, inpatient psychiatry, group homes, and foster care.

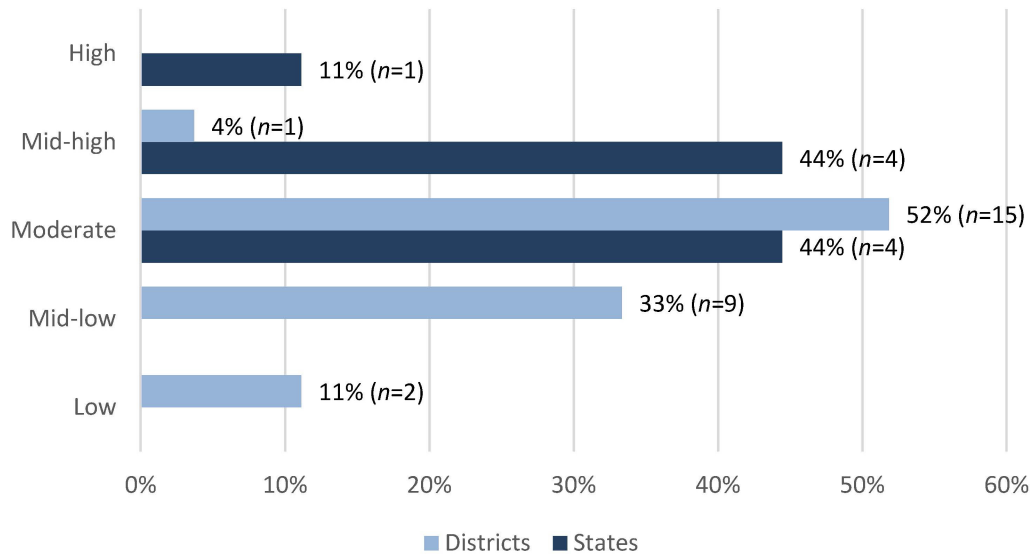
The state also used special events as opportunities to promote coordination. For example, the summer MTSS Institute included staff from a diverse set of state offices, including Common Core, Special Education, Safety and Health Enhancement, Project AWARE, the Indian Education Division, School Improvement Grant staff, and the Children's Mental Health Bureau.

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### **Most grantees were involved in at least a moderate level of coordination. Overall, states exhibited a higher level of coordination activities than did districts.**

For more than half of the study sample (16 of 27 districts and all nine states; 69 percent overall), scores on the coordination continuum indicated that at least a moderate level of coordination existed across the federal grant projects (see Exhibit 6). At a moderate level of coordination, staff across the grant projects worked together and planned events and activities, and their relationships were altered to some degree by the shared nature of their work. Grantees in the moderate range interacted and communicated, and in some instances shared training, but no clear statement showed that staff were working toward common goals with shared responsibility and mutual accountability. (See Appendix A for a discussion of the methodology used to determine these ratings.)

**Exhibit 6. Distribution of levels of coordination across SCTG and Project AWARE district and state grantees, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** No district was rated high for coordination; one of nine states was rated high on the coordination continuum.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 (n = 27 districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

All state grantees were judged, based on their descriptions of training, planning, communication, and shared organizational structures, to have been engaged in at least a moderate level of coordination. Because the state Project AWARE grants mandated the establishment of a state management team to coordinate work across agencies, implementation of these grants as intended would necessarily involve a higher level of coordination. The state management teams, as operationalized by Project AWARE, included youth and family representatives as well as representatives from the state office of mental or behavioral health, the state juvenile justice agency, and participating districts. Engaging additional partners, such as child welfare, early childhood, and faith-based organizations was encouraged. The team’s purpose was to develop and implement a coordination and integration plan for the leadership and management to the state’s efforts to promote safe schools and healthy students. For example, one state SCTG project director stated,

*Our core team for Project AWARE has three people on the team, and I have [one other person] and myself. The five of us, along with our state PBIS coordinator, meet weekly, and we meet for an extended time weekly to be sure that we are coordinating together, that we’re continually talking about the integration.*

Staff within a site tended to describe coordination fairly consistently. When rating the same activities, such as training or organizational structures, 14 of 23 districts (61 percent) and eight of eight states<sup>4</sup> had individual respondent coordination scores that were within one point of each other. In all cases where a

<sup>4</sup> The totals of districts and states for the consistency finding were less than the totals of districts and states in the study because not all respondents provided information that allowed us to code coordination.

discrepancy occurred, it was based on only one coordination activity described (of up to four that could receive scores), and the difference in ratings was never larger than two points.

Differences across grantees in the level of coordination were associated only with whether the grantee was a state or a school district. The average coordination rating for states on a scale of 1 to 5 was 3.7; for districts, it was 2.6. The study team examined other factors gathered from grant applications to explain variation across sites, such as a history of prior collaboration, district size, urbanicity, having the same person serve as the project director of both grants, or being a state or a district-only Project AWARE grantee. None of these other factors explained the variation in levels of coordination.

## Plans for Sustaining Coordination

**Most grantees (89 percent) reported using capacity-building mechanisms to sustain coordination across their grants.**

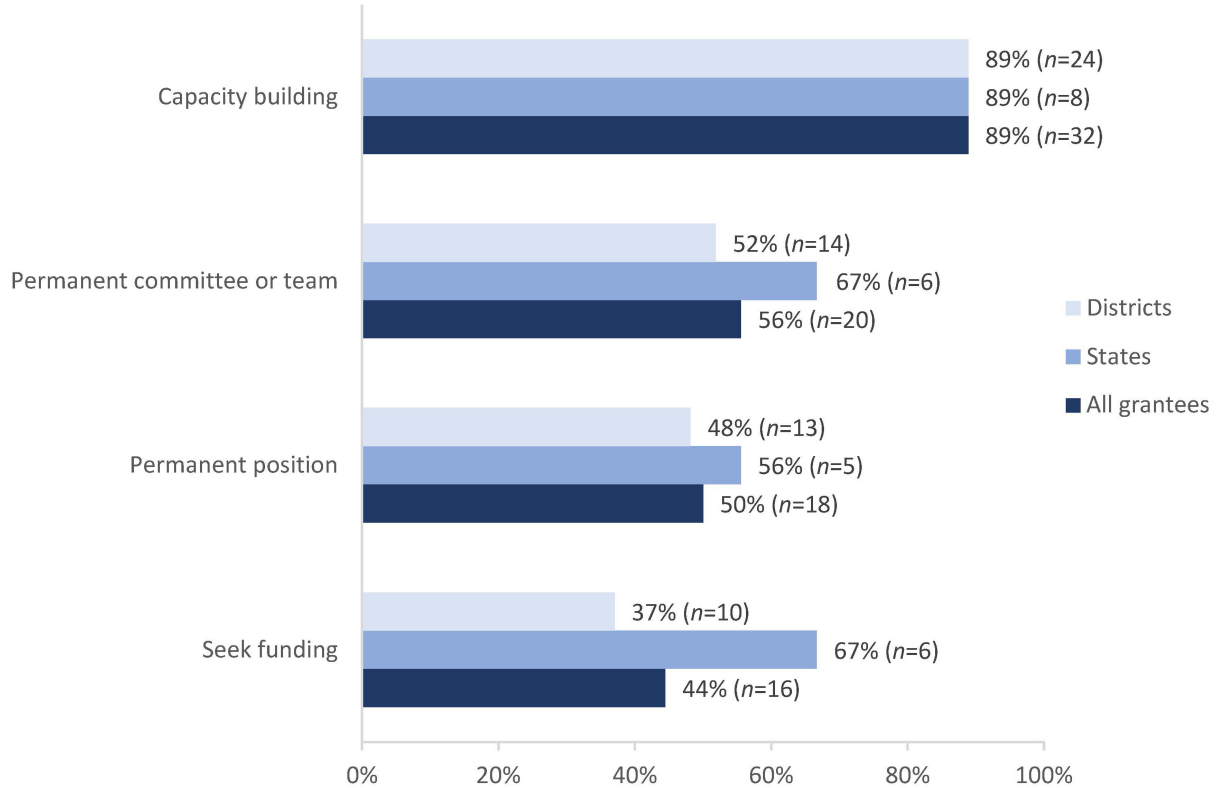
All grantee sites reported that they were planning to continue the work of their grants beyond their funded period of performance. When planning to sustain coordination, grantees described a set of activities collectively described as “capacity building” — that is, grantees sought to ensure that sufficient numbers of staff had received training in the fundamental components of the grant so that they could continue practices (and support newer staff) when funds were exhausted. Capacity building — which most often involved providing professional development for staff in MTSS and/or school mental health — was the most common district (24 of 27) and state (eight of nine) plan for sustainability (see Exhibit 7). A district-level SCTG respondent said,

*We have plans to continue training all of our interns, make sure that all of our [MTSS] coaches and all of our mental health counselors continue to get [trained in] Youth Mental Health First Aid. . . . We plan on continuing to do those trainings [after the grant].*

Two state grantees specifically mentioned that the broader vision of integrating mental health with MTSS was the focus of sustainability efforts, not only the work of the grants. Grantees also noted other possible pathways to sustainability, including establishing a permanent committee or team or establishing a permanent position with the responsibility of coordination. For example, a common district practice was establishing a districtwide MTSS leadership team that was expected to continue even after funding ended. Moving positions from grant funding to “hard” district funding was a goal for half of the grantees. Almost half of the grantees (44 percent) stated that they planned to apply for additional grants to support the work of integrating MTSS and mental health. One district SCTG grantee reported that hosting a regional MTSS meeting provided a source of funding for the district’s ongoing work toward building safe school climates.



**Exhibit 7. Plans for sustainability as reported by school districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Eighty-nine percent ( $n = 24$ ) of the school districts described capacity building as a plan for sustaining collaboration after grant funding ends.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of sustainability plans are in Appendix C.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

## Coordination of Funding

**Most districts reported keeping the funding of their grants separate, whereas states reported combining the funding across their grant programs.**

Of the 27 districts, 18 explained that they did not coordinate funding across the two grants to achieve project goals. Based on respondent reports, the small size (\$50,000 per year) and limited scope of the Project AWARE district grants appeared to contribute to this separation of funding: Project AWARE grants most often funded YMHFA instructor training, books, travel, and stipends, plus travel and materials for the staff who received training. The SCTGs were larger (up to \$750,000 per year) and could cover staff positions, professional development, and local and national conferences.

At the state level, the Project AWARE grants were larger (up to \$1.95 million per year), and seven of the nine states reported combining funding across the two grant programs. For example, although state Project AWARE grants funded comprehensive safe schools work in three districts each, several states used SCTG and other grant funds to extend MTSS to additional districts, using strategies such as

countywide leadership teams. In this way, SCTG funds were combined with other funding sources to achieve the state's goal of supporting MTSS statewide. A state-level Project AWARE respondent said,

*Obviously, you have your independent funding streams. We know what Congress has appropriated for what and we know what rules we have to follow, et cetera. We also know that there are many opportunities to braid our funding to enhance our systems. We individually fund the pieces we need to individually fund, but then we look at cross-collaboration opportunities to braid funding, to strengthen these other systems, and to meet the ultimate need at the district level.*

## Coordination Reflected in Grantee Applications

### **The SCTG applications did not provide many details about what coordination would entail or how sites would work with other projects.**

All grantees indicated that their SCTG application addressed the competitive preference priority for coordination with Project AWARE or other funding opportunities. However, beyond reporting that coordination would take place, coding and analysis of the grant applications showed that grantees generally did not provide details about what this coordination would entail or how they would work with other projects. When specific coordination mechanisms were noted, they most commonly included training staff (such as training on the YMHFA curriculum) to build capacity or share resources across projects, such as having a single coordinator or a team with representatives from both grants. The lack of detail provided suggested that coordination might not have been well planned in advance; one lesson learned reported by grantees was that they wished they had planned and begun coordination sooner.

### **More states than districts reported that the competitive preference points affected the decision to submit or the content of their grant application.**

Fewer than half (13 of 27) of the districts said that the availability of competitive preference points affected their grant application in some way, but seven of nine states indicated that these points mattered. In these states, respondents stated that the points did indeed make a difference, such as by encouraging sites that were already coordinating to submit or by developing new coordination structures and plans. A state-level SCTG respondent said,

*I think by having that, it also forced some discussion. So when we were writing the School Climate Grant and then [name] was doing with the AWARE, we were talking about, well, what is it from both of these grants that we can make sure there's connection in the application? So, I think it set the stage, and it helped out right from the very beginning.*

## Types of Personnel Involved in Coordination

**Staff interviewed for this study, based on their role in coordination for the SCTG and the Project AWARE grant, were primarily based in offices focused on student support services (in contrast to instruction).**

The individuals selected for interviews were recruited based on the project director’s report of their involvement in coordination efforts. To explore the types of personnel involved in coordination, the office names and titles of these staff were examined.

The offices supporting the SCTG and the Project AWARE grant were categorized as reflecting either the “instructional” or “student services” domains. Sample titles for instructional leaders included Associate Superintendent, Director of Instruction, Director of Schools, Director of Learning, and Principal. Student services titles included Student Discipline and Support Services Director, School Culture Support Specialist, Director of Safe Schools/Healthy Students, Director of Social and Emotional Learning, and School Counseling and Career Development Specialist. For some grantees, insufficient information existed to make this determination. For SCTG district grants, 15 of 20 leaders (75 percent) were on the student support side of the education agency; for Project AWARE grants, 12 of 19 (63 percent) were in student support offices. At the state level, five of six SCTG leaders and all seven Project AWARE leaders were in roles focused on student support.

### Coordination in a High-Coordination District

#### District Background

This rural district, with 56 percent of its roughly 3,000 students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, reported in its grant application and in interviews that it has demonstrated successful collaboration with its surrounding community to build capacity for improving the lives of youth and families. For example, the district successfully established one of the first Department of Juvenile Justice/Educational Day Treatment facilities in the region, created the first drug court in the area (coordinated with county government), and enacted the first student drug-testing policy in the state (which has since been replicated statewide).

The district stated in its SCTG application that grant funding would enable it to address school climate and the mental health needs of students, reduce negative behaviors in youth, and increase protective factors. The district’s plan was to approach this through the schools and the community in partnership.

#### Key Features of Coordination

The district conceptualized coordination of the SCTG and the Project AWARE grant in its SCTG application as a way “to create an evidence-based matrix of services to address all youth and families in this community to work to prevent, identify, and remedy student social, emotional, and behavioral needs.” Interviews with the Director of Support Services, the Director of Student Services, and the Communications Endorsement Facilitator described a multifaceted collaboration process, anchored by joint training, communication, and shared organizational structures. Training in YMHFA was offered to people well beyond the school, including firefighters, family members, and other community partners.

Interviewees explained that coordination occurred through collective partnerships between the school district and stakeholders, such as community agencies, law enforcement, education, faith-based organizations, civic group leaders, and parents. The district developed communication mechanisms through media channels, such as television, radio, video production, and social media, so that students, families, and the community would be aware of the work and accomplishments of the SCTG and Project AWARE.



## Findings: The Value of Coordination

Implementation science has established that innovations are more likely to be sustained when they address the concerns and improve the lives of the implementers (Hall and Hord 2001). Therefore, one of the study questions focused on respondents' perceptions about the value of coordination. Specifically, grantees were asked about (1) accomplishments because of coordination that would not have been realized otherwise, (2) any long-term changes because of coordination, (3) the effect of coordination on the implementation of grant activities and interventions, and (4) the advantages of coordination. Overall, respondents in sites with an SCTG and a Project AWARE grant described positive perceptions of the value of working on schoolwide behavior and access to mental health services simultaneously. The interview respondents reported that coordination of the two grants produced benefits beyond what either grant on its own could have achieved. A district-level SCTG respondent said,

*There's been just an entire systemwide focus on providing social, emotional, and behavioral support for our students and realizing how important that is to their academic success. That systemwide change in our district would not have happened without the support from these grants.*

### Benefits of Grant Coordination

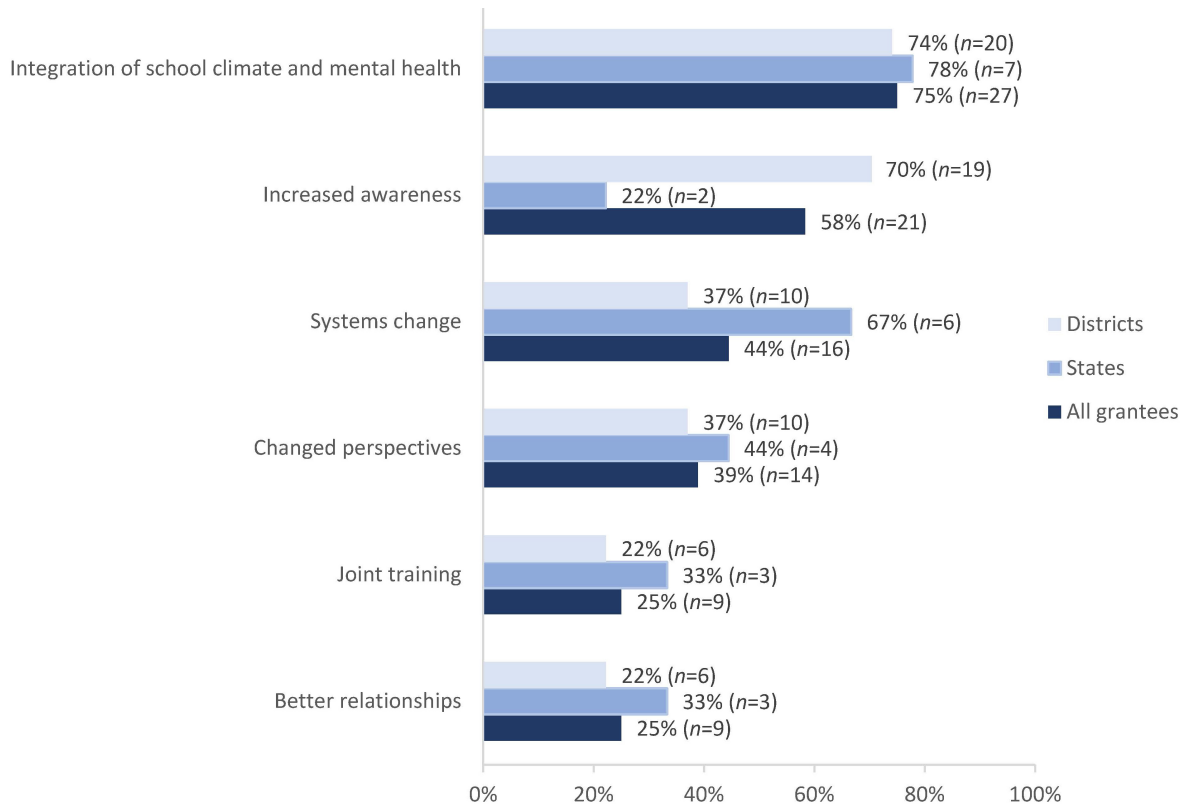
**Better integration of efforts to improve school climate with mental health services (e.g., by training staff in student identification and referral practices) was the most commonly reported accomplishment of coordination for grantees (75 percent).**

When Project AWARE and SCTG projects work together, the focus of the overlapping efforts is the integration of a schoolwide behavioral support framework with a systematic approach to identifying students in need of mental health services. This integration of efforts produced a positive, safe school climate and mental health that the interview respondents identified as the primary accomplishment of grantees' coordination efforts (20 of 27 districts and seven of nine states). Grantees at both the district and state levels indicated that with both grants, they could enhance interventions for students, create teams, and meet students' needs more effectively than they could with either grant alone (see Exhibit 8).

Data analysis showed that this integration allowed school districts to enhance student interventions focused on addressing student misbehavior by identifying and taking steps to repair harm caused by a behavior, rather than simply punishing the student. When evidence-based behavioral interventions that emphasize responsibility and skill development are in place and student behavior improves, students and teachers can attend to academics rather than deal with behavioral issues (Bradshaw, Mitchell, and Leaf 2010). In addition, behavioral interventions may be more appropriately selected and administered (Horner et al. 2009). One district Project AWARE leader said,

*There are certainly lots of benefits to collaborating and coordinating because we want to make sure that students get the support that they need and that we are not, for example, over-identifying kids who need IEPs [individualized education programs] because we don't have anything else in place.*

**Exhibit 8. Accomplishments resulting from grant coordination reported by school districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Seventy-four percent ( $n = 20$ ) of the school districts described the integration of school climate and mental health as an accomplishment resulting from grant coordination.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of accomplishments are in Appendix C.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

At the state level, respondents also noted that through integration, they could implement more student support programs and create new and better products through coordination across the grants. One state described a website of resources related to school mental health that included a framework with best practices, mental health screening tools, and example memoranda of understanding. In another state, a Project AWARE respondent summarized the way that coordination allowed them to integrate school climate and mental health:

*You could have a school transformation grant all on its own. You could have an AWARE grant all on its own. But I don't feel like you would get as much accomplished if they were separate as we have having them together. Just being able to understand the mental health of students and staff is such a huge component to any part of school culture. So, to be able to work those two pieces together and to connect them has been really valuable for our staff. All of our PBIS pieces and trainings have mental health components to them. All of our districtwide pieces of information and services and resources that we provide all have a mental health aspect to them, which I'm not sure that they would have — if we would have had that as much of a focus as we did because of the AWARE grant.*

Other than the development of better integration of mental health and school climate, accomplishments accruing from coordination across the grants identified by both district and state respondents included increased awareness of mental health issues, system change, changed perspectives, joint training, and better professional relationships (to include both behavior support and mental health staff). Several of these categories of responses were the same as those identified as long-term changes resulting from coordination.

**Slightly more than half of the grantees (53 percent) described increased efficiency in the delivery of services as the primary advantage of grant coordination, followed by stronger relationships (42 percent) and working across disciplines (42 percent). States were consistently more likely to report these advantages than were districts.**

District and state grantees described the benefits to coordination as including increased efficiency, establishing better professional relationships, and working across disciplines (see Exhibit 9). For example, increased efficiency or leverage was an advantage of coordination because it allowed the alignment of previously separate streams of work so that redundancy and staff burden could be minimized and the process of obtaining support could be both easier and better defined. Stronger relationships might include establishing or expanding professional networks with community groups or feeder schools to meet student needs more effectively. Working across disciplines referred to the value of having instructional staff work closely with student support personnel, with each learning from the other.

Efficiency was a benefit noted by 13 of 27 districts and six of nine states. Grantees reported that adding mental health to their MTSS frameworks helped schools identify and address student needs more swiftly and more fully, without adding extra staff. Grantees found that reducing fragmentation of student support resulted in less duplication of effort and smoother operations.

Stronger relationships, particularly among staff, but also among staff and students also were common benefits of coordination identified by 10 of 27 districts and five or nine states. Coordination provided opportunities for staff to work with community partners and other staff across disciplines — strengthening their professional relationships. Respondents reported that this would not have happened had states not received funding for both grant programs.

One school district Project AWARE director described having common goals between the grants as a way of focusing the work on what’s important.

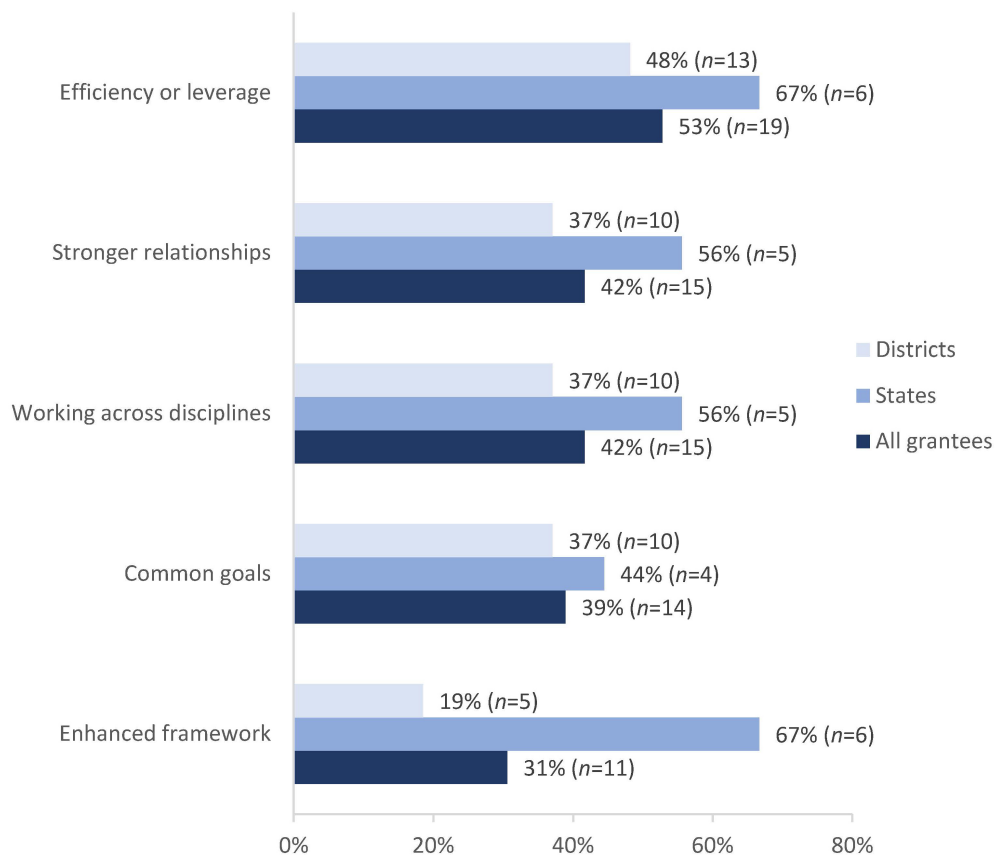
*So just the fact that these two organizations came together and really worked together for these two grants to be coordinated and have the collaboration between the two grants — I think it’s somewhat unprecedented that this happened, and I think that the success that has come out of it should be looked at more often. That instead of having all of these different areas to try to combat everything, if you can get people to work together and focus on certain things that are really important and collaborate, like these two grants have allowed us to do, we would see a lot more success that way.*

For states, a benefit identified with equal frequency as efficiency (six of nine states) was establishing a common, yet enhanced, framework that encompassed both MTSS and mental health in schools. State staff reported that there was not only efficiency but also power in aligning behavior management and mental health within a shared, tiered system. In this way, staff did not feel as if the mental health work

was one more (separate) thing they had to do; rather, it felt as if attending to students’ mental health needs was part of what they were doing anyway.

School districts and states lower on the continuum of coordination (levels 1 and 2) identified advantages resulting from grant coordination, such as greater buy-in or commitment to the aims of the grant, with the two grants having common goals and having sufficient funding to bring experts to the teachers rather than sending teachers elsewhere for training. At high levels of coordination, districts described increased efficiency resulting from less duplication of effort, a greater base of professional knowledge from the two different grants, and the ability to provide multiple resources (from each grant) to schools. Respondents from states with high coordination focused on not only having but also sharing resources (e.g., people and training) and benefiting from a diversity of strengths and perspectives from two teams.

**Exhibit 9. Advantages to grant coordination reported by school districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Forty-eight percent ( $n = 13$ ) of the school districts said that increased efficiency was an advantage to grant coordination.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of advantages are in Appendix C.

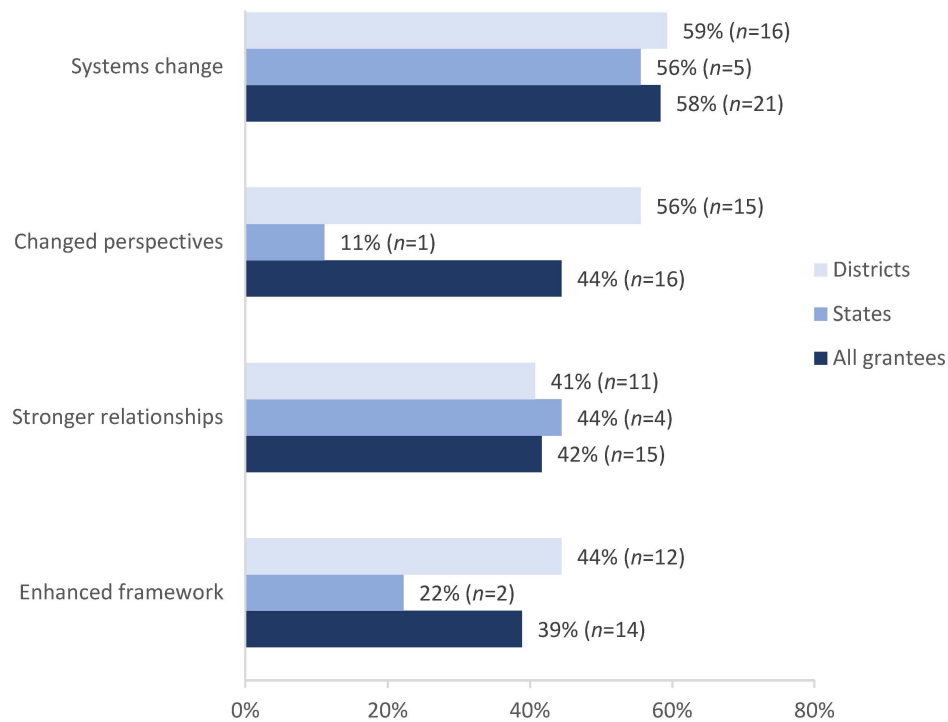
**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).



**More than half of the grantees (58 percent) reported system change as the primary long-term change resulting from the coordination of multiple grants.**

Sixteen of 27 districts and five of nine states pointed to system change, or a permanent structural change in their organization, as a lasting result of coordination (see Exhibit 10). Sites described system changes, including changes in policy (e.g., new staff or teams to conduct community outreach) and a general shift in more effectively and coherently addressing the social and emotional needs of students. Although interview questions asked specifically about long-term changes, some respondents provided examples that could be considered shorter term in nature.

**Exhibit 10. Long-term changes resulting from coordination reported by school districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Fifty-nine percent ( $n = 16$ ) of the school districts described system change as a long-term change associated with grant coordination.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of long-term changes are in Appendix C.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

The types of system change varied by state or district status and their level on the continuum of coordination. District sites at the lowest level of coordination provided relatively concrete examples of system change resulting from the initial implementation of MTSS and YMHFA in their schools, such as shifting from a focus on punishing misbehavior in school to teaching and reinforcing positive behavior, introducing practices to identify mental health issues, and using peer mediation and other restorative justice practices when problems arose. Grantees higher on the continuum (levels 2 and 3) included examples of changes such as establishing leadership teams; establishing cross-departmental work teams; and having a systemwide focus on social, emotional, and behavioral supports. One district reported as a long-term change the embedding of YMHFA training into the professional development for all new teachers.

States that were moderate on the continuum of coordination described system changes, such as state-level prevention and wellness teams working with and providing services to school districts, the establishment of mental health work groups, and the emergence of community management teams resulting from the collaboration of agencies and community members. States that were high on the continuum of coordination reported system changes, such as grant-funded positions becoming permanent within districts, the institutionalization of YMHFA training into teacher professional development, stronger relationships, and a perspective valuing greater interdependence across offices addressing student support.

**Although grantees reported that a relationship between coordination and their achievement of fidelity of MTSS implementation, coordination scores were not correlated with the percentage of schools achieving MTSS fidelity.**

Coordination between the SCTG and the Project AWARE grant — between teaching and mental health more broadly — is expected to support a more fully realized MTSS framework (Barrett et al. 2012). Indeed, one item on the Tiered Fidelity Inventory, which many SCTG grantees used to measure and report on MTSS fidelity, includes an item asking whether schools use decision rules and multiple sources of data to identify students who may require Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports (Algozzine et al. 2014). Project AWARE fulfilled this function in schools that use it. A district SCTG staff member stated, “Fidelity isn’t possible without coordination.” Other staff pointed to the high degree of complementarity of SCTG and Project AWARE goals and indicated that incorporating mental health into MTSS, and having MTSS in place to better organize student supports, helps both programs more fully realize their goals. One district has gone beyond MTSS fidelity or YMFHA fidelity to look at the fidelity of integration of these programs.

*We have a fidelity measure called the Integrated Systems Framework. It looks at coordination between community service providers and mental health awareness and activities in the school and the degree to which that is coordinated [as well as] questions about the multi-tiered process and how that works. . . . Prior to that, there was not so much emphasis placed on fidelity of integration. It was more fidelity of implementation of one grant and fidelity of implementation of the other, but now I think we’re working toward fidelity of the integration piece.*

To examine the relationship between the fidelity of MTSS implementation and district grantee reports on coordination, the study team examined the district *GPR*A indicator that related to the fidelity with which schools were implementing MTSS (more detail about *GPR*A measures is in Appendix B). All grantees were required to use a valid fidelity measurement tool, such as the one provided by the Department-funded [PBIS OSEP \[Office of Special Education Program\] Technical Assistance Center](#) to measure and monitor fidelity. Grantees reported the percentage of schools in their district implementing MTSS with fidelity, with a range of 0 to 100 percent, a mean of 50 percent, and a standard deviation of 36 percent. The correlation between district coordination ratings and the percentage of schools in that district implementing MTSS with fidelity was -0.12, meaning that there was a very small tendency for districts higher in coordination to have a smaller proportion of schools implementing MTSS with fidelity. The lack of strong association may be caused by coordination being measured at a district level and fidelity being measured at the school level.

## Factors That Enhanced Grant Coordination

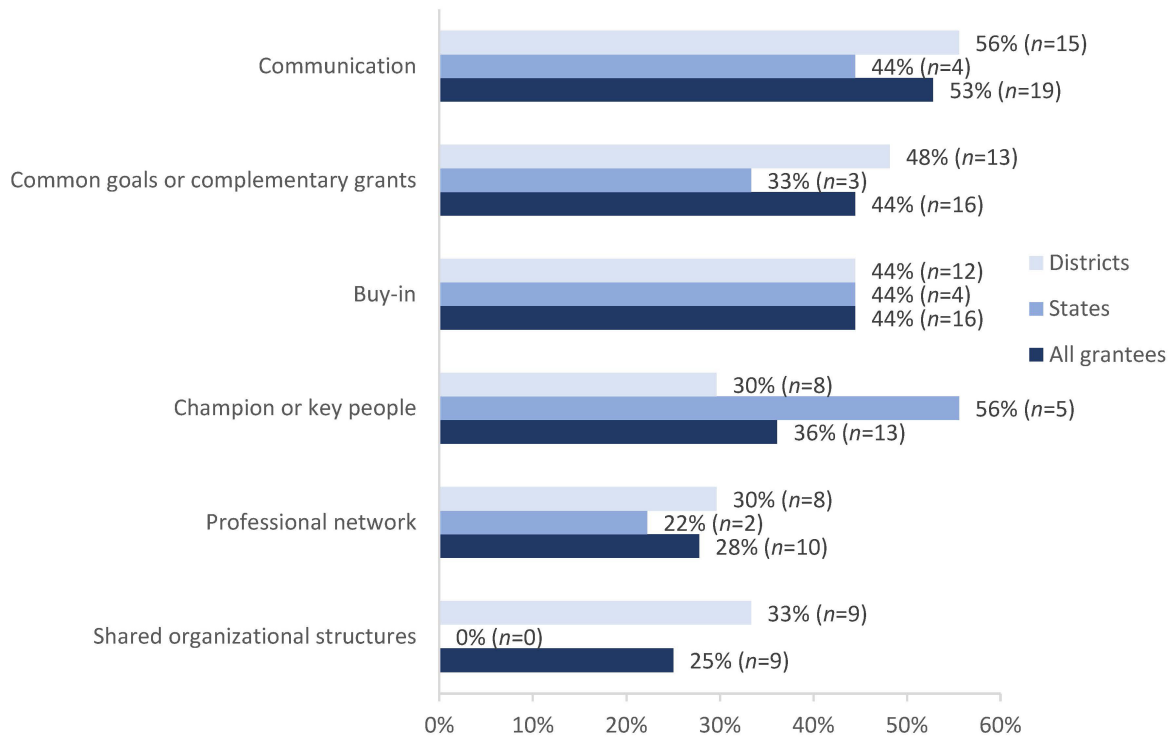
**Increased communication was frequently cited as a factor that enhanced coordination (53 percent of the grantees).**

More than half of the district grantees (53 percent) identified communication as the primary factor that enhanced coordination. Communication ranged from regularly scheduled meetings (e.g., quarterly) to more informal discussions that gave grantees the opportunity to discuss successes and challenges, provide updates, and identify ways in which they could support each other. In some cases, grantees created new teams to facilitate ongoing dialogue about their work. Communication between grants was further facilitated by factors such as having a preexisting culture of collaboration, having a new organizational structure (e.g., housing the grants within the same department or location, having one project coordinator for both grants), having a cross-sectional team (i.e., a team that spans several departments), and including community organizations in action planning meetings. Regarding the existing culture of collaboration, one SCTG respondent described how the shared organizational structure supported communication:

*All of the project directors were all housed within student services, and we're all right here on the same floor. And if we have a quick question, it's not even just picking up the phone or sending an e-mail; we can actually physically walk over a few feet [and] have a conversation with the other project directors.*

Additional factors that enhanced collaboration included having common goals or other complementary grants, having stakeholder buy-in, having a champion or an identified leader for coordination efforts, having a strong professional network, and creating a shared organizational structure (see Exhibit 11).

**Exhibit 11. Factors that enhanced coordination as reported by districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Fifty-six percent ( $n = 15$ ) of the school districts described communication as a factor that enhanced coordination.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of enhancers are in Appendix C.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

## Value of Coordination in a High-Coordination District

The district reported that being engaged in a wide array of activities to leverage the opportunities provided by SCTG and Project AWARE. For example, the training for all school personnel, community agency staff, and others interested in YMHFA assisted those who came into contact with students to identify mental health issues early. The school district reduced barriers to the training, making it easy to engage in. In addition, all school personnel trained in MTSS had the opportunity to learn how to integrate YMHFA into their MTSS framework. In this way, managing student behavior and raising concerns about potential risk factors for mental illness were addressed collaboratively in all the district's schools. The student support services director described the flexibility of this district as follows:

*Our district is willing to loan [trainers] out for the day to come do the training. We set those up at the community's desire. We give them flexible dates. We provide the space. We provide them training materials, and we try to remove all those barriers.*

However, it took time for the district to successfully collaborate with stakeholders and help them realize the value of YMHFA. For example, when this school district was awarded both grants, the director of support services described sharing the news with one of its partners: "I said, 'Hey, we were funded on the School Climate proposal.' They said, 'Great, so is that going to be putting weather stations up at the school?'" This confusion underscored the need for robust communication activities. Their communications endorsement facilitator developed videos, public service announcements, and press releases for newspapers. The student support services director underscored the importance of communicating the purpose of and the partnerships that develop from grant collaboration and how it fosters buy-in from school staff, students, and other stakeholders. She commented,

*When you educate people on mental health, the ways that you can help others, you're changing the climate inside your school, making students and staff more aware of issues that may be happening [or] are most likely happening in their building. Changes in the way that others treat people, and that's what [the] School Climate Transformation Grant is all about. We want to change the way that people act in our school. And providing them with the resources to do that is just a partnership.*

Having teams from both grant programs coordinate their work and services across all eight schools required the team members to allocate time to meet once every two months as an advisory council. During these meetings, everyone in attendance was encouraged to discuss successes and raise any concerns about students or issues in the school(s). As a result, coordination continued smoothly, staff embraced innovative ideas, and communication flowed easily among all those involved with the grants.

According to the interviewees, the coordination of both grants also contributed to better recognition of students' needs, improved data collection related to school discipline, and refined data-sharing practices.



## Findings: Challenges and Lessons Learned

In many districts and schools, educators implement, sustain, and evaluate multiple innovations, initiatives, programs, or practices at the same time. Not only MTSS and mental health but also bullying and violence prevention programs, restorative justice practices, and trauma-informed care programming may be concurrently implemented. Challenges inherent in this process include the potential for redundancy, misalignment, ineffective implementation, and excess burden on human and financial resources. Interviews asked about challenges and lessons learned from the implementation experience.

This chapter first describes the broad challenges that grantees reported experiencing when implementing their grants. Next, grantees identified the factors that inhibited coordination once efforts to work together were underway. In addition, findings regarding the extent to which grantees received federal support for their coordination efforts are presented. The chapter concludes by describing the lessons that grantees learned.

### Challenges to Grant Implementation

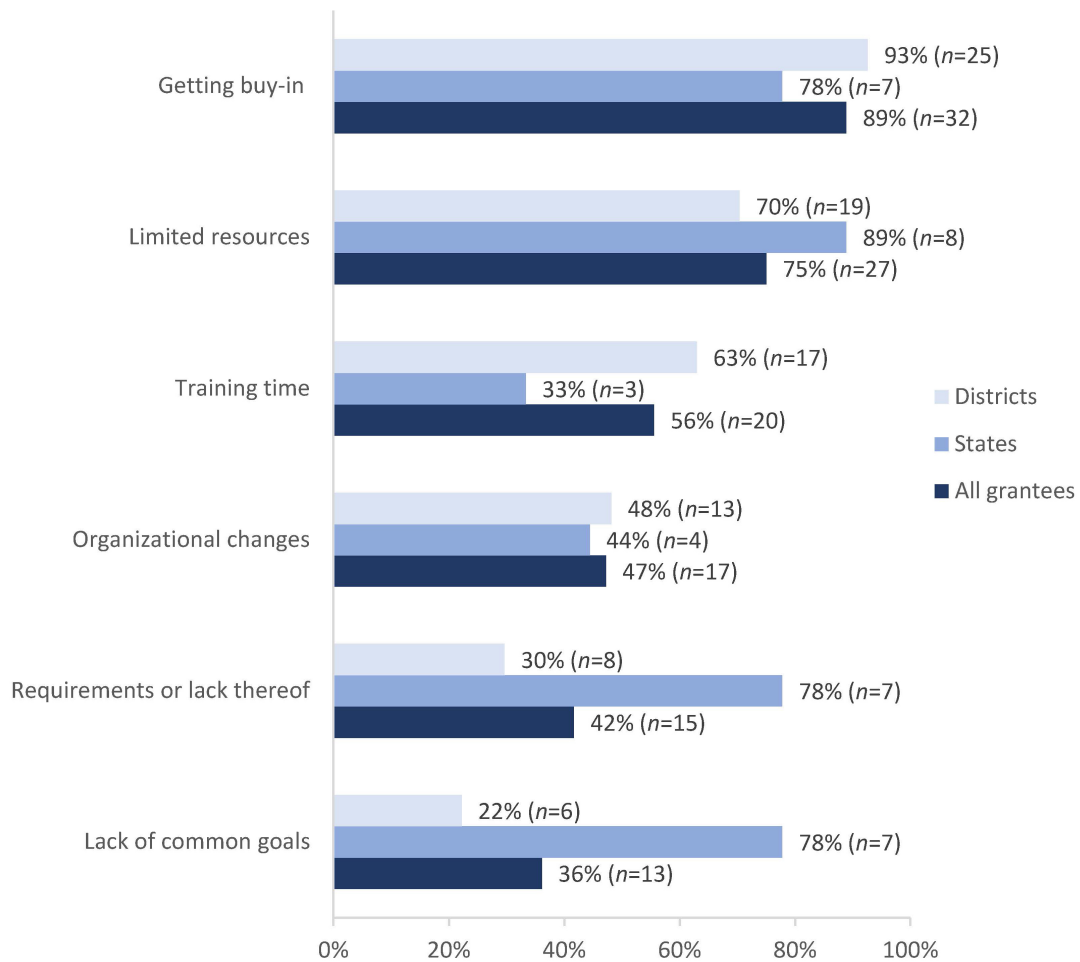
**Nearly all grantees (89 percent) reported securing buy-in from principals, teachers, and district or state colleagues as their primary challenge to coordination.**

When asked what challenges they faced in doing the work of their grant, grantees cited buy-in at both the district (25 of 27) and state (seven of nine) levels (see Exhibit 12). The term *buy-in* was defined as securing the commitment or willing participation of others in the grant's activities, whether internal staff or representatives of other groups or agencies. Lack of buy-in was attributed to several factors, including resistance to change, general concerns that these initiatives would simply create more work, a lack of awareness and understanding among community members about the relevance of the trainings, and mind-sets and values regarding the importance of focusing on mental health or addressing behavior problems in new ways. For example, one Project AWARE respondent reported:

*When we're asking behavior and mental health, a lot of times that buy-in is very challenging. People will always step up to the plate to do something for an academic need, but getting the community of educators to see that the behavior and mental health piece are essential because really, without that, academics can't go forward — that was another challenge.*

The lack of buy-in also had implications for the training, particularly for the YMHFA training, which required eight hours. As one Project AWARE respondent stated, "Principals simply were not willing to give up [eight hours] of teacher development staff time to one topic because they have many, many other topics that have to be discussed."

**Exhibit 12. Challenges to grant coordination reported by school districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Ninety-three percent ( $n = 25$ ) of the school districts said that securing buy-in was a challenge to grant coordination.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of challenges are in Appendix C.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

In addition, when school or district leaders did not buy in to these programs, little accountability was evident to ensure that the grant was meeting its goals (which included improving attendance; reducing disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions; and implementing MTSS with fidelity). One district SCTG leader described this challenge as follows:

*I think the biggest challenge has been working with administrators, really trying to change hearts and minds so that they have the courage and the willingness to try these things, to put these things into place and to kindly put the pressure on their staff to implement these [changes].*

In some instances, buy-in increased organically during the grant. As the first staff were trained, they could report to their peers about whether the initiative was worthwhile and help bring others on board. Grantees also engaged in several strategies to increase buy-in and engagement, such as educating



stakeholders about how the work was related to academic achievement. Other strategies included leveraging existing relationships within schools and districts, inviting representatives from community organizations to participate in team meetings, and sharing success stories.

Geographic location also was cited as a challenge by respondents in the two rural districts. Here, respondents reported that geographic conditions (e.g., roads that were susceptible to flooding) and the size of their coverage area made it difficult to reach certain populations. This also made it difficult to recruit participants for training because some trainees had to travel a long distance to get to the training site.

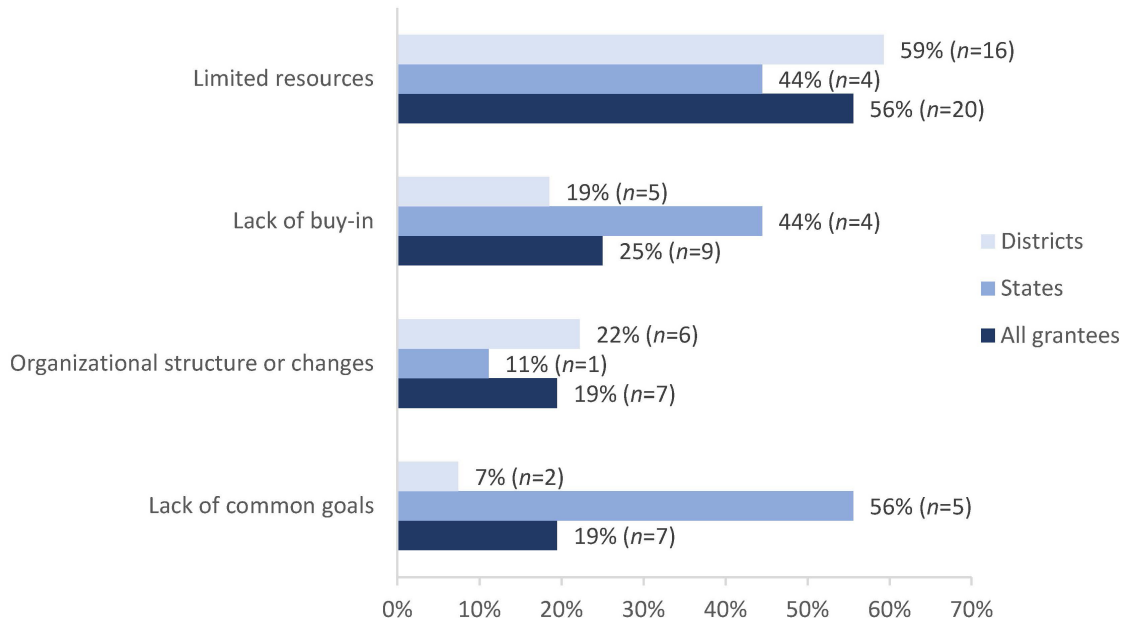
Additional challenges identified by district and state grantees included limited resources, the eight-hour training time required for the YMHFA workshop, organizational changes, requirements or the lack thereof regarding working across departments or offices, and a lack of common goals (see Exhibit 12). Challenges were distributed across districts and states at all levels of the continuum of coordination, with sites rated as having low, moderate, and high levels of coordination each reporting limited resources as a challenge.

**Regarding factors that inhibited coordination, districts most often described limited resources (including time, staff, or funds), whereas states more often reported lacking common goals or understanding and having different philosophies.**

Respondents were asked both what enhanced and what inhibited coordination in their sites. The most commonly reported inhibiting factor overall was a lack of resources (see Exhibit 13). The resource that was most limited, according to respondents, was time. Challenges with time were related to training (e.g., YMHFA), collaboration, and implementation. First, grantees indicated that the time required for the YMHFA training sometimes posed a challenge to recruiting participants. As noted previously, the training was eight hours in length and was therefore difficult to integrate into schools' existing professional development plans. Grantees also noted that most staff were trying to manage multiple responsibilities, which made it difficult to find the time to coordinate. For example, one SCTG respondent stated,

*Initially what inhibited the collaboration was time. We had to make a decision that we were going to intentionally create time and space for the work because our schedules were so different. And then what aided the work was just realizing that we were on the same page, we wanted the same outcomes, just had to intentionally create the time and space to do the work.*

**Exhibit 13. Factors that inhibited grant coordination as reported by school districts and states, 2016–17**



**Exhibit reads:** Fifty-nine percent ( $n = 16$ ) of the school districts said that limited resources inhibited coordination.

**Note:** Definitions for all categories of inhibitors are in Appendix C.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017 ( $n = 27$  districts and 9 states, or 36 grantees overall).

At the state level, grantees more commonly reported that the lack of common goals and understanding was an inhibitor to collaboration. According to one Project AWARE respondent,

*I think the only way that collaboration for us was inhibited is in having some murky understandings of what the outcomes or expectations were. It's hard to feel like what you've done was effective or done in a timely fashion when you're not entirely sure of all the goals. So, we know individually and locally what we want and what our schools need. When we look at that in the context of the measurable outcomes for a grant and the expectations for each grant under the federal programming, in the beginning the direction seemed to change quite a bit. So, it was hard to move forward when the rules keep changing. That inhibits collaboration because how do we work together to make it better or to do it better or faster when we're not sure what game we're playing yet?*

Differing philosophical or theoretical approaches also inhibited coordination. For example, one respondent reported difficulties integrating PBIS and mental health:

*Marrying the two has been difficult when we have lacked the same knowledge. In PBIS, we are very systems oriented, and we are having a difficult time with our districts to express how to build mental health in systematically. They are still used to having co-located rather than collaborative [services].*

## Federal Support for Grant Coordination

**Grantees reported that federal officials expected coordination across grants, and about half (53 percent) reported receiving federal support specifically designed to help them achieve this goal.**

Grantees acknowledged that coordination was expected. This was communicated by federal agencies in several ways, beginning with the application phase, through which grantees received additional points for providing a coordination plan. Grantee staff reported that their program monitors provided them with resources and helped them make local contacts. Thirteen of 27 districts and six of nine state grantees had respondents who indicated that the funding agencies provided direct support for coordination across grants. The support described by these respondents included engaging in conversations with grantees to help them reflect on their coordination plans, providing feedback and suggestions, and following up on progress. The annual meetings held by the funding agencies also served as a mechanism through which grantees received support. Specifically, these meetings allowed grantees to connect with their counterparts in other districts and states and learn more about how others approached the coordination of multiple grants.

A relatively high number of districts had at least one respondent (20 of 27)<sup>5</sup> who was unable to answer questions about the extent to which the funding agencies supported coordination among the grants (but only three of nine states that were asked did not know). One district respondent reported no federal support for coordination, beyond prioritizing it during the application phase. As one respondent noted,

*It's clear that they have recognition of the fact that these projects are connected. They take pride in that; like, I've noticed when we go to the annual School Climate Transformation Grant team meetings that there is always that recognition of the collaboration with AWARE. But I think that to a certain extent, we have been encouraged to find the mechanisms for coordination and integration. I can't honestly say that there's been a clear directive from either AWARE or School Climate Transformation on how that's to be done.*

At the state level, respondents described varying levels of federal support for their coordination efforts. This included holding events or conferences that brought staff from both grants together, providing technical assistance (TA) from TA providers (e.g., from the PBIS Technical Assistance Center, brainstorming and problem solving), having conference calls during which participants shared examples of how they were coordinating, facilitating connections with other sites, and providing resources. In general, respondents found this support to be helpful. According to one respondent, "I think that they have helped in supporting [coordination] by being able to provide events that would bring both of the grant partners together." However, most state grantees indicated that they would like to see more coordination and communication between the two funding agencies. For example, a respondent at one site reported,

*I feel we've gotten good support from both of the grants, from both School Climate Transformation and from Project AWARE. But it doesn't always feel like that support, the*

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<sup>5</sup> Grantees had three to six respondents per site; in some cases, some respondents within a site indicated that they received federal support, and others indicated they did not know.

*support that comes from above us, from the TA centers, or from our federal leads, that they are talking to each other and that that's coordinated. We've gotten very good support on each one of them, but as separate entities, not necessarily as correlating grants.*

Similarly, a respondent at another site explained that more coordination at the federal level, particularly related to TA, would enhance their coordination on-site. According to this respondent,

*I do love that the Department of Ed and SAMHSA came together to do this. I wish that there had been more coordination at that level where we could have received TA in a more integrated way, where the PBIS technical assistance center had worked more closely with NITT [Now Is the Time], because I do think that the experiences that these districts have received because of these two grants are really rich, and I think it could have been enhanced if there had just been more coordination at the federal level.*

Other suggestions included modeling coordination at the federal level (e.g., integrating TA and other grant activities), holding events to bring the two programs together earlier in the life cycle of the grant, and developing a shared vision and mission that would leverage the strengths of both federal agencies (SAMHSA and the Department).

## Lessons Learned From Grant Coordination

**The importance of planning and the value of communication were the most commonly reported lessons learned for grantees (56 percent each).**

Grantees reported multiple factors that they would have changed during the early or planning phase of their grants to facilitate better coordination between the grant programs. These included establishing a team as soon as feasible, leveraging existing teams, clarifying goals early on, and mapping resources to determine which services and strategies were already in place to avoid redundancies. Grantees also noted the importance of engaging key stakeholders early in the process and educating them about the grant (e.g., plans and progress updates). In addition, several grantees mentioned planning for sustainability or implementing strategies that would promote sustainability. A district-level SCTG respondent said,

*I think you have to start looking at sustainability from Day 1. I think we looked at it too late. We didn't really start looking at it until after Year 1, and I think we should have started looking at it from the very beginning. Now, we kind of got a little bit more pushback than I would have liked to have seen regarding embedding that professional development within the training for the incoming teachers. There was a lot of enthusiasm and stuff for it at the beginning I think we could have capitalized on — if we had talked about sustainability from Day 1.*

Another commonly reported lesson learned was the value of communication. Specifically, grantees mentioned the importance of messaging, helping stakeholders understand the need for and the goals of the grant, and connecting these goals to the district's mission and other initiatives and strategies that are currently being implemented in the district.

*I wish, from the beginning, there would've been something presented at the district level to the school principals that we were working with to help them understand how important it is and what the grant is. I can see now that when principals have so many things on their plate, they really need something broken down in very simplified terms of what we're asking . . . It's almost like people need to know the why, why are we doing, not just what we're doing. They need to understand the reasons behind why this is so important for students.*

Other lessons learned included establishing relationships, being flexible in terms of how grantees work with schools and their interactions with the funding agencies, understanding the time required to implement the grants and see results, and planning for sustainability (e.g., embedding or aligning practices).

## **Lessons Learned From District and State Grantees**

### **Lessons Learned From a High-Coordination District**

Communicating early and often to school personnel, families, and stakeholders in addition to providing training that is easily accessible to all school personnel and community agencies (and others who are interested) were the key components to successful collaboration. Although it was too early in the SCTG program to analyze outcome data, the interviewees provided examples of how particular students' needs were addressed because of SCTG and Project AWARE collaboration. The interviewees stated that through collaboration, school climate and mental health concerns were recognized more and were being addressed by teachers in the school district through YMHFA training and its integration in all three tiers of MTSS. A respondent said,

*Our teachers are making better connections with our kids through the School Climate Transformation Grant and then those kids that are getting that connection are more open to talk to their teachers, and the teachers are ready and prepared to talk to those students. . . . So, by using this Project AWARE Grant to train our staff, we've been able to make our teachers more comfortable with the situation, know what to say, know who to point them to get help with, and give those kids a real outlet.*

### **Lessons Learned From a State Grantee**

This state began implementing a multi-tiered system of PBIS in the 1990s with five community-school partnerships. This initiative represented a proactive approach for creating behavioral supports and a social culture that established social, emotional, and academic success for all students using the response to intervention model, a three-tiered system of support, and a problem-solving process to help schools meet the needs of and effectively educate all students. State officials sought the SCTG and the Project AWARE grant to complement the existing PBIS infrastructure and integrate a focus on services to Native American youth. In addition to issues of role definition and clarity in the lines of supervision, the SCTG coordinator provided the following thoughts about coordination.

*I think we've made it pretty clear in our own agency that if we are writing grants like this ever again, that there really needs to be an established coordination team that's made up of all the divisions that are involved, with very established goals and a shared vision, a shared hiring process, and a shared time line. I think if you have a vision that — I think of Wisconsin and what they've done with their trauma-informed [approaches] and PBIS. They went into that with a very specific vision. . . . I think it's so obvious in the work that they've done and what they've been able to share with other people, but that was preplanning that made that happen.*



## Conclusion

The importance of professional coordination to improve school and student outcomes has been recognized for at least two decades. In the 1990s, the Department's Office of Special Education Programs developed a national agenda for improving outcomes for students with emotional and behavioral disturbances. A centerpiece of this agenda was collaboration across schools, families, and other youth-serving agencies (Osher, Quinn, and Hanley 2002). The federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, which began in 1999 in response to a series of deadly school shootings, aimed to prevent youth violence and promote the healthy development of youth. Through this initiative, more than \$2 billion in funding and other resources have been provided to 365 communities in 49 states, and more than 13 million youth have been served (SAMHSA 2015). Safe Schools/Healthy Students focuses on collaboration, and the initiative has developed collaboration tools to sustain coordinated work through deliberate planning, more cost-effective service delivery, and a broader funding base.

In the policy context in which the value of coordination to achieve better outcomes in schools is recognized and actively promoted by federal sponsors, this study provided information about how and to what degree districts and state agencies reported that coordination was happening. This chapter highlights potentially actionable lessons learned that are based on this work.

### **Most school districts and state education offices reported engaging in at least a moderate level of coordination.**

More than half of the study sample (16 of 27 districts and five of nine states) were rated as engaging in at least a moderate level of coordination across the federal grant projects; only two districts were rated as showing the lowest level of coordination. This finding indicates that most districts have some capacity to coordinate work across schoolwide behavior supports (MTSS) and mental health. The overall level of district coordination is somewhat lower than one might have expected, however, considering that 23 of 27 districts reported in their applications that the SCTG work would build on already established collaborations within the school system.

### **A higher proportion of states than districts met the criteria for moderate or high coordination.**

The state Project AWARE grants required that each state establish a state management team to oversee the coordination of comprehensive school mental health services with other ongoing initiatives, including the SCTG. The presence of this organizational structure enhanced the level of coordination for states. Some states had such teams in place before applying for the SCTGs, but for most it was new.

### **Most districts and states reported using capacity-building mechanisms to plan for the sustainability of their coordination.**

Capacity building is a helpful strategy but is not in itself sufficient to sustain coordination across complex innovations such as MTSS or YMHFA (e.g., Barrett, Bradshaw, & Lewis-Palmer 2008; Garet et al. 2016). Districts, in particular, relied on this strategy heavily, with 24 of 27 districts planning to use capacity building to promote sustainability. Fourteen districts stated that they relied on other strategies, such as establishing a permanent committee or a permanent position. A smaller proportion of districts identified more than two sustainability strategies (six of 27 districts, compared with five of nine states).

**More states than districts reported that the competitive preference points affected the decision to submit or the content of their grant application.**

Fewer than half of the districts (13 of 27) but most states (seven of nine) said that competitive preference points affected their grant application. This finding may be an artifact of the high number of district respondents who did not know about the competitive preference points.

**Grantees reported that coordination brought a range of benefits: system change, integration of mental health with school climate, and increased efficiency.**

The implementation research and practice communities have operated for decades under the assumption that coordination is an inherent good and more of it must be better. Large federally funded TA centers actively advocate for communities of practice and other ways for educators and youth-serving professionals to share information, goals, and tips. The data from this study suggested that these approaches may be well founded: grantees reported a variety of positive outcomes accruing from their coordination. Perhaps the most critical of these benefits was increased efficiency because the need for more time to accomplish work was a commonly nominated challenge.

**The importance of planning and the value of communication were the most commonly identified lessons learned for both districts and states.**

Identifying lessons learned for grantees that were coordinating work across schoolwide behavior and mental health can help practitioners, administrators, and policymakers become more proactive in addressing needs. Specifically, pitfalls in planning (such as crafting job descriptions, identifying implementation and outcome data to monitor, or seating the right partners on the advisory committee) can be addressed early if new grantees are advised about what those pitfalls may be.

Overall, this study showed that coordination is perceived as valuable, but districts and states reported challenges. Coordination may increase efficiency across time, but in the short run, implementation studies show that co-training of staff and the planning required to integrate work requires the allocation of time and resources (Barrett et al. 2008; Garet et al. 2016). The long-term benefits identified by grantees suggested that investing in coordination may pay off for the quality and reach of their work across time.



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## Appendix A. Technical Details for Coordination Continuum Ratings

**Exhibit A-1. Construction of coordination continuum ratings for school districts and states**

<b>Summary</b>	The conceptualization of coordination used in this study translated levels identified by Osher (2002) into low, moderate, and high anchor points on a scale of 1 to 5, with ratings of 2 and 4 representing intermediate levels of coordination. The scoring was based on a subset of coordination strategies and mechanisms described by interviewees that were rated, averaged, reviewed, and adjusted. The <i>Analysis Methods</i> section of the Introduction introduces these analyses; the <i>Findings: Coordination Between SCTG and Project AWARE Grantees</i> chapter describes the findings.
<b>Definition of levels</b>	Coordination was defined as the degree to which training, planning, communication, and shared organizational structures were implemented by grantees in a shared manner. Coordination at a <b>low</b> level was defined as the independent execution of grant activities, or grant activities were conducted with limited interaction. Examples included referrals and communication letting the other organization know about planned activities. <b>Moderate</b> coordination was defined as shared implementation of grant activities involving altered relationships of the independent organizations, staff, or resources. That is, rather than independent action or superficial interaction, agency staff actively worked together to plan and conduct activities. Coordination at a <b>high</b> level was defined as the integration of efforts and activities by organizations and staff to achieve common goals unattainable by a single individual or an organization acting alone. This level of coordination involved agreed-on common goals, shared responsibility, mutual accountability for success, and shared resources.
<b>Data sources</b>	Study staff gathered data from coded qualitative interviews with project directors, staff, and other individuals familiar with the coordination of SCTGs and Project AWARE grants. Only those codes representing key findings for school districts and states associated with coordination strategies and mechanisms were used. Other key findings (e.g., advantages or factors that inhibited coordination) were excluded because they represented outcomes to coordination (i.e., perceived value, challenges, or lessons learned). The coded elements included the following: <b>School district codes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint training</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Plans for sustainability and capacity building</li> </ul> <b>State codes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared organizational structure</li> <li>• Plans for sustainability and capacity building</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 1: Rating coded elements of interviews</b>	The lead qualitative analyst rated coded elements of each interview transcript by using the coordination continuum with the following criteria: <b>Low</b> (rating of 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction</li> <li>• Sharing information</li> <li>• Referrals</li> </ul> <b>Moderate</b> (rating of 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altered relationships</li> <li>• Working together</li> <li>• Planning events and activities</li> </ul>

	<p><b>High</b> (rating of 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed-on common goals</li> <li>• Shared responsibility</li> <li>• Mutual accountability for success</li> <li>• Shared resources</li> </ul> <p>A rating of 2 was given to those coded elements falling between the low and moderate levels. Likewise, a rating of 4 was given to those coded elements falling between moderate and high coordination.</p>
<p><b>Sample quotes illustrating range of ratings for communication</b></p>	<p>The following are example quotes for communication at Stage 1 at each rating level on the continuum of coordination.</p> <p><b>Low</b> (rating of 1)          “And then there’s kind of community of practice too because some districts share that information and we’re part of the PBIS Coalition so you get together with a lot of folks and share things.” [SCTG respondent]</p> <p><b>Low to moderate</b> (rating of 2)          “So, and we meet quarterly — the instructors — to talk about, you know, what’s going well, what things have come up during the trainings to support each other and so, because we’ve done so much work in creating this system we just felt like well, because the funding ran out we’re not just going to drop it. So, we all felt that it was important enough in the county that we would continue to offer that service.” [project director for both SCTG and Project AWARE]</p> <p><b>Moderate</b> (rating of 3)          “Most of it was information sharing across the grants and making sure we understood what was happening in our partner districts in [our grant project], and how we might be able to offer a Youth Mental Health First Aid training through Project AWARE for those staff.” [Project AWARE respondent]</p> <p><b>Moderate to high</b> (rating of 4)          “We meet weekly with the school leadership teams and at least monthly with the school PBIS teams. And when we have those meetings, we find out the needs of the school and then create a plan for next steps.” [SCTG respondent]</p> <p><b>High</b> (rating of 5)          “I can give you a twofold example. One is that when we’re doing our annual strategic planning for my department, although [name] and behavioral health, which encompasses [Project] AWARE, is technically a separate sub-department from mine, we come together to do that planning and talk. We set our vision for what our charge was for the year and sort of on board stars so to speak, what we’re working towards this year in terms of our efforts. We set that together. We sat down and spent hours going through what would schools look like and sound like and feel like? What are some of the different metrics and data points?” [SCTG respondent]</p>
<p><b>Stage 2: Computing average ratings by site</b></p>	<p>Ratings given to coded passages were averaged first within an interview and then across interviewees by school district or state site. For example, if an interviewee had three ratings, these were averaged to arrive at a rating for the interviewee. If a site had four interviewees, these ratings were averaged to arrive at a global rating for that site.</p>

<p><b>Stage 3: Assessing quality of global ratings</b></p>	<p>Global ratings were then reviewed by the study staff members who conducted the interviews for a given site or by the study’s project director, who reviewed and edited all interview transcripts. This review compared the arithmetically derived scores with expert judgment based on the holistic content of the interviews. When expert judgment differed from the calculated global rating, quotes were found to justify a revised rating. The following quotes are examples of global ratings that were revised.</p> <p><b>Increase from a rating of 2 to a rating of 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “For me it’s very different; it’s a bonus piece. The School Climate Transformation Grant is the big animal, the big PBIS. They implement that in 57 schools at fidelity at all three tiers. . . . So, School Climate Transformation to me is the big umbrella, and where Project AWARE came in really was a perfect complementary piece of RTI [response to intervention] for us because many of the kids — everything that my team does really is for prevention, early intervention. And, so, with Youth Mental Health First Aid training, we’ve been able to train over 600 staff and we’ve referred over 2,000 more students the last two years.” [SCTG leader]</li> </ul> <p><b>Increase from a rating of 4 to a rating of 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Well, we work very, very closely together. Our core team for Project AWARE has three people on the team, and I have [one other person] and myself. The five of us, along with our state PBIS coordinator, meet weekly, and we meet for an extended time weekly to be sure that we are coordinating together, that we’re continually talking about the integration.” [SCTG leader]</li> <li>• “So, within that we are working, we meet regularly with the School Climate Transformation team, weekly basis to align the work of building mental health capacity, [and] identifying students early. . . . Once we identify a learner who may need additional mental health support, making sure, within a multi-tiered system, we are aligning our work so that there [are] both Tier 2 or 3 interventions as well as preventative and promotive health supports at the universal level.” [Project AWARE leader]</li> </ul> <p><b>Decrease from a rating of 3 to a rating of 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I’ll start off by saying that I am not the person who’s responsible for Project AWARE. . . . Project AWARE in our district is primarily Youth Mental Health First Aid training. . . . So that is the only component that I’m aware of with Project AWARE and my role in that is to work with the trainers to coordinate the training sessions, to make sure that they have the materials. I make sure that we have sign-in sheets, certificates, and all of those logistical pieces. So that would be my only connection with Project AWARE.” [SCTG leader]</li> </ul>
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## Appendix B. *GPRA* Data for School District and State-Level Grantees

The *GPRA* indicators for district and state SCTG grantees are shown in Exhibit B-1.

### Exhibit B-1. *GPRA* indicators for district and state SCTGs

Grantee type	Indicators
<b>School districts</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number and percentage of schools reporting an annual decrease in office disciplinary referrals</li> <li>2. Number and percentage of schools reporting an annual improvement in the attendance rate</li> <li>3. Number and percentage of schools reporting an annual decrease in suspensions and expulsions, including those related to possession or the use of drugs or alcohol</li> <li>4. Number and percentage of schools annually implementing the multi-tiered behavioral framework with fidelity (to the PBIS Technical Assistance Center’s fidelity instrument)</li> </ol>
<b>States</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of training and TA events focused on implementing a multi-tiered behavioral framework</li> <li>2. Percentage of school districts supported that reported an improvement in knowledge of implementation of a multi-tiered behavioral framework</li> <li>3. Percentage of schools that provided training that implemented a multi-tiered behavioral framework with fidelity</li> </ol>

Exhibit B-2 summarizes the *GPRA* fidelity indicator data for the 27 district grantees in the SCTG program that were included in this study. These *GPRA* data were analyzed to address the question of how collaboration relates to the fidelity of MTSS implementation.

**Exhibit B-2. Percentage of schools implementing MTSS with fidelity**

School district grantee	2015	2016	Difference
ABC Unified School District (CA)	0	12	12
Appleton Area School District (WI)	95	100	5
Berlin Area School District (WI)	33	66	33
Cheektowaga Central School District (NY)	0	100	100
Corbin Board of Education (KY)	100	100	0
Des Moines Independent Community School District (IA)	25	85	60
Duval County Public Schools (FL)	50	60	10
El Rancho Unified School District (CA)	0	*	*
Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port Laker Schools (MI)	*	0	*
Ft. Dodge Community School District (IA)	100	100	0
Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District (MA)	0	17	17
Hillsborough County Public Schools (FL)	0	90	90
Jefferson County Board of Education (KY)	22	57	35
Jefferson Parish Public School System (LA)	49	79	30
Laconia School District (NH)	*	20	*
Lyons Central School District (NY)	0	0	0
Mendocino County Office of Education (CA)	53	16	-37
Monterey County Office of Education (CA)	75	67	-8
Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MI)	62	73	11
Newton Public Schools (MA)	0	0	0
Northside Independent School District (TX)	0	56	56
Pasadena Independent School District (TX)	47	47	0
Pasadena Unified School District (CA)	15	*	*
School Board of Broward County (FL)	29	65	36
School Board of Polk County (FL)	22	16	-6
School District of Lancaster (PA)	0	0	0
Town of Reading (MA)	14	17	57

**Notes:** Fidelity was defined as a score of 70 or higher on PBIS.org's [Tiered Fidelity Inventory](#) or [Benchmarks of Quality](#) rubric or a score of 80 or higher on the [School-Wide Evaluation Tool](#). "\*" indicates data not reported by grantee.

**Source:** Data provided by the Office of Safe and Healthy Students, U.S. Department of Education, June 2017.



## Appendix C. Data Tables

This appendix includes data tables that present respondent-level counts for each study finding aggregated at the district and state levels. The order of the data tables corresponds to the study research questions. Each exhibit presents percentages and counts of responses from interviewees. Categories are listed in descending order based on total counts. Types of comments representing each code appear below each table to aid interpretation.

**Exhibit C-1. Coordination strategies used as part of an MTSS or behavioral support framework reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
Joint training	48	57	52	16	29	21
Coordinated planning	17	19	18	28	43	33
Communication	13	21	17	8	29	15
Shared organizational structure	13	17	15	40	7	28
Data sharing	6	10	7	4	7	5
Unknown	6	5	5	0	7	3
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
Joint training	25	24	49	4	4	8
Coordinated planning	9	8	17	7	6	13
Communication	7	9	16	2	4	6
Organizational structure	7	7	14	10	1	11
Data sharing	3	4	7	1	1	2
Unknown	3	2	5	0	1	1

**Note:** Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.  
**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2016–17.

Coding category	Types of comments
Joint training	Comments indicated that training of personnel involved both grants (e.g., MTSS coaches receive YMHFA training) or incorporating grant topics into training (YMHFA covered in MTSS training).
Coordinated planning	Comments indicated a description of how strategies and mechanisms of the grants were coordinated and integrated.
Communication	Comments indicated information sharing; attending meetings together; and communications about activities, such as including other agency personnel on newsletters or updates.
Shared organizational structure	Comments indicated overlap of positions across grants (e.g., dual professional development), a dedicated team or committee, and external partnerships.
Data sharing	The site collected or leveraged data to make decisions.
Unknown	The respondent lacked awareness of coordination activities.

**Exhibit C-2. Plans to continue coordination after the grants end reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
Capacity building	63	48	56	52	43	49
Permanent position	27	12	20	8	14	10
Permanent committee or team	17	17	17	28	36	31
Seek funding	15	14	15	24	43	31
Use of existing infrastructure	8	7	7	4	21	10
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
Capacity building	33	20	53	13	6	19
Permanent position	14	5	19	2	2	4
Permanent committee or team	9	7	16	7	5	12
Seek funding	8	6	14	6	6	12
Use of existing infrastructure	4	3	7	1	3	4

**Note:** Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2016–17.

Coding category	Types of comments
Capacity building	Comments indicated that training of shared permanent positions or individuals would lead to sustainability.
Permanent position	Comments indicated that the grant-funded position would become permanently funded to continue coordination activities.
Permanent committee or team	Comments indicated that coordination would continue through committees or teams that would persist after grant funding has ended.
Seek funding	Comments indicated that additional funding would be sought to continue coordination activities or positions.
Use of existing infrastructure	Comments indicated that infrastructure (e.g., expanded MTSS framework or common language) was in place, or would be in place, to support sustainability.

**Exhibit C-3. Long-term changes resulting from grant coordination reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
System change	35	26	31	20	21	21
Changed perspective	23	24	23	0	7	3
Better relationships	12	19	15	16	14	15
Enhanced framework	15	12	14	4	14	8
Increased awareness	2	14	7	0	0	0
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
System change	18	11	29	5	3	8
Changed perspective	12	10	22	0	1	1
Better relationships	6	8	14	4	2	6
Enhanced framework	8	5	13	1	2	3
Increased awareness	1	6	7	0	0	0

**Note:** Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2016–17.

Coding category	Types of comments
System change	Comments indicated systemic long-term change (e.g., coordinated activities or mechanism now permanent, to include leadership team).
Changed perspective	Comments indicated a change in attitude about or behavior concerning mental health issues.
Better relationships	Comments indicated that internal or external relationships had been created or strengthened because of coordination.
Enhanced framework	Comments indicated that coordination helped improve or expand the framework for the integration of mental health and school climate.
Increased awareness	Comments indicated growth in knowledge or an understanding of mental health issues.

**Exhibit C-4. Advantages resulting from grant coordination reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
Better relationships	15	17	16	12	21	15
Increased efficiency	17	12	15	24	21	23
Working across disciplines	13	17	15	24	7	18
Having common goals	15	5	11	12	21	15
Enhanced framework	4	10	6	16	36	23
Increased awareness	4	10	6	0	7	3
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
Better relationships	8	7	15	3	3	6
Increased efficiency	9	5	14	6	3	9
Working across disciplines	7	7	14	6	1	7
Having common goals	8	2	10	3	3	6
Enhanced framework	2	4	6	4	5	9
Increased awareness	2	4	6	0	1	1

**Note:** Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.  
**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017.

**Coding category**

Better relationships

Increased efficiency

Working across disciplines

Having common goals

Enhanced framework

Increased awareness

**Types of comments**

Coordination created or improved on internal or external relationships.

Coordination increased efficiencies by leveraging shared resources (e.g., shared professional development, multiple perspectives, and expertise).

Coordination forced individuals or offices to work with those from other disciplinary backgrounds, such as social workers working with teachers.

Coordination created common goals or direction between grants (e.g., viewed as one initiative, not multiple initiatives).

Coordination enhanced or expanded the framework for integrating mental health and school climate.

Comments indicated growth in knowledge or an understanding of mental health issues.

**Exhibit C-5. Accomplishments resulting from grant coordination reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
Enhanced framework	29	38	33	24	29	26
Increased awareness	25	24	24	12	0	8
Changed perspective	12	17	14	16	0	10
System change	17	7	13	12	29	18
Training related	12	7	10	4	14	8
Enhanced interventions	12	2	7	8	7	8
Larger network	6	7	6	12	7	10
Synergy	6	0	3	8	29	15
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
Enhanced framework	15	16	31	6	4	10
Increased awareness	13	10	23	3	0	3
Changed perspective	6	7	13	4	0	4
System change	9	3	12	3	4	7
Training related	6	3	9	1	2	3
Enhanced interventions	6	1	7	2	1	3
Larger network	3	3	6	3	1	4
Synergy	3	0	3	2	4	6

**Note:** Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017.

Coding category	Types of comments
Enhanced framework	Comments indicated that coordination helped improve or expand the framework for integrating mental health and school climate.
Increased awareness	Comments indicated growth in knowledge or an understanding of mental health issues.
Changed perspective	Comments indicated a change in attitude about or behavior concerning mental health issues.
System change	Comments indicated accomplishment as a systemic change (e.g., started a staff learning library with resources related to academics and behavior).
Training related	Comments indicated that an accomplishment related to training (e.g., reaching correct audiences or meeting training goal) could not have occurred without coordination of grants.
Enhanced interventions	Comments indicated that one or more interventions were enhanced because of grant coordination.
Larger network	Comments indicated that at least one network connection (i.e., with another group, office, department, or team) was made possible because of grant coordination.
Synergy	Comments indicated that the facilitation of a process or a mechanism because of grant coordination — that is, the process or mechanism — still would have occurred without coordination (e.g., training individuals in YMHA) but was accomplished more efficiently with it.

**Exhibit C-6. Challenges faced in doing the work of the grant reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
Getting buy-in or follow-through	62	45	54	24	43	31
Limited resources	42	43	43	32	29	31
Training time	15	60	35	8	7	8
Organizational changes	27	7	18	12	29	18
Requirements or lack thereof	10	14	12	24	29	26
Training logistics	4	14	9	0	0	0
Lack of common goals, understanding, or integration of different philosophies	10	5	7	32	14	26
Geographic	4	10	6	12	14	13
Technology issues	4	10	6	0	14	5
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
Getting buy-in or follow-through	32	19	51	6	6	12
Limited resources	22	18	40	8	4	12
Training time	8	25	33	2	1	3
Organizational changes	14	3	17	3	4	7
Requirements or lack thereof	5	6	11	6	4	10
Training logistics	2	6	8	0	0	0
Lack of common goals, understanding, or integration of different philosophies	5	2	7	8	2	10
Geographic	2	4	6	3	2	5
Technology issues	2	4	6	0	2	2

**Note:** Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017.

Coding category	Types of comments
Getting buy-in or follow-through	Comments indicated getting buy-in or participation with internal staff at all levels or external agencies (e.g., people see the value of the work, principal supports time away for training, or people follow through on their training commitments).
Limited resources	Comments indicated a challenge of meeting goals of the grant with limited funds or staff.
Training time	Comments indicated a challenge of getting teachers, staff, or others to commit voluntarily to a full day of unmandated and structured training.
Organizational changes	Comments indicated a challenge of managing organizational changes and their effect on coordination (e.g., staff turnover, changes in administration, or reorganizations).
Requirements or lack thereof	Comments indicated a challenge of meeting different agency requirements for multiple grants.
Training logistics	Comments indicated a challenge related to one or more aspects of training (e.g., determining who should be trained, reaching training number goal).
Lack of common goals, understanding, or integration of different philosophies	Comments indicated a challenge of coordination because of a lack of shared common goals, understanding, or integration of work or different philosophies.
Geographic	Comments indicated a challenge related to a geographic hurdle (e.g., travel distance or the distance to nearest mental health provider).
Technology issues	Comments indicate a challenge related to technology (e.g., difficulty getting website or database working properly).

**Exhibit C-7. Factors that enhanced grant coordination reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
Communication	25	21	23	12	14	13
Common goals or complementary grants	21	12	17	16	14	15
Buy-in or follow-through	17	14	16	4	29	13
Shared organizational structure	10	17	13	0	0	0
Champion or key people	8	10	9	8	36	18
Better network	10	7	9	4	7	5
Convenient location	8	7	7	16	7	13
Overlap of staff	8	7	7	0	0	0
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
Communication	13	9	22	3	2	5
Common goals or complementary grants	11	5	16	4	2	6
Buy-in or follow-through	9	6	15	1	4	5
Shared organizational structure	5	7	12	0	0	0
Champion or key people	4	4	8	2	5	7
Better network	5	3	8	1	1	2
Convenient location	4	3	7	4	1	5
Overlap of staff	4	3	7	0	0	0
<b>Note: Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.</b>						
<b>Source: Grantee interviews, 2017.</b>						

**Coding category**
**Types of comments**

Communication	Comments indicated information sharing; attending meetings together; and communications about activities, such as including other agency personnel on newsletters or updates
Buy-in or follow-through	Comments indicated getting buy-in or participation with internal staff at all levels or external agencies (e.g., people see the value of the work, principal supports time away for training, or people follow through on their training commitments)
Common goals or complementary grants	Coordination created common goals or direction between grants (e.g., viewed as one initiative, not multiple initiatives).
Shared organizational structure	Comments indicated overlap of staff on grants and activities (e.g., teams with individuals from both grants or an individual who works on both grants).
Champion or key people	Comments indicated a high-level or an instrumental individual facilitates coordination or is integral to its success.
Better network	Comments indicated that internal or external relationships were created or strengthened because of coordination.
Convenient location	Comments indicated location or proximity enhanced coordination (e.g., being housed in the same department or office).
Overlap of staff	Comments indicated overlap of staff on grants or activities.

**Exhibit C-8. Factors that inhibited grant coordination reported by district and state grantees**

Code	District grantees			State grantees		
	SCTG (n = 52)	Project AWARE (n = 42)	Total (n = 94)	SCTG (n = 25)	Project AWARE (n = 14)	Total (n = 39)
<b>Percentage of grantees</b>						
Limited resources	27	29	28	12	21	15
Buy-in or follow-through	8	7	7	12	14	13
Organizational structure or changes	6	10	7	4	0	3
Lack of common goals or understanding or different philosophies	0	5	2	20	14	18
<b>Number of grantees</b>						
Limited resources	14	12	26	3	3	6
Buy-in or follow-through	4	3	7	3	2	5
Organizational structure or changes	3	4	7	1	0	1
Lack of common goals or understanding or different philosophies	0	2	2	5	2	7

**Note:** Because of multiple responses, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

**Source:** Grantee interviews, 2017.

Coding category	Types of comments
Limited resources	Comments indicated that coordination was inhibited by limited resources (e.g., funds, staff, or time).
Buy-in or follow-through	Comments indicated not getting buy-in or participation with internal staff at all levels or external agencies.
Organizational structure or changes	Comments indicated that the organizational structure got in the way of coordination or a recent change in organizational structure inhibited coordination.
Lack of common goals or understanding or different philosophies	Comments indicated that differing goals, understanding, or philosophies got in the way of coordination.







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