

# The School Improvement Consultant Framework



## Components

**Use of Self** is bringing full awareness of self, others, and the context while drawing on knowledge from experience and evidence to be most helpful in the present situation. Effective use of self requires consultants to be clear about their intentions and purposefully manage their actions.

**Process skills and tools** are the concrete means by which consultants help clients identify, organize, and accomplish the tasks necessary to reach their goals. They are applied tactically, and in various combinations, in response to the client's needs and context. Examples include skills and tools for asking good questions, identifying options, facilitating decision-making, and providing feedback.

**Change acumen** is deep knowledge and insight into the process and dynamics of change. This includes iterative cycles of using data and evidence to inform change, quickly and accurately understanding the implications of change for the client system, and making appropriate decisions and judgments.

**Content Expertise** is academic and practical knowledge of specific subject areas (e.g., mathematics, science, reading) or of factors and conditions related to improving education systems and student outcomes (e.g., professional development, assessment, instructional strategies, MTSS, parent engagement).

**A Commitment to Results** is a set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that enable clients to pursue and achieve their priority aims.

## Framework Purpose and Use

School improvement consultants are professional helpers whose role requires specialized knowledge and skills applied in helping schools address the challenges and opportunities associated with improving teaching and learning. Although school improvement consultants' role is recognized, their profession is not well-defined. In fact, individuals in this role often bear the burden of figuring out what the profession is and shoulder the responsibility for building their own capacity to carry out the role.

The purpose of the School Improvement Consulting Framework is to contribute to the professionalization of school improvement consulting by adding clarity, coherence, and consistency to how people think about the school improvement consultant role. The framework helps to define what this role entails, guides the work of school improvement consultants, and serves as a gauge for their performance. The framework is not an exhaustive list of everything school improvement consultants need to know, rather it provides broad categories of knowledge and competencies, emphasizing that consultants are continuously learning and developing their craft.

The framework can be used to design and facilitate the learning and development of school improvement consultants. It embodies the philosophy that consulting is a helping, mutually supportive relationship, based on trust, in which the client and consultant each have roles, contribute their knowledge and skills, and learn through their joint work. It includes both the technical skills and the “softer,” more nuanced skills that consultants need to be most helpful to schools today.

## Framework Description

**Components:** The School Improvement Consultant Framework is grounded by a consultant's **use of self**, which involves bringing awareness of self, others, and the context and drawing from one's unique set of experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and values, to serve as a “change instrument.” The framework emphasizes that consultants use an array of **process skills and tools** and apply **change acumen** to guide and assist clients in undertaking intentional continuous improvement. In addition, consultants apply their **content expertise** to help clients identify and take actions related to achieving their intended outcomes and, ultimately, foster a collective and sustained **commitment to results**.

**Domains:** The color coding of the framework indicates relative balance of **consultant** and **client** capabilities and responsibilities for each component of the framework. For example, use of self is primarily a function for the consultant. Both the consultant and the client have responsibility for process skills and tools and change acumen. Consultants have content expertise and apply it when appropriate, but the primary responsibility for using content expertise and fostering a shared and relentless commitment to results rests with the client.

**Capacity Building Zone:** The three components in the capacity building zone are the areas in which the consultant has the most likely opportunities to intentionally strengthen the client's ability to successfully undertake change and improve outcomes independently over the long term. The shading of the line defining the zone emphasizes that the need and opportunity for capacity building vary by client.