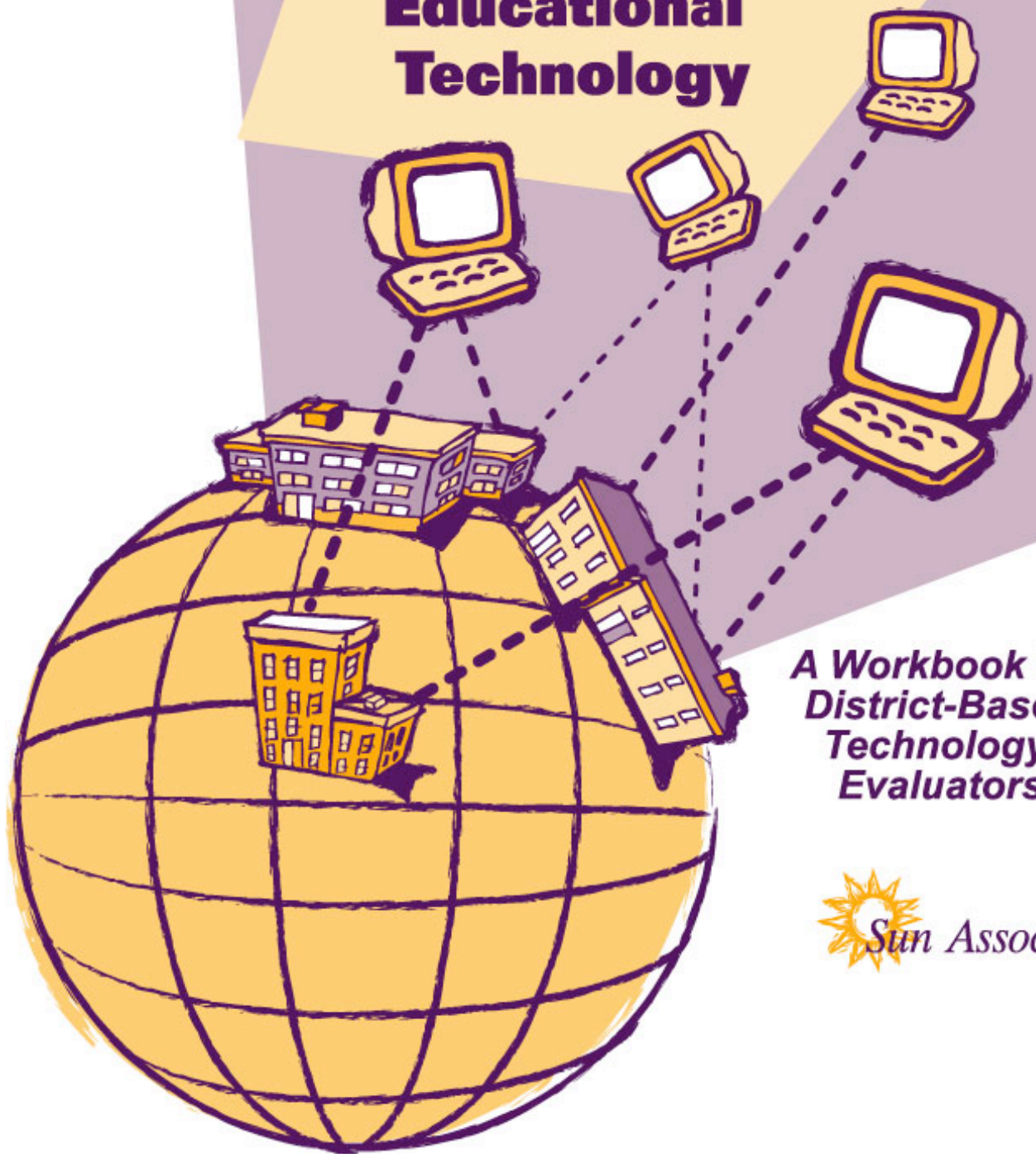


# **Creating District-Wide Evaluations of Educational Technology**



***A Workbook for  
District-Based  
Technology  
Evaluators***

 *Sun Associates*



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## Acknowledgments

The tools and process steps presented on the following pages have been derived through a decade of work with a wide spectrum of schools, districts, state departments of education, and other organizations. These clients have contracted with Sun Associates to facilitate technology evaluation processes, and the work presented in the following is representative of the format and intent (if not always the actual content) of that work. Our work with these clients has significantly contributed to materials in this workbook:

Alabama State Department of Education  
Fayette County (KY) Public Schools  
Katonah-Lewisboro (NY) Public Schools  
Kentucky Department of Education  
Lexington (MA) Public Schools  
Massachusetts Department of Education  
Michigan Department of Education  
New Hampshire Department of Education  
Southeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR\*TEC)  
St. Louis (MI) Public Schools  
Warren County (KY) Public Schools

Additional resources related to this workbook are available online at [www.edtecheval.org](http://www.edtecheval.org)



# Introduction: The Process of Technology Program Evaluation

Sun Associates has worked with a wide array of districts to develop and implement meaningful processes for assessing technology. In particular, we have performed external evaluation services for many Title IID state technology grants, all of whom share an active interest in self-examination for the purpose of continuous meaningful improvement.

The following pages provide an overview of the methods employed by some of these districts, as well as some of our own findings from working with these schools. We believe that these tools and notations will assist interested schools, districts, intermediate units, or state education agencies in framing effective technology evaluation criteria. It is important to note that the tools themselves are not as useful as the process into which they fit, nor can they be applied out of context. Evaluation is most meaningful when it arises from the concerns and priorities of individuals at the local level.

## Essential Conditions

Several factors significantly affect the success and degree of impact of technology program evaluation. While it is only in the rarest of circumstances that all of these “essential conditions” met, it *is* the case that evaluation benefits from the presence of at least one of the following within the district:

### A Commitment to Reflection

The school district as a whole must be committed to the process and act of reflection. The community overall must have an interest in periodically reviewing how they have gotten to their current “place” and how they can best position themselves for future improvement.

### An Existing Strategic Technology Plan or Individual Technology Initiative (Title IID Grant)

Concrete goals for how a district or project will utilize technology for student achievement can provide a focal point for evaluation. The basic performance expectations articulated in a district’s plan or in a project’s purpose statement develop into evaluation indicators and become the basis for assessing progress.

### A Strong, District-Wide, Technology Leader

Most often, evaluation work is initiated by a district technology coordinator (DTC). Under ideal circumstances, the DTC is someone primarily concerned with technology as a tool for teaching and learning.

## **A Supportive Superintendent**

Evaluation projects take time and fiscal resources., and their findings can be controversial. Superintendents who are “on board” with the evaluation process and who value reflection as a means towards improvement can provide valuable support and leadership. As with nearly every initiative in schools, evaluation efforts benefit greatly from the backing of engaged leaders at the very top.

## **A School Committee That Holds Programs and Individuals Accountable**

We have often seen School Committees as the catalyst for kicking off a technology evaluation. Sometimes the board’s need to know about the efficacy of technology expenditures will catalyze an evaluation effort. Whether or not the board is actually driving the evaluation work, it is always a good idea (as we will discuss below) to include a board member on the evaluation committee.

## **A State Directive for Program/Technology Accountability**

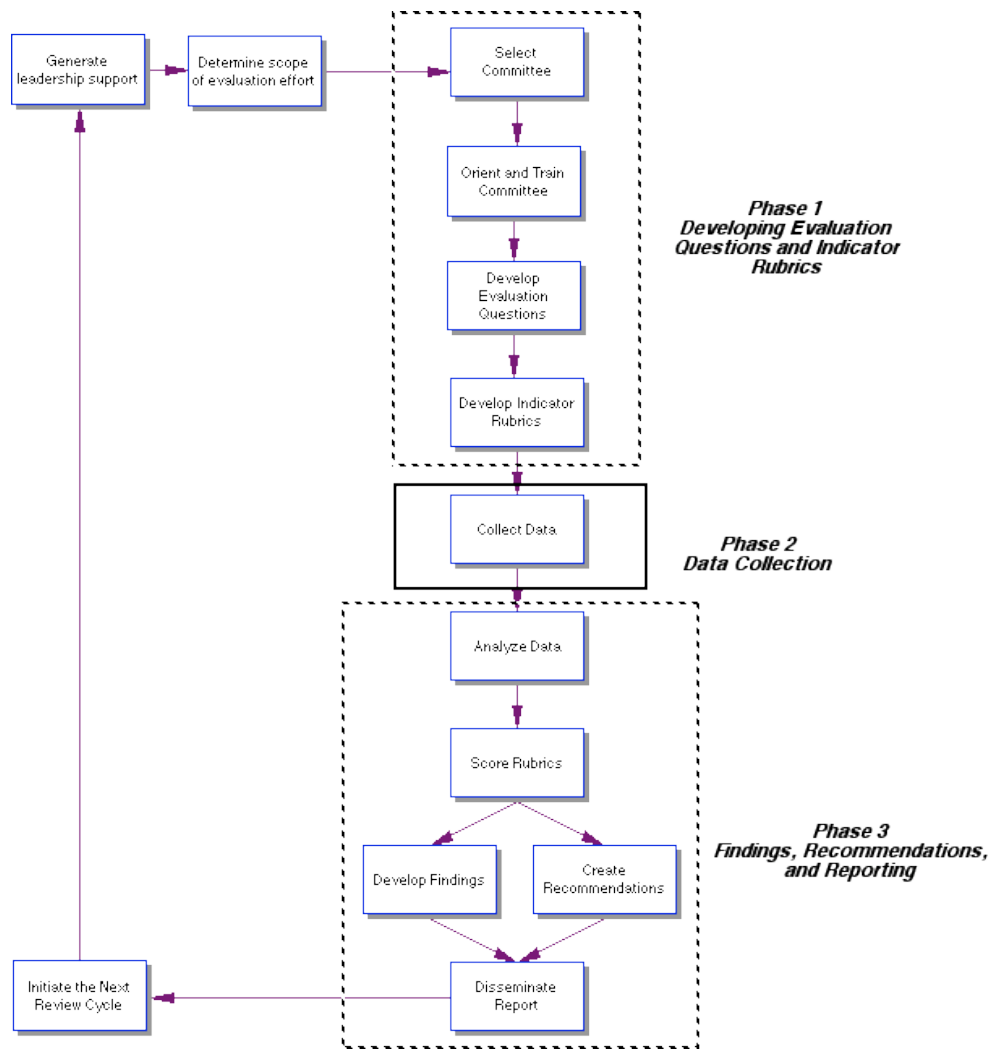
As part of the increased emphasis on assessment and accountability, most states include “evaluation” as a required component of district plans. In most cases, few guidelines are provided to help districts perform or make use of their evaluation. Unfortunately, the result is that districts include the word “evaluation” in their technology plan but can’t detail any activities beyond the quantitative actions of “counting” things.

## A Three-Phase Evaluation Process

The three-phase evaluation process described in the following pages is very well suited for the smaller scale of funded project evaluation. The basic phases – creating indicators, data collection, and reporting or dissemination – are essential whether one is focusing on a particular instructional technology initiative or the broad scale implementation of a district’s strategic technology plan.

Most teachers will be familiar with our basic evaluation process as it essentially parallels the model for authentic, performance-based, assessment. While such assessments have traditionally been used for student work, we apply similar methodology to assessing the "performance" of a system -- in this case, technology that is integrated into the process of teaching and learning. Developing and deploying a technology evaluation is a considerably larger task than developing a rubric for assessing student projects, but the underlying logic is the same

These steps are shown schematically in Figure 1:



**Figure 1 - A three-phase approach to technology program evaluation**