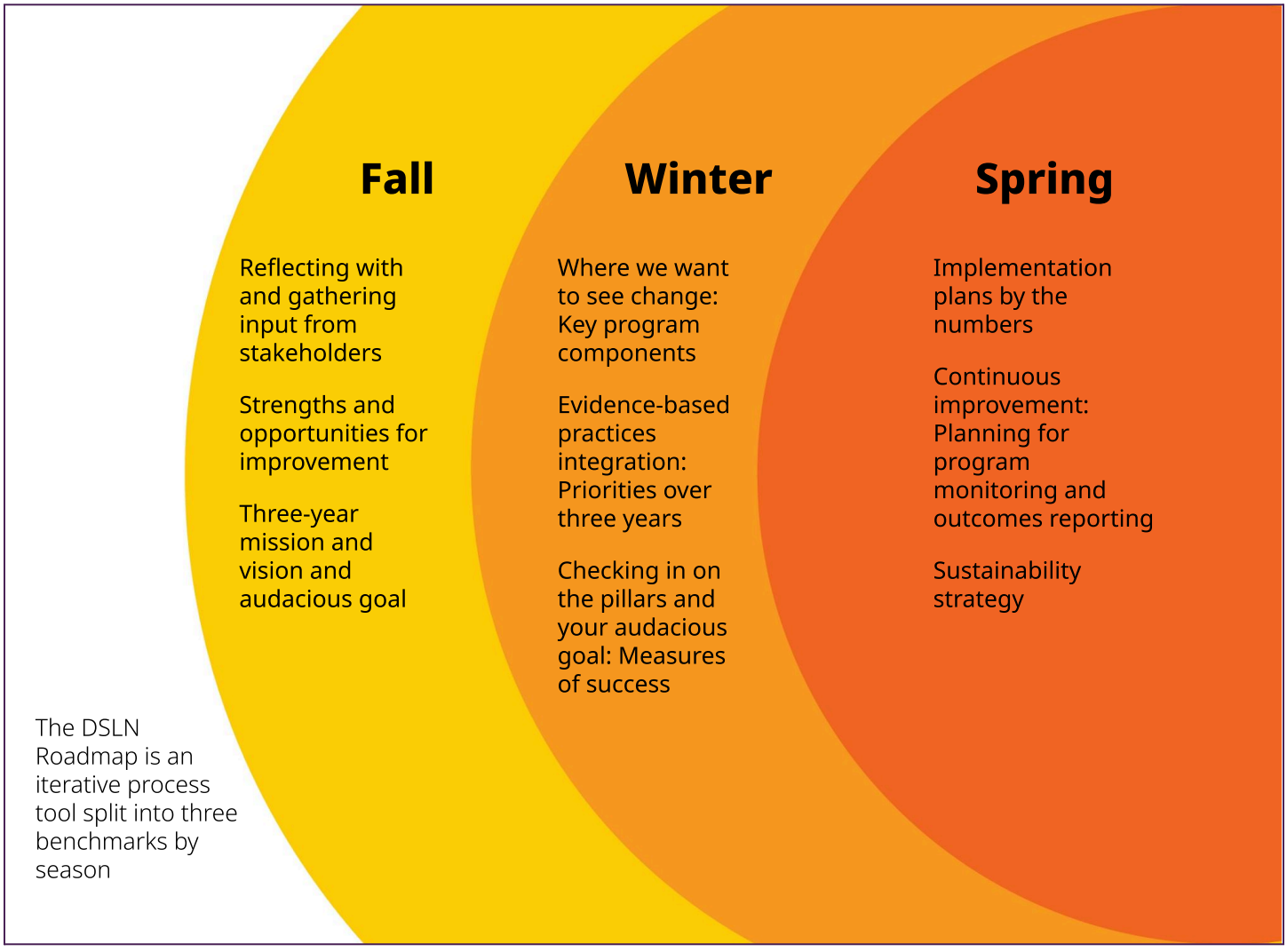
DSLN Roadmap

TOOL

The District Summer Learning Network roadmap helps guide your district team through planning for evidence-based, high quality summer learning experiences for your students. The roadmap helps districts to consider eight key evidence-based practice recommendations (EBPs) as well as DSLN's three pillars— academic quality, whole-child development, and partnerships. Using the roadmap for planning the summer ahead *and* three summers from now will ensure that your summer learning program increasingly offers sustainable, successful programming that helps you to meet goals for your students, staff, and community. We encourage districts to use the roadmap in the ways that feel most useful. Adapt this template so that it becomes the tool you want to use in your planning each year.

Roadmap Overview: 2026-27



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About this Document

DSLN recommends that you choose to include members of key audiences (ex: parent engagement, operations, communication, student support, instruction, CBO's, etc) in yearlong summer planning and review. You can use the table below to keep track of who has participated.

District Name: _____

This document was developed with the support of the following people:

Team Members

Name	Role: e.g., Contributor, Reviewer, Planning Lead, Authorizer
	Representing Select Representation Option
	DSLN District Planning Lead(s)
	Authorizer (Superintendent or Designee)
	DSLN Coach, if applicable

Partners, Reviewers, and Critical Friends

Name	Role	Feedback Date

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About the Evidence Base

Evidence-Based Practices for Summer Learning and The DSLN Pillars

The DSLN roadmap refers to eight evidence-based practices (EBPs) drawn from the strongest and most current research into what works in summer learning.[1] The roadmap also refers to three DSLN pillars: academic quality, whole child development, and community partnerships. The project pillars remind us to keep summer learning plans connected to important overarching ideas; that learning in the summer should be a rigorous, joyful, and enriching experience that accelerates readiness for the year ahead; that children have developmental needs and priorities that show up when they learn; and that community partnerships can help districts to strengthen their programs by incorporating the knowledge, relationships, and resources that community organizations hold. Taken together, the EBPs and pillars help districts to design and plan for summer programs that are successful and sustainable. In addition to this roadmap, DSLN has developed a "tool" for each pillar that district teams can use to explore concepts and identify planning priorities.

DSLN Pillars and Tools	Description
Academic Quality DSLN Academic Quality Tool	A focus on academic quality helps districts plan engaging, empowering, relevant, and rigorous summer programs so that all students have access to high quality summer instruction. The tool addresses the summer learning environment, student engagement, instruction, and curriculum.
Whole Child Development DSLN Whole Child Development Tool	When districts make summer learning planning decisions, there is value in considering the needs of the whole child. When districts clarify how their vision for summer learning incorporates a whole child approach, they are also supporting engagement and attendance. The tool helps districts consider how program planning and implementation address the whole child and identify how success will be measured.
Partnerships for Summer Learning DSLN Partnerships Tool	Summer learning partnerships can greatly enrich the student experience, connecting school to the larger world. They also increase the pool of resources and people who can support important program goals. The tool supports districts and community organizations in designing a model for collaboration that helps create transformative summer learning opportunities and experiences for young people.

[1] Source: Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success, 2nd Edition, RAND 2018, updated in 2023; https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-learning/toolkit/pages/default.aspx

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Evidence Based Practices	Key Ideas
Start Planning Early	• Start cross-department planning by January • Make key programmatic decisions, such as targeted student population and program duration, upfront • Meet regularly and plan for engaging academic and enrichment activities that meet students' needs and interests • Engage in a continuous improvement process
Structure Program for Sufficient Academic Time on Task	• Schedule academic instruction for three to four hours per day • Schedule the program to span five to six weeks • Provide teachers with strategies for maximizing instructional time • Ensure smooth site operations from Day 1
Use Effective Student Recruitment Practices	• Develop clear and timely recruitment materials that explain program requirements and features • Personalize recruitment of students and their families • Follow up with enrollees before the program starts
Hire Effective Instructional Staff	• Develop rigorous processes to recruit and hire effective, certified teachers with grade-level and content experience for academic classes • Incentivize educators to teach in the summer • For enrichment classes, hire instructors with strong content expertise • Train enrichment instructors in positive behavior management strategies
Provide High-Quality Academic Instruction	• Select curricula that are aligned to school-year standards and students' needs • Instruct in small classes or groups • Hire special education teachers and staff to provide support to students with special needs • Give teachers sufficient training and ongoing support
Foster a Positive Summer Site Climate	• Establish a positive behavior management policy that outlines expectations for students and adults • Train all staff on the importance of positive adult engagement with students throughout the day — not only in classes • Develop a clear, positive message about the summer site culture and ask staff to consistently convey it to students • If resources allow, consider hiring staff to support positive student behavior
Maximize Attendance	• Establish firm enrollment deadlines and keep electronic student records • Establish a clear attendance policy and track student-level attendance data • Provide free meals and transportation • If resources permit, provide field trips, prizes, and other incentives to attendees
Strive for Cost Efficiencies	• Capitalize on existing district experts and systems • Hire staff based on projected daily attendance, not on the initial number of enrollees • Adapt the school-year curricula for the summer • Partner with community-based organizations to provide enrichment activities

Table content from: https://wallacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/key-practices-for-summer-learning-implementation.pdf

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Fall Section of Roadmap

Submission Due: November 20th 2026

Purpose

The purpose of the DSLN roadmap's fall section is to help district teams envision the future of the district's summer learning programs. This process is rooted in sharing information about the district's current context and it is strongest when informed by evidence and input from multiple stakeholder perspectives. Complete **only** those parts of the fall section that help you to advance your planning, and feel free to drop in a link instead of writing if you have an existing document that serves the same purpose as any question in the roadmap. Prompts include:

- What is the current state of our summer learning programs? Do all stakeholders see the same strengths and improvement opportunities?
- What should our summer mission and vision statement include? Do they reflect the perspectives held by multiple stakeholders, including our youth?
- What is our audacious goal for next summer? Does that goal motivate and challenge everyone to strengthen summer learning?

In this phase, you will start by gathering data and insights to summarize your district's current state of programming. We recommend you review the national research on what works in summer learning with your team, determine how those areas showed up in your programs in recent summers, and reflect on your priority improvement areas for future summers.

Then, you can connect your ideas to the DSLN pillars: academic quality, whole child development, and partnerships – and explore opportunities for program improvement in these important areas. You will have the opportunity to draft your summer learning mission and vision, which will guide you in setting goals for this year's program, as well as tracing a path three years into the future. Finally, you will define your audacious goal for the year ahead, which you can use to build your coalition of summer learning champions.

Discuss these topics with your network colleagues and DSLN coach (if applicable) as well as your own team and, where possible, create opportunities for diverse stakeholders and constituents – including partners, families, and students – to add their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.

This fall section is organized into four parts:

1. Document Baseline Information About Summer 2026 Programs and DSLN Cohort Selection
2. Reflect With and Gather Input From Stakeholders
3. Focus on Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement
4. Three-Year Mission and Vision and Audacious Goal

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1. Document Baseline Information About Summer 2026 Programs and DSLN Cohort Selection

DSLN is interested in learning if your SY25-26 summer program resulted in positive increases in literacy, math and/or attendance outcomes. Let us know in the table below:

Outcome	Please select the dropdown response that best fits	Please share comments and specific details, for example specific assessments (MAP, iReady) and measured change
1, Our summer 2026 program(s) showed positive increases in literacy.	*No measures available*	Comments:
2. Our summer 2026 program(s) showed positive increases in mathematics.	*No measures available*	Comments:
3. Our summer 2026 program(s) showed positive increases in student attendance.	*No measures available*	Comments:

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2. Reflect With and Gather Input From Stakeholders

We encourage districts to gather input about the current state and future of summer learning from a variety of perspectives. Think about ways you can include multiple stakeholders' priorities and perspectives, including those of young people, as you prepare to write your audacious goal. Use all or some of the questions below in your conversations with different stakeholder groups. Adjust questions as needed for your purpose.

Reflection Areas	What the Team Heard:
What are our ideas for making our summer programs a high quality learning experience for students? How can students themselves, including those most needing support, help us understand how to better meet their academic needs? (e.g., student advisory groups, focus groups)	
What are our ideas for supporting whole child development in our district so that all students are better able to engage in and benefit from summer learning experiences? How will we share these ideas with students, staff, and families?	
What are our ideas for community partnerships that can make summer learning in our district more successful in meeting a variety of needs? What resources, strengths, and role(s) can specific partners bring? What successes have we observed among our partners?	

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Reflection Areas	What The Team Heard:
What are our ideas for ensuring that more children in our district get what they need from summer? Which students most need summer support? What do they need, and how can we meet that need?	
What are our ideas for making our summer programs financially sustainable? What sustainability risks do we need to plan for? (*Include information about per-student cost and revenue streams where known.*)	
What metrics and data would let us know that our programs were of high quality and important to sustain? Did we communicate enough about last summer's successes with our stakeholders?	

	Priorities to Take Away
Based on what the team heard, what is most important to remember as you go into planning?	

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3. Focus on Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Now review the evidence-based practices and DSLN pillars on pages 3-4. Where do your summer program(s) currently show strength and have areas to improve?

Our most significant successes last summer were...	**1**	**2**	**3**
Describe the 1-3 important successes in this row.	*Our greatest success was:*		
Which pillar(s) or evidence-based practice(s) do we connect this to?			
What evidence lets us know this is an area of programmatic strength?			

Maybe last summer could have been even better if …	**1**	**2**	**3**
Describe possible improvement ideas along this row.	*Our first priority for improvement is:*		
What evidence would let us know this was an important improvement?			
What support would we need to get there?			

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4. Three-Year Mission and Vision and Audacious Goal

With your stakeholders, review your notes so far. Then, use those ideas to create your **summer learning mission and vision** and the **audacious goal** you will set for this year. A compelling mission and vision and a right-sized audacious goal can energize and motivate your team and stakeholders and attract the attention and resources you need to achieve the outcomes you prioritize.

Not every aspect of a program can change in one year. Give yourself permission to look ahead three years and consider what you would like students, families, and the community to be experiencing by then. **What is your summer learning vision?** (Think about the important impact you want to have in the future.) **What is your mission?** (Think about the work it will take to get to that impact.) Think about including the needs and wants of different stakeholder groups as you write.

1. Mission and Vision Questions to Consider	Summer Learning Mission and Vision Statement: Three Summers from Now
What impact will high quality learning experiences offer to students, families, the community? How do we define high quality summer learning? Can we measure it? What leadership and planning work will help us to achieve this impact? What experiences do we want staff to have? How will those experiences prepare and inspire them as well? How do we know that the vision we have for our future programming includes the ideas and hopes of young people? Their families and community?	*If you have worked on a DSLN roadmap before, note how your vision is evolving as needed.*

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2. Audacious Goal Questions to Consider	Audacious Goal for This Summer
What is our audacious goal for the summer ahead? Why is this goal the right one to focus on? How will it motivate and challenge everyone to strengthen summer learning programs and outcomes How will working to achieve this audacious goal this year help to create the conditions for your longer-term mission and vision to be fulfilled over time?	*Our ambitious but doable goal is:*

The fall planning section of your DSLN roadmap is complete! Date of share with DSLN: _____

We also encourage you to share part or all of your fall roadmap work with partners and other key stakeholders.

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Winter Section of Roadmap

Submission Due: January 22nd 2027

Purpose

In the fall phase, you focused on **what** to work on: you reviewed the DSLN pillars and evidence-based practice recommendations for summer learning (detailed on page 4), gathered input from stakeholders, considered current strengths and opportunities for increasing students' success, and drafted an audacious goal for the year ahead alongside a mission and vision statement to guide the next three years. In the winter planning phase, you will consider **where**, **how,** and **with whom** you can make the changes necessary to advance your goals. Questions you will consider in this section include:

- **What planning deliverables or milestones will we need to complete? By when? Who is leading?**
- **Which evidence-based practices are we building towards achieving this summer? Which will take more time?**
- **How will we know if our efforts are successful? What data will we need and who will be in charge?**

In this winter phase, planning will focus on considering evidence-based practices, gathering a range of ideas for program components to add or strengthen, and selecting those you will prioritize . We recommend that you review the whole winter section in advance with your team and decide which planning areas on the roadmap are most helpful / needed to advance your mission, vision, and audacious goal, and how you will share the work among the team **Skip or modify any roadmap prompts as needed to ensure value for your district's process.**

Once you have completed this winter section, you will have a three-year plan with continuous improvement notes that is aligned with your mission and vision. Your team will then be ready to focus on implementation for the summer ahead.

This winter section is organized into three parts:

1. Where We Want to See Change: Key Program Components
2. Evidence-Based Practices Integration: Priorities Over Three Years
3. Checking in on The Pillars and Your Audacious Goal: Measures of Success

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1. Where We Want to See Change: Key Program Components

To achieve your audacious goal and align your work with the summer learning evidence base, you will need to work on building out specific components of your program. These might be a change in approach to curriculum, a major new partnership, transforming communication and PD for site leaders, "re-branding" your summer programs, a new approach to continuous improvement, or others. Ask yourselves, *which changes will give us the greatest leverage to help us achieve our mission, vision, and audacious goal?*

In the table below, you will see an example for illustration, followed by rows where you can list possible change ideas you have identified through your process so far. Remember to include ideas from your diverse stakeholders. **This list of possibilities allows you to collect several ideas before prioritizing final decisions, if helpful to your process.** DSLN encourages districts to consider the opportunities that can be offered to new or first-time leaders in this phase.

Component that will change to achieve our goal	What is the idea? What critical steps would we need to take to ensure success? Who can lead this work?
(for example, if the goal is to rebrand programs positively and recruit willing families early. . .) Shift to Voluntary Student Enrollment via Positive Recruitment	*Recruitment: (person[s] responsible)* 1. *Design new branding and communications to encourage students and staff to look forward to summer and choose to participate; roll out by Feb 1. Remind families about "summer slide" and suggest that family vacations happen before / after.* 2. *We heard from families that a "save the date" message by Feb 1 and enrollment confirmation by March 1 would be helpful so they know what to plan for.* 3. *Teachers and counselors follow up: be sure students in need are signed up and planning to come by April 1.*
1. What is the idea?	Who would lead the work? What steps will it take? By when?
2. What is the idea?	Who would lead the work? What steps will it take? By when?
3. What is the idea?	Who would lead the work? What steps will it take? By when?

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2. Evidence-Based Practices Integration: Priorities Over Three Years

You now have an opportunity to make connections between the summer learning evidence base and the planning work you have done so far. Review the eight evidence-based practices (descriptions are found on page 4) and identify the areas where the program that you are envisioning is in and out of alignment with recommendations. Think about closing gaps over the next three years.

1. Start Planning Early	**2. Structure Program for Sufficient Academic Time on Task**	**3. Use Effective Student Recruitment Practices**	**4. Hire Effective Instructional Staff**
5. Provide High-Quality Academic Instruction	**6. Foster a Positive Summer Site Climate**	**7. Maximize Attendance**	**8. Strive for Cost Efficiencies**

Evidence-Based Practice Recommendation:	This Summer	Second Summer	Third Summer
Example: *#5 Provide High Quality Instruction*	*We will need more time to move away from curricula that teachers have typically planned solo to shared curriculum that will help all students achieve reading goals.* *Y1: pilot a new reading approach in one site with a reading specialist: Screen 3rd-5th graders with universal screener, use a strategic reading period, group based on intervention needs, and teach and capture data from embedded assessments. Invite teachers who could lead sites next summer to visit pilot classrooms.*	*Staff reading leads in every elementary site, offer PD to support all staff in implementing summer strategic reading.* *Keep finding and recognizing strong summer staff for retention and leadership* *Gather and share outcomes data and continue to adjust based on findings*	*Sustain, begin to integrate more effective and aligned strategic interventions into school year practice.* *Keep finding and recognizing strong summer staff for retention and leadership* *Gather and share outcomes data and continue to adjust based on findings.*
1.			
2.			

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3. Checking in on The Pillars and Your Audacious Goal: Measures of Success

If your district is successful in planning and implementing the changes you identified in **Key Program Components** and **Integrating Evidence Based Practices Over Three Years** above, how would you and your team and stakeholders be able to measure that success? DSLN recommends that districts first invest their energies in gathering accurate attendance data, so that you know about program / site level attendance improvement and are able to identify which students actually participated. In addition to attendance data, what are a few additional data points you want to track and report to let you know about your impact? Consider what is authentically doable based on your summer learning program evaluation capacity and resources. Accurate reporting of 1-3 data points is ultimately more useful than collecting so much data that you can't make meaning of it all.

Area of Interest	What's your high-level plan to meaningfully measure the success of your program in this area?
1. Attendance	
2. Area #2	
3. Area #3	

The winter planning section of your DSLN roadmap is complete! Date of share with DSLN : _____

We also encourage you to share part or all of your roadmap work with partners and other key stakeholders.

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Spring Section of Roadmap

Submission Due: March 15th 2027

Purpose

The purpose of the DSLN roadmap's spring section is to help districts plan for ongoing implementation, program monitoring, and continuous improvement. Advance planning to gather key data is a great way to secure opportunities to learn about what's working, where great things are happening that should be celebrated, and where your team can get curious about why what you're seeing is different from what you expected. Questions you will consider in this section include:

- **How can we intentionally learn about the strengths and growth opportunities in our program so that we can continuously improve it?**
- **Whose voices will help us understand where our design meets students' needs and where we need change?**
- **What facts and highlights about the program do we need to be able to reference when we are planning and advocating for sustainability?**

We encourage you to review this whole section in advance and make needed adjustments to prompts to ensure value for your district's planning process.

This spring section is organized into three parts:

1. Continuous Improvement: Planning for Program Monitoring and Outcomes Reporting
2. Sustainability Strategy
3. Implementation Plans by the Numbers

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1. Continuous Improvement: Planning for Program Monitoring and Outcomes Reporting

In general, a strong continuous improvement plan will allow you and your team to do two things to inform improvement: **monitor progress** and **report outcomes**. To **monitor** effectively, site leaders need to be ready to make expectations clear and identify missed expectations in real time to make prompt adjustments. **Outcomes** reporting can capture a mix of quantitative, qualitative, and anecdotal information about how your outcomes compare to your goals to understand your strengths and opportunities to improve. Review your notes from part three of the winter section, and go deeper in your planning by noting key actions **site leaders** will need to take.

DSLN Pillar	Program Monitoring and Adjustments	Outcomes Reporting
Considerations:	**Clear expectations** *such as using formative student assessment and feedback* **Supervision and feedback** *such as observations, walkthroughs or reviews of student work with clear next steps* **Adjustments to meet expectations** *such as coaching, resources sharing actionable feedback or instructional modeling*	**Quantitative measures** *such as survey results, assessment scores, % attendance* **Qualitative measures** *such as focus group findings, descriptions of events* **Anecdotal findings** *such as quotes from feedback forms or photo illustrations*
Academic Quality *Including academic time, effective staff, high quality instruction*	Key actions:	Key actions:
Whole Child Development *Including positive summer climate, effective recruitment, and maximizing attendance*	Key actions:	Key actions:
Community Partnerships *Including cost efficiencies and contributions to #1 and 2 above*	How can partners support monitoring?	How can partners support outcomes reporting?

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2. Sustainability Strategy

Program sustainability refers to the ability to keep providing services successfully even when facing major challenges. Sustainability occurs when summer learning programs produce results and continuously improve, persuading increasingly engaged stakeholders that programs are necessary and thus leading to ongoing alignment of priorities between summer and the regular school year and clear expectations about summer program . This table identifies four key sustainability strategy questions to guide your planning.

More support for understanding sustainability planning is available via the DSLN Sustainability Tool

Summer Learning Sustainability Approach		
	Notes on strengths (optional)	Actions we could prioritize to increase our program sustainability
1. Do we engage everyone who should be supporting summer learning by sharing key information about our work and outcomes with them?		
2. Is our summer learning program embedded in the district's overall approach to accomplishing our district improvement goals?		
3. Do we understand where our summer funding comes from and how decisions are made? Do we participate in planning for fiscal sustainability?		
4. Do we have partners who contribute to our sustainability with endorsements, funding, staffing, space, and / or transportation?		

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3. Implementation Plans By The Numbers

It is helpful to have key data on hand about your program for each year when discussing or comparing year-to-year investments and changes to resource allocations. Capture that information here:

Projected Summer Enrollment	
Total estimated number of students, all sites, and all grades	
Estimated percentage of total district enrollment, all grades	
Pre-K-grade 2 enrollment	
Grade 3-5 enrollment	
Grade 6-8 enrollment	
Grade 9-12 enrollment	

Estimated Total Program Funding Proportions (%)	
State funds and/or local tax levy	
Federal reimbursable programs	
Partnerships or in-kind	
Public and/or private grants	

The spring planning section of your 2025-2026 DSLN roadmap is complete! Date of share: _____

Your document belongs to the team and you may continue to revise it, but a snapshot will be saved at the time of your submission.

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