

Improving Institutional Change in Higher Education Institutions



The Intermediary Capability Assessment

Introducing the Intermediary Capability Assessment

The Intermediary Capability Assessment (ICA) is a framework and process that guides organizational self-examination and informs the development and continuous improvement of the essential organizational capabilities needed to support colleges and universities through transformational institutional change processes. Funded by the Gates Foundation, developed by the American Institutes for Research® in collaboration with the Gates Foundation, and refined by use with 16 leading organizations of higher education, the ICA helps improve organizational practices to better accomplish institutional and student-level goals and outcomes.

At its core, the ICA is a method for organizations to assess themselves and reflect on organizational capabilities to inform organizational development and continuous improvement efforts.

Building Opportunities

The ICA offers opportunities for funders, institutions of higher education, and intermediary organizations. For funding organizations similar to the Gates Foundation, the ICA represents an opportunity to dig deep with grantees to connect goals, strategies, theories of change, and organizational capabilities with intended outcomes. It provides a common language to guide conversations and share promising practices. It can also be used

Thank you to the organizations that participated in the ICA process and provided feedback:

- Achieving the Dream
- Advising Success Network (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators)
- American Indian Higher Education Consortium
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities
- Complete College America
- E3 Alliance
- Every Learner Everywhere (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education)
- Excelencia in Education
- The John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Higher Education
- Growing Inland Achievement
- Jobs for the Future
- MDRC
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Strong Start to Finish (Education Commission of the States)
- UNCF

to inform foundation strategy and funding decisions to support grantees in enhancing services and supports for institutions. By implementing the ICA with 16 higher education organizations, the Gates Foundation supported these intermediaries in discerning their strengths as well as areas for improvement. This was done in order to align individual and multiple organizational development strategies based on identified needs and to consider guideposts for future collective learning. The ICA Implementation Guide was written for funders to use with grantees, as relevant, and so AIR could support their needs, as appropriate.

Giving Organizations a Voice

For intermediaries (organizations focused on supporting multiple institutions or service providers in a strategic direction) the ICA represents a process, tools, and opportunities for engagement with

According to one of the leading higher education organizations that tested the ICA,

“The ICA has helped us to build a muscle in terms of change management and gives us the opportunity to see how all these things come together. There is something really valuable about having everyone in the room and having the space and place to agree and disagree and learn how we see things differently.”

colleagues to acknowledge strengths and attend to growth opportunities. For most of the 16 intermediaries using the ICA through Gates Foundation funding, engagement with the ICA has represented the first real opportunity to discuss and discern behind-the-scenes understanding of organizational impact from staff, partners, funders, and the institutions they seek to support. The ICA’s guidance helps pull together multiple resources from within and beyond the field of higher education in a step-by-step way that benefits intermediaries through its adoption.

Taking the First Step With the ICA

Over the past decade, the ICA has been continuously refined for use across the field of higher education. We invite you to peruse the tools and framework, apply the pieces that meet your needs, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue across the higher education field regarding how your near- and long-term needs are determined and monitored over time. We welcome your engagement in the way that works best for you.

You can find the ICA and supplementary materials at <https://www.air.org/intermediary-capability-assessment>. Should you have questions, please reach out to Ben Kalina (bkalina@air.org) or Garry Davis (gdavis@air.org) at the American Institutes for Research.