



The Value of Education Service Agencies (ESAs)

How ESAs Help School Districts Operate More Efficiently and Effectively

Across the United States, Education Service Agencies (ESAs) are called different names such as ESCs, ESDs, AEAs, ESUs, Intermediate Units, and Cooperatives. What they do is similar in that they serve as the shared services infrastructure for public education. Their purpose is consistent nationwide: help districts stretch limited resources, strengthen instruction, and successfully implement state priorities.

Driving Efficiency: Doing More with Fewer Dollars

- Provide shared services for Business Managers, HR, technology, purchasing, compliance, and legal support.
- Offer cooperative purchasing and regional contracts that reduce costs through economies of scale.
- Deploy shared specialists (special education, technology, cybersecurity, curriculum, and behavior supports).
- Support grant development and management, bringing external dollars directly into districts.

Example: Ohio's ESC network documented over \$417 million in combined cost savings and external grants in one year, returning \$8.83 for every \$1 of state operating subsidy. Texas ESCs also provide a similar study to show savings for school districts on a biennial basis.

Strengthening Effectiveness: Improving Teaching and Learning

- Texas's 20 regional Education Service Centers provide statewide professional development, special education technical assistance, compliance guidance, and implementation support—helping districts meet state requirements while reducing local administrative burden.
- Oregon's 19 Education Service Districts provide both direct teacher support (PD, coaching, mentorship) and direct operational support (technology, HR, legal, business services) to districts statewide.
- Kentucky's education cooperatives serve 81 districts with professional learning, technology services, and fiscal/accountability support.
- Pennsylvania's Intermediate Units deliver regional special education services, professional development, and technical assistance so districts can meet compliance requirements efficiently.

- Washington's Educational Service Districts operate cooperative purchasing and regional service models that reduce costs and expand access to specialized expertise for small and rural districts.

Scaling State Priorities and Innovation

- Help states implement new initiatives consistently across rural, suburban, and urban districts.
- Provide the infrastructure to scale literacy reform, data systems, accountability, and emerging technologies.
- Serve as the critical bridge between state agencies and local schools.

The National Value Proposition

- Lower operational and administrative costs for districts.
- Expand access to specialized expertise that districts cannot afford independently.
- Improve instructional quality and educator capacity.
- Strengthen compliance and reduce organizational risk.
- Support equity by serving rural and under-resourced communities.
- Increase return on investment for taxpayers.

Bottom Line: Education Service Agencies are the infrastructure that allows school systems to operate efficiently, deliver high-quality services, and ensure students—regardless of ZIP code—receive strong educational support.