LEARNING BRIEF #8–BEHAVIOR CHANGE APPROACHES IN ACTION – POLICY AGENCIES

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Introduction

The MacArthur Foundation's Big Bet On Nigeria program supports Nigerian-led efforts to reduce corruption by strengthening accountability, transparency, and participation. Encouraging citizens, civil society, and government actors to take action against corruption is a key element of the overall On Nigeria Theory of Change and the Behavior Change cohort Theory of Change. This learning brief explores how policy agencies, a subset of On Nigeria grantees focused on shaping government policy, apply the results of behavior change-focused partnerships to their anticorruption work. These agencies include the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission- Anticorruption Academy of Nigeria (ICPC-ACAN), the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), and the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER).

> **Learning Question**
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> **3.2** *What are the ways in which policy agencies and media grantees engage citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), and teeth actors around corruption issues? Where are they experiencing success and challenges and why?*
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> **Learning Priorities**
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> *1 How does the work done under On Nigeria, and with respect to the accountability ecosystem, contribute to outcomes in other areas and sectors?*
>
> *2 How do grantees come together to address other topics, beyond anticorruption, in the broader accountability ecosystem?*

Sample and Methods

This learning brief contributes to answering Learning Question 3.2, as well as Learning Priorities 1 and 2 (see box).[1] EnCompass reviewed proposals and reports from the 17 behavior change grantees

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[1] In December 2022 and early 2023, the Program Team and EL Partner identified three "learning priorities" to explore throughout the duration of On Nigeria. These priorities are a complement to the EL Framework's learning questions.

to identify policy agencies and technical assistance grantees, then collected training materials and reports from these grantees for further analysis. EnCompass conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with 11 individuals representing all four policy agencies and two technical assistance grantees to further explore their behavior change-related programming (see Annex 1 for more on KII participants). EnCompass coded, analyzed, integrated, and synthesized the collected data to generate the overarching findings and conclusions presented in this brief.

Findings

Findings are presented under three lines of inquiry that cut across the learning question and priorities. The first set of findings describes the content of behavior change-focused partnerships involving policy agencies and technical assistance grantees. The second set focuses on how policy agencies apply behavior change approaches in practice, and the final group of findings explores perspectives on what is needed to sustain emerging successes in the future.

The content of behavior change-focused partnerships

1 | Technical assistance grantees supported policy agencies on foundational behavior change topics but did not generally tailor the training and resources they developed to specific training recipients.

Exhibit 1. Technical assistance grantee training topics

	Training Topic
	Behavior change strategies in designing and implementing surveys and conducting research
	Defining, diagnosing, and identifying social norms
	Behavior mapping
	Power mapping
	Communicating and addressing behavior through policy interventions
	Communication for Behavior Impact (COM-B) and 'behavior change wheel' approaches

Technical assistance grantees reported that they conducted roundtables with On Nigeria grantees and other Nigerian anticorruption entities when designing their technical assistance efforts. One technical assistance grantee explained that though they considered contextual factors during design processes, they did not want their training to be overly prescriptive, as grantees are the experts in their field and would be best placed on how to apply tools and guidance most appropriately. Technical assistance grantees organized a variety of activities to support policy agencies in integrating behavior change approaches into their work. These activities focused on understanding common behaviors that contribute to corruption, developing possible strategies for shifting attitudes, beliefs, and actions, and exploring social norms frameworks, collective action, and systems thinking (see **Exhibit 1**).[2]

> *…Until the intervention of MacArthur, Chatham House, [and] Behavioural Insights Team, the social norms and behavior change approach was not, if you do not mind me using this generic term, 'mainstreamed' into [Organization name's] curriculum; so, this project mainstreamed or helped us to mainstream that this approach which was already on the fringes of our activities. – [Policy agency]*

Technical assistance grantees provided support through workshops, trainings, and mentoring. Technical assistance grantees and policy agencies noted that much of the technical support was delivered via larger online workshops and trainings that were attended by many other On Nigeria grantees, not just policy agencies. According to a technical assistance grantee, this was partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made tailored, in-person trainings for smaller groups more difficult to facilitate.

Applying behavior change approaches in practice

2 | Policy agencies integrated behavior change considerations into their strategic plans, training and curricula, and research and evidence-building efforts. Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) considerations appear to feature only rarely in their behavior change-related work.

Only one policy agency reported having experience with behavior change strategies prior to engaging with technical assistance grantees. Despite this, policy agencies consistently reported that technical assistance topics were relevant and useful and informed their work in various ways.

Strategic planning. One policy agency established an internal Behavioral Insights Team to focus on building capacity and integrating behavior change approaches into their future work, while another reported supporting the development of government policies that sought to shape behavior beyond using punitive measures. A third integrated behavior change strategies shared by technical assistance grantees into their programs focused on reducing voter apathy and vote buying and selling (**Exhibit 2**).

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[2] For more on the COM-B model of behavior change mentioned in Exhibit 1, see: https://www.bitbarriertool.com/.

Exhibit 2. Snapshot: Confronting voter apathy and vote buying/selling ahead of the 2023 elections

One policy agency described applying behavior change considerations to their work ahead of the 2023 presidential elections.

Selection of behavior change priorities and intervention design. The grantee held 'co-creation workshops' with an edutainment grantee from the Behavior Change cohort to jointly map key priorities for amplifying behavior change approaches. After prioritizing challenges around voter apathy and vote buying and selling ahead of the 2023 elections, grantees identified the relevant actors and behavior change solutions to integrate into their interventions.

Implementing behavior change approaches. The policy agency partnered with the edutainment grantee to apply behavior change strategies to voter education programs and information campaigns to edutainment grantees' target populations in two states ahead of the 2023 elections.

Applying GESI considerations. The policy agency grantee reported activities and messaging was tailored specifically for various populations in each state, including for differences across rural and urban areas, and for different ethnic groups. Careful attention was paid to translating messaging across languages.

Strengthening training activities and curricula. Policy agencies reported that they updated their training curriculum to sensitize other governmental and nongovernmental organizations and individuals to behavior change strategies and to incorporate social norms approaches. Policy agencies' trainings include topics such as confronting the costs, drivers, and enablers of corruption, as well as responding to the norms, attitudes, and behaviors associated with corrupt practices.

Advancing research and evidence-building efforts. Some grantees described working to create a behavior change knowledge center that will disseminate findings and promising practices from desk reviews, surveys, and intervention engagements through a quarterly seminar series. Others reported updating research methodologies with behavior change theories and frameworks and sensitizing staff on these methodologies to better understand barriers to changing corruption-related behavior. For example, one policy agency integrated behavior change-related questions into the design and implementation of a survey exploring peoples' experiences with corruption with government entities, then used survey results to identify three institutions to shift toward more transparent and accountable behaviors. Other grantees used research to inform and test behavior change interventions. For example, one grantee used research on corrupt practices related to policy implementation to improve their own systems for enforcing anticorruption measures.

> *We are supporting this process of behavior change through research, meaning we want to dig into the literature, we want to undertake action research, bring up evidence that will then inform behavior change interventions in the public sector.*
> *– [Policy agency]*

Integration of GESI considerations. Only two policy agencies explicitly mentioned GESI considerations in the context of their behavior change activities. Both stated that they include men and women in trainings and curriculum development, while one hosted a corruption and gender conference during which they held a session on behavioral insights. Two policy agencies did, however, discuss using what they learned in technical assistance sessions to

contextualize their behavior change-related programming by demographics such as ethnic groups, urban/rural areas, and socioeconomic status or by labor sector such as civil society, military, or private versus public sector.
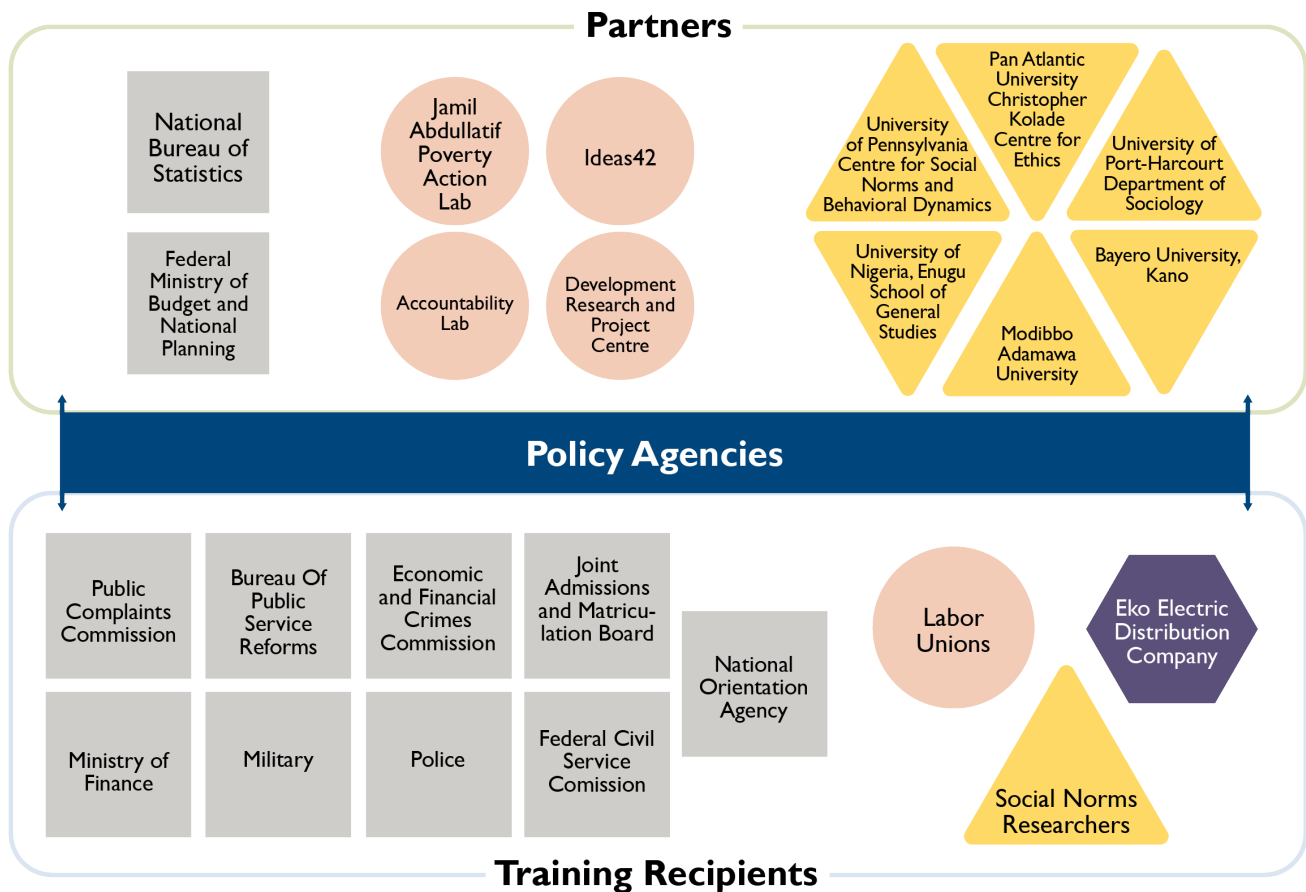
3	Policy agencies are targeting various stakeholders with their behavior change interventions, including public and private sectors, political party leaders, military/paramilitary, and various government ministry, department, and agency (MDA) staff.

Policy agencies are using behavior change approaches to engage partners and audiences throughout the accountability ecosystem in order to scale the use of behavior change approaches by other actors and to create anticorruption champions and influencers in various sectors. For example, one policy agency trains both state and non-state actors to create a network of organizations and agencies using behavioral insights to address corruption issues. Another conducts training for senior executives, military and paramilitary leaders, and political party leaders to create anticorruption champions or influencers. One policy agency specifically targeted both senior and lower-level public servants simultaneously, seeking to encourage trainees to look beyond the law toward social norms to change the behaviors of others while also changing their behaviors.

Policy agencies held trainings for personnel in five of the 28 federal ministries and in three initiatives under the Office of the Presidency. Training audiences included anticorruption academies or training units within the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Police, National Orientation Agency, Public Complaints Commission, and directors in Federal Civil Service training. Other targeted actors included civil society actors and CEOs of key private sector institutions. **Exhibit 3** presents policy agencies' training recipients as well as some of the actors with whom they collaborate (see Finding 4 for more on collaboration).

Exhibit 3. Policy agencies' training recipients and partners

Partners

National Bureau of Statistics	Jamil Abdullatif Poverty Action Lab / Ideas42	University of Pennsylvania Centre for Social Norms and Behavioral Dynamics / Pan Atlantic University Christopher Kolade Centre for Ethics / University of Port-Harcourt Department of Sociology
Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning	Accountability Lab / Development Research and Project Centre	University of Nigeria, Enugu School of General Studies / Modibbo Adamawa University / Bayero University, Kano

Policy Agencies

Training Recipients

Public Complaints Commission / Bureau Of Public Service Reforms / Economic and Financial Crimes Commission / Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board / National Orientation Agency / Labor Unions / Eko Electric Distribution Company

Ministry of Finance / Military / Police / Federal Civil Service Comission / Social Norms Researchers

Grey boxes: Government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs); yellow triangles: Universities and academic researchers; Orange circles: Civil society groups; Purple hexagon: Private sector stakeholders

4 | Policy agencies partner with other actors in several ways: exchanging knowledge and information and co-creating research, resources, and/or training activities.

Knowledge exchange and information sharing. Policy agencies reported successfully working with each other, technical assistance grantees, other behavior change grantees, and with non-grantees such as universities, government, and civil society to exchange information and data and to leverage complementary skillsets and expertise. For example, one policy agency described working closely with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to gather previously collected NBS data, co-design future NBS data collection tools to include behavior change considerations, and collaborate on interpretation. The policy agency also noted that NBS provided them with operational support to conduct surveys across several states.

Co-creation activities. Policy agencies and technical assistance grantees reported developing resources and conducting joint activities with each other and other actors. Two policy agencies noted that they worked with technical assistance grantees and other experts in the behavior change space

to co-create behavior change goals and interventions. These grantees felt that these relationships contributed to their growth and expertise in behavior change strategies.

Policy agencies also partnered with non-grantee and grantee actors to jointly design and deliver training and to share and reference curricula to avoid duplicating efforts. Policy agencies also described collaboration on other joint efforts. For example, one policy agency worked with another behavior change grantee to gather both government and non-state actors to jointly identify key systemic corruption challenges in Nigeria and then together, consider the behavior change strategies that could be applied to each challenge. From there, they sought to prioritize, co-create, and implement specific interventions.

5 | Insufficient resources and expertise and limited buy-in among target audiences constrain policy agencies' efforts to effectively apply behavior change approaches in their anticorruption programming.

According to both technical assistance grantees, policy agencies lack the research capacity and financial resources they need to consistently design and implement high-quality behavior change approaches. High staff turnover also appears to be a challenge. A policy agency grantee concurred, mentioning that although the funding provided for

> *For me, that is a challenge. The subject matter, the expertise, I do not see a lot of it around the space…we do not have subject matter experts who I can say are working with us on a permanent basis.* – [Policy agency]

these initiatives has helped them reach many actors, there are other targets that they do not have the financial and personnel resources to engage. For example, they cannot convene large workshops and gatherings that would bring together faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and private sector actors. Another policy agency explained that, despite the resources provided by technical assistance grantees, behavior change research on Nigeria is still limited, and this is sometimes an impediment.

Buy-in can also be a challenge. For example, one policy agency had issues when conducting surveys on corruption due to respondents, especially women, being unwilling to discuss the topic. Both technical assistance grantees and policy agencies felt that prevailing social norms, according to which corruption is seen as a normal behavior, or that everyone is already committing corrupt acts, remains a persistent barrier to changing behaviors across different sectors and populations. Public resentment, apathy, and a general lack of trust in anticorruption efforts also pose obstacles.

Policy agencies, sometimes in partnership with technical assistance grantees, are trying to tackle these challenges. For example, one policy agency noted that they included both senior and junior level personnel in their trainings to build awareness and support for behavior change strategies and ensure that learning could be carried on by younger staff.

Priorities for sustaining and scaling emerging success

Strategic efforts to shift social norms around corruption are relatively new to Nigerian government institutions. Policy agencies and technical assistance grantees agree that shifting social norms will take time and are intentionally planning their behavior change work with sustainability in mind. Moving forward, both policy agencies and technical assistance grantees highlight **capacity** and **collaboration** as essential to sustaining and scaling their work.

6 | Both technical assistance grantees and policy agencies note that continuing to strengthen policy agencies' behavior change <u>capacity</u> is essential for building on early successes.

Policy agencies expressed interest and shared plans for continuing and deepening their behavior change work, particularly in expanding their research and institutional expertise to inform future activities. Most policy agencies reported that they plan to engage technical assistance grantees in the future, but plans are mostly informal and still in development. Policy agencies noted that priority technical assistance topics include updating behavior change activities to incorporate findings from ongoing research and tailoring their training plans and curricula for other actors. Technical assistance grantees also recognized the importance of supporting policy agencies to access and use research to design and conduct data collection efforts, including monitoring whether and how trainees apply behavior change strategies in their work and to what effect. **Exhibit 4** lists policy agencies' and technical assistance grantees' priorities for 2023 and 2024.

Exhibit 4. Priorities for future behavior change efforts

Technical assistance grantees' priority behavior change topics	Policy agencies priority behavior change topics	Policy agencies requests for technical assistance support
• Understanding the mechanics of corruption in Nigeria • Why Nigerians engage in corruption • Naming and faming those who abstain from corruption • Understanding the motivation of integrity actors/corruption avoiders	• Relationship between social norms and corruption • National ethics and integrity • Methodologies for behavioral research • Behavior change intervention design • Analysis methods	• Integrating ongoing research into behavior change activities • Strengthening training plans and curriculum

7 | Grantees emphasized that further strengthening <u>collaborative efforts</u> with target audiences, especially state and federal level government actors, as well as other grantees, is critical for sustainability.

Policy agency and technical assistance grantees highlighted the importance of working in collaboration with other actors on behavior change issues. Grantees noted that success and

sustainability depended on both deepening existing partnerships and engaging new actors. They suggested several ways of achieving these aims.

For example, one technical assistance grantee and three policy agencies reported that anticorruption actors should continue to seek commitment to ongoing and future behavior change interventions from influential individuals at both state and federal levels. They noted that public support and advocacy from these actors can play a crucial role in gaining more buy-in from others. Technical assistance grantees also reported that buy-in could also be facilitated through building informal institutions around behaviors of honesty, integrity, and accountability and that peer learning opportunities might facilitate such efforts.

> *A key learning in trying to do Randomized Control Trials (RCT) is that we are going to work with the government agency directly if we are going to do this the next time. Like, we are going to work maybe with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), because those ones have the secondary data, and it makes the work easier – [Policy agency]*

Technical assistance grantees are interested in expanding their work to include audiences like the Nigerian police force, the Ministry of Justice, the National Assembly, and INEC. One policy agency similarly reported interest in expanding direct collaboration with government agencies to foster the "spread" of behavior change approaches.

Technical assistance grantees also noted that 'spread' could entail engaging marginalized populations more intentionally. For example, one technical assistance grantee hoped that behavior change work could be more inclusive of persons with disabilities and women through understanding their experiences with corruption better.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Policy agencies are integrating behavior change approaches into their On Nigeria programming and are engaging and collaborating with a variety of actors throughout the accountability ecosystem to shift social norms around anticorruption. Some of these efforts show early signs of success. (Aligned with Findings 1, 2, 3, 4)

Technical assistance grantees have carried out training and other capacity-building efforts in which policy agencies (and other On Nigeria grantees) have had the opportunity to learn about foundational aspects of behavior change programming and to consider the ways in which they might apply behavior change approaches to their own work under On Nigeria. Policy agencies have adjusted their programmatic strategies, training activities, and research approaches to reflect an emphasis on shifting social norms and collective action, with a view toward changing the behavior of key targets throughout the accountability ecosystem in different ways. In some cases, policy agencies are trying to encourage the emergence of anticorruption champions among political party leaders and in the private sector. In others, they want to build the capacity of key government counterparts, especially MDA staff, to develop and apply behavior change approaches themselves, in order to encourage ongoing work to shift social norms in the future. With a few exceptions, GESI considerations are rarely explicit in these efforts.

There are emerging signs of success in behavior change programming. Technical assistance agencies have noted apparent improvements in the capacity of policy agencies, and other On Nigeria grantees, to develop and deploy behavior change approaches. Further, some policy agencies report gains in the extent to which partners are embracing and applying behavior change strategies, while others suggest that key targets are increasingly amenable to fighting corruption. Definitive evidence as to whether and how these efforts are contributing to sustainable behavior changes in the broader accountability ecosystem, however, remains a work in progress.

Conclusion 2: Policy agencies and their partners continue to face challenges in their efforts to shift social norms around corruption. Additional skill-building opportunities, and a renewed emphasis on deepening collaborative efforts with government counterparts, are important for addressing these challenges and for sustaining and potentially scaling behavior change work in the future. (Aligned with Findings 5, 6, 7)

Despite emerging successes, policy agencies continue to face substantial challenges in their behavior change-related work. Even with recent gains, limited expertise and resources continue to constrain many policy agencies. Widespread apathy regarding corruption, including among targeted audiences, also poses an obstacle. Though these challenges are not simple to address, both technical assistance grantees and policy agencies agreed that two areas of emphasis might be especially important for overcoming them in the future.

First, grantees reported that policy agencies need to continue developing their own behavior change skills. Access to more skill-building opportunities for more staff, including through continuing collaboration with technical assistance agencies, may provide a foundation for policy agencies to navigate issues related to staff turnover such that they can sustain their anticorruption efforts and scale them to involve more actors in the future.

Second, and relatedly, On Nigeria grantees and their partners believe they will benefit from doubling down on their efforts to identify and collaborate with government counterparts—at both state and federal levels—to strengthen a network of integrity champions throughout the accountability ecosystem. Continuing to work with other grantees, including technical assistance agencies, is also seen as a priority for ensuring the sustainability of On Nigeria's behavior change programming.

Learning Considerations

Based on the findings and conclusions presented in this brief, the Program Team may benefit from reflecting on the following questions:

1. *How might the Program Team and technical assistance grantees best support policy agencies in their efforts to institutionalize behavior change efforts beyond 2024? Might technical assistance grantees be able to tailor behavior change-focused support to the needs and priorities of specific policy agency partners?*

2. *Are policy agencies best served by: a) focusing on building their own internal behavior change capacities over the next 18 months, b) training other partners in the use of behavior change approaches, or c) some combination of a) and b)?*

3. *Moving forward, how might the Program Team contribute to efforts that seek to strengthen policy agencies' knowledge, capacity, and integration of GESI considerations in their behavior change efforts?*

Annex 1: Key Informant Interview Participant Organizations

According to On Nigeria 2.0 Theory of Change, "policy agencies" are public and private sector organizations that work to shape the development and/or implementation of policies related to transparency, accountability, and participation, including by providing training to policymakers and public sector officials. "Technical assistance grantees," for the purposes of this brief, are On Nigeria grantees that provide training and support on behavioral insights and/or human-centered design to policy agencies. **Exhibit 5** lists the policy agencies and technical assistance grantees with whom the EL Partner conducted KIIs for this brief.

Exhibit 5. KII Participants

Organization Names	Type of Organization
Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG)	Policy agency
ICPC – Anticorruption Academy of Nigeria	Policy agency
National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS)	Policy agency
Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER)	Policy agency
Behavioural Insights Team/Griot Studios*	Technical assistance grantee
Chatham House	Technical assistance grantee

*NOTE: The Behavioral Insights Team partnered with Griot Studios on activities related to policy agencies. Both organizations were represented together in one KII session and, for purposes of this report, are considered to represent one technical assistance grantee initiative, meaning that all of the grantees providing technical assistance contributed to this brief.