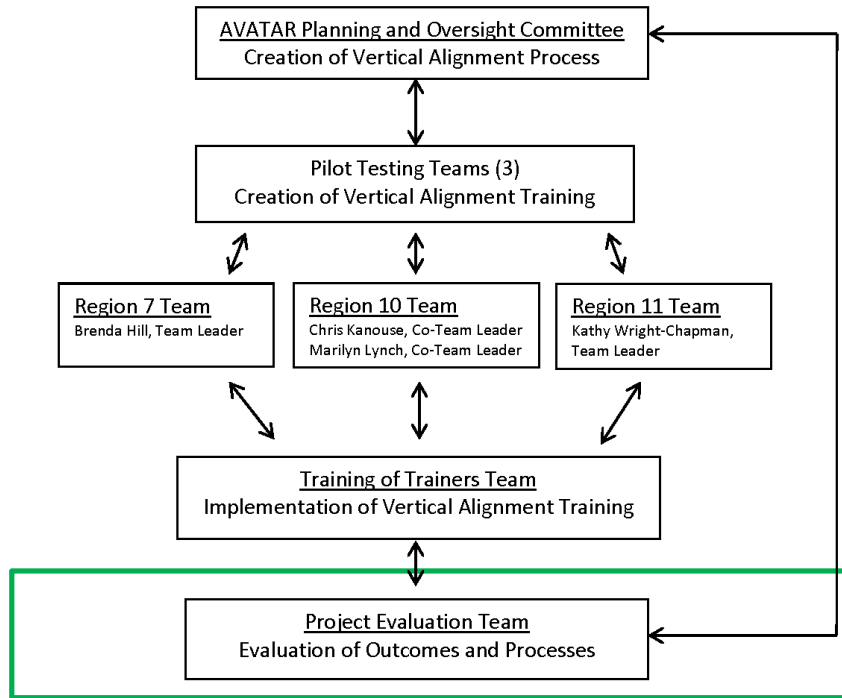**Evaluation Plan**

Figure 7: AVATAR (Academic Alignment Training and Renewal)

The AVATAR process and training is engulfed in formative and summative evaluation processes in order to create the most effective and efficient vertical alignment model, as is exhibited in Figure 7. This comprehensive evaluation design is embedded in the AVATAR model with a utilization focus and a qualitative perspective.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation (Patton, 2008) begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use; therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, from beginning to end, will affect use. Use concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experience the evaluation process. Therefore, the focus in utilization-focused evaluation is on intended use by intended users.

Utilization-focused evaluation is a process for helping primary intended users select the most appropriate content, model, methods, theory, and uses for their particular situation. Situational responsiveness guides the interactive process between evaluator and primary intended users. A psychology of use undergirds and informs utilization-focused evaluation; intended users are more likely to use evaluations if they understand and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings; they are more likely to understand and feel ownership if they have been actively involved; by actively

involving primary intended users, the evaluator is training users in use, preparing the groundwork for use, and reinforcing the intended utility of the evaluation every step along the way (Patton, 2008). Participants will learn key factors in doing useful evaluations; common barriers to use, and how to overcome those barriers; implications of focusing an evaluation on intended use by intended users; options for evaluation design and methods based on situational responsiveness, adaptability, and creativity; and ways of building evaluation into the programming process to increase use.

The overall goal of the AVATAR evaluation process is to provide formative, summative, and utilization-focused assessment of a curriculum alignment training program that empowers Regional Partnerships to take curricular action to close achievement gaps for students including those from groups underrepresented in higher education and to reduce students' time in developmental education. This goal functions at two levels, in that evaluation must be conducted for the training and follow-up program to be developed for Regional Partnerships and also for the AVATAR-motivated activity of any single partnership. Measures of impact on students during the life of the project is limited. Participants' perceptions and buy-in to the vertical alignment process will be assessed.

Project objectives that pertain to project evaluation as a whole include the following. In this narrative, goals and objectives labeled D refer to evaluation that pertains to the project as a whole. Goals and objectives labeled A, B, and C refer to Phase 1, 2, and 3 of the project, respectively.

> D.1. Project AVATAR will solicit feedback from pilot test participants for improvement of its curriculum alignment processes, training, and follow-up technical support.

> D.2 Project AVATAR will collect and analyze relevant baseline and continuing performance, retention, and developmental education data from schools and institutions of higher education participating in the project.

> D.3 The project will collaborate with THECB in an external, summative evaluation.

The project objectives that pertain to evaluation to the work of a Regional Partnership in horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment as part of Phases 2 and 3 are:

> D.4 **High school partners** will institute systems for collecting, by subgroup, section, and learning objective, state test results and college readiness indicators of students in relevant STEM classes and for sharing them with partners.

> D.5 **Higher education partners** will institute systems for collecting by section and learning object final examination or assignment results for relevant STEM classes and for sharing them with partners.

> D.6 **Regional Partners** will develop and implement methods for tracking retention and college success data for students from participating high schools into public technical and two-year colleges and from them into public four-year institutions.

D.7   **Regional Partnerships** will develop and implement methods for surveying workforce partners about the career readiness of graduates.

D.8   **Regional Partnerships** will develop and implement systems that enable accountability dialogues through their local or regional P-16 Councils.

D.9   **Regional Partnerships participants** will document their extent of implementation, satisfaction with, and perception of the cost effectiveness and potential impact of curricular alignment goals.

To accomplish these goals, the primary evaluation activities of the project will be as follows.

1.   Partnership agreements for Planning and Regional Partnerships will specify deliverables, baseline data, continuing data collection systems, and accountability dialogue to be provided by these groups and means for documenting submission or details of completion.

2.   Focus groups of Oversight Team members will ascertain their perception of congruence of the programs designed with the criteria stated in the project proposal.

3.   Leaders of Regional Partnerships will be interviewed about perceptions of project success.

4.   Surveys of Phase 2 and 3 Regional Partnership participants will focus on their perceptions of the quality of training and follow-up technical assistance and, for Phase 2, on evidences of their development of capacity through this project, to include their coaching of Phase 3 participants.

5.   Minutes will be kept of Pilot Test Leader feedback to the Oversight Team about the curriculum, training, and follow-up processes.

6.   Project staff and designated liaisons will keep logs about technical assistance rendered in Phases 2 and 3.

7.   Surveys will be developed during Phase 1 for use with employers in Phases 2 and 3.

8.   The project will collaborate with THECB in conducting an external evaluation.

The Planning and Oversight Committee and the associate project director, Dr. Mary Harris, will monitor and evaluate the work in Phases 1, 2, and 3 along with the AVATAR evaluation team, comprised of members from the North Texas Regional P-16 Council representing a wide cross-section of highly qualified members of the Research, Assessment, and Accountability Committee. This committee has agreed to include the evaluation of AVATAR in its strategic plan and program of work for 2011-2012. The following members, V. Barbara Bush, University of North Texas, Co-Chair; Rick Garcia, Tarrant County College District, Co-Chair; Mary Hendrix Texas A&M University-Commerce; Marilyn Jones,

United Way of Tarrant County; Sandy Maddox, ESC Region 10; Danielle Mazzeo, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas; Rusty Reeves, UNT Health Science Center at fort Worth; and Cynthia Williams, Texas Christian University, will work in collaboration with the THECB evaluators in collecting and analyzing data. Additionally, Dr. Changkuan Xu, who has worked with the North Texas Regional P-16 Council in analyzing the gap analysis for five years, will ensure all FERPA standards are adhered to and best practices are used in reporting the findings.

Project Evaluation Plan Table

Project Goal:

D. Provide formative, summative, and utilization-focused evaluation of a curriculum alignment training program that empowers Regional Partnerships to take curricular action to close achievement gaps for students including those from underrepresented groups and to reduce student time in developmental education.

Activities/ Strategies	Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Measure/ Indicators of Success	Persons from or about whom data are collected	Methods of data collection
Formative project evaluation.	Quantitative data Qualitative data	Satisfaction with project & suggestions	Participant offer suggestions for improvement that increase satisfaction in later iterations	Partnership participants Partnership leaders	Survey Interviews
Summative project evaluation-internal	Quantitative student indicators	Systems of local data collection inform curriculum work	Indicators improve over time	High school and college students	Compile AEIS / THECB data.
Summative project evaluation-external	External evaluation data	THECB measures are addressed	Improvement over time on THECB measures	Unknown	Unknown
Formative Regional Partnership evaluation	Student performance data Graduate workforce data	Systems in place for regular data collection	Improvement over time on student indicator measures and perception of career readiness	High school and college students in pipeline Selected employers	Assessment results Tracking of pipeline students Survey
Summative	Accountability	Regional	Agreements are	Regional	Compilation

Regional Partnership evaluation.	dialogues Participant feedback	Partners discuss their collective performance with respect to CCRS	made across partners for improvement of CCRS	Partnership students Regional Partnership Participants	of assessment & other local data Survey

Project Goal: PHASE 1

A. Design a training and follow-up program to support horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum across regional high school and college partnerships that will focus on the STEM disciplines, be based on Texas CCRS, and employ aspects of the Texas accountability systems for data collection and analysis

Activities/ Strategies	Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Measure/ Indicators of Success	Persons from or about whom data are collected	Methods of data collection
Engage LEA and IHE leaders in partnerships	Collaborative cultures in LEA, ISD, and Regional Partnerships	Regional Partnerships are motivated to do work	Enthusiasm is high for continued partnership	LEA and IHE academic leaders & participants	Interviews Surveys
Clear specification of data for collection by Regional Partnerships	Partnership Agreements include clear direction for data systems	Participating institutions collect specified data	They cite the value of the data collection for improvement student progress	Regional Partnership leaders	Partnership Agreements
Curriculum alignment processes designed	The curriculum alignment processes developed meet design criteria	Strong agreement of designers that criteria are met	User participants also perceive that criteria are met (See other goals for measures)	Oversight planning team and Pilot test team leaders	Focus groups
Training for curriculum alignment partnerships designed	The training for curriculum alignment partnerships meets design criteria	Strong agreement of designers that criteria are met	User participants also perceive that criteria are met (See other goals for measures)	Oversight planning team and Pilot test team leaders	Focus groups

Follow-up technical assistance designed	The follow-up technical assistance plan meets design criteria	Strong agreement of designers that criteria are met	User participants also perceive that criteria are met (See other goals for measures)	Oversight planning team and Pilot test team leaders	Focus groups

Project Goal: PHASE 2

B. Pilot test and evaluate the program designed in Phase 1 with attention to its meeting the requirements of the THECB for statewide implementation in closing achievement gaps in STEM education. The Regional Partnerships will represent three different Texas Education Agency regions, and each will involve at least 8 high school and at least 4 college/university faculty. Assuming students per faculty member per year, 1,440 students would be affected for each partnership (4,320 for 3 partnerships); however horizontal alignment will spread impact to all students in affected courses over time.

Activities/ Strategies	Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Measure/ Indicators of Success	Persons from or about whom data are collected	Methods of data collection
Pilot tests meet stated participant criteria	Stated numbers of participants are retained	Stated numbers of participants deliver CRPs	Participants remain involved with work of project	Regional Partnership leaders & participants	Partnership Agreements Deliverables Surveys
Pilot tests further develop training model	Pilot test participants contribute to project development	Improvements to the model and its delivery are recognized by Oversight Team	A culture of continuous improvement is embraced by the project	Pilot test participants	Team leader input to Oversight Team Surveys
Pilot test team engagement in informed horizontal and vertical alignment	Efficiency and rigor of mutual curriculum is increased	Participants cite examples of efficiency and rigor in deliverables	Student data over times confirms improved efficiency and rigor of curriculum	Pilot test participants	RCPs Data system implementation Surveys
Pilot test team development of expertise in collaborative curriculum work	Pilot test participants coach Phase 3 participants	Examples of coaching are logged in project records	Phase 3 participants cite value of coaching	Pilot test participants	Records of technical assistance in Phase 3
Accountability	Accountability	Regional partners	Agreements are	Regional	Compilation

dialogues	dialogues sponsored at least annually by P-16 Council	discuss collective performance with respect to CCRS	made across partners for improvement of CCRS	Partnership students	of assessment & other local data

Project Goal: PHASE 3

C. Training of trainers conference will be designed and held in September 2012 to facilitate vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment and continued articulation using the Avatar Model by up to 12 Regional Partnerships that include those in regions of greatest need. In the first year, 12 faculty and 1440 students will be impacted by each partnership with cumulative impact.

Activities/ Strategies	Outputs	Expected Outcomes	Measure/ Indicators of Success	Persons from or about whom data are collected	Methods of data collection
Training of Trainers conference	Regional Partnerships with resources for Phase 3 implementation participate	Up to 12 partnerships participate that include high need regions	More than 12 regional partnerships apply to participate	Conference participants	Partnership Agreements Surveys
Follow-up technical assistance to participants	Technical assistance will serve needs of users	Users will rate technical assistance helpful and timely	Users view technical assistance and instrumental in successful implementation	Phase 3 participants Project staff/ participants assigned to Phase 3 support	Technical assistance logs Surveys
Evaluation of Phase 3 accomplishments	Phase 3 work serves the needs of users	Phase 3 work is perceived as worthwhile	Phase 3 work receives funding for continuation and expansion.	Phase 3 participants Project staff/ participants assigned to Phase 3 support	Technical assistance logs Surveys