Guide: Summarize Context

When you share the results from your study, the information you provide on this webpage will help your colleagues make sense of the education technology implementation and the results. Study context is also important for understanding how the evaluation applies to other environments.

By describing the context using the questions outlined below, you will be able to generate a list of important contextual features about the specific technology you are using in your study.

WHAT IS THE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND HOW IS IT BEING USED?

Table 1. *Characteristics of your technology*

Questions	Explanation	Example
What is the educational technology?	This is a general description of the technology you are using and its intended effect.	Ex., a software program designed to improve reading achievement among under-performing students
What are the key components of the education technology?	These are the different features of the technology you use, such as how it presents information to students or tracks progress.	Ex., a screening test and adaptive diagnostic testing as well as use of video content to engage students in skill-building tasks and a data interface that allows teachers to track students' progress
How the technology is supposed to be used?	This refers to how often and for how long users are supposed to be engaging with the educational technology during your study.	Ex., twice per week for 40 minutes per session
Is the technology being used as intended?	It is important to reflect on whether users are engaging with the technology as intended. How many users engaged with the technology in the way they were meant to? If you have access to this data, it can help explain your findings.	Ex., 75 percent of students used the educational technology for the intended 80 minutes per week

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Example Characteristics

☐ iReady is a software designed to improve reading achievement among under-performing students.
☐ iReady offers personalized lessons and reading content based on reading level.
☐ iReady was used individually by students during class time for 90 minutes per week.
☐ 20% of students used iReady for 90 minutes per week

WHAT IS THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING?

Some technologies work better in some settings and not so well in others. This information will be included in the appendix of your findings brief and can be very useful to those you share your findings with. Include features of the setting that you think might influence how well you would expect the technology to work. These might have to do with the available technology resources (e.g. computer labs, laptops for students, etc.), student population, or presence of other technology initiatives at schools.

Example Setting

☐ XYZ School District is located in a rural setting where each school in the district has 400 students and class sizes of 20, on average. Each school has 1 computer lab and moderate internet connectivity.
☐ ABC School District is a suburban district with 2,000 students, 25% of whom have IEPs, and with 1:1 laptops.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES?

Implementation is crucial. You should include any information about challenges you faced in allowing users to use the technology as intended, such as technical difficulties or technological limitations. This information will be included in the appendix of your findings brief and can be very useful to others.

Example Implementation Issue

☐ Teachers did not find the tool user-friendly and therefore often chose to use one of the many other options available to them.
☐ Students had difficult logging into their accounts for the first two weeks of class. About half the teachers got frustrated and used other products for the rest of the term.

WAS THE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY USED AS *RECOMMENDED*?

Vendors often have suggestions for how to best use the technology. Including this information can provide invaluable context for your results.

System data (also sometimes called log data) can provide information about technology was *actually* used, which may differ from intended use. You should include any available information about how actual use differed from intended use.

Example Recommended Use

☐ According to the vendor, students who complete all 10 modules are most likely to benefit from the education technology. 90% of students attempted the first three modules. Usage dropped dramatically for modules 4-10, with only 5% of students attempted module 10.

☐ This technology is designed for teachers to be able to assign homework exercises that students log in from home to complete, but many students do not have a home internet connection. The technology was used primarily as a source of in-class activities.