



The Innovation Project
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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

ITEM DESCRIPTION	Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program Evaluation Partner (FY24-FY26)
DATE ISSUED	Monday, December 4, 2023
QUESTION DEADLINE	Friday, December 8, 2023 5:00 pm EST
SUBMISSION DEADLINE	Friday, December 15, 2023 5:00 pm EST
RFP POINT OF CONTACT	Winston McGregor Chief Operating Officer wmcgregor@tipnc.org

Instructions

1. Interested bidders are strongly encouraged to email wmcgregor@tipnc.org indicating their intent to apply to ensure any RFP addendums are provided in a timely manner.
2. Bidders must submit proposals as a single PDF via email to wmcgregor@tipnc.org by the submission deadline with the subject line "Innovation Project RFP: TSL Program Evaluation Partner".
3. Bid proposals not received by the submission deadline will not be considered.
4. Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted to the RFP point of contact by the deadline listed above.

I. Background

The Innovation Project (TIP) is seeking a skilled external evaluator to support the project 'Reimagining Teaching Talent' (RTT). RTT is a three-year initiative funded by a Teacher and School Leader (TSL) grant from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). RTT will directly impact 79 high-need schools, 168 administrators, 2,048 teachers, and 31,679 students. The project objectives are to: 1) Improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of effective educators; 2) Improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of effective educators of color; 3) Increase school leader effectiveness; 4) Increase teacher effectiveness; 5) Increase student

achievement; and 6) Create sustainable systems of continuous improvement for each of the previous objectives. RTT will bring educators together into a Networked Improvement Community (NIC), allowing these small and mostly rural districts to benefit from the support and resources that would typically be found in a large district. The interventions begin with a focus on ensuring the human capital management system (HCMS) produces more effective and diverse teachers. The project will create and improve systems for: recruitment and retention; professional development; instructional leadership; and career advancement. These inputs individually and collectively target the professional learning of all RTT educators to drive improvement in educator effectiveness, as well as to provide the systems to accurately measure and identify educator effectiveness. Once identified, RTT will make sure effective teachers are recognized, promoted, retained, and equitably assigned to the most vulnerable students to improve student achievement, and specifically, to improve the academic outcomes for economically disadvantaged students and students of color.

II. Scope of Work & Key Deliverables

TIP is soliciting proposals from qualified individuals or organizations capable of designing and conducting an evaluation study that would measure implementation fidelity and impact of activities carried out in association with the TSL grant, awarded by ED to TIP. The consultant or consulting organization retained through this RFP will be required to perform the following work scope:

- Develop a research plan that meets the approval of TIP;
- Execute approved research plan on behalf of TIP;
- Write a research brief for TIP which provides scientific literature-base to contextualize results;
- Present findings and recommendations to TIP;
- Assist with preparation and submission of semi-annual performance reports;
- Attend advisory board meetings.

III. Required Qualifications

TIP requires a vendor to meet the qualifications and specifications listed below:

- Demonstrated knowledge and ability to conceptualize and design a high-quality and methodologically sound evaluation plan appropriate for an urban educational context;
- Demonstrated knowledge and ability to work with district and building administrators to develop an appropriate evaluation plan
- Demonstrated experience with rural school districts.
- Demonstrated ability to organize and present evaluation study results to various audiences with a focus on program and policy improvement.
- Demonstrated experience with TSL grants.

IV. Timeline for Implementation

The period of performance will be a three-year contract between TIP and the consultant/consulting organization.

V. Proposal Requirements

To achieve a uniform review process and obtain the maximum degree of comparability, it is required that proposals be organized in the manner specified.

The proposal shall be submitted as a single PDF file via email. The proposal should be organized as follows:

1. Bid Cover Sheet
2. Table of Contents
 - Clearly identify the materials by section and page number.
3. Profile of the Proposer and Services Offered
 - Consultant's philosophy, approach, and qualifications. Key personnel who will be involved in the evaluation and provide a copy of their professional resume/vita.
 - Testimonials from references for projects of similar scope, nature, and complexity.
4. Evaluation Proposal
 - Proposal of evaluation design
 - Sample materials for projects of a similar scope, nature, and complexity, preferably from work with other consortiums of rural districts, including a research plan, a research brief providing a scientific literature-base to contextualize results; and presented findings and recommendations.
5. Pricing Proposal
 - Any and all pricing information, including alternative pricing proposals that may be acceptable for individual components and/or supplemental products/services that meet all or some of the criteria listed in this RFP.
 - Provide a detailed narrative of the implementation schedule and pricing.

VI. Limitations

This Request for Proposals (RFP) does not commit TIP to award any contract or pay for the preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP. TIP may withdraw or amend this RFP in its entirety or in part, at any time if it is in the best interests of the organization to do so. This award is contingent upon the receipt of federal funding.

VII. Questions

Questions concerning this solicitation should be emailed to Winston McGregor at wmcgregor@tipnc.org by December 8, 2023 at 5:00 pm ET.

VIII. Evaluation Proposals

Each vendor proposal will be reviewed and scored against the criteria in the table below. A review committee with at least three members will evaluate the proposals. Each member of the committee will conduct a thorough, independent evaluation of each proposal. The committee will then meet for a discussion after which members will have the option to revise their scores. The technical score will be determined by averaging each member's score in each category.

Criteria & Weight	Points Available
Demonstrated experience with the Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (35%)	10
Demonstrated experience with consortiums of rural districts (30%)	10
Low Cost (35%)	10

IX. Additional Documents

[Attachment 1 - Bid Cover Sheet](#)

[Attachment 2 - Project Narrative](#)

[Attachment 3 - Logic Model](#)

[Attachment 4 - TSL Project Measures](#)

Attachment 1 - BID COVER SHEET

Agrees to Bid on	Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program Evaluation Partner (FY24-FY26)
Submission Deadline	Friday, December 15, 2023 5:00 pm EST

Name of Bidder	
Business Address	
Contact Name	
Contact Email Address	
Delivery Date	

Signature of Representative

Title

Attachment 2 - PROJECT NARRATIVE

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ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1: HCMS or PBCS and Career Advancement Opportunities

The Innovation Project (TIP), a nonprofit entity, in partnership with eight North Carolina LEAs, proposes Reimagining Teaching Talent (RTT). This project will expand and improve the Human Capital Management Systems (HCMS) and embedded Performance Based Compensation Systems (PBCS) at all participating schools in collaboration with their teachers, school leaders, and the public. This project will also provide career advancement opportunities with increased responsibilities and pay. RTT will have two types of PBC: stipends for teacher and school leaders who are deemed effective, and recruitment and retention bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff areas. All PBC will use student outcomes as a key component.

This project will serve as a catalyst for enhanced HCMS and take a systemic approach to school improvement in 79 schools in the following high-need districts: Asheboro, Edgecombe, Elizabeth City-Pasquotank, Lexington, Mount Airy, Scotland, Vance, and Warren. Specific information about the proposed HCMS and PBCS, including how the evaluation and support systems reflect clear and fair measures of educator performance and provide educators with ongoing support and feedback, are provided in sections A and B.

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2: High-Need Schools

RTT's proposed activities are concentrated on teachers and school leaders serving in high-need schools across the eight partner districts. The majority of participating schools—75 schools or 95%—meet the TSL criteria of a high-need school (at least 50% free or reduced-price lunch [FRPL]). The average FRPL rate of participating schools is 82%. A list of all proposed TSL-funded schools and the FRPL data supporting their designation as high-need is provided in Appendix E.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1: Promoting Equity in Student Access

RTT is designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in elementary, middle, and high schools. To begin, we will **examine sources of inequity and inadequacy** in each partner district. In Year 1, districts will receive an external Equity Analysis that will examine opportunity, access, and outcomes in five key domains: 1) Structures, Systems, and Resources, 2) Culture and Community, 3) Equity in the Educator Workforce, 4) Professional Learning and Personal Growth, and 5) Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning. The Equity Analysis will examine policies, practices, culture, district data, curriculum, and any sources of inequity, and will result in recommendations for districts to better meet the needs of diverse students and increase the diversity of staff, all with the intent of promoting equity in student access, improving student achievement, and eradicating gaps.

As teacher effectiveness has the most impact on student outcomes (Schmidt et al., 2017) and teachers of color positively impact the outcomes of students of color and all students in a school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Partee, 2014), we will **implement responses** to increase the number of experienced and effective educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds, ensure that underserved students have access to them, and retain them in these high-need districts. Through the launch of a district-wide Equity Team in each district, teams will use Equity Analysis findings to develop an Equity Plan to guide district equity work in future years. The following project activities will support attainment of these goals: equity-driven recruitment systems; district-university partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Praxis support; and aspiring leader academies. All activities will be described in more detail in Section B.

As part of the external evaluation, we will disaggregate student achievement data by student demographics and compare this information to educator demographics. We will also track teacher assignments by race and ethnicity and will report on teacher assignments by prior student performance. Each year we will also collect and analyze disaggregated data by race, gender and, when available, disability status, associated with the number of: (1) teachers receiving performance compensation, (2) school leaders receiving performance compensation, and (3) teachers receiving performance compensation for leadership responsibilities. This information will help us see both whether and to what degree the schools are retaining, promoting, and rewarding diverse, effective educators. Results from the external evaluation will be used to refine the Equity Plan in Years 2 and 3 and inform principal and teacher assignment, including when pairing educators/classrooms for collaborative teaching.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2: Supporting a Diverse Workforce

RTT has an intentional focus on supporting a diverse workforce and ensuring educators' professional growth to strengthen student learning. The project aims to create a pipeline of diverse educators in each partner district by leveraging recruitment and retention strategies (partnerships with HBCUs and MSIs, year-round recruitment and retention systems, recruitment and retention bonuses) to attract and retain effective educators, with a specific focus on educators of color. Additionally, the project emphasizes differentiated and personalized professional development that will ultimately support professional growth to strengthen student learning. Professional development will include aspiring leader academies and leadership academies that focus on preparing a diverse candidate pool for leadership opportunities.

The following project activities will help expand partner districts' capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce. ***District-University***

Partnerships: A centerpiece of this work will be an annual regional recruitment convening, which will bring together RTT districts and leaders and students from local MSIs and HBCUs to establish district-university partnerships to provide a direct pipeline of educators of color.

Recruitment & Retention: RTT will support districts in creating year-long, multi-stakeholder, and equity-driven recruitment and retention systems to attract and retain effective educators to the schools that need them most. There will be an HR Director community of practice that will work together to create recruitment and retention systems in their own schools. Additionally, community participants will lead cross-departmental working groups in their schools to create their recruitment and retention systems. ***Praxis Support:*** RTT will provide support to new educators who are trying to pass the Praxis Tests for teacher licensure to address the disparity in pass rates between educators of color and other educators. ***Aspiring Leaders Academy:*** There will be an Aspiring Leaders Academy for current teachers of color interested in moving into leadership roles to address the disparity in educators of color being promoted to instructional leadership positions. All project activities will be described in more detail in Section B.

(a) NEED FOR PROJECT

(i) Identifying and addressing gaps and weaknesses (Application Requirement [AR] ii, v, vi)

North Carolina's Need

In the 1990s, North Carolina (NC) saw the largest student achievement gains of any state in math, became the first southern state to score above the national average in fourth grade reading and math, and was the most successful state in narrowing the achievement gap (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). After the 2008 recession, legislative cuts reduced or eliminated many programs and began to undermine achievement and equity gains. Since 2013, NC has declined in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and

achievement gaps have widened (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). This trend was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (NCES, 2022).

Compounding the decreasing student achievement is an increasing teacher shortage. The number of teachers receiving an initial credential in NC has been decreasing since 2013 and enrollment in traditional teacher education programs has declined by more than 50% (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). NC ranks 43rd nationally in teacher compensation (Carver-Thomas & Patrick, 2022). A contributing factor is that the state sets salary schedules that cap teacher pay, limiting districts' ability to recruit and retain teachers and causing teachers to move out of state (NC DPI, 2022). Further, average NC principal salaries are 28% lower than the national average (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). While salaries are low, the demands on NC educators are high; however, only 20% of NC teachers strongly agreed that "sufficient resources are available for professional development" and that their schools "provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices"—key characteristics of high-quality education environments (Berry et al., 2021). These factors highlight the urgent need to improve educator working conditions to ensure a stable and high-quality educational system for all NC students.

The Unique Needs of Small and Rural Districts



This project includes small and mostly rural districts, with student populations of 5,635 or fewer. RTT has an intentional focus on these smaller, rural districts as we know that they do not receive as much attention, resources, or funding opportunities as larger districts. NC's teacher compensation issues are more acute in rural areas (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019), where teacher salary cuts have reduced the supply of teachers and fewer certified and experienced teachers are attracted to teach there (Oakes et al., 2021). Small districts with high-need schools


face unique challenges in recruiting, developing, and retaining human capital without the infrastructure to provide aligned resources and systems to support their educators' growth, including coaching and content-specific PD. This project provides an opportunity for smaller districts to benefit from the professional learning and development that would be found in a large district, as well as the creation and sharing of resources, best practices, and sustainable systems of support. As 80% of NC's counties are rural, this project has a high level of scalability and potential to expand impact to other rural districts and students (Public Schools First NC, 2021).

Addressing the Challenge of Human Capital: The Three Levers

Eight TIP member districts, the proposed district partners for this project, were intentionally selected based on their shared needs and potential for the project to address those needs. RTT builds upon the participating districts' current HCMS to address their weaknesses and create a systemic approach to how teachers are provided feedback and support and given opportunities to lead and advance (AP 1). The table below summarizes the most significant human capital gaps and weaknesses that have been identified in our partner districts and how they will be addressed by the proposed project.

RTT creates a robust HCMS that addresses how teachers are provided feedback and PD, recognized, given career advancement opportunities, and given resources to help them succeed (AP 1). Specifically, this project will utilize three key levers to create a reimagined HCMS. These levers were determined based on the specific needs of our partner districts that were identified at a May 2023 superintendent retreat and are explained in the table below.

A Reimagined HCMS (AR ii)	
Need: Student and educator access and opportunities	
<p><u>Gap:</u> All districts are struggling to recruit and retain effective teachers in high-need schools, especially teachers of color. In 2022, the average teacher turnover rate was 16% for partner districts that track this data, which is significantly higher than the national average of 10% (RAND, 2023). Hiring teachers after the start of the school year can have negative effects on student achievement and turnover rates (Papay & Kraft, 2016). Last year, all participating districts still had open positions at the start of the school year. Entering the 2023 hiring season, Scotland had 44 teacher vacancies in just 3 schools.</p> <p><u>Gap:</u> The RTT districts on average serve 72% non-white students; however, only 42% of RTT teachers are teachers of color. One of the districts has no administrators of color.</p> <p><u>Gap:</u> Over 26% of RTT schools have a first year principal.</p>	<p><u>Strategy:</u></p> <p>Lever 1: Student and educator access and opportunities</p>  <p>Partner districts will expand their capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce (CPP 1, CPP 2)</p>
Need: Organizational systems and structures	
<p><u>Gap:</u> Overall, the districts lack consistency and alignment in their HCMS. Currently, evaluators are not consistently identifying effective teachers, evidenced by the high percentage of teachers rated effective or higher (over 86% in 3 districts).</p> <p><u>Gap:</u> There is a disconnect between teacher evaluation and student achievement. For example, in Edgcombe 100% of teachers were rated as effective or highly effective while student proficiency is 33% in math and 33% in ELA. In Asheboro, 92% of teachers were rated as effective or above while student proficiency is 39% in math and 34% in ELA.</p> <p><u>Gap:</u> Most of the districts do not tie local performance-based pay to student achievement.</p>	<p><u>Strategy:</u></p> <p>Lever 2: Organizational systems and structures</p>  <p>Partner districts will redesign schedules, collaboration, and compensation strategies to reimagine the educator workforce (AP 1)</p>

Need: Differentiated and personalized professional development	
<p><u>Gap:</u> Opportunities for PD and support for teachers are inconsistent (in type, frequency, and alignment to teaching expectations), not job-embedded, and not meaningfully aligned with evaluation—all contributing to high turnover as teachers are not given the support needed to be successful.</p> <p><u>Gap:</u> While all districts provide some form of PD to principals, most are district-wide sessions that are not tailored to individual principals. None of the participating districts derive principal PD from needs that emerge in principal or teacher evaluations.</p>	<p><u>Strategy:</u></p> <p>Lever 3: Differentiated and personalized professional development</p>  <p>Partner districts will provide differentiated educator development opportunities and programs that promote career advancement (AP 1)</p>

By integrating these evidence-based levers, we aim to foster innovation, address teacher dissatisfaction, improve student academic outcomes, and create a more sustainable, diverse, and effective educator workforce in high-need schools. RTT will utilize new strategies that redefine educator roles and responsibilities and aim to improve the sustainability, effectiveness, and joy of the profession. These strategies will be implemented and evaluated within the RTT schools. The learnings and successes from these schools will provide valuable insights that can be shared with other schools in our network, encouraging the scaling of effective practices throughout the state.

(ii) Building on related efforts

TIP's mission is to bring together forward-thinking NC district superintendents to find and implement innovative and transformative practices in public education so that students and their communities can thrive. Members from TIP's 18 district partners meet regularly to brainstorm solutions to persistent and emerging challenges and operationalize new ideas using iterative program design. Members provide insights into transformative programs in their

districts through presentations, resource-sharing, and hosting site visits and other events. TIP also provides a PLC and job-alike opportunities for member superintendents. This project will leverage and expand upon this existing structure to create a true collaborative network of educators in high-need schools. By catalyzing the efforts of RTT district grant partners around the key levers, TIP will accelerate the development of promising new initiatives and practices.

This project builds on other TIP initiatives to improve relevant outcomes in member districts. For example, TIP's guidance on NC's Restart Schools law has shaped member districts' orientation toward uses of flexibility in staffing, calendars, finances, and other areas of school operations. The mindset developed through TIP's Restart work will enable district leaders to think creatively about implementing innovative roles and systems. Additionally, TIP is facilitating an inter-district initiative with six districts to use a combination of remote and local positions to scale Multi-Classroom Leadership in their schools.

Leveraging the existing TIP network, RTT will test, confirm, and scale an approach to HCMS that addresses the greatest barriers to recruiting and retaining top talent with a focus on diversifying the workforce. Each partner district utilizes the NC Educator Effectiveness System (NCEES) for educator evaluation and the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) to measure student growth over time. However, while each school has the components of HCMS based on the state systems, their current structures are too siloed and not aligned. RTT serves as a catalyst for weaving together funding streams and local priorities in order to redefine partner districts' approach to human capital management and professional development (AP 1).

Each district will bring together different existing funding streams—including current local, state, and federal dollars—to integrate district priorities with the goals and processes of this project. While each of the districts have different funding structures, they will utilize a

combination of Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, IDEA, and ESSER funds. These funds will allow the project to not only meet the matching requirements of the grant (as detailed in the budget), but also to prepare for sustainability (AR ix).

(iii) A comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

RTT takes a comprehensive approach and utilizes aligned and evidence-based activities with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning to support rigorous academic standards for students (AP 1). The purposeful alignment of treatments and supports throughout RTT ensures the supports provided work synergistically rather than in silos. Isolated interventions often fail because they are seen as “add ons” to an already taxed system and individuals (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). An aligned, systems-level approach creates a feedback loop up and down the system, improving districts’ ability to operate as the dynamic interconnected organizations they are. Further, this alignment enhances the likelihood of sustainability and impact over time.

In order for the HCMS to have the intended effects on educator practice and student achievement, we know that they need to be part of a comprehensive effort to change the status quo in participating schools. Therefore, this project is intentionally designed to **impact all levels of the system and all people in the system**. The following is a summary of the most notable project components/systems-changes that will occur as a result of this project. The HCMS and these activities will be described in detail under Section B.

RTT’s comprehensive support systems begin with the creation of a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) of high-need districts and schools across NC. The following activities will happen at the **network level**: communities of practice, annual events, and the advisory council. At the **district level**, partners will receive: a review of their HCMS, technical assistance around flexible scheduling, an Equity Analyses and aligned Equity Plan, recruitment

and retention support, Leadership Academies & Aspiring Leaders Academies, upskilling opportunities, and sustainability reviews. At the **school level**, RTT will establish ILTs, PLCs, and collaborative teaching. At the **classroom level**, educators will receive coaching. RTT's project components provide support for educators at **every stage of the career path**: aspiring teachers, early career teachers, teachers, teacher leaders, aspiring administrators, and administrators.

(iv) Addressing the needs of the target population (AR v, vi)

Across the project, the average proportion of students receiving FRPL is 82%, with over a third of the schools at 100% (AP 2). Student achievement results across the network are low with an average of 37% proficiency in math and 39% in literacy in 2021-22. However, teacher evaluation data shows 84% of teachers were rated effective or above, highlighting a discrepancy between how teachers are measured and how students are performing. Accurately identifying effective instruction is a common challenge across partner schools. The table below highlights district-level data that includes student academic achievement, demographic, and socioeconomic information. School-level data for the 79 participating schools, including high-need schools data, is included in Appendix E.

District	Student Pop.	FRPL% (AP 2)	Non-White Reporting Groups %	2021-22 Proficient Math	2021-22 Proficient ELA
Asheboro (9 Schools)	4,475	78.8%	71.9%	38.6%	33.7%
Edgecombe (14 Schools)	5,367	72.7%	79.1%	33%	32.9%
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank (13 Schools)	4,592	100%	54.9%	32%	39.4%
Lexington (6 Schools)	2,962	100%	81.7%	46%	38%
Mount Airy (4 Schools)	1,751	56%	40.4%	55.1%	54.7%

Scotland (10 Schools)	5,635	74.6%	75.5%	32.5%	36.5%
Vance (16 Schools)	5,205	71%	89.4%	33.4%	33.1%
Warren (7 Schools)	1,692	100%	85.5%	22.3%	42.3%

Identified Need: High Teacher Turnover Rates - Data shows that the highest need schools often have the fewest effective teachers and the highest rates of teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). In 2022, the average teacher turnover rate in RTT's high-need schools was 16%, significantly higher than the national average of 10% (RAND, 2023). ***Project Elements Addressing Need:*** 1) Systematic recruitment and retention; 2) PLCs and coaching to provide meaningful support; 3) Career ladders and upskilling opportunities to provide advancement opportunities with corresponding pay incentives.

Identified Need: High Principal Turnover - Over 26% of RTT schools had a new principal within the last year and principal effectiveness is the second greatest school-related influence on student achievement growth after teachers (Grissom et al., 2021). ***Project Elements Addressing Need:*** 1) Leadership academies with job-embedded PD for current school leaders; 2) Communities of Practice; 3) ILTs to facilitate effective distributed leadership.

Identified Need: Lack of Diverse Teachers - The RTT districts on average serve 72% non-white students. However, only 42% of RTT teachers are teachers of color. Recent studies show the advantages of a teaching force that more closely resembles the student population (Gershenson et al., 2022) and that diverse educators have a positive impact on outcomes for all students (Kress, 2019). ***Project Elements Addressing Need:*** 1) Systematic recruitment and retention focused on teachers of color; 2) Partnerships with HBCUs and MSIs; 3) Aspiring Leaders Academies for educators of color; 4) Equity Analyses and Plans; 5) Praxis support.

(b) QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

(i) Demonstrates a rationale (AR x)

RTT's project objectives are to: 1) Improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of effective educators; 2) Improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of effective educators of color; 3) Increase school leader effectiveness; 4) Increase teacher effectiveness; 5) Increase student achievement; and 6) Create sustainable systems of continuous improvement for each of the previous objectives. The interventions begin with a focus on **ensuring the HCMS produces more effective and diverse teachers**. To do this, the project will create and improve systems for: recruitment and retention (with a focus on teachers of color); professional development (ILTs, PLCs, coaching, and upskilling opportunities); instructional leadership (leadership academies, collaborative teaching, and calibration); and career advancement (career ladder and PBC). These inputs individually and collectively target the professional learning of all RTT educators to drive improvement in educator effectiveness, as well as to provide the systems to accurately measure and identify educator effectiveness. Once identified, RTT will make sure **effective teachers are recognized, promoted, retained, and equitably assigned to the most vulnerable students** to improve student achievement, and specifically, to improve the academic outcomes for economically disadvantaged students and students of color. As such, RTT is designed to improve outcomes for high-need students. Our logic model (Appendix A), provides detail about RTT's specific resources, project components, outputs, outcomes, and measures.

RTT's Expanded and Improved Human Capital Management System (AP 1, AR i)

RTT builds upon districts' existing systems to create a robust HCMS that addresses: teacher and principal professional development, teacher and principal evaluation, recruitment and retention, teacher and principal PBC, and a career ladder.

Career Ladder (AP 1): Career ladders are a proven strategy for increasing retention of experienced teachers (Partee, 2014). The RTT career ladder provides a trajectory that includes eligibility for additional compensation commensurate with additional work and responsibilities. In order to provide career advancement opportunities for teachers, RTT will implement a career ladder of Classroom Teacher > Master Teacher (MT) > Lead Teacher (LT). These teacher leaders will receive salary stipends and must be deemed effective on each district's respective evaluation system, as well as on specific metrics related to their role in school-wide PD and support, in order to maintain their positions each year. The goal for the LTs and MTs is to work collaboratively with teachers to provide individual, relevant PD at the school and across the network. RTT will create competencies for each career leader role so educators have clarity on how they can advance. The core responsibilities for LTs and MTs are described in section C.

Educator Evaluation (AR iv): RTT will use districts' existing evaluation system for teachers and principals to inform key HCMS decisions across all schools, such as hiring, retention, promotion, and dismissal. Student growth data (including baselines to track progress) will be a key component (at least 35%) of the teacher and school leader evaluation process. While each district has a valid evaluation system (NCEES), RTT will focus on calibrating evaluators to ensure inter-rater reliability for lesson analysis and instructional coaching. We will utilize an online platform that simplifies observer calibration training, which observers will take quarterly to ensure consistency in how they are identifying effective instruction. Since a well-functioning HCMS is predicated on accurate inputs, calibration is one of the initial RTT milestones.

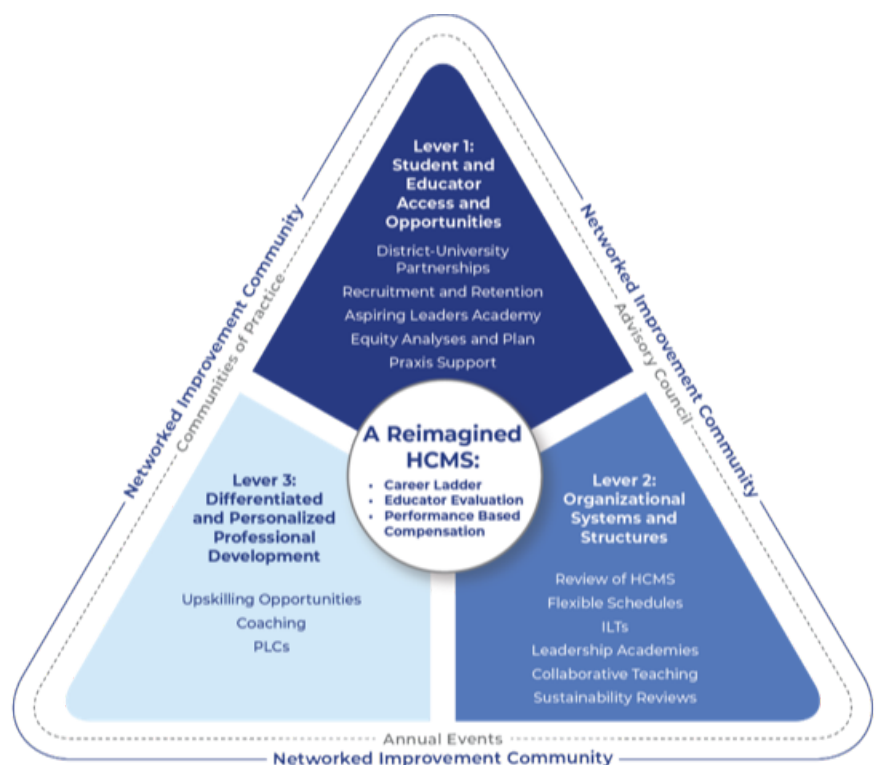
Performance-Based Compensation (AP 1, AR i): The PBC in RTT is focused in two areas. First, stipends for teachers and school leaders. The following roles would qualify for stipends

based on additional responsibilities if they are deemed to be effective based on local measures (including student achievement): principals, assistant principals, LTs, and MTs. Second, strategic recruitment and retention (RR) bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff areas. Each district will have RR bonuses to offer to teachers who a) fill hard to staff areas and b) are deemed effective based on local measures (including student achievement). Districts may differentiate the weight of these stipends by hard-to-staff grades or subjects, providing local flexibility to fill needs at the building level. Given the balance of participating in an inter-district network while retaining local control, RTT leadership will work with each partner district to create the specific metrics for effectiveness and the exact amounts of PBC based on RTT's recommended amounts below.

Type	Metrics	PBC Amount
Administrator Stipend	Required: Student achievement at a minimum of 35%; Other possible metrics: evaluation data, survey results, student learning objectives, retention, other local (approved) metrics.	\$7,5000/year
Lead Teacher Stipend		\$5,000/year
Master Teacher Stipend		\$3,000/year
Recruitment & Retention		\$5,000-\$10,000

RTT's System of Support

RTT's **reimagined HCMS** is part of a **network-wide** approach to changing the status quo (AP 1). As shown in the graphic, RTT's **three key levers** are composed of activities designed to form a robust system



of support. The research-based evidence behind each project activity is outlined below (AR x).

Network-Level Components

NIC: This project will create a NIC across eight NC districts and 79 schools. A NIC is a collaborative and structured network that allows individuals and groups to develop, test, and scale improvements, and, thereby, accelerate learning (McKay, 2017). RTT will bring together district and school leaders and teachers into one cohesive network, allowing these small and mostly rural districts to benefit from the support and resources that would typically be found in a large district. The network will build capacity among partner districts and help facilitate the improvement of their staff. Significantly, these schools will use the same processes for recruitment and retention and professional development so that they can get better together. The NIC will allow educators to learn, share, and hone best practices in teaching and learning. The following are activities that will happen at the network-level.

Communities of Practice: The NIC will provide all stakeholders with a broader network of peers for meaningful, job-specific collaboration. The following job-alike communities will form across districts: superintendents, assistant superintendents, HR directors, principals, and assistant principals. These communities will be peer-driven, grouped around common challenges, and will encourage best practices to be shared and spread.

Annual Events: Bringing leaders from each partner district together is necessary to establish or deepen connections. Network leaders will gather at an annual regional RTT workshop to create a true sense of community, convene the job-alike communities of practice in person, and share best practices and lessons learned. Network leaders will also attend an annual national workshop to participate in professional learning and network with leaders from across the country. Finally,

partner districts will convene at an annual regional recruitment event focused on recruiting and retaining more educators of color, described in more detail in the next section.

Advisory Council: This advisory committee will be described in section C.

Rationale: The value of an inter-district NIC—especially for under-resourced, small districts—cannot be overstated. NICs incubate innovation and accelerate improvement as they enable participants to test new ideas and strategies in different contexts (Feygin et al., 2020) and build the capacity of educators to manage complex problems and solutions in high-poverty districts (Pitcher et al. 2016). Research also indicates that communities of practice play a vital role in sharing knowledge, solving problems, and fostering innovation (Wenger, 2004). Combined, these network-level components will drive more cohesion and collaboration across the partner districts and provide a mechanism for sharing and scaling best practices.

Lever 1 Components

District-University Partnerships (CPP 1, CPP 2): NC HBCUs enroll the most Black students nationwide (UNCF, 2023), and many of those institutions have committed support to this project (Appendix C). An annual regional recruitment convening will bring together RTT districts and leaders and students from local MSIs and HBCUs to establish district-university partnerships to provide a direct pipeline of educators of color. Importantly, each district will have the opportunity to meet with college students from nearby MSIs or HBCUs to gain valuable feedback on their recruiting materials, strategies, and incentives from prospective teachers of color, as well as to form relationships with these pre-service teachers. **Rationale:** Partnerships with HBCUs (Underwood et al., 2019) and MSIs (Turner et al., 2017) help build a diverse educator pipeline that fosters direct relationships with potential candidates.

Recruitment and Retention (CPP 1, CPP 2): RTT will support districts in creating year-long, multi-stakeholder, and equity-driven recruitment systems to attract and retain effective teachers to the schools that need them most. Each district will build a multi-channel marketing campaign and create its own context-specific resources. RTT will work with leaders to analyze their current recruitment efforts, including social media and websites, in order to create a detailed timeline for increasing the effectiveness of outbound marketing. RTT will also provide coaching and support around the interview process. There will be an HR Director community of practice that will work together to create recruitment and retention systems in their own schools. RTT's recruitment and retention efforts are centered around providing an equitable education to the high-need students we serve by recruiting and retaining effective teachers of color. ***Rationale:*** The link between teacher quality and student outcomes has been well established (Kraft et al., 2018). Given the high financial costs of teacher turnover to districts, the negative impact on student learning, and the promise of retention strategies in getting great teachers to stay (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), there is a high-stakes imperative to improving the HCMS across RTT schools so that they robustly address how teachers are recruited, supported, and retained. There is much evidence that teachers of color positively impact the academic and behavioral outcomes of students of color, while benefiting all students in a school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Partee, 2014).

Aspiring Leaders Academies (CPP 1, CPP 2): There will be an Aspiring Leaders Academy for current teachers of color interested in moving into leadership roles. ***Rationale:*** Studies have indicated that Black leaders are often funneled into disciplinary roles (Modan, 2021) and are less likely to be promoted to principal positions than their white colleagues (Bailes & Guthery, 2020), highlighting the need for specific leadership development opportunities for educators of color.

Further, studies have shown that the presence of school leaders of color is linked to positive student outcomes and increased recruitment and retention of teachers of color (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019; Grissom et al., 2017).

Equity Analyses and Equity Plan (CPP 1): In Year 1, each district will receive an external Equity Analysis that will examine opportunity, access, and outcomes in five key domains. The analysis will examine policies, practices, culture, district data, curriculum and instruction and will result in recommendations for districts to better meet the needs of diverse students and increase the diversity of staff. Through the launch of a district-wide Equity Team in each district, districts will use Equity Analysis findings to develop an Equity Plan to guide district equity work in future years. ***Rationale:*** For a district or school to provide an equitable, high-quality education, equity must be present in all parts of the educational system (Skrla et al., 2009).

Equity analyses examine an institution's policies, programs, and practices that directly or indirectly impact students or staff relative to their race, ethnicity, or gender (Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, 2021). These analyses provide school leaders with clear and relevant data that can be used to help plan for and monitor school efforts to increase equity (Skrla et al., 2009).

Praxis Support (CPP 1, CPP 2): RTT will support new educators who are trying to pass the Praxis Tests for teacher licensure. This will include access to prep courses and practice tests to equip educators with the tools they need to pass the exams. Existing district employees, such as paraprofessionals and non-certificated staff, can take advantage of these resources to further expand the districts' educator pipelines. ***Rationale:*** Initial teacher licensure examinations often serve as a barrier for new teachers entering the profession, especially for educators of color (Ingersoll & May, 2011). In NC, only 72.6% of all educators pass the Praxis on their first attempt, while only 44.7% of Black educators pass on their first attempt (NCDPI, 2023).

Lever 2 Components

District Level-Review of HCMS (AP 1, AR i): In Year 1, each district will receive a review of their HCMS. This review will examine components that are working well and identify areas to be enhanced or modified. The review also examines teacher assignments to ensure the most vulnerable students are not taught by the least experienced or most ineffective teachers (CPP 1). Each district will receive a report of findings that include recommendations and next steps.

Rationale: A strong and data-driven HCMS can significantly boost teacher and school leader effectiveness in ways that dramatically improve instructional practice and student learning (Odden, 2011). A thorough review of the existing HCMS in each district will enable the project to build on what already exists and identify improvements.

Flexible Schedules: Also in Year 1, districts will undergo a strategic scheduling analysis to identify recommendations to incorporate flexible schedules. Examples of modifications include: giving new teachers and those in the most need of support reduced workloads; utilizing technology to reduce educator workload, such as programs to help with grading, data collection, and family communications; adopting more flexible teaching schedules to allow educators more autonomy over their time to take care of their basic needs, such as lunch, doctor visits, and child care; and expanding the use of high-quality online/blended/hybrid learning to make student and staff schedules more flexible. ***Rationale:*** A recent survey of educators found that flexible scheduling is the number one factor that would keep them in the classroom, even above higher pay (Rodberg, 2022). The adoption and implementation of an innovative, flexible school schedule will increase teacher satisfaction, recruitment, retention, and effectiveness.

Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs): ILTs will be established at all RTT schools. ILT members across the districts will receive training for leading instructional improvement efforts,

promoting cohesion among members, and learning the process for managing instructional improvement efforts in authentic situations. ILTs will also help plan and operationalize flexible scheduling. ***Rationale:*** ILTs not only set the vision and goals, but as a cohesive group of leaders, they proactively, efficiently, and regularly work through issues that impede progress so that real student growth can be achieved (Wickman, 2011).

Leadership Academies: School administrators will participate in regional Leadership Academies that focus on capacity building and the successful implementation of improvement processes. Academy content is informed by Problems of Instructional Practice (POIP) surfaced during ILTs and PLCs, ensuring that the new learning is relevant to impacting teacher practice and student achievement at their school. ***Rationale:*** Both new and veteran school leaders need training and coaching feedback aligned with self-identified areas of focus. Research shows that leadership academies develop school leadership capacity to build school settings that encourage teacher retention and are effective in developing leaders who support effective teaching and enable stronger student learning (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Collaborative Teaching: RTT districts will implement collaborative teaching in order to more efficiently and effectively use their personnel and provide more flexibility for educators. Collaborative teaching is defined as any academic experience in which two or more teachers work together in designing and teaching a course (Robinson & Schaible, 2010). Collaborative teaching allows teachers to focus on the areas where data is showing they are having the greatest impact and to match teachers based on complementary strengths, backgrounds, and diversity. Collaborative teaching will look different in each district depending on local need. For example, certain districts may use a hybrid approach where some teachers are remote and others are in person, a strategy that has been effective in rural districts (Ghimire, 2022). Others may co-plan

or review data and results together, while others may focus on providing additional support to first-year teachers. Partner districts will test what collaborative teaching strategies work well and determine which effective practices can be scaled across the network. ***Rationale:*** Research shows that collaborative teaching benefits both students and teachers. For students, collaborative teaching improves learning, social skills, and behavior, especially among students with learning difficulties (Duran & Miquel, 2019). For teachers, it allows them to share and design new methodologies, offer mutual support in difficult situations, reduce isolation, and create a more favorable working atmosphere (Nevin et al., 2009).

Sustainability Reviews: In Year 3, each partner district will undergo a sustainability review. Similar to the district HCMS review done in Year 1, this review emphasizes how to maintain the improvements made in previous years of the grant. Following the review, districts will receive an accompanying sustainability plan to help guide them in the years following the grant. These sustainability reviews will be critical to ensuring the district has the capacity and resources in place to extend the project activities well beyond the life of the grant. ***Rationale:*** In order to sustain improvements across whole systems, both capacity and systems for improvement at all levels is required (Fullan & Quinn, 2015). The sustainability reviews will ensure districts have both the capacity and systems needed to sustain project activities in the long-term.

Lever 3 Components

Upskilling Opportunities (AP 1): RTT will provide educators in partner districts with upskilling opportunities to build their knowledge and expand their capabilities, ultimately supporting their overall career advancement. Opportunities include asynchronous learning courses that will enable them to receive credit towards advanced degrees and commensurate salary growth.

Rationale: The use of digital learning to upskill teachers can not only provide them with access

to high-quality professional development, but can also have a tremendous impact on the lives of children, particularly those in hard-to-reach or rural areas (Thorne, 2020).

Coaching: Educators and school leaders will receive job-embedded coaching from MTs and LTs as well as from RTT project personnel. Via the online platform, educators will upload videos and receive either synchronous or asynchronous coaching feedback from peers or a teacher leader, either within their school or across the network. ***Rationale:*** One-on-one coaching has been found to improve the quality of teachers' instruction much more than other traditional professional development (Kraft et al., 2018). When school-based PD is also supported by coaching, improved student achievement is more likely (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Coaching has also been linked to teacher retention among early-career teachers (De Jong & Campoli, 2018).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): This project will utilize a systemic, data-driven PLC structure focused on collaborative teaching called the Collaborative Teaching Community (CTC). The CTCs will support the implementation of the collaborative teaching structures. Using an asset-based approach, each CTC will meet regularly to examine their practices and identify solutions that can be scaled across the school (and ultimately the NIC) for greater improvement. PLC meetings will be led by LTs and MTs as part of their additional job responsibilities.

Rationale: Research shows this type of PLC model can lead to a positive shift in professional culture, increasing teachers' satisfaction, knowledge and skills, and application to practice that ultimately benefits students (Prenger et al., 2019).

TIP's Prior Experience Developing and Implementing these Activities (AR x)

TIP has extensive experience developing and implementing similar projects and activities across NC. TIP has selected and partnered with districts on collaborative, innovative projects and managed grant projects across multiple districts. As part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation-funded

Early Learning Network (ELN), TIP developed an inter-district network to provide coaching and support to school leadership and district leaders from 36 schools in 12 NC districts to enhance early learning outcomes. Through the Virtual Academy Collaborative (VAC), TIP provided high-quality curricular materials for remote learning and served as a supplemental resource to enhance educational opportunities. TIP's \$8M state-funded initiative, SparkNC, aims to accelerate student progress on pathways to tech careers, addresses teacher shortages in computer science and related subjects through an inter-district network, and provides collaborative inter-district resource sharing and learning experience design.

To address NC's pronounced teacher shortage, TIP worked with North Carolina State University's College of Education (NCSU) to establish a new scholarship program for future teachers, especially in STEM and Special Education, who agreed to teach in rural or semi-rural TIP districts for two years. TIP and NCSU collaborated and refined the project over a two-year period before expanding the program to the rest of the state. After building the RTT initiatives within targeted TIP districts, we aim to expand to all TIP member districts and then to open up what works to the entire state in a phased approach, as TIP has done with numerous programs including the Restart Schools Collaborative, VAC, and TIP Teaching Scholars.

(ii) Relevant literature, plan for project implementation, and methodological tools

Literature Review (AR x)

The RTT components are research-based and grounded in current literature, much of which is especially relevant to the unique educational context within NC. Presently, NC continues to face a variety of challenges within the state's HCMS, including the need for diverse teacher/leader pipelines, compensation that addresses educators' needs and preparation, and

retention support that includes professional learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). To that end, research shows that a strong HCMS can significantly increase the effectiveness of school leaders and teachers, develop leadership and instructional expertise, and improve instructional practice that leads to student learning (Odden, 2011). In addition, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching asserts that the development of a NIC can positively leverage multiple districts to draw upon unique strengths, solve complex problems, and accelerate growth (McKay, 2017). Following these principles, RTT will facilitate network collaboration to design solutions across NC districts' HCMS that will improve the recruitment and retention of educators within high-needs schools through programs that reward their efforts (Odden, 2011).

It is widely recognized that principals serve as integral leaders within schools that promote students' learning (Sharif et al., 2020), while teachers represent the most impactful school-based influence on student achievement outcomes (Oppen, 2019). In addition, leaders and teachers from diverse backgrounds offer a wide array of social and academic outcomes for all students (e.g., Figlio, 2017; Grissom et al., 2017). RTT's NIC is built upon the understanding that it is vital to recruit, support, and retain not only a highly-qualified and effective workforce, but to also prioritize educator diversity. To address the initial recruitment needs of the HCMS, RTT will build a diverse educator pipeline aimed at improving recruitment and retention through research-based strategies, including HBCU (Underwood et al., 2019) and MSI (Turner et al., 2017) partnerships that foster direct relationships with potential candidates. RTT will also conduct equity analyses that identify areas for growth within the districts (Skrla et al., 2009).

In addition, RTT will implement evidence-based structures and supports across all levels designed to combat educator attrition in NC (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). To promote the retention of district leaders across the NIC, RTT will form communities of practice that promote

job-specific collaboration (Wenger, 2004). RTT will also create tailored leadership academies that facilitate growth and provide ongoing, job-embedded professional development (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), including aspiring leader academies that support the transition of teachers into leadership roles. To further build capacity within the HCMS, RTT will use evidence-based strategies to support principals in forming ILTs that engage in critical activities for improving students' academic outcomes (Sharif et al., 2020), such as constructing a shared vision and proactively addressing challenges (Wickman, 2011).

In alignment with the areas of need identified by the ILTs, RTT will also provide teachers with PLCs called CTCs, which have the potential to enhance teachers' growth, increase the effectiveness of professional development, and thereby improve educational quality (Prenger et al., 2019). CTCs will also address the pressing issue of access to professional learning for NC teachers, underscored by findings that only 20% of respondents strongly agreed that 'sufficient resources are available for professional development' across the state (Berry et al., 2021, p. 8). To foster a sustainable system of support, RTT will design multiple layers of coaching for educators and school leaders, including opportunities for one-on-one coaching that can positively impact student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018) and promote educator retention (De Jong & Campoli, 2018). Further, RTT will support the development and implementation of a career ladder, which has been shown to increase leadership capacity and reward practice, thereby providing yet another layer of support in educator retention (Loeb, 2020).

At its core, RTT is a sustainable NIC (Bryk, 2020) designed to address the unique challenges of NC's schools. As such, RTT provides a collaborative approach to the HCMS that is tailored to meet the needs of educators from diverse backgrounds—an aspect that is central to providing systematic support at the network, district, and school levels. The RTT components are

highly effective in fostering job-alike collaboration, enhancing school leadership, strengthening teacher instruction, and supporting the recruitment and retention of diverse educators—ultimately leading to improved outcomes for all students in RTT’s high-need schools.

Plan for Project Implementation

RTT’s implementation plan and detailed timeline are provided in section C.

Appropriate Methodological Tools

The methodological tools that will be utilized to support the research-based work of RTT are grounded in improvement science and will be directly connected to the aforementioned objectives and needs. These tools have been intentionally selected based upon their validity and reliability in measuring the proposed objectives. RTT districts benefit from the NC State Department of Education’s assessment, evaluation, and data systems. Our teaching and learning measures draw heavily upon these resources. RTT will use state-developed measures of student performance (NC State Testing), student growth (EVAAS), and teacher and leader effectiveness (NCEES). Additionally, the evaluation will include biennial results for the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey as a potentially important driver of teacher job satisfaction and retention. These tools are grounded in state-, district-, and school-level data and reporting and thus will ensure reports will support continuous improvement aligned with specific contextual needs and goals.

(iii) Methods of evaluation

TIP and partner districts will cooperate with the U.S. Department of Education on any evaluation of the program. Additionally, RTT will engage an external evaluator to develop and implement a robust, adaptive external evaluation. Our project evaluation will produce data to be used by RTT project staff and school district personnel. The evaluation will be based on the RTT

logic model (Appendix A) and will also utilize the TSL Performance Measures to gauge implementation progress and determine the impact of activities. Our complete external evaluation plan is provided in Appendix F.

RTT has six project objectives. The first five objectives aim to improve teaching and learning through better management of human capital systems. We propose multiple measures and methods, within an improvement science framework, to ensure RTT achieves these project objectives. To this end, the evaluation will monitor and display key implementation metrics, develop results and process measures, build measurement and visualization capacity, provide rapid feedback and forecasting, and assess the impact of selected interventions.

The evaluation design calls for periodic progress assessments via brief reports to provide performance feedback. These data briefs begin immediately with baseline reports designed to indicate average performance and variation around the average for each intended outcome and for each RTT district. RTT will use baseline data to set ambitious, yet achievable performance targets around student performance and educator and school leader effectiveness. The evaluators will provide frequent brief reports covering project objectives. These brief reports will assess RTT progress as a whole and as individual districts in closing the gaps between the baseline measurement and the performance target. Periodic reporting will increase attention to data and allow the system(s) to incorporate new learnings and potentially shift resources. Additionally, this frequent reporting process reinforces RTT's "continual improvement" project objective by increasing the number of instances where member districts experience improvement-oriented data analysis and project adjustments.

Ultimately, successful outcomes depend upon program implementation. Grant activities are designed to build, within each of our RTT district partners, the skills and understanding to

create a reimagined HCMS. A distinct set of grant activities animates each of our three levers. Each of these will be monitored, evaluated, and reported differently. We plan to operate the evaluation of this grant consistent with implementation science principles and as a model of how school systems can enact their own sustainable model of continual improvement.

(c) QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Because the project is being implemented across multiple districts, there is an added layer of complexity for effective project management. Given this challenge, RTT's management plan includes both project-level and school-based positions to effectively support the project and ensure fidelity of implementation, as well as an Advisory Council (AC). Below are descriptions of key RTT positions followed by the project implementation timeline. Job descriptions for all positions, including project responsibilities and relevant selection criteria, a diversity recruitment plan, and resumes for identified key personnel are provided in Appendix B.

Project-Level Positions

Project Director (PD): The PD will provide leadership, management, and oversight for the project and serve as the primary point of contact both internally across all partner districts and externally with the U.S. Department of Education. The PD will manage the daily implementation of the project and establish and facilitate the AC. The PD will use routine cost-control mechanisms, as well as systematic review of any project costs, to ensure alignment to detailed work and budget planning. Actual accomplishments and their costs will be compared to the planned workflows and budgets. Each quarter, the PD will present budget updates to the AC. Additionally, the PD will provide sustainability support and training to district-level leaders and board members. *Dr. Sharon Contreras*, the CEO of TIP, will serve as 75% PD on this project. Sharon has extensive grant and project leadership experience and has supported TIP member

districts with fiscal planning, data collection, and research. Dr. Contreras has a wealth of experience in five school districts managing large organizational budgets with complex funding streams and accountability requirements. She has also served as superintendent in the Syracuse City School District (NY) and Guilford County Schools (NC).

Principal Investigator (PI): The PI is responsible for overall performance management of the project and provides executive-level guidance. The PI provides oversight for the PD. The PI will leverage their extensive experience to help solve the most complex problems that arise over the lifespan of the project. The PI also focuses on sustainability to ensure the work established throughout the life of this project outlives the grant funding. *Dr. Valerie Bridges* will serve as PI. Dr. Bridges is the Vice Chair/Treasurer of TIP's Board of Directors. As the 2022 NC Superintendent of the Year, she has more than 30 years of experience as an NC educator and school leader and extensive experience overseeing the key elements of this project.

Grant Managers (GM): One 25% Senior GM and two 100% GMs will provide overall day-to-day support for the grant. The Senior GM will report directly to the PD and will hire, train, and manage the two GMs. The GMs will work with districts on budgeting, reimbursement requisitions, and data collection. The GMs will also serve as point for the administrative and operational support across the project, including preparation of internal and external project reporting and managing partner district adherence to direct cost and matching funds budgets. *Dr. Blake Wiggs*, who serves as TIP's Director of Strategic Initiatives and is a former research scholar at the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University, will serve as the Senior GM. Dr. Wiggs has a strong grant management and research background.

Data Manager (DM): A 100% DM will ensure each partner district has an effective and efficient system for collecting data. The DM will act as a liaison for the grant’s external evaluator to ensure data is collected and analyzed in a timely manner and included in annual reports. The DM will also work with the PD to run internal data reports to provide real-time support for districts’ professional development.

Project Coaches (PC): RTT will have four 100% PCs, each reporting to the PD. PCs will serve as a coach and thought partner for school leaders by providing day-to-day support in the planning and implementation of project strategies. Each PC will serve two districts, based on geography. The PCs will be instrumental in facilitating and supporting the Leadership and Aspiring Leaders Academies, recruitment and retention systems, calibration activities, and aligning the grant strategies with school-level goals and priorities. The PCs will also serve as a coach and thought partner for the school-based LTs and MTs by assisting them in outlining and meeting ambitious teacher performance goals, preparing and executing high-quality, innovative teacher support, and providing effective professional development for teachers.

School-Based Positions (AP 1)

Lead Teachers (LT): LTs serve as an instructional coach focused on providing teachers with on-site day-to-day support in the planning, implementation, and assessment of effective classroom instruction. As such, LTs will provide instructional coaching, job-embedded professional development, co-planning (e.g., strategic design, curriculum, assessment), data analysis, and demonstration lessons. The LTs will be part of the ILT and will lead CTC meetings, coaching, and collaborative teaching in their school. LTs will not have a full teaching load to focus on these additional responsibilities. There will be one LT for every two schools.

Master Teacher (MT): MTs serve as the model for equitable, rigorous, and effective instruction in each school. MTs will have full classroom duties, but their classrooms will be open to other teachers and will demonstrate live (in-person or virtual) examples of high-leverage instructional practices that engage students, provide all students with the necessary scaffolds and support, and ensure a focus on student learning. Model lessons will be used to create school and district-based video libraries of effective instruction. MTs may also lead CTC meetings in their school. There will be one MT at each school.

Advisory Council (AC)

In order to balance cross-district collaboration while retaining local control, RTT will utilize a quarterly AC composed of the superintendent and one board member from each district, the PD, PI, and External Evaluator. It is essential to have a board member engaged in the project for sustainability. The AC is critical as the initial glue of the NIC and for long-term sustainability. This council will serve as quality control for project implementation across partner districts. Each meeting will consist of programmatic, fiscal, evaluative updates, questions, and outstanding items for decision. The AC is designed to be a mechanism of support for the districts and to make decisions on local, contextually specific items. This structure will enable local ownership of the goals and initiatives of the grant and create the stakeholder buy-in and leadership necessary to sustain the work.

The following timeline illustrates how we will achieve the objectives of the proposed project (provided in section B) on time and within budget (**AR vii**).

Legend: PD – Project Director; PI – Principal Investigator; GM – Grant Manager; DM – Data Manager; PC – Project Coach; EE – External Evaluator; TA – Technical Assistance Provider; *– Activity will lead to project sustainability

Project Activity	Person Responsible	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Establish the Advisory Council to meet quarterly*	PD												
Hire other project-level positions	PD, GM												
Work with districts to create yearly specific performance targets and indicators	PD, PC, EE												
Create a process for collecting data needed for the project	PC, DM, EE												
Create multi-channel communication campaigns for year-round recruitment	PD, PC, TA												
Cross-departmental working groups established in schools to create recruitment and retention systems and carry out year-round activities	PCs												
Develop training on fiscal management and processes of TSL grant for partners	GM												
PBC metrics for each school approved by Advisory Council	PD, PC												
District level review of HCMS system and report	PD, TA												
Equity analysis conducted at each district	PD, TA												
Equity plan developed at each district	PD, TA												
Strategic scheduling analysis to provide model flexible schedules	PD, TA												
Quarterly Project Reports to all schools	PD, DM												
Post and hire Lead and Master Teachers	PD, PC												
Provide Instructional Leadership, CTC, Coaching training to all districts	TA												
Provide access to the online platform for all educators and licenses for Praxis prep course	TA												
Annual Regional RTT Workshop to share best practices	PD, PC, TA												
Annual National Workshop	PD, PC, TA												

Project Activity	Person Responsible	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Annual Regional Recruitment Convening, focused on educators of color	PD, PC, TA												
Communities of Practice convene	PC												
Begin ILTs, CTCs, and coaching in all schools	PD, PC												
Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leaders Academies	PD, PC												
Quarterly calibration activity for leaders, teachers, and coaches	PD, PC												
Periodic progress assessments/performance feedback (monthly data briefs)	EE												
Annual evaluation report	EE, DM												
Present the activities and preliminary results from the project at relevant conferences and journals	PD, EE												
Sustainability reviews*	ALL												
Creation of Sustainability Resources and Systems of Sustainability*	ALL												
Use external evaluation results to determine and scale best practices	PD, EE												
Gradual Release Model: ILT*	PD, PC, TA												
Gradual Release Model: CTC*	PD, PC, TA												
Gradual Release Model: Coaching*	PD, PC, TA												
Gradual Release Model: Recruitment and Retention*	PD, PC, TA												
Prepare/submit high-quality, data-rich Annual Performance Report to US DoE	PD, GM, DM												

(d) ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

(i) Likelihood to result in system change or improvement

RTT project activities address every level of the education system—network, district, school, and classroom—so that organizations can be more effective at implementing initiatives and addressing challenges. Therefore, system changes and improvements are expected. The RTT logic model (Appendix A) clearly outlines the researched-based interventions that are designed to impact student achievement. Further, the logic model is structured around the key capacity areas necessary to transition successful aspects of the project into system-wide improvements both during and beyond the grant period (AR viii). We are also ensuring this project has the intended effects by closely monitoring project implementation and impacts through an ongoing external evaluation—and then adjusting accordingly.

The initial project period has a scaffolded set of goals and milestones for each of those years. In Year 1, the focus is on creating the network connections and human capital systems described above. Year 2 has a focus on implementing the new systems with fidelity and sharing best practices and lessons learned across partner districts within the NIC. Year 3 has a dual focus on sustainability for the current partner districts and scaling effective practices to all TIP member districts. The expansion will rely heavily on the evaluation results to determine which aspects of RTT are having the intended effects on teacher and student improvement and should be scaled. Following Year 3, the focus will be on opening the NIC to other NC districts (non-TIP members) and scaling up what has proven effective to the entire state. TIP is uniquely positioned to scale its educator workforce efforts statewide—TIP district membership serves 439,000+ students, which is approximately one-third of the state’s students, public schools, and teachers.

As mentioned above, TIP has extensive experience implementing similar system changes as RTT in school districts across NC with positive results; therefore, we expect system change

and improvement from this project. Specifically, TIP has extensive experience providing macro-level supports and scaling successes across NC districts. Since its inception, TIP has worked with partners to expand innovation through initiatives in its “TIP Incubator.”

(ii) Likely to build local capacity

The inherent design of RTT is about changing systems and building local capacity. Changing systems is a capacity building endeavor as it creates sustainable improvement that remains beyond the individuals currently in the system (Prenger et al., 2019). Data will be central to the examination of efficacy of each system-level change. The project evaluation will track implementation data, which will help both the project team and district administrators determine implementation strength and whether the intervention is likely to achieve its intended effect.

The project leadership team will utilize a Gradual Release Model (GRM) with schools to ensure effective knowledge transfer across the second and third year of the project. GRM is a best practice to strategically transfer the responsibility in the learning process (Fisher & Frey, 2013). The GRM is intentionally designed to build the local capacity necessary to sustain the project activities and their impact on high-need students. As the project focus evolves during Years 1-3, the project-level team will shift responsibility for and ownership of the activities to participating districts: in Years 1 and 2, TIP’s project-level team will provide the training and support to begin the interventions; in Year 3, the responsibility for support will be shared among TIP and districts, with TIP serving more as quality-control. The overarching goal for Years 1-3 is to create a self-perpetuating system of support and growth to sustain after the grant period.

Collaboration is embedded at every level of RTT as evidenced by the letters of support in Appendix C (AR iii). RTT prioritizes stakeholder engagement and local control so that districts can make decisions based on their specific local context. Through this partnership, district leaders agree to the basic tenets of participation as outlined in the Letter of Intent (Appendix C).

However, we believe the specific policy decisions and metrics should be made at the local level for the local level, which is why we created the AC structure. For example, the project provides recruitment and retention bonuses for effective educators; however, local stakeholders will decide the specific amounts and distribution metrics. Therefore, the AC will enable local ownership of the initiatives of the grant and create the stakeholder buy-in to sustain the work.

Another human capital building and sustainability mechanism is the Aspiring Leaders Academy. By expanding leadership development beyond current sitting principals, we are ensuring the project practices will become part of the fabric of schools even with new leaders.

Addressing Needs of Target Population

The target population for RTT is underserved students and activities are concentrated in high-need schools. Students of color benefit from excellent teaching and from having teachers who look like them (The Education Trust, 2017). The extensive recruitment and retention systems described above will result not only in securing effective teachers, but will also uniquely focus on teachers of color. RTT will track teacher assignment by race and ethnicity and will report on teacher assignment by prior student performance (CPP 1).

Scaling to Other Districts with Similar Target Populations

TIP is committed to scaling change across NC by sharing resources created by TIP. TIP staff regularly present at conferences, and member districts are encouraged to share resources at their regional and state meetings. Expansion of services and scaling of best practices is a core feature of RTT. As mentioned above, this project will accelerate the development of promising new initiatives and practices. After building these initiatives within targeted TIP districts, we aim to expand to all TIP member districts and then to open up what works to the entire state in a phased approach. Further, we have selected the participating districts for this project because of

their similar needs. All partner districts have 16 schools or less. There are approximately 13,100 public school districts in the U.S., and about 96% of them have fewer than 25 schools (NCES, 2021). As such, given that a clear goal of expansion is also built into the RTT project model, there is a high level of scalability and replicability to share our learnings and takeaways with other small, rural districts across NC and even the nation.

(iii) Resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant (AR viii)

Sustainability and scalability are built into RTT. In our logic model (Appendix A), we separated out sustainability as a key bucket of work to ensure that—from the onset—we are setting up the resources and structure necessary to continue this work. We have structured the sustainability plan around the human, material, organizational, and structural capacity needed for the important work of this project to continue in support of high-need students beyond the grant. Additionally, RTT will leverage the expertise of technical assistance (TA) partners who can support with training, reviews, logistics of annual convenings, and providing an online platform. So as not to be a burden on the partner districts, using TAs will also contribute to the sustainability of the project activities.

Financial Resources (AR ix)

The RTT budget was purposefully and thoughtfully crafted with sustainability in mind. RTT has two key approaches for ensuring that schools have the financial resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant: sustaining PBC and personnel through public funds and sustaining the NIC through growth.

Sustaining PBC: As evidenced by the Match Intent and Ability Letter (Appendix D), RTT will meet the required 50% match for this project, which demonstrates a major commitment of resources to the RTT tenets; in fact, a significant portion of the district match comes from the

new teacher leader positions. RTT schools will use a combination of public funding to continue PBC after the grant.

Sustaining Teacher Leaders: RTT schools will also use a combination of public funding to maintain the new teacher leader positions after the grant. The PD will work individually with each district to help identify which funds can be used to maintain PBC and personnel (e.g. Title I and Title II, part A).

Sustaining the NIC: RTT recognizes that TSL grant funding is available for three years; therefore, we consider Year 4 and beyond as Phase II of the NIC. Following Year 3, TIP will plan for expanding the network in Phase II by offering access to RTT's NIC, communities of practice, and library of resources to other districts in NC. These districts would be charged a nominal annual fee, which will supplement significant costs of sustaining the NIC. Further, this model of TIP supporting HCMS systems across partner districts could be replicated with small districts throughout the state and nationally.

Sustainability Resources

Our goal is to provide RTT schools with asynchronous and synchronous supports to help educators refine their practice and best serve students, as well as to leave them with a robust library of resources to help sustain this work. Therefore, during the three years of this grant, RTT will focus on creating "Sustainability Resources," the key resources and supports that schools will need to continue to implement the project activities described above after the grant ends. This will include materials from trainings and recordings of exemplar candidate interviews, PLC meetings, and coaching sessions. Further, the NIC will create a video-library of effective practice across grade levels and content areas.

Organizational Capacity

An essential part of creating the organizational capacity to sustain and expand this work is through the sustainability reviews. In Year 3, the project team will conduct a sustainability review for each district. The purpose of this review is to ensure the district understands how to maintain all the improvements and enhancements made in previous years of the grant and that it has the resources and organizational capacity to do so. The resulting sustainability plan will help guide the partner districts in the years following the grant.

Additionally, each district will identify external stakeholders who can provide awareness about the program to the broader community and program champions who can support the school with advocacy efforts. This includes developing a communications plan to inform legislators, board members, and other organizations about how impactful this program has been for students and educators and why it should continue.

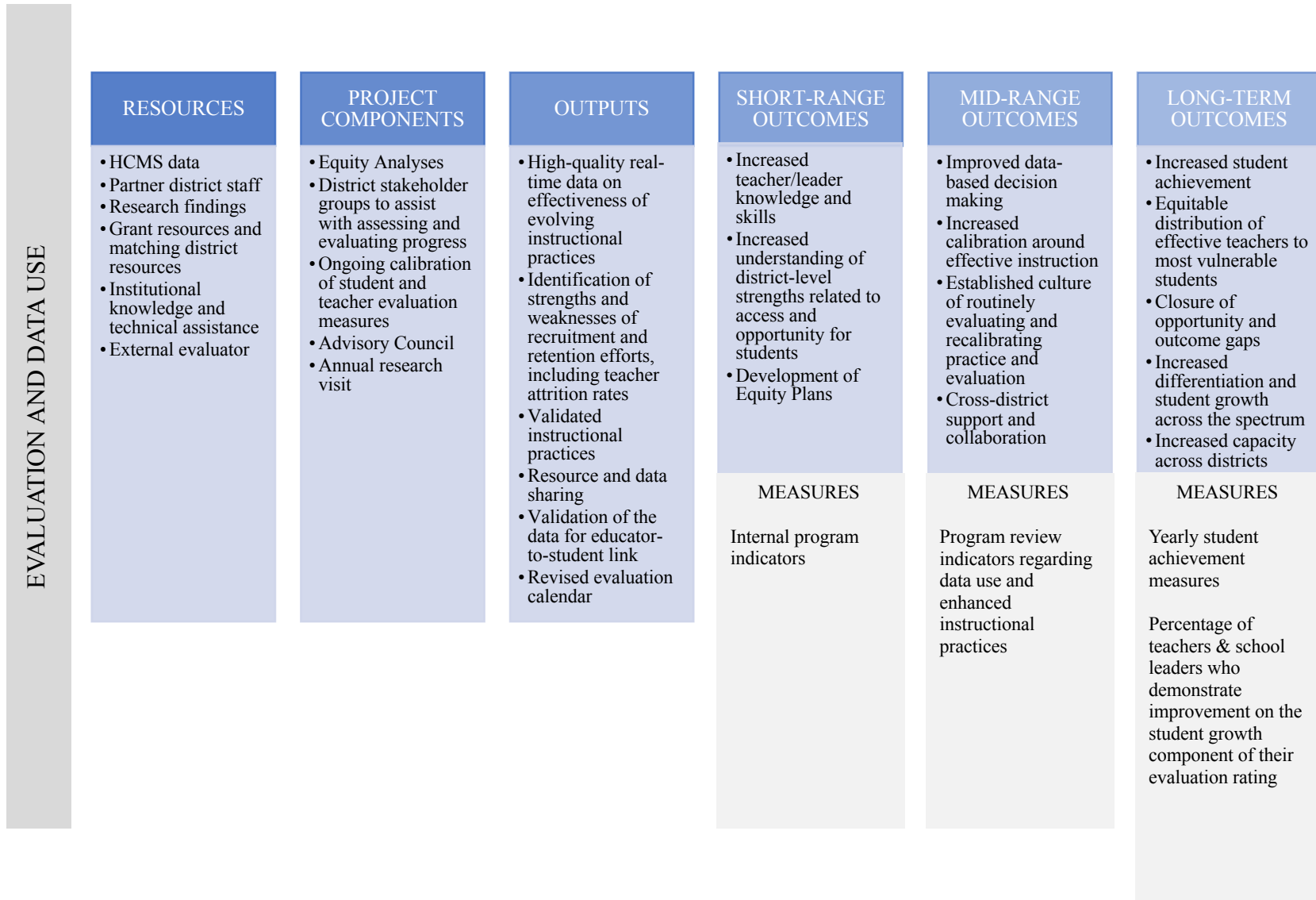
Partner Commitment (AR iii)

As evidenced by the letters of support and Letters of Intent (Appendix C), there is broad project support and buy-in from key stakeholders including teachers, school leaders, superintendents, the Governor's office, members of congress, HBCUs, and the State Superintendent of Education. The districts each also agree to the basic tenets of participation in the grant as outlined in the Letter of Intent. If awarded, all districts would sign a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). While the basic tenets are common across all districts, local control will still take priority, as local stakeholders will tailor specific policy decisions and granular metrics to their local needs. In addition, each district has committed to sustain the systemic aspects of RTT following the grant. These systems (e.g. PLCs, coaching) can be sustained by the local school in perpetuity at no additional cost.

Attachment 3 - LOGIC MODEL

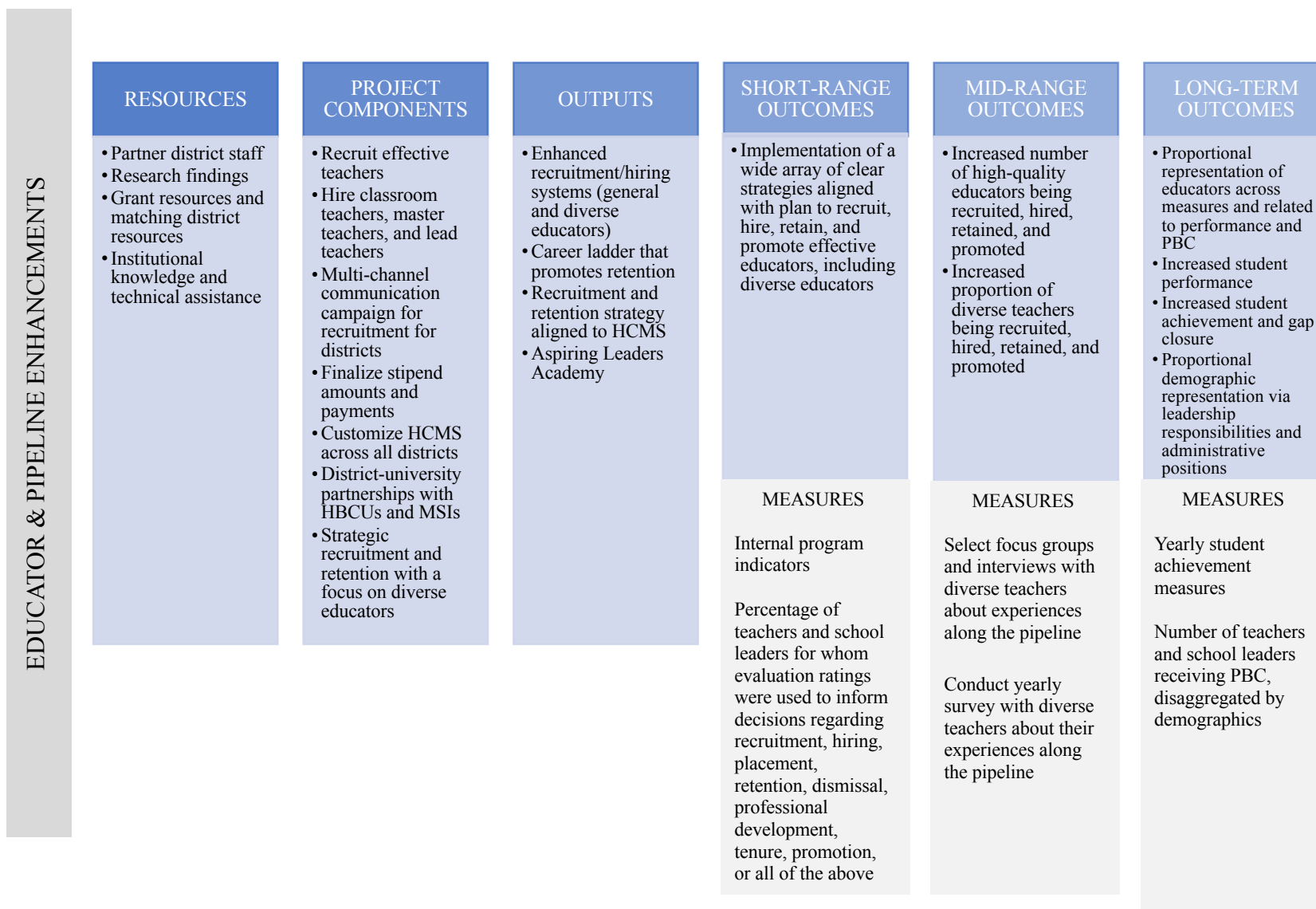
Logic Model

Reimagining Teaching Talent (RTT)



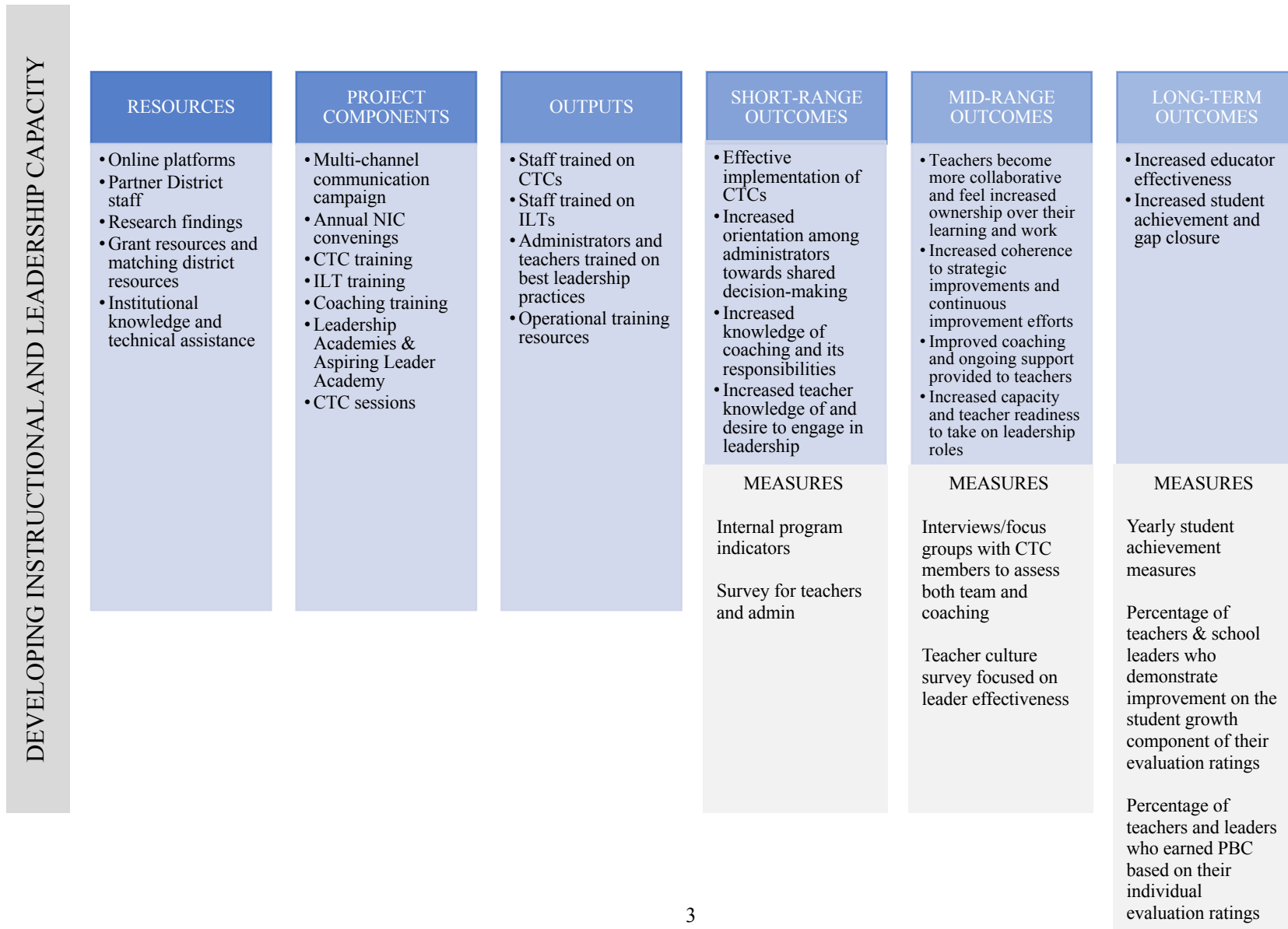
Logic Model

Reimagining Teaching Talent (RTT)



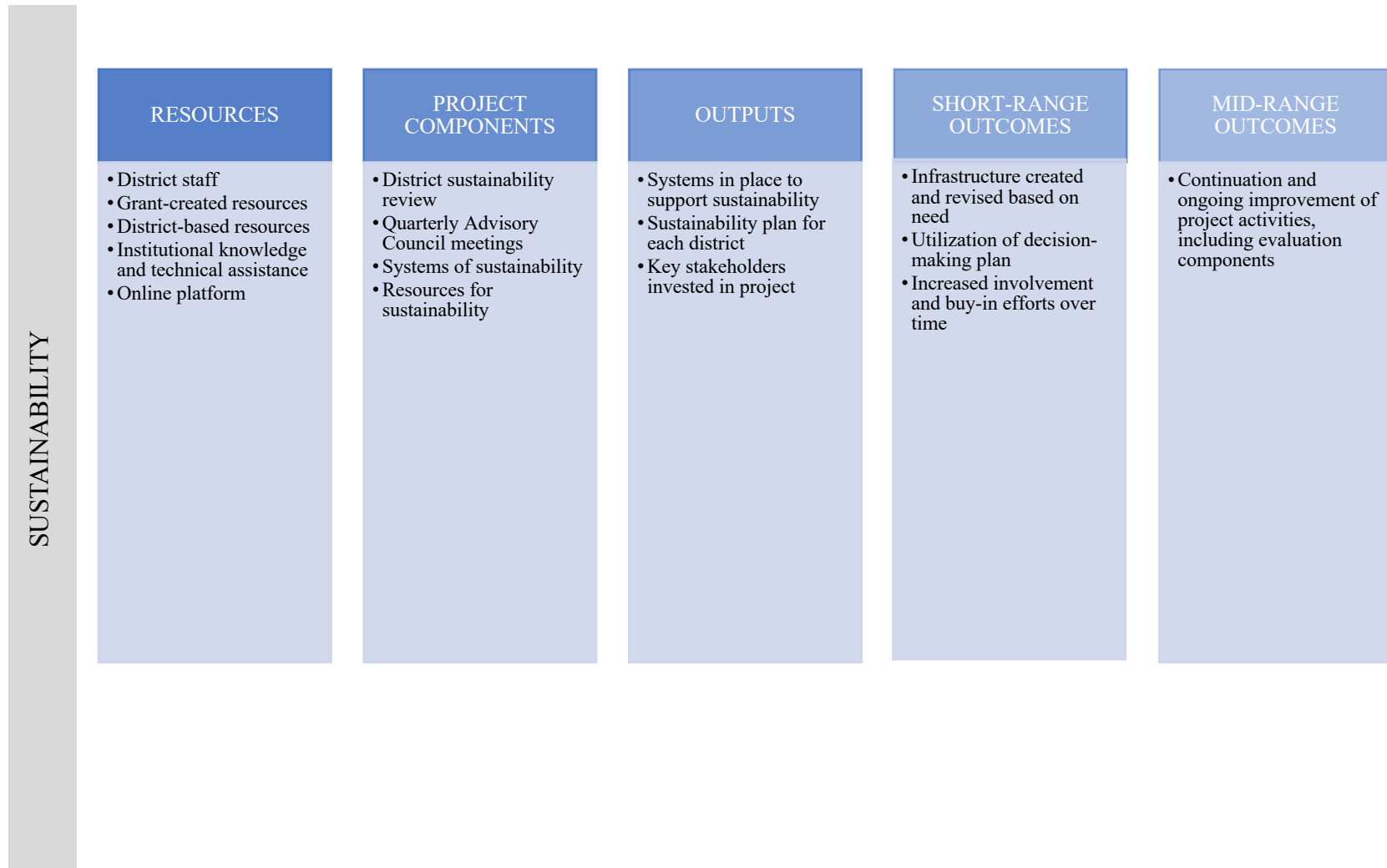
Logic Model

Reimagining Teaching Talent (RTT)



Logic Model

Reimagining Teaching Talent (RTT)



Attachment 4 - TSL PROJECT MEASURES

Performance Measures: The goal of TSL is to support educators, particularly those in high-need schools, to raise student academic achievement and close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students. For the purposes of Department reporting under [34 CFR 75.110](#), we have established a set of performance measures:

- (a) the percentage of teachers and school leaders within the TSL-assisted schools rated effective or higher by their districts' evaluation and support systems;
- (b) the percentage of teachers and school leaders across the participating district(s) that show improvements, over the previous year, on the student growth component of their evaluation rating;
- (c) the percentage of teachers and school leaders within the TSL-assisted schools that show improvements, over the previous year, on the student growth component of their evaluation rating;
- (d) the percentage of teachers and school leaders in TSL-assisted schools for whom evaluation ratings were used to inform decisions regarding recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, dismissal, professional development, tenure, promotion, or all of the above;
- (e) the percentage of teachers and school leaders within the participating district(s) who earned performance-based compensation based on their individual evaluation ratings;
- (f) the percentage of teachers and school leaders in TSL-funded schools who earned performance-based compensation based on their individual evaluation ratings;
- (g) the number of teachers receiving performance compensation disaggregated by race, gender, and where available, disability status;
- (h) the number of school leaders receiving performance compensation disaggregated by race, gender, and where available, disability status; and
- (i) the number of teachers receiving performance compensation for leadership responsibilities disaggregated by race, gender, and where available, disability status.