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NEED FOR THE PROJECT

It is a new era for public education in rural Rowan County, North Carolina (NC). With the mission, *to inspire innovative and engaging learning*, Rowan-Salisbury School District (RSS) entered the forefront of educational reform in the state by pursuing and achieving the status of becoming NC's first, and currently only, Renewal District. This designation allows flexibility to incorporate successful and promising elements of charter school operations in a traditional public education system. RSS has invested in creating systemic change to reimagine and restructure its schools, building relationships with experts on the cutting edge of educational transformation and dynamic leaders across the country to create a *student-centered school system*. RSS leaders understand that the flexibilities afforded as a Renewal District and the redesign work serve a larger purpose: for *all* students in its 34 schools to achieve strong and equitable outcomes in learning environments where *students enjoy learning and teachers enjoy teaching*. Rowan-Salisbury School System was named as one of six districts across the nation to watch in 2020 (Education Drive) for their innovative efforts to create a student-centered school system.

The Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program, *Accelerate Rowan*, is designed to *accelerate* system-wide implementation of a student-centered school system in which every student has an effective teacher and every school has effective leadership to improve academic outcomes for all students. While RSS began the journey years ago to transform education in the Rowan County community, this project will allow RSS to strengthen efforts to strategically manage school change and build system coherence, develop a Human Capital Management System (HCMS) and a structured Performance Based Compensation System (PBCS) that prioritizes recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators (*Absolute Priority 1*). Twenty-

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five (25) of 34 RSS schools are high needs schools (*Absolute Priority 2*); all schools will receive services through the project. Six of our schools are located in a Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ) (*Competitive Preference Priority 1*). The project addresses *Competitive Preference Priority 2*; Rowan-Salisbury School System has **never received a TSL** or Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant.

i. Gaps/weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities

Rowan-Salisbury School District (RSS), located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina, provides educational services to approximately 19,000 preK-12th grade students in 34 schools including 19 elementary, 7 middle schools, 6 traditional high schools, one 6-12 alternative school, and 1 Early College. The district serves a diverse student population that is 56% white, 18% African American, and 20% Hispanic; sixty-four percent (64%) of RSS students are living in poverty as measured by the free/reduced price meal (FRPM) statistics. Ten (10) schools are Community Eligibility Schools (CEP) and do not have to complete FRPM applications due to high disadvantaged populations. Twenty-five (25) schools are high needs schools with 50% or more socioeconomically disadvantaged. In the remaining nine schools, 33% to 49% of the students qualify for FRPM. The project will serve teachers, principals, and other school leaders in all 34 high needs schools (*Absolute Priority 2*). Please see chart in attachments that identifies participating schools, enrollment, percentage of economically disadvantaged students (EDS), and identification of schools in QOZ, with census track number.

Gap: Low student achievement gains. The challenges associated with these socioeconomic indicators put RSS students at extreme risk for educational failure. The district has demonstrated some incremental change in student achievement; however, 15 of its 34 schools are designated as Low Performing. Data from 2018-2019 End of Year testing results reveal a downward trend with 45% of students demonstrating proficiency in reading, 36% proficient in mathematics and 46%

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were career and college ready. Approximately 43% of RSS students met standards on the state proficiency composite (Internal Ready Review Site and NC School Report Cards) in 2019 compared to 58.8% of students in North Carolina. The data also show a continued achievement gap between white students and other subgroups with a greater disparity for Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Gap: High teacher/leader turnover. Research shows that effective teachers are the most important factor contributing to student achievement (Chetty et al. 2014; Sharratt, L., 2018; Anderson, M., 2016). The research is also clear that most economically disadvantaged students are disproportionately served by higher percentages of ineffective and or/inexperienced teachers (Reardon, 2012; Wiswall, M., 2013; Ladd, H., & Sorenson, L., 2017). Low income schools with diverse populations such as RSS are three to ten times more likely to have novice teachers in the classroom than school districts in more affluent schools (Long, 2011). With little experience or preparation for working in a diverse learning environment coupled with the immense challenge of educating students with low achievement, many new RSS teachers struggle and leave the profession.

Typically, RSS has to recruit, vet, hire, and train approximately 190+ new educators each year representing, on average, 14% of the teaching staff. However, in our highest needs schools (CEP), teacher turnover ranges from a low of 22% to as high as 40%. More than a quarter (26%) of the current teachers have less than 5 years in the teaching field; 23.8% of teachers did not meet expected student growth as indicated on the Teacher Value Added Composite from the North Carolina Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). This pattern is creating a churn of inexperienced teachers in our schools.

School leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors

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that contribute to what students learn at school (Fairman, J., & Mackenzie, S., 2015; Harris, A., Jones, M., & Huffman, J., 2017). School leaders play a critical role in the district to support the implementation of the RSS Renewal Directional System (see page 11), provide feedback and professional learning to teachers and staff, and cultivate a learning culture that enables teachers to be successful. Consistent with the tendency for less-advantaged schools to be run by less experienced principals, *74% of RSS principals have less than five years' experience* at their current school.

Gap: Diversity of Workforce. Emerging evidence suggests that a diverse teaching force has the promising potential to help minority students attain greater educational success (Howard, 2010; Zeichner & Payne, 2013). Outcomes such as test scores, attendance, and suspension rates are affected by the demographic match between teachers and students (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Thomas, L., & May H., 2010; Blomeke et al., 2016). There is an underrepresentation of minority teachers relative to proportion of RSS minority students. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of classroom teachers are white; 56% of students are white. Nearly 20% of students are Hispanic yet less than 2% of the teaching staff are Hispanic. Nine percent (9%) of RSS teachers are African-American compared to 18% of students.

Like many schools with similar populations throughout the state and the nation, Rowan-Salisbury schools has experienced long, documented histories of poor performance and failed efforts to improve. A small portion of students performed well, but significant numbers failed to graduate, and the majority of those that did graduate were inadequately prepared for college or the workplace. Clearly, the traditional educational system was failing RSS students. In order to meet the challenges of poor achievement results, dropouts, and unprepared students, systemic change was needed.

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With the intent of enabling the district to establish new, innovative practices to support students, the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) enacted legislation (HB 986) during the 2017-18 session, granting RSS renewal status. Specifically, S.L. 2018-32 (Section 6) states that the purpose of operating the local school under a renewal school system model is for the local board of education to create a comprehensive, innovative strategic vision for sustainable school improvement and student achievement through the delivery of instruction and resources tailored to the needs of students and the community. The renewal school system model provides RSS, a traditional public school district, with the flexibility typically utilized by charter schools with the aim of spurring school improvement and fostering greater student achievement.

Many of the RSS renewal opportunities revolve around calendar flexibility and teacher-led teams that are designing new curriculum to support fundamental standards in which all students will demonstrate mastery. There is also budget flexibility that results in RSS receiving state funds in one lump sum rather than in multiple categories with program restrictions. Additional flexibility allows the district to hire teachers with industry experience to teach in their areas of strength without a teacher license.

Gap: Lack of systemic HCMS framework. Recognizing the strategic role that acquiring and managing educator talent plays in the success of the district, RSS conducted operational and organizational reviews of the Finance and Human Resources (HR) Departments to ensure that resources are aligned with the strategic direction of the school community. Major findings from the reviews highlighted: 1) a lack of communication and interconnected processes between HR and Finance Departments for recruitment, hiring, and placement of educators; 2) lack of centralized electronic system; and 3) lack of an integrated structure aligned with RSS Directional System and structures. *There is a critical need to develop a strategic approach to build a robust*

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Human Capital Management System (HCMS) framework to recruit, place, develop, and retain high quality, experienced educators to improve student achievement.

Gap: Lack of structured Performance-Based Compensation System. A significant shortage of educators in the region and state has exacerbated efforts to recruit and retain high quality, experienced teachers, especially teachers that reflect the diversity of the student population. RSS offers a competitive salary schedule; however, performance-based compensation is limited in scope and application and is not designed to allow opportunities for high-quality teachers and principals to earn increased compensation to incentivize working in the district's low-income, high needs schools. The rural location and at-risk student population often hinder efforts to recruit and retain the experienced, high quality teachers needed to support gains in student achievement. Additionally, the lack of a fully functioning HCMS has often delayed the new hire process to the extent that highly qualified candidates often take a job elsewhere in the time it takes to process the request to hire, sometimes up to 6 weeks (Position Control Process Evaluation, 2019).

Gap: Educator evaluation not aligned to Directional System. Teachers and principals are evaluated using the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). Educator Evaluation instruments are based on the Framework for 21st Century Learning, the North Carolina (NC) Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) and NC Standards for School Executives. The NCEES does include data collected on student achievement (EVAAS); however, the tool and process is not a significant force behind feedback for improving educator effectiveness and outcomes for students. The process for conducting and scoring teacher evaluation, including observations, is inconsistent from principal to principal; there is inadequate training for principals on the administration and scoring calibration for more consistent results. Additionally,

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the current tool is not aligned to the new competency-based system, district core values and accountability models. *Design of an effective teacher and principal evaluation system aligned with the NCPTS, our local district core values and directional system will also allow RSS to customize professional development for teachers based on a personalized system of feedback and support.*

Through *Accelerate Rowan*, RSS will strategically manage the school redesign model for coherence and accountability, develop a comprehensive and strategic Human Capital Management System (HCMS) to align foundational structures, processes and workflow within Human Resources, Finance and across the district and incentive performance with structured Performance Based Compensation.

ii. Project will integrate with or build on related efforts to improve relevant outcomes

Building on evidence of promise, the district's investment in teacher and leadership development in a competency-based learning environment, and the state's commitment to the RSS renewal, RSS will leverage its resources and utilize funds from *Accelerate Rowan* to build alignment, coherence and accountability across all systems building the capacity to effect district-wide change. The district has forged partnerships with districts and educational organizations that have demonstrated systemic and sustained evidence of success in improving teacher and leader efficacy and student achievement in a student-centered school system. RSS will build on lessons learned, best practices, and evidence of success to implement the strategies outlined in this proposal. As the only renewal district in the state, Rowan-Salisbury is uniquely positioned to reimagine and restructure learning and educational systems to deliver a state-wide replicable model for student-centered learning. Through *Accelerate Rowan*, the district will build a *blueprint to manage system change, building a model for innovation in other districts.*

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RSS has been in the process of creating systemic change, shifting from a traditional school system to a student-centered competency-based system, over the past six years. The district worked with a broad base of stakeholders to develop a strategic design that guides teachers and leaders towards redesigning learning environments in all RSS schools to foster academic skills, interpersonal skills and unique life purposes in all our students. The transition to a competency-based system requires that all programs and policies are fully integrated and aligned with the RSS future-focused strategic design, the Renewal Directional System, and funding streams from local, state, and federal resources are leveraged for district-wide organizational change. The district has an educator evaluation process and a system for recruiting, hiring, induction, mentoring and professional development. *These processes will be aligned and strategically managed through the development of an integrated HCMS structure with a coherent set of policies and practices that work together to attract, develop, motivate, and retain educators with the competencies to achieve the district goals and improve student achievement.*

The district also brings a five-year investment in technology resources including 1:1 technology and community Wi-Fi access, digital curriculum resources and professional development on best practices in delivering digital content to the implementation of a data driven, competency-based system. The district implemented, in 2016, an inclement weather work-from-home option in which teachers and staff created eLearning Days for students within the regular calendar; Zoom was used to virtually connect leaders, teachers, and students. A Virtual Professional Development Framework (VPD) has been created that provides a menu of professional learning opportunities for all RSS staff. The Professional Development Guidebook describes webinar topics ranging from accountability to being learner-centered to the future of learning presented by national speakers, authors, researchers, business owners, partners, founders,

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entrepreneurs, and our own staff. When schools were closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, *RSS had already developed a virtual culture* and was as ready as any school district in the country to start teaching remotely without a break in instruction. The district has experienced an increase in participation in virtual professional development opportunities during the shutdown. Over an eight-week period, there were over 20,000 views to the PD Guidebook; RSS teachers, leaders and staff completed over 50 webinars; there were over 7,000 views to our recorded webinars; over 5,000 attended 5 live Wednesday Webinars; and 2,700 completed classified modules.

This investment in technology and professional learning will be expanded through the project as the district develops a digital learning management system (LMS), content and curriculum for competency-based pedagogy, and professional development on learner-centered instruction.

iii. Comprehensive effort to improve teaching & learning and support rigorous standards

RSS has earned unprecedented freedoms from the state. The district has defined a vision and framework for flexibilities that has empowered its school to embark on the redesign journey. Within the framework of a newly articulated district-wide Directional System, all of its schools have established Teacher-Led Design Teams and launched the process of creating, planning and implementing school renewal. Design teams have visited schools around the country (model providers) that have engaged in system-wide change and brought back many new ideas and models, which they have started adapting to the local contexts.

The implementation of *Accelerate Rowan* will create a robust, fully aligned HCMS restructured to boost teacher and principal effectiveness in ways that dramatically improve instructional practice and student learning. The RSS student-centered model recognizes each student as an individual with unique interests, needs, and abilities, while building a shared foundation that emphasizes and values instructional rigor, real-world relevance, and relationships between teachers and students.

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Through the renewal process, the leadership team has committed to redesigning education to create authentic and personalized learning experiences for all students through teacher-led flexibility in developing curriculum, budgeting, hiring, staffing, and scheduling. The goal is to give teachers the autonomy to respond to and engage with each student’s unique needs on a daily basis. While each school in the RSS System adopts district-level policies, they have the flexibility to create and implement their own school policies.

The district as a whole will focus on four areas that will contribute to the development of engaged learners. The focus on these areas -- *academic skills, unique life goals, and interpersonal skills* to develop *engaged learners* -- is organized in Rowan-Salisbury’s **Directional System**, which will guide all improvements in the district. The Directional System is

an organizing structure that enables all schools to work towards common goals. The structure helps RSS leadership to pinpoint common metrics against which to measure the district’s and school’s strategies for success. Based on the goals outlined in the Directional System, the RSS learners will master fundamental standards in English, math, science, and social

studies, set personal goals based on their unique smartness, career aspirations, and personal passions, and develop skills for interacting with other people in order to thrive as a productive employee and citizen. Each focus area will have a set of accountability measures set by RSS.



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Students' academic skills in core subject areas often are measured by performance on state-mandated assessments. These tests, and the curricula developed to prepare students for these tests, are developed based on a set of standards, which break curricula down into areas of focus. RSS leadership has reviewed these standards thoroughly and identified the specific standards that are necessary to build the academic foundations (called fundamental standards) that students will need to be successful in their future careers. Teachers will focus on these fundamental standards to provide a deeper dive into content, with the goal of enabling students to develop a greater understanding of the required materials.

Emphasis on unique life goals is driven by the question, "What do we want our students to become?" The RSS Renewal model plans to allow students to take part in answering this question by allowing them to explore career options, their strengths and talents (unique smartness), and their passions, the rationale being that if students are able to drive their learning based on their interests, they will be more engaged and inspired learners.

The RSS leadership team included the following quote from the U.S. Department of Education (2005) in their Renewal Plan submitted to the State Board of Education in August 2018 that describes "character," or interpersonal skills, as follows: "Character education is a learning process that enables students and adults in a school community to understand, care about, and act on core ethical values such as respect, justice, civic virtue and citizenship, and responsibility for self and others. Upon such core values, we form the attitudes and actions that are the hallmark of safe, healthy and informed communities that serve as the foundation of our society." RSS recognizes that developing intangible "soft skills" is often as important as developing students' academic skills as they prepare for careers after school. These skills can be difficult to measure, and include civility, work ethic, problem-solving, leadership,

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communication, teamwork, and creativity. All of these skills are necessary to be a good colleague, employee, and a productive citizen of the community.

The ultimate aim of focusing on the three areas outlined above -- Fundamental Standards, Unique Life Goals, and Interpersonal Skills -- is to develop engaged learners. Engaged learners are motivated because their experiences are matched to their readiness level (academically and emotionally), their learning styles, and their strengths and interests. Educators in the Rowan-Salisbury School System want to graduate self-directed, future-focused, life-long learners so that their students have successful experiences beyond K-12.

At the district level, strategies were developed to advance the Directional System goals. Personalized learning is an extension of work already underway in the district related to digital learning and 1:1 computer program; emphasis on Problem-based Learning (PBL) is a new districtwide strategy and will be built out through the project. The pillars of the Directional System, particularly the life goals area, speak to the emphasis on personalized learning. The district, in partnership with teachers, will create K-12 graduate profiles with experiences, skills and knowledge that students should master at each level; the guide will allow school teams to design learning environments that promote personalization to support the individual needs of every student. A blended learning environment to include digital tools, field experiences, and other resources will support learning preferences and motivate students to find their passions and achieve their life goals.

School level strategies differ from school to school; however, all schools are accountable for Directional System goals. The emphasis on fundamental standards in core subject areas and pedagogy of personalized learning will focus teaching in all classrooms across the district but in different ways based on school and classroom needs.

iv. Design is appropriate and successfully address the needs of target population

The development of the Directional System was deeply informed by multiple sources: a growing body of research on learning and best practices; deep engagement with stakeholders including students, educators, families, and community members with special attention given to voices that are often underrepresented; and examination of future trends to understand how demands and opportunities will be changing. This strategic design is the blueprint for the district to realize its vision. Through the flexibility afforded by the renewal district status and the strategic design, RSS will provide the county and state with graduates who bring strong academic and interpersonal skills to their unique life goals, and have the ability to adapt and to affect change in the world.

All elements of the project are grounded in research and effective practices in student-centered school systems (Wolfe, Steinberg, & Hoffman, 2013; Bonner, & Thomas 2017; Basu, & Barton, 2010) and school change management (Datnow, & Park, 2018; Donohoo, J. 2018). The district has an innovative school board and leadership team who are committed to doing the work needed to implement a student-centered competency-based learning environment and create a culture of change at all levels of the organization.

In partnership with our community stakeholders and educational partners, RSS examined teacher recruitment, development, evaluation and retention and identified comprehensive programs to address gaps and weaknesses. Reviews were conducted on systems, procedures and processes of Finance and Human Resources; recommendations were made based on the findings from those reviews. *Accelerate Rowan* has incorporated these recommendations in the development of the HCMS to improve processes for recruitment, placement, development, and retention. The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, NC State University worked with the district superintendent to construct an evaluation strategy that retained all of the required

legislative goals and included additional goals to enable RSS and evaluators to develop richer and more complex understanding of implementation and outcomes. The Friday Institute will serve as evaluators on this project and will complete more in-depth research into the impact and effectiveness of project activities on student outcomes.

RSS is certain that our focus on increased teacher and leader effectiveness in a student-centered system, personalized professional development, and opportunities for leadership development will strengthen our team of educators and *accelerate* the academic achievement of all students. *The development of a systemic school design strategy that is student-centered and strategically aligns with the goals and core values of the Directional System yet allows flexibility for schools to adapt to their local context, will build capacity for innovation that will become a model throughout the state.*

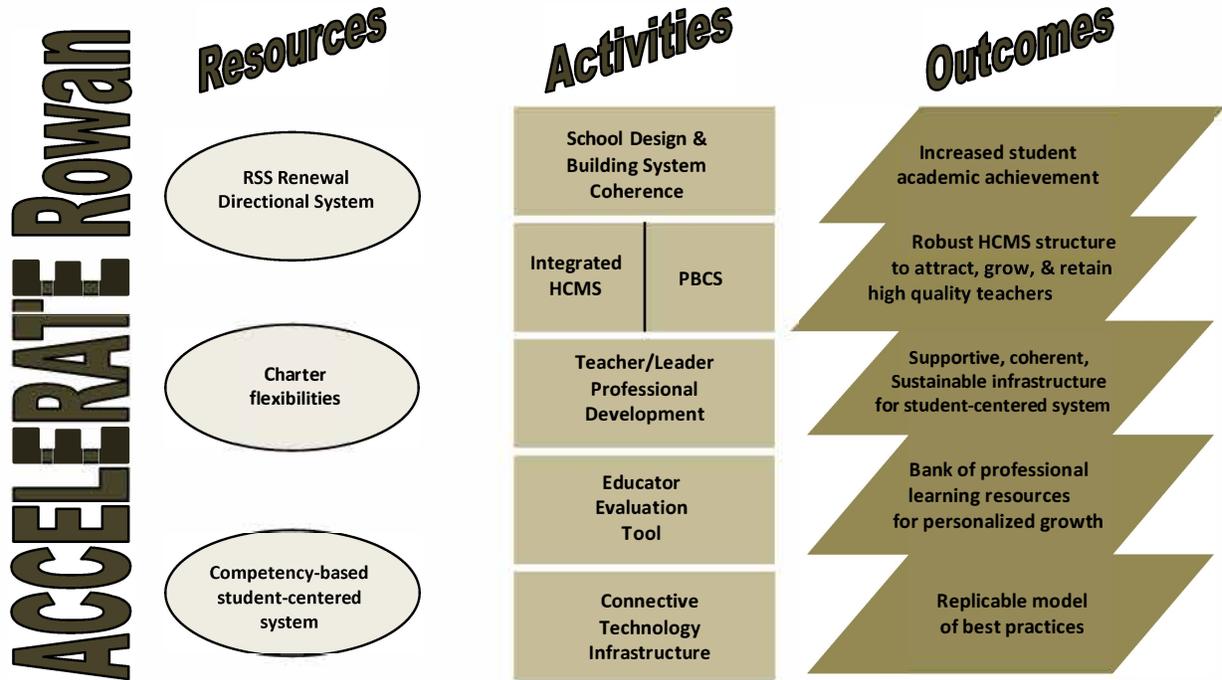
QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN

i. *Demonstrates a Rationale*

Rationale/Theory of Action: *Building the systems, policies and procedures aligned with the RSS Directional System and research-based best practices in effective school design, improving educator evaluation, and deepening and supporting professional development aligned to the district's strategic direction will result in improved instructional practice, teacher and school leader effectiveness, and student academic achievement.*

Through *Accelerate Rowan*, the district will develop a supportive, coherent, sustainable infrastructure for its transformation to a fully realized student-centered school system. Key elements of the project include: 1) Strategic management of school design principles to build system coherence; 2) Development of an integrated Human Capital Management System (HCMS); 3) Implementation of structured performance-based compensation; 4) Expansion of professional development for teachers and leaders; 5) Refinement of educator evaluation; and 6)

Integration of connective technology infrastructure. Please see Attachments for more detailed Logic Model.



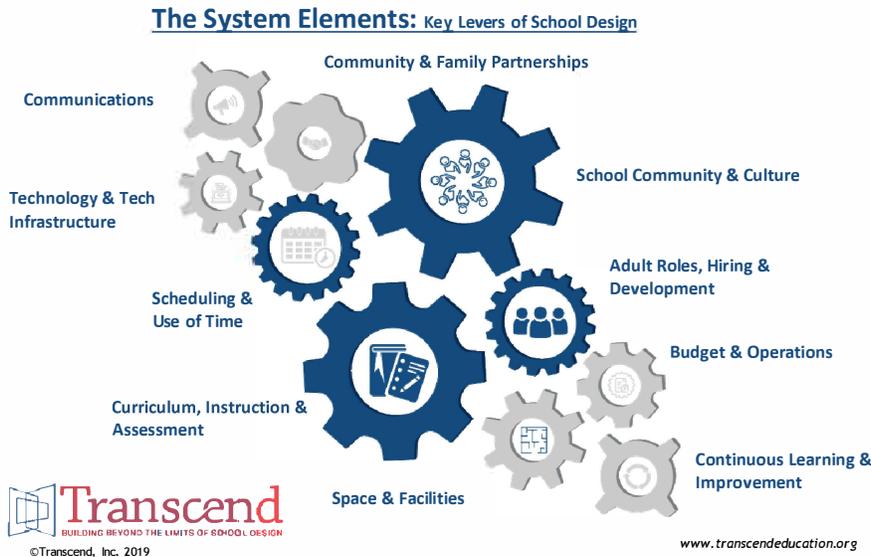
ELEMENT 1: SCHOOL DESIGN TO BUILD SYSTEM COHERENCE

With the backdrop of a newly articulated district-wide directional system, all of RSS schools have developed design teams and launched the process of creating, planning and implementing school renewal. Personalized learning is an extension of work that has been underway in the district related to digital learning and one-to-one computer programs. Each school has the flexibility to design strategies within their own local context within a competency-based system; however, all strategies must be aligned and accountable under the Directional System. RSS must ensure that *all* elements of the vision are internally coherent and support one another, each resource it adopts is aligned with the outcomes in the Directional System and fully integrated with the competency-based instructional approach. The district must consider the resources and structures it needs to ensure alignment and accountability with the Directional System across all schools while supporting school leaders and design teams in cultivating local conditions for

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innovation and change management. *Building a supportive and coherent district system allows unique personalized learning to occur at each school while maintaining a coherent system overall.*

Transcend Education will partner with RSS to help the design teams make the school designs



effective and aligned to the Directional System.

Transcend is a nonprofit organization that supports school leaders in developing, iterating, and scaling innovative learning models. In its work, Transcend

collaborates with practitioners, communities, and experts to surface the best and most current insights from research and practice. The insights are thus used to create actionable knowledge that helps school designers accelerate innovation in their own contexts. The design work with RSS will encompass a collaborative three-stage effort. Stage 1 and 2 activities will begin upon award in October – December 2020. Stage 3 will be in progress over years 1 and 2 of *Accelerate Rowan*.

Stage 1: Assessing. During this stage of the work, Transcend, in partnership with RSS, will be looking at the present state of the district’s schools. Transcend will map where each of the 34 schools are, and the district as a whole, in relation to the Directional System, looking at learner impact, the learner experience, school designs and their implementations, and local and district

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conditions. This phase is intended to be a brief but important period of time to understand and analyze how broadly and deeply the Directional System is embedded in the district and its individual schools. Three sets of data will be collected: 1) a broad swath of quantitative and qualitative data from the 34 schools; 2) district-level quantitative and qualitative data from the central office aimed at surfacing system factors that support and inhibit implementation of the Directional System; and 3) deep-dive exploration of a limited number of schools.

Based on the data gathered from this phase, Transcend will develop *a map of where the district and schools currently stand in relation to the Directional System, as well as highlight key leverage points and strategic redesign cohorts* to enable the district and schools to accelerate innovation. *Stage 2: Planning.* During this stage of the work, the Transcend team will develop the jointly constructed map into a project plan. The content of this plan is highly dependent on the results obtained in Stage 1 and what is prioritized through collaborative conversation. The following major workstreams may be expected in this stage. 1) *Effective School Designs:* To support design teams to make their school designs as effective and aligned to the Directional System as possible. 2) *Conducive Local Conditions:* To support school leaders / design teams in cultivating strong local conditions for innovation and change management. 3) *Rowan Salisbury School Design Library:* To codify and spread effective, Directional System-aligned school model components to be spread across the district. 4) *School Design Network:* To share and spread ideas, model components, R&D practices across the RSS network and also link it to Transcend's National Design Community. 5) *A Supportive and Coherent District System:* To support the district leadership in creating policies, systems, and change management processes that allow *unique innovation to occur at each school while maintaining a coherent system overall.*

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Deliverable: A project plan will be provided that defines the major workstreams and possible tasks, milestones, and partners.

Stage 3 Moving Forward. The specifics of this stage will depend heavily on outcomes in stages 1 and 2. During this stage, a variety of thought partners such as The Innovation Project (TIP) and model providers such as Lindsay Leads would support RSS in further developing and implementing the project plan. This stage would last a minimum of two years with a robust step-back at the end of each school year. Deliverable: School blueprints, district blueprint, school design network plan, communications assets, and Stage 4 plan.

The Innovation Project (TIP) is a collaborative working group of forward-thinking North Carolina public school district superintendents and their teams. TIP is now leading efforts of a group of its district members, in partnership with the North Carolina State Board of Education, to design and implement bold, scalable innovations to move from the COVID-19 crisis to transformation. The Innovation Project will collaborate with *Accelerate Rowan* to develop a Playbook that will include case studies, roadmaps, and implementation resources. TIP will coordinate a professional learning community based on this playbook as other districts work to adopt innovations pioneered in Rowan-Salisbury within their own unique local contexts. In this virtual era, this Playbook may be translated into a YouTube channel, flipbook, or professional learning webinars to further spread the word.

The implementation of Key Element 1 will provide the capacity to understand and strengthen local conditions for innovation, build strong and practical design products (library of model components, TIP Playbook) that enable effective implementation and accelerate progress through connection to resources across the country.

ELEMENT 2: DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Through *Accelerate Rowan*, the district will develop a transparent, centralized, strategic Human Capital Management System (HCMS) which will align the core competencies of the educator evaluation system to district priorities and key strategic decisions prioritizing recruitment, hiring, placement, compensation, and professional learning and growth. Advancing an integrated HCMS framework will provide districtwide coherence through a common, strategic framework as well as common language around the components of the system.

In Year 1, based on the findings from the process evaluations, RSS will adopt an integrated electronic system between finance and HR to strategically manage positions and data including clarifying roles and aligning HR and payroll processes. Professional development will be provided for staff on new processes and procedures.

To be strategic, the district needs to attract, hire, develop and retain the people with the skills, knowledge and expertise to provide personalized instruction in a competency-based, student-centered system. The district will align recruiting and hiring practices that focus on district core values and educator and leadership mindsets aligned to the culture, innovation and flexibility required for personalized learning in RSS schools.

According to North Carolina's State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, individuals who already have roots or ties in a community, particularly rural or low wealth areas, are more likely to remain in those communities after graduating from a teacher education program (p.33). To increase the pipeline of teachers, RSS will recruit and select high school students with an interest in education careers to pursue a credential and teach in RSS. The district will help them navigate the process with resources such as counseling, securing financial aid, mentoring, participation in virtual professional learning and in college promise courses offered at

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the Personalized Learning Lab School (see below) that will introduce potential candidates to careers in teacher education.

It is evident that recruitment strategies beyond the traditional pipelines already utilized need to be developed. RSS will collaborate with Catawba College, NC State, and other education partners to determine innovative methods to recruit a sufficient number of talented teachers (and ultimately) principals with a focus on recruiting minority populations more representative of the students they will serve. The district will also expand recruitment efforts in virtual formats such as Virtual Recruitment Fair and social media. Through the project, fully credentialed new hires who agree to teach in the highest need schools (CEP) will receive a scaled signing bonus (see page 23), fully actualized after completing four consecutive years in the district.

To increase the number of teachers prepared to teach in RSS high need schools, decrease teacher turnover and increase teacher effectiveness, *Accelerate Rowan* will implement a Personalized Learning Lab School over the three-year project period. The Personalized Learning Lab, developed in partnership with Catawba College, will provide new hires, candidates in a credential program, and other educators an opportunity to practice their skills in collaboration with a certified Master Teacher with experience and demonstrated effectiveness in a performance-based system.

In Year 1, a Personalized Learning Lab School Manager will be hired (grant funded) to coordinate the partnership between Catawba College, set up the systems and processes, recruit and develop compensation for veteran and high-quality teachers to teach in the lab school with expected implementation by September 2021. The Personalized Learning Lab School will be established at Koontz Elementary, one of the district's highest need schools.

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As part of the Catawba College Teacher Education Program, all candidates will participate in courses taught on site; the Personalized Learning Lab will be considered education lab research for students in the program at Catawba. The experiences and intensity of the courses offered at the lab site will increase as students move through the cohort model established through the partnership. By the last year of the program, students will spend 70% of their time at the lab site and the district will be able to offer early contracts during this time. The district will pay tuition (funded through the project) for pre-service teachers in exchange for a 5-year teaching commitment in RSS.

Participating Master Teachers will be paid a stipend (grant funded) and will be required to take courses from Catawba to qualify and receive the credentials for a research lab setting. Teacher Education Candidates participating in the cohort model will have the opportunity to apply for a fellowship program (district funded) that would offer a full scholarship and expanded professional learning opportunities.

Teacher candidates will participate in a year-long paid apprenticeship; candidates will be paid an hourly wage (funded through the project) to serve 29 hours a week at the lab school. They will serve with an identified Master Teacher as Teacher Associates and will be involved in co-teaching, teaching, and planning for classroom experiences. Candidates will also participate in all professional development experiences provided at the school where they are serving. This experience allows for the candidate to practice all aspects of the teaching experience.

The district is developing its own induction for all new teachers and teachers new to the district that will be focused on the mindset and pedagogy of student-centered learning that will be designed in years 1-3 of *Accelerate Rowan* and will be implemented in the 2023-24 school year. New teachers will continue to participate in a comprehensive, university-based induction

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program, The North Carolina New Teacher Support Program (NC NTSP), that provides a research-based curriculum and multiple services (instructional skills Institute, coaching, aligned professional development sessions) designed to increase teacher effectiveness, enhance skills, and reduce attrition among beginning teachers.

During senior year of high school, students can participate in college promise courses offered at the Personalized Learning Lab School by Catawba faculty that will introduce potential candidates to careers in teacher education. The year-long courses will count towards requirements for the teacher education program at Catawba. These courses will inspire and spark the interest of early learners to discover and explore opportunities in the field of teaching.

The implementation of strategies in Element 2 will create a sustainable infrastructure to collect data on recruitment and retention and determine the most effective strategies and needs across the district. The HCMS framework will provide a coherent set of policies and practices that work together to attract, develop, motivate and retain educators who have the competencies needed to achieve the goals of the district's Directional System.

ELEMENT 3: PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION SYSTEM (PBCS)

Key Element 3 focuses on recognizing and rewarding efforts to engage in learning to improve instructional practice and leadership in a competency-based system. RSS has a PBCS already in place, along with a stipend fund reflecting the extra contributions and commitments that educators make. Through *Accelerate Rowan*, the district will implement a scaled signing bonus for teachers to teach in the highest needs (CEP) schools: Overton, Dole, Koontz, Isenberg, Landis, North Rowan Elementary Schools; Knox and North Rowan Middle Schools; and Henderson Independent High School. To receive the full signing bonus the teacher must remain at the high need school for 4 years. PBC signing bonus is earned after completion of each year at

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the start of the following year (\$2,000 after completion year 2; \$3,000 after completion of year 3; and \$4,000 for completion of year 4).

Schools that meet established goals for interpersonal skills (required) **and** academic achievement goals in at least two, three or four out of four subjects: Math, Science, ELA, or Social Studies. Schools can earn up to \$30,000 in discretionary funds for the school by achieving 5 out of 5 goals (\$10,000 3/5; \$20,000 4/5). By tying the performance bonuses to rigorous, objective and state-aligned metrics, RSS rewards its educators for working *together* to improve instructional and professional practices to improve academic achievement for students.

Teachers and curriculum coaches will earn PBC to design lesson models, instructional content and resources for K-12 English Language Arts and math to support a cross section of the fundamental standards. The Directional System-aligned lesson models will be developed and adopted into the RSS School Design Library to be disseminated across the district and adapted to local contexts. The lessons will be available on the digital learning management system, developed through this project. This work will span all 3 years of the project to ensure vetted content for all fundamental standards.

ELEMENT 4: EXPANSION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The district embraces the belief that teachers and school leaders can lead and serve as agents for positive change within RSS schools by taking greater responsibility for developing themselves as professionals and for facilitating the development of their peers. By deepening and differentiating adult learning opportunities, providing relevant and consistent professional development that is aligned to personal growth needs, and focusing directly on instruction through coaching and teacher reflection, academic achievement will grow exponentially.

Research finds that data-driven professional development activities correlate with an increase in teacher efficacy and expectations for at-risk learners (Harris, D., & Sass, T., 2011; Garet, et al.,

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2016). The district is dedicated to providing a professional development system that is both guided by data and evaluation and gives educators direction, opportunity and resources for improvement. *Accelerate Rowan* will provide all educators with opportunities to choose personalized professional development based on needs identified in the evaluation process, learning goals, and interests. All professional development offerings are aligned with the district's Directional System and support increased effectiveness of educators in a competency-based system.

In order to personalize student learning effectively and authentically, teachers require a personalized approach to their professional learning that create an environment of risk-taking and ongoing reflection. RSS has created a Virtual Professional Development Bank of professional Learning that is personalized based on interest and professional learning goals. The project will expand virtual professional learning opportunities on implementing fundamental standards in the competency-based model, developing growth mindsets in personalized learning and webinars presented by experts, RSS master teachers, and university partners in the area of teaching and learning in personalized learning environments.

Lead Design Teachers and Leaders will participate in *Go and See* professional development to visit established schools that have successfully implemented competency-based learning or problem-based learning (PBL). Funds will also be allocated for principals, assistant principals in the aspiring administrator's program, and new teachers to visit established schools who have implemented innovative school design models, competency-based learning or PBL.

Training, coaching and support will be provided for teachers and leaders in implementing learner-centered school structures that are supportive of the principle that all learners learn in different ways and different time frames. Their work will include: synthesizing, analyzing, and

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reporting on the data disaggregated for specific student groups participating in learner-centered structures; highlighting the specific impact on the attitudes, habits of mind, and successful learning of these disaggregated groups; developing and sharing a database of these learner-centered school structures with the greater educational community.

The district will partner with Empower Learning to implement a digital learning management system (LMS), a comprehensive data system that links educators with student learning outcomes and gives students access to meaningful data to help them track their progress and establish personalized mastery learning plans. The system allows educators to make real-time data-driven decisions to improve learning and students to manage their learning anytime, anywhere. Empower Learning will provide professional development and coaching (virtual and on-site) on the Empower LMS and customized implementation. Professional development will be offered on competency-based system implementation, student agency, and using proficiency scales in the classroom. Empower will work with the district (virtually or on-site) to develop a comprehensive 3-5 year technology integration and professional development plan for phased implementation and support.

System leaders are often an underutilized lever of broad-scale change; growing their capacity to foster conditions of innovation will accelerate the creation and spread of student-centered environments. The RSS Superintendent, Dr. Lynn Moody, will participate in the first cohort in the development of The Learner-Centered Leadership Lab (LCLL) in partnership with Transcend Education, Lindsay Unified School District and Edgecomb County Public Schools (Years 1 and 2). The pilot will be designed collaboratively and implemented as a part of the CORE Lindsay (Cultivating Opportunities in the Redesign of Equity in Education) project. Professional learning will focus on deep adaptive future-focused leadership practices and the development of five

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systems conditions – clarity, conviction, coalition, culture of innovation and capacity. The LCLL model will develop cohorts of leaders who want to take on more responsibility in the growth and sustainability of student-centered models within their systems. The district will pilot the model curriculum and lab experience (Years 2 and 3) at its schools to grow the capacity of leaders to accelerate and sustain student-centered learning environments. Evidence of growth and impact on student achievement will provide a leadership model to scale in the state and in other innovative districts across the country.

ELEMENT 5: REFINE EDUCATOR EVALUATION

The current educator evaluation system is not a significant driving force for constructive feedback to improve instructional practice and student achievement. RSS is currently working to develop a formative evaluation instrument that is aligned with the Directional System, key adult competencies in student-centered learning, the recruitment process, and professional growth and learning. Building on this work, the district will develop: 1) clearly defined processes and procedures for conducting fair and accurate evaluation; 2) a set of rubrics that indicate the level of performance of each teacher and leaders aligned with the district’s instructional vision; and 3) a digital platform to link teachers and leaders to evaluation and support system including professional development. The RSS teacher evaluation and support system will focus on providing continuous timely and formative feedback to educators so they can improve their practice (Darling-Hammond & Wei, 2009). The principal evaluation system will support principals in their professional development and help them improve as instructional leaders.

To develop clearly defined processes and procedures, a systems evaluator will assess our current system for teacher and principal evaluation to generate a well-defined protocol to conduct evaluations across the system. To build interrater reliability in rating the evaluations across all schools, administrators must be able to calibrate scores accurately and utilize the

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results to provide meaningful feedback and support. The evaluator will develop a course for all leaders involved in the district evaluation process. District evaluators will be required to complete and pass the course to ensure accuracy in calibration of scores.

Rubrics will be developed for each standard (NC Professional Teaching Standards and NC School Executive Performance Standards) in the current evaluation tools to objectively measure achievement of professional standards. The evaluation tool will incorporate the criteria and rubrics for instructional effectiveness in a personalized learning system currently being developed. Walk-through tools aligned to the evaluation model will be developed.

The RSS evaluation tool will be refined in Year 2 and piloted in Year 3 of the project. Teachers and school leaders will be informed about the new evaluation tool, designed as a formative growth plan, the criteria to determine effectiveness, and the process for conducting the evaluations. The district will solicit feedback at the end of the pilot period from all stakeholders regarding the evaluation protocols and the quality of feedback and support provided through the process. The tool will be refined based on input from educators and will be implemented districtwide in Year 3 of the project.

ELEMENT 6: INTEGRATION OF CONNECTIVE TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

RSS has developed a virtual culture that includes 1:1 device K-12, community wi-fi access, mobile device management plan, online learning resources, and professional development. These initiatives primed the district to make the shift to personalized learning and primed everyone in the system for a new districtwide culture of innovation. Systems and structures to support competency-based learning require access to accurate, timely student-level data. To recruit, develop and retain qualified educators to provide effective instruction in a competency-based learning environment, systems and structures need to be integrated and centralized for accurate, timely data on adults in the system. To evaluate performance, reward achievement, incentivize

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excellent educators, provide opportunities for meaningful professional growth, accurate data must be collected and housed in a system that is easily accessible.

Accelerate Rowan will implement the *Empower* platform to support competency-based instruction over the project period. The digital platform will connect teachers to students and students to teachers, content standards, learning resources, and digital assessments. *Empower* also provides students with a learning community that shares what each learner is working on to create better peer-to-peer connections. Empower has developed an interactive interface for teachers and leaders that will link to evaluation, feedback, support, resources, and personalized professional development. The educator platform has a similar dashboard as the student platform and, as teachers and students build capacity to use the system, it will be a smoother transition to use the same aligned interface to support educators as part of the HCMS.

Investment in a connective technology infrastructure will streamline access to key educator data that currently exists only in silos or is missing or inaccessible. Through *Accelerate Rowan*, the district will purchase and implement integrated electronic systems connecting the processes and workflow in Finance and in Human Resources to provide accurate, timely and transparent data to track positions, inform hiring, and compensation. This technology will form the foundation for the development of a fully integrated HCMS over the project period. The district will work with Allovue (process evaluators) to implement the recommendations from the systems review that include technology as well as professional development for finance and HR staff on the technology, tools, processes, procedures and workflow.

ii. Methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and assessment of progress

The *Accelerate Rowan* evaluation is based on a continuous improvement model. Data regarding project effectiveness is collected throughout the life of the project and analyzed to inform modifications leading to continuous improvement. Data collection activities will focus on

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data to measure both effectiveness of implementation of the strategies, activities described in the project design and formal outcomes, and will involve all persons served by the program.

Quantitative data collected for the evaluation will include data for the 8 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Performance measures and project goals and objectives. Data collection will include: educators earning performance-based compensation with TSL funds and non-TSL funds; teacher retention rate; data collected through the RSS HCMS including recruitment, hiring, placement retention, dismissal, professional learning, tenure, and promotion; and teacher and principal evaluation ratings. Data will be analyzed using appropriate statistical analysis techniques, including the use of descriptive statistics and more advanced statistical techniques, as appropriate. Qualitative data collected to document our effectiveness will include annual stakeholder focus groups, interviews, and observation. Project goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Increase student achievement. *Objective 1e1:* By June 2025, and annually thereafter, Rowan students will master grade-level RSS fundamental standards in reading and mathematics. *Objective 1e2:* By June 2024, and annually thereafter, all RSS graduates will be enrolled, enlisted or employed. *Objective 1.3:* By June of 2024, and annually thereafter, RSS will demonstrate student overall growth. **Goal 2: Increase efficiency in HCMS to attract, grow, and retain high quality educators.** *Objective 2e1:* By June 2022, RSS will implement new hiring processes and begin to incrementally decrease the time it takes to process a request to hire to not more than two weeks. *Objective 2.2:* By 2026, there will be an increase in the retention of effective staff as identified through Panorama Survey items and staff turnover. **Goal 3: Build a supportive, coherent and sustainable infrastructure for student-centered learning.** *Objective 3.e1:* By August 2021, RSS will have implemented a new technology infrastructure to support competency-based learning, with full implementation by the year 2024. *Objective 3.2:* By

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August 2022, and each year thereafter, RSS teachers and leaders will design and contribute to a library of model school design model components, including but not limited to PBL, competency-based learning, fundamental standard lessons to be shared across schools. **Goal 4: Build a bank of professional learning resources for personalized professional growth and model best practices.** Objective 5.1: By August 2022 and each year thereafter, RSS will contribute to a bank of professional learning resources aligned to the district directional system for staff to utilize for professional learning. Objective 5.2: By June 2023, all teachers and leaders will participate in professional learning from the RSS learning library each year.

Accelerate Rowan will also collect data to meet the reporting requirements outlined in the enacting (Renewal) legislation (student absences and outcomes based on state assessment, teacher and school administrator turnover, vacancies and use of long-term substitutes for these vacancies) as well as specific Renewal System goals and outcomes. An evaluation strategy will be developed by the external evaluator that retains all of the required legislative goals and also integrates additional goals to enable RSS and evaluators to arrive at a richer and more complete understanding of the implementation and outcomes of the initiative. The evaluation will encompass student outcomes aligned with the mission, vision and Directional system, while also including evaluation components that focus on the use of renewal flexibility, fidelity of implementation and identification of effective renewal strategies. Final evaluation questions will be determined by the evaluation team upon funding; however, several preliminary evaluation questions that address impact and implementation have been developed. **Impact:** 1) To what degree has the Renewal System model improved student outcomes aligned with the RSS Directional System including: mastery of fundamental standards, development of unique life goals, growth in interpersonal skills, and engagement in school. 2) To what degree has the RSS

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Renewal System model created conditions that attract and retain high-quality staffing?

Implementation: 3) In what ways and to what extent is the use of renewal flexibility (i.e., budget, personnel, calendar) supporting teaching and learning reforms? 4) What factors supporting or impending implementation of planned renewal system strategies do school and the district encounter? 5) What promising strategies, particularly those requiring or greatly facilitated by renewal flexibility, show potential for being scaled with RSS and across North Carolina?

Thoroughly addressing these questions will require a mixed-methods approach that incorporates quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources. Specifically, the evaluation development team (Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina State University) recommends a mixed-method triangulation design, in which one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type. This design is especially suited to evaluations in which a single data set is not sufficient, different questions need to be answered, and each type of question requires different types of data. By using this design, the evaluation can “increase the interpretability, meaningfulness and validity of the constructs and inquiry results by both capitalizing on inherent method strengths and counteracting inherent biases in methods or other sources” (David & Sutton, 2011).

The Friday Institute has a history of collaboration with the district and will assist RSS in conducting scientific research studies on what works in improving student achievement through professional learning and moving forward with a larger, data-driven human capital management framework. Specifically, the Friday Institute Research and Evaluation (FIRE) Team will support RSS by designing a new evaluation system inclusive of student growth and performance measures. The team will create rubrics and reporting systems to assess and communicate student growth and performance; and also design and align teacher and principal evaluations to the

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competency-based system, district core values and the district accountability model.

The evaluation team will also be responsible for the development of annual performance reports due at the end of each project year. These detailed reports will include summaries of implementation findings, as well as progress towards *Accelerate Rowan* and RSS Directional System outcomes. Specifically, these reports will include data for the 8 GPRA measures; feedback on the extent to which the program is impacting teacher working conditions; and student performance on fundamental standards, including student outcomes not associated with test scores (i.e., unique life goals, interpersonal skills, and student engagement). Additionally, internal reports will provide findings related to school- and district-level implementation, including recommendations for improvement as suggested by evaluation findings and as appropriate.

In service to producing these internal reports, and to providing RSS with timely evaluation data for guiding continuous improvement efforts, preliminary findings will also be shared with the superintendent and leadership teams through less formal means (e.g. memoranda, meetings, online survey reports) as data are collected and analyzed during the year. The RSS Superintendent should determine whether and to what extent to include information from annual reports in any required reports to the U.S. Department of Education, North Carolina General Assembly, State Board of Education, or other education stakeholders. Budget permitting, RSS may request that the evaluator prepare internal reports using additional data products meant for external audiences such as fact sheets, infographics, report briefs, etc.

The FIRE Team is uniquely qualified to conduct a rigorous, comprehensive, and cost-effective evaluation for *Accelerate Rowan*. Since 2009, the FIRE team has effectively carried out \$15,000,000 in research and evaluation grants and contracts, with past funders including local

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foundations (e.g., Golden LEAF, Walton Family, Belk), state government (e.g., NC Department of Public Instruction), and national agencies (e.g., National Science Foundation and Institute of Education Sciences). The FIRE Team conducts evidence-based studies with a commitment to mixed research methods that employ the most up-to-date tools and techniques. A key component of the FIRE Team’s approach to research and evaluation is its strong network of relationships with local, state, and national education leaders, stakeholders, and policymakers.

QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN

i. Project will achieve objectives on time and within budget

Rowan Salisbury Schools is certain that the qualifications and time commitments of key project staff are appropriate and adequate to achieve project objectives on time and within budget. The time and expertise contributed to the project through partner agencies, the community, and school and district staff will further support the implementation and achievement of project objectives. The Program Manager will coordinate all project activities and facilitate the Core Management Team (CMT) which will meet weekly to monitor progress and revise/refine project activities. Assistant Superintendents and Chief Human Resources Officer (hired through the project) will be a part of the CMT and lead activities in specific components of the project as described in the following pages and illustrated in the management graphic in attachments.

The Rowan-Salisbury Superintendent, Dr. Lynn Moody, will provide supervision and guidance (in-kind match) for the project. Dr. Moody is an accomplished innovative leader in transforming education and one of the architects of RSS innovative school transformation. Through Dr. Moody’s leadership, NC legislators chose the Rowan-Salisbury Schools to become the first and only district in NC to be designated as a Renewal School System during the summer of 2018. With this historical designation, the district is granted charter-like flexibilities in the areas of Curriculum, Finance, Personnel, and Calendar. Dr. Moody and her team continue to

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bring national and state attention to the innovative practices that are receiving astonishing results for student success. The district was ranked in the top 10 nationally for pioneering technology uses; received the national digital curriculum strategy award and the national digital content & curriculum achievement award. In addition, Discovery Education presented Dr. Moody with the ‘Innovation in Education’ award. Bio Attached.

Eisa M. Cox, Ed.D. is the RSS Executive Director of Partnerships. Dr. Cox holds a Masters of School Administration, Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations, an Education Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership, and a Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership. She will serve as the Project Manager (PM). She will be responsible for supervision of all staff, coordination of all components of the program, organization of the work of external consultants, management of the grant budget and facilitation of the project implementation and evaluation teams. Dr. Cox will be responsible for coordinating all components of the project in partnership with the *Accelerate Rowan* CMT in implementing all programs related to the grant, as well as collaborating with the Superintendent and Human Resources Department to ensure that project components are integrated into the RSS HCMS. Resume Attached.

Carol M. Herndon is the Chief Financial Officer at RSS, responsible for executive and strategic leadership of the Finance, Human Resources and Technology Departments. Ms. Herndon is an accomplished executive leader with over 20 years of experience managing and leading large, complex organizations. She will be responsible for contract and implementation of PBCS and aligned HCMS. As Chief Human Resources Officer, she will lead recruitment, hiring, and development, implementation of processes and procedures and data reporting for HCMS, and development of the teacher and principal evaluation. Ms. Herndon will provide supervision

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for the Chief Human Resources Officer who will oversee the Personalized Learning Lab School Project Manager and facilitate the Catawba Partnership and teacher recruiting. Resume attached.

Kelly Withers, Ed.D. is the Rowan-Salisbury Associate Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Withers has a Masters in School Administration, Educational Specialist Degree and Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations. As Associate Superintendent, she is responsible for the hiring, training, support, and evaluation of all RSS principals and is charged with supporting all schools in the implementation of the Directional System. Dr. Withers will provide leadership for *Accelerate Rowan* in the areas of effective school design, professional development for school and district leaders, and accountability reporting. Resume attached.

Andrew J. Smith, Ed.D is the current Assistant Superintendent of Transformation. Dr. Smith also served as the RSS Director of Innovation. He holds a Master of Education, Graduate Certificate in Administration and Supervision and Doctorate of Education from Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Smith provides leadership and supervision for the staff of the Offices of Strategy, Marketing, and Communication and assists the superintendent in developing, communicating, executing and sustaining district strategic initiatives. With *Accelerate Rowan*, he will be responsible for School Design Network, Supportive and Coherent District Systems, and facilitation of collaboration with Transcend, The Friday Institute, and The Innovation Project. Resume attached.

April Kuhn, Esq., Assistant Superintendent of Advancement, supervises and leads the departments of Student Services, Counseling, Federal Programs, Exceptional Children and Academically Gifted Program. Dr. Kuhn is an attorney and servant leader in the field of education with over 10 years of experience. Equity leadership, justice and inclusive practices are

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core components in her work. She will provide leadership in Conducive Local Conditions, ensuring equitable systems and processes. Resume Attached.

Tina Mashburn serves as the Assistant Superintendent of Professional Development and Team. Ms. Mashburn has extensive experience in education, serving as teacher, administrator and Executive Director of Secondary Education. She will be in charge of the School Design Library and provide oversight of professional development, teacher induction and professional development reporting. Resume Attached.

Jason Gardner, Ed.D, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, is responsible for leadership at the district level in the development, coordination and implementation of curriculum and instruction. Dr. Gardner holds a Master/School Administration, Educational Specialist/Education Leadership and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. In *Accelerate Rowan*, he will provide leadership in the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and development of mini-measures, oversight of curriculum coaches and curriculum reporting. Resume Attached.

A Chief Human Resources Officer (HRO) will be hired through the project to provide strategic, professional, consultative, and supervisory work in staffing, planning, management, operation, compliance and budgeting in human service programs. The HRO will oversee the Personalized Learning Lab School Project. Job Description Attached.

The chart on the following page identifies project tasks by element and timelines.

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	PROJECT TASKS	MILESTONE YEAR				
		1	2	3	4	5
Grant Management	Finalize project budget with key stakeholders	X				
	Finalize specific project metrics	X				
	Post and hire Chief Human Resources Officer	X				
	Convene and schedule Core Management Team	X				
	Contract and coordinate with key project partners	X				
	Develop plan to conduct research on effectiveness of activities	X				
School Design	Develop timeline for school design assessment/plan(Stage 1 & 2))	X	X			
	School Design Network development	X	X	X		
	Create Playbook of case studies/best practices (TIP)	X	X	X	X	X
HCMS/PBSC	Contract to build and align HCMS foundation structures HR/Finance	X				
	Purchase electronic system to connect processes	X				
	Clarify roles and align HR and payroll processes	X				
	Document procedures/workflow/digitize forms and approval process	X				
	Training on new HCMS procedures	X				
	Structure performance-based compensation policy/procedure	X				
Recruitment & Retention	Create multi-channel communication campaign for recruitment	X				
	Align recruiting and hiring practices across district	X				
	Conduct gap analysis to determine teacher supports	X				
	Hire Personalized Lab School Manager	X				
	Develop/implement Personalized Lab School at Koontz Elementary		X	X	X	X
	Recruit master teacher to teach and mentor pre-service teachers	X	X			
	Develop paid apprenticeship structure	X				
	Provide professional development (PD) supports	X	X	X	X	X
	Develop RSS induction program	X	X	X		
Professional Development	Professional learning opportunities/aligned with strategic goals	X	X	X	X	X
	Expand Virtual PD Bank fundamental standards/growth mindsets, etc.	X	X	X	X	X
	Develop/implement Go and See opportunities	X	X	X	X	X
	Purchase/implement/training for learning management system	X	X	X	X	X
	PD/use of data in competency-based system/instruction	X	X	X	X	X
Educator Evaluation	Assessment of current teacher/principal evaluation system	X				
	Develop rubrics professional standards/criteria for personalized learning		X			
	Provide PD for principals to conduct evaluations	X	X			
	Pilot evaluation tool/implement based on feedback		X	X		

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

i. Likelihood project will result in system change or improvement

Accelerate Rowan is comprehensive effort to improve educational outcomes for students through a vision and framework that redesigns the way instruction is delivered in all RSS schools. All stakeholders were involved in the development of the vision and the strategic design, the Directional System, the blueprint for the RSS competency-based model. The shared vision and commitment to personalized master learning in a competency-based model, as



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described in the strategic design, is integrated into the culture of the schools and community, increasing the likelihood that the goals of the project will be sustained to demonstrate improvement.

The Directional System is the map for change; however, there are many paths to take to arrive at the destination – improved outcomes for students. Schools have flexibility to modify specific aspects based on local needs. The inherent tension in this model is the need to ensure fidelity to the core principles of the strategic design. The project will address this flexibility by participating in a research based, effective school design process aligning all system elements with the Directional System accountability model.

Sustainability of system change is achieved when best practices are made into systemic processes and procedures that are applied with fidelity and consistency throughout the organization. RSS has committed significant time and resources building the infrastructure that supports change over the long term. Leadership teams and teachers worked (and will continue to collaborate) with experts in the field of education, educational transformation, and student-centered systems as part of the RSS innovation. The project’s continuous improvement process and consistent focus ensures that the organizational structures adapt to meet the need of students, teachers, leaders, and administrators.

ii. Local capacity to provide/ improve/ expand serves that address the needs

Accelerate Rowan is designed to accelerate system-wide implementation of an equitable, student-centered school system so that *all* (100%) students have an effective teacher and every school has effective leadership to foster student success. With the flexibilities afforded through Renewal status and a strategic design (Directional System) that provides a blueprint for innovation based on equity, core values, research and accountability, the district has reimagined

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the use of time, space, technology, and the roles of students and educators in a competency-based, student-centered school system.

Accelerate Rowan drives results for students that incorporate: 1) an equity approach to flexible learning environments including support for access to virtual learning and professional development; 2) research-based strategies in school design elements aligned to Directional System goals to create coherence in the shift from a school-centered to learner-centered environment; 3) a focus on mastery-based and problem-based learning to increase engagement for students at all levels; and 4) a focus on the whole-child – interpersonal skills, unique life goals – to graduate self-directed, future-focused, life-long learners.

Accelerate Rowan propels solutions for educators that feature: 1) strategies to improve personal and professional growth; 2) professional development in a variety of formats to improve instructional practices in a competency-based system; 3) incentives for demonstrating improvement in educational outcomes; 4) opportunities for leadership development; 5) a resource library of instructional resources, lessons, and best practices.

iii. Resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant

The district will contribute 5.5 million dollars in match funding annually, and has a commitment of slightly over two million dollars from project partners annually, demonstrating a significant commitment to the components of *Accelerate Rowan*. In addition, the district is dedicated to sustaining the systemic components of the project in support the district's Directional System to build the capacity of the district educators to design and implement a student-centered learning environment. Funds from *Accelerate Rowan* will permit the district to accelerate the building of a sustainable infrastructure (HCMS, PBC, school design, LMS) that can be maintained through district funding. The resources developed through the project (PBL, the School Design Library, Playbook, Virtual professional development, School Design Model)

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can be replicated and scaled to other districts. The Personalized Learning Lab School and Learner-Centered Leadership Lab will be sustained through district resources and contribute to knowledge and skills of educators and improved student outcomes well into the future. The benefit of the investment in professional learning and implementation of innovative best practices to recruit and retain highly qualified educators cannot be quantified as it will last as long as our teachers and leaders remain in schools and classrooms.

The Rowan Salisbury community has had a long history of collaboration to meet the needs of students and families. The district has had the opportunity to work closely with state legislators (see Letters of Support from Representative Harry Warren, Senator Carl Ford) and the State Board of Education (Eric Davis, Chair) who are passionate about advancing opportunities for NC children. The RSS leadership team continues to bring national and state attention to the innovative practices that are receiving astonishing results for student success. The teachers and principals have been involved in the design of the project and are committed to working together to create a student-centered learning environment. *Accelerate Rowan* also has a broad base of support from community members, university partners, and local and regional foundations (see Letters of Support). The district will continue to develop new partnerships and pursue other local, state and federal funding sources to sustain project activities beyond the federal funding period.

Accelerate Rowan is designed to build a sustainable infrastructure supported by processes and procedures aligned to the district strategic direction and renewal system goals. By investing in the development of the HCMS, RSS is building a foundation that fosters capacity in personnel, aligns workflow and embodies a framework that can be sustained with internal staffing oversight and removal of redundant software.

Rowan-Salisbury Schools
TSL Project Narrative

Following year five of the project, the lab school project manager would be absorbed into the normal allotment for the lab schools as would our paid student apprenticeships. It is a goal of this project to decrease the teacher turnover rate for the district and therefore decrease the need for teacher signing bonuses. By year six, we expect to not need signing bonuses to attract teachers into our schools. Between increasing student growth and educator satisfaction, our schools will become more stable and more attractive to incoming teachers and principals. Additionally, our lab schools would become the primary pipeline to fill new vacancies, eliminating the future need for signing bonuses.

Investing in our teachers to build resources for problem-based learning, competency based learning, and other model practices will be accelerated through grant funding. Once those resources are built, it will not be necessary to invest additional dollars, outside of traditional funds. Professional development invested into Go and See best practices is also front-loaded into this grant. With decreasing our teacher turnover and building a strong culture of professional virtual learning, the district plans to repurpose our existing professional development Go and See funds to invest in new teachers to our district. Further, through partnerships with TIP and Transcend, the district can utilize funds from other districts visiting our schools for further professional development.

Once Empower is created and built out, RSS will be able to repurpose the funds used for the existing LMS. Focusing on alignment and efficiency across schools, will eliminate redundant software purchases.

Please see Post-Funding Budget Table in Attachments.