

# The Bridge Project:

## Statewide Supports for Future Illinois Principals of Color

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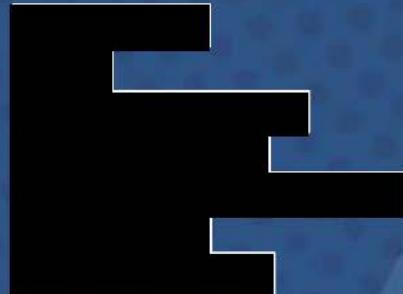
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Supporting Effective Educator  
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(SEED)



# The Bridge Project: Statewide Supports for Future Illinois Principals of Color

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# SECTION A: PROJECT DESIGN

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## I. Exceptional Approach to the Priorities Established for the Competition

*The Bridge Project*, under the leadership of WestEd and the Illinois Lead Hubs,<sup>1</sup> supplies more, and more diverse, future school principals to fill 400 hard-to-staff school<sup>2</sup> positions by:

- Building aspiring principal leadership experiences, skills and career supports through a paid, post-certification instructional leadership residency focused on improving social conditions in high-need schools for aspiring leaders to create inclusive, supportive, equitable, unbiased and identity-safe learning environments for students;
- New principal induction support in the first two years of work, as a principal;
- Eliminating systemic barriers that aspiring principals of color and women experience through principal pipeline system improvement.

The Bridge Project is a two-year intervention specifically designed to address a crucial stage of school leader development: Post-certification and induction support for novice principals. The stage occurs at the end of principal preparation program engagement and before the principalship, a period called the “gap years” which is a pre-service period<sup>3</sup> when certified administrators take assistant principal or teacher-leader positions for up to five years. In Illinois, approximately 43,000 educators have an administrative certification and hold teacher-leader or

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<sup>1</sup> WestEd is a national nonprofit educational research and service organization. Illinois Lead Hubs is a network of Illinois Regional Offices of Education, which are intermediary organizations that partner together to support principal preparation and professional learning improvement.

<sup>2</sup> Pre-pandemic statistics indicate Illinois has 400 principal vacancies per year. A study by the Illinois Principals’ Association (2021) indicates 46 percent of Illinois principals are now considering leaving the profession, an increase in anticipated vacancies of 25 percent.

<sup>3</sup> “Pre-service” typically refers to the period when an educator is in a preparation program. However, principals typical career paths include preparation and several “gap years.” When we use the term “pre-service,” we mean the period prior to the principalship.

assistant principal positions, yet the state's average 400 open principal positions are hard-to-staff. If successful, The Bridge Project provides a replicable and sustainable model for post-certification support of aspiring principals.

The Bridge Project addresses ***Absolute Priority #2*** of the SEED Program, and ***Competitive Preference Priorities #1, #2, and #3***. The Bridge Project uses evidence-based strategies from a study on leadership residency and induction that meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Moderate Evidence Standards, as defined in the Federal Register.<sup>4</sup> The project engages 50 aspiring principals of color and women teacher-leaders and assistant principals in their current schools, which serve approximately 17,100 students (approximately 60% qualify as high-need), and 1,750 teachers.<sup>5</sup> All schools are located in six Illinois regions of the state, which have 156 educators of color and women who hold an administrative certification but are not currently principals (and are, therefore, candidates for The Bridge Project).<sup>6</sup>

The Bridge Project will directly impact high-need students in elementary, middle and high schools because ***school leadership matters for student academic achievement and equity*** and research tells us that principals influence more students per year than classroom teachers.<sup>7</sup>

Correlational studies indicate effective principals account for between .25 and .33 of school-level

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<sup>4</sup> Gates, Hamilton, Martorell, Burkhauser, Heaton, Pierson, Baird, Vuollo, Li, Lavery, Harvey & Gu, 2014

<sup>5</sup> The program will work with 50 aspiring principals, who have earned a Illinois Type 75 administrative certificate but are currently assistant principals or teachers. To determine service levels, we multiplied the 50 aspiring principals by 522, the average number of students per school within *The Bridge Project* catchment area, to determine that the program will serve 26,100 students. According to state statistics, 60 percent of students in local education agencies within the catchment are considered high-need and/or minority students. We also multiplied the 50 aspiring principals by 32, the average number of teachers per school within *The Bridge Project* catchment area, to determine that the program can influence 1,600 classroom teachers. 182,225 students are enrolled in 349 high-need schools outside of Chicago, from which we will recruit the aspiring principals.

<sup>6</sup> Goshen Consulting collected certificate and demographic information on Illinois educators in 2020 for Illinois Lead Hubs in preparation for this proposal.

<sup>7</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2010; Tshannen-Moran, 2004

variation on student test scores,<sup>8</sup> and successive studies indicate principal influence is stronger in high-need schools.<sup>9</sup> Principals' actions also influence student equity, as indicated by student disciplinary referrals,<sup>10</sup> student grade differences, and/or student access to appropriate academic services.<sup>11</sup> Unlike teachers, principals' work focuses on *school-level systems*, which means that their practice influences all students and classroom teachers within schools.<sup>12</sup> If Illinois can increase the number of effective principals in schools, then students and teachers benefit.

The Bridge Project instills leadership practices that matter for current and future principals. Research tells us that ***what principals do (principal practice) matters to student achievement and equity.*** Comparative studies between demographically-similar principals in similar schools show differences in student performance and equity, indicating that leadership practice makes a difference.<sup>13</sup> Correlational studies point to key leadership practices: (a) focusing on achieving equity, (b) instructionally-focused teacher interactions, (c) facilitation of collaborative, continuous improvement processes, (d) establishment of safe, inclusive learning environments, and I strategic personnel management as associated with improved student achievement and equity, as measured by mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) achievement test scores.<sup>14</sup> The Bridge Project supports strong leadership practices through professional learning, coaching and residency.

Research indicates ***principal practice matters for teachers' instruction and retention.***

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<sup>8</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021; Clifford, Sherratt & Fiplaza, 2015; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Dou, Devos & Valcke, 2016; Loeb, Kalogrides & Beteille, 2012; Branch, Hanusek & Rivkin, 2009; Chiang, Liscomb & Gill, 2016

<sup>9</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021; Loeb, Kalogrides & Beteille, 2012; Branch, Hanusek & Rivkin, 2009; Sebastian, Allensworth, Wiedermann, Hochbein & Cunningham, 2018

<sup>10</sup> Bartanen, 2020

<sup>11</sup> Sorensen, Bushway & Gifford, 2020

<sup>12</sup> Clifford, Sherratt & Fipaza, 2015; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2004

<sup>13</sup> Sebastian, Allensworth, Wiedermann, Hochbein & Cunningham, 2018; Grissom & Loeb, 2011

<sup>14</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021

Research studies indicate that principals influence who teaches in classrooms: Correlational research shows an association between principal hiring practices and new teacher race/ethnicity.<sup>15</sup> Teachers' attribute their abilities to use culturally-responsive and inclusive instructional practices to principals' instructional leaders.<sup>16</sup> Research also indicates that principals are the strongest educational factor in teachers' decisions to join or leave schools.<sup>17</sup> Finally, research studies show positive correlation between principals' race/ethnicity and teachers' race/ethnicity: Principals tend to attract teachers of the same race/ethnicity and teachers of the same race/ethnicity leave schools when principals of the same race/ethnicity leave.<sup>18</sup>

Research suggests that ***who leads schools matters to students and families***, in addition to what principals do. A growing body of research suggests that a more diverse principal population may benefit students' achievement. Principal race/ethnicity has been correlated with stronger student achievement, higher expectations for students of color, and school attendance in successive studies, though few correlational studies at large scale have been conducted.<sup>19</sup> Several studies show a positive association between principal race/ethnicity and the test scores of students of the same race/ethnicity in multiple states.<sup>20</sup> For example, Grissom and Bartanen and Grissom (2019) found Black student math test scores increase (.06 standard deviation) more when the principal is Black, a relationship that appears in the second year of principals' work in a school.

While students may benefit from schools led by principals of color, the principal workforce

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<sup>15</sup> Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005

<sup>16</sup> Fink & Markholt, 2011

<sup>17</sup> Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Kim, 2019; Redding, Booker, Smith & Desimone, 2019; Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2009; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar & Brown, 2006

<sup>18</sup> Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Baker, Punswick & Belt, 2010; Meier, O'Toole & Nicholson-Crotty, 2004; Grissom & Keiser, 2011

<sup>19</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021

<sup>20</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021

does not provide access to such benefits. Workforce statistics indicate 80 percent of principals are White at the national level<sup>21</sup> and 78 percent at White in Illinois,<sup>22</sup> and nationally, racial composition of the principal workforce has remained relatively the same of the past decade.<sup>23</sup> In comparison, 53 percent of U.S. public school students are White and 47 percent of Illinois students are White.

## Addressing Gaps in Principal Preparation

Illinois is losing talented educators of color and women from the principal workforce. While states have an adequate workforce supply of certified school administrators, most states report that the principal position is hard-to-staff. Pre-pandemic research suggests a majority of certified school administrators do not pursue principal positions, due to a lack of social supports.<sup>24</sup> Though they have credentials, most aspiring principals do not pursue school leadership positions. The Bridge Project will increase the number and diversity of Illinois principals by providing pre-service and induction support to aspiring principals, who have already been certified.

Research points to two factors as contributing to the gap between certified and job-seeking aspiring principals, which are addressed by The Bridge Project. First, aspiring principals believe themselves to be unready to lead, despite being certified by the state to do so. Aspiring principals view the job as stressful, isolating, and untenable. Aspiring principals view the job as highly stressful due to (a) continuously changing and increasing work requirements; (b) heightened performance accountability; (c) poor access to professional learning and (d) poor quality initial placements.<sup>25</sup> New principals and principals of color are more likely than experienced principals

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<sup>21</sup> National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016; Chen, 2011

<sup>22</sup> Illinois Principals' Association, 2021; Haller & Hunt, 2016

<sup>23</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021

<sup>24</sup> Fuller & Young, 2022; Bailes & Guthery, 2020

<sup>25</sup> Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar & Brown, 2006; Clifford & Coggshall, 2022

to lead high-need schools, which contributes to higher attrition among principals.<sup>26</sup>

Aspiring principals believe themselves unready to lead because they have observed principals' job stress. Principals' work and job stress are barriers to aspiring principals: Because school districts require principals to do so much, the principalship is not appealing to teacher-leaders and assistant principals. Currently, 42 percent of the 90,000 U.S. principals are considering leaving the profession, and in Illinois 46 percent are considering leaving,<sup>27</sup> at a minimum average replacement cost of [REDACTED] per principal.<sup>28</sup> Nationally, 50 percent of principals leave the profession by year three. The Bridge Project addresses aspiring principal perspectives on themselves in the job by building social supports around aspiring principals and showing them—through residency and induction—that they can be effective principals.

Second, principal pipeline systems—which are intended to support school leaders from teacher through principal positions—include gaps and barriers that hampers career advancement, particularly for principals of color and women. Principals' typical career trajectories include five years as a teacher-leader or assistant principal, after they have been certified as an administrator by the state. While these “gap years” could serve as an apprenticeship to principal positions, principal pipelines provide little structure or support to assistant principals or teacher-leaders.<sup>29</sup> The gap years between certification and principalship are longer on average for educators of color and women, in comparison to their White, male counterparts.<sup>30</sup> The Bridge Project aims to accelerate already-certified, aspiring principals' of color and aspiring women principals' careers through residency and career mentoring.

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<sup>26</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021

<sup>27</sup> Levin, Scott, Yang, Leung-Gagne & Bradley, 2020

<sup>28</sup> Tran, McCormick & Nguyen, 2018

<sup>29</sup> Goldring, Rubin & Hermann, 2021

<sup>30</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021

Illinois' 43,000 certified educational administrators<sup>31</sup> experience a wider gap, due to the state's legacy poorly calibration between principal work, preparation and certification. Illinois' educator certification system provides for a *General Administrator Type 75* (hereafter "Type 75") certificate that qualifies educators for a multitude of school and district level positions (i.e., athletic director, department chair, dean).<sup>32</sup> Type 75 certificate programs have largely been ineffective in preparing principals to lead schools, forcing most to augment preparation with informal training to learn that principal position for several years. In 2010, policymakers attempted to close the gap by passing IL Public Act 096-0903 focused the new Principal Endorsement on the specific knowledge/competencies required of principals, but policymakers feared workforce shortages and continue to view Type 75 certification as qualifying educators to be principals.

## Evidence-Based Project Design: The Bridge Project Theory of Action

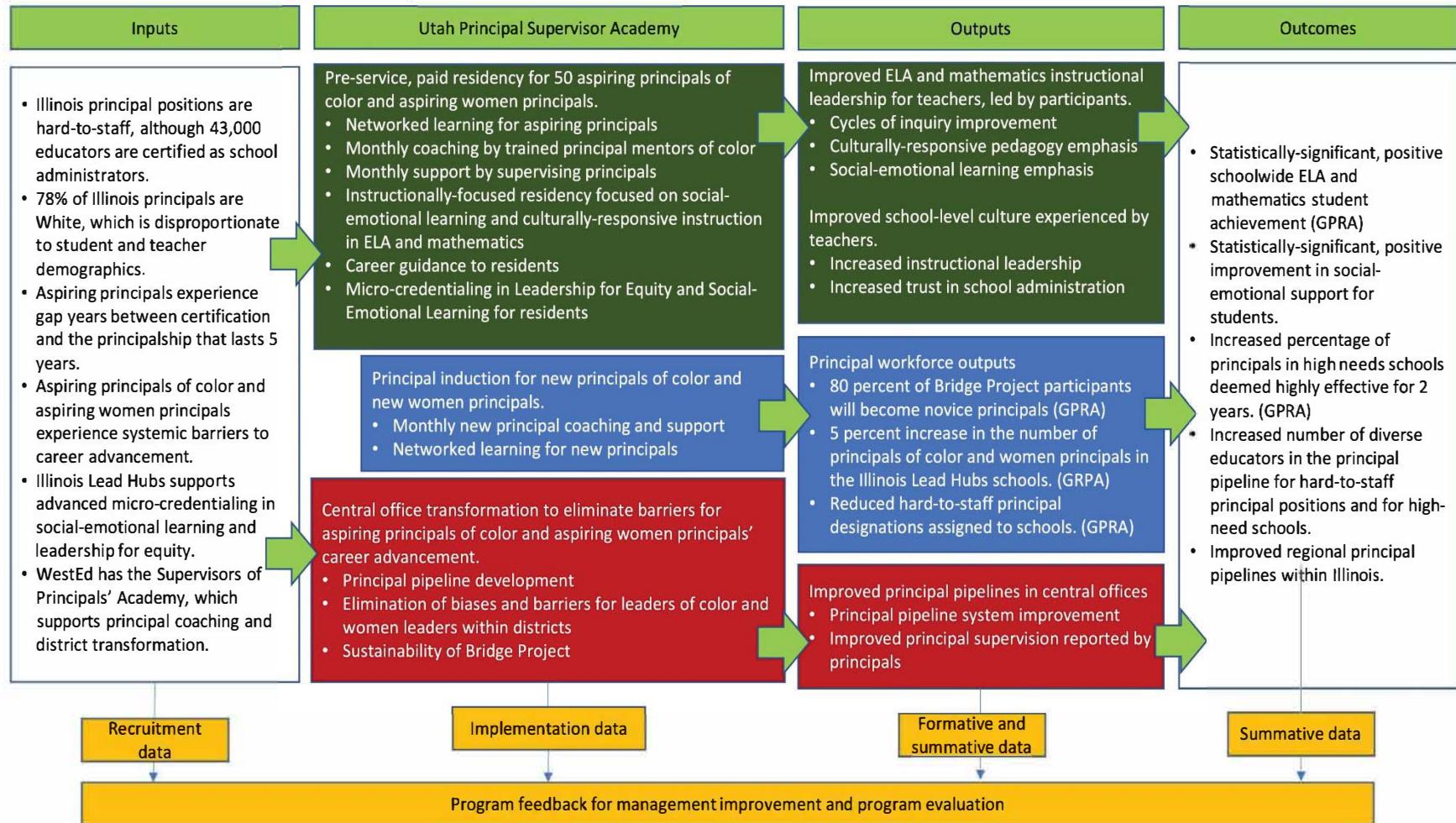
The Bridge Project provides needed supports during educators' career "gap years" between Type 75 certification and the principalship. Through The Bridge Project, educators will crossover to the principalship from teacher-leader and assistant principal positions. WestEd, Illinois Lead Hubs and high-need schools/districts will enact The Bridge Project's *theory of change*, which (1) accelerates aspiring principals' careers through a *post-certification, paid, in-school residency* focused on equity and instruction, (b) retains new principals of color and women principals, through *new principal induction* and (c) eliminates barriers and strengthens principal pipelines through *district transformation*, thereby creating systemic changes that are sustainable. Figure 1 displays the program theory of change, and subsequent text explains significant aspects of the intervention.

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<sup>31</sup> Illinois Principals' Association, 2021; Haller & Hunt, 2016

<sup>32</sup> Baron & Haller, 2014

**Figure 1: Conceptual Map of The Bridge Project (see Appendix G for more detail)**



Our 10+ year partnership supports us in selecting candidates, identifying placement sites, providing residency experiences, transitioning the resident to a principal position, and retaining a more diverse, new principal workforce. Residency and induction experiences are supported by well-trained supervising principals and mentors of color, all of whom are former successful Illinois principals. American Institutes for Research (AIR) will be the external evaluator that provides data-informed, frequent feedback loops and information regarding areas of project improvement/need.

As Figure 1 shows, The Bridge Project's three components address professional and systemic issues that inhibit career advancement and retention of aspiring principals of color and female principals. ***The yearlong residency (component 1) provides an intensive, consistent post-certification, paid, job-embedded residency experience to 50 aspiring principals*** of color and women educators. The Bridge Project residency has three strands:

- **Instructional leadership experience** focuses on leading equitable instruction and creating identify-safe, socially and emotionally supportive ELA and mathematics classrooms, through teacher engagement in Project Years 1, 2.<sup>33</sup> Participant instructional leadership practice is supported through formal training, structured coaching, and on-the-job experience. The professional learning draws upon research from *How People Learn I and II* (National Academies Press, 2014; 2019) on K-12 student learning and teacher professional development design, as aligned to the Illinois statewide content standards.<sup>34</sup> Participants are supported by a supervising principal and coach.
- **Career mentoring** by a trained coach and a supervising principal. Each aspiring principal

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<sup>33</sup> The residency model is based upon New Leaders' residency design, which has been shown to be effective at scale through a study that meets WWC guidance, without reservations (Gates et al., 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Through funding from the Gates Foundation, WestEd has developed a framework for culturally-responsive math education which will be leveraged for The Bridge Project.

is partnered with a supervising principal (e.g., the principal in the school), who oversees placement and supports the residency, and the mentor principal of color, a successful school principal that provides support and career advice.

- **Micro-credentialing** documents participant advanced skills acquired through residency.

The Bridge Project residency focuses on leading instruction to improve equity and social-emotional support for students, and participants completing residencies will also complete two micro-credentials (MC): Illinois' Leadership for Equity (LFE) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Bridge Project partners DuPage County regional office of education is the statewide MC provider, and DuPage ROE works with Bloomboard to host MCs. The two MCIs have been developed with previous SEED funding, are hosted by BloomBoard, are validated by American Institutes for Research (AIR). Aspiring principals provide evidence of competency, which are evaluated by training Bloomboard evaluators.<sup>35</sup> MCs (or “badges”) are awarded upon successful demonstration of competency, which is built through the residency.

*New Principal Induction (Component 2)* provides Bridge aspiring principals coaching support, once they transition into new principal positions in Project Years 2, 3. New principal induction provides coaching continuity to Bridge participants, as Bridge coaches provide 2 hours of induction support per month to support the career transition and leadership in a new school.<sup>36</sup> Principal supervisors and mentors will successfully complete WestEd's Supervisors of Principals' Academy (SOPA).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bloomboard has significantly reduced fees associated with microcredential review and attainment for The Bridge Project. WestEd's budget includes \$150 per aspiring principal for microcredentialing.

<sup>36</sup> The New Leaders study included induction support and coaching in the first year of leading a school.

<sup>37</sup> WestEd's SOPA provides professional development and coaching support to leadership coaches and supervisors, helping them to evaluate and nurture talent during pre-service, induction and in-service. SOPA is the statewide training model in Arizona, Utah, and Nevada.

***District Transformation (Component 3) Engages Central Office Administrative Teams and Other Partners in Revising Principal Pipeline Supports at the Local Education Agency and Regional Levels.***

District transformation addresses policies/procedures, district culture, supervisory practices and leadership divisions of labor that support or inhibit principals throughout their careers.<sup>38</sup> Investments in principal pipelines create improved principal working conditions, increase principal retention, and displays statistically-significant, positive impact in large, urban school districts or regions, according to a large-scale, comparative quasi-experimental analysis which meets WWC Tier 2 guidelines.<sup>39</sup> The Bridge project engages central office administrators with principal preparation program staff and other partners in assessing and revising principal pipelines to improve leadership conditions for sustaining Bridge Project residencies, creating conditions for retaining and advancing affecting principals of color, and supporting principals to advance instructional quality and equity. Engaging central office teams with preparation programs and other partners in revising principal pipelines will improve new/existing principal working conditions, district policies/practices and culture that may intentionally or unintentionally dissuade new principals of color from pursuing the principalship.

The Bridge Project investment addresses near-term (i.e., outputs) and longer-term (i.e., outcomes) anticipated impacts. In the near term, The Bridge Project provides aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals with a rich, job-embedded residency experience focused on culturally-responsive pedagogy in ELA and mathematics, and aspiring principal career mentoring. Aspiring principals' residency experiences will directly support teachers' instruction and student learning, through the residency, and they will increase ELA and mathematics student

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<sup>38</sup> Turnbull, Worley & Palmer, 2021

<sup>39</sup> Gates, Baird, Master, & Chavez-Herrerias, 2019

performance during residency. In the longer-term, The Bridge Project will improve principal retention through induction support and principal pipeline systems, which amplifies retention of diverse principals. If positive results are observed, The Bridge Project provides LEA and regional leadership pipelines by intentionally building a replicable vacancy strategy and focusing recruitment efforts to identify/select a diverse candidate pool and addresses current shortages in hard-to-staff schools.

## **Competitive Preference Priority #1**

Bridge Project addresses the goals of Competitive Preference Priority #1 –*Promoting educator diversity in classrooms across the Nation*. The Bridge Project addresses the national need and Illinois need for more, diverse school principals. In Illinois, 78 percent of the principal workforce is White, and 80 percent of the nation’s approximately 90,000 principals are White. Nationally, 45 percent of principals are women. The number of White, male principals in Illinois and the nation does not reflect teacher workforce or student demographics.<sup>40</sup>

The Bridge Project identifies 50 aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals from a pool of 43,000 educators, who have attained an administrative certification (called “Type 75”) but are not principals. *Illinois Lead Hubs partners identified 156 Type 75 educators of color and women educators who have not become principals and who expressed interest in Bridge* within the 162 school districts served by the Illinois Lead Hubs partners.<sup>41</sup> All Bridge candidates will be full-time teacher-leaders or assistant principals in high-need schools, who seek to increase skills and marketable experiences in order to become a principal. All Bridge aspiring principals are supported by a supervising principal and mentor of color, both of whom are trained

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<sup>40</sup> Illinois Principals’ Association, 2021

<sup>41</sup> Goshen Research, 2022

and monitored to coach, evaluate and support by Bridge Project partners.

Illinois Lead Hubs (Bridge Project partners include Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) located in each of the six service areas that cover the entire state. As such, our external evaluation partners at AIR are able to *draw a sample from 349 schools that are located in, or serve students from high-need schools.*<sup>8</sup> A detailed table including the 349 census track numbers of schools that will be included in the sample pool and a map highlighting the areas around the state that have been designated as high-need are included in Appendix H. Each census track included in the table includes the corresponding ROE and school district.

The Bridge Project also recognizes central office policies/procedures, culture, and principal work configurations can create barriers and biases, which inhibit aspiring principals' career trajectories. These "social factors" are malleable with central office administrator professional learning and engagement. Leveraging WestEd's Supervisors of Principals' Academy model, The Bridge Project engages central office administrators and their partners in creating more equitable conditions for principals' career advancement and use of inclusive, culturally-responsive leadership practices.

## Competitive Preference Priority #2

The Bridge Project addresses Competitive Preference Priority #2-- The importance of preparing teachers to create inclusive, supportive, equitable, unbiased, and identity-safe learning environments for their students. The Bridge Project provides ELA and mathematics teachers in high-need schools access to an aspiring principal of color, who supports inclusive, supportive, equitable, unbiased and identity-safe learning environments for students. By requiring residencies to focus on instructional leadership and equity in ELA and mathematics, Bridge will

improve students' academic success, a strong predictor of future success.<sup>42</sup>

The project spurs investment in the high-need, Illinois schools by implementing a sample selection process that prioritizes high-need schools in regions within the state. All high-need schools are located in communities with high poverty levels, as identified by census tracts data, and all regions where schools are located will be considered hard-to-staff for the principal position. The Bridge Project will assist high-need and hard-to-staff schools by placing aspiring principals in residencies in schools, thereby developing a pipeline of highly effective and racially-diverse principals with the ability to transform low-performing schools.

Aspiring principals of color will be trained and supported to increase instructional quality and student academic success in high-need schools. WestEd and regional offices of education will provide aspiring principals of color with training in cognitive/developmental sciences, culturally-responsive pedagogy, identity-safe classroom environments and cycles of inquiry for instructional improvement. The aspiring principals will be supported in leading ELA and mathematics improvement by supervising principals and mentors, who have experience and training in these instructional approaches.

### **Competitive Preference Priority #3**

The Bridge Project addresses Competitive Preference Priority #3-- Provides explicit support for developing students' social and emotional skills, such as their ability to collaborate with peers and persist through challenging tasks. School principals create conditions for student learning and influence learning for an average of 356 students per year, in contrast with teachers' influence on an average of 33 students. Teaching aspiring principals about SEL is an important scaling approach. Bridge Project aspiring principals will complete year-long residencies focused

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<sup>42</sup> Duckworth, Quinn & Tsukayama, 2012

on instructional leadership, equity and socially, emotionally-supporting ELA and mathematics classrooms. Participants will receive professional development and coaching on leading teachers to create socially and emotionally-supportive classrooms, which will be directly applied to school classrooms during the residency. In participating schools, we expect teacher effectiveness to increase in developing students in areas aligned to the CASEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, relationship building, social awareness, and decision making. (See Appendix G). The aspiring principals will receive SEL training and support from WestEd and ROE partners, and the aspiring principals will complete an SEL micro-credential (MC) to recognize competence from DuPage County Regional Office of Education. Supervising principals and mentors will also receive SEL training for use in supporting residents through WestEd's Supervisors of Principals' Academy (SOPA) program.

WestEd is a nationally-recognized provider of SEL professional learning to teachers and principals, which works in collaboration with Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). WestEd's intervention involves formal professional learning experiences to support educator integration of SEL practices into leadership/instructional practices. WestEd will provide SEL training to the aspiring principals of color, their supervising principals and their mentors.

Bridge Project participants will also complete SEL micro-credentials, which are advanced leadership credentials. Illinois has been a leader in this area and was the first state to establish social emotional learning (SEL) standards, due in large part to the hard work and influence of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). In a previous collaboration with CASEL and other SEL specialists, The Bridge Project's staff developed training and materials designed to build understanding by school leaders and staff of the social

emotional competencies and corresponding skills that directly influence an individual's resilience capacity.<sup>43</sup> Those tools and resources will be built upon by Bridge Project staff to develop the Social Emotional Leadership micro-credential series which have been validated by American Institutes for Research (AIR). DuPage County Regional Office of Education, a Bridge Project partner, is the statewide provider for MCs.

A meta-analysis from 2011 demonstrated the importance of SEL on student outcomes. It explored 213 studies and found that interventions that address the five CASEL core SEL competencies increase students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate. Students participating in SEL programs also showed improved classroom behavior, increased ability to manage stress and depression, and more positive attitudes about themselves, others, and school.<sup>44</sup> SEL skill development also demonstrated a lasting impact, as another meta-analysis found that 3.5 years after the intervention, participants' academic performance was an average 13 percentile points higher than a comparison group.<sup>45</sup>

## II. Quality, Intensity, and Duration of Supports Leading to Improvements in Practice

The Bridge Program is grounded in research findings from a qualifying study completed in 2014 by RAND of the New Leaders program. A non-profit organization, New Leaders aims to improve student outcomes by preparing effective leaders and improving the working conditions in schools. *The qualifying study provides Moderate Evidence of effectiveness<sup>46</sup>* by analyzing data from roughly 400 participating school leaders, who served over 160,000 students, in ten

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<sup>43</sup> Hambrick, Brawner & Perry, 2019

<sup>44</sup> CASEL, 2016

<sup>45</sup> Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, Weissberg, 2017

<sup>46</sup> Statistically significant gains were found in student math and reading scores that are detailed in Section B.

school districts located throughout the U.S.<sup>47</sup> The intervention included the completion of a one-year residency-based training program where participants worked as a principal resident under the supervision of a mentor principal and the support of a coach. After successful completion of the residency year, participants were hired into principal positions where they continued to receive induction coaching support and professional development in their new role as a novice principal.

The Bridge Project is *a two-year intervention*<sup>48</sup> modeled after the New Leaders intervention within the qualifying study. Bridge provides aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals with a residency and induction support, once participants become principals. Each participant will receive a one-year (academic year 2023-24), paid residency which includes training and coaching support to build their instructional capacity to improve student learning. Participants will be supervised by a mentor principal of color and supported by supervising principal,<sup>49</sup> who are responsible for ensuring strong placements and advancing leadership learning. In the second year (academic year 2024-25), participants receive career and induction support, as they transition to a new principalship. In this second year, participants will receive induction coaching and training aimed at schoolwide improvement efforts. Table 1 outlines the intensity and duration of supports in each phase.

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<sup>47</sup> Districts that implemented the intervention included: Baltimore; Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL; Memphis, TN; Milwaukee, WI; New Orleans, LA; New York, NY; Oakland, CA; Prince George's County, MD; Washington, D.C.

<sup>48</sup> Were The Bridge Project to receive renewal funding for PY4-5, the intervention for novice principals would be extended and quasi-experimental research study would be completed exploring the impact of the model on school-level performance over three years. The additional study would be designed to meet WWC evidence standards with reservations.

<sup>49</sup> A supervising principal is the principal in the school where the residency occurs.

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**Table 1: Intensity and Duration of Supports of Bridge Project Intervention**

Project Year	Development Phase	Hours of Learning	Type of Support
Year 1-2	Residency	1700 hours	Professional Development, Coaching, Job-Embedded Leadership Activities, Advanced Certification
Year 2-3	Induction	75 hours	Professional Development and Coaching
Years 1, 2	District transformation	140 hours	Central office team professional development and coaching to support principal pipeline improvements

***The Bridge Project Residency:*** The principal's capacity to effectively engage teachers in instructional improvement efforts that lead to increased student achievement depends on sound academic training. Research identified practices that significantly increase student achievement,<sup>50</sup> and additional studies on principal preparation have empirically connected specific residency practices found to improve student achievement.<sup>51</sup>

Research literature on effective educator residencies point to the following features: (1) targeted recruitment and selection of candidates; (2) coherent content aligned to professional standards; (3) emphasis on instructional leadership aimed at school improvement; (4) active, reflective, student- centered instruction that integrates theory and practice; (5) social and professional support from expert mentors/coaches; and (6) well-designed, intensive, and supervised leadership. The Bridge Project residency supports include those important features, which also align to key elements found in qualifying study.

The Bridge Project's residency component is aligned to the national *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* (PSEL) and the *National Educational Leadership Preparation Program Recognition* (NELP) Standards. The residency experience also incorporates leadership activities

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<sup>50</sup> Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021

<sup>51</sup> Gates et al., 2014

that align to the Southern Regional Education Board's 13 Critical Success Factors and corresponding activities (See Appendix G for a crosswalk).<sup>52</sup> The coach will work with the resident and host principal to design a development plan that also aligns with the state's principal evaluation framework.

During the residency, participants will receive training in research-based approaches that build instructional leadership capacity. Aspiring principals will collaborate with teachers in action research projects focused on instructional excellence in ELA and mathematics, social-emotionally supportive classroom environments, localized assessment design/use and culturally-responsive pedagogy. To support teachers' work, the participant will receive training and support in instructional leadership, teacher coaching and performance feedback. Each participant will be supported by a supervising principal, who currently leads the school, and an effective former principal of color, who will mentor the participant. The supervising principal and mentor will meet one-on-one each weekly with participants to support residents' work. The target dosage for coaching during the pre-service phase is a minimum average of 120 minutes per month.

The Bridge Project residency design aligns with the New Leaders' intervention in the qualifying study. The Bridge Project aligns with New Leaders' residency intervention in the qualifying study. New Leaders and Bridge projects allocate: (1) a significant amount of time and resources are spent on selecting a pool of high-potential aspiring leaders; (2) both provide a full-time, paid, year-long residency for each participant; (3) both provide training and support on pedagogy and instructional leadership, and (4) both provide new principal induction training, professional development, and coaching support when pre-service principals take new principal

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<sup>52</sup> The job-embedded experiences of the residency will be aligned with the internship competencies required for the state's new P-12 Principal Endorsement. The competencies are based on SREB's Critical Success Factors but are currently being revised to align with the NELP standards. The NELP standards, which are aligned to PSEL, provide specificity around performance expectations for beginning level building leaders.

positions. The Bridge Project exceeds the amount and duration of coaching provided by New Leaders, and Bridge also improves upon the qualifying intervention by intentionally engaging district leaders in the selection of the aspiring principal pool and placing participants in a school and/or district where there is an anticipated principal vacancy in the year immediately following the residency.<sup>53</sup>

Like the intervention in the qualifying study, Bridge triangulates support to pre-service residents. The Bridge project provides rigorous training and support to mentor principals and supervising principals, both of whom support pre-service learning. Bridge staff members closely monitor mentor principal and supervising principal support delivery, to ensure participant residency experiences exhibit strong quality and intended duration. Bridge also provides on-going coach training to increase supervisor and mentor practices and calibrate coaching with local priorities.

***Induction:*** In addition to aligning with the New Leaders model involving the early in-service phase of development, Bridge was specifically designed as a principal vacancy strategy aimed at ensuring a pipeline of high-quality candidates for high-need schools. To host an aspiring principal of color for the residency year, the project requires districts to: (1) have an anticipated principal vacancy in project year three, and (2) agree to interview The Bridge Project resident for that open position. The project makes explicit to participating districts that it intends to disrupt the traditional pathways to the principalship in order to move well-prepared aspiring principals of color into school leadership positions as soon as they complete the residency. However, because the position is not guaranteed, The Bridge Project continues to provide coaching support

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<sup>53</sup> Districts with upcoming vacancies will be identified through the Educator Pipeline Data Portal (see pp. 21), which captures supply/demand data of IL districts, including projected vacancies. To identify potential candidates for the LWP residency, a survey has been distributed by ROEs to identify Type 75 holders who would be interested in participating with this project, if awarded (see Appendix H).

to assist participants with securing a principal position (i.e., conducting mock interviews, documenting evidence of successful leadership experience related to school improvement, providing feedback on resumes or presentations, etc.)

As part of new principal induction training and support, Bridge Project coordinates with the local district to reduce redundancy and fragmentation. The Bridge Project provides new principals with research-based professional development that is specifically focused on developing the schoolwide conditions and routines that promote principal engagement of teachers in instructional improvement efforts that have been shown to improve schools.<sup>54</sup> Professional development provided by Bridge is aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning established in 2011 by Learning Forward. Additionally, the project provides weekly one-on-one coaching sessions for novice principals. The target dosage for coaching during the in-service phase is a minimum average of 100 minutes per month. Coaching support is provided by well-trained coaches who have previously served as a successful principal and have experience supervising and/or developing principals. Combining two critical stages of leader development, Bridge will utilize multiple research-based strategies to support principals.

***District Transformation of Principal Pipeline Supports:*** The Bridge Project recognizes that systems designs may intentionally or unintentionally create barriers to career advancement for aspiring principals of color. Efforts to increase principal workforce racial diversity and principal retention surfaced central office hiring practices, supervisory procedures and organizational communication structures as challenges.<sup>55</sup> While district central offices transformed organizations to bolster principal pipelines, the types of changes occurring in the study were not

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<sup>54</sup> Cosner & Jones, 2016; Cosner, Tozer & Zavitkovsky, 2016; Saunders, Goldenberg & Gallimore, 2009

<sup>55</sup> Honig & Rainey, 2020

uniform.<sup>56</sup> Some districts adopted new standards, while others created departments focused on aspiring and current principals.

The Bridge Project addresses systemic barriers to future principal success by engaging central office teams and their partners (e.g., university principal preparation programs) in central office transformation, principal pipeline development and principal supervision support. Bridge will enroll twelve district teams in a nine-month network of improvement, twice during the period of funding (2022-23, 2023-24). Each central office team can bring up to 10 participants. The central office administrators and partners will engage in *Cycles of Inquiry* in an effort to identify and improve support for aspiring principals of color.

WestEd's Supervisors of Principals' Academy model has developed an intervention for central office transformation, which will be refined for Illinois districts. Each central office team will follow a similar *Cycles* process, which begins by completing *The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Self-Assessment* to gather multiple perspectives on principal pipeline health, examining longitudinal data on principal/teacher disproportionality, and principals' responses to a *Principal Supervisor 360* survey about central office supports. Next, central office administrators and partners will develop a theory of change and team learning plan. Enactment of the learning plan will be supported through a formal professional development series, which includes case studies and conversations with advanced implementer central office administrators. Team advancement will be supported through 90 minute coaching meetings to chart progress.

## **Addresses the Needs of the Target Population**

The Bridge Project represents a comprehensive effort by a consortium of partners, which are located in five regions of the state. The Bridge Project works with schools, districts, and aspiring

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<sup>56</sup> Gates et al., 2019; Honig & Rainey, 2020

principals in six, geographically disparate areas of the state. The six areas include 162 school districts, 615 schools in urban, rural, and suburban communities, and 181 schools can expect a principal staffing change each year based upon yearly turnover statistics. Bridge will serve 50 public schools will participate in the program, and each of the 50 schools will host one teacher-leader or assistant principal who are women and/or principal candidates of color. In the region, 1403 educators have a Type 75 certification who are not principals. Of these Type 75 holders, 156 (11 percent) of eligible candidates of color and 561 (39 percent) are women principal candidates expressed interest in Bridge.

Working in collaboration with each partner and the Illinois State Board of Education, The Bridge Project will harness the collective talent and resources of each region to fully address any local differences that may otherwise create barriers to implementation. The Bridge Project advisory committees will ensure that recruitment, professional development, and supports are calibrated to regional/local needs. Organizations joining The Bridge Project advisory boards include: the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), Black Educational Advocacy Coalition, Latino Advocacy Coalition, Rural Education Network and university principal preparation program representatives.<sup>57</sup>

### **III. Bridge Project Purposes, Activities, or Benefits are Incorporated into the Ongoing Work of the Organizations Beyond the Life of the Grant**

The Bridge Project includes two strategies for ensuring project continuation beyond the life of the grant. First, The Bridge Project goals directly align with WestEd and Illinois Lead Hubs missions. The second involves the policy connections that have been intentionally build into the

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<sup>57</sup> Each partner and their roles and responsibilities within the project is outline in Section III of the proposal.

project, which are align with state policymakers' intents to diversify the principal workforce through sustained pipeline investments.

The Bridge Project's purpose aligns with WestEd and Illinois Lead Hubs mission, and the Project's activities leverage existing resources within each organization. WestEd and Illinois Lead Hubs have partnered together over the past ten years in order to build a robust, equitable principal pipeline of Illinois school leaders. **WestEd**, for example, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency that works with education and other community to promote excellence, achieve equity and improve learning for children and adults. As an organization, WestEd conducts research and provides professional services aimed at creating more inclusive, productive schools through deep engagement with central office administrators and principals nationwide. **Illinois Lead Hubs** is a partnership among state regional offices of education, who are intermediary organizations serving all school districts in the state. The Illinois Lead Hubs provides school leadership evaluation, professional development, and coaching in an effort to support Illinois' principal pipeline improvement efforts. As established in state statute, ROE's organizational mission is focused on coordinating and delivering supports to schools. The ROEs work regionally with central office administrators and school leaders to advance school leadership and educational outcomes for students. Both key partners aim to build local capacity **with** schools for strengthening instruction and educator support systems, rather than creating profitable, commercial solutions **for** schools.

The Bridge Project leverages WestEd, ROE and partner talents, through the project's primary **activities**. The ROE partners, for example, will use pre-existing training materials, tools, resources, and protocols to strengthen pre-service supervision and mentoring through a *Cycles of Inquiry* approach focused on improving instructional quality and increases student learning.

WestEd support for central office administrators will capitalize on its Supervisors of Principals Academy model, which supports principal supervisors in three states. Both organizations' activities not only benefit the participating school leaders and high-need schools in which they are placed but is also a great benefit to the partnering ROEs and districts.

During the residency, all aspiring principals of color will complete an action research project with teachers, focused on ELA and mathematics equity. During their residency, participants lead teacher teams through an inquiry process and implementing instructional improvement efforts that result in increased learning by high-need students. During the in-service phase, new principals extend their learning from a single grade level or grade band to improvements in instructional quality schoolwide. Through *Bridge* training and support, participating principals will lead school efforts that result in improvements to teacher practice, and ultimately increases in student achievement.

The Bridge Project also benefits ROEs, WestEd and the partners. The project extends ROE capacity to sustain and scale the project intervention beyond the life of the grant, and advances WestEd capacity to provide high-quality coaching to pre-service candidates. This is not just a passing interest by the partners, rather Bridge provides an expanded level of expertise, guidance, and funding that will establish a mechanism for harnessing the collective knowledge and resources of multiple organizations to improve and build upon efforts in creating a robust pipeline of well-trained principals that are capable of improving our most challenging schools. The tight alignment between the goals of the grant and scope of work of the WestEd and ROEs provides incentive for their continued participation and commitment.

In addition to the tight alignment between the WestEd and the ROE's mission and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which supports sustainability and scaling. States play a role in

fostering an environment for effective school leaders through policy enactment, compliance monitoring and strategic funding.<sup>58</sup> Through its recently-funded Office of District and School Leadership, ISBE has emphasized principal preparation program improvement, new principal mentoring, and diversification of the principal workforce through hiring and professional development. The Bridge Project strengthens ISBE's current capacity to meet principal supply challenges and educator workforce diversification. If successful, Bridge provides a replicable model to the state, which may be implemented outside of the participating regions, and a cadre of leadership mentors of color, which can support new principals beyond The Bridge Project.

## SECTION B: SIGNIFICANCE

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### I. Magnitude of the Outcomes of The Bridge Project

The Bridge Project aims to replicate the intervention in a qualifying study from 2014 by RAND that determined a combined principal preparation and novice principal induction resulted in statistically significant gains when compared to similar schools that had not participated in the project. *At the lower grade levels, achievement gains were found to be 0.6 - 1.3 percentile points higher in both mathematics and reading* than the comparison group. *At the high school level, students gained up to 3 percentile points more in reading*, compared to non-participating students. At both the lower grade levels and the high school level, the impact of intervention appeared to increase over time. The qualifying study includes a *significant population overlap* with those that will be served by the Bridge Program, as both the study and the proposed project target hard-to-staff schools serving high-need populations.<sup>16</sup> Replicating the intervention from the qualifying study with aspiring principals of color in high-need, hard-to-staff schools will

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<sup>58</sup> Manna, 2015

further test the model with a population of principals disproportionately under-represented in the state and national principal workforce who work in non-urban schools/districts.

Bridge Project follows the same principles that led to significant learning by students documented in the study by RAND. Given the strong similarities between the two programs, we are confident that The Bridge Project participants will demonstrate a level of impact at least as strong as the participants in the qualifying study. The study's external evaluation team at AIR has worked closely with WestEd to identify the number of aspiring principals of color necessary for a sufficiently powered sample size for the impact analysis. A total of 50 Illinois educators who hold the Type 75 license but have not worked as a principal will be recruited and will complete the project. Power analyses conducted on the proposed sample found that if no intervention schools exit from the study, the minimum detectable effect size (MDES) for student-level outcomes is .136, while at 5% and 10% attrition rates, the MDES are .140 and .144 respectively. The MDES for aspiring principal level effect is .241 at 0% attrition, and .247 and .254 at 5% and 10% attrition rates. Details of the power analyses used to establish the MDES are described in Appendix H.

While their work is entirely located in urban areas, the New Leader's approach includes research-based key elements of effective principal preparation and development that are emblematic of other programs that have been designated as "Exemplary" by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA).<sup>59</sup> The three core elements highlighted in the qualifying study include: 1) selective recruitment and admission, 2) research-based training leading to advanced credentials, and 3) support for novice principals. Those core elements align to research on best practices in principal preparation and development. Bridge Project designers

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<sup>59</sup> University Council of Education Administration, 2012

incorporated each of those key elements in the project's design, working with the assumption that Bridge Project will achieve at least equivalent impact as the qualifying study. The proposed project amplified the qualifying study's intervention by addressing central office systems which can inhibit aspiring principals' of color career advancement intentionally or unintentionally, and the proposed project standardizes supervision and mentoring routines and protocols aimed specifically at addressing ELA and mathematics instructional problems of practice. By combining the evidence-based professional development program with proven strategies for increasing principals' competencies in consequential areas (e.g. establishing formal data-informed improvement processes, creating adult learning systems, ensuring equity, etc.), The Bridge Project partners are confident that the improved model will increase the positive impact the project has on student outcomes.

## II. Contribution of the Project to the Field

The Bridge Project contributes to the field of principal workforce development in four areas: (1) informing pre- and in-service program design, (2) examining near-term and long-term school-level program impacts associated with educator residencies in high-need schools, and (3) expanding the evidence-base of principal preparation and development by replicating the qualifying study in a new setting.

First, The Bridge Project provides evidence for an underlying assumption of recent education reform efforts that the quality of a preparation program can positively influence future school leaders' work and their school's efforts to improve student outcomes. There is a dearth of empirical evidence on the impact of preparation programs on student learning, and the majority of studies occur in urban settings.<sup>60</sup> In order for policy makers, university, and district leaders to

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<sup>60</sup> George W. Bush Institute, 2020

fully understand the impact that a high-quality principal residency and a comprehensive induction training program can have on a school and student outcomes, more research is needed on principal pipeline and residency configurations within diverse school/district settings. Bridge Project carefully documents implementation configurations across diverse settings and uses implementation data to improve project effectiveness. Our proposed work will inform collaborative partnerships between university preparation faculty and district leaders charged with delivering induction support for school leaders, as well as leadership collaboratives focused on increasing the diverse principal pipeline.

Second, the proposed project examines near-term and long-term school-level impacts of residency programs in high-need schools. The qualifying study used student academic performance and educator retention as primary outcomes, though these outcomes are distal to leadership preparation and induction. AIR will incorporate additional medial measures (i.e. school culture survey) to examine school-level changes more approximate to the program, thereby strengthening inferences associated with the intervention.

Third, based on the magnitude of the anticipated results on principal effectiveness and student outcomes, Bridge Project will inform the field on how to improve the preparation and induction of new principals through a high-quality residency and job-embedded professional development model. This type of residency model provides a powerful incentive for districts to hire aspiring leaders of color as principals because they have demonstrated the ability to foster instructional leadership and advanced equity for students, during residencies. Careful Bridge Project documentation coupled with strong results can provide a model to hard-to-staff and high-need schools for diverse principal retention.

### III. Dissemination of the Project Model for Scaling and Sustainability

The Bridge Project has great potential to be disseminated and replicated using three strategies: 1) aligning project efforts with statewide goals and initiatives; 2) building regional dissemination and replication capacity; and 3) capitalizing on WestEd and partners' mechanisms for disseminating project practices and outcomes.

#### ***State Policy Alignment*** (see Appendix I for more background information)

The Bridge Project aligns with ISBE's and the Illinois State Board of Higher Education's (IBHE's) significant, statewide priorities for more, and more diverse, principals. Alignment with both state-level agencies' agendas is discussed in this section.

The proposed project has been developed in consultation with ISBE to address state-level gaps within principal pipeline initiatives. The Bridge Project residency and supports align with statewide priorities identified in ISBE's *Strategic Action Plan* under Goal 3: Elevating Educators, most notably, "3.1.4 Retain educators by providing coaching and mentoring, leadership opportunities, principal preparation support, and access to high-quality professional learning." The project aligns closely with current ISBE initiatives, including:

- The Illinois' *Educator Pipeline Work Group* co-led by ISBE and Advance Illinois, which launched and supports the Office of District and School Leadership to advance professional learning and evaluation statewide.
- The Partnership for Educator Preparation effort to improve principal preparation effectiveness, which is a standing committee focused on preparation program improvement through policy. WestEd staff chair the principal preparation PEP subcommittee.
- Statewide micro-credentialing for principals and teachers, which recognizes advanced

practice. ISBE encourages micro-credential development and completion as a means of extending educator career ladders and recognizing educator accumulation of technical skills. The Bridge Project provides access to two micro-credentials on Equity Leadership and SEL student support, thereby expanding the number of principals participating in the new statewide program. Both micro-credentials are supported by ROEs, and both micro-credentials have been previously developed (and validated) through SEED grant investments.

- ISBE efforts to appropriate new principal mentoring support as a means of addressing educator supply shortages exacerbated by COVID-19. State leaders are seeking replicable, promising approaches for strengthening the bench of school leader and increasing principal workforce diversity. The Bridge Project provides an intensive new principal residency and induction model, which can serve as a proof of concept for future appropriations, if Bridge Project impact is observed.

The Bridge Project also aligns with IBHE's efforts, and IBHE commits to partnering with Bridge Project leaders to advocate and share strategies with universities to support their improvement work but also to invest the necessary funding to adequately support robust principal preparation throughout the state. The policy and practice recommendations from the University Consortium of Professional Practice will be supported by both ISBE and IBHE (that jointly oversee principal preparation programs) and will focus attention on the need for developing a robust pipeline of diverse educators.

Finally, The Bridge Project was designed with input from the Illinois P-20 Council, which includes key organizational stakeholders to influence local state policy and practice. That expectation was shared in letters of support from the IL Deputy Governor of Education (P-20

Council Chairperson) and Executive Director of TLEA (Chairperson for Teacher and Leadership Effectiveness Committee). The longstanding relationships that ROE staff have developed with policymakers and leaders at SEAs, professional associations, and teachers' unions speak to the organization's ability to engage stakeholders in collaborative efforts to improve state policy and secure public funding to sustain/scale effective programs.

## Capacity-Building for Dissemination and Replication

Bridge Project has great potential to be sustained and scaled in Illinois by ROEs and in other states by WestEd. ROE regional capacity-building efforts capitalize on existing, regional structures and partnerships with school districts. SEED funds will support ROEs in internal capacity for principal coaching, professional learning and central office transformation within their service regions. ROEs are legislatively created education agencies that provide supervision and support to all public schools in their area. By supporting the capacity for one ROE in each Service Area of the state, the success of their work can serve as a model to build statewide capacity to scale the work throughout Illinois. The focus on building the ROEs' capacity to serve as Area Service Centers for supporting leadership addresses a key policy gap in the state that was identified by Illinois School Leader Advisory Council, a taskforce that recommended the state develop a system "for school districts to access regional or neighborhood partnership 'hubs' to optimize and equalize resources for training and supporting principals throughout the state."<sup>61</sup>

The Bridge Project also expands WestEd's capacity for providing research-based, leadership professional learning and coaching nationally. WestEd has been addressing K-12 systems change, educator talent pipelines and leadership development for decades. WestEd's leadership development work has grown and expanded dramatically in the last two years to meet state,

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<sup>61</sup> Illinois School Leader Advisory Council, 2016

central office and school-level demand for leadership services. Currently, WestEd supports networked improvement efforts among principals, principal supervisors, and other central office administrators as a means of diversifying the educator workforce and achieving equity of students. The Bridge Project advances WestEd's capacity for online, equity-focused executive coaching to new and aspiring principals, and it deepens WestEd's engagement in central office transformation processes.

## **Project Dissemination Efforts**

While WestEd is leading The Bridge Project, the project will be conceptualized and enacted in partnership with ROEs, ISBE and other organizations that contribute to its success. The partnership also positions the project for successful dissemination efforts, with many partners contributing staff time and communications capacity. Many of these project partners and affiliates have signed letters of agreement in Appendix D.

We have planned the project so that timely, rigorously researched information can be disseminated. Products and discussions about The Bridge Project will focus on invariable/essential project elements and other more flexible/variable elements that can be tailored to specific contexts. The AIR independent evaluation will identify the elements most consequential for successful implementation and elements that can be adapted to meet the needs of an individual principal or school contexts. Bridge Project will highlight implementation variation because the project offers lessons learned for future replication. To this end, Bridge Project includes a short-term evaluation process call Rapid Cycle Evaluation (RCE) for monitoring fidelity of implementation across all schools and will identify the variable and invariable elements of the model.

- WestEd maintains considerable capacity for wide dissemination of Bridge Project

accomplishments, through the Center for the Future of Teaching website, WestEd website, associated social media platforms, research reports and policy briefs. Proposed WestEd staff support two Regional Educational Laboratories and four Regional Comprehensive Centers, which interface with state-level agencies and associations that work to build principal pipelines.

- ROE staff maintain strong, state-level and regional relationships with professional associations, principal preparation programs and other entities. ROE staff has capacity to speak at statewide forums/conferences (e.g. Illinois Principals Association, Illinois' Human Resource Directors Conference) and strategically disseminate briefs to policymakers, superintendents and others.
- WestEd and ROE staff members are also active in national professional organizations, which can serve as dissemination venues. As staff resumes indicate, staff are active members in American Educational Research Association, University Council of Education Administration, National Association of Secondary School Principals and National Association of Elementary School Principals.
- American Institutes for Research also maintains extensive research networks, which can provide dissemination mechanisms for study findings. The proposed AIR staff members regularly speak at SREE, AERA, and regional educational laboratory conferences.

# SECTION C: MANAGEMENT PLAN

## I. Measurable Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, and Activities

The Bridge Project supports aspiring principals of color to be effective, equity-oriented leaders in ELA and mathematics, and to attain a principal position in high-need schools through an advanced residency and micro-credentialing. In addition to an innovative design, the project will be well-managed by expert partners with over ten years of experience working together, in Illinois. Table 3 outlines the goals, objectives, targets, measures, and activities in project design.

**Table 3. Bridge Project Goals, Objectives, Targets, Measures and Activities**

<p><b>OBJECTIVE 1: RESIDENCY</b> - 50 aspiring principals of color, who have attained Type 75 certificates and who are assistant principals or teacher-leaders in high-need schools will participate in a yearlong, paid, full-time residency (Year 1-2) where they are supported by trained supervising principals and mentors.</p>
<p><b>OUTCOME/TARGETS 1:</b> (Years 1-2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100% of Bridge Project participants will be aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals that hold a Type 75 certification.</li><li>• 80% of Bridge Project participants serve schools with concentrations of high-need students (GPRA).</li><li>• 90% of Bridge Project participants will fully complete the principal residency program.</li><li>• 80% of Bridge Project participants will successfully complete one or more microcredentials advanced certificate by the end of the residency.</li><li>• 70% of ELA and mathematics teachers on teams lead by Bridge Project participants will report statistically-significant, positive improved school culture and instructional leadership support on the statewide 5 Essentials school culture survey which has been previously validated and shows positive correlation with ELA and mathematics student achievement scores.</li><li>• 90% of Bridge Project participants will lead teachers in <i>Cycles of Inquiry</i> to improve ELA and mathematics instructional quality and social-emotional support.</li><li>• 30% of Bridge Project residency schools will display improvement in teacher retention.</li></ul>
<p><b>MEASURES:</b> Aspiring principal demographics (self-reported) and position information; Student scores on state assessments in ELA and Math; BloomBoard record of micro- credential completion by aspiring principals and coaches; Number of aspiring principals of color who complete the Illinois Teacher Performance Evaluation training; Number of aspiring principals that complete ELA and math action research projects and provide documentation of results; Coach/mentor logs; Training attendance tracking data; Student scores on the Peer Social Emotional Learning scale; Teacher responses on the Illinois 5 Essentials Survey; The Bridge Project annual principal survey.</p>
<p><b>ACTIVITIES:</b> Mentors meet monthly for on-going training; Mentors meet monthly with supervising principals; Mentors and supervising principals are trained on Cycles of Inquiry and SOPA coaching to support residency program components; Aspiring principals complete training, including the Illinois</p>

Teacher Performance Evaluation, Cycles of Inquiry, and micro-credentials; Aspiring principals collaborate with teacher teams to complete action research projects in ELA and math; Aspiring principals participate in weekly supervisor and mentoring sessions; Aspiring principals, coaches, mentor principals, AIR evaluators, and project directors collaborate with regular feedback loops, and monitoring fidelity of implementation and progress toward goals; Project staff and AIR collaborate to collect and report data quarterly and annually (regionally and project-wide) regarding fidelity of implementation, necessary improvement, and progress toward goals; Bridge Project Directors and staff gather annual enrollment data in participating schools to calculate annual cost per student; Advisory committee meetings held bi-annually to review progress, make decisions on any necessary mid-course corrections, and work on sustainability; AIR submits findings for Bridge Project evaluation study for panel review and approval as study that meets WWC Standards with Reservations (GPRA).

**GOAL 2: INDUCTION SUPPORT**- Bridge Project aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals transition to become highly-effective principals, particularly for high-need students.

**OUTCOME/TARGETS 2:** (Year 2-3)

- 80% of aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals that complete The Bridge Project residency will be hired as new principals.
- 75% of aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals that complete The Bridge Project residency will be hired as new principals *in high need schools*.
- 80% of Bridge Project principals will participate in on-going professional development and coaching at 2 hours per month.
- 80% of Bridge Project principals will remain in schools that serve concentrations of high need students after one year.
- 80% of Bridge Project principals will be rated as highly-effective (GPRA).
- 40% of Bridge Project induction schools will have increases in teacher retention.

**MEASURES:** Student scores on state assessments in ELA and Math; BloomBoard record of micro-credential completion by new principals; Number of new principals that participate in on-going coaching support; Coach log data; Student scores on the Peer Social Emotional Learning scale; Teacher responses on Illinois 5 Essentials Survey; ISBE teacher and administrator employment data; Bridge Project annual principal survey.

**ACTIVITIES:** New principals participate in monthly coaching sessions; Coaches meet monthly for on-going training; New principals, coaches, AIR evaluators, and project directors monitor fidelity of implementation and progress toward goals; Project staff and AIR collaborate to collect and report data quarterly and annually (regionally and project-wide) regarding fidelity of implementation, necessary improvement, and progress toward goals; Bridge Project Directors and staff complete required reports to the US Dept of Ed including data on the participation of new principals; Bridge Project staff meet weekly to support on-going project operations through the use of an expanded GANTT chart; Advisory committee meetings will be held bi-annually to review data, plan future activities, make decisions on any necessary mid-course corrections, and work on sustainability.

**GOAL 3: LEA PRINCIPAL PIPELINE SUPPORT**- Central office administrators and other partners will improve principal pipeline conditions to support aspiring principals of color career advancement.

**OUTCOME/TARGET 3:**

- 90% of Bridge Project local education agencies will convene a district transformation team of up to 10 people, focused on principal pipeline improvement.

- 90% of participating Bridge Project local education agencies will complete the *Principal Pipeline Self-Reflection* process and launch *Cycles of Inquiry* for principal pipeline improvement.
- 90% of participating Bridge Project local education agencies will participate in 120 minutes of coaching per month.
- 50% of participating local education agencies' principals will report improved working conditions, as measured by the 5 Essentials survey.

**MEASURES:** The Wallace Foundation Principal Pipeline Self-Assessment guide; Coaching log data; Participant demographic data; Principal responses to 5 Essentials school culture survey.

**ACTIVITIES:** District transformation teams of up to 10 convene monthly, over a nine-month period; District transformation teams complete The Wallace Foundation Principal Pipeline Assessment guide; District transformation teams attend formal professional development network meetings; LEAs complete a theory of action; District transformation complete s complete *Cycles of Inquiry* improvement efforts; Principals complete 5 Essentials survey

## II. Plan to Achieve Goals on Time and Within Budget

The Bridge Project is designed to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget and will be led by Project Directors and project staff with extensive experience with managing and successfully completing large federally-funded grant projects of this size and scope (for detail, see Appendix J). The ***project management plan*** includes an overview of the management structure, personnel involved, key responsibilities, an implementation timeline aligned to activities, and indicators of progress toward goals. A detailed budget narrative is attached to this proposal, indicating how Bridge Project funds will be allocated for each year of the project. Each year's budget is adequate to fully implement the proposed activities with fidelity to the proposal model.

Bridge Project will rely on successful strategies established through previous grant projects administered by WestEd. Those ***key strategies for ensuring the project progresses on time and on budget***, include:

1. Building upon existing trusting relationships among partners founded on regular and open communication aimed at meeting organizational needs and achieving mutually developed goals;

2. Identifying variable and invariable elements of the model to ensure fidelity in a wide variety of settings located around the state;
3. Determining cost projections and staffing needs up front to ensure adequate resource allocation;
4. Focusing from the beginning on building the capacity of partner organizations to sustain the work after the grant ends;
5. Developing multiple networks, mechanisms, and platforms for partners to communicate within and across regions; and,
6. Enacting rigorous process for continuous improvement that values/includes perspectives of all partners and data from the external evaluation exploring fidelity of implementation and impact.

Table 4 outlines the milestones and timeline aligned to The Bridge Project intervention, external evaluation, continuous improvement process, and management system.

**Table 4: The Bridge Project Timeline & Milestones**

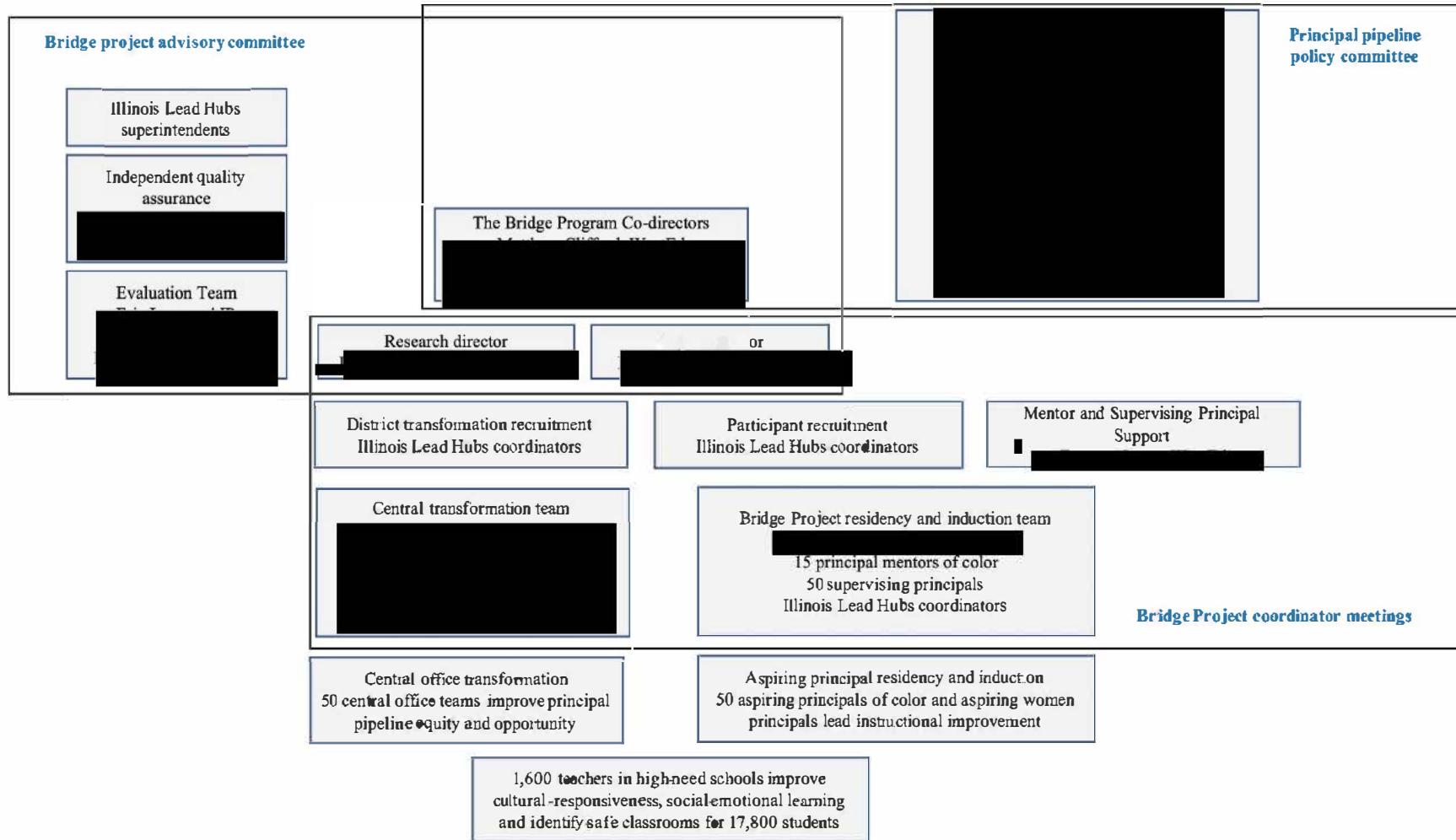
Milestones	Y1- 2023	Y2- 2024	Y3- 2025
	Spr Fall	Spr Fall	Spr Fall
<i>Readiness for Implementation</i>			
Finalize participant and district recruitment	X		
Initial training for coaches & mentor principals of color	X		
Convene state-wide advisory committee			
Launch aspiring principal coaching and mentoring		X	
Launch aspiring principals' professional development series		X	
Determine residency placements and scopes of work		X	
<i>On-Going Activities</i>			
Monthly Coaches mtgs./trainings	X	X	X
Weekly coaching and mentoring sessions for aspiring principals		X	X
Monthly SOPA central office principal pipeline sessions (Cohort 1)		X	X
Monthly SOPA central office principal pipeline sessions (Cohort 2)			X
Aspiring principal residency experiences		X	X

Aspiring principal career management meetings	X	X				
Bridge Project principal induction and mentoring, as new principal			X	X	X	
Coach and supervising principal quality monitoring and support	X	X	X	X	X	
Coach support of instructional leadership teams (Induction Year)					X	X
Identification of viable new principal job openings	X	X				
Leadership for Equity and SEL micro-credential completion			X		X	
Weekly Bridge Project management team meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X
Monthly Bridge Project curriculum committee meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X
District transformation support network meetings		X	X	X	X	X
Quarterly Bridge Project advisory committee meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarterly State-level principal pipeline leadership meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b><i>Data Collection &amp; Analysis</i></b>						
Fidelity of implementation data collection	X	X	X	X	X	X
School demographic & performance data collection	X	X	X	X	X	X
5 Essentials survey data collection (statewide)		X		X		X
Student assessments	X	X	X		X	
Aspiring principal job seeking behaviors survey				X		X
Teacher and principal retention analysis			X		X	
Annual aspiring principal surveys		X		X		X
Annual aspiring principal and partner interviews		X		X		X
Quarterly formative evaluation reports to project leadership team	X	X	X	X	X	X
Annual Evaluation Reports		X		X		X

***Oversight, Key Personnel, Responsibilities and Time Commitments:*** The Bridge Project management team has significant experience leading statewide principal pipeline improvement efforts and federal grants. While WestEd is leading The Bridge Project, project administration capitalizes on a 10-year old partnership between staff members, regional offices of education and the state. WestEd, the six ROEs, ISBE, IBHE and a collaborative of university faculty and AIR researchers. (See Appendix D for formal MOUs and letters of support). Figure 2 outlines the Bridge project, including all partners.

As Figure 2 indicates, The Bridge Project is closely connected to, and is informed by, statewide efforts to improve the number and diversity of principals. The Bridge Project addresses a gap in statewide supports, and Bridge Project representatives will work with multiple advisory committees to fully integrate and sustain Bridge Project within state-level services. WestEd will act as fiscal agent for this project.

**Figure 2: Bridge Project Organizational Chart (See also Appendix B)**



The Bridge Project will be co-directed by [REDACTED] (WestEd), [REDACTED] (WestEd) and [REDACTED] (Illinois Lead Hubs). The co-directors will be responsible for administration and fiscal management of the project, including: 1) manage day-to-day operations and provide project direction; 2) oversee implementation in collaboration with ROEs, 3) coordinate data sharing with the external evaluators; 4) ensure compliance with performance reporting; 5) facilitate the continuous improvement process; 6) promote collaboration among. [REDACTED] will oversee WestEd Supervisors of Principals Academy training, which addresses mentor and supervisor training and district transformation. [REDACTED] will oversee instructional leadership training and school culture improvement training for aspiring principals during residency and induction periods.

The six Illinois Lead Hubs regional offices of education will contribute The Bridge Project management (see Figure 3 for statewide map of service areas). [REDACTED] will co-direct the project with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] has convened the Illinois Lead Hubs partnership for the past five years. [REDACTED] will chair The Bridge Project Advisory Committee and Bridge Project Superintendents Committee. [REDACTED] of the Illinois Lead Hubs will interface with AIR researchers. Their role with this grant is not only to direct services within their ROE but within the larger service area where they are located.

Daily project oversight will be provided by [REDACTED], a former Chicago Public School area superintendent and WestEd principal coach. [REDACTED] will ensure strong project communications and support are provided to all parties.

**Figure 3: Statewide ROE Service Area Map (see also Appendix I)<sup>62</sup>**

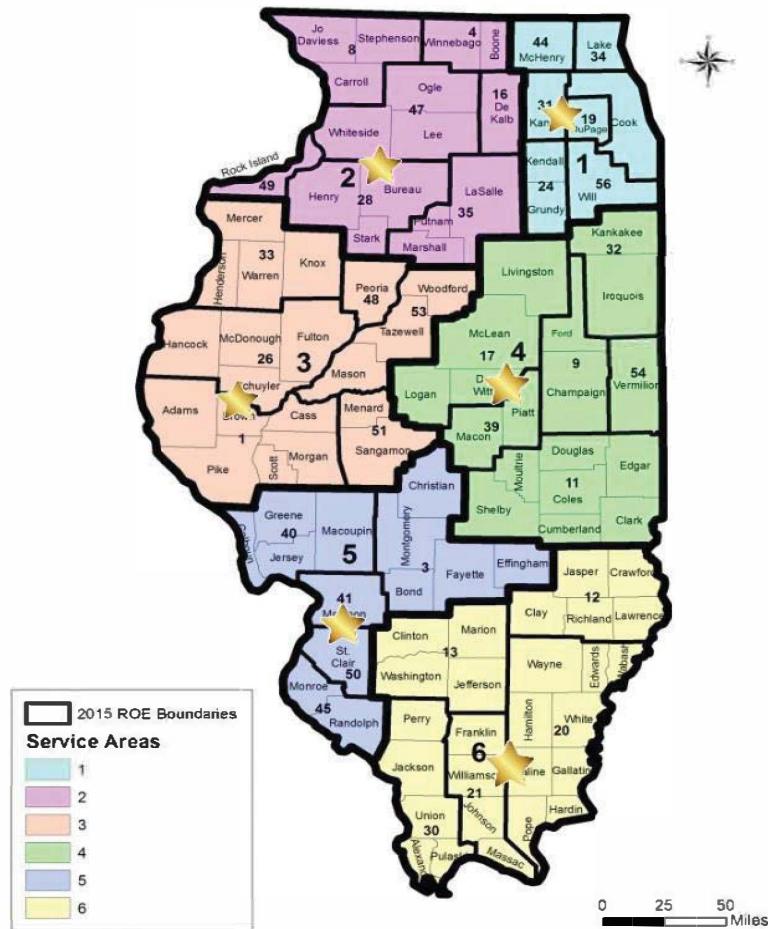


Table 5 below provides a list of key personnel involved in The Bridge Project, their backgrounds, amount of time devoted to The Bridge Project; and their roles in the project. Key project personnel were selected based on their professional experience, subject-matter expertise, and commitment to the project's goals. Relationships and trust built through previous work will mitigate challenges to collaboration and reduce delays that can occur in the initial phase of project implementation. (See Appendix B for curriculum vitae/resumes.)

<sup>62</sup> Stars indicate the location of partner ROEs (referred to as LEAD ROE) located within each Service Area.

**Table 5: Key Personnel & Responsibilities**

Name and Job Title	Affiliation	Time (FTE)	Bridge Project Role
<b>Project Leads</b>			
[REDACTED], Director of education leadership research	WestEd	.25 FTE	Co-Lead: Lead designer for coach, supervising principal training; advisory committee lead; SOPA lead
[REDACTED] Co-Director of TEAM Lead and Partners to Lead Projects (SEED grants)	Illinois Lead Hubs ROE17	.25 FTE	Co-Lead: Provide leadership, planning, and administrative oversight to the project
[REDACTED], Director of leadership professional learning	WestEd	.25 FTE	Co-Lead; professional development coordinator; central office transformation lead
[REDACTED], leadership learning director	WestEd	.6 FTE	Project director, trainer: Manage daily operations of Bridge Project; central office transformation lead
[REDACTED] Co-Director of TEAM Lead Project (SEED)	ROE17	.25 FTE	Evaluation liaison: Manage fidelity of implementation data; interface with evaluation team
[REDACTED], financial analyst	WestEd	.15 FTE	Financial oversight
[REDACTED], division lead	WestEd	.04 FTE	Project management, quality assurance and partner coordination.
<b>Partners Supporting Recruitment</b>			
[REDACTED], coordinator	Illinois Lead Hubs ROE19	0.25 FTE	Coordinator for Bridge Project within Region; District and aspiring principal recruitment; evaluation support; Participate on regional advisory committee (RAC) for the project.
[REDACTED] coordinator	Illinois Lead Hubs ROE1	0.25 FTE	
[REDACTED], coordinator	Illinois Lead Hubs ROE28	0.25 FTE	
[REDACTED], coordinator	ROE#17	.25 FTE	
[REDACTED] coordinator	ROE #19	.25 FTE	Coordinator for Bridge Project within Region; District and aspiring principal recruitment; evaluation support; Participate on regional advisory committee (RAC) for the project.
[REDACTED], coordinator	ROE#28	.25 FTE	
TBD	ROE#21	.25 FTE	
<b>Coaches</b>			
Prudence Minton, central office transformation specialist	WestEd	.2 FTE	Central office transformation coach

[REDACTED], central office transformation specialist	WestEd	.2 FTE	
[REDACTED], central office transformation specialist	WestEd	.2 FTE	
[REDACTED], district support specialist for TEAM Lead (SEED)	ROE #17	.2 FTE	
[REDACTED], district support specialist	ROE19	.2 FTE	
15 principal mentors of color			Aspiring principals of color mentors, who facilitate residency learning and support post-residency induction.
<b>Key Evaluation Team Members</b>			
[REDACTED], principal economist	AIR	Project based	Co-Principal Investigator
[REDACTED], researcher	AIR	Project based	Project director
[REDACTED] principal researcher	AIR	Project based	Co-Principal Investigator
<b>In-Kind Staff Supports</b>			
[REDACTED], elected regional superintendent	ROE #28	in kind	Oversee district participation in the project and serve on the Project Advisory Committee
[REDACTED], elected regional superintendent	ROE#1	in kind	Oversee ROE participation in the project; serve on Project Advisory Committee
[REDACTED], elected regional superintendent	ROE#17	in kind	Oversee ROE participation in the project; serve on Project Advisory Committee
[REDACTED], elected regional superintendent	ROE #19	in kind	Oversee district participation in the project and serve on the Project Advisory Committee
[REDACTED] elected regional superintendent	ROE#21	in kind	Oversee district participation in the project and serve on the Project Advisory Committee
[REDACTED] director of educational leadership	Illinois State Board of Education	in kind	Project advisory committee; Sustainability planning
[REDACTED] director	Illinois rural school network	in kind	In-kind contributions identified in letter of support
[REDACTED], director	Advance Illinois	in kind	In-kind contributions identified in letter of support
[REDACTED], director	The Black Educator Advocacy Coalition	in-kind	Project advisory committee; Sustainability planning

Illinois Board of Higher Ed Staff		in kind	In-kind contributions identified in letter of support
Illinois Educators Association Staff		in kind	In-kind contributions identified in letter of support
Illinois Area Regional Superintendents Staff		in kind	In-kind contributions identified in letter of support
Latino Policy Forum staff		in kind	In-kind contributions identified in letter of support

The co-leads, [REDACTED], have a successful track record of managing large federal, state, and foundation grants, in partnership with other organizations. [REDACTED] currently manages a portfolio of educational leadership research and professional learning valued at approximately \$5M per year, leads the Supervisors of Principals' Academy in multiple states, and co-leads WestEd's Education Leadership and Systems Design content area. [REDACTED] directs WestEd's Educational Leadership and Systems Design team, which provides professional learning and coaching to aspiring and current school principals throughout California and Arizona. [REDACTED] co-directs a [REDACTED] U.S. Department of Education SEED project ([REDACTED] and an EIR grant. Clifford and Hunt have worked in partnership for over 10 years together, and both have an established track record of fiscal and project management.

The Bridge Project management team oversees the aspiring principal coaching program; induction program; and central office transformation program. The management team is responsible for strong project management, fiscal oversight, and quality control of services.

Critical to the success of the project will be the expanded role ROEs will have in policy collaborations with ISBE, IBHE, and Governor's Office. To maximize the impact of the robust partnerships, partnering ROEs have outlined the specific expectations and responsibilities in formal Memoranda of Understanding (Appendix D includes partner MOUs and Letters of Support that outline commitments of in-kind contributions). Policy partners, including IL Deputy Governor of Education, State Superintendent, Executive Director of IBHE, and other key

organizational partners will be integral in communicating with policymakers and promoting Bridge Project sustainability and replication as part of a statewide policy agenda.

### III. Feedback Loops and Continuous Improvement Processes

Bridge Project includes multiple systems of support in which formative evaluation data and feedback are regularly shared and used to inform continuous improvement. Similar structures have been utilized with previous projects directed by WestEd and Illinois Leadership Hubs, and they have provided insight into necessary modifications to processes or resource allocation, while ensuring the integrity of the original project design and evaluations study. The proposed feedback system is outlined in Table 6.

**Table 6: System of Feedback Loops and Continuous Improvement Process (see also Appendix H)**

<i>Structure</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Principal pipeline policy Committee (Quarterly meetings)	Convenes state-level policy advocates and researchers in conversation about Bridge Project program implementation, effectiveness; Ensures Bridge Project activities are coordinated with other state-level and regional programs and is non-duplicative with other programs; Considers long-term sustainability of Bridge Project in policy, practice
Bridge Project Advisory Committee (Quarterly meetings)	Brings together Illinois Lead Hubs, ROE coordinators, and Bridge Project lead staff to review data, determine the need for any mid-course corrections, and plan next steps; the key focus will be on fidelity of implementation and sustainability of the project beyond the life of the grant.
Bridge Project Residency and Induction Team (Weekly meetings)	Management team for all training and materials for Bridge Project residency and induction program, including training for principal supervisory and coaches. Design team will also support work of Equity and SEL micro-credentials.
Central Office Transformation Team (weekly)	Management team for central office transformation services, with responsibilities for network design, implementation.
Bridge Project Coordinator Meetings (Monthly)	Bridge Project staff and ROE coordinators will connect bi-weekly through a virtual platform to collaborate and participate in a shared decision-making process designed to attend to the necessary tension between standardization and customization of supports designed to ensure project success.
Evaluator meetings (Every two weeks)	Zoom meetings will be held with Bridge Project staff and AIR to monitor fidelity of implementation, plan for upcoming presentations and reports, and address challenges or modifications to project.

## SECTION D: PROJECT EVALUATION

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The Bridge Project theory of action is based on the premise that a two-year, intensive, paid, post-certification, job-embedded residency and induction experience with formal professional learning and coaching in inclusive, culturally-responsive, and content-specific instructional leadership practices in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. During residency (Project Years 1, 2), the intervention is hypothesized to improve (a) teacher working conditions within schools, (b) teacher and leader retention in schools, and ultimately, (c) student academic performance in ELA and Mathematics, and (d) motivation for participants to pursue school leadership positions in high-need schools. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) will conduct an independent, rigorous evaluation of The Bridge Project that is aligned with the program theory of action and includes both formative and summative components.<sup>63</sup>

### I. Evidence about Effectiveness Designed to Meet WWC Standards

The outcome evaluation examines Bridge Project impact on the intended student, school, teacher, and leader outcomes (Figure 1). AIR will use quasi-experimental research design, valid and reliable outcome measures, and analytic methods to produce effectiveness evidence that meets *What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) 4.1 Standards with Reservations*.

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#### Exhibit 1. Outcome Evaluation Program Outcomes, Research Questions, and Data Sources

Program Outcomes	Research Questions	Data Sources
Increased student achievement in ELA and mathematics	<b>RQ1:</b> What is the impact of The Bridge Project on students' achievement in ELA and Mathematics? <b>RQ1a:</b> Do effects differ for students by race, English learner status,	Student Illinois Assessment of Readiness and SAT test scores and extant data on student and school characteristics from

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<sup>63</sup> The Bridge Project evaluation study focuses on program impact during participant residencies. Should The Bridge Project receive funding for Years 4 and 5, the AIR evaluation team will conduct an impact analysis of placing Bridge Project participants in high-need schools, as principals.

	gender and socio-economic status?	Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).
Improved teacher working conditions	<b>RQ2:</b> What is the impact of The Bridge Project on teacher working conditions? <b>RQ2a:</b> Do effects differ by school characteristics? <sup>64</sup>	School-level scores from the <i>5Essentials Survey</i> and extant data on school characteristics
Increased teacher and leader retention	<b>RQ3:</b> What is the impact of The Bridge Project on teacher and leader retention? <b>RQ3a:</b> Do effects differ across teachers and leaders with different characteristics? <sup>65</sup>	ISBE teacher-level and administrator-level employment and demographic data

To estimate program impacts on student achievement (RQ1), teacher working conditions (RQ2), teacher and leader retention (RQ3), AIR will employ a matched comparison group design using propensity score matching.<sup>66</sup> This design allows for a rigorous, cost-efficient outcomes evaluation with large samples of students in different grades and subjects across multiple regions and districts served by The Bridge Project. During the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years, The Bridge Project will engage fifty aspiring principals of color<sup>67</sup> in their current schools, which enroll a total of approximately 17,100 students each year, of whom approximately 60% qualify as high-need. All fifty aspiring principals of color and aspiring women principals will have attained an administrative certification (called “Type 75”) but not pursued a principalship.

Three comparison schools will be matched to each school with a participating aspiring principal of color and/or aspiring women principal in The Bridge Project, and schools will be “exact matched” on school level, so that elementary schools are compared to elementary schools, middle schools to middle schools, and high schools to high schools. Across the 200 study schools (50 intervention and 150 comparison schools), approximately 68,400 students (17,100 in intervention schools and 51,300 in comparison schools) in grades 3–8 and 11 and 7,000 teachers

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<sup>64</sup> School characteristic variables of interest include school grade band, urbanicity, regional office of education catchment area, student population size.

<sup>65</sup> Variables of interest include teacher and leader gender, ethnicity.

<sup>66</sup> Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983

<sup>67</sup> Principals of color include administrators who may self-identify as Black, LatinX, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and Multi-racial.

(1,750 in intervention schools and 5,250 in comparison schools), across five regions in Illinois are expected to contribute to the impact evaluation each year.

The condition for comparison schools will be “business-as-usual” (i.e., whatever would otherwise be available to the group targeted for the intervention). Comparison-group schools will be identified before AIR receives outcome data for intervention and comparison schools. To meet WWC Group Design Standards with Reservations for studies with cluster-level assignment, AIR will demonstrate that individuals in the analytic sample are representative of the clusters (schools), and that the treatment and comparison clusters (schools) are equivalent at baseline. These criteria will be demonstrated for each outcome measure.

To meet the baseline equivalence requirement, AIR will demonstrate that the standardized mean difference (SMD) of baseline measures (as specified in the relevant WWC protocols) between intervention and comparison schools is less than 0.25. The statistical models AIR implements to measure program impact will include controls for baseline outcome measures and individual student (for RQs 1), school (for RQs 1–2), educator (for RQ3) characteristics. In analyses where the level of observation does not match the level of treatment assignment (schools of participating aspiring principals), AIR’s statistical models will account for clustering of students (RQs 1) or teachers (RQ3) within schools.<sup>68</sup>

To determine whether the impact of The Bridge Project on student achievement differs for high-need students (RQ1a), AIR will estimate a version of the statistical model that interacts the treatment indicator with a binary measure of student disadvantage. AIR will then evaluate the magnitude and statistical significance of the estimated moderator effect as measured by the coefficient on the interaction term. AIR will perform analogous analyses to determine whether

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<sup>68</sup> Abadie, Athey, Imbens, & Woolridge, 2017

school characteristics moderate program impact on teacher working conditions (RQ3a), and whether educator characteristics moderate program impacts on both teacher and leader retention (for RQ4a). These analyses will help deepen understanding of the relative effects of the program in different contexts.

Power calculations performed using PowerUp! Dong and Maynard indicated that the minimum detectable effect sizes (MDES) for student-level outcomes (ELA and math achievement and attendance) range from 0.13 with no attrition to 0.15 at 20% attrition of aspiring principals.<sup>69</sup> Kraft characterizes effect sizes in this range as “moderate” effect sizes, and effect sizes in this range are educationally meaningful, equivalent to increasing average teacher effectiveness at intervention schools by more than one standard deviation.<sup>70</sup> The estimated MDES for school-level outcomes (teacher working conditions and principal retention) range from 0.33 with no attrition to 0.36 at 20% attrition, which would allow detecting “large” differences under Kraft’s benchmark. Details for the statistical models and power analysis are presented in Appendix H.

A 2017 national survey of public school principals found that approximately 18% of principals had left their position since the year before.<sup>71</sup> Because aspiring leaders who commit to participating in The Bridge Project are likely to be more committed to their roles than the “average” school leader, AIR expects that less than 20% of aspiring principals who begin program participation in 2023–24 will leave their position, and thus the sample for the impact evaluation, in 2024–25.

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<sup>69</sup> Dong & Maynard, 2013

<sup>70</sup> Kraft, 2020; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010

<sup>71</sup> Goldring & Taie, 2018

## **Objective Measures that Provide Valid and Reliable Evidence on Intended Outcomes**

Program impact for all outcomes will be measured at the end of the second full year of program implementation (2024–25). To provide an interim assessment of progress toward achieving intended program outcomes, AIR will also report impact estimates at the end of the first full year of program implementation (2023–24). AIR will measure program impact on **student achievement** in grades 3–8 using ELA and mathematics scores on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) and in grade 11 using ELA and math scores on the SAT. Beginning in spring 2017, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) began requiring all public-school students in grade 11 to take the SAT. The SAT serves as the state assessment for state and federal accountability, and the SAT is provided at no cost to public school districts in Illinois and is offered to students during the school day. To make ELA and math scores comparable across grades and years, AIR will use sample means and standard deviations to standardize IAR and SAT scores to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one within each grade, subject, and year. Program impact on **student attendance** will be measured using student-level data from ISBE, following guidelines from the WWC Review Protocol for Supporting Learning Environment Interventions on using student attendance as an outcome measure.<sup>72</sup>

To measure **teacher working conditions**, AIR will use school-level results from the *5Essentials Survey*, a reliable, validated school conditions and culture survey administered annually and statewide to teachers and students.<sup>73</sup> The *5Essentials Survey* is administered to all prekindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade teachers and all 4<sup>th</sup>- through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students in a school.

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<sup>72</sup> What Works Clearinghouse, 2020

<sup>73</sup> Hart, Young, Chen, Zou, & Allensworth, 2020

The survey provides information on how teachers and students perceive their school along five dimensions: Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment, and Ambitious Instruction. Program impact on educator retention will be measured using administrative personnel data from ISBE, following guidelines on measuring program impact on retention of teachers and leaders from the WWC Review Protocol for School Leadership.<sup>74</sup>

## I. Performance Feedback and Periodic Assessments of Progress Toward Outcomes

The formative evaluation will examine fidelity and quality of implementation, using objective measures to provide periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended project outcomes. The performance measures are aligned with the intended project outcomes and will use mixed methods with quantitative and qualitative data to measure project progress toward promoting leader diversity in schools across the United States (Exhibit 2).

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**Exhibit 2. Formative Evaluation Program Outcomes, Research Questions, and Data Sources**

<b>Program Outcomes</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
Activities are completed as intended, with the expected level of resident participation	<b>RQ4:</b> To what extent is The Bridge Project implemented with fidelity? <b>RQ5a:</b> What factors support or inhibit program implementation?	Bridge Project participant training attendance data, coaching logs, certificate of completion for micro-credentials, review of Bridge Project program documents, interviews with WestEd and Illinois Lead Hubs staff members
Participants report positively on the quality and utility of the program	<b>RQ5:</b> To what extent do Bridge Project participants find key program components to be useful and of high quality?	Bridge Project Satisfaction Survey, Illinois Lead Hubs interviews with program participants
Participants report they are more likely to pursue a principalship following the second year of program participation	<b>RQ6:</b> To what extent does the number of participants who report they are likely to pursue a principalship increase between the 1st and 2nd years of the program?	Bridge Project Aspiring Principal Job-Seeking Behaviors Survey

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<sup>74</sup> What Works Clearinghouse, 2019

To assess fidelity of implementation (RQ4), AIR, WestEd, and the Illinois Lead Hubs will develop an implementation fidelity rubric and examine adaptations and challenges in implementation. AIR, WestEd, and the Illinois Lead Hubs will identify specific implementation indicators and associated thresholds for program delivery, activities, and participation, aligned to the key components of The Bridge Project logic model: an aspiring principal residency that includes formal training, structured coaching, and on-the-job experience; career mentoring by a trained coach, who is a former, effective principal and a person of color; and completion of the Illinois' Leadership for Equity and Social-Emotional Learning micro-credentials.

The Illinois Lead Hubs will collect participant training attendance data, coaching logs, and certificates of completion for micro-credentials and deliver these formative datasets in file layouts specified by AIR. AIR will in turn analyze these datasets along with Bridge Project program documents to determine whether expected thresholds for adequate implementation are met for the implementation indicators in 2023–24 and 2024–25. The analyses will aggregate indicators across aspiring principals of color to produce frequency estimates of core program activity implementation overall and will also examine variations in implementation across participants and schools. This method will provide a quantitative and replicable assessment of the extent to which program features were implemented as expected.

To help ensure that implementation data provide objective measures of program activities, the Illinois Lead Hubs will collect attendance data at the completion of each training session, and mentors will be reminded to submit coaching logs within 48 hours of completing the coaching sessions. AIR will process and review implementation data monthly to identify and address potential individual and systematic errors, missing items, irregularities, or duplicates in the data,

and formal reports on program implementation will be delivered to WestEd and the Illinois Lead Hubs biannually.

To obtain participants' feedback on The Bridge Project's progress toward achieving intended program outcomes, the Illinois Lead Hubs will survey participants annually using two surveys: The Bridge Project Satisfaction Survey and The Bridge Project Aspiring Principal Job-Seeking Behaviors Survey. This Bridge Project Satisfaction Survey will solicit participant feedback on their perceptions of program quality and utility, as well as their perceptions on the extent to which Bridge Project helped them achieve the program's objective of assisting participants to become highly effective in improving their schools, thereby gaining necessary experience to attain an open principal position at their own or another school (RQ5). The Bridge Project Aspiring Principal Job-Seeking Behaviors Survey will ask participants to report whether they are likely to pursue a principalship and other job-seeking behaviors (RQ6).

Each year, the Illinois Lead Hubs will deliver to AIR participating aspiring principals' responses to these surveys in file layouts specified by AIR. AIR will then examine the distribution of responses to individual survey items from each administration to track and report participants' perspectives on the quality and utility of the program, how likely participants are to pursue a principalship, and the extent to which variations in participant responses are associated with participant characteristics.

To provide more nuanced evidence on progress toward achieving intended outcomes, AIR will use qualitative data from interviews with WestEd and Illinois Lead Hubs staff to elicit perspectives on facilitators and barriers of successful program implementation (RQ4). In addition, the Illinois Lead Hubs will conduct interviews with participants, focusing on participants' perceptions of program quality and utility, as well as their perceptions on the extent

to which The Bridge Project helped them gain experience necessary to attain an open principal position at their own or another school (RQ5).

AIR will use findings from the evaluation to assess progress toward achieving intended outcomes and share these findings through regular check-in meetings with WestEd and the Illinois Lead Hubs. In Years 1 to 3 AIR will also submit an annual report that is aligned to the RQs and highlights key implementation findings and outcomes that WestEd and the Illinois Lead Hubs can use formatively to make iterative improvements to ensure student, school, teacher, and leader outcomes are met. In Year 3, the final report will also include outcome findings and highlight the extent to which The Bridge Project achieved its intended outcomes.

## **Guidance on Replication of Project Activities and Strategies**

The Bridge Project management plan invests in dissemination and influence on the field. The proposed evaluation will inform development and generate guidance for future scaling through both its formative and outcome evaluations. AIR will document Bridge Project implementation, including key components and adaptations, as part of the formative evaluation. AIR will pre-register The Bridge Project impact study details, including the design summary, confirmatory contrasts, and impact models, in the Registry of Efficacy and Effectiveness Studies, updating the registry if and when changes are needed. The final brief will be published on AIR's website and presented at conferences to ensure that information about program effectiveness can guide implementation of The Bridge Project by other organizations. AIR will also write and publish a journal article and support WestEd and the Illinois Lead Hubs in disseminating evaluation results to parents, teachers, and school staff in participating districts.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The Bridge Project matching fund plan includes expansion the proposed research agenda. AIR, WestEd and Illinois Lead Hubs will pursue additional funding to support research in Years 2, 3 from philanthropic organizations such as the McCormick Foundation, Stone Foundation, Tracy Family Foundation. All three foundations have expressed support for the expanded agenda.

The program will capitalize on the insights gained from developing The Bridge Project to provide guidance for future implementation or testing of the program in other settings, building a strong foundation for future replication efforts. AIR will analyze a rich set of implementation data to assess both implementation fidelity and quality, which will be used to provide independent feedback to WestEd and the Illinois Lead Hubs throughout the grant period (RQs4–6). AIR will review data systematically across school sites, providing key information to inform future replication efforts. The evaluation also will provide guidance for subsequent replication and testing by exploring whether the program impact differs across student (RQs 1a), school (RQ2a) and educator (RQ3a) characteristics. These results from these moderator analyses will indicate whether The Bridge Project needs refinement to better support participants, their schools, and their students in specific settings and will provide insights to inform later efforts to scale.