

# NORTH CAROLINA

Leading North Carolina's Statewide Family Engagement Center to build capacity of schools, families, and communities for improved student development and family well-being.

Application for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) program,  
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number 84.310A

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March 11, 2022

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<b>Statewide Family Engagement Requirements Addressed in this Proposal</b>	
<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Page Numbers Addressing</b>
A description of the applicant's approach to family engagement in education. (Logic model/project plan)	<b>5-20</b>
A description of how the SEA and any partner organization will support the SFEC that will be operated by the applicant including a description of the SEA and any partner organization's commitment of such support. (Preliminary MOUs, letters of support)	<b>39 + Appendix 1</b>
A description of the applicant's plan for building a statewide infrastructure for family engagement in education that includes management and governance; statewide leadership; and, systemic services for families.	<b>7-20, 28-33</b>
A description of the applicant's demonstrated experience in providing training, information, and support to SEAs, LEAs, schools, educators, parents, and orgs in family engagement in education policies and practices that are effective for parents (including low income parents) and families, parents of English learners (as defined in this notice), minorities, students with disabilities, homeless children and youth in foster care, migrant students, including evaluation results, reporting, or other data exhibiting such experience.	<b>36-39 + Appendix B, C</b>
A description of the steps the applicant will take to target services to low-income parents and students.	<b>10-12</b>
<b>Assurances</b>	
Establish a special advisory committee, the membership of which includes parents (constitute majority), education professionals with expertise in improving services for disadvantaged students, representatives of local elementary and secondary schools, STUDENTS, business community, LEAs and SEAs	<b>11-12</b>
Use not less than 65 percent of funds to serve schools, LEAs, community-based orgs that serve high concentrations of disadvantaged students including English learners, minorities, students with disabilities, homeless children and youth in foster care, migrant students	<b>40</b>
Operate an SFEC of sufficient size, scope, and quality to ensure that the center is of sufficient size, scope and quality to serve SEAs, LEAs, and community-based organizations	<b>28-33</b>

Ensure that the SFEC will retain staff with the requisite training and experience to serve parents in the state.	<b>33-35</b>
Serve urban, suburban, and rural schools	<b>35</b>
Work with other SFECs and Parent Training and information centers and community and parent resource centers	<b>15</b>
Use not less than 30 percent of funds annually to establish or expand technical assistance for evidence-based parent education programs	<b>40</b>
Provide assistance to SEAs, LEAs, and community-based organizations that support family members in supporting student achievement	<b>13-15</b>
Work with LEAS, SEAs, educators, and parents to determine parental needs and the best means for delivery of services to address needs.	<b>13-15</b>
Conduct sufficient outreach to assist parents, including parents who may have a difficult time engaging with school or LEA	<b>9-20</b>
Conduct outreach to low-income students and parents, including low-income students and parents who are not proficient in English	<b>9-20</b>
An assurance that the applicant will conduct training programs in the community to improve adult literacy, including financial literacy	<b>13-20</b>
<b>Requirements</b>	
Assist parents in participating effectively in their children's education and to help their children meet challenging state academic standards	<b>15-20</b>
To engage in activities that will improve student academic achievement, including understanding of how parents can support learning in the classroom with activities at home and in after school and extracurricular programs	<b>15-20</b>
To communicate effectively with their children, teachers, school leaders, counselors, administrators, and other school personnel	<b>15-20</b>
To become active participants in the development, implementation, and review of school-parent compacts, family engagement in education policies, and school planning and improvement	<b>19</b>
To participate in the design and provision of assistance to students who are not making academic progress	<b>15-20</b>
To participate in state and local decision-making	<b>10-12, 19</b>
To train other parents	<b>15-20, 19</b>

In learning and using technology applied in their children's education	<b>18-19</b>
To develop and implement, in partnership with the SEA, statewide family engagement in education policy and systemic initiatives that will provide for a continuum of services to remove barriers for family engagement in education and support school reform efforts	<b>19</b>
To develop and implement parental policies under the ESEA.	<b>10-12, 19</b>

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) submits this proposal to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to carry out the North Carolina Statewide Family Engagement Center (NC SFEC) in partnership with a consortium of statewide organizations that include Book Harvest (BH), North Carolina Parents as Teachers (NCPAT), University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG), North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (SEA), and North Carolina LEAs in communities demonstrating the most need. The NC SFEC will provide an equitable, coordinated continuum of family engagement (FE) support designed to build the capacity of families, schools, and communities to address COVID-19 learning recovery and improved student and family well-being.

The pandemic has intensified the need for robust, cohesive, and reciprocal FE systems that lead to transformational impact on families, local school districts and communities, and the SEA (Alberty, 2021). Each partner will contribute their expertise to launch, implement, and sustain the NC SFEC through a collaborative vision of shared power between families, educators, and community members carried out through a collaborative governance structure, high quality training and technical assistance (TTA), high-impact FE programs, and aligned policy and advocacy initiatives.

This is an uncharted moment in the history of the United States public education system. The urgency and emphasis are not solely around the best ways in which to support student learning recovery but encompass additional factors essential to the overall well-being of students and families such as access to services that fulfill basic needs, positive social emotional development, and economic prosperity. Beyond this, those who support students and families have not been left unscathed. Many issues surrounding learning amidst the pandemic have become politicized, miring educators and administrators alike in unprecedented conflict around

public health decisions for which they are not trained or prepared. North Carolina is a microcosm of this national context.

While the pandemic has created new and urgent challenges for all families, those living in North Carolina were experiencing academic and economic disparities long before COVID-19. Despite high concentrations of world-class institutes of higher education and wealth, North Carolina ranks in the lowest quarter for poverty rates among all states at 38<sup>th</sup> (Welfare Info, 2019). The education and wealth disparities are glaring, especially when considering African American, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latinx residents, who make up the largest racial minority groups. Overall, these groups have less educational attainment than their white counterparts, the latter of which 87.3% have a high school diploma/equivalency and 30.4% a bachelor's degree. Specifically, African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic/Latinx adults have comparatively lower proportions of high school diplomas/equivalency (84.7%, 75.7%, and 59.5%, respectively) and bachelor's degrees (20.3%, 13.9% and 14.8%, respectively). Moreover, African American, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latinx residents are more likely to experience poverty than their white counterparts (12%) with rates of 23.5%, 25.5%, and 27.3%, respectively (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). The longer view is even more alarming. Today's income inequality is a harbinger for predicting wealth disparities in the future. National studies indicate that racial wealth disparity is even more pronounced than income inequality. A report conducted in partnership with the University of North Carolina Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity and a state-based Foundation, *Racial Wealth Disparity in North Carolina*, illuminates the bleak reality for residents (Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, 2010).

Income and education disparities are more pronounced depending on where residents live. North Carolina has the nation's second-largest enrollment of rural students (568,000), with more than one-third of all students residing in rural communities. A report from the Rural School and Community Trust cited North Carolina as the second highest priority state based on educational outcomes, college readiness, and policies (Showalter, D. 2018-19). Without a thriving, diverse economic tax base, it is more difficult for rural schools to fully enroll a student body and subsequently give students the exposure to extended support services and postsecondary career opportunities. Rural school districts in North Carolina have a per-pupil instructional spending average of more than \$1,000 below the national average. This disparity creates significant challenges for rural districts to provide the level of rigor and diversity of FE opportunities available in urban and suburban districts.

The current state of educational and economic inequity for North Carolina families is cause for serious concern and immediate, intensified action. A substantial body of research demonstrates that FE in education is a critical driver for student academic achievement and social development. Children whose parents are more involved with their education are more likely to have higher school attendance, achieve good grades and better test scores, have improved social emotional well-being, and are overall more adaptable and comfortable in a school setting (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Despite FE's well publicized efficacy, families facing the greatest external and structural barriers to engagement are still being left behind because current FE opportunities may not be accessible or relevant to them. Often, many FE strategies are designed and implemented by school administrators and practitioners without input from the families that they are trying to engage.



The opportunity to build an NC SFEC allows the consortium partners to take significant action by leveraging the power of FE in education while centering the state’s minority and rural-based families who have historically been underserved. The vision of the NC SFEC is to provide an equitable, coordinated continuum of family engagement support designed to build capacity of communities, schools, and families for improved student development and family well-being.

**A. Quality of the Project Design A1. The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that**

**framework.** FE in education is a shared responsibility, therefore the NC SFEC design is based in deep collaboration and informed by NCFL’s leadership and partnership on four existing SFECs as well as through its co-leadership of the national SFEC network, a Community of Practice (CoP) that promotes knowledge-sharing and collaboration among the twelve current SFEC grantees. By merging NCFL’s national experience in the field with the localized knowledge, networks, and expertise of state-based partners, the NC SFEC will provide a continuum of cradle-to-career services that is contextualized to specific communities and that promotes educational equity by engaging parents as core partners in the work.

Specifically, the theory of action and logic model below provide a conceptual framework for the project that build upon learnings from the first cycle of SFEC efforts and align to *The U.S. Department of Education’s Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships*.

# If we...

**Create a governing and leadership SFEC special advisory committee**

to enhance cross-agency collaboration and partnerships that can guide implementation, provide recommendations, and support the evaluation of deep, statewide family-school-community partnerships,

Build the capacity of all stakeholders through **training and technical assistance, professional learning, and leadership development** to create a networked community of practice for family, school, and community engagement,

**Co-create and carry out research-based programs promoting equity leading to improved student development and academic achievement** based on the lessons learned addressing the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic,

**Enhance the policy environment at the state and local levels** designed to support family, school, and community engagement,

**Then,** the North Carolina SFEC will enhance recovery efforts through equitable, high-impact cradle-to-career family, school, and community engagement to increase student opportunities and academic achievement and support family well-being.

# North Carolina Logic Model

**Vision:** The North Carolina SFEC provides an equitable, coordinated continuum of supports designed to build capacity of communities, schools, and families for improved student development and family well-being.

Enabling Conditions	Levels of Impact	Objectives	Activities	Outputs	Increased/Enhanced Outcomes	
Shift mindsets by changing the narrative of working with and alongside families	Families/Communities	Governance and Leadership	Form a cross-sector SFEC special advisory committee with at least 50% parents <b>[CP 4]</b>	15+ people attend monthly board mtgs	Equity and shared decision-making in educational opportunities and school-family-community engagement across integrated systems	
	District/School (LEA)	High quality Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) and Professional Learning	Conduct community asset mapping <b>[CP 2]</b>	Statewide community asset map on NC SFEC website		
Understand the effective approaches and strategies for building strong family-school partnerships	Regional		Codify SFEC best practices throughout state and nation to address learning recovery	NC SFEC website		
	State (SEA)	High-Impact Family Engagement Services	Identify and elevate FE champions	Annual Family Engagement Bright Spots Report and FE champion storytelling interviews		
Focus on learning and development preschool through adulthood	Parent-informed Policy Infrastructure for Family Engagement in Learning and Recovery	Parent-informed Policy Infrastructure for Family Engagement in Learning and Recovery	Deliver FE train-the-trainer TTA and PL to for SEA, LEA, family and community-level capacity building and leadership <b>[CP 3]</b>	Regional trainers deliver TTA and PL to 35,000 LEA, school, family, and community-based reps <b>[APR 5]</b>		Racial/Socioeconomic Parent/Family engagement efficacy, and leadership <b>[APR 4]</b>
			Foster connections between NC SFEC work and other SFEC grantees through the national SFEC network <b>[CP 4]</b>	Parents participate in activities to help them understand school report cards and other opportunities <b>[APR 1]</b>		
Collective will, commitment to, and strategic communications for support of family-school-community engagement			Carry out evidence-based, high impact programming (Preschool through adulthood) <b>[CP 1] [CP 3]</b>	560 families participate in high-impact family engagement activities <b>[APR 3]</b>		Student academic achievement
			Home Visiting (birth-K) Family Literacy (PK - Middle) Parent Leadership (Adult)	60 virtual PD offerings offered through national SFEC network <b>[APR 2]</b>		Family Well-being
			Incorporate digital tools to extend learning <b>[CP 2, 3]</b>	Educators, local boards, and LEA/SEA leaders participate in high-impact TTA, PL, or coaching opportunities <b>[APR 2]</b>		Increased Capacity of LEA staff and school staff <b>[APR 6]</b>
			Annual TTA for parent leaders on policy and advocacy <b>[CP 3]</b>	High-impact activities or services provided to build a statewide infrastructure for systemic family engagement that includes support for SEA- and LEA-level leadership and capacity-building <b>[APR 2]</b>		Collaboration of cross-agency partnerships
			Conduct policy landscape analysis with parent input	230 parent leaders trained on policy/advocacy topics and practices <b>[APR 3]</b>	Enhanced Policy environment for family-school engagement supports	
			Identify and Host NC SFEC Conference <b>[CP 4]</b>	Annual report of parent-informed policy recommendations		
				150+ people attend conference		

**KEY**

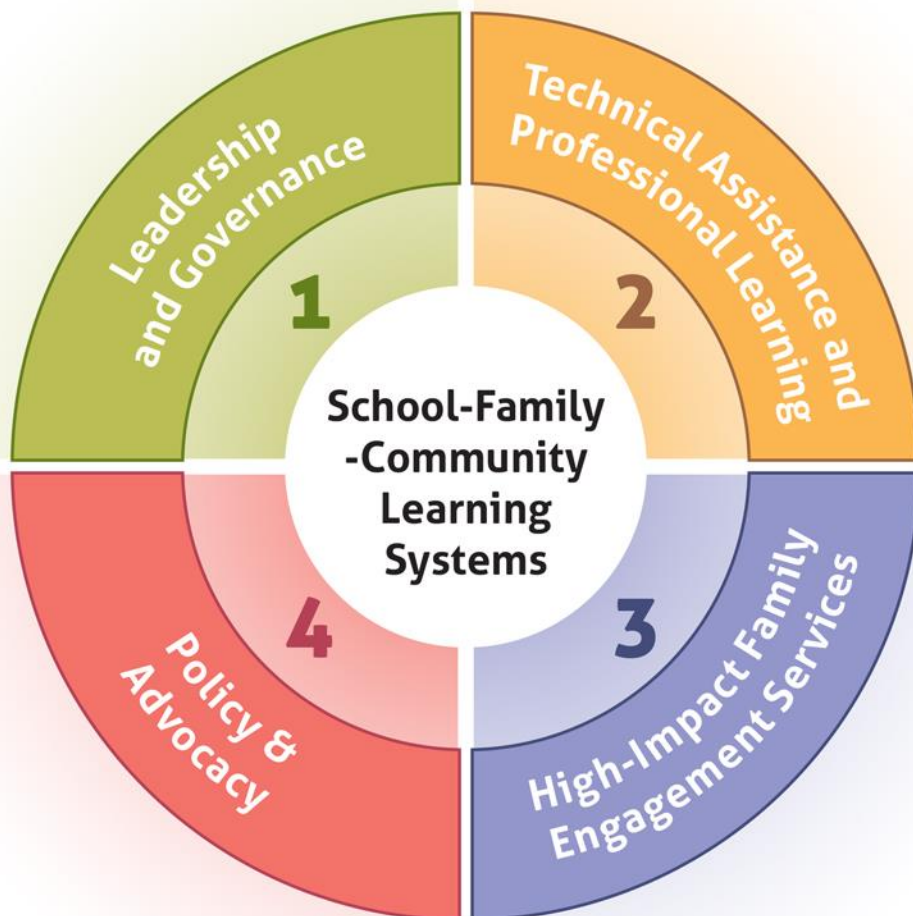
**APR** = Annual Performance Requirement

**CP** = Competitive Priority

*Infrastructure:* The NC SFEC infrastructure reflects the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework's* Organizational Conditions (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013): 1) Systemic: The NC SFEC builds a TTA system that connects and integrates FE in education initiatives that have impact at family, school, LEA, and SEA levels. A throughline across all system levels promotes parent and student leadership opportunities to elevate family voices and inform local decision-making as well as state policy efforts. 2) Integrated: The NC SFEC aligns with existing complementary state initiatives that support families, specifically the SEA's Operation Polaris, which is a strategic framework to combat learning loss from the pandemic and create conditions for long term academic achievement. 3) Sustained: The NC SFEC conceptual framework is designed such that leadership and project oversight is gradually released to state-based management by the end of the grant, with NCFL serving primarily as a support role in Years 4 and 5.

The NC SFEC infrastructure promotes a two-way flow of communication and capacity-building initiatives to achieve impact for families, schools, LEAs, SEAs, and community-based organizations. Two-way communication in FE cultivates reciprocal and mutually beneficial conversations between families and the schools and service providers that support them. School leaders and service providers promote authentic and honest dialogue with families, asking for their input and creating pathways for parents to co-create education solutions that can be elevated to catalyze changes in systems, practices, and processes that may perpetuate inequities in schools. Co-creation in education as “joint production of ideas, interpretations, actions, activities, and policies among families, schools, and communities” (Caspe, M., Lopez, M. E., & Hanebutt, R., 2019) is an important equity design principle of the NC SFEC. This reciprocity between families, schools, and communities across the local, regional, and state SFEC system is intentionally designed. It also fulfills multiple policy and program goals identified as the “4 C’s”

in the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships* (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). 1) Capabilities: The NC SFEC enhances and builds the capacity and knowledge of parents, schools, and communities through TTA and high-impact FE programs; 2) Connections: The two-way communication flow and co-creation practices fostered through the NC SFEC are infused throughout the system, from local communities to the NC SFEC's statewide advisory committee (50%+ parent membership), to the national CoP engaging all SFEC projects, forging strong, trust-based relationships between families, schools, and communities. The opportunity for continuous and meaningful engagement across networks builds trust and increases social capital among all stakeholders; 3) Cognition: The NC SFEC's asset mapping process will help to illuminate current assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews among families, schools, and community stakeholders that will be incorporated into TTA and high-impact FE programming. The SFEC's high-impact FE programming and Special Advisory Council (SAC) support the philosophy of schools and communities working alongside families and partners. 4) Confidence: The NC SFEC creates conditions for increased self-efficacy by providing leadership TTA for people across the SEA, LEA, family, and community levels to participate in and lead education conversations at local, regional, state, and national levels. Further, NC SFEC's high-impact FE programs empower educators and families to engage in the learning and creation process together by starting from a place of mutual respect, honoring family funds of knowledge, creating welcoming cultures, and providing actionable strategies for collaboration.



- Objective 1:** Establish strong NC SFEC Leadership and Governance.
  - 1.1 Community asset mapping
  - 1.2 Special Advisory Committee formation and facilitation
  - 1.3 Establish digital presence for NC SFEC
- Objective 2:** Provide high-quality TTA and professional learning to the SEA; LEAs; parents; and communities.
  - 2.1 Establish 8 regional TTA hubs
  - 2.2 Identify FE champions and conduct storytelling interviews
  - 2.3 Deliver targeted FE TTA and PL through a train-the-trainer approach
  - 2.4 Make intentional connections between NC SFEC efforts and established National SFEC Network PL opportunities
- Objective 3:** Provide high-impact FE services and programs (birth-adulthood) to North Carolina LEAs in partnership with families and communities.
  - 3.1 Home Visiting Model (birth-K)
  - 3.2 Family Literacy Model (K-Middle)
  - 3.3 Parent Leadership (Adults)
  - 3.4 Incorporate digital tools to extend learning beyond school walls
- Objective 4:** Embed parent participation in local, district, and state policy and advocacy.
  - 4.1 Provide train-the-trainer TTA on policy and advocacy topics
  - 4.2 Conduct policy landscape analysis

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Establish strong NC SFEC Leadership and Governance.

**1.1** Conduct a statewide community asset mapping process in Year 1 of the project to a) explore the impact of COVID-19 on students, educators, and communities (**competitive preference priority 2**); b) examine educator and family needs and potential for collaboration to promote equity (**competitive preference priority 3**); c) identify key community partners and current FE efforts to enhance cross-agency collaboration (**competitive preference priority 4**) and serve on the SFEC's SAC. A sequential mixed methods design will be employed to guide the asset-mapping process based on community-based participatory research principles (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Initial asset mapping will be carried out in two phases during Year 1 and updated in Year 5.

During Phase I (October 2022-March 2023), listening sessions will be hosted to explore interests and community needs from the eight educational regions in North Carolina (first 90 days). Listening sessions will inform the design and distribution plan of the NC SFEC Asset Inventory. The Asset Inventory will be distributed to administrators, educators, community leaders, and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to elicit both community assets and aspirations. Geographic information will be documented to support the creation of a statewide asset map that will inform the identification of three LEAs and eight regional training hubs to serve as the focal sites for the duration of the FE activities of this grant. The Asset Inventory will also highlight existing exemplary partnership efforts that will be identified as FE champions.

During Phase II (April-September 2023), affinity focus groups will be conducted inviting key stakeholders from the three identified LEAs. Through these focus group discussions, participants will be invited to share their insights and offer examples that can further substantiate

the tangible and intangible assets at the individual, associational, and institutional levels. Based on focus group discussions, FE champions at each of the LEAs will be identified and recognized. Follow-up, video-based “storytelling” interviews will be conducted with these champions who contribute significantly to the existing FE efforts in North Carolina through the positive impact of their work during the COVID-19 pandemic, their efforts to promote equity, and/or their engagement to foster cross-agency collaborations. These interviews will be added to the statewide digital repository that can be shared with pre-service teachers, in-service educators, administrators, families, and community partners.

The asset mapping process and outcome will not only inform the co-design of the project, but also initiate dialogues among key stakeholders to enhance state-wide coordination and collaborations to promote equity in FE and student learning. In collaboration with the SEA and LEAs, an effort to recognize FE champions will be established at the system level to cultivate and recognize exemplary partnerships and leaders among families, educators, and community partners. Outputs: NC SFEC Asset Inventory to inform SAC composition; identification of organizations and dissemination channels to connect to statewide communications efforts; identification of LEAs and partners as well as prioritize content for regional and statewide TTA; identification of LEAs for high-impact FE programming; identification of at least eight FE champions and storytelling videos to highlight the partnerships.

**1.2** Formation and facilitation of the NC SFEC’s SAC. The SAC is the convener of parent members together with representatives demonstrating expertise in improving services for disadvantaged children, local schools, LEAs, the SEA, and diverse state agencies, systems, and organizations that support family success and well-being. It translates local and regional practice and policy recommendations in family, school, and community engagement to statewide

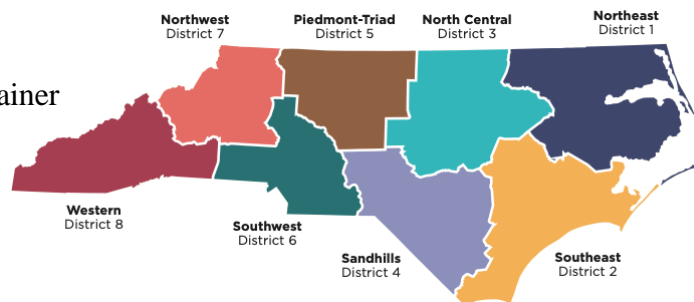


initiatives that influence North Carolina decision-makers. The SAC will identify the most effective ways to integrate and partner within the SEA such as collaborating with: (1) Key departments such as the Office of Early Learning and Office of Learning Recovery; (2) Operation Polaris Literacy and Student Support Services workgroups; and (3) Its web-based resource, *Parent's Corner* to deepen and amplify family, school, and community engagement efforts. In Year 1, parents are recruited through their participation in the statewide community asset mapping process. Years 2-5, additional parents are recruited through their participation in both local and regional TTA and high-impact FE programs. SAC responsibilities include: 1) Promote the broad understanding of the NC SFEC, its system of resources and initiatives, and how family, school, and community engagement contributes to the viability and success of North Carolina communities; 2) Collect, analyze, and consolidate data that helps identify gaps and opportunities to better address the effects of the pandemic through family, school, and community engagement; 3) Collaborate with and align efforts between agencies, organizations, education systems and businesses for optimal NC SFEC systems integration; 4) Elevate parent voices and their role in decision-making within the committee, and; 5) Act as a trusted source of information and a credible voice for the NC SFEC. The NC SFEC staff will convene and support this group as well as manage its membership. Outputs: 15+ members convene quarterly; annual parent-informed policy report highlighting recommendations for the state.

**1.3** Establish an NC SFEC digital presence for statewide learning opportunities for the SEA, LEAs, schools, families, and communities; resources responsive to changing learning needs; and communications for widespread knowledge sharing on NC SFEC efforts and initiatives. The asset mapping process will help determine if this is built upon an existing web-based platform or if a new digital repository will be established. In either scenario, this site will be maintained and

dynamically populated by NC SFEC staff and partners with materials and resources that reflect new findings and a responsiveness to target populations. Outputs: Established NC SFEC web-based presence for digital learning opportunities supporting multiple audiences, enhanced resource dissemination, and ongoing NC SFEC communications (content translated in multiple languages for equity).

**OBJECTIVE 2:** Provide high-quality TTA and professional learning (PL) through a train-the-trainer approach to the SEA, LEAs, schools, parents, and communities.



**2.1** Establish regional TTA hubs, one in each of the SEA’s existing eight regions, to include rural, urban, and suburban North Carolina communities. Consortium partners will provide cradle-to-career FE offerings through a train-the-trainer approach. The consortium will identify TTA hub locations based on inputs from the statewide asset map and data provided by the SEA. Three regional training hubs will be established during Year 2 of the project. Two additional regional training hubs will be established during Year 3, and three more will be added during Year 4 to reach a total of eight regional training hubs serving all the existing eight educational regions in the state. Each hub will have two liaisons that work with NC SFEC staff, reflecting both educators’ and families’ perspectives to support the engagement of both LEAs and community partners to advance FE within the region. Liaisons will also serve on the SAC.

Through the hubs, TTA will be provided to families, school-based LEA and SEA staff, and community organizations to integrate and enhance FE programs and activities that address students’ and families’ learning needs, promote access and equity, and enhance cross-agency collaborations. During Year 3, community partners, family leaders, and FE champions from each

of the existing regional hubs will be invited to participate in cross-regional TTA sessions through asynchronous, synchronous, and in-person formats. In addition, beginning in Year 3, participants will be invited to join a planning committee to lead an FE research, policy, and practice dialogue that will involve representatives from the SEA, LEAs within the region, community agencies, educators, and families. Regional educators and family liaisons will work with local educators and family leaders to lead the dialogue. Cross-regional sharing and collaboration will be facilitated during the planning. Video, audio, and text output of the presentations and discussion outcomes from this dialogue will be captured to contribute to the statewide digital repository and expand resources available through TTA. By Year 4, all eight regions in North Carolina will each have an established regional training hub with enhanced TTA resources accessible for all educators and families in the state. Outputs: eight regional TTA hubs established.

**2.2** In collaboration with the SEA and LEAs, FE champions will be recognized at the system level to cultivate and spotlight exemplary partnerships and leaders among families, educators, and community partners. During Years 2-5 of the project, regional FE champions will share their insights via video-based storytelling interviews. The NC SFEC will elevate these stories to share the impact of the NC SFEC's collective and individual FE efforts; These stories will be added to the digital repository and shared broadly with communities, families, educators, administrators, and teacher educators. Outputs: Storytelling interviews from regional FE champions.

**2.3** Deliver targeted FE TTA and PL through a train-the-trainer approach to SEA representatives, LEA and school-based staff, families, local boards, community-based organizations, and other state agencies. Each region will host an annual series of PL offerings that reach target stakeholders in each regional TTA hub. Content will connect to specific practices and strategies addressed in the community asset mapping process and happening within local high-impact FE

programs. Family-facing opportunities will be translated into multiple languages to support equity in learning. Outputs: Ongoing train-the-trainer PL series in each established region delivered to SEA, LEA, school, family, and community-based representatives annually in Years 2-5 to a total of 35,000 people.

**2.4** Make intentional connections between NC SFEC efforts and established national SFEC network PL opportunities to foster networking, knowledge sharing, and collaborations nationally between SFEC grantees. The National SFEC Network CoP convenes regularly for knowledge sharing and professional learning; all opportunities will be available to NC SFEC stakeholders.

Outputs: 12 total National SFEC Network convenings annually including 4 for SEAs and LEAs; 4 for SACs; and 4 for families. These convenings will be virtual.

**2.5** During Year 5, an NC SFEC conference will be planned and led by the staff, SAC, and family leaders to showcase FE programming and practices, recognize FE champions, explore continued enhancement opportunities, and co-create a long-term agenda for the NC SFEC.

Outputs: FE conference; sustainability plan for NC SFEC.

**OBJECTIVE 3:** Provide high-impact FE services and programs (birth-adulthood) to three North Carolina LEAs in partnership with families and communities. Consortium partners NCFL and NCPAT will serve as providers of high-impact FE programming based in LEAs, identified by the statewide asset map as having high need and desire for increased FE programming. NCFL will lead implementation of its family literacy and parent leadership models. NCPAT will lead implementation of its home visiting model.

**3.1** Build capacity through high-impact evidence-based home visiting (birth-K). PAT professionals partner with families to provide personal visits, health and development screenings, group connections, and referrals to community resources. During each interaction, professionals

utilize the PAT curriculum to focus on parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting and family well-being. Their specialized training in structural and process fidelity guides the application of evidence-based practices. Outputs: 20 families each year across three LEAs participate in home visiting in Years 2-5 for a total of 80 families (160 people). Best practices and relevant training from LEA-based home visiting programming are shared through regional TTA offerings.

**3.2** Build capacity through high-impact, evidence-based Family Literacy Programs (FLP, K-Middle). FLP is an intensive program that supports student academic achievement through a holistic, family-focused approach. This approach includes the four components outlined in the federal definition of family literacy: 1) Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children (Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time<sup>®</sup>), 2) Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children (Parent Time), 3) Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency (Adult Education), and 4) An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences (Child Education). The FLP is delivered to families who are furthest from opportunity through a cohort model over a period of 28 weeks in school buildings. The deliberate use of technology and intentional focus on the building of social capital and social emotional support with families are woven throughout the FLP. Programming engenders trust between families and schools, constructing the foundation for a strong partnership. This relational process is identified by the *U.S. Department of Education (ED) Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships* as essential to high-impact family engagement (Kuttner & Mapp, 2013).

Outputs: 60 families each year across three LEAs participate in FLP in Years 2-5 of the grant for a total of 240 families (480 people). Best practices and relevant training from LEA-based FLP programming are shared through regional TTA offerings.

**3.3** Build capacity through high-impact Parent Leadership Programs (PLP, parenting adults at three LEAs). PLPs are designed to activate leadership skills in parenting adults by building their capacity to engage in the diverse roles outlined in the *U.S. ED's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships*. Parents learn, practice, and apply skills that support their roles as co-creators, advocates, supporters, encouragers, monitors, and models in their children's education. PLP efforts: 1) create a pathway for authentic family and community engagement to influence and engage decision makers; 2) provide culturally sustaining, accessible, and inclusive programming for families to leverage families' funds of knowledge; 3) advocate for increased wraparound services, such as social workers and mental health services, and, 4) support family leaders in implementing Family Service Learning projects, partnering with educators, to better support their children's education and connect it to future workforce opportunities and career goals. Outputs: 60 parents each year across three LEAs participate in PLP in Years 2-5 of the grant for a total of 240 parents. Best practices and relevant training from LEA-based PLP programming are shared through regional TTA offerings.

**3.4** Incorporate digital tools to extend learning beyond school walls and advance equity in technology. The use of digital platforms and innovative technologies are incorporated into NC SFEC's high-impact FE programming and regional TTA to enhance learning outcomes. Opportunities to learn beyond school allows for young people to have extended learning time that is desperately needed for recovering loss due to the pandemic. Digital tools proved to be essential resources throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to continue learning when school

closures occurred. Additionally, providing technology resources for students furthest from opportunity helps mitigate the digital divide and equity gaps currently evident in education systems. They support parents in learning and using technology applied in their children's education. These include:

*-Wonderopolis® (elementary-middle):* Wonderopolis (Wonderopolis.org) is a digital education platform that fosters a love of learning in students and their families through inquiry and project-based learning that extends learning beyond school walls. All learning activities are standards-aligned and build skills in reading, STE(a)M subjects, communications, and technology.

Everyday topics are explored through nonfiction articles (Wonders of the Day®), which are investigated through videos, online and offline activities, and vocabulary-building exercises – all designed to enhance literacy and discipline-specific knowledge and skills. The NC SFEC will support families, educators, schools, and LEAs in how to use Wonderopolis content as supplemental resources aligned to school and district-based curricula to support extended and afterschool learning.

*-Immersive Education (high school):* Promising research demonstrates that mixed reality education can accelerate learning; increase learner retention, engagement, confidence; and build empathy (Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2019; A. Van Loon et al., 2018). COVID-19 solidified the role technology will play in automation in jobs and job creation for the future. Learning in a variety of contexts using immersive technologies has accelerated over the past two years. The NC SFEC will expand upon recent learnings from a six-month design pilot carried out by NCFL to investigate new ways to engage families together in immersive education using virtual reality (VR) headsets. Through NCFL's high-impact FE programs, educators and families will work together to both experience learning activities via VR and practice new technology skills to

design their own learning environments and research topics. Additionally, through the NC SFEC's regional TTA hubs, LEA and school-based staff, families, and communities will learn how to effectively incorporate immersive learning experiences into their respective environments. Outputs: 60+ families each year across three LEAs participate in inquiry-based and immersive learning opportunities for a total of 240 families; Educators, local boards, and LEA/SEA leaders participate in high-impact TTA around effectively implementing inquiry-based and/or immersive learning; Recorded learning experiences, artifacts, and curricular resources created using VR headsets.

**OBJECTIVE 4:** Embed parent participation in school, district, local or state policy advocacy and leadership such that: 1) Parents become active participants in the development, implementation, and review of school-parent compacts, FE in education policies, and school planning and improvement; 2) Parents participate as partners in the design and provision of assistance to students who are not making academic progress; 3) Parents participate in state and local decision-making.

**4.1** Provide an annual train-the-trainer TTA on topics related to policy and advocacy for racially and ethnically diverse parent leaders in North Carolina. Parents will be recruited as participants in this TTA through the regional liaisons, SAC, and LEA-based PLP. Outputs: 10 racially and ethnically diverse parent leaders representing each of the eight NC SFEC regions (once established) are trained annually in Years 2-5 for a total of 230 parents.

**4.2** Conduct policy landscape analysis led by NC SFEC staff and parent leaders participating in the SAC and in high-impact PLP. Outputs: Annual report of parent-informed policy recommendations.



**NC SFEC Continuum of Services**

		<b>Audience</b>	<b>Five-year Reach</b>	<b>Statutorily required impact</b>								
<b>High-Impact FE Model Programs will support parents to:</b>				Parents help children meet standards	Support learning with activities at home	Communicate effectively	Participation in compacts, policy	Assist students no making progress	Participate in state/local decisionmaking	Train other parents	Learn & use tech applied education	Develop/implement parental policies
<b>Home Visiting</b> (Birth-K)	LEA and school staff, parents	160	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Family Literacy</b> (K-Middle)	LEA and school staff, parents	480	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Parent Leadership</b> (Adult)	LEA and school staff, parents	480	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

		<b>Audience</b>	<b>Five-year Reach</b>	<b>Statutorily required impact</b>								
<b>High Quality Training &amp; Technical Assistance will support parents to:</b>				Parents help children meet standards	Support learning with activities at home	Communicate effectively	Participation in compacts, policy	Assist students no making progress	Participate in state/local decisionmaking	Train other parents	Learn & use tech applied education	Develop/implement parental policies
<b>Regional Training &amp; Professional Learning Series</b> (Birth-adult)	SEA, LEA, and school staff, parents, community-based organization staff	35,000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

**GRANT TOTAL = 36,120 People Served Over 5 Years**

## **NC SFEC Responses to Competitive Preference Priorities (CPP) 1-4**

**CPP 1-** The NC SFEC will offer two high-impact FE programming models that meet the U.S. ED's standard for an intervention demonstrating moderate evidence.

*Moderate Evidence for NCFL's Family Literacy Model (FLP):* Built on nearly three decades of ground-level work with families, NCFL's FLP is undergirded by evidence and supported by qualitative knowledge gained over time by listening to families and observing programs through technical assistance. In a 2018 study of the FLP, findings showed that there were positive changes in the home literacy environment: increased frequency of at-home reading to or with children and improved home literacy environment indicators for parents who were full participants (Levesque, J. & Scordias, M., 2018). Further, the FLP study found statistically significant improvements in child school attendance, parental level of participation on student's school attendance, academic mindset, and reading achievement. The study showed a meaningful effect for increased adult participation on education-related parenting behaviors, student's school actions, and reading level (Levesque, J. & Scordias, M., 2018).

*Moderate Evidence for NCPAT's Home Visiting model:* A recent research study found that children who participated in Parents as Teachers Sunnyside Unified School District's home visitation program performed significantly better over time on English, reading, and math assessments, while their parents demonstrated improved parenting quality. The peer-reviewed research study, *Parents as Teachers home visiting intervention: A path to improved academic outcomes, school behavior, and parenting skills*, was conducted by LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc., a research and evaluation firm in Tucson, AZ. It found statistically significant findings for the 625,983 children in grades 3-12 who participated in the Sunnyside Unified School District PAT program (Lahti, Evans, Goodman & Lecroy, 2019). The results revealed

that the students performed significantly better on ELA assessments and phonics and reading comprehension tests, had significantly lower school absence rates, and higher average scores in reading and writing assessments. For the more than 300 participating parents, the study showed that they demonstrated significantly improved parenting quality while in the program and showed significant improvements in Protective Factors which are: family functioning; social support; and concrete support.

**CPP 2** - The NC SFEC will implement a statewide community asset mapping process in Year 1 to obtain the most recent impacts that COVID-19 is having on families, schools, and communities and prioritize LEAs for high-impact FE programming; the Inventory will be updated again in Years 3 and 5. This process will also serve as timely guidance for the NC SFEC's high quality TTA and high-impact FE programs to most effectively address students' social, emotional, and mental health and academic needs through approaches that are inclusive regarding race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status. These efforts will extend beyond academics, encompassing the Center for the Study of Social Policy's *Strengthening Families* approach, which outlines the Five Protective Factors to increase family strengths and well-being. Factors include parental resilience; social connections; knowledge of parenting and child resilience; social emotional competence; and concrete supports (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2018).

**CPP 3** - The NC SFEC expansion deliberately creates additional opportunities to promote equity in student access to educational resources and opportunities in multiple ways.

Co-creation – The Global Family Research Project (GFRP) defines co-creation in education as the “joint production of ideas, interpretations, actions, activities, and policies among families, schools, and communities” (Caspe, M., Lopez, M. E., & Hanebutt, R., 2019). They go on to

recommend it as an approach that has the potential and power to transform the field of family, school, and community engagement. Successful co-creation efforts result in shifts in relationship dynamics where families are empowered to have an authentic seat at the table with schools and community decision makers to develop more equitable FE policies and practices that reflect and elevate the voices of parents. The NC SFEC's partners share a deep commitment to leveraging the lived experiences and voices of community members and the place-based context to ensure maximum relevance and impact. Collectively, partners possess the requisite beliefs, experiences, and motivations to embed a co-creation approach throughout local, regional, and state NC SFEC levels to solidify it as a systematic effort.

Immersive Education - The NC SFEC's continuum of services focused on supporting families will provide opportunities for participants to leverage immersive technologies as learning tools (Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2019; A. Van Loon et al., 2018). FLP families often have the last and least access to emerging technologies, which directly impacts their opportunity to develop in-demand technology skills. In the NC SFEC's TTA and FE programs, families will have the opportunity to learn how to use immersive technologies, expanding the skill sets of both children and their parents.

Inclusive Practices: The NC SFEC will prioritize translation and interpretation of family-facing materials to foster wide involvement and adoption among families' diverse home languages (Hall & Hord, 2001).

**CPP 4** – The NC SFEC will prioritize cross-agency coordination and community engagement through its proposed integration within the SEA, LEAs, community-based entities, and a variety of established coalitions and associations including:

- *NC DPI (SEA)*: The NC SFEC’s scope of work aligns with the SEA’s multi-year strategic vision, Operation Polaris, developed in 2021 in response to significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Operation Polaris is specifically targeting key levers for recovering learning loss because of the pandemic and is aimed at achieving public education gains now and into the future (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2021).
- *Every Child NC (ECNC)*: ECNC is a community-led, statewide coalition of organizations, parents, teachers, and students who advocate for every child’s constitutional right to a sound, basic education. Their work focuses on promoting equity so that race, ethnicity, economic background, regional location, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, immigration status, and language are not barriers to educational opportunity.
- *Smart Start*: The Smart Start Network consists of 75 Smart Start Local Partnerships that serve all 100 counties in North Carolina. Their work includes promoting increased family engagement and leadership for parents in the education of their children.
- *North Carolina PTA Association (NC PTA)*: The NC PTA exists to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. NC PTA has 11 councils.
- *North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE)*: NCAE is an all-inclusive Association with all categories of professional school personnel eligible for membership. NCAE is the state’s largest education advocacy organization for public school employees and represents active, retired, and student members.

- *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)*: North Carolina boasts the second highest number of HBCUs in the country with 11 schools.

These important stakeholder groups will be invited to help create the NC SFEC SAC and serve to make local, regional, and statewide connections that foster equitable FE in education for North Carolina families and partners in concert with the SFEC's distinct offerings.

**A2. The extent to which the services provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date**

**knowledge from research and effective practice.** The NC SFEC reflects well-researched, evidence-based strategies that have been identified both before and during the pandemic as necessary factors to support learning recovery of underserved students through equitable family, school, and community engagement. The NC SFEC will offer TTA and programming that is responsive to three critical audiences for ensuring school success – educators, students, and parenting adults. These services will result in positive outcomes for students that are holistic in nature and provide benefits to North Carolina's communities and schools. The NC SFEC system and continuum of offerings fulfill many of the essential conditions and program goals outlined by the *U.S. ED's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships*, most importantly building the capabilities (skills and knowledge) of North Carolina's educators, families, and community partners around FE as a shared responsibility; enhancing the connections between these three audiences (networks); promoting asset-based beliefs about the capabilities and importance of families in education (cognition); and, collectively increasing the self-efficacy (confidence) of all three audiences to work together to meet the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

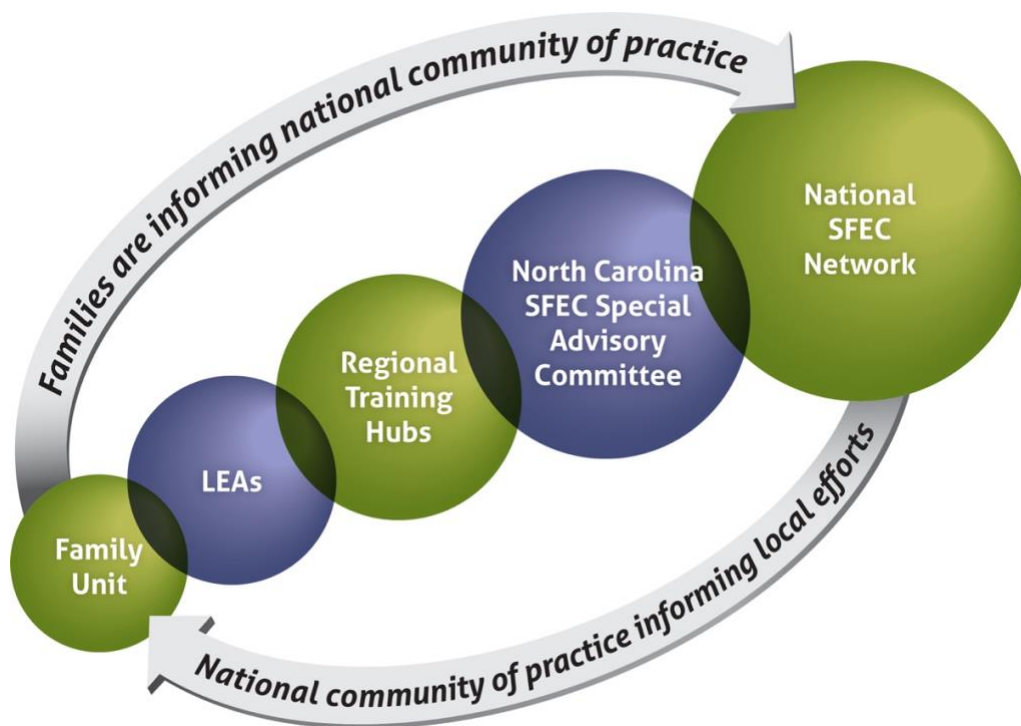
The NC SFEC system and scope of work activates a more holistic approach to supporting student academic success, family engagement, and overall family well-being. The NC SFEC's

virtual TTA for families and its FLPs are informed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy's (CSSP) research-based Strengthening Families Framework, which identifies five protective factors that support a child's success (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2018). These SFEC offerings develop important social connections (protective factor) between families who have become even more isolated during the pandemic. Further, they provide equitable access to community and school support (protective factor) designed to address family needs and mitigate stressors. During parent focused TTA and in FLPs, parents learn and practice habits and routines that support their children's academic and social emotional development (protective factors). The NC SFEC's intensified focus on these protective factors will address and enhance long-term learning recovery efforts in response to COVID-19.

The NC SFEC's through line of increasing equity outcomes throughout the system with a co-creation approach to programs, parent leadership, and policy and advocacy reflect research and recommendations by the GRFP. Co-creation has the potential to create transformative FE where educators and the broader community work alongside families rather than for them. For effective co-creation to occur, GRFP recommends that capacity-building for this approach is built systematically to result in outcomes such as collaborative decision-making, empowered parents, and stronger parent-educator relationships (Casper, M., Lopez, M. E., & Hanebutt, R., 2019). The NC SFEC infrastructure will embed TTA and practice opportunities to learn and apply co-creation practices throughout all levels of the NC SFEC infrastructure to catalyze this change.

**A3. The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.** The NC SFEC is designed using established research on Communities of Practice (CoPs), which are defined as “groups of

people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2010). The domain of NC SFEC’s CoP is FE in education and its infrastructure serves to join stakeholders in sharing ideas, promoting innovation, developing social capital, and facilitating and spreading knowledge. The NC SFEC CoP intentionally unites participants from families, schools, and communities as equal and key stakeholders in FE. This design emanates impact and reciprocal learning beginning with a family unit and spreading outward to a national network. This structure ensures that national efforts in FE are informed by authentic experiences happening among families in communities, while at the same time, families are learning from FE practices happening in communities nationwide. To support capacity building at each level, the SFEC will offer intensive high-impact FE models in three LEAs located in geographically diverse parts of the state, establish eight regional training hubs that respond to customized local needs, and provide resources and asynchronous PL opportunities for families statewide. The SAC will participate in the National SFEC Network.





To ensure the proposed project yields results that extend beyond the federal grant period, the NC SFEC's scope of work aligns to SEA's multi-year strategic vision, Operation Polaris, as mentioned in more detail related to CPP 4, above. The SFEC will also transition management of core SFEC activities and strategies to state-based partners and entities represented by SAC members, through a gradual release model in Years 4 and 5.

**B - Quality of the Management Plan B1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing tasks.** The NC SFEC

infrastructure will be created using an integrated design approach across existing systems that impact families within the equity domains of education, economic opportunity, public health, justice and government, and neighborhoods and infrastructure. Geographically, it will actively engage stakeholders at the local, regional, state, and national levels in a way that intentionally elicits feedback and continuous improvement starting with families all the way to a national community of practice and vice-versa. SFEC services will also span rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Critically, as lead partner and fiscal agent, NCFL possesses recent experience leading this work. Since 2018, NCFL has effectively led two ED Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) in Arizona and Nebraska, while serving as a lead training and technical assistance (TTA) provider of high-quality, evidence-based professional development, programs, and resources for SFECs in Kentucky and Maryland. In addition, NCFL launched and co-leads the national SFEC network, a community of practice that promotes knowledge-sharing and collaboration between the twelve current SFEC grantees. NCFL will leverage these important

experiences and learnings to lead the establishment of an SFEC infrastructure in North Carolina in close partnership with consortium partners. By merging NCFL’s national experience in the field with the localized knowledge, networks, and expertise of North Carolina’s leading FE organizations, the SFEC will provide a continuum of cradle-to-career services that are contextualized to specific communities while reflecting best practices and promoting educational equity.

NC SFEC partners will work together to advance family, school, and community engagement in the state to increase equitable student outcomes and family well-being. Partners worked collaboratively on the project timeline below to ensure high-quality provision of NC SFEC offerings, seamless system integration, and a gradual and uninterrupted transition of the NC SFEC to in-state partners by the end of the grant period.

<b>Figure 1. Project Objectives, Activities &amp; Timeline</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Year(s)</b>
<b>1. Establish strong NC SFEC Leadership and Governance.</b>	<b>1.1</b> Conduct a comprehensive community asset mapping process.	UNCG with support from all partners	1, 5
	<b>1.2</b> Formation and facilitation of the NC SFEC’s SAC.	NCFL with support from all partners	1-5
	<b>1.3</b> Establish a digital presence for the NC SFEC for statewide learning opportunities, resources, and communications for widespread dissemination of NC SFEC efforts and initiatives.	NCFL with support from all partners	1

	<b>2.2</b> Identify FE champions and share their insights via video-based storytelling interviews	NCFL with support from all partners	2-5
<b>2.</b> Provide high-quality TTA and PL.	<b>2.1</b> Establish eight regional TTA hubs to include rural, urban, and suburban North Carolina communities where Consortium partners will provide cradle-to-career FE offerings through a train-the-trainer approach.	NCFL with support from all partners	2-5
	<b>2.3</b> Deliver targeted FE TTA and PL through a train-the-trainer approach to SEA representatives, LEA and school-based staff, families, local boards, community-based organizations, and other state agencies.	NCFL, UNCG, BH	2-5
	<b>2.4</b> Make intentional connections between NC SFEC efforts and established national SFEC network PL opportunities to foster networking, knowledge sharing, and collaborations nationally between SFEC grantees.	NCFL	1-5
	<b>2.5</b> Plan and host an NC SFEC conference.	All partners	5
<b>3.</b> Provide high-impact FE services and programs (birth-adulthood) to three North Carolina LEAs in partnership with	<b>3.1</b> Build capacity through high-impact evidence-based Home Visiting Programs (birth-K)	NC PAT	2-5
	<b>3.2</b> Build capacity through high-impact, evidence-based Family Literacy Programs (K-Middle)	NCFL	2-5
	<b>3.3</b> Build capacity through high-impact Parent Leadership Programs (Adult)	NCFL	2-5

families and communities.	<b>3.4</b> Incorporate digital tools to extend learning beyond school walls and advance equity in technology.	NCFL with support from all partners	2-5
<b>4.</b> Embed parent participation in local, district, and state policy advocacy and leadership.	<b>4.1</b> Provide an annual train-the-trainer TTA on topics related to policy advocacy to parent leaders in NC.	All partners	2-5
	<b>4.2</b> Conduct policy landscape analysis.	NCFL, SAC, families	2-5

**B2. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**

The nature of the NC SFEC’s integrated design lends itself to a continuous feedback loop among stakeholders. Key tactics for generating feedback and driving continuous improvement are highlighted in Figure 2, below. Data will be reported frequently to allow for adjustments as needed throughout the five-year grant period. Specifically, the SFEC will employ a continuous improvement approach designed to prioritize implementation. Delivery Associates (DA), a global firm specializing in helping spur social impact through strong implementation, will assist the SFEC in setting up a strong procedure for continuous improvement using their 4-step method. DA’s approach is designed for sustainability to equip teams with the structures and skills they need to make change happen on an ongoing basis. The SFEC will work closely with DA in Year 1 to establish a strong set of procedures for using feedback to drive continuous improvement that are embedded into the overall project workflow.

**Figure 2: Continuous Improvement Feedback Tactics**

	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Stakeholders Involved</b>
Weekly	Statewide	Team meetings to review timely information, plan for prioritizing daily operations and management of SFEC	NC SFEC staff
Monthly	Local	Implementation, coaching, and observation of high-impact FE programming	Families, LEA staff, NC SFEC staff
	Statewide	SAC meeting	SAC members
	National	SFEC Network meeting - includes opportunities for professional learning as well as networking and collaborative planning and problem solving.	NC SFEC staff, state partners, families, and other National SFEC Network members
Quarterly	Statewide	Project meetings - updates, monthly goals and objectives, plans for next steps, problem-solving strategies related to the implementation of project activities, and evaluation results will be reviewed and discussed.	NC SFEC staff, state partners, SEA, LEAs,
Annually	Statewide	Needs Assessment	NC SFEC staff, state partners, SEA, LEAs, families
	National	Families Learning Conference	NC SFEC staff, families, state partners, LEAs, National SFEC Network members

**B3. The adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project.** There are three key mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and

services are in place and emanating from the NC SFEC: 1) practices are grounded in research and evidence; 2) ongoing professional learning of those delivering products and services; and 3) independent evaluation informing implementation.

1) Grounded in Research and Evidence: The SFEC's evidence-based, localized, high-impact FE offerings and research-based regional and statewide TTA will ensure that North Carolina's most disadvantaged families have access to high quality and high-impact services throughout their educational journeys. As an example, NCFL's four-component family literacy model is a key strategy that meets the U.S. ED's standard for an intervention demonstrating moderate evidence.

2) Professional Learning: NC SFEC staff will have access to ongoing professional learning to ensure they are performing at a high level in carrying out the proposed activities and strategies. Each team member will participate in NCFL's PL Academy, a dynamic platform that includes specific learning pathways to acquire new knowledge and hone leadership and facilitation skills. Additionally, the SFEC team will consistently increase their knowledge of current research and then discuss implementation of related skills and practices with colleagues to find what methods will work best in their roles and settings as research evolves.

3) Independent Evaluation: Bellwether Education Partners, serving as independent evaluator, will support the NC SFEC in executing the DA's structured process for continuous improvement by collecting data from surveys, extant data, interviews, and program observations to consistently provide a detailed understanding of its ongoing TTA, high-impact FE program implementation, and policy efforts. The Project Director and SFEC staff will work closely with state and local partners and the SAC to drive routine check-ins with meaningful qualitative

and quantitative data. Using independent evaluation data will help build internal and external visibility, evidence-based policy, and trust among stakeholders.

**B4. The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

NCFL will be responsible for recruiting and hiring NC SFEC staff (3.0 FTE), including a state-based Director and two state-based Family Learning Specialists, to lead and work alongside partners at the local, regional, and statewide levels. NCFL is prepared to begin the hiring process immediately upon notification of award. For new positions, we will seek to hire staff representing diversity across cultural, ethnic, racial, and professional experience backgrounds. NCFL has a research-based *Recruiting for Diversity* strategy in place that was developed with a certified Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion strategist and consultant.

A portion of NCFL's headquarter-based staff will provide leadership, consultation, and support services to the state-based staff. The Project Director (.25 FTE, covered in part by this grant and the remainder through in-kind contribution) will provide leadership and oversight. Subject matter experts in family literacy, family engagement, and family leadership will dedicate time in Years 1 and 2 to support fidelity of implementing high-impact FE models and high quality TTA. An Administrative Assistant (.35 FTE) and Contracts and Grant Administrator (.50 FTE) will provide essential support services to ensure the SFEC is operating efficiently and fully compliant. NCFL's experience in leading two SFECs since 2018 has helped prove that our proposed staffing model is appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project. The graphic below outlines the overall structure of the NC SFEC. Additionally, please see detailed descriptions of specific NC SFEC staff and partner roles as part of the addendum.





The NC SFEC will form a SAC in Year 1. This group will be a majority parent membership and include key decision makers and representatives from a diversity of organizations and agencies across the state that are committed to supporting children and families, as mentioned under CPP 4, above. Consortium partners' shared commitment to co-creation will cultivate an inclusive space for the SAC's governance where parents are truly core partners in driving the work forward. All stakeholder groups will participate in asset mapping to provide an expansive, multifaceted perspective on how needs assessment data is then translated and operationalized through the NC SFEC's project objectives and activities. The SAC's quarterly meetings will support ongoing and consistent feedback from its membership to directly inform NC SFEC leadership.

**C. Project Personnel C1. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.**

**NC SFEC Project Director** Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith has more than two decades of supporting teaching and learning, FE in education, and innovation and equity in P-20 education. Dr. Smith has held pivotal roles influencing the future of education both nationally and globally. Critically, as a prior state agency and district leader she has worked closely with and alongside various SEAs and LEAs to implement and scale major reform efforts. As a senior program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, she helped to shape and reimagine statewide strategies for education leadership and advancing college and career ready efforts, P-20. At the National Geographic Society, she led a team to steward 31 regional partnerships from incubation and strategy development to execution. These roles have required Dr. Smith to form close relationships with organizations and staff supporting students and families at SEAs, LEAs, and community-based organizations. A lifelong educator and national thought leader for teaching and

learning, Dr. Smith started her career as a classroom teacher in Kentucky, eventually influencing and advancing high quality training and technical assistance, professional development, and policies centered on college and career readiness, curriculum, instruction, and assessment, education leadership, and FE in education at the LEA and SEA levels.

**NC SFEC Principal Investigator (PI):** Dr. Melissa Steel King will serve as the PI for the NC SFEC. Dr. King is a partner on the Policy and Evaluation team at Bellwether Education Partners, where her work has focused on program evaluation, evaluation capacity-building, teacher preparation and training, and whole child development. Prior to joining Bellwether, Dr. King worked at SUNY Albany’s Center for Human Services Research, where she conducted evaluations of programs such as the school district’s federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, a local parenting education workshop series, and the Albany Promise, a cross-sector partnership to improve cradle-to-career outcomes for Albany students. Previously, Dr. King conducted effectiveness research on pre-K through 12 curricula in the Research and Validation Department at Scholastic Inc. and worked as a trainer and evaluator for a social and ethical awareness program in Boston Public Schools. Dr. King began her career as an elementary school teacher in New York City and Boston. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Williams College and a master’s in elementary education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She completed her doctorate in education in human development and psychology at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Currently, Melissa serves on the board of GreatSchools.

**C2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project**

**personnel.** NCFL will lead the hiring of NC SFEC key project personnel who will be recruited and hired from a pool of qualified candidates residing in North Carolina. The composition of the staff to be hired will reflect both the racial and geographic diversity of the state. Prospective

hires will also possess firsthand and current knowledge of the implications that the pandemic has had on the education and well-being of underserved communities in North Carolina and will have experience working within North Carolina's education system at the community- or school-base, LEA, or SEA level. The NC SFEC is collaboratively designed by consortium partners who will contribute personnel to the project upon launch. Please find detailed descriptions outlining NC-based staff and partner roles and key project personnel resumes in the Appendix.

**C3. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of project consultants or subcontractors.** The Consortium partners, consultants, and subcontractors cumulatively bring over 200 years of experience supporting vulnerable children and families across the age continuum within their distinct bodies of work.

Bellwether Education Partners will serve as the NC SFEC's independent evaluator. They are a national nonprofit focused on dramatically changing education and life outcomes for underserved children. Bellwether works with a broad array of organizations including districts, states, charters, foundations, nonprofits, associations, and mission-driven for-profit organizations across the nation. The Bellwether team is made up of experienced education leaders with decades of hands-on experience as teachers, school operators, founders, early stage and scale-up senior executives, strategy consultants, and organizational development and individual coaching practitioners.

UNC Greensboro (UNCG), established more than 125 years ago, is focused on helping each student unleash their potential and make a meaningful impact with their life, in their community, and around the world. The NC SFEC will engage with Dr. Ye He's work, which focuses on the promotion of strength-based, community-engaged culturally responsive practices in education.

*North Carolina Parents as Teachers (NCPAT)*: has provided infrastructure supporting early childhood parent education home visiting services for the last 20 years. NCPAT supports the accountability and continuous quality improvement of the 41 PAT affiliate programs throughout North Carolina. These affiliate programs use the PAT evidence-based home visiting model to provide comprehensive home visiting and parent education services to families from before birth through age five.

*Book Harvest*: provides an abundance of books and ongoing literacy support to families and their children from birth and serves as a model for communities committed to ensuring that children are lifelong readers and learners.

**D. Adequacy of Resources D1. The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**

NCFL, the applicant and lead partner, has a 33-year history advancing high-impact, research-based FE and family literacy initiatives to improve academic achievement and drive equitable outcomes of underserved students across diverse communities nationwide. We convene and unite families, educators, and community stakeholders to develop sustainable and effective FE systems. Being nonpartisan, NCFL is uniquely positioned to form authentic partnerships with state organizations and offer an objective perspective on how to align and integrate FE initiatives, resulting in cohesive systems that build the capacity of families, schools, and the broader community. Since its inception, NCFL has worked in all states and in more than 150 communities nationwide.

Each state-based partner contributed to the creation of this proposal and provided a letter from their respective organizations indicating full support of this project and their commitment to carry out the project together. The SEA provided a letter of support (preliminary MOU) from

the state Superintendent, signaling their endorsement of this project. The NC SFEC will retain staff with the requisite training and experience to execute the project.

**D2. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.** The urgency around student learning recovery encompasses myriad factors essential to the overall well-being of students and families such as access to services that fulfil basic needs, positive social emotional development, and economic prosperity. NC SFEC's offerings are provided through a layered approach, beginning with reaching families at the LEA level with high-impact FE programming, then serving a larger number of families, SEA-, LEA-, school- and community-based staff through regional TTA, and finally by offering web-based tools and resources for all to consume at the statewide level. The proposed budget includes 74.5% of the funds received to serve LEAs, schools, and community-based organizations that serve high concentrations of disadvantaged students and 49.6% of the funds received under this competition each fiscal year will be used to expand technical assistance for evidence-based parent education programs. The budget also accounts for costs for adequate state-based (3.0 FTE) and support personnel (1.3 FTE) to execute the project and serve a statewide network inclusive of the SEA, LEAs, families, and community-based partners.

**D3. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits.** The NC SFEC will provide a tremendous return on investment for the U.S. ED by directly impacting 35,640 people through high-impact FE programming and high quality TTA over the five-year project, resulting in a per person cost of \$139. This is a nominal amount of investment that will contribute to a sustainable FE statewide system for North Carolina children and families. The anticipated results and benefits of the NC SFEC's efforts will be transformational for North Carolina families. It is anticipated that

student achievement and family well-being are improved. The NC SFEC efforts will increase racial and socioeconomic parent and family engagement and efficacy. The NC SFEC is likely to result in increased equity and shared decision-making in educational opportunities and school-family-community engagement among families, communities, and schools. It is anticipated that the NC SFEC will increase the capacity of educators and community leaders to work effectively with families as partners. All of this will result in an enhanced policy environment for family-school engagement and support. Ultimately, the impact will result in a more collaborative funding community for sustaining family engagement endeavors.

**E. Quality of the Project Evaluation:** Bellwether will conduct an independent evaluation of the NC SFEC. Bellwether has extensive experience conducting rigorous quasi-experimental, correlational, and implementation evaluations of multi-year federal grant programs, including Charter Schools Program and Regional Comprehensive Center Program funded projects. Bellwether will use a mixed methods approach to evaluate the impact and implementation quality of project activities at all system levels, focusing on 1) providing moderate, promising, and descriptive evidence of the impact of three core strands of School-Based High-Impact Programming (Home Visiting, Family Literacy, and Parent Leadership training) on student, family,<sup>1</sup> and school climate outcomes in targeted LEAs; 2) providing descriptive evidence of the impact of regionally-provided train-the-trainer programming on outcomes for participating SEA staff, LEA staff,<sup>2</sup> CBO staff, and parent leaders; 3) providing descriptive evidence of the impact of creating a statewide advisory committee; and 4) providing formative feedback on implementation. The evaluation will be guided by research questions aligned to the core project objectives (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Evaluation Research Questions**

<p><b>Objective One:</b> Provide strong NC SFEC Leadership and Governance.</p>
<p>1. Descriptive: To what extent is the statewide Special Advisory Committee creating more alignment in the resources and strategies offered across the state? To what extent is this group implementing shared decision making with a focus on equity?</p>
<p><b>Objective Two:</b> Provide high-quality training and technical assistance (TTA) and professional learning through a train-the-trainer approach to the SEA; LEAs; families; and communities.</p>
<p>2. Descriptive: Do families and educators who participate in NC SFEC train-the-trainer programming report greater awareness of strategies and improved capacity to work across school-family partnerships effectively in meeting the academic and developmental needs of their children? To what degree do these results vary by staff role and region?</p>
<p><b>Objective Three:</b> Provide high-impact family engagement services and programs (preschool - adulthood) to LEAs, families, and communities.</p>
<p>3. QED: Do students participating in the Home Visiting and/or Family Literacy Program have higher attendance rates relative to a matched comparison group of students within the same district?</p>
<p>4. QED: Do students participating in the Home Visiting and/or Family Literacy Program perform better on K-readiness &amp; grades 3-5 ELA assessments relative to a matched comparison group of students within the same district?</p>
<p>5. QED: Do schools that participate in NC SFEC High-impact Programming improve school climate scores year over year?</p>
<p>6. Descriptive: Do families who participate in the Home Visiting, Family Literacy, and/or Parent Leadership program have improved self-efficacy, attitudes, and behaviors related to engaging educators to meet the academic and developmental needs of their children? To what degree does this vary by parents' background (race, gender, education), the age of their children, and parents' baseline level of involvement in school activities?</p>
<p>7. Descriptive: At schools participating in High-impact Programming, do educators report improved competencies aligned to the Dual Capacity Framework? To what degree does this vary by role and region?</p>
<p><b>Objective Four:</b> Embed parent participation in local, district, and state policy advocacy and leadership.</p>

8. Descriptive: Do parent leaders who participate in the Parent Advocacy train-the-trainer programs report greater ability to advocate for the developmental needs of their children and others? To what degree do these results vary by parent's background (race, gender, education) and the age of their children?

Implementation of NC SFEC Programming

9. Is the statewide infrastructure for meaningful engagement of parents implemented as intended? What factors facilitate or hinder quality implementation?
10. Does the NC SFEC implement train-the-trainer programming through three regional hubs as intended? What factors facilitate or hinder quality implementation?
11. Does the NC SFEC implement High-impact Programming in selected LEAs as intended? What factors facilitate or hinder the quality implementation?
12. How do parents and SEA, LEA, and school staff perceive the quality, effectiveness and inclusiveness of NC SFEC programming and support?

**E1. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.** Bellwether's evaluation approach aligns the research questions with objective performance measures to provide systematic, rigorous information related to progress toward project goals and intended outcomes. Bellwether researchers will use a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources and multiple stakeholders to triangulate findings for increased validity. Figure 5 shows alignment across project objectives, research questions (RQ1-RQ8), outcome measures, and proposed data sources. We describe implementation measures to address RQ9-RQ12 in our discussion of performance feedback below.



**Figure 5: Crosswalk of Research Questions, Outcome Measures, and Data Sources**

RQ	Outcome Measure	Data Source ( <i>Collection Schedule</i> )
<b>Obj 1: Provide strong NC SFEC Leadership and Governance.</b>		
RQ 1	% Of NC SFEC, SEA staff & Advisory Committee members report: special advisory committee is creating more alignment across statewide resources/strategies & implementing shared decision making with a focus on equity	Interviews with NC SFEC staff, SEA staff, and Advisory Committee members ( <i>Spring Y1-Y5</i> )
<b>Obj 2: Provide high-quality TTA and professional learning through a train-the-trainer approach to the NC SEA; NC LEAs; families; and communities.</b>		
RQ 2	% Participating families and SEA, LEA, and CBO staff report: improved self-efficacy, knowledge, and attitudes after regional train-the-trainer programs ( <b>APM 4, APM 6</b> )	Post-training surveys ( <i>immediately after each training series, Y1-Y5</i> )
<b>Obj 3 Provide high-impact family engagement services and programs (preschool - adulthood) to NC LEAs, families, and communities.</b>		
RQs 3&4	Estimated program effect on student attendance and performance on K readiness and state reading assessments	State/district administrative data ( <i>Spring Y4 baseline &amp; Spring Y5 outcome, Treatment Students (TS) and Control Students (CS)</i> )
RQ 5	Estimated program effects on school climate	School Climate (Panorama) survey ( <i>Spring Y1 to Y5; TS and CS</i> )
RQ 6	Change in parent self-efficacy, knowledge, and behaviors related to meeting the needs of their children ( <b>GPRA 4</b> )	Family Survey ( <i>Fall Y2-Y5, baseline; Spring Y2-Y5, outcome; TS only</i> )
RQ 7	# Educators in participating schools reporting improved competencies aligned with Dual Capacity Framework	Focus groups with LEA & school staff ( <i>Spring Y1-Y5; TS only</i> )
<b>Obj 4 Embed parent participation in local, district, and state policy advocacy and leadership</b>		
RQ 7	% Parent participants report: improved knowledge & self-efficacy after parent advocacy training	Post-program surveys ( <i>immediately after each training, Y1-Y5</i> )

**Administrative Data.** *Student Attendance (RQ3).* Bellwether will request end-of-year (2027, Y5) and prior-year (2026, Y4) attendance data for students in grades pre-K to 5 in treatment and control schools in Year 5. Bellwether will measure attendance using both a continuous variable indicating the number of days a student was absent during one school year as well as with a dichotomous variable indicating whether a student was chronically absent (i.e., accumulated 10 or more unexcused absences). *Student Academic Achievement (RQ 4).* Bellwether will collect student-level district kindergarten readiness data and Grades 3-5 state standardized ELA test score data for 2025-26 (Y4, baseline) and 2026-27 (Y5, outcome).<sup>3</sup> Kindergarten readiness data includes ratings across 5 domains of learning and development<sup>4</sup> (measured as categorical variables) as well as a composite K-readiness rating (measured as a continuous variable). Data on the grades 3-5 state test include students' scale scores, which are measured as continuous variables.

**Survey Data.** Bellwether will use four surveys to collect outcome measures listed in Table X above, analyzing all survey data using descriptive methods (means, medians, max, min), inferential statistics (t-tests and chi-squared tests), and sub-group analysis. *School climate survey (RQ 5).* Target LEAs participating in high-impact family programming will administer a school climate survey, such as Panorama School Climate Survey,<sup>5</sup> to students, staff, and parents in treatment and control schools districtwide, in the spring of Years 2-5. Survey items will focus on student, staff, and parent perceptions of key climate elements (i.e., engagement, environment, and safety). *Family Survey (RQ 6).* Families who participate in the Home Visiting, Family Literacy, and/or Parent Leadership programs will take a project-designed Family Survey administered in the fall and spring of Years 2-5 (Year 1 is largely a planning and development year). The survey will measure constructs including parents' self-efficacy, knowledge, and

behaviors related to supporting and advocating for their child’s academic and developmental needs. *Training participant self-efficacy, knowledge, and behaviors (RQ2, RQ7)*. Bellwether will design two surveys to capture changes in participant capacity after trainings: 1) the Train-the-Trainer Participant Survey, to be administered to all participants (families and SEA, LEA, and CBO staff) immediately upon completion of train-the-trainer programming offered at regional hubs; and 2) a Parent Advocate Survey, to be administered to parents participating in parent advocacy trainings immediately upon completion of the training. These brief post-program surveys will include items that capture the extent to which participants believe they improved in their sense of self efficacy and in knowledge and skills aligned to the Dual Capacity Framework and/or the parent advocacy training curriculum. *Interviews/Focus Groups (RQ 1, RQ 7)*.

Bellwether will conduct individual interviews each spring to gather NC SFEC staff, SEA staff, and Advisory Committee perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of the Advisory Committee as well as overall project successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Focus groups will be conducted each spring with a purposive sample of staff in schools implementing high-impact programming; a semi-structured protocol will probe for perceptions of improved competencies aligned to the Dual Capacity Framework: connecting FE to learning and development; engaging families as co-creators; honoring family funds of knowledge; and creating a welcoming culture. Topics will also include quality of implementation (see below).

**E2. The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.** To

contextualize the findings of the impact study and provide systematic and ongoing performance feedback to NC SFEC staff, Bellwether will conduct an implementation study throughout the grant period, focused on the scope and quality of NC SFEC activities and services, as well as

fidelity to evidence-based practices. The implementation study will examine early indicators of progress toward intended outcomes, assess the fidelity of program implementation, and explore factors that facilitate or hinder quality implementation. Figure 6 shows alignment between implementation measures and proposed data collection.

**Figure 6: Crosswalk of Research Questions, Implementation Measures, and Data Sources**

RQ	Implementation Fidelity Measures	Data Source ( <i>Collection Schedule</i> )
8	<u>Creation of statewide infrastructure</u> : Creation of Asset Inventory; creation of Advisory Committee (AC); frequency of meetings; content of meeting agendas; creation of digital presence for statewide learning opportunities; identification of FE champions ( <b>GPRA 2</b> )	Interviews with NC SFEC staff & AC members; review of AC meeting agendas; review of digital platform and SFEC reports ( <i>Spring Y1-Y5</i> )
9	<u>TTA/professional learning through regional hubs</u> : Creation of hubs; # train-the-trainer programs provided to build capacity of SEA, LEA, school staff & CBO staff and parent leaders; # parent leaders, families, and SEA/LEA/school staff participating ( <b>GPRA 1, GPRA 2, GPRA 5</b> )	NC SFEC administrative data ( <i>Quarterly Y1-Y5</i> ) Post-program surveys ( <i>immediately after each training, Y1-Y5</i> )
10	<u>LEA-based High-Impact Programming</u> : # High-impact activities/services to ensure that parents are trained and can effectively engage in activities that will improve student academic achievement ( <b>GPRA 3</b> ); # parents participating in high-impact activities/services ( <b>GPRA 1</b> )	NC SFEC administrative data ( <i>Quarterly Y1-Y5</i> )
11	<u>Across all activities</u> : Description of factors that support or hinder implementation fidelity and outcomes; Perceptions of quality and utility of NC SFEC activities and services	Interviews/focus groups: NC SFEC, AC, SEA/LEA/school staff, parent leaders, families ( <i>Spring Y1-Y5</i> )

Data sources for the implementation study include NC SFEC administrative records, post-event surveys (described above), surveys of school staff and parents (described above), and

interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders. *Project Administrative Records*. To facilitate sharing of implementation data between Bellwether and NC SFEC, and ensure consistent performance feedback, Bellwether will work with the NC SFEC to create a Performance Indicator Dashboard. This Dashboard will be updated at least monthly by the NC SFEC team to track project activities. Dashboard data will be analyzed using descriptive methods (e.g., means, standard deviations, counts, cross-tabs). *Focus Groups*. Each spring (Y1-Y5), Bellwether will conduct site visits to a purposive sample of LEAs participating in high-impact programming to conduct focus groups with parent leaders, families, LEA, and school staff. Semi-structured protocol topics will include project implementation, perceived quality and utility of the services provided, and factors supporting or hindering quality implementation. Bellwether will code the interview transcripts, identify emerging themes, and distill key findings.

Bellwether will use multiple modes of communication to share findings about implementation and impact with the NC SFEC and other stakeholders throughout the year. In addition to using the Dashboard as a tool for ongoing informal communication about implementation progress, Bellwether will meet quarterly with NC SFEC to reflect on formative findings related to performance and progress toward goals. Findings from each year's data collection and analysis will be summarized in an annual evaluation report (Years 1-4) and a final summative evaluation report (Year 5), which will address the research questions and include lessons learned and recommendations for continuous improvement.

**E3. The extent to which methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce promising evidence (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) about the project's**

**effectiveness.** Bellwether's evaluation is designed to assess the degree to which there is moderate evidence that meets WWC standards with reservations of a relationship between

project activities and student attendance and achievement using a matched comparison group QED (RQ3, RQ4). This evidence will surpass the requirement for promising evidence. Our evaluation will also provide promising evidence of the impact of project activities on school outcomes (RQ5). The remaining RQs will be addressed using descriptive or qualitative methods that will not provide promising evidence but may be used to demonstrate a rationale, as described above.

For RQ3 and RQ4, (impacts on student attendance and achievement), Bellwether will use propensity score matching to identify at least one matched comparison for grade-eligible students<sup>6</sup> who participated in the relevant NC SFEC program in Year 5. Students will also be matched on prior measures of the outcomes, student-level demographics (e.g., student race/ethnicity, gender, grade level, special education status, English learner status, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch), and school characteristics (e.g., school location, size, and concentrations of minority, economically disadvantaged, special education, and English learner students). Bellwether will include an exact match on district. After matching, Bellwether will examine the quality of the match on student and school characteristics and will also include them in the models, to increase precision. Bellwether will examine baseline equivalence between treatment and matched comparison groups for each baseline outcome measure (prior year attendance and achievement measures). The treatment effect will be estimated at the student level using multi-level models, with students nested within school and district, controlling for student- and school-level characteristics, and including a district fixed-effect. We expect that at least 40 families will participate in high-impact programming (home visiting, family literacy, and/or leadership training) in each of the three LEAs, for a total treatment group cohort of at least 120 students each year. The analysis will pool outcomes from each cohort of participating

families from Year 2 to Year 5; since there might be some overlap, with families participating in both the leadership and literacy programs, we estimate a total of around 450 students for the treatment sample.<sup>7</sup> *School Outcomes.* To address RQ5 (school climate scores) Bellwether will use propensity score matching to identify at least one matched comparison for all schools that enroll students whose parents participate in NC SFEC High-Impact Programs in Years 2-5. Schools will be matched on prior-year school climate score, as well as the school characteristics listed for RQs 3 and 4. Bellwether will examine baseline equivalence between treatment and matched comparison schools for the outcome measure (school climate score) and for school characteristics, and all matching variables will be included in the final model to improve precision. The treatment effect will be estimated at the school level using OLS regression, adjusting standard errors for clustering at the district level. All models will include school and district level controls. We anticipate there will be a minimum of eight participating schools per district during the grant period, for a treatment group size of at least 24 treatment schools.