



# **SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**

## **NJ Family Engagement Hub**

### **NJ Statewide Family Engagement Center**

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#### **Narrative**

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## **Introduction: The NJ Statewide Family Engagement Center (“Family Engagement Hub”)**

***SPAN:*** The SPAN Parent Advocacy Network of NJ (SPAN) is a non-profit with 34 years of experience providing information, training, technical assistance (TA), support, and leadership development for families, youth, and professionals on issues that impact the lives of children with and without disabilities across all child- and family-serving systems. Our ***vision*** is that all families will have the resources and support to ensure that their children become fully participating and contributing members of our communities. Our ***mission*** is to empower and support families, youth, and professionals interested in the healthy development and education of children and youth. Our ***priority*** is children and families with the greatest need due to disability; poverty; discrimination (race/ethnicity, gender, language, immigrant, LGBTQ+, or homeless status); involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems; or geographic location.

***New Jersey:*** The most densely populated state, NJ has 2,493 schools in 686 districts serving 1.34 million students (the eleventh largest enrollment in the nation). Given substantial gaps in performance based on disability, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status, there is a profound need for a systematic approach to identify students’ needs early and provide preventive intervention and differentiated approaches to increase student learning and development.

***NJ Department of Education:*** The NJDOE supports family engagement (FE) through a variety of mechanisms. It offers information to families through online resources, social media, county-level activities,, information sessions, and guidance documents specifically for families; conducts professional development to support educators of low-income students, ELLs, and students with disabilities regarding effective family engagement; works collaboratively with multiple state agencies and organizations to build and strengthen capacity to create partnerships that increase achievement; and models engaging families in planning through a variety of stakeholder groups. Despite these efforts, NJ lags in its capacity and infrastructure to support evidence-based FE.

As outlined in its partnership letter (*Attachment 1*), the SEA is committed to a systemic approach to family engagement aligned with the Dual Capacity-Building (DCB) Framework.

To achieve the **NJ Family Engagement Hub (FE Hub)** goals and outcomes, SPAN will convene a collaborative *network of partners* committed to improving services to and outcomes for children by engaging their families and professionals in effective partnerships. SPAN has secured the written commitment of over 30 agencies/organizations/ districts, to collaborate with us to extend and enhance our reach, effectiveness, and impact. Our Board, Advisory Council (AC), Stakeholder Board, and Youth Advisory Council, will provide invaluable direction and assistance. (See *Attachment 1, Letters of Commitment* and *Attachment 2, Board/Stakeholder Board*).

#### **A. Quality of Project Design (25 points)**

*(1) There is an underlying conceptual framework & quality of that framework:* SPAN's approach to family engagement is built on our strong belief and experience in *dual capacity-building*, including support for families, family-led and community-based organizations (CBOs), and professionals to develop skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and connections to support student learning and participate as partners to make schools places where all children thrive.

Our activities are based on the underlying premise that participation and engagement of parents from all backgrounds as integral and full partners in their children's education as well as in school, district, and state improvement efforts, can be achieved under even the most challenging circumstances, if provided with this support. Our approaches are based on evidence-based practices (EBPs), and we will devote resources to expanding the evidence base through robust evaluation.

The project will provide the most intensive technical assistance (TA) in communities with the largest populations of low-income students. The SEA has identified 272 schools for Targeted or Comprehensive Assistance. 62% are high-poverty schools. The 32 districts in which these schools are located and those who are part of the NJ Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) Initiative will be

included as Primary LEAs for more intensive TA/training. Each of the 75 districts to be served intensively have high rates of low-income children, minorities, English learners (ELs), students with disabilities, and/or immigrant or migrant students. This will ensure we spend more than 65% of SFEC funds to serve LEAs/communities with high concentrations of disadvantaged students.

**Attachment 3** sets forth our Family Engagement Hub (FE Hub) **Conceptual Framework** (CF) and **Logic Model**. *Child and family outcomes* are at the center of the CF. Outcome assessment is infused through all levels and involves a systematic process of ongoing inquiry that uses multiple measures to determine efficacy. Achievement of these outcomes is supported by *shared learning, coaching and mentoring, and collaboration and shared leadership*, which interact to provide the structures, services, and supports to impact outcomes. The framework includes core values of *strengths-based empowerment* (individual level), *dual capacity-building* (organization level), and *equity and authentic, impactful engagement* (all levels.) The outcomes, approaches, and core values are achieved by use of effective/EBPs, Improvement Science/continuous quality improvement (CQI), and Active Implementation. *Promotion of equity in access and outcomes, addressing root causes* of inequitable access and outcomes, and *culturally responsive and reciprocal (relationship-based) practices*, are central to an effective system of TA and training, and are wrapped around the elements. *Culturally responsive practices* adapt to NJ's broad diversity of cultures of families, students, communities, schools and districts. *Multi-level, tiered systems of support* reflect systematic provision of differing levels of intensity of supports based on family, community, school, and district need. Project activities will range from *universal* (website, webinars, materials development and dissemination) for all audiences, yet tailored to meet the needs of the diversity of race, ethnicity, language, literacy levels, abilities, and socioeconomic factors (poverty, homelessness, child welfare, foster care, juvenile justice involvement) of NJ populations; to

*targeted* support (conferences, regional trainings); to the most *intensive* supports provided for LEA adoption of EBPs in literacy and SEL and family engagement, and parent leadership development.

All components of our conceptual framework inform and impact each other. Our project design embraces these *values, essential elements, and practices*, and infuses them through all activities.

Our **logic model** provides a visual representation of the project, demonstrating the interrelated nature of inputs → outputs → outcomes. The ongoing identification of NJ's strengths and needs will lead to ongoing revision of activities, including training, TA, resource development/ dissemination, and facilitation of community collaboratives. The result will be the expansion and enhancement of family and professional FE **capabilities** (human capital, skills & knowledge), **connections** (relationships and networks), **confidence** (self-efficacy), and **cognition** (assumptions, beliefs, and worldview), leading to improved outcomes for students and for family well-being.

***(2) Services to be provided reflect up-to-date knowledge from research & effective practice:***

The FE Hub will use SPAN's extensive and up-to-date knowledge of research and effective practices to attain our three goals (see below) aimed at increasing informed and effective family engagement and family-professional collaboration and partnerships in improving student learning and development, using EBPs, and address all four competitive priorities. We will use effective/ EBPs in outreach, dissemination, service delivery, continuous quality improvement (CQI), and evaluation (See ***Attachment 4: Tools for TA/Bibliography and Evidence Form***).

The project will use *effective approaches* in training, TA, and support. It will provide direct services to parents and families through evidence-based activities aimed at engaging families in supporting their children's learning and linking parent and community involvement to learning, i.e., focusing involvement on improving achievement in general, and in literacy and social-emotional learning (SEL), and engaging families in developing specific knowledge and skills.

Our training will reflect up-to-date knowledge on adult learning and on the importance of using

varied approaches as well as the realities imposed on families, youth and professionals by COVID-19. For individual workshops, we will use three models of learning. *On Demand* learning offers presentations in multiple languages via an online platform for unlimited access around the clock (brief resource documents, a recorded video presentation, and an online learning assessment). *Virtual* workshops are learning sessions provided remotely in real time using an online video conferencing platform and simultaneous interpretation using adult learning principles with interactive activities to keep participants learning and engaged. *In-person* presentations are learning sessions provided face to face across the state, typically hosted by districts or family-serving CBOs. These sessions will provide engaging presentations, group discussions, and other interactive learning activities focused on pre-defined learning objectives, with simultaneous interpretation.

The FE Hub's more extensive training programs will use an evidence-based multi-stage participatory process that builds on participant's foundational information, growing their knowledge over time with introduction and determination of a baseline, providing information, discussion, practice and self-directed learning, self/instructor evaluation of knowledge and practical application with feedback, and ongoing information and participant development activities. Training activities will use research on adult learning and ensure process conditions necessary for adult learners to gain knowledge *and* the ability and desire to apply what they have learned, such as development of respectful and trusting relationship between parents and professionals.

Consistent with the research on quality improvement, there will be frequent and ongoing evaluation of the quality, relevance, usefulness, and impact of services and products.

***(3) The project builds capacity and yields results beyond the period of federal assistance.*** The FE Hub will build capacity of families, family leaders, family organizations, CBOs, schools, district, and state professionals. Our evaluation plan outlines how we will ensure that we are achieving the desired outcomes among all participants across our three tiers of training, TA and support.

The results will extend well beyond the period of funding. A cadre of trained family leaders and professionals will have been developed and will continue to use what they learned for many years. NJ will have an approved family engagement policy that will be implemented statewide. Leaders in the communities identified for the most intensive support will have been trained and supported to engage in needs assessment and prioritization and action plan development and implementation, and will have experience working together to meet the well-being needs of families.

All reports, tools, and materials, including updated and easy-to-understand and use information and resources for families and professionals and reports of best and promising practices, etc., will continue to be disseminated, including on the FE Hub website to ensure continued access to national, state and local audiences. Partners will continue to engage in efforts to identify and allocate resources to sustain and spread the successful work of the FE Hub. We will seek funding from foundations and government agencies to create new resources. We will train our staff across our 25+ projects in the FE Hub tools so that families who are impacted by all projects will be able to get evidence-based information individual and systems level family engagement.

**Goal 1 | The NJ Family Engagement Hub will build a state-level family engagement (FE) infrastructure to support and enhance the state’s efforts to build capacity to increase informed and effective FE in improving student learning and development via a continuum of services to remove barriers and support district/school reform and FE efforts.**

**Objective 1.1** | Management and Governance. By Year 1 Quarter 2, establish the FE Hub Advisory Committee (AC) of 30 members representing NJ’s diversity, the membership of which includes: (i) a majority of parents; (ii) representatives with expertise in improving services for disadvantaged children; (iii) local elementary and secondary school representatives, including students; (iv) business community representatives; and (v) SEA and LEA representatives. (Priority Assurance).



Activity 1.1.1 | By Year 1 Quarter 2, SPAN and the SEA Lead will develop onboarding protocols, processes and leadership development modules for AC members. SPAN will adapt the following TA resources: *Serving on Groups That Make Decisions (SoG)*, *Group Alchemy: Six Elements of Highly Successful Collaborations*, *Leading by Convening (LbC)*, and *Collaborative Action Team (CAT) Toolkit*. See **Attachment 4: Tools for TA/Bibliography** for descriptions and source info.

Activity 1.1.2 | With the SEA, SPAN will identify, recruit and train 15 family and 14 other members, who will serve up to two-year terms (with some staggering for continuity).

Activity 1.1.3 | By the end of Year 1 Quarter 2, implement onboarding training for 30 AC members, SEA and SPAN FE Hub staff. Members will participate in a full-day retreat to establish the AC vision, set participation agreements for successful collaboration, get familiarized with Goals and Objectives, and establish workgroups on foundational activities (i.e. needs and strengths assessments, policy review, development of NJ FE framework). This retreat will be conducted using Activity 1.1.1 tools. New members will be on-boarded prior to their 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

Activity 1.1.4 | Facilitate four AC meetings/year on days/times when parent members are most available. AC members will learn about and inform the work of the FE Hub, review needs assessment and evaluation data, provide feedback on dissemination and outreach plans, recommend district and parent leaders for LEA committees (see Goal 2 activities), potential LEA and CBO participants, and ensure that activities meet the needs. Family members will be (a) offered the opportunity to attend pre-meetings held via a web platform, (b) provided with SoG training and information on upcoming meeting content, and (c) supported with stipends.

Activity 1.1.5 | Facilitate an Annual retreat to review data and review progress across all Goals.

Activity 1.1.6 | Annually evaluate the Advisory Committee using board assessments as to members' participation, satisfaction and perceptions of impact and effectiveness.

**Objective 1.2** | By the end of Year 1, develop a NJ state and local FE system framework. The SPAN and SEA leads, a parent rep, and a rep from other constituencies will work with cross-division NJDOE staff to draft a framework for AC review, feedback and approval and referral to the Commissioner for adoption. It will reflect the elements of the DCB and NJTSS frameworks and ESSA parent involvement requirements and guidance, and be informed by CAT Toolkit, NJTSS resources, Whole School/Whole Community/Whole Child (WS/WC/WC) and ESSA parent involvement resources. Special attention will be paid to strengthening engagement of families in the Bilingual Education Advisory Committee and Early Childhood Advisory Councils.

**Activity 1.2.1** | By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, develop needs/assets assessments for state, district, school and family capacities to inform the development of the NJ-FE framework.

**Activity 1.2.2** | By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, disseminate to and collect needs/assets assessment data from Primary LEAs, families, professionals, CBOs and other stakeholders. Needs assessments will go out to stakeholders via NJDOE, AC members, and SPAN.

**Activity 1.2.3** | By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, draft proposed NJ FE engagement policy for AC review and approval, and for submission to the Commissioner for review, approval and adoption.

**Activity 1.2.4** | By the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter receive approved FE framework.

**Objective 1.3** | Develop resources, TA & Training for SEA implementation of the NJ-FE framework that supports the state's efforts in building informed and effective FE capacity.

**Activity 1.3.1** | By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, analyze data to identify the resources, TA & Training needs of LEAs, families and CBOs needed to support implementation.

**Activity 1.3.2** | Develop tools to provide targeted and intensive training and TA for the project's Primary LEAs, using NJ-FE resources and tools (SoG, Group Alchemy, LbC, and CAT Toolkit.

**Activity 1.3.3** | Identify/develop tools/protocols to evaluate TA & Training activities and resources.

**Objective 1.4** | Curate and develop universal TA resources to support framework implementation.

Activity 1.4.1 | Facilitate inter-rater reviewer Workgroups of SEA/LEA staff and AC members.

Activity 1.4.2 | Create a database of resources aligned with the NJ-FE framework that have been identified by needs/assets assessments, SEA staff, Committee members, SPAN staff or Primary LEAs. The database will include intended audiences, formats, languages, literacy levels, and other categories as determined by the Workgroups. Tools include National Association for Family School and Community Engagement website, Signetwork.org Family Engagement Resource Collection, exemplars from NJ and other states, and NJ-FE Needs/Assets assessment results.

Activity 1.4.3 | Each Workgroup will be assigned a group of items in the database and will rate them as to quality, accessibility, usability, and relevance to the intended audiences.

Activity 1.4.4 | Highly-rated resources will be included on the FE-Hub website.

Activity 1.4.5 | As highly rated resources are available, SPAN will develop and/or continually populate web-based topical resource collections organized by subtopics, with descriptions including potential uses, intended audiences, resource formats, and potential uses.

**Objective 1.5** | Disseminate NJ-FE framework resources through multiple channels, using effective dissemination strategies, including SEA and SPAN social media (including updated SEA webpages related to FE by the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of year 1), bi-monthly e-newsletter, Primary LEAs, and AC members. An effective dissemination plan will be developed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of year 1.

**Objective 1.6** | Assist SEA to review and update FE policies to ensure alignment with the NJ FE framework and that they support state efforts in building all stakeholders' FE capacities.

Activity 1.6.1 | By the end of Year 1, provide results of SEA FE policies scan for AC review.

Activity 1.6.2 | At each Year 2 meeting, the AC will provide improvement recommendations.

Activity 1.6.3 | As FE policies are updated, SEA staff will develop updated guides, fact sheets, templates, etc. to support LEAs and parents to appropriately use and implement them.

**Goal 2 | With NJDOE, build the capacity of LEAs, professionals, CBOs, family organizations, family leaders, and families to use evidence-based FE practices (Competitive Priority 1) to increase informed and effective family engagement in improving student learning and development via a continuum of supports to remove barriers for FE in education and support parent involvement policies via three tiers of information, training, assistance, and support.**

The three tiers include (a) *universal* training, TA, resources and opportunities that are widely disseminated and easily accessible for participants from across the state; (b) *targeted* TA and support in communities with higher representation of students who are low-income, of color, immigrant/migrant, ELL, military-connected, and/or homeless; and (c) *intensive* TA, primarily in the 75 low-income districts with schools identified for Comprehensive or Targeted Assistance and districts involved in the NJTSS project. A major focus is on enhancing family engagement in SEL, and working with stakeholders to implement components of the WC/WS/WC model of school improvement. This will help address the impact of COVID-19 on students, families, communities, and educators, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic (*Competitive Priority 2*). We will work with communities most negatively impacted by the pandemic via needs/asset-mapping, schools to re-engage and support disengaged students and families, and CBOs to provide resources and supports to meet the basic, fundamental health and safety needs of students, families and educators and the social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs of students through inclusive and culturally/linguistically appropriate methods. SPAN will work with the NJ Office of Resilience and ACEs Collaborative to implement the education aspects of NJ's ACES Action Plan (training on SEL, Mental Health First Aid, and trauma-informed practices.)

This work, as well as the focus on evidence-based family engagement in literacy, will be part of our strategy to promote equity in access to educational resources and opportunities. (*Competitive Priority 3*). Equity will be the cornerstone and focus of all activities across all tiers. Developing

Parents As Champions for Literacy and for SEL will build on our Parents As Champions for Healthy Schools and for Early Learning and Empowering Women in Community Leadership for Healthier Families, and enhance/expand leadership development and engagement of underserved communities in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice.

**Objective 2.1** | Provide intensive and targeted TA to support Primary LEAs to develop systemic services for family engagement (15/year, for a total of 75 districts). We have already identified the 45 intensive districts for years 1-3, representing 355,358 students (26% of all NJ students) in 538 schools (21.5% of all schools, see *Attachment 5, Year 1-3 Intensive Districts*. Beginning in Year 1, we will facilitate development/enhancement of local Family Engagement Advisory Committees (FE ACs) and school staff capacity to support family engagement in student learning to achieve academic and SEL standards; develop/update school-parent compacts, district and school policies; ensure informed family participation in planning and improvement; and participate in design and provision of intensive FE interventions to assist parents whose students are not making progress. TA, including coaching and facilitation, will be provided using: *Guide to Developing Local Parent Advisory Groups, SoG, LbC, Group Alchemy, CAT Toolkit*, and the *DCB & NJ FE Framework*.

Staff will work with districts to identify parent leaders who are representative of student demographic diversity with targeted outreach to parents representing under-performing student groups (i.e., members of Special Education, Bilingual, Title I, and Early Childhood Advisory Groups) to serve on local majority-parent FE ACs. Once the FE AC has been convened, we will facilitate their use of the tools outlined above for orientation, including differentiated approaches to educate and engage diverse parents such as providing translation and interpretation; materials that rely on visual presentations (like infographics); one-to-one coaching prior to meetings to help process information; and peer-to-peer mentoring (members buddy up for support in processing information and participating in discussions).

An initial activity will be dissemination of assessments of how schools or districts are doing in FE programs, policies and practices. We will facilitate LEA and schools' completion of self-assessments of FE using either the updated National PTA Standards or the NJ-developed FE self-assessment for NJTSS, and survey instruments they can use to collect perspectives of parents, students and educators. The FE AC will receive TA on best practices in survey and self-assessment dissemination, and strategies to increase responses from underserved populations.

We will use the "Understanding Data" module from SoG to guide FE AC members through the data and into the development of an action plan with strategies and action steps for improving FE. The action plan template will be adapted to include steps aligned with NJ-FE or DCB framework outcomes. Districts that develop action plans will be eligible to receive small contracts that they can use to implement EBPs to improve family engagement. Schools can select comprehensive programs like the Read With Me literacy back-pack program (full description in *Attachment 4*), or select from a menu of trainings of trainers that will prepare staff and parents to provide parent education programs in their schools and communities. This menu will include modules on: strategies to engage families in understanding NJ's academic and SEL standards and activities to improve achievement, including those that parents can do at home and in out-of-school settings; parent-staff collaboration and communication; appropriate assistance for students who are not making progress, including NJ's Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) system; SEL development and the role of families in enhancing their children's SE "literacy;" accessing adult and financial literacy programs; the WC/WS/WC school improvement model; and other topics.

FE action plans will also identify any needs for updating school and district FE policies. Regional Family Engagement Coordinators will provide intensive TA to support Primary LEAs and their FE ACs to review and update district and school policies and practices to align with the NJ FE Framework and ESSA and ensure they address identified needs using the CAT Toolkit.

**Objective 2.2** | Provide TA and training to build capacity of Primary LEAs to assist families and communities to help their children meet challenging State standards through FE. Beginning Year 1 Quarter 4, we will offer opportunities to create cadres of local FE instructors prepared to enhance information, knowledge and skills focused on improving students' literacy and SEL development. Instructors will learn the module's topical content and interactive activities, and strategies for outreach, especially to underserved populations. At the end, FE Instructors will develop an outreach and dissemination plan. To ensure fidelity of implementation, instructors must: (1) attend the workshop to observe expert trainers in action; (2) fully participate in the training of trainers and complete all pre- and post- activity assignments; (3) develop a dissemination plan for their first workshop; and (4) be observed in their delivery of the training by the Training Director and/or the Literacy and SEL content consultants, who will provide them with feedback on presentation skills, familiarity with content, and ways to improve delivery. Instructors will provide feedback on their experiences, including improvement recommendations as the modules are refined in Years 1 & 2. After completing this process, instructors will be included in the list of per diem trainers and eligible to receive stipends for presentations. Initially, the project will offer the following:

**BookSmart.** The BookSmart Reading Workshop series is an intensive program with 7 one-hour sessions, delivered to parents of preschool and early elementary students to support parents' comfort with and success in enhancing their "reading relationship" with their young children at home, to increase both quality and quantity of shared reading time, which contribute to children's long-term academic success. Parents practice strategies designed to engage children actively in the reading process to bolster their sense of confidence when reading to their children and to build children's emergent literacy skills. Each session's structure includes introductory comments/review from previous week; discussion of successes/challenges faced during home reading time; introduction of new skills via presentation, discussion, and group activity/role play; and Q&A.

This workshop series has been offered to families in sites throughout the NYC metropolitan area. Across sites, engagement in these workshops has increased child enjoyment in reading, decreased parental stress, and altered the ways in which parents interact with children during shared reading time. These changes are even greater with low-income or BL families (the materials are available in Spanish). We will use a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis, so that we can assess *quantitative* changes in amount of time spent reading, parent stress scores, and child outcomes, and *qualitative* changes in parent reports of the quality of reading time.

Parents as Champions |The project will develop, implement, and evaluate training modules for engaging parents in school reform efforts. The Parents as Champions for Literacy and Parents as Champions (PAC) for SEL will provide comprehensive training to parents to develop leadership skills to partner to improve their individual student’s learning and to partner with their schools and communities in school improvement efforts. These PAC trainings are based on SPAN’s Parents as Champions for Healthy Schools, a program that has been externally evaluated as highly successful in positively impacting parents’ knowledge, skills, connections and self-efficacy as they partner with schools to improve school health. PAC-Literacy and PAC-SEL will engage diverse parent leaders in underserved communities, hone their skills and prepare them to develop and implement action plans to improve their schools. They will be prepared to serve on school and district improvement teams as advocates for strengthening literacy and SEL programs. Parents receive three full days of interactive training on how schools work, skills to work with schools, planning for change, taking action/developing an action plan, addressing obstacles, and resources. Training of trainers will be provided to LEA and school staff, parents and CBOs so they can turn-key this leadership development in schools and communities. The leadership skills development content will be supplemented with literacy and SEL-specific information and strategies as outlined below:



Parents as Champions for Literacy curriculum will train parents as leaders in improving literacy outcomes. Training will include best practices in literacy instruction, with a focus on key indicators of effective teaching and learning for students of different ages, cultural/linguistic backgrounds, and academic needs. Parents will receive information about reading development, the importance of language development and listening comprehension for reading comprehension, and of infusing classrooms with engaging and developmentally appropriate opportunities to build component reading skills. The curriculum will highlight the key roles that reading engagement and motivation play in the development of lifelong learners, and how opportunities to use reading strategies, critical thinking skills, and background knowledge can be applied across grades and subjects.

Parents as Champions for SEL curriculum will train parent as leaders in improving SEL outcomes. Training will include best practices in SEL instruction and foundational information about SEL as an approach to strengthening children's ability to interact with others, handle stress, become more resilient, and enhance problem solving. Parents will be prepared to champion SEL through acquiring knowledge of the components of a high-quality SEL education and NJ's SEL Learning Standards, and strategies to support SEL learning and improve SEL education in schools.

Literacy Strategies for Families. Families play a crucial role in their child's reading development and support their child's reading success in many ways - by spending time together reading, making quality reading materials available at home and working with their child's teacher. This 1 ½ hour workshop will help families support reading achievement, especially for children who are struggling readers. Fun, hands-on activities and resources to use with children are provided.

SEL Strategies for Families. Using the same model as the Literacy Strategies workshop above, the SEL version will be a 1 ½ hour session that provides an overview of what SEL is and can be, NJ's Learning Standards related to SEL, and project-based problem-solving activities.

The menu will grow as we develop modules on topics like strategies to engage families in understanding NJ academic and SEL standards; home and community activities to improve achievement; parent-staff communication/collaboration; strategies to obtain help for students who need it; adult literacy and financial literacy programs; coordinated school health; and other topics.

By the beginning of Year 3, there will be a cadre of FE Instructors in at least 25 of the Primary LEAs delivering workshops to approximately 700 parents, school/district staff and CBOs/year. The project will engage these FE Instructors as presenters to scale up and sustain the SEA FE efforts.

**Objective 2.3** | Provide *universal* training, TA, and resources to parents, school and district staff and CBOs that are widely disseminated and easily accessible and that will build the capacities of families, professionals, and CBOs, to increase informed and effective family engagement in improving outcomes for students via annual statewide conferences (350/year participants), regional workshops (18/year with total participants of 500/year), and webinars (24/year with 1200 contacts).

**Web-based Outreach and Impact** | The internet is a major source of information for families as they look for help regarding the education and development of children, even for lower-income parents, over 90% of whom have some level of internet access. A coherent one-stop site for NJ's families will enable them to obtain the information they need to partner and engage with their children's schools in achieving better outcomes. The NJ FE Hub will assist the SEA to disseminate key information regarding education in NJ in accessible and understandable formats to families. SPAN will implement the UX Honeycomb approach to website design. Of primary importance will be ensuring that the content is valuable to families including being: **credible**, from reliable sources; **findable** in a design that is logical and practical for functionality and navigation; **desirable** with an overall appearance of the site and pages pleasing to the eye; **useful** and fulfilling the information and support needs of the intended audiences; and **accessible** to comply with the ADA and to ensure



full inclusion of the widest audience in line with our goal to serve NJ’s diversity of families (race/ethnicity, literacy, language, disability, etc.), professionals and CBOs. SPAN has developed a number of sites that offer robust repositories of resources and functions, such as

[www.parentcenterhub.org](http://www.parentcenterhub.org), with over 5 million page views/year. User

feedback will guide the creation of the website and advance the project’s mission and goals.

Annual Statewide Family Engagement Conference (years 1, 3, 5) and LbC Summit (years 2, 4) |

With NJ DOE, the project will host an annual statewide event for at least 350 participants/year. In

years 1, 3, and 5, the focus will be on family leadership development, while in years 2 and 4 the

focus will be Leading by Convening: A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement. Topics will address

the capacities and outcomes outlined in the DCB, including strategies to collaboratively develop,

implement, and review school, district, and state policies related to FE, and school planning and

improvement provisions in ESSA and NJ guidance; participate in the design and provision of

assistance to students not making academic progress using the I&RS process and NJTSS

implementation teams; participate in local and State decision making; and understand parental roles

and rights under ESSA. The NJ DOE will assist in recruitment. Trained staff, administrators, and

parent and community leaders will participate in bi-monthly seminars and quarterly facilitated

discussions about effective parent involvement strategies via a Community of Practice (CoP).

Additional Workshops | We will conduct workshops for an additional 500 participants and

disseminate materials to at least 10,000 people/year. Trainings will address each area outlined in

the menu of options for FE Instructors in Goal 2, including regional in person trainings on PAC-

SEL (5), PAC-Literacy (5), Literacy Strategies for Families (6) and SEL Strategies for Families

(6), BookSmart (5) and the NJ FE Framework (5), NJ Learning Standards, State Assessments, the

FE Framework, Family Supports for Struggling Learners, and topics identified through FE ACs.

Dissemination of Resources | The project will partner with collaborating organizations (see *Attachment 1*), partners and other CBOs to widely disseminate project resources, identify co-hosts for activities and for presentation of workshops and training opportunities at conferences and meetings of partner organizations including NJ PTA, Black Issues Convention, NJ Education Association, NJ DOE workshops, and workshops in collaboration with Learning Resource Centers.

**Goal 3 | Enhance cross-agency coordination at the state and local levels and community engagement to advance systemic change aimed at improving outcomes for students and meet family well-being needs in underserved communities.** (*Competitive Priority 4*). This will be achieved through implementation of WS/WC/WC approaches; community collaboratives that will bring together partners for shared learning and action; and state and local FE AC efforts.

**Objective 3.1** | Engage a wide variety of partners concerned with child development and family well-being in communities receiving intensive TA in community collaboratives to support family engagement, academic and social-emotional development, and family well-being. Each year in the 15 districts receiving intensive TA, staff will work with family leaders, CBOs including Family Success Centers, county Council for Young Children and Early Childhood Hub, immigrant-serving organizations, Head Start, municipal agencies, and others in quarterly meetings to identify and address family needs. Each collaborative will be supported to complete a needs assessment and develop a CAT Plan to bring together resources to address identified needs. Family leaders will be trained using tools from Empowering Women in Community Leadership for Healthier Families (using a collective impact approach); the CDC's WC/WS/WC model; and SoG.

**Objective 3.2** | Provide intensive support and leadership development to parents most negatively impacted by COVID-19 and/or engagement with the child welfare system. In each of the districts provided with intensive support, Parents, Inc. (NJ affiliate of Parents Anonymous-PA) will facilitate monthly support/leadership group meetings with 25-30 families (375-450/year).

PA has been rated as an EBP by the US Department of Health and Human Services Prevention Services Clearinghouse for its effectiveness in preventing child abuse and neglect. Research on PA's Shared Leadership demonstrates increased knowledge, skills, abilities and opportunities for families and resulting organizational culture change and improved services for families.

### **B. Quality of the Management Plan (20 points)**

Started at a kitchen table in 1987, SPAN now has an almost 35-year history of providing information, training and support to NJ's diversity of families, including those whose children have disabilities, are ELs, low-income, migrant or homeless or involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, and the professionals who serve them, so that they can be informed and effective partners in their children's education, including as NJ's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). For 3 decades, SPAN has been identifying, recruiting, preparing, supporting and transforming parents across NJ into effective leaders who can engage in leadership activities at all levels. We have almost 20 years of experience building the capacity of other family-led organizations and groups in NJ and nationally and almost 10 years of experience as content specialists working with national TA projects who are building the capacity of states in the area of stakeholder engagement through "leading by convening" (state agencies leading change through deep and meaningful engagement of stakeholders including families.) Further, SPAN, a parent-led non-profit, has successfully implemented dozens of state and federal grants, contracts and cooperative agreements, since its inception, including serving as NJ's Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC). Through this expertise and our partnership with NJDOE and a wide array of parent and community partner organizations (see *Attachment I*), the FE Hub will establish and build upon state and local infrastructures that support substantive and authentic family engagement. Relevant examples of our expertise and experience are outlined in *D.1, Adequacy of Resources*, below.

***(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives on time and within budget:***

Systems and staff will be in place to ensure effective management of the wide range of activities. SPAN is governed by a Board with a majority parents of children ages birth to 26. The Board also includes representatives from diverse racial/ethnic, geographic, and professional backgrounds, males and females; they bring fiscal, HR, technology, content, and professional development knowledge and expertise. They will meet quarterly to review implementation and results.

Project Co-Directors will be responsible for goals and objectives, evaluation, supervision of the Regional FE Specialists, and ongoing communication with the Project Officer. We will use our detailed logic model, entered into our project tracking tool, to monitor timely completion of activities. The schedule will be reviewed monthly by the team to ensure timely implementation. They will update existing and identify new resources from other SFECs and TA Centers

The Training Director will directly supervise trainers, update existing training curricula, and identify effective training curricula from curricula. The training team will set up and conduct virtual and in-person workshops; recruit, train, and oversee per diem trainers; and review and revise curriculum and resource materials as needed. FRSs will provide information, TA, and support to families. The Director of TA will directly supervise the Family Resource Specialists (FRSs) who will provide FE information and assistance to at least 2,500 families and professionals each year. Outreach will occur consistent with ***Quality of Project Services***, above.

The Intake Specialist will respond to telephone and email communications, and enter data into the Contact Management System (CMS). The Resources Coordinator will maintain resources, provide administrative support, and input evaluation data for review and analysis by the team.

The Fiscal Director will work with the management team to oversee fiscal management. The Office Systems Manager will oversee AA staff. Each staff member will keep weekly activity time-logs and timesheets. An up-to-date calendar will be posted on the website and available virtually.

In Year One, we begin with a focus on identification, recruitment, and orientation of the AC. Development of curricula for PAC-Literacy, Literacy Strategies for Families, PAC-SEL and SEL Strategies for Families will begin in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, with outreach and recruitment for initial cohorts occurring in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. With NJDOE, SPAN will finalize the initial LEAs in the first quarter and begin TA activities. Literacy and SEL trainings of trainers for these LEAs' staff and parent leaders will be completed in Year One and trainers deployed to work with families in their districts by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Current staff identified as project team members will begin work soon after the project start date. Universal TA activities, including website development and launch; bi-monthly FE e-newsletter dissemination (English and Spanish) to staff and parent leaders in all LEAs, through SPAN, NJDOE, and partner networks, and a statewide FE Leadership Conference, will occur in Year 1. In Year 2, we continue our SEA FE infrastructure work with the AC, and the first cohort of districts establish their local FE ACs and begin to implement training and TA activities including evidence-based parent education programs (including Book Smart, Read With Me, PAC-SEL, and PAC-Literacy). The Year 1 cohorts are joined by Year 2 cohorts and other school, parent and community leaders at regional training of trainers on strategies for engaging families in literacy (3 trainings + 1 Spanish) and SEL (3 trainings + 1 Spanish). New trainers begin outreach and delivery in their own schools and communities with protocols to document activities. SPAN trainers will offer the SEL and Literacy Strategies for Families trainings in person (two each in three regions) and via webinar (two or three each). SPAN staff will create and deliver webinars on key topics. In Years 3-5, new cohorts will join and proceed through the NJ FE framework training and TA activities, and implementation of evidence-based parent education programs. The duties of staff and key consultants are outlined in *Quality of Project Personnel*, below.

***(2-3) Adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback, CQI, and high quality products/services:***

The project will be nimble and responsive. Formative evaluation activities, the AC, and NJDOE

will provide feedback on activities that the team will use for CQI. We will also be responsive to emerging issues. To assure effective services, we will (1) keep summary data on participants, activities, and timelines; (2) assess participant feedback on the quality, relevance, usefulness, and impact of products and services; and (3) assess progress towards achieving outcomes. Data collection will be ongoing. Data will be entered into our CMS from which reports can be generated. Immediate and follow-up surveys will be used for TA and workshop evaluation and assessing qualitative and quantitative outcomes of services, with our external evaluator.

The project will improve implementation of activities and staff practices regularly, based on analysis of collected data, informal feedback from families/youth including via ongoing “chats,” professionals, Board, Stakeholder Board, AC, and NJ YELL (youth advisory board), and staff and volunteers, and the results of USED-required annual data/outcomes reports, to ensure that we provide services and products of high quality, relevance, usefulness, and high impact that help families/youth, professionals, districts, schools, and the SEA to achieve desired outcomes.

We will use both active implementation and improvement science in our efforts to ensure high quality products and services. Both SPAN and the NJDOE are working with the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-Based Practices (SISEP) national TA center in our work, including our joint work on the NJTSS State Professional Development Grant (SPDG). SPAN also uses the Plan-Do-Study-Act model of improvement science to ensure CQI. Finally, in years 2 and 4, our external evaluator will conduct an Implementation Evaluation to ensure that we are implementing activities with fidelity. We will also make use of resources from the Center for Parent Information and Resources and the USED-funded Comprehensive and Content Centers, Equity Assistance Centers, and Regional Educational Labs; the National Center for Mental Health in Schools; and national family engagement organizations (National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement and the National PTA and its parent involvement standards).



***(4) The extent to which the time commitments are appropriate and adequate to meet objectives:***

The Co-Directors will be able to effectively manage the project because of their expertise and experience and the in-kind contributions of staff and resources from projects closely related to SFEC work. The time commitments of Co-Directors and other project staff are based on our highly successful PTI, our experience running several PIRCs, and multiple other projects such as START. Staff time commitments are also adequate because of our effective use of trained parent leaders and community partners, who will help the project reach, inform and train parents and families locally and throughout the state. See also, *Qualifications of Key Personnel*, below, for staff commitments.

***(5) Ensuring that a diversity of perspectives is brought to bear in project operation:*** SPAN has always been committed to the inclusion of diverse voices in our work. All of our national and regional projects and our PTI have advisory committees representing parents, professionals, and local and state agencies. This project will be informed by an AC of individuals committed to the authentic and substantive engagement of families and communities in improving student learning and development. We have letters of commitment from more than 30 state, local, and community agencies and family groups and leaders. More than half of our board are parents of children 0-26 and represent the perspectives of business, higher education, teacher preparation, health care, youth leadership, and community development. Participant data will be reviewed to inform project operation, and the website will include a module where site visitors can provide feedback.

**C. Quality of Project Personnel (15 points) (See *Resumes, Attachment 6*)**

***Extent to which the applicant encourages applications from underrepresented populations:***

SPAN's staffing demonstrates our commitment to, and effectiveness at, encouraging applications for employment from members of traditionally underrepresented groups based on race, color, national origin, gender, or disability. Our staff is 27% Caucasian, 45% African-American, 22% Latina, 3% South Asian, and 3% Native American; the Management Team is 60% African-

American; and its Executive Director is Native American. SPAN's staff speak 10 languages; 15% have a disability. Over 90% are parents, most of whom first came to SPAN for help.

SPAN is an equal opportunity employer. Our personnel policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender/gender identification, race, ethnicity, national origin, creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, or language. SPAN encourages applications from diverse individuals by posting job openings with CBOs that primarily serve underrepresented groups; advertising opportunities in publications accessed by under-represented groups; actively outreaching to parent leaders; and distributing job announcements on our website. Recruiting staff from underrepresented groups is facilitated by our offices in underserved communities and well-established relationships with groups such as the NJ Alliance for Immigrant Justice, the NAACP, the Black Issues Convention, the Minorities with Disabilities Coalition, etc.

SPAN's leadership team has extensive experience in successfully implementing and managing projects funded by USED and USDHHS, including 2 national, 2 regional, and 1 statewide project funded by USED, and 1 national and 1 statewide project funded by USDHHS; SPAN is a funded partner on 9 other federally-funded projects (6 national, 3 statewide). The team includes Executive Director Autin; Chief Operating Officer Danielle Green; Senior Director, National/Regional Projects Carolyn Hayer; Senior Director, State/Local Projects Jeanne McMahon; Policy Director and Director of the Military Family 360 Support Center Peg Kinsell; and Fiscal Director Roy Maynard. This team will play a supporting role in the project, bringing additional extensive knowledge in managing multiple projects, staff development, creating and delivering parent and professional development tools and resources, facilitating group processes, and human resources management, data collection and community collaboration. Monthly management team and Project Director meetings provide an opportunity to discuss and provide input on all 40 SPAN initiatives ranging from pre-natal through young adulthood.

**(1) Qualifications of project director:** The project will be managed by a team that includes **Project Co-Directors Esposito & Mejias**, under the leadership of the **Senior Director for State/Local Programs**, Jeanne McMahon, overseen by **SPAN Executive Director** Autin.

*Autin* has 45 years of experience working to assist underserved communities to understand and use their rights to advocate for improvements in their lives, and 34 years working at a federally-funded PTI in a management capacity. She is on the Board of the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, the Region 1 Equity Assistance Center Advisory Board, the Wisdom Council of the National Center for Cultural Competence, and a governor-appointee to the NJ Council for Young Children. She co-directs the Leadership in Family Professional Partnerships national TA center funded by US Maternal and Child Health Bureau. She helped create the IDEA Partnership's *Creating Agreement* and *LbC* resources. Recent awards are the Champion of Health Equity Award from Family Voices (2021) and the FFCMH Reclaiming Children Award (2019). She is of Cajun/indigenous ancestry, and the mother of multiracial adopted children ages 29-45.

Senior Project Director of State/Local Programs, *Jeanne McMahon*, has a Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Urban Health Administration. Relevant previous experience includes serving as National Program Director at the What to Expect Foundation, where she developed strategic cross-sector partnerships; directed national professional development and curriculum development for practitioners; and oversaw efforts to integrate the prenatal health literacy program into evidence-based maternal-infant programs. She is Co-Chair of the NJ Statewide Network on Cultural Competence and is on the Prevention Committee of the NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. She has been at SPAN in a management role for 5 years.

African-American parent and project Co-Director *Debbie Esposito* co-directs SPAN's START Engaging Parents of Students with Disabilities (START-EPSDT), and our NJ Tiered Systems of Support-Early Reading collaboration with the NJ DOE with USED SPDG funds. She oversees

Parent Group Specialists' work with underserved districts and families to develop, strengthen, and sustain parent advisory groups and early literacy work in schools identified for improvement.

Previously, she served as a Parent Group Specialist, and Coordinator of the START Parent Leadership Development Initiative, providing SoG training to members of the parent-majority County Councils for Young Children (funded by the NJ Department of Children and Families).

Latina parent and project Co-Director *Jeannette Mejias* directs SPAN's SEVA project, funded by the NJ Department of Education, with 3 components: training parents to mentor and support other parents in preparing for, participating in, and following up from school meetings; providing Creating Agreement workshops for families and professionals in low-performing districts with high levels of conflict; and educating parents about alternatives to formal dispute mechanisms. Mejias has expertise in the intersection of education and health, having served as a Statewide BL Family Support Coordinator for SPAN's Family to Family Health Information Center and as a Family Representative for the Preventive Services Improvement Project, helping identify, train, engage and support diverse parent partners. She is on the Board of the Egenolf Early Childhood Learning Center, the first childcare center in NJ to gain NAEYC accreditation; the Universal Home Visiting Stakeholder Advisory Group; the Children's Inter-Agency Coordinating Council; and the Reach Out and Read Early Relational Health Collaborative Parent Advisory Committee.

Both Co-Directors are Co-Presidents of their local Special Education Parent Advisory Group.

**(2) *Qualifications of key personnel:*** Project personnel have extensive relevant training and experience to fulfill project goals and objectives. All proposed staff are currently on staff and are parents. All staff receive ongoing professional development to enable them to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Other key personnel are: *Regional Family Engagement Specialists (3 FTE)*: SPAN will use the SFEC funding to expand the hours of Parent Group Specialists on the START project who currently are ½ time, bringing them all to full-time: Stefanie Babits, Beth

Cosentino, Brenda Figueroa (BL-Spanish), Keishlen Ortiz (African-American), and Vanessa Schwippert (BL). SPAN will also use SFEC funds for two .5 FTE *Family Resource Specialists*: Henry Tejada (BL-Spanish), and Kim Rivers (African-American) and .5 FTE of training staff. Other staff include .25 of our Director of Family and Professional Development (Jeannine Brinkley, former Director of the PEAL Parent Center and staff member of the PA DOE-funded PA Training and TA Network); .15 of our Communications Director, Tom Franklin; .15 of our Web Content Manager, Melanie McLauren; and .5 of Intake Specialist Evann Hardy.

*Non-SFEC personnel* carrying out project objectives at no cost to the project include *Denise Bouyer*, NJ Inclusive Child Care Project, and her team, who oversee program fidelity in implementation of the Pyramid Model Positive Solutions for Families training by Family Liaisons of county Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and provide training and TA to child care programs on topics including family-professional collaboration; *Kasey Dudley*, Parents As Champions for Healthy Schools, and her team, working with parent leaders and schools to implement the WC/WS/WC model; *Nicole Pratt*, Empowering Women in Leadership for Healthier Communities, and her team; *Deepa Srinivasavaradan*, Early Childhood Parent Lead on NJ's Help Me Grow, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems, and Home Visiting initiatives and NJ's Learn the Signs Act Early and Division of Early Childhood Recommended Practices Ambassador; *Monique Dujue Wilson*, Education and Health Rights of Children in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems; and *Maria Docherty*, Cross Project Director of Individual Assistance.

When positions open, new staff will be recruited and selected by Project Co-Directors, with highest priority given to representatives of NJ's diverse communities and to parents. We provide equal access and treatment to all who apply for positions, actively seeking staff from diverse racial, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation and disability backgrounds.

Accommodations are provided for employees with disabilities or of diverse faiths (SPAN staff includes Catholics, Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists and agnostics).

**(3) *Qualifications of project consultants/subcontractors:*** Two consultants will bring their content expertise in the areas of literacy and positive SEL to the project, Dr. Jaime Zibulsky and Dr. Maurice Elias, respectively. Zibulsky is co-author of *Book Smart: How to Support and Develop Successful, Motivated Readers*, a how-to parent guide with stories, lessons, and activities aimed at addressing the broad range of interpersonal, social, emotional, and motivational skills that must be fostered in young children. An Associate Professor of Psychology at Fairleigh Dickinson University, she directs their School Psychology Training Programs. Her research focuses on the interaction between early reading skills and behavioral development, the best strategies for parents to use when supporting young readers, and teacher professional development in literacy. Elias is Director of the Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) Lab, as well as Co-Director of SEL4NJ, Co-Leader of SEL4US, and Co-Director of the Academy for SEL in Schools

#### **D. Adequacy of Resources (20 points)**

**(1) *Relevance & demonstrated commitment of each partner:*** SPAN has a national reputation for providing the highest caliber services to families, professionals, and family organizations. SPAN houses the National Parent TA Center and the RSA-funded National RSA Transition TA Center, and co-directs the US MCHB-funded TA center, Leadership in Family Professional Partnerships. SPAN also provides TA to 26 Region A Parent Centers via 3 USED-funded projects.

SPAN has offices in Newark and on the joint military base, and staff in 20 other locations across the state. The main office includes a 10-person meeting room, 50-person training room, and library with a wealth of resources. All offices are accessible by public transportation. Through our toll-free line and email, parents, youth, and professionals, can contact our office free of charge, and with our library of on-line workshops, families can access training in English/Spanish free of charge, 24/7.

All staff members have a phone, computer, e-mail capacity, Internet access, broadcast fax capability, and access to SPAN's CMS, social media, and meeting/presentation platforms. SPAN's website, which meets accepted accessibility standards, receives over 267,00 visits annually. All computers are connected to a server to ensure secure information and provide regular backup to all program and financial data and shared files. Website users can send in requests for information or workshops. We use Eventbrite to recruit workshop participants and for on-line registration; this expands outreach and attendance, as it allows registrants to easily invite others in their network, and allows our events to be advertised on the Eventbrite network. We use Constant Contact for our monthly SPAN e-newsletter and *Reaching All Families* Parent Group e-newsletter. Desktop publishing software enables us to produce publications and brochures. SPAN uses multiple meeting and presentation platforms including Zoom, Facebook Live, Go To Meeting and Webinar, Microsoft Teams, and Skype, and a variety of social media including a Facebook page, state and regional Facebook groups, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest, WhatsApp (Latino audiences) and WeChat (Chinese-American audiences). The FE Hub will have access to all these resources.

Our *Board of Directors*, a majority of parents of children ages 0-26, is another resource to SPAN, providing a variety of organizational and program expertise. (See ***Attachment 2***). Our *Stakeholder Board* and *Statewide Youth Advisory Council*, with members age 16-24 with a range of abilities and disabilities, provide ongoing input on SPAN's programs and services. Our affiliations with local and state agencies and organizations, such as the Departments of Education, Health, Human Services (child care, TANF, Medicaid/CHIP), and Children and Families (child behavioral health, developmental disabilities, child protection, and prevention/family and community partnerships, including its Office on Early Childhood), as well as local parent, immigrant, and other CBOs, will enhance our reach by co-sponsoring training events, sharing expertise and materials, helping publicize activities, and collaborating in cross-agency referrals and connections for services.

Demonstrated Experience in State and LEA Capacity Building | Several years ago, SPAN and NJDOE published “Special Education Parent Advisory Groups (SEPAG) in NJ: A Guide to Developing and Conducting an Effective Group.” In this guide, we collected and curated the tools and best practices for developing and implementing an effective special education parent advisory group. The format and content were informed by the experience and expertise of our Parent Group Specialists and reflected the hundreds of comments and suggestions we collected at a series of focus groups and interviews of parent and district leaders across NJ. The guide is organized so that an LEA or parent leader or a team can quickly find the right tools or practices that will help to make their group work better. In LEAs identified for Target & Comprehensive Support by the NJDOE, SPAN works closely with district administrators and parent leaders to activate SEPAGs. This guide is now listed as a national resource on the USED-funded Parent Center Hub.

For 18 years, SPAN has facilitated a “community of practice” of 26 federally-funded Parent Centers in 13 states, DC, PR, and the USVI, including NJ, through the Region A Parent TA Center funded by US ED. The CoP supports Parent Centers as they build the capacity of parents, caregivers, and youth to engage in productive partnerships with educators, schools and districts leading to improved outcomes for students. Results from our current five-year grant reveal that over 97% of Centers increased their capacity to reach and serve families that represent the families in their state/community, to help parents partner to improve outcomes at the individual child and school improvement level, and to more effectively collaborate with SEAs and LEAs.

SPAN has also facilitated training for family organizations on SoG and on LbC for organizations and state/local agencies, significantly increasing knowledge, perceived capacity, and attitudes about partnerships between families/family organizations and state and local agencies, as demonstrated by results of retrospective pre-post surveys. Participant understanding of strategies to: support meaningful participation of diverse stakeholders and stakeholder groups increased from



57% to 96%; identify new stakeholders to engage increased from 58% to 93%; and collaboratively develop an improvement action plan increased from 56% to 93%. State agencies increased their belief that it is practical to share leadership with stakeholders from 71% to 94%, and their confidence in their ability to effectively engage stakeholders in decision-making from 58% to 90%.

As TA Providers with the USED-funded National Center for Systemic Improvement, SPAN has significant experience assisting state EI and education lead agencies to partner with stakeholders, including families and family organizations, to improve outcomes for children with disabilities birth to 21. For 5 years, SPAN helped facilitate a cross-state learning collaborative focused on family outcomes, providing training and TA on LbC, CAT strategies, and family engagement. SPAN's current role focuses on equity, anti-racism, and family engagement.

SPAN has significant expertise in providing professional development to educators, social workers, related services providers, school and district administrators, etc., to strengthen their skills to partner with families, via face-to-face, virtual, and on-line training. We facilitate a biannual statewide cultural competence conference for over 200 professionals. Overall, 98% of training participants report that our training is of high quality, useful to, and relevant for their work.

Demonstrated Experience in Diverse Parent Leadership Development | For 18 years, the NJDOE and SPAN have partnered to support the development of parent groups involved in special education systems change activities, improving parents' knowledge of best practices in education, and/or providing peer-to-peer support. Through this project, SPAN has helped start, resuscitate, and/or sustain groups, with a primary focus on ensuring that these groups are representative of and culturally responsive to the racial, ethnic, language, and socio-economic diversity of their communities. The project has exceeded its project performance goals providing TA, resources and support to approximately 563 groups, 40,043 parents, and 16,829 professionals. SPAN assisted in development and formation of new groups in more than 80 districts targeted for support based on

having schools identified as focus or low-performing schools under the state's ESSA system, and/or were identified for TA due to overrepresentation of African American children in special education, discipline, and segregated settings. This longstanding family engagement investment has been enhanced by our work on NJ's USED-funded SPDG focused on enhancing family engagement in early literacy for families in low-performing schools and districts.

Under NJ's Early Childhood Race to the Top grant, we were tapped by NJDCF to bring this model to 21 county-based Councils for Young Children (0-8) (CCYCs), facilitated by CBOs and struggling to authentically engage families in shared leadership to improve child/family-serving systems. We partnered with one of the Councils to develop a model CCYC, and provided training and support to over 600 parent and community leaders across all 21 CCYCs.

This SFEC grant will also assist SPAN in building upon its successful Parents as Champions (PAC) for Healthy Schools model program. Funded by the NJ DOH Office of Adolescent Health, PAC provides comprehensive training to parents to develop leadership skills for partnering to improve school health in their schools and communities. Diverse parent leaders in underserved communities have honed their skills, developing and implementing action plans to create healthier school environments in collaboration with their schools and districts. SPAN facilitated train-the-trainers for 3 regional NJ DOH Coordinated School Health grantee organizations to improve their capacity to engage parents as leaders in the schools they serve. To date, SPAN and its partners have trained over 454 parents from 134 schools in 19 counties. Parents receive three full days of interactive training on What is School Health; Working with Schools; and Taking Action. PAC has also provided seed funds to 69 teams of parents and school administrators and staff to develop and implement health-related projects in their school. To increase sustainability, we have also fostered collaboration and partnerships with 28 community partners in each of the individual parent team school districts. An external evaluation found that PAC is having profound positive impacts on

participants, including a 53.5% increase in participant knowledge about the importance of school health and how to work with schools for positive change, including knowledge of the connection between health and academic achievement; an 80% increase in knowledge of the role of the components of school health in supporting healthy schools; and a 68.4% increase in knowledge of the appropriate person to contact in their school or district to propose a change that supports a healthy school. PAC also increased participants' *skills* to partner effectively to make a change in their school or district, including increasing skills in active listening (by 47.8%), skills in making an action plan (by 62.5%), and overall skills (by 54.8%). PAC participants expressed increased *confidence*, including in partnering with others (by 62.5%); use of active listening when building partnerships with other parents and school staff (by 58.5%); and in making an action plan (by 75.7%). More than 90% gave the highest rating on all six of the evaluation's indicator statements.

Demonstrated Experience in Parent Capacity Building | In our last 5-year PTI project, SPAN facilitated over 150,000 workshop contacts for parents representing NJ's diverse communities on a variety of topics all aimed at enhancing knowledge, skills, and confidence, and for over 15,000 parents in leadership development. 98% of surveyed parents indicated that the training prepared them to partner with professionals to improve services and outcomes for their children.

For the last 2 ½ years, SPAN has hosted the Empowering Women in Community Leadership for Healthier Families initiative, funded by NJ's Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities. Using the *paving the way* to Collective Impact model of engagement, as well as SoG and LbC, Family Resource Specialists engage and support underserved women in communities with high levels of lead poisoning and/or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders to participate on advisory groups and task forces to bring the voice of lived experience to decision-making tables.

Funding through a NJ SFEC grant will provide NJ with the resources to take these successful programs to scale bringing capacity building through training and TA, information, resources and

individual support to parent leaders, parents, the SEA, schools, districts and community based organizations on evidence-based practices in FE in literacy and SEL, in Title I, Title III, McKinney-Vento parent advisory committees and other committees, and in decision-making at the student, school and district levels with a central focus on improving learning for all students.

The NJ FE Hub is a partnership between NJDOE and SPAN. We have been partners in increasing the engagement of parents of children with disabilities, especially African-American, Latino, and low-income parents, since 2004. The core partners are excited about the opportunity to extend our demonstrated expertise in engaging families and professionals as partners in improving services and outcomes to communities where our robust approaches will help improve results.

Joining the partnership as consultants are Dr. Zibulsky and Dr. Elias, who are recognized leaders and educators in the fields of literacy and SEL, respectively. They will bring to our work evidence-based practices in engaging parents in not only improving student achievement in these areas, but also in advocating for reforms in curriculum, instruction and systems, in order to better engage students in learning that is relevant to our global economy. (See *Attachment I*).

**(2-3) Extent to which costs are reasonable:** The budget was developed using information and experience gained through SPAN's 35 years of operating a statewide PTI, 32 years of providing information and support to families with NJDOH funding, 18 years of working with districts to develop local Parent Advisory Groups to partner in school improvement with NJDOE funds, 5 years of serving as NJ's PIRC, and is adequate to support the project. The budget supports 1 FTE Co-Directors; 3 FTE Family Engagement Specialists (FES) (at least 1 FTE BL Spanish); 1 FTE Family Resource Specialist (FRS); .25 of a Training Director; .35 FTE training staff and per diem training funds for 40 workshops; .5 FTE for Training Logistics; .5 FTE for administrative support; .2 of a Product Development Coordinator; .15 of a Communications Director; and .4 of a Website developer/ coordinator and e-news editor.

The annual budget of \$999,974 and our matching funds will enable us to carry out all activities. Operating costs are based on actual expenditures. Cost effectiveness is included in project design by building on existing activities, and by establishing a network of partners to coordinate and leverage resources. SPAN will provide in-kind contributions of existing office equipment, resource library, copier (charging only for the excess costs of additional copying), expertise of existing staff on other related projects, and space for project meetings. Partners will provide in-kind contributions of office, meeting and training space; disseminate information about events and activities; co-sponsor train-the-trainer sessions and workshops, and encourage participation; and connect parents and professionals to us for training and TA. (See *Attachment I*). The budget includes funds to send at least 1 Co-Director to grantee meetings and relevant conferences.

SPAN has substantial experience in designing and successfully implementing federally-funded programs serving families and professionals and is keenly aware of the staffing and other resources needed to achieve results in the areas of parent and professional development, facilitating organizational development, and engaging parents/families in influencing systems. As outlined in the Budget Narrative this application includes *costs that are reasonable in relation to objectives, design, and potential significance*. The project will be staffed by 7.15 FTE staff from SPAN, with additional support from NJDOE, for product development, delivery of workshops, coordination of program logistics, and outreach to attain LEA participations and partnerships. Over 32 state and CBOs have agreed to: (a) participate as a member of the AC so that the activities of the Hub reflect the needs and strengths of their communities; (b) disseminate information about the NJ FE Hub resources and activities to their networks through social media, websites and other organizational communications; (c) participate in training of trainers' activities and turn-keying these trainings on engaging families in student learning and development; (d) co-host parent workshops and events at their organization or other sites in their communities; and/or (e) support the participation of parents

on district/school advisory committees. These partners represent significant diversity in relation to professions, race, language, geography, socioeconomic status, and NJ's most vulnerable families.

The combination of grant resources and these substantive partnerships will help the project to achieve its anticipated results, including engaging families and schools in shared leadership through state and local FE ACs focused on improving FE programs, practices and outcomes related to children's learning and development. The SEA and 75 LEAs serving over 650 schools (538 in years 1-3 alone) and 450,000 students (355,358 in years 1-3 alone) will be supported. The NJ FE Hub will also (a) develop and support implementation of a NJ FE system framework for high quality, effective state and local FE with needs assessment and development/implementation of improvement plans; (b) provide intensive and targeted TA to support Primary LEAs to develop systemic services for family engagement focused on helping children meet challenging state standards, especially literacy and SEL; (c) develop and maintain an easy-to-use website; (d) develop and disseminate resources via 50,000 contacts; (e) facilitate 1 statewide conference/year (350 participants), 24 regional workshops/year (500 participants/year in years 1-2, with an additional 700/year in years 3-5), and webinars (12/year for 1200 participants), for a total of 12,350 to be trained over 5 years, 1,875-2,250 underserved parents provided with intensive support and leadership development by Parents, Inc. over 5 years, and 50,000 to be reached with information and resources over 5 years. SPAN will employ its extensive connections, experience and expertise in outreach to underserved populations to ensure that NJ's diversity is reflected in all activities. Thus, costs are reasonable both in relation to the number of persons to be served and anticipated results and benefits. (See *Budget Narrative*).

**Match:** Year 1 - 16.3%, Years 2-5 - 15.4% non-federal or in-kind resources. The Budget Narrative details that the project will raise non-federal and in-kind resources of \$162,600 in year 1, and \$154,100/year in years 2-5, for a total match of \$779,000 over 5 years (15.6% of federal funds).

## E. Quality of the Project Evaluation (20 points)

*(1) Evaluation methods include objective performance measures related to project outcomes that will produce quantitative and qualitative data.* The evaluation will be led by Pamela Kelley, Ph.D., President of Kelley Analytics<sup>®</sup>, LLC, an independent evaluation and research consulting firm. Guided by the logic model, the evaluation is designed to establish the impact of the NJ FE Hub on core outcomes (family engagement, student achievement, and state and local decision making). It will explore the relationship between these outcomes and initiative implementation in participating LEAs and statewide using a mixed methods design that includes surveys, focus group/interviews, and review of program documents that will yield quantitative and qualitative data for formative (i.e., program processes and implementation) and summative (outcomes) evaluation components. Overarching evaluation outcomes include: (1) level of implementation/fidelity to the FE model in participating LEAs; (2) increased family engagement; (3) improved student outcomes, with a focus on literacy and SEL; and (4) the enhancement/improvement of a state system of FE. Data collection strategies include multiple data sources and both quantitative and qualitative data for triangulation and to increase the validity of the results.

| <b>Tools/Data collection</b>   | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Data Type</b>            |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Project Records Review         | Outputs related to reach/participation, provision of info/TA/support, quality/relevance/usefulness ratings. | Quantitative                |
| EBP Fidelity Forms             | Quality of, and level at which, EBPs are implemented in schools in participating districts                  | Quantitative                |
| District Implementation Survey | Level at which key initiative components are implemented in each intensive district                         | Quantitative<br>Qualitative |

|  |  |                             |
|--|--|-----------------------------|
| Training Surveys                                   | Change in knowledge/skills/confidence of training attendees using retrospective pretests or pre/posttests  | Quantitative<br>Qualitative |
| Family Survey                                      | Parent-reported engagement with schools (family engagement, support, efficacy, and learning behaviors scales from the Family-School Relationships Survey (Gehlbach, 2015). Also measures PM4: change in capacity to work with pros. to meet children’s needs | Quantitative<br>Qualitative |
| Student Success Scale                              | Parent-reported measure of their child’s achievement   | Quantitative                |
| Family Literacy Support Scale                      | Pre-posttest assessment of change in key indicators of family literacy support & EB literacy behaviors.  | Quantitative                |
| Collaboration Survey                               | Quality, strengths, and areas of improvement for collaborative efforts among participants, uses the Wilder Collaborative Factors Inventory.  | Quantitative                |
| State and Local Advisory Committee (AC) Interviews | In-depth data on AC members’ experiences with implementing the initiative and working together as a group, including successes/challenges/lessons learned  | Qualitative                 |
| Family Focus Groups                                | In-depth data on experiences of family participants including successes/challenges, and recommendations  | Qualitative                 |

The evaluation will assess change in participants’ knowledge/skills/confidence related to family engagement and working effectively with parents and professionals to meet children’s needs among the initiative’s participants (i.e., SoG and LbC conferences, intensive TA, Parents Inc. support groups), using a retrospective pre-posttest design. A retrospective pretest is administered at the end of the training only and asks participants to compare their level of knowledge following the training with how they felt prior to attending. This eliminates the need for a pretest and corrects for



biases related to participants overestimating how much they know prior to the training. The tool includes posttest questions on the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the content, activities, and materials; presenter skills, and key takeaways and suggestions for improvement.

Workshop participants will be asked to rate the information's quality, relevance and usefulness, and the extent to which the training increased their knowledge, skill, confidence, and perceived self-efficacy. Every person who receives individual assistance from the FRSs will be asked whether they understand the information and feel prepared to use it. A sampling of workshop and individual assistance participants will be surveyed 4-6 months later using the Parent Program questions developed by the USED-funded Center to Improve Project and Program Performance, adapted for the SFEC program. Parents, Inc. support group participants will be surveyed prior to their participation and at the end of the year's series of parent support group meetings using SPAN's Intensive Individual Assistance survey using questions adapted from the Family Outcomes survey developed by the USED-funded National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring; SPAN has used this survey across multiple projects including in our PTI, Family to Family Health Information Center, Superstorm Sandy Resiliency Project, and Child Welfare Advocacy Program. Parents who are trained as Champions for Literacy or SEL will be surveyed using an adaptation of the tools developed for SPAN's Parents As Champions for Healthy Schools by our external evaluator. Parent Leadership Conferences and LbC Summit attendees will complete the retrospective pre-post surveys developed by the Institute for Community Health as part of the Leadership in Family-Professional Partnerships. See *Attachment 7, Evaluation Instruments*.

In addition to the key outcomes, the evaluation will examine contextual factors that are likely to influence implementation and achievement of project outcomes, including collaboration among participating stakeholders, State and LEA level challenges and barriers to and facilitators of implementation, family challenges and barriers to and facilitators of participation. The evaluation

will use an intervention group correlational design to examine the relationship between the level of family engagement and student school success, as moderated by the level of model implementation in participating LEAs that receive targeted or intensive levels of TA and support.

**(2) *Evaluation methods provide performance feedback and periodic assessment of progress.*** Key performance data will be collected quarterly to allow timely sharing of the most current evaluation findings with leadership and stakeholders for monitoring, planning, and improvement. This will include formative findings to monitor levels of model implementation in participating LEAs and summative findings to monitor changes in participant knowledge/skills/confidence/behaviors related to family engagement and capacity to work as partners. Demographic data will ensure that we are reaching our intended participants. The evaluator will share findings and recommendations via results briefs, dashboard summaries, presentations, and annual and final evaluation reports.

**(3) *Methods of evaluation will produce promising evidence on project effectiveness:*** The evaluation will use a correlational design to examine the relationship between the level of family engagement and student success in families from participating LEAs who received targeted or intensive TA/support, moderated by the level of district model implementation. By highlighting the strength and direction of this relationship, the analysis will highlight the initiative's key focus area for change—family engagement. The analysis will employ a multilevel modeling (MLM) approach that includes the nesting effects of families within schools within districts. Because observations within groups are likely to be correlated, MLM produces more accurate standard error estimates compared to other analytic methods. The model will include family and school demographic variables and variables controlling for family exposure to the initiative's components. With 75 participating districts, the sample size will be consistent with guidelines from the literature for minimum sample-size requirements (Hox & Maas, 2002). Thus, this evaluation has the potential to contribute a potentially promising level of evidence to the field.