

## PROJECT DESIGN

**Need for the Project.** Family engagement is essential for successful school reform and a powerful strategy to improve student achievement and development (Bryk et al., 2010; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Federal and state laws have repeatedly recognized the importance of family engagement in improving student and school outcomes (e.g., *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* [ESSA; reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA)], South Carolina’s *Parental Involvement in Their Children’s Education Act* (Parent Involvement Act, 2000), and *Read to Succeed Act* (2014)). Effective family engagement encourages schools, families, and community members to share responsibility for educational outcomes (National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group, 2009). **South Carolina is certainly no exception to the need for sustained efforts leading to educational improvement.** Its children face many challenges. Data from SC’s 2021 district report cards show that 75/80 districts reporting (excluding special districts) had a poverty index of 50% or higher. Data collected just prior to the pandemic ranked SC in the bottom quarter nationally in overall child wellbeing (Annie E. Casey Foundation *Kids Count*, 2021). In mid-March 2020, the pandemic forced SC schools to close, beginning extended school closures, disruptions, and uncertainty devastating learning and development for many students, particularly those disadvantaged or underserved as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) (referred to collectively herein as “underserved”). The SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC) Report (January 2021; [eoc.sc.gov](http://eoc.sc.gov)) states, “...it is projected that nearly 70 percent of those students [grades 3-8] will not meet grade level proficiency standards in English Language Arts and math in spring 2021. The ‘COVID Slide,’ as it is widely referred to, is expected to be more dramatic in mathematics, among elementary students and for students who are often identified as vulnerable, such as those

living in high-poverty households or who do not have access to reliable internet access.” EOC Executive Director Matthew Ferguson said, “The pandemic has presented an unprecedented upheaval to the education of students in every corner of the state. . . .we cannot ignore that many students have and will continue to experience learning loss. Student success – from cradle to career – must remain our collective goal.” *The pandemic has only heightened awareness of the need for and importance of strong family-school partnerships that support equity, student achievement, and student and families’ social and emotional wellbeing.* The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE; SC’s SEA) and many districts have taken steps to integrate needed capacity-building for family engagement into its support structures. The currently funded **Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC; award #: U310A180058)** has played an important role in this process since it began delivering services (see *Applicant’s Demonstrated Experience in Providing Services to Education Stakeholders* and Appendix). While much work remains, much has been achieved since its inception in October 2018. The continued presence of a **Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC)** is needed to complete development of a systemic and sustained approach to family engagement that will make a lasting, significant impact on student achievement and school improvement in SC. *Proposed Carolina Family Engagement Center’s Response to the Above Need.* The **South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC)**, housed in the College of Education (CoE) at the University of South Carolina (UofSC; lead agency), will operate the **Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC)** as described in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education’s SFEC NIA with **SCDE** as its lead partner to further their shared capacity-building goals. SC-SIC is uniquely positioned to lead in addressing the capacity-building needs of families, schools, and communities. In addition to hosting CFEC 18, SC-SIC has for the past 45 years provided high-quality capacity-building

training and technical assistance (TA) for education stakeholders who serve on the over 1,100 local School Improvement Councils (SICs) statewide. SC-SIC's network extends into every SC district and K-12 public school. SC-SIC draws from UofSC faculty's expertise in education and related fields to ensure training and TA fits schools and communities, is grounded in research and is subject to robust evaluation. SC-SIC, CoE, and SCDE also share a fundamental commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in education, reflected in CFEC personnel and programmatic priorities. **The proposed CFEC project will not duplicate existing initiatives; rather, it will enhance, integrate, and extend the reach of existing CFEC programs and supports throughout SC. CFEC Goals and Expected Outcomes.** Goals are to increase stakeholder capacity to engage in effective partnerships that support parents as active participants in their children's learning and development and increase student achievement and student and family social and emotional wellbeing, while fostering school improvement and achieving educational equity for *all* SC students by narrowing persisting opportunity gaps for underserved populations. Educational equity measures fairness in a school or district system (LaSalle & Johnson, 2019). It examines if each student, regardless of zip code, will receive appropriate supports to excel in premium education that only some students are privileged to experience (LaSalle & Johnson, 2019). ***A focus on students most impacted by the pandemic, with an emphasis on underserved students and their families and the educators who serve them, is central to and deeply embedded across all CFEC activities and initiatives.*** Expected outcomes for families include increased capacities in *all* families, including underserved, to engage in (a) effective school-family-community partnerships as partners, shared decision makers, and leaders and (b) children's learning using evidence-based practices linked to improved student achievement and development. Expected outcomes for schools include increased capacities to (a)

create welcoming schools for all families, connect family engagement to learning and development, engage parents as co-creators, and honor families’ funds of knowledge (Mapp et al., 2019); (b) plan, implement, and evaluate effective, integrated family engagement programs school-wide aligned with school improvement and COVID-19 learning and development recovery goals, and (c) establish and maintain local and regional partnerships providing needed resources to schools, students, and families. Expected outcomes for districts and SCDE are increased capacities to (a) develop and implement systemic family engagement policies and programs that incorporate the components in the Parent Involvement Act (see Appendix) and (b) develop and deliver family engagement dual capacity-building opportunities for all schools and families, including underserved. Populations to be Served. CFEC will serve (a) all SC families with emphasis on underserved families as defined in the NIA; (b) all SC public schools and districts (emphasis on high concentrations of underserved students); (c) SCDE; and (d) other community organizations/agencies that serve these families. Competitive Preference Priorities (CCPs) Addressed. CFEC will address **all four Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs).**

**CCP1 Evidence-Based Activities:** use GTO®, an evidence-based accountability process, to support stakeholder teams and teachers in strategic goal setting, implementation and ongoing monitoring, and continuous improvement (see *Evidence Form* and Appendix *CFEC Logic Model* for conceptual framework). **CCP2 Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty in Priority Area (c): “[a]ddressing students’ social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs through approaches that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status”:** continue activities with SCDE such as the upcoming annual statewide trainings for school and district-level family engagement personnel on SEL and mental health (March 2022) and social and emotional learning (SEL)

family curriculum and activity kits; professional development (PD) for educators on engaging families in SEL; develop a new Parent Leadership Program (PLP) module addressing parents' role in pandemic recovery; and embed focus on students most impacted by the pandemic within CFEC's School & District Partner program. **CCP3 Promote Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities** through PD (see Appendix for list), CFEC family engagement liaisons' (CFEC liaisons) work with underserved schools and districts, active engagement of the Advisory Committee, Latino Stakeholder Advisory Group, and CFEC Specialists in informing the direction and development of CFEC goals and activities; development and dissemination of the Parent Leadership Partners program (English and Spanish language versions); projects with community partners (e.g., proposed CFEC/PASOs initiative to create videos in Spanish for families about common parent activities in schools such as SIC or PTA/PTO meetings); continued growth and maintenance of CFEC's Community Family Resource Centers that provide free materials on family engagement in student learning and development in community locations for families who cannot easily access online information and resources; and ongoing PD in equity and inclusion for CFEC leadership team and CFEC liaisons. **CCP4 Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change:** integrate SCDE's SC Family Engagement K-12 Framework (2019) (SC Framework) in all CFEC work with districts and schools; encouraging and providing supports to implement systemic activities and structures at the state and district levels as outlined in the Parental Involvement Act; projects with SCDE to provide coordinated capacity-building training and TA at the district and school levels; and through activities that (1) promote greater awareness of services and resources across CFEC partner organizations; (2) provide CFEC liaisons with cross-training from CFEC partners; and (3) help connect schools with available

services and resources that match their needs. *CFEC's Approach to Family Engagement.*

Family engagement is essential to increased student achievement, school improvement, and educational equity. Our approach is consistent with SCDE's definition: family engagement occurs when "[f]amilies are actively involved in the learning and development of all students to become college- and career- ready." We take a strengths-based approach and view families, schools, and communities through an asset rather than deficit lens. Welcoming school cultures, trusting relationships and effective, two-way communication are keys to effective family-school partnerships. Family engagement programs and practices should involve families as co-creators and must be linked to student learning and development and grounded in and respect all families' cultures and values. We value democratic participation, self-determination, and shared decision making. Shared decision making empowers families to control their futures and increases the likelihood that school decisions will reflect the best interests of students and families. Not all families or educators have had opportunities to build knowledge and skills, confidence, and supportive networks needed to partner effectively with each other. A dual capacity-building approach is essential, therefore, for effective family school partnerships (Mapp et al., 2019). CFEC uses "family engagement" rather than "parent involvement." "Family" recognizes and respects that, for many children, the person functioning as their parent may not be their biological parent. We use "engagement" rather than "involvement" to emphasize the importance of helping parents progress from being present to being active, integral school partners. When we refer to school-family partnerships, we view "school" to include *every* school employee who interfaces with families; all need to be considered in capacity-building. The pandemic offers a critical context for family engagement in education, as it heightened the importance of relationships, effective two-way communication, linking to learning, family-school

collaboration, and the essential role of community partnerships (see SC Framework). It also illuminated how student developmental issues relate to academic achievement and the need to address those issues, especially the social and emotional needs of students and their families and educators. The pandemic created new challenges but also adoption of new strategies that can enhance family engagement (e.g., widespread use of virtual/phone meetings has allowed more parents to participate in school meetings). It has not, however, changed our general approach to family engagement; rather, it has reinforced the key guiding principles. To achieve our capacity-building goals, it is essential that CFEC and our partners build long-term relationships with families, educators, and community leaders and understand the unique contexts in which they engage. **CFEC will have a strong presence in the field to facilitate that critical relationship-building component.** *Conceptual Frameworks and Background Literature.* CFEC will draw from several conceptual frameworks and models (*See CFEC Logic Model for conceptual framework and theory of change.*) Our work is rooted in **Epstein’s model of overlapping spheres of influence** (Epstein et al., 2019), which describes three environments in which children learn and grow (family, school, and community) with the child at the center; children learn and grow best when the three spheres intersect. Strong family-school-community partnerships help pull the spheres together. Our primary framework is the **SC Family Engagement K-12 Framework** (SCDE, 2019; see Appendix) (SC Framework); it is foundational to developing a systematic approach to family engagement in SC. It identifies five strategies critical to effective engagement: Building Relationships, Communication, Linking Families to Learning Outcomes, Collaborative Practices, and Community Partnerships. Our understanding of this framework is enhanced by **The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships 2.0** (Mapp et al., 2019; see Appendix) with its emphasis on

ensuring *both* schools and families have capacities needed to engage in this work. We work with partner schools and teachers to ensure that capacity-building activities and practices reflect the Dual-Capacity Framework’s process conditions (relational, linked to learning and development, asset based, culturally responsive, collaborative, and interactive) and the full range of needed capacities (capabilities, connection, cognition, and confidence) (Mapp et al.). The capacity outcomes also inform our work, assisting in developing measurable objectives and evaluation plans. Together, these models and frameworks form the *what* of family engagement. It remains essential that we also address the *how* of planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and activities. Our planning process for school-wide family engagement will borrow heavily from the goals-based approach in **Epstein’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP)** process (Epstein et al., 2019). Planning will be centered in each school’s ATP, a stakeholder group including parents, teachers, administrators, students (high school) and others; ATP is intended to serve as a family engagement-focused committee in each school’s SIC (Epstein et al.). ATPs first will select two academic and one non-academic goal from the school’s improvement plan and adopt the goal of a welcoming environment (see Appendix ATP Planning Form G) that ensures activities are goal-driven rather than random acts of engagement. ATPs then select goal-aligned activities from Epstein’s framework of six types of parent involvement: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community (see Appendix). The ATP also will identify methods of evaluation, populations to be served, needed resources, key tasks and a timeline for implementing activities, and persons responsible (Epstein et al.). **To enhance and deepen this planning process, CFEC will draw from key concepts in the SC Framework and the Dual Capacity-Building Framework as well as Getting To Outcomes® (GTO), an evidence-based implementation science framework** (Chinman et al.,



2004; Wandersman et al., 2016; RAND Corporation Projects/Getting To Outcomes, <https://www.rand.org/health-care/projects/getting-to-outcomes.html>). Randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental studies show GTO's effectiveness in improving outcomes and increasing organizations' capacities to perform key program tasks (Wandersman et al., 2016; Chinman et al., 2017). Integrating GTO accountability questions (see Appendix) can enhance outcomes by focusing on the need to review or gather additional data to ensure needs and strengths are well understood; capacities needed to implement selected activities; availability of evidence-based programs and activities for the six types of involvement; cultural responsiveness; measuring progress toward family engagement capacity-building goals; and strategies for continuous improvement and sustainability (see Appendix, *CFEC Guide to using GTO Accountability Questions with NNPS ATPs*). CFEC's planning tool for its teacher partners is also based on the GTO accountability questions (See Appendix, *CFEC teacher-partner planning template*).

### **Project Design for Building Capacity and Extension Beyond Funding Period**

**A. Management and Governance.** Housed in SC-SIC, CFEC will fall in general oversight of SC-SIC Executive Director, Tom Hudson (Co-PD). SC-SIC Associate Director and **CFEC Project Director (PD) Karen Utter** will oversee every aspect of CFEC. She will ensure programmatic components are grounded in an evidence base and implemented with quality and that the grant is administered in accordance with all U.S. ED and UofSC requirements. PD Utter is part of a **Leadership Team that will include the CFEC Co-Project Directors: Dr. Gina Kunz** (family engagement, grants management, and research), **Dr. Yasha Becton** (Parent Leadership Partners [PLP] program and research), and **Tom Hudson** (Advisory Committee coordinator). PD Utter will oversee a **full-time CFEC Project Manager. Five Regional Family Engagement Liaisons (CFEC liaisons)**, at least one bilingual in English and Spanish, will work

under PD Utter’s supervision to deliver training and TA to districts, schools, and families. They will meet virtually with schools and districts until limits on visitors are lifted. Where virtual meeting platforms have increased participation during the pandemic, we will encourage schools to continue offering virtual or hybrid options. We will also integrate two advisory bodies in our structure to ensure our programs, training, and TA are evidence based, reflect current research, and are culturally responsive, particularly with respect to underserved families. **CFEC**

**Specialists** are a diverse group of CoE faculty who will meet regularly with CFEC’s Leadership team and liaisons to share their expertise in areas including urban, suburban, and rural family engagement; diversity, equity, and inclusion; early childhood literacy; and engaging African American and Latino families (see *Letters of Support*). Specialists will continue providing capacity-building PD to schools and districts and TA to CFEC liaisons, including working with the liaisons in their partner schools and communities or with CFEC community partners. **The CFEC Advisory Committee** will also be integral to CFEC’s structure (see *Letter of Support*); membership will represent SC’s diversity and NIA requirements and will continue to participate in prioritizing needs and providing input and feedback during development of materials and trainings. CFEC will recruit PLP graduates as additional parent representatives and will expand membership to include additional student and educator representatives from diverse populations.

**B. Statewide Leadership in Family Engagement Policies and Systemic Initiatives.** CFEC will take a collaborative approach to statewide leadership in family engagement policies and systemic initiatives. It will build on its relationship developed with SCDE during the currently funded project to facilitate efforts to fully implement existing state policy (see Appendix Parent Involvement Act). Our continued collaboration with SCDE on development and delivery of PD for district and school-level family engagement personnel will allow us to continue to influence

the content to include sessions on the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (e.g., CFEC’s session for the SC Family Engagement Summit 2021), the NNPS ATP model (e.g., CFEC’s joint session with the Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty for the SC Summit 2019), and other evidence-based strategies. CFEC aims to impact systems at district and school levels by continued use of the SC Framework in trainings and work with educators and family engagement professionals. CFEC will continue to engage in systemic initiatives to include family engagement instruction in teacher and administrator preparation programs at SC’s institutions of higher education. We were instrumental, with SCDE, in forming the SC team selected to participate in the national NAFSCE Pre-Service Family Engagement Consortium. CFEC Specialist Dr. Michele Myers serves on the SC team that is working with other consortium members to develop a pre-service framework for culturally responsive family engagement and higher-education curricula. Once completed, CFEC will collaborate with other SC team members, including SCDE and Claflin University, one of South Carolina’s HBCUs, in activities designed to raise awareness and prompt state-wide adoption of the framework which would have a significant, ongoing impact on capacity of teachers and administrators and quality of family-school partnerships. CFEC’s work in including families in district and school Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiatives also promises to impact systems state-wide. SCDE has identified SEL as a high priority, particularly given the impact of the pandemic on mental health. During the currently funded project, two highly qualified CFEC liaisons began creating capacity-building opportunities for families to meet needs of schools, districts, and community partners, such as the video-recorded training for families now used by the SC Foster Parent Association and the “SEL in literacy” family toolkits (i.e., Awareness of Self, Awareness of Family, Awareness of Community) currently used by the SC State Library and available in English and

Spanish. They also developed a series of questions to guide districts in developing a family engagement component to their SEL work based on the family-school partnership strategies recommended by CASEL (published in the March 2021 issue of *The Learning Professional*; see Appendix). These will serve as the foundation for CFEC's proposed statewide initiative to develop and disseminate a self-paced SEL curriculum for families and SEL family activity kits grounded in the five core CASEL competencies and their 25 related subcomponents. We anticipate SCDE will commit about \$320,000 through September 2022, for the first phase. We will continue our initiative to integrate family engagement into SEL initiatives through continued dissemination of SEL family activity kits, family training and tools, and with available funding, continued development of additional modules for the self-paced SEL curriculum for families.

### **C. Systemic Services for Family Engagement in Education.**

**Proposed Components of CFEC's Training and Technical Assistance (TA).** Proposed project components are (1) CFEC's partnership activities with SCDE, (2) CFEC's *Parent Leadership Partners (PLP)* program, (3) CFEC's multi-year, intensive *School & District Partners* program, which incorporates the CFEC *Teacher Partner* program, (4) PD and special events and projects, (5) sustaining and expanding SC's infrastructure of statewide and community-level partners supporting family engagement in student learning and development, and (6) information dissemination through CFEC's website and social media sites, conference presentations, webinars, and publications. **Partnership Activities with SCDE.** SCDE will provide in-kind match (\$19,500 in years 2-5; see *Letters of Support*). The Office of Student Intervention Services will be our lead partner and will regularly discuss CFEC's direction, ongoing projects, and SCDE priorities. We will co-sponsor bi-monthly roundtables and annual spring regional workshops for school and district-level family engagement liaisons and SCDE's Annual Statewide Family

Engagement Summit, together with the Region 6 Comprehensive Center (SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro) and the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) Equity Assistance Center (EAC)-South. The 2021 Summit, although virtual due to the pandemic, attracted more than 500 participants. *CFEC's Parent Leadership Partners (PLP) program* was designed during the currently funded project by Dr. Yasha Becton, UofSC CoE faculty and CFEC Specialist, for use especially among parents (including guardians or primary caretakers) of students enrolled in SC Title I schools. Goals are to increase parent (1) capacity to advocate for their own children's educational needs and school improvement for all students and to serve as parent leaders at their schools and (2) awareness of beneficial tools and resources. In PLP, groups of up to 15 parents increase knowledge, skills, confidence, and connections in a supportive environment with other parents from their region. Sessions include eight research-based modules developed by Dr. Becton incorporated into a workbook and cover topics related to leadership skill development, navigating the special education system, and actively participating in an SIC or a PTA/PTO. In addition, parents develop and complete a small leadership project to address an education need in their school or community. PLP participants meet for an orientation, eight 2-hour facilitated sessions, and a graduation ceremony. CFEC's first pilot PLP was in Fall 2020 with 15 parents of students enrolled in Title I schools from the Lowcountry region of SC (13 graduated). Although intended to be in-person, the pilot was conducted virtually due to the pandemic. After reviewing the overwhelmingly positive evaluation results, adjustments to format, content, and delivery were made. A second virtual pilot is underway with 15 parents from the Midlands and Upstate regions of SC. After we review evaluation data from the second pilot, make adjustments, and complete a facilitator's guide, CFEC will conduct at least one "Train the Trainer" session in Summer 2022 for up to 20 parents,

community leaders and district and school personnel state-wide who wish to facilitate a PLP in the coming school year. **CFEC is requesting funding in this proposal for the following: (1) facilitate expanded use of the existing PLP program in schools, districts, and communities across SC throughout the 5-year grant period.** CFEC proposes at least one annual Train the Trainer session each summer for up to 20 participants. It will also provide TA to organizations in forming new PLP groups and continued outreach to and support for PLP graduates. CFEC will develop an online registration system to gather contact data from parents graduating from PLP sessions organized by schools, districts, and community organizations and will use this data to track PLP graduates' future levels of engagement in educational advocacy and decision making for research purposes. In addition, CFEC will actively recruit graduates as parent representatives on the CFEC Advisory Committee, encourage their participation in local SIC and other school and community leadership positions, provide them with information about additional capacity-building opportunities and resources, and connect them with new PLP participants/graduates in their region; **(2) create a new module addressing issues related to closing opportunity gaps that may be present due to the impact of the pandemic.** This module, to be developed *in Year 1* and used in successive years, can be added to or substituted for one of the eight existing workbook modules; **(3) create a Spanish language version of the PLP program.** *In Year 1*, with input from diverse types of Latino stakeholders, CFEC will complete development of Spanish-language PLP materials. The English language PLP workbook (with adaptations and including the new module on closing the opportunity gap) will be translated into Spanish; in addition, CFEC will create an audio version of the workbook. CFEC will also develop a new module for the Spanish language workbook to addresses issues of special interest to Spanish-speaking families, such as their right to receive important school information in Spanish. *In Year*

2, CFEC Specialist Dr. Julia Lopez-Robertson, a bilingual faculty member in CoE, will pilot the Spanish language PLP program during the 2023-24 school year. The pilot will include up to 15 Spanish-speaking parents with children enrolled in Title I schools. Dr. Lopez-Robertson and Dr. Becton will modify the facilitator's guide to fit the Spanish language program. CFEC will conduct at least one Train the Trainer session for Spanish language PLP facilitators in Summer 2024. *In Years 3-5*, CFEC will offer at least one summer Train the Trainer session for Spanish language PLP annually and provide similar supports and outreach to Spanish language facilitators and PLP graduates as provided for the English language PLP; **(4) conduct a multi-year research project designed to examine longer-term impacts of the PLP program and produce promising evidence of the program's effectiveness.** *In Years 1-5*, CFEC Co-Directors Becton and Kunz, in consultation with CFEC's evaluation team at the Research, Evaluation, and Measurement (REM) Center, will design a research study to (a) examine the longer-term impacts of the PLP program on parent advocacy and participation in school decision making activities, (b) evaluate the efficacy of the PLP Train-the-Trainer sessions, and (c) through an iterative process, produce a manualized program that will be ready for an RCT through IES funding or similar agency funding; and **(5) sponsor "Parents on Center Stage" event.** *Beginning in Year 3 and annually thereafter*, CFEC will sponsor a regional, one-day event entitled "Parents on Center Stage" for PLP parents, their children, and other interested families to build knowledge and skills and new relationships and networks. Workshops for parents and elementary, middle, and high school students will be offered on parallel tracks on topics linked to learning and development; childcare will be provided. Families will have opportunities to reunite periodically during the day for plenary sessions. The event will also highlight community agencies and organizations and available resources in the region.

**CFEC's School & District Partner Program (Including Teacher Partner Program).** Because it takes time for an organization to fully adopt and sustain an innovation like family engagement (Scaccia et al., 2015) and more than one-time trainings (Ringwalt et al., 2002), the currently funded CFEC project launched its *School Partner* and *Teacher Partner* programs in Fall 2019 to provide up to 4 years of intensive capacity-building to schools and 2 years of intensive capacity building to teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating evidence based, culturally responsive family engagement programs and practices using the GTO method of strategic planning. **CFEC proposes to continue its *School Partner* and *Teacher Partner* programs in Years 1-5 with modifications that reflect lessons learned in the field.** First, the *School Partner* program will be renamed the *School & District Partner* program to reflect an increased emphasis on capacity-building at the district level aimed at generating systemic change. Second, the *Teacher Partner* program will be housed exclusively in CFEC partner schools rather than operating as a stand-alone initiative to intensify and expand the impact of CFEC's work within the school. CFEC will add several new components designed to extend its depth and increase sustainability. We will recruit up to 20 K-12 public schools: 4 from each of the five CFEC regions that together cover South Carolina (*see Appendix for map of CFEC regions*), to participate beginning in Fall 2022. Only schools with a poverty index of 60% or higher as documented on their 2021 SC School Report Card will be eligible. Preference will be given to schools participating in the current *CFEC School Partner* program. Schools and their districts will be selected based primarily on their demonstrated commitment to strengthen and sustain an integrated, systemic family engagement program. Each CFEC liaison will serve the four partner schools in her region and their district(s). Participating schools will be required to commit to convening a school stakeholder group that will meet at least monthly with their CFEC liaison to



work on planning, implementation, and evaluation of family engagement programs and practices (see Appendix for CFEC *School & District Partner* program). Formative and summative assessments of our current program indicate that stakeholder teams and CFEC liaisons would benefit from a planning method that is simpler in design and that provides more family engagement-specific planning tools than the GTO method currently in use. Because the NNPS ATP model meets those requirements and as SCDE and many SC districts already participate in the NNPS network, CFEC proposes to use the NNPS ATP model as the primary planning tool for schools participating in the *School & District Partner* program. CFEC liaisons will continue to use the GTO accountability questions when facilitating monthly meetings with ATP teams to enhance the quality of the planning and evaluation processes (see above and Appendix). A key objective will be to move this initiative forward from one that is successful in building *capacity within* a family engagement stakeholder group to one that impacts the *capacity of all school personnel*. This has occurred organically in varying degrees in our existing partner schools. To address this challenge more strategically, however, we will include these additional components: schools will be required to (a) adopt one school-wide evidence-based practice each year aimed at creating a welcoming school environment as selected by the school's ATP; its effectiveness will be evaluated by the ATP using data collected in CFEC evaluation surveys; (b) schedule at least one CFEC PD session per year for *all* school personnel and will provide specific capacity-building in the designated school-wide practice; and (c) provide the CFEC liaison with access to the school's leadership team to assess progress and develop school-wide strategies. Another important objective is to influence systemic change at the district level by involving them more fully in the partnership process. Districts will be required to designate a lead representative, an individual with significant levels of responsibility for family engagement. This individual will

meet at least monthly with the CFEC liaison to discuss progress at participating schools and more fully implement existing state and district policies. District representatives will also be required to attend at least one ATP meeting in each school and a school-wide family engagement PD session, annually. In addition, we will offer two additional capacity-building opportunities for classroom teachers and parents at partner schools. Schools will be encouraged to (1) designate an individual to participate in CFEC’s PLP Train the Trainer program and lead at least one PLP group annually, and (2) designate one teacher every two years to participate in CFEC’s *Teacher Partner* program, that was developed and implemented during the currently funded project to increase teachers’ capacities to design, plan, implement, and evaluate evidence based, culturally responsive family engagement initiatives for their classrooms. Since its launch in Fall 2019, CFEC will have served a total of 27 teachers: 12 teachers completed program requirements during Summer 2021; an additional five are expected to complete the program this summer; and the remaining 10 participants are expected to complete their requirements by Summer 2023. Teachers are assigned a CFEC liaison who meets with them monthly over a two-year period to provide ongoing TA and coaching in family engagement at the classroom level. They are guided by the SC Framework and use a planning template designed by CFEC and based on the GTO method of strategic planning (see Appendix for sample template). Participant-completed evaluations have been highly positive. Sample feedback: *“I feel like my biggest success is the relationships that I have fostered with my parents due to this program. I have been able to implement some strategies that I would have never thought before. I am excited and eager to continue what I have been doing. This year due to the CFEC I have been holding monthly parent drop-in meetings. This has been met with positive feedback and all of my parents would like to continue this even into next year”* (see Appendix, CFEC Year 3 Annual Report, pg 7); *“CFEC*

*has planned out everything perfectly. I could have not asked for a more knowledgeable, caring liaison or for more thorough organizers or resources. ... I especially thought the mental health resources were very beneficial.*” Each of the 20 partner schools may designate one teacher to participate in project years 2-3 and another in years 4-5. If a school chooses not to designate a teacher, teachers from other partner schools may apply for that slot. Although each school will be limited in the number of designated teacher participants, other teachers often observe and join in on CFEC teacher partner activities on their own initiative. We encourage this as it creates a “ripple effect” across the school. In addition to the activities described above, participants will receive access to tools, materials, PD, and other resources, including those developed especially for them. They will also benefit from connections with CFEC Specialists (CoE faculty) and with state level agencies and organizations. CFEC liaisons will also assist schools in building local and regional networks of community agencies and organizations and facilitating connections between partner schools and the resources available through these local and regional networks.

**Professional Development (PD) Offerings and Special Projects.** CFEC will continue offering PD, by CFEC or community partners, primarily in family engagement; equity, diversity, and inclusion; and SEL (*see Appendix for “menus”*), such as inclusive family engagement (developed and delivered jointly with CFEC partner Family Connection, SC’s PTI) and the Dual Capacity-Building Framework. We will continue developing tools to address the needs of SC’s Spanish-speaking families. In Fall 2020, CFEC conducted focus groups with Spanish speaking parents to assist in identifying priority needs and convened a Latino Stakeholder Advisory Committee to help address them. This group meets regularly to inform development of new materials and trainings, including a guide for school districts on available interpretation and

translation resources and a “language simulation” training for school personnel that simulates experiences and challenges faced by Spanish-speaking parents when interacting with schools.

**Sustaining and Growing Community Partner Infrastructure.** CFEC will continue work on its objective to sustain and grown community partner infrastructure to support family engagement in education. We will maintain regular contact with statewide and regional partners and engage in cross-training, cross-referrals and sharing information about partner services via CFEC’s website, social media, CFEC’s liaisons, and through events such as a pre-conference session for community partners prior to the annual SC Family Engagement Summit. CFEC liaisons will continue to actively build connections among community organizations in their regions.

**Level of Commitment of SCDE and other CFEC Partners.** SCDE’s commitments are described above (also see *Letters of Support*). This is a continued demonstration of SCDE’s commitment which, in addition to annual in-kind match, has also included commitments of approximately \$7,000 towards printing CFEC’s *Ready, Set – Kindergarten!* family guides, approximately \$83,000 to establish 15 Community Family Resource Centers (CFRCs), and an anticipated \$320,000 to support development and distribution of an SEL curriculum and activity kits for families (see above). CFRCs are a CFEC initiative to place materials for families on supporting their children’s learning and development in locations such as a gas station, laundromat, community center, etc. They are maintained by CFEC liaisons and local school, parent and community volunteers. If funded, CFEC will create a toolkit for local SICs and community organizations to use to establish and operate CFRCs. Several other CFEC partners have made match commitments (see *Letters of Support*) as follows. Family Connection: \$2,000 in each year (2-5), the Consortium for Latino Immigration Studies: \$8,103 in each year (1-5), and the SC Educational Policy Center: \$25,000 in each year (1-5) in annual 4-year climate surveys.

**Steps CFEC Will Take to Target Services to Low-Income Students and Parents** include (1) establish an eligibility requirement that schools seeking participation in CFEC’s *School & District Partner* programs have a poverty index of 60% or higher; (2) recruit PLP Train the Trainer participants from districts, schools, and organizations serving parents of children enrolled in Title I or high poverty schools; (3) locate CFEC events and opportunities in low-income communities; (4) seek low-income families and schools for input via focus groups, interviews, or other means when conceptualizing and piloting new tools and materials; and (5) create and test new formats and methods for information dissemination and data collection that are a good fit and result in greater participation by low-income families.

**Applicant’s Demonstrated Experience in Providing Services to Education Stakeholders.** As described throughout, lead agency SC-SIC and the currently funded CFEC project have demonstrated experience in successfully providing services to education stakeholders. Capacity indicators include the currently funded CFEC’s success in meeting or exceeding its GPRA goals for the most recent year, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic (see Appendix for CFEC GY3 Annual Report); its high retention rate in personnel, advisory committee and faculty specialist participants, school and district participants, and community partnerships; and the commitment of funds and number of joint activities SCDE has undertaken with CFEC.

**MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROJECT PERSONNEL**

**A. Quality of the Management Plan**

The plan to achieve project objectives on time and within budget is adequate.

*Table 1: Project Timeline*

*Grant Years*

Project Component	1	2	3	4	5
Partnership activities with SCDE – Project Director (PD)	X	X	X	X	X

PLP program – PD & Co-Directors Becton & Kunz					
• Implement English language Train-the-Trainer program	X	X	X	X	X
• Complete Spanish PLP program materials and content	X				
• Complete pilot of Spanish language PLP		X			
• Implement Spanish language Train-the-Trainer program		X	X	X	X
• Complete design for PLP research project	X				
• Conduct and complete PLP research project		X	X	X	X
• Sponsor regional “Parents on Center Stage” event			X	X	X
School & District Partner program – Project Director					
• Complete recruitment of 20 participating partner schools	X				
• Implement CFEC liaison work with schools & districts		X	X	X	X
• Implement teacher partner program with 1 <sup>st</sup> cohort		X	X		
• Implement teacher partner program with 2 <sup>nd</sup> cohort				X	X
Community partner infrastructure – PD & Project Manager					
• Pre-conference session prior to SC Summit	X	X	X	X	X

**Quality Control Mechanisms and Processes:** The processes for incorporating feedback and continuous improvement and ensuring high-quality products and services from the project are adequate. CFEC’s leadership team will meet monthly with its evaluation team, review formative assessment results, and use self-assessment tools developed by our evaluators to help monitor progress for meeting timelines and goals. The evaluation team also will interact regularly with the CFEC liaisons and hold annual “data parties” to review results of data collection and suggest

adjustments. CFEC also will regularly seek input and feedback from its Advisory Committee, designated contacts at SCDE, partner districts, school leadership teams, and CFEC Specialists.

**Adequacy of Time Commitments:** Time and effort for lead and key personnel are adequate, and their unique expertise and experience in content and grant management demonstrate unequivocally their relevance and commitment to successful implementation of the proposed project and meeting objectives. Further, time and effort will be contributed through matching funds from partners and in-kind match for some project personnel (*see Budget Narrative*).

**Diversity of Perspectives Represented:** CFEC will integrate diverse perspectives by continuing to hire and retain diverse staff members, and it will ensure Advisory Committee and faculty Specialists are diverse and systematically integrated into CFEC decision making and product and service development. We will continue our current practice of establishing ad hoc, specialized advisory groups such as CFEC's Latino Stakeholder Advisory Group to help develop tools for specific populations. CFEC partnerships with districts, schools, parents, and community organizations allow numerous points of access to diverse populations, including underserved. We will continue to develop and draw from these connections to ensure that our work is informed by and reflects a diverse range of perspectives.

**B. Qualifications of Project Personnel:** *Unless otherwise noted, the positions identified in this proposal will be filled with personnel who currently serve in these positions for CFEC.* People originally serving and/or hired by the currently funded project to fill their respective positions have remained the same; this has been especially important in CFEC's ability to maintain working relationships and progress towards project goals, especially during the pandemic.

**B.1. Qualifications of Project Director Karen Utter, JD:** Ms. Utter is the currently funded CFEC Project Director. She is also the Associate Director of SC-SIC, with various roles since

2010. Ms. Utter is a catalyst for family engagement initiatives in SC. She brings a wealth of experience working with district and school administrators, teachers, and families while providing capacity-building training and TA in family engagement and effective operation of SICs. She developed materials, website content, and initiatives for varied education stakeholders. Her expertise include using GTO accountability questions as a framework for quality planning, implementation, and evaluation. Experience as CFEC's current PD and extensive history with family engagement in SC, perfectly position Ms. Utter as PD for the proposed CFEC project.

**Dr. Gina M. Kunz (Co-PD and Family Engagement Specialist)** is Project Co-Director and Family Engagement Specialist for the currently funded CFEC and will continue to serve as such (See *Letters of Support*). She is currently Project Co-Director for two grant-funded projects, was instrumental in founding research centers in two Colleges of Education, and faculty in two Medical Centers. She is a licensed psychologist for children and adolescents, and she has served as PI/Co-PI for large-scale funded research projects (e.g., Co-PI for the \$10 million-dollar IES-funded National Center for Research on Rural Education (R<sup>2</sup>Ed). She will assist PD Utter in all project activities. Her position as Co-PD for the currently funded CFEC project and extensive experience directing federal projects uniquely qualifies her to co-lead this proposed project.

**Dr. Yasha Becton (Co-PD and Parent Leadership Partner Program Director)** is a Specialist for the currently funded CFEC project and Clinical Assistant Professor and Online Coordinator for the Curriculum Studies component of the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in the UofSC's CoE. Serving as a secondary teacher for 12 years and administrator for 5, primarily inner-city schools in North and South Carolina, gives her a unique ability to understand challenges facing today's public schools. She has experience in family-school partnerships and works strategically in communities to help families ensure their children achieve academic excellence. Success of



the PLP program in the currently funded project, of which Becton led development and piloting, led CFEC to make PLP a prominent component of this proposal and name her as a Co-PD.

**Tom Hudson (Co-Project Director and Advisory Committee Coordinator)** is the SC-SIC Executive Director and a Co-PD for the currently funded CFEC project, where he coordinates Advisory Committee activities and will continue in the proposed project. He has expertise in SICs and parent and community engagement, oversees SC-SIC, and provides training, TA, and other support to SIC members, educators, and public officials. He co-coordinates SC Education Policy Fellowship Program and has served on the SC-SIC's State Board of Trustees. He is a past member of the Beaufort County First Steps Partnership Board. He is a 2010 Diversity Fellow of the Riley Institute at Furman University and a 2012 Education Policy Fellow of the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. He completed PD in education, public/media relations, quality improvement, organizational leadership, and community mediation.

## **B.2. Qualifications of Key Personnel**

**Theresa Harrison (Project Manager)** is project manager (PM) for the currently funded CFEC project and will serve as such in the proposed project. She has served 11 years in higher education administration at UofSC. As CFEC PM, she focuses primarily on grant administration but also on developing statewide community partnerships. She is completing UofSC's GRANT Certificate program, a foundational grant life-cycle education. She is also a doctoral student in the Educational Foundations and Inquiry at UofSC CoE with research interests in community-university relationships and partnerships, critical race and decolonizing pedagogies, and abolition studies. She is an active member of the National Society for Experiential Education and the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement.

**Julia Beaty, MSW, LISW-CP** is the CFEC Family Engagement Liaison and Bilingual Project Lead for the Upper Central Region for the currently funded CFEC project and will serve as such for the proposed project. She has a Masters in Social Work. As a clinically-licensed social worker, she has worked with children impacted by developmental trauma. She is a Trust-Based Relational Intervention® Practitioner and has provided TBRI Caregiver training domestically and internationally. She has developed multiple SEL and MH resources for students and families and a variety of PD trainings focused on SEL and trauma-informed care in schools, including the development of micro-credentials for the Center for Teacher Quality at UofSC. She also sits on the Board of Directors of Palmetto Place for Child and Youth Services.

**Laurann Gallitto Patel, MMFT,** is the CFEC Family Engagement Liaison and Project Lead for the Midlands for the currently funded project and will serve as such in the proposed project. She has a BA in History and Modern Languages and a Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy. She has participated in AmeriCorps NCCC service program assisting community organizations to address housing, education, disaster relief efforts, and environmental needs. Her experience in refugee resettlement includes positions with Lutheran Services Carolinas and the International Rescue Committee to assist, educate, and empower refugee youth, parents, and families.

**Claressa M. Hinton, MHA,** is the CFEC Family Engagement Liaison and Project Lead for Lowcountry for the currently funded project and will serve as such in the proposed project. She served families in the SC Midlands for 10 years, most recently as a Parent and Community Engagement Specialist for Richland One School District in Columbia, SC; she won two District Awards for *Best Practice of the Year*. She has also proudly participated in the Children's Defense Fund's summer Freedom Schools program for the past nine years.

**Ranina Outing, MHA, MPH,** is the CFEC Family Engagement Liaison and Project Lead for Pee Dee for the currently funded project and will serve as such in the proposed project. She has a Master of Business in Healthcare Administration and a Master of Public Health with a focus on improving people's lives and wellbeing through a combination of analysis, psychology, social work, and methodologies. She has worked on a variety of research projects at UofSC providing training, TA, and program coordination. She is a leader and advocate for education and human welfare, continuously developing her expertise in community, school and work settings.

**Dr. Lorilei Swanson, LMFT, LPC** is the CFEC Family Engagement Liaison and Project Lead for Upstate for the currently funded project and will serve as such in the proposed project. She has worked at the Family Art Therapy Center, the National Dropout Prevention Center, the International Center for Service-Learning in Teacher Education, and the School District of Oconee in SC. She serves on the Oconee First Steps Board, Healthy Oconee Health Disparities Committee, Oconee Food Council, and CU ALL IN Youth Event Core team. She co-leads the Youth Empowerment Team of Empower Oconee as co-facilitator for the City of Walhalla Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She has developed multiple SEL and MH resources for students and families and a variety of PD focused on SEL and trauma-informed care in schools, including development of micro-credentials for the UofSC Center for Teacher Quality.

**Aida Rogers** is the CFEC Marketing & Communications Coordinator for the currently funded project and will serve as such in the proposed project. After 38 years in journalism, 35 in SC, she's developed a broad insight about how race and poverty have affected its people. She conceived, created, and edited the three-volume anthology series, *State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places They Love*, (UofSC Press). Her human-interest writings have

won awards from the National Better Newspaper Contest, the Society of Professional Journalists, the Independent Publishers Book Awards, and the South Carolina Press Association.

**Social and Digital Media Coordinator, TBH**, will coordinate content among all social media platforms and the CFEC website and edit video content. Active online and social media presence is vital to the project's success.

**CFEC Specialists (see *Letters of Support*): Dr. Michelle Bryan (CFEC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Specialist)** is Associate Vice President in the Office of Diversity, Equity and

Inclusion at UofSC and Associate Professor of Educational Foundations and Inquiry in the CoE.

Her research focuses on issues that illuminate complex intersections of race, culture, class, gender, sexuality, and other socio-demographic factors within educational settings, and in educational program evaluation. **Dr. Catherine Compton-Lily (CFEC Family Literacy**

**Specialist)** is the John C. Hungerpiller Professor of Education in the UofSC CoE. In the currently funded project, she is developing an initiative with the SC Native American community to create bilingual (English and Cherokee) soft-bound children's books that families can read with children. She teaches courses in literacy studies, works with professional development schools, and has published a series of books that follow eight of her former first grade students through high school. **Dr. Heather Smith Googe (CFEC Early Childhood Specialist)**, Research

Associate Professor at the Yvonne & Schuyler Moore Child Development Research Center at UofSC, is PI and Director of SC Child Care Inclusion Collaborative and PI of SC Partnerships for Inclusion. She has experience as an early interventionist with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, as a preschool teacher in an inclusive preschool, as a trainer and TA provider supporting childcare providers to increase use of inclusive practices, and as an adjunct instructor for graduate and undergraduate early childhood and early childhood special

education students. **Dr. Julia Lopez-Robertson (CFEC Latino Family Engagement Specialist)**, Associate Professor of Language and Literacy in UofSC's CoE, focuses on advancing understandings of bilingual/ multilingual students, transforming teachers and teacher education to ensure equitable teaching for all, especially underserved children and families. She grounds these topics in the use of culturally relevant children's literature to investigate literacy development and the nexus between home and school literacies. She was a bilingual primary teacher for 17 years. **Dr. Michele Myers (Equity for Education for African American Student Specialist)** is a Clinical Associate Professor and the Coordinator for the Elementary Education Master of Arts in Teaching Program at UofSC. She is a member of the National Council of Teachers of English, Center for the Expansion of Language and Thinking (CELT), Professional Dyad for Culturally Relevant Teaching, a board member of the Whole Language Umbrella (WLU) and the chair for the Early Childhood Education Assembly.

### **B.3 Qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of Project Consultants**

**Dr. Tammie Dickenson (Lead Evaluator)** (*Listed in Budget Narrative under Other Direct Costs as REM Center*) is the Director of the UofSC Research, Evaluation, and Measurement (REM) Center and will serve as the Lead Evaluator for the proposed CFEC project. Her research interests include multilevel modeling, quasi-experimental designs, and item response theory. Her work includes development of project objectives and associated measures, instrument selection and development, and data collection and analysis. **Dr. Ashlee Lewis (Co-Lead Evaluator)**, Research Associate Professor in the REM Center, will co-lead evaluation with Dr. Dickenson. Her experience using culturally responsive evaluation methods makes her especially well qualified. Her PhD is in Foundations of Education and M.Ed. in Educational Research, both from UofSC. She is the lead evaluator of the currently funded CFEC project and has served as lead

evaluator for other U.S. Department of Education and NSF grants. As such, she regularly is in contact with daily routines and inner workings of SC schools and has opportunities to interact extensively with teachers, instructional specialists, principals, and district administrators.

## RESOURCES

**Relevance and Demonstrated Commitment of Partners to Success of Project** is addressed above under Level of Commitment of SCDE and other Partners (also see *Letters of Support*).

**Reasonable Costs Related to the Objectives, Design, and Potential Significance of Project**

The costs related to the objectives, design, and potential significance of project are reasonable, with not less than 30% of funds received through this award to be used to establish and/or expand TA for evidence-based parent education programs. We will collaborate with the SC Department of Education (SCDE) to achieve integration of SC policy and capacity-building goals statewide; expand CFEC's Parent Leadership Partners (PLP) program; enhance CFEC's multi-year, intensive School & District Partners and Teacher Partner programs; continue PD and special projects; strengthen and expand the statewide family engagement infrastructure of community organizations; and continue information dissemination and contributions to research, policy, and practice. In addition, CFEC will serve as a hub for expertise and programming that is sufficient in size, scope, and quality to be able to reach across the state and serve SCDE, districts, schools, families, and community-based organizations.

**Reasonable Costs Related to Number of Persons Served and Expected Results, Benefits**

The costs related to the number of persons to be served are reasonable, with not less than 65% of funds received through this award to serve local education agencies/districts, schools, and community-based organizations that serve high concentrations of underserved students.

Conservative estimates of numbers to be served: 20 partner schools with 40 partner teachers

serving all students and families in their classroom in five partner school districts also resulting in school-wide trainings for all teachers and staff and events for all students and families; at least 20 English language PLP program facilitators per year for five years (100 total) with each facilitator serving at least 15 Title I parents for a total of 1500 parents; at least 20 Spanish language PLP facilitators per year in Years 3-5 (60 total) with each facilitator serving at least 15 Title I parents for a total of 900 Spanish language parents; at least 500 participants at the SC Family Engagement Summit in each of years 1-5; approximately 25 school and district-level family engagement liaisons participating in 6 roundtables per year in years 1-5 (total 750); and approximately 80 school and district-level family engagement liaisons participating in the annual spring regional family engagement trainings in each of years 1-5 (total 400).

### **PROJECT EVALUATION**

The Research, Evaluation, and Measurement (REM) Center will conduct CFEC's evaluation.

*(1) 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.* The evaluation design is aligned to the logic model and will include tracking of progress toward key goals and outcomes. The evaluation team will conduct a mixed methods utilization-focused evaluation to measure progress that uses rubric evaluation methodology (Davidson, 2005). The evaluation will be guided by an evaluation rubric that will be co-created with the project team. The evaluation rubric will be based around the broad evaluative questions listed in Table 2 below. For each question, descriptive criteria for optimized performance will be developed; data collection activities are designed to align with the evaluation rubric.

Table 2. *Evaluation Questions by Focus Areas*

Focus Area	Evaluation Question
Statewide Infrastructure	To what extent are project activities related to strengthening and expanding a systemic statewide family engagement infrastructure in South Carolina being implemented with quality?
	To what extent are project goals related to strengthening and expanding a systemic statewide family engagement infrastructure in South Carolina being met?
Support for Partner Schools/Districts	To what extent are project activities with partner schools/districts being implemented with quality?
	To what extent are project goals related to partner schools/districts being met?
Support for Partner Teachers	To what extent is CFEC effectively supporting partner teachers?
	To what extent are project goals related to partner teachers being met?
Support for Partner Parents	To what extent are project activities with partner parents being implemented with quality?
	To what extent are project goals related to partner parents being met?

The evaluation will address both process and outcome components to document the implementation process and determine the extent to which the project is meeting its goals and associated outcomes. The evaluation plan also includes a quasi-experimental design component capable of producing promising evidence, according to WWC standards, about the project’s effectiveness to increase student academic performance. The overarching goals of CFEC are as follows: **Goal 1:** Improve outcomes in student achievement & student and family social and emotional needs; **Goal 2:** Foster school improvement; **Goal 3:** Increase equity by closing the opportunity gap for underserved students/families. Table 3 below displays the outcome measures (GRPA and project-specific) with project goal alignment and data sources used to examine each performance measure and project outcome. Baseline data will be collected over the first project year, and then targets for each performance measure and project outcome will be set.

Table 3. *Outcome Measures with CFEC Goal Alignment and Data Sources*



Measure Type	Outcome Measure	CFEC Goal(s)	Data Source
GPRA 1	The number of parents who are participating in CFEC activities designed to provide them with the information necessary to understand their annual school report cards and other opportunities for engagement under section 1116 and other related ESEA provisions	1, 2	Liaison and project director's logs
GPRA 2	The number of 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	2, 3	Liaison and project director's logs
GPRA 3	The number of high-impact activities or services implemented to ensure that parents are trained and can effectively engage in activities that will improve student academic achievement, to include an understanding of how they can support learning in the classroom with activities at home or outside the school generally, as well as how they can participate in State and local decision-making processes	1, 2	Process data directly collected from CFEC staff
GPRA 4	The percentage of parents and families receiving CFEC services who report having enhanced capacity to work with schools and service providers effectively in meeting the academic and developmental needs of their children	1	CFEC Family Survey
GPRA 5	The number of high-impact activities or services implemented to ensure that LEA, school, and community-based organization staff are trained and can effectively engage in activities with families that will improve student academic achievement, to include an understanding of how they can help families participate in state and local decision-making processes	1, 2, 3	Liaison and project director's logs
GPRA 6	The percentage of LEA and school staff receiving SFEC services who report having enhanced capacity to work with families effectively in meeting the academic and developmental needs of their children	2, 3	CFEC Educator Survey
Project Outcome	The percentage of partner schools that demonstrate increased school climate from the <i>teacher</i> perspective annually from the baseline year	2	School climate survey profile data analysis by SCEPC
Project Outcome	The percentage of partner schools that demonstrate increased school climate from the <i>parent</i> perspective annually from the baseline year	2	School climate survey profile data

			analysis by SCEPC
Project Outcome	The percentage of partner schools that demonstrate increased student achievement in ELA annually from the baseline year	1, 2, 3	Data collected from SCDE website
Project Outcome	The percentage of partner schools that demonstrate increased student achievement in mathematics annually from the baseline year	1, 2, 3	Data collected from SCDE website
Project Outcome	The percentage of partner schools that demonstrate improved equity gap scores for student achievement in ELA annually from the baseline year	3	Analysis of data collected from SCDE website
Project Outcome	The percentage of partner schools that demonstrate improved equity gap scores for student achievement in mathematics annually from the baseline year	3	Analysis of data collected from SCDE website
Project Outcome	The effect size for the difference between partner and matched comparison schools for student achievement in ELA in project year 5	1, 2	Analysis of data collected from SCDE website
Project Outcome	The effect size for the difference between partner and matched comparison schools for student achievement in mathematics in project year 5	1, 2	Analysis of data collected from SCDE website

## Data Sources

*Measures of Student Achievement.* To measure student achievement in reading and math, we will collect data from state-administered standardized assessments. To measure student achievement at elementary and middle school levels, we will use the SC READY Assessment for grades 3-8, which was first used in SC in 2016. The SC READY assessments are statewide in English/ language arts (ELA) and mathematics, and they are taken by all SC students in grades 3-8 for state and federal accountability reporting. Test items on SC READY are aligned to the *South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards* for each grade-level and subject. SC READY

data will be used as part of the quasi-experimental study design. SC READY achievement is reported in one of four score categories: Does Not Meet Expectations, Approaches Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Exceeds Expectations. Score categories are determined based on scale score thresholds that differ by grade level. Percentage of students who score Meets or Exceeds Expectations is combined for accountability reporting. At the high school level, we will collect the Algebra 1 and English 1 results from the SC End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP), a statewide assessment program of end of course tests for gateway courses in ELA, math, science, and social studies as defined by the SC State Board of Education. The EOCEP documents the level of students' mastery of the academic standards. EOCEP examination scores count 20% in the calculation of the student's final grade in gateway courses.

*CFEC Family Survey.* Families in all 20 partner schools will complete the CFEC Family Survey in spring of Years 1-5. This instrument will align with the SC Family Engagement Framework (SCDE, 2019) and the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (Mapp et al., 2019). It will assess the extent to which families feel that their child(ren)'s school is welcoming, communicates effectively, links family engagement to student learning and development, partners with families in decision-making, and collaborates with the community. It will also assess the frequency of family engagement activities. Additional items specific to CFEC initiatives will be developed in collaboration with the project team to address CFEC's progress toward outcomes.

*CFEC Educator Survey.* Educators in the 20 partner schools will complete the CFEC Educator Survey in the spring semester of Years 1-5. The CFEC Educator Survey instrument will align with the family survey to allow for comparisons between educator and family perspectives on the extent to which the schools are welcoming, communicate effectively, link family engagement to learning, partner with families in decision-making, and collaborate with the community.

Additional items specific to CFEC initiatives will be created in collaboration with the project team and added to the educator survey to examine progress.

*School Climate Survey.* We will measure CFEC's impact on school climate using the SC School Climate survey. The SC Educational Policy Center (SCEPC) will develop climate profiles for each participating school using SC's school climate surveys, administered annually to students, parents, and teachers at all SC public schools. SCEPC has used factor analytic techniques to identify 14 school climate factors: six teacher factors, four student factors, and four parent factors. Climate profiles can be used by school personnel to identify strengths and weaknesses in terms of their school climate and trends in their climate over time. Climate profile results will be reported annually in the fall following each school year.

*CFEC Liaison Focus Group.* The CFEC liaisons will participate in an annual 60-90-minute focus group to examine progress toward project goals and determine areas where they may need additional resources or support. To develop protocols, REM will work with CFEC leaders to include essential questions and will include questions emerging over the course of the evaluation. All focus group data will be audio-recorded, transcribed, thematically coded using key program elements as an analytic framework, and integrated with other findings.

*CFEC Partner Survey.* To understand CFEC's influence on statewide partners, REM will administer an annual survey with leaders from partner organizations; surveys will be conducted in conjunction with scheduled partner meetings. Evaluators will work with project leaders to develop survey questions relevant to their partner work. Data from partner surveys will be analyzed annually and results will be shared with CFEC leaders for continuous improvement.

*Partner school case studies.* REM will conduct evaluation case studies of selected partner schools that represent varying levels of implementation of CFEC components. Protocols for site

visits at case study schools will be developed in collaboration with CFEC leaders, including RFELs, who will assist in ensuring that each visit is responsive to the culture of the school community. Visits will include semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and students. Site visits also may include observations of classrooms, family workshops, SIC meetings, or other family-centered events. Site visit data will be analyzed around program elements and integrated with other school-level information, including CFEC survey results, school climate profile data, student achievement outcomes, and school artifacts. Case study reports will be prepared and shared with CFEC and school leaders.

*(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.* REM personnel will be full evaluation partners with the project implementation team, taking a utilization approach. Utilization-focused evaluation is an approach that is based on the principle that evaluations should be judged by their usefulness and that the intended users of the evaluation should be involved in planning and conducting evaluation activities (Patton, 2008; Patton, 2012). For this project, intended users include CFEC leaders, CFEC liaisons, school personnel, and parents. In addition to lead evaluators serving on the CFEC Leadership Team, REM will hold monthly meetings with project leadership to plan data collection, review draft data collection instruments, share updates on data collection, and share results from data collection. In addition, evaluation findings will be shared with other stakeholders at least annually. Involving project personnel, including specialists in key areas, in the development process provides evidence of content and construct validity of the instruments. In addition, sharing data with stakeholders is essential to ensuring that evaluation findings will be used by key decision makers to make informed programmatic and policy level changes (Patton, 2008).

*Process Evaluation.* Involving project personnel in evaluation conversations ensures the utility of data collection and provides feedback to guide program development. The process evaluation will also serve to document the implementation processes that are enacted through CFEC. Process evaluations ensure that the program is being delivered/implemented effectively and as intended and can help determine what is working in a project and what is not. A REM team member will attend a sample of trainings and workshops either in-person or virtually for context. Using evaluation tools and instruments outlined previously, the process evaluation will examine program implementation and will provide continuous feedback to project personnel to inform ongoing programmatic change. In addition to the ongoing communication and data sharing outlined above, REM will share findings in a formal evaluation report and present findings to school and district personnel at least annually.

*Outcome Evaluation.* The outcome evaluation will measure progress toward the outcomes outlined in Table 3 using the tools and instruments described above. REM will use the data sources described to examine the impact of project participation on students' academic achievement in ELA and math and on other outcomes. Evaluators will collect much of the achievement outcome data from the SCDE's website (<https://ed.sc.gov/data/>), where summarized assessment results are available at the school level, to examine trends over time. REM will work with participating school districts to obtain data not available through SCDE's website. The extent to which CFEC is increasing equity (Goal 3) will be assessed by calculating equity gap scores for ELA and math achievement measures for each partner school. An equity gap score is a method for calculating the disparity in results for a particular indicator (We All Count, 2021). The score is calculated by dividing the outcome of the highest performing group by the outcome of the lowest performing group. This produces a ratio

between the performance of the two groups. A score of 1 indicates that there are no equity gaps; larger scores indicate that there are bigger equity gaps. Equity gap scores can be especially useful for tracking changes in equity over time, as it can be possible for the outcomes for a marginalized group to improve without reducing the equity gap. REM will compile analyses across all instruments into a formal annual report for project staff and will share memos, data analysis summaries, or smaller pieces of evidence as they emerge.

*(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce promising evidence (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1 (c)) about the project's effectiveness.* REM will conduct an impact study using a quasi-experimental design that establishes baseline comparability between treatment and matched comparison schools. The design provides potential to establish promising evidence of the effectiveness of the CFEC model in partner schools. Once participant schools are determined, matched comparison schools will be selected within each region.

Matching variables will include school climate data, school demographics, and baseline student achievement in the year immediately prior to implementation. The comparison group schools will be selected using propensity score matching (PSM). PSM is a quasi-experimental technique that uses multiple variables to create a comparison group similar to the treatment group at baseline. In this case, treatment is provided at the school level as CFEC uses a whole-school model. The intent is to select a group of schools comparable to the treatment schools based on data collected prior to implementation. An advantage of PSM is that comparison group schools can be tracked over the same time period as the treatment schools, minimizing history as a threat to validity. A disadvantage of PSM is that it does not account for unmeasured variables that may cause the groups to systematically differ. Data from SC school report cards and accountability assessments are publicly available (<https://ed.sc.gov/data/>), and school climate

data will be provided by SCEPC. Data from these sources will be used to create a database for the PSM selection. Baseline achievement and school demographic variables from the school year prior to project implementation will be included in the PSM analysis. These include school poverty index, gender, race/ethnicity, school climate factors, SC READY results in ELA and math for elementary/middle schools, and EOC results in English 1 and Algebra 1 for high schools. A logistic regression model will be fit to compute the probability of being a treatment school, referred to as the propensity score. Non-treatment schools that have similar propensity scores as the treatment schools, determined using 1-to-1 nearest neighbor matching, will be selected as the PSM comparison group. For group comparison analysis between treatment and comparison, effect size measures will be computed for each variable considered in the baseline matching process. Statistical adjustments will be used for variables with effect sizes between 0.05 and 0.25, per WWC guidelines. For both groups, analysis between treatment and comparison schools will be conducted for outcomes reported on SCDE's website at the school level. These include results in ELA and math on SC READY for grades 3-8 and EOCEP tests in English 1 and Algebra 1 for high schools. Hedge's  $g$  will be used as an effect size measure to gauge the magnitude of differences in mean scale scores between groups. Per WWC, an effect size of 0.25 standard deviations or larger will be considered substantively important. Outcomes with effects of this magnitude will provide evidence of promise for the intervention provided by CFEC. Because CFEC will be implemented across five regions of the state, the sample may be considered to be geographically representative of the state; however, schools will be selected based on interest. Thus, any substantively important findings will be isolated to schools that meet the readiness criteria. The documented processes from CFEC may be replicated in other sites to determine if promising evidence from implementation holds in other locations.