

Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program  
(CFDA 84.374A)

*Raising The Bar for Rural Alaskan Teachers*

*Building Strong Human Capital Management Systems that support efficient schools and effective educators in the rural and isolated areas of Alaska...*

Submitted by the Alaska Council of School Administrators

-in Partnership with the School Districts of-

Bering Strait • Craig • Kodiak Island • Kuspuk  
Nenana • Nome • Petersburg

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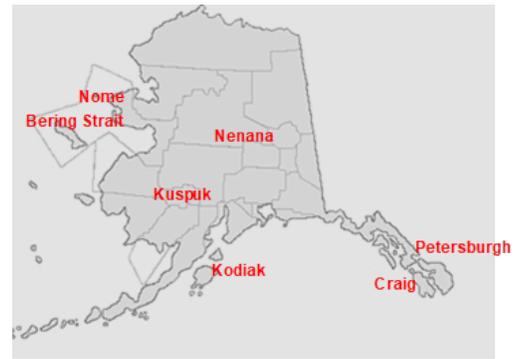
The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining evidence of the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(a) Need for Project (20 points)

**Introduction:**

Seven rural Alaska school districts and the Alaska Council of School Administrators have partnered to create the *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaskan Educators (RTB AK)* project. Districts differ greatly in geography but what they share in common is a pressing need to improve the academic success of the students they teach, primarily because they suffer from their inability to attract and retain highly quality teachers and school administrators. At 36%, Alaska’s rural schools have a much higher turnover rate than the US teacher turnover rate of 16%.<sup>i ii</sup> Unfortunately, year after year staff come and staff go, creating a constant churn that negates the districts’ investments in these educators in areas such as professional development, building cultural understanding, and fostering community acceptance.

**Geography Challenges:** Many partner schools are located in small communities and villages with limited access, no public roads and are only reachable by aircraft, snowmachine in the winter or the use of frozen rivers as roads in extreme freezing temperatures. This rugged terrain, changing weather conditions and remoteness can prevent even plane access.



**District Snapshots:**

**Educators To Be Served By RTB AK**

Partner District: Staff Served ↓	Bering Strait	Craig	Kodiak	Kuspuk	Nome	Nenana	Petersburg	Totals
Classroom Tchrs	156	7	134	39	42.5	10	30	418.5
Principals	26	2	7	3	2	1	2	43

Superintendents	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Principal/Teachers		1			1			2
SPED Teachers	22	1	22	5	6	2	4	62
Counselors	14	1	11	0	1.5		1	28.5
Instrt. Coaches	5		5	1	1		1	13
Other District Level*	14	1	6	2	4	2	3	32
Totals:	238	14	186	51	59	16	42	606

\*These are personnel who regularly interact with schools on matters of education, such as Special Education Directors, Assistant Superintendents, Curriculum Directors, Title I Coordinators, and Technology Coordinators. Excludes technicians, building maintenance, payroll and the like.

Bordering the Bering Sea is the **Bering Strait School District**. Of our seven participating districts it is the second largest in student population and the most remote. None of its 15 schools are on the road system meaning access is by snow machine in the winter, riverboats in the summer, or airplanes most the time. This area has been occupied by Inupiat, Yup'ik and Siberian Yup'ik Inupiat Natives for at least 10,000 years and was the hub of ancient arctic trading routes. With a size of about 80,000 square miles, its treeless landscape is larger than the nine smallest states combined.

Located on Prince of Wales Island in the most beautiful part of a beautiful state is the **Craig City School District**. Craig is a center for transportation, commerce, government and tourism and is surrounded by lots of really, really big bears. Despite its small size, CCSD has three school buildings -elementary, middle and high school.

**Kodiak Island Borough School District** is on an island, too – the second largest in the United States at 3,595 square miles. It is the only one of the seven partner districts that has an actual city, Kodiak, with a population of 5,458 people and where the majority of the population is concentrated. The road system extends approximately 40 miles one way from the city of Kodiak and 15 miles the other way. The remainder of the island, with the exception of the

villages, is virtually uninhabited wilderness. There are seven outlying Alaska Native rural villages on the island, accessible only by boat or small plane. The village populations range from 40 to 260 persons of Alutiiq (Russian-Aleut) ancestry and the village schools have enrollments of 10 to 34 students.

**Kuspuk School District** is located along a 120 mile span of the Kuskokwim River from Lower Kalskag to Stony River. At 12,000 square miles the District's area is larger than the state of Washington. There are 9 schools in 7 villages with travel to all communities by small aircraft, riverboats or snow machines.

**Nenana City School District** is a six-square mile single-site district on the road system, located just south of Fairbanks. The district is one of the few in Alaska that has 9-12<sup>th</sup> grade boarding school that attracts students from across the State.

**Nome City School District** is located on the windswept east coast of the Bering Sea. The city of Nome was incorporated in 1901 during the gold rush days when it the most populous city in Alaska. There are four schools in this city of 3,594. Slightly over half the students are Inupiaq.

**Petersburg School District** Located in a picturesque section of Alaska's southeast with the Gulf of Alaska to the south and the Wrangell mountains to the north, Petersburg used to be the home of a vibrant fishing fleet. That occupation has shrunk, and what was once rumored to have the highest per-capita income for a working town in the United States now relies as much on tourism.<sup>iii</sup> Twenty percent of PSD's students are Tlingit.

(i) *The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.*

## **Human Capital Management System Gaps & Weaknesses**

All seven participating districts have a Human Capital Management System (HCMS).

However, each HCMS tends to be fragmented and disconnected from workforce and instructional improvement. Below is a summary of a *RTB AK* recent needs assessment of their most commonly identified gaps and weaknesses. (Sample District responses are in Appendix F, p. 42)

### **Summary: Gaps and Weaknesses in Districts' Human Capital Management Systems**

#### **Recruitment**

Constant recruitment because of high staff turnover. Not enough applicants. Special Education teachers near impossible to find. Try to hire internationally but unfamiliar with H1B visas and how to reach potential non-citizen teachers. Make effort to recruit in areas of District need but sometimes just need a warm body. Often need to recruit into Fall with vacancies filled in January. Use traditional methods such as job fairs, Alaska Teacher Placement, and personal recruitment from staff alma maters. High pay, and help with moving expenses. At times, provide housing.

#### **Teacher Professional Development and Support**

Use of data to drive Professional Development (PD) uneven. Use Video Teleconferencing often and web-based classes. Send teachers to conferences but little follow-up to share knowledge/practices learned there. Most districts pay for classes, but the gain remains with one teacher. Use Professional Learning Community (PLC) model in most districts but implementation uneven and frustration with process. Little job-embedded PD.

#### **Principal Professional Development and Support**

Guided discussion time on district initiatives set aside but often sidetracked with pressure to walk through District "to dos" checklist. As one superintendent put it, "Balancing the needs between instructional and operational PD is an on-going need." Pay for classes; send to conferences. Set goals for year based on strategic plans but PD loosely coupled to those. One district's week is so crowded they set aside Saturdays for admin professional development. Generally, principals self-select their professional development interests.

#### **Teacher Evaluation**

All have modified teacher evaluation systems, because existing models (e.g., Danielson, Marzano) "too cumbersome and time consuming." A few use a digital format, with others saying it's too training intensive and complex. None do inter-rater reliability checks. Tie to PD and teacher support is loose. Some have only three levels of performance. One District (Kuspuk) houses evals on *Bullseye* (<https://bullseye.education/>), which links to complementary instructional coaching in needed areas – an excellent idea we want to explore in this project.

#### **Principal Evaluation**

Most common instrument is Marzano (three districts) followed by locally-developed tools using various leadership rubrics. All commercial eval instruments are modified by districts that use them to make it easier to use. All evaluation instruments cross walked to Standards for Alaska Administrators as required by the State. There is a loose link between administrator evaluation and their PD plan.

**Teacher Performance Pay/Incentives**

Only one district has performance pay (Nome), but all have incentives. These take the form of extra pay for committee work; paid conferences; one r/t ticket to their village school assignment a year; workshops that count towards certificate renewal/advancement on pay scale; lots of professional development; well paid from the get go; pay for extra duties in school; free housing (not universal); help with moving expenses.

**Principal Performance Pay/Incentives**

Again, one district has performance pay, but all have incentives. All principals have paid conferences and courses and some are provided housing; paid to complete certain training modules; earn days off or cash outs for extra duties they accept. Like teachers, a generous pay and benefits package.

**Career Advancement**

Generally, career advancement occurs informally, with district leaders encouraging able teachers to become principals, and able principals to move into district leadership. Teachers are open to teacher leadership roles but there are few opportunities, no formal structure to obtain them, and no training.

**Retention**

This is a huge problem. Yet, most districts reward retention only through the pay scale, which earns staff more dollars for every year of experience. All districts in the State pay based on experience, so leaving one district to go to another is not penalized, except for the need to re-earn tenure.

**Dismissal, Tenure, Placement**

All Districts use their evaluation process to inform tenure and dismissal decisions. Placement decisions are more uneven but generally work well. Applicants apply for specific schools, and in an interview with administrators a determination is made as to the fit of the applicant to the school needs and community makeup.

The most often expressed Gaps and Weaknesses as *RTB AK* was developed were:

- Teacher and principal retention
- Unwieldy teacher evaluation system
- Ineffective school-level professional development
- Dearth of opportunities for teacher and principal career advancement, including leadership opportunities
- Failure to recruit specialized teachers, such as in Special Education, and,
- Complete absence of Performance Based incentives either for individuals or schools.

**Student Achievement Gaps:** Students in the participating schools are experiencing large academic achievement gaps in English/Language Arts and Math as illustrated in chart below.

Not passing state proficiency tests is one indicator that students will fall behind academically and not graduate. (Source: Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AKSTAR), Spring 2022)

AK STAR (Alaska System of Academic Readiness, Spring 2022)				
District	ELA Proficient and Above	E/LA Below/ Far Below Proficient	Math Proficient and Above	Math Below/ Far Below Proficient
Kodiak	28.86%	71.14%	18.38%	81.62%
Craig	32.21%	67.79%	20.81%	79.19%
Nome	14.09%	85.91%	12.57%	87.43%
Kuspuk	6.84%	93.16%	8.02%	91.98%
Nenana	34.52%	65.48%	15.48%	84.52%
Petersburgh	44.44%	55.56%	39.82%	60.18%
Bering Strait	4.27%	95.73%	3.61%	96.39%
<b>District Average</b>	<b>23.60%</b>	<b>76.40%</b>	<b>16.96%</b>	<b>83.04%</b>
<b>State Results</b>	<b>29.46%</b>	<b>70.54%</b>	<b>22.88%</b>	<b>77.12%</b>

(Source: AK EED, 2022 Assessment Results)

**COVID-19: A Devastating Impact on Student Learning** The Coronavirus (COVID-19) struck Alaska unexpectedly and drastically impacted our schools. As cases of COVID-19 skyrocketed, our Governor took drastic action by closing all schools statewide on March 13, 2020 until that Fall, and some districts decided to remain closed for 2021-2022. Little academic recovery has taken place as can be seen by the fact that only two of our partner districts outperform the already low state averages for Math and English/Language Arts. This reinforces the need for high quality teaching by highly effective teachers.

**Student Characteristics and At-Risk Factors in Participating Districts** Research has found that minority students and students of poverty are more likely to be at-risk and have large academic achievement gaps compared to their peers without these characteristics.<sup>iv</sup> The tables below illustrate a high number of students in at-risk categories in *RTB AK* districts.

(Notes: 1) Sources: AK DEED, Report Card to the Public, 2022-2023 & Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR), Spring 2022 2) By School Data in Appendix E, p. 41)

Bering Strait Borough School District	School Enrollment	% Alaska Native	Students in Poverty - FRL	High Need School
District Total/Average	1831	96.9%	97.0%	15 of 15

Craig City School District	School Enrollment	% Alaska Native	Students in Poverty - FRL	High Need School
District Total/Average	238	15.6%	75.0%	3 of 3

Kodiak Island Borough School District	School Enrollment	% Alaska Native	Students in Poverty - FRL	High Need School
District Total/Average	2254	21.7%	57.4%	7 of 12

Kuspuk School District	School Enrollment	% Alaska Native	Students in Poverty - FRL	High Need School
District Total/Average	318	96.2%	93.5%	9 of 9

Nenana City School District	School Enrollment	% Alaska Native	Students in Poverty - FRL	High Need School
Nenana City School	189	60.3%	68.3%	Yes
District Total/Average	189	60.3%	68.3%	1 of 1

Nome Public Schools	School Enrollment	% Alaska Native	Students in Poverty - FRL	High Need School
District Total/Average	720	52.5%	100.0%	4 of 4

Petersburg Borough School District	School Enrollment	% Alaska Native	Students in Poverty - FRL	High Need School
District Total/Average	442	20.1%	61.9%	2 of 3

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve Relevant Outcomes (as defined in this notice) using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.

Alaska’s constitution requires the State to fund 100% of education costs, with a base student allocation set with some adjustments for local area cost differentials, and the number of special needs and Career and Technical Education students. Organized boroughs and cities can tax to supplement the base student allocation through taxation, and three of our partners do this. However, four partners (and we will include Nenana in this group because of their minuscule tax base) cannot tax because they are not inside a borough or city and rely exclusively on State and federal revenue sources for their operations. Just last week our Governor vetoed the first increase in six years to the state contribution to school funding by half. At the same time, Alaska continues to lose population and an economic slump that existed well before Covid continues. This will explain somewhat a scarcity of community resources to support *RTB AK* outcomes.

That said, the districts are very diligent in adding external funding that support the relevant outcomes, as reported on the Survey they filled out as part of project planning (See Appendix F, p. 42 for completed sample). Districts identified the following sources and programs: (Note: All areas below supported by the States’ allocation local tax funds if available.)

Similar/Related Efforts in the Area of:	Funding Used to Support This Effort (Name all that apply)
Recruitment	Cares Act ESSER funds, Title IIA
Teacher Professional Development	Indian Education, GEAR UP, Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant (CLSD), ESSERS, Title IA, Johnson O’Malley (JOM), Carl Perkins, Title VI-B (SPED) Title IIA, Federal Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program (IAL), Student Improvement Grants (SIG); Small Rural Schools Achievement Funds (SRSA), Alaska Reads Act grants (ARA)
Principal Professional Development	Title I-A, Carl Perkins, JOM, Title IIA; Indian Education, ESSER, IAL; SIG, Title VI-B, ARA

Student Achievement	Title IA; Title IVA, CLSD, Gear Up, Title IC, Title IIIA, Indian Ed., ESSER, Carl Perkins, JOM, SIG, Title VI-B, Rural and Low Income schools grant (RLIS), 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers (ARA)
Professional Learning Communities	Title IA, Title IIA, SIG, RLIS
Teacher Career Ladder	BSA used by Districts that have them, Title IIA
Developing/Refining your Evaluations	BSA, Title IA
Retention	BSA, ESSER, Title IIA

(iii) *The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.*

Participating districts are engaged in numerous initiatives to improve teacher and student learning. This proposal will allow these efforts to be incorporated into a coherent and coordinated HCMS.

<b>Current District Initiatives to Improve Teacher and Student Learning</b>	
BSSD	BSSD is focused on improving the social and emotional health of all students. Through a federal grant, this year they have been able to place full time school counselors in each of their 15 schools, including the smallest. Making a concerted effort to implement adopted research-based programs and practices (e.g., Success For All, Six+1 Traits for Writing, and enVision Math) with more fidelity.
Craig	Strategic Plan emphasizes staff collaboration; increased professional development; and expanded Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).
Kodiak	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills; Mastery approach to learning; SWOT process to provide information to Strategic Plan development; uses Plan, Do, Study Act process extensively as does this project; focus on research-based academic materials and practices; after-school centers; distance learning opportunities (Apex, e-Dynamics); shared leadership approach; teacher mentors
Kuspuk	Culturally-based science; emphasis on technology (Google Classroom, Google Suite, GoMath Tutorials); Career and Technical Education; Strategic Plan focus on improvements in Literacy and Math; working towards having a professional development plan for all staff; and provide a substantive faculty performance appraisal system (evaluation).

Nenana	Performance Based Compensation; Response to Instruction and Intervention effectiveness improvements (especially for Tier III); Literacy; tying content areas into literacy improvement.
Nome	Response to Instruction and Intervention; Social Emotional Learning curriculum; Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures; emphasis on post-secondary options for students; importance of indigenous culture; used SWOT process to provide information to Strategic Plan development; focus on retention of effective administrators, educators and staff; teacher mentors; strengthening site & district Professional Development Plans.
Petersburg	High degree of use of technology to support learning (one-to-one wireless laptops for students and teachers, smartboards, document cameras, classroom voice capture/projection equipment, etc.); Positive Behavior Intervention Support Program (PBIS).
State of Alaska	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP)</i> - Provides expert teacher mentors to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year teachers; limited numbers of districts and schools served.</li> <li>• <i>Alaska School Leadership Academy (ASLA)</i> - Designed to provide early career principals with a collegial cohort that is engaged in networking, skill building and mutual support across the state.</li> <li>• <i>Alaska's Education Challenge</i> - State initiative to boost student achievement developed by groups of education practitioners, parents and child advocacy groups, with measurable goals.<sup>v</sup></li> <li>• <i>Alaska Reads Act</i> - Establishes a reading program within the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to provide direct support for and intervention services for the lowest-performing 25% of schools. Reading specialists on will coach, train, and mentor teachers and school staff, and the specialists will help create specific improvement goals for each school selected.</li> </ul>

RTB AK project activities will support and assist districts to make progress on their initiatives as described above. One benefit of this project at this time is that the project can help districts as they craft a response to the State’s new Literacy mandates, which include required actions, performance targets and consequences for non-achievement. Instructional Leadership Teams and upgraded Professional Learning Communities can greatly help districts in meeting these mandates.

(iv) *The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.*

Schools and districts across the country are struggling to recruit and retain teachers and administrators—a challenge that is associated with negative student outcomes. Alaska's efforts

are complicated by the state's unique characteristics, including geographic remoteness. A 2019 study conducted by Education North West found that 36 percent of teachers and 38 percent of principals working in a rural-remote Alaska school (*RTB AK* schools!) did not return to their school the following year, compared to 19 percent for both teachers and principals working in an urban Alaska school.<sup>vi</sup> The main reasons for leaving are:

- most teachers in Alaska come from outside the state and may have a difficult time adjusting
- working conditions in Alaska schools can involve serving in multiple roles and teaching multiple grade levels and/or subject areas; teacher workload, lack of satisfaction with district leadership, and challenges with community integration also contribute to teachers and principals leaving
- living conditions can include extreme weather conditions, months with no sunlight, months with no darkness (the “midnight sun”), and the isolation of living in a remote community, without roads, access to supplies or entertainment, and poor internet, and,
- Alaska has become less competitive in the regional job market.

**Summary: How *RTB AK* is addressing the needs of educators and students** Teachers and principals receive timely feedback that they can use to improve their performance and support student learning, and *RTB AK* mentoring that supports and develops school leaders reduces the likelihood that principals will leave their schools or the profession. District leaders will examine the usefulness of their principal support and evaluation systems with an eye toward sustaining practices that are helpful and creating new mechanisms and supports as needed. This project reduces stated obstacles to professional development, especially lack of time, by exploring remedies such as staff support that frees up educator’s time, offering professional development at times and locations that are more convenient for staff using Teacher Leaders, and working professional learning into the district feedback, evaluation, and mentoring systems. *RTB AK* also

offers powerful research based student achievement gain content (e.g., Hattie’s Visible Learning), and supplements school efforts to improve student achievement.

*(b) Quality of the Project Design (25 points)*

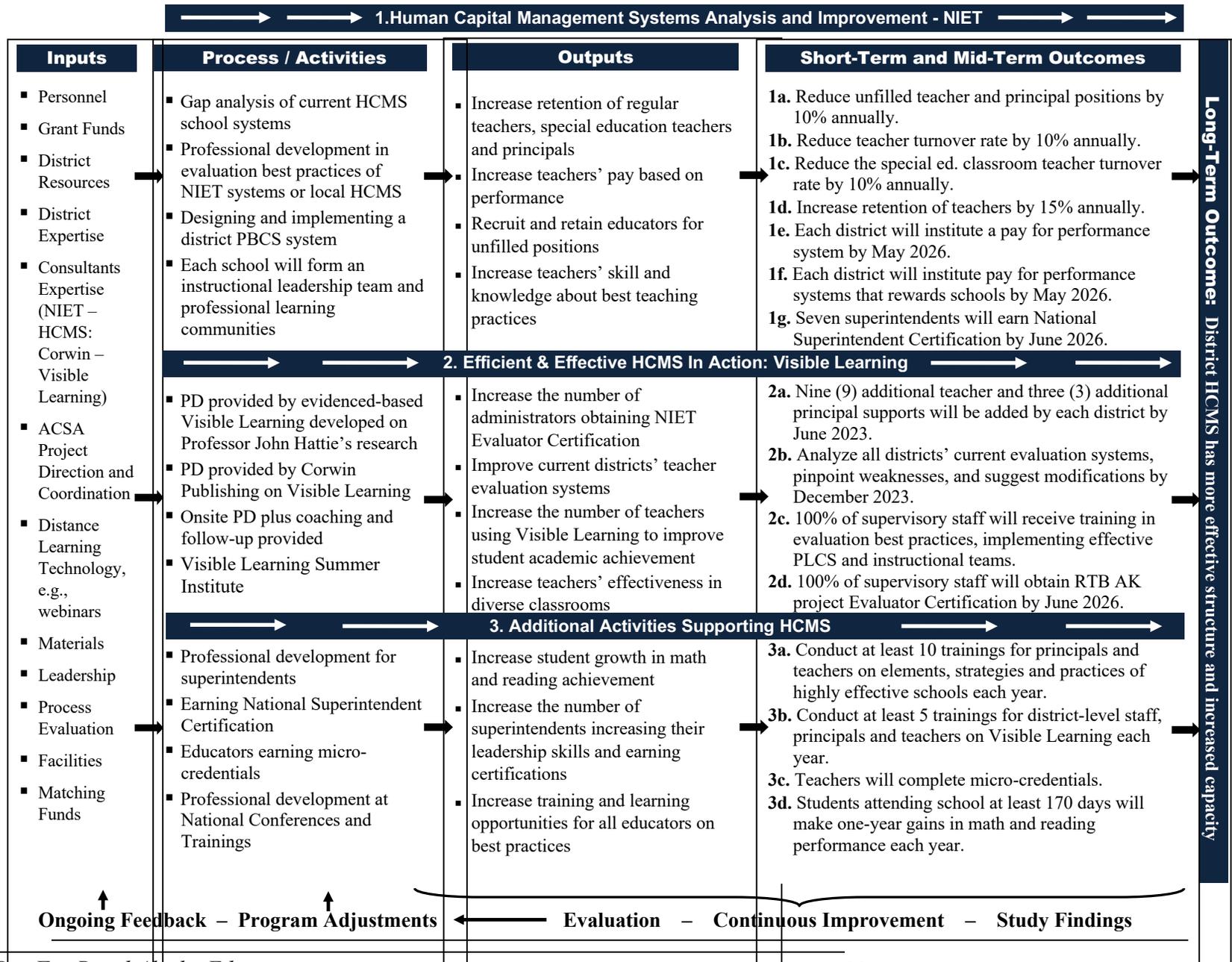
*The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:*

- (i) The extent to which the proposed project Demonstrates a Rationale (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).*

We embrace the Secretary of Education’s initiative to Raise the Bar for all educators. Our services, outcomes and goals are designed to advance this initiative in Alaskan schools. We at the Alaska Council of School Administrators are also raising the bar on providing the best evidence-based and highest quality professional development for our Alaskan educators. We believe we are accomplishing this by our strong partnerships with Corwin Press and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), internationally recognized trainers of educators. We are also asking teachers to raise the academic expectations (bar) for students, and we will support them with the tools and high-quality professional development to do so.

The *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaska Educators (RTB AK* for short) project is a collaborative effort by the rural Alaska school districts of Bering Strait, Craig, Kodiak, Kuspuik, Nenana, Nome, Petersburg and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA). Program development began by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to ensure that district, school and students’ needs, and the magnitude of those needs, were identified. The assessment included stakeholder virtual planning meetings, principal input meetings, district surveys and partnership planning meetings. (See examples of completed district surveys, Appendix F, pp. 42-48.) Using this information we then designed an effective and efficient program to meet the needs of our partners. We also conducted a thorough literature review of evidence-based relevant program and strategies and incorporated those findings in our program design. Lastly, we developed the Logic Model to guide our planning and activity connectedness:

## Raising The Bar for Rural Alaskan Educators -- Logic Model



**Long-Term Outcome: District HCMS has more effective structure and increased capacity**

Rationale for Selecting Services - Strong Theory & Logic Model - Our rationale and theory for selecting programs, curricula and services for target schools and students is based on the principles of the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of a strong theory. A strong theory is a rationale for the proposed process, product, strategy, services or practice that is typically illustrated in a Logic Model linking the relationships between key program components, indicators and measures/ outcomes - theoretically and operationally. This conceptual framework is a hypothesis that connects the proposed theory of services/activities to the intended outcomes/ measures. According to Harvard Researcher Carol Weiss, strong theory is often referred to as a Pathway of Change, Logic Model or Theory of Action.<sup>vii</sup> Our Logic Model includes the Inputs, Process, Outputs, and Outcomes Measures as illustrated above.

Based on the HCMS needs of the partner districts we developed the following *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaska Educators* Goals and Objectives that align with the TSL Program’s purpose and GPRA Measures:

Goals	Objectives
<p><b>Goal 1: Enhance the Participating Districts’ Human Capital Management System (HCMS), including a Performance Based Compensation System (PBC)</b></p>	<p><b>Objective a.</b> Reduce the number of unfilled teacher and principal positions by the end of each project year by 10%. <i>(Note: Most of the participating schools are so small this must be an aggregate measure. See school size charts, Appendix E pp. 40-41)</i></p> <p><b>Objective b.</b> Reduce the regular classroom teacher turnover rate by 10% annually, using SY 2022-2023 as a baseline.</p> <p><b>Objective c.</b> Reduce the Special Education classroom teacher turnover rate by 10% annually, using SY 2022-2023 as a baseline. <i>(Note: Again aggregate)</i></p> <p><b>Objective d.</b> Increase the retention of district teachers by 15% annually, starting September 30, 2025, using SY 2023-2024 as a baseline. (Exclude retirement)</p> <p><b>Objective e.</b> By May, 2026, each district will institute a pay for performance system (individual teacher and/or whole school) that includes student achievement gains.</p> <p><b>Objective f.</b> By May, 2024, two districts will institute a pay for performance system that rewards schools and/or teachers for other important factors, such as evidence of effective Professional Learning</p>

	<p>Teams, use of school embedded master teachers, number of micro-credentials earned by staff and student achievement gains. By May, 2025, five districts; by May 2026, all districts.</p> <p><b>Objective g.</b> By the end of <i>RTB AK</i>, seven District superintendents will earn AASA National Superintendent Certification.</p>
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Goals	Objectives
<p><b>Goal 2: Improve the Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Support System</b></p>	<p><b>Objective 2a.</b> By June, 2026, nine (9) teacher and three (3) principal support strategies and associated incentives will be offered by each district, such as pay for courses, attendance at conferences, and bonuses for school-wide student achievement gains.</p> <p><b>Objective 2b.</b> By December 2023, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) will analyze all (100%) of districts’ current evaluation systems, pinpoint weaknesses, and suggest modifications.</p> <p><b>Objective 2c.</b> Each project year a) 100% of supervisory staff, including principals, will receive training in evaluation best practices, and b) each school will receive training in implementing and operating effective Professional Learning Communities and Instructional Leadership Teams.</p> <p><b>Objective 2d.</b> By the end of the project, 100% of supervisory staff, including principals, will obtain <i>Raising The Bar</i> project Evaluator Certification from the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET).</p>

Goals	Objectives
<p><b>Goal 3: Increase Student Achievement in High Needs Schools</b></p>	<p><b>Objective 3a.</b> Each project year, conduct at least 10 trainings for principals, teachers and certificated specialists (e.g., Literacy Specialists) on elements, strategies and practices of highly effective schools, such as school-based instructional leadership teams, using data to drive professional development and instructional programs, professional learning communities, teacher leaders, inter-school coaching and mentoring, etc.</p> <p><b>Objective 3b.</b> Each project year, conduct at least 5 trainings for district-level staff, principals, teachers and specialists on John Hattie’s Visible Learning, an approach to boosting student achievement using highly effective research-based strategies.</p> <p><b>Objective 3c.</b> By May, 2024, 20 teachers will complete micro-credentials in subjects related to school improvement issues and student academic needs; by May, 2025, 40 teachers; By May, 2026, 100 teachers.</p> <p><b>Objective 3d.</b> By May of each year, students who have attended the same school at least 160 days will make gains from Spring to Spring in math and reading performance, as measured by the <i>Performance Evaluation for Alaska’s Schools (PEAKS)</i></p>

Our **Project Design** begins with methods and activities that address the effectiveness and quality of each Districts' Human Capital Management Systems (HCMS). This is followed by a deep dive into professional development focused on the use of research-based best practices to boost student achievement. Finally, we propose additional activities that support a highly effective HCMS.

## **COMPONENT I: HCMS ANALYSIS AND IMPROVEMENT**

*Raising The Bar For Rural Alaskan Educators (RTB AK)* will improve HCMS systems in concert with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), an international leader in assessing district HCMS, determining the quality of educator evaluation systems and supporting districts with implementing an effective, aligned HCMS.

Strengthening Educator Performance Evaluation Using evidence-based research, NIET will review each district's current teacher and principal rubrics, policies, and artifacts and conduct an assessment of current evaluation data management practices and systems. Also examined will be samples of principal and teacher evaluator feedback. All of this will result in a report tailored to each district's evaluation instrument and processes, necessary because few partner districts use the same evaluation model. (Marzano, Danielson, their own.)

NIET will then provide training in evaluation best practices and materials to support each district in strengthening their current educator evaluation system, or districts may opt to adopt the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric and evaluation system. This will include such integral practices as pre-conference, evidence gathering and post-conferencing. Another key activity, if districts choose to keep their evaluation systems, is to ensure evaluations are consistent across administrators. NIET does this through Evaluator Certification. District evaluators -usually principals- are trained and certified in teacher evaluation using the district's

educator evaluation system or the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric and evaluation system. Supervising administrators who are working towards earning this certification will assess classroom instruction compared to a NIET expert's evaluation of that same teacher. If the evaluations differ greatly certification is not granted until inter-rater reliability is established.

Performance Based Compensation Systems (PBCS) Each district will engage in NIET consulting support on designing and implementing a PBCS based on individual and whole school rewards for student achievement gains. This includes advising on compensation measures, cost estimates, and best practices recommendations involving PBCS. As various PBCS models are presented, each district will be encouraged to ask these questions: "What would this model look like if it is applied in our district?" "What HCMS challenges could it help, such as retention?" "What new problems will it grow?" PBCS workshops will be held to build knowledge of the requirements of the *RTB AK* grant, supportive stakeholder meetings to ensure understanding of the performance-based compensation requirements, outlining of a comprehensive yet attainable model for all to understand, and monitoring progress towards the PBCS throughout each grant year. The monitoring process will include check-ins on data collection needed for each year's incentive payout.

HCMS Reviews In discussions about what an *RTB AK* HCMS project would include, we brainstormed what our ideal HCMS might look like at the end of the grant period. (See Appendix N: Optimum HCMS pp. 89-92) This is useful not only to show the difference with what is happening now as seen in the districts' current HCMSs description but also for "backward planning" purposes. That is, share the optimum outcomes for an improved HCMS and plan grant activities to achieve them. NIET will conduct a survey of each district's HCMS and write a "gap analysis" report in the first three months of the project to identify those

elements that need to be added or strengthened to reach the optimum. At times, the project director, evaluator, contractors (e.g., NIET) and districts revisit this gap analysis to see if the distance between beginning conditions and desired conditions is growing or shrinking.

Evidence-Based Interventions #1: Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) An Instructional Leadership Team is a powerful lever for making change in schools. Their aim is to improve instruction by evaluating student achievement and the tasks associated with student learning. ILTs typically include the principal, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, instructional paraprofessionals if appropriate, and other school specialists. ILTs are an excellent vehicle to build teacher leadership, as well. Here, each school that does not already have one will form an ILT, composed at a minimum of the school principal and at least one teacher leader. (Remember, some of our schools are very small.) NIET provides this professional development to ILTs:

- identifies actions that highly effective administrators and teacher leaders consistently engage in, and asks them to reflect and self-assess in key areas of instructional leadership
- develops an understanding of the purpose and value of consistent ILT meetings
- pinpoints the elements of effective ILT meetings and describe the principal’s responsibility in planning and facilitating those meetings, and,
- strengthens the principal and teacher leaders’ ability to monitor, support and continuously improve the quality of ILT meetings and their impact on teaching and learning.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Instructional Leadership Teams encourage a culture of collaboration among teachers to improve instruction through the examination of a school’s student achievement data and instructional methods. Professional Learning Communities are different but complementary: they model the structure and function of a “community of practice,” focusing on collective problem solving leading to more effective

practice among team members to increase student achievement. PLCs delve into the “big stuff”, practicing an ongoing cycle of inquiry and collective problem solving of issues affecting student performance, such as absenteeism, student engagement, school climate, the school’s literacy program, or parent engagement. PLCs are already used in most of our partner districts. However, the districts have expressed shortcomings in their PLCs (and, to a lesser extent, their ILTs) such as long, poorly organized meetings, sidetracked discussions, actions decided but no followup, support for desired actions haphazard and diluted, and impact on student learning not measured. NIET will conduct professional development with principals and teacher leaders addressing running efficient PLCs using one of many exemplary PLC materials, such as the Tucson Unified School District’s Professional Learning Communities Guide<sup>viii</sup>, the *Five Steps to Effective Learning* (a student learning model!)<sup>ix</sup>, etc..

*Raising The Bar for Rural Alaska Educators* sees PLCs and ILTs as a natural -and untapped- way to grow and sustain Teacher Leaders, for teachers are strategically and formally engaged at the school level in setting school goals and instructional strategies, supporting the instructional staff, and providing job-embedded professional learning. Successful Teacher Leaders in turn develop next year’s Teacher Leaders. In addition, involving Teacher Leaders in this formalized structure for distributed leadership supports principals in becoming more effective instructional leaders and builds their capacity to provide leadership services at the school.

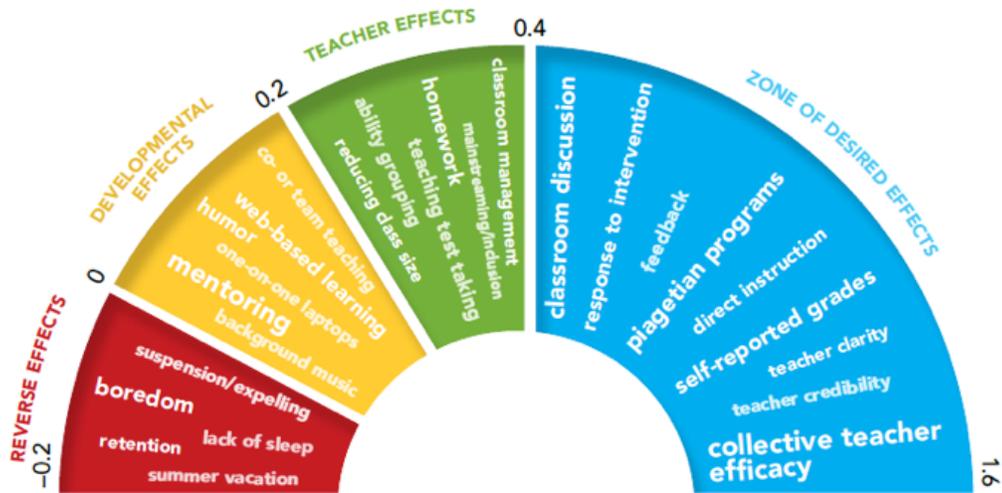
Instructional Leadership Teams and Professional Learning Communities also provide benefits for the district as a whole. ILTs and PLCs give district leaders the structures through which a range of improvement initiatives can be driven. Examples of these -common in school districts- are new curriculum, State mandates (in Alaska, Literacy), professional development

initiatives, or new assessments. This reflects a coherent and connected HCMS that connects schools and district office systems to continuously build the local capacity of teachers, schools and district leaders to promote student academic growth.

## **COMPONENT II: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE HCMSs IN ACTION: VISIBLE LEARNING**

The NIET HCMS structures and capacity building established in Component I (Instructional Leadership Teams, Teacher Leaders, PLCs, certified evaluators, etc) will be used to support the implementation of valuable instructional practices and knowledge gained during professional development. Professional development will concentrate on Visible Learning, a highly effective research-based approach to student learning which is familiar to most districts.

What is Visible Learning? More than 25 years ago world-renowned Professor John Hattie began his quest to find the answer to this profound question: “Which factors have the greatest impact on student learning?” Through the meta-analysis of 95,000+ studies on 300 million students across the globe, Professor Hattie identified more than 270+ factors that have a positive impact on student achievement, with positive being defined as the amount of progress a student is expected to make during one year of schooling. The power of the Visible Learning research lies not only in helping educators understand how much impact each influence is likely to have on student achievement, but also in understanding impact relative to other influences. Educators who understand which influences have the greatest impact on student achievement can make debate-free strategic decisions based on evidence to maximize how they use their time, energy, influence, and resources. Below is a graphic that explains Hattie’s research:



Practices That Yield Desired Effects	
Collective teacher efficacy	1.57
Self-reported grades	1.33
Response to intervention	1.29
Piagetian programs	1.28
Teacher credibility	.90
Classroom discussion	.82
Teacher clarity	.75
Feedback	.70
Direct instruction	.60
Providing formative evaluation	.48

The *RTB AK* project will couple the enhancements to school and teacher learning systems in Component I with a powerful Visible Learning professional development program provided by our second well-recognized consulting team, Corwin Press. Corwin is the only Hattie-approved provider of Visible Learning professional development and it does so according to the ESSA definition of high quality professional development, i.e., sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data driven and classroom focused.<sup>x</sup> Visible Learning strategies are currently used in a fragmented way in all seven participating districts and all districts express great interest in implementing Visible Learning practices systemically and with fidelity.

The Visible Learning training will be spread over three years, with Year 1 consisting of diagnosis and planning. This year is dedicated to building a foundation of Visible Learning knowledge and planning for success. Personalized professional learning sessions and tools will guide each Professional Learning Community (PLC) as they assess their school and develop an

action plan for achieving school-wide goals. Teacher Leaders developed under this project will receive in-depth training, and specialized professional learning will be provided to principals and district leaders to ensure Visible Learning efforts are implemented with fidelity and are supported, cohesive and coherent districtwide.

The second year of the Visible Learning System training identifies interventions, implementation and monitoring. Building on the diagnosis of the data and what is learned in year 1, the school will put into action a PLC-developed plan for increasing student progress and school-wide student achievement. This is the year for an extended look into the application of Visible Learning beliefs, knowledge, and practices.

Visible Learning in the content areas and evaluation are the focus for year three. The successes and shortfalls of implementation are evaluated, and the PLCs examine the degree to which the Visible Learning system process has become part of regular classroom and school practice as well as its impact on the learning lives of students. Visible Learning consultants lead sessions that assess each PLCs progress in meeting their goals and how they can sustain their efforts in future years after grant funding ends.

On-site professional learning sessions include three district-wide core training days plus two days of coaching, follow-up and site-requested training per school. One all-district Visible Learning training for school leaders is also held. The Visible Learning virtual sessions include:

- Live sessions with a certified Visible Learning+™ expert
- Meaningful small and large group discussions
- Interactive activities to support collaboration, deeper understanding and implementation
- Resource guides to follow along with instruction and activities
- Developing a district and school-specific action plan to gather evidence to help guide next steps, and,

- Opportunities to earn University of Alaska graduate credit, with credit cost support provided by *RTB AK*.

Each year we will hold a Visible Learning Summer Institute in Anchorage for superintendents, district-selected principals, Teacher Leaders, teachers, and instructional aides, and offer breakout sessions at the Alaska Staff Development Network winter *Response To Intervention /Multi Tiered System of Supports Effective Instruction* Conference. At both participants will receive advanced Visible Learning professional development and have the opportunity to ask deeper questions about practice, investigating and answering challenges in cooperation with their peers from partner districts.

### **COMPONENT III: ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING HCMS**

The Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project (ASMP) will provide mentoring services to first and second year teachers from project partner districts. ASMP’s Mentors provide a sounding board, problem solving, and a second set of hands during those hectic first years of teaching. ASMPs mentors are drawn from exemplary retired teachers, do not serve an evaluative role, and use the New Teacher Center’s mentoring protocols.<sup>xi</sup> First and second year principals will find support from the ACSA’s Alaska School Leadership Academy (ASLA) principal mentors. Each new principal is paired with an Alaska-based, seasoned principal who serves as a professional mentor. Participants engage in monthly-facilitated discussions around a leadership text, distance delivered, and are required to take part in three in-person meetings throughout the year.

Superintendents play a key role in improving teacher quality and student achievement. *Raising the Bar* includes them in professional development through the opportunity to obtain American Association of School Administrators National Superintendent Certification. This Certification program is for early career superintendents and superintendents desiring to refresh

their skill set to engage in world-class professional learning. The program offers the highest quality curriculum and the ability to join professional networks that superintendents need to become cutting edge leaders for our schools. Information on this program is to be found in Appendix G: National Superintendents Certification, p. 49.

Teacher Leaders' and administrators' professional growth will be enhanced by supporting them in the attainment of micro credentials. A micro-credential is a skills and competency-based focus for learning, generally short, and fixed on a narrow range of skills and competencies. Completion leads to achievement certificates or, in fashion lately, "badges". Micro credentials with college credit are widely available through universities, education businesses (Coursera, edX, FutureLearn, etc) and the National Education Association (NEA). These credentials can be useful for the Instructional Leadership Teams and PLCs to gain shared key knowledge and understandings, in an accelerated timeframe with a sharp focus, as they address an issue important to their school. Listed below are just some of the possibilities and benefits of micro credentials:

- Pay incentives for completion of micro credentials tied to teacher evaluation, district initiatives, social-emotional student concerns (e.g., suicide prevention, Adverse Childhood Experiences (AKA trauma)) and cultural relevance
- Building the capacity of staff in areas of high interest to districts, such as having teachers become Google or Microsoft certified teachers, then become trainers in those platforms for the district, or,
- Teachers could take a short course in instructional coaching as a micro credential, earn performance pay for passing, and then the next year serve as a mentor for one other teacher (again, with performance pay), which could support the goal of teacher retention.

*Raising The Bar* will defray the costs of micro credentials. We give an examples of the types of micro credentials offered, using NEA's library, in Appendix H, p. 59.

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), too, has developed other tools and activities that will assist us in this project, including:

- A Training Portal, consisting of an interactive web tool that provides real-time access to individualized trainings and support for advancing educator effectiveness. (Educator Effectiveness Training Portal: Appendix I, p. 61)
- A Performance Data Management System consisting of an interactive online tool for storing and analyzing teacher evaluations and other school data, if desired
- A University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) Collaboration Symposium. Educator preparation programs in Alaska are actively seeking ways to upgrade teacher and administrative preparation programs. *RTB AK* will sponsor a “*What We Hear From The Front Lines*” Symposium at UAS (which has 20%+ Alaska Native enrollment) that explains the use of the NIET/TAP rubric with teacher and principal candidates and engage the University in a discussion around ways to strengthen efforts around preparation, recruitment, and mentoring of educator candidates
- A Teacher Leader Workshop Series (Appendix J, p. 63 provides a sample list of offerings), and,
- National Conference and Training: The NIET annual conference is a professional development opportunity for Teacher Leaders, principals, and district level administrators to receive role-specific and practice-specific training.

(ii) *The extent to which the design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.*

...*high-quality review of the relevant literature*... This review, indexed to major RTB AK strategies, such as ILTs, PLCs and Visible Learning, can be found in Appendix K, p. 67.

... *high-quality plan for project implementation*... See Section c, Quality of Management Plan

... appropriate tools to ensure a successful achievement of project objectives... **Continuous Improvement**

**Management (CIM)** – The Project Director and Evaluator will implement the Continuous

Improvement Management Process Model developed by USED. This model measures the

implementation of a

Human Capital

Management System

(HCMS), including

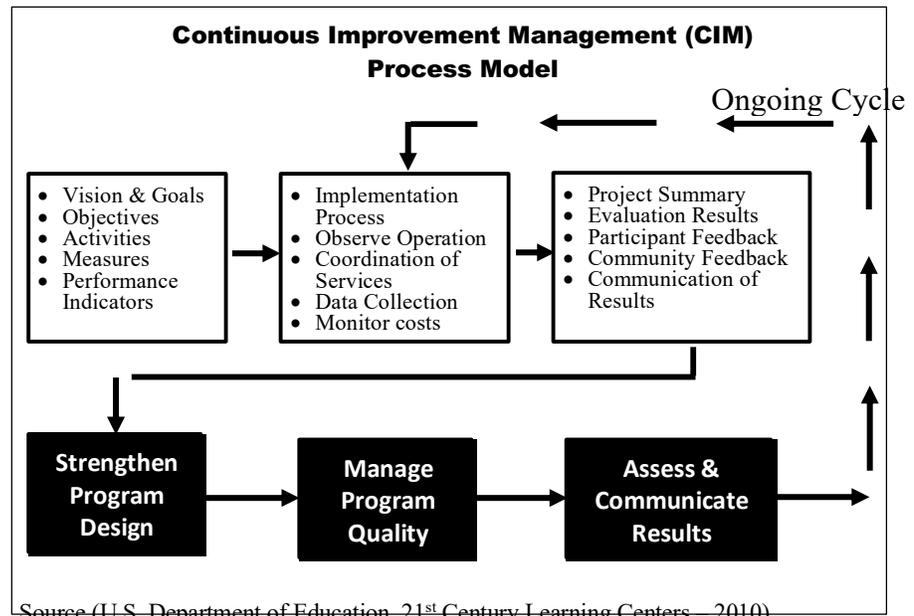
Performance Based

Compensation (PBC)

through observations,

school data, HR data,

session evaluations,



personal interviews and educator surveys. The plan is designed to provide ongoing feedback to

the Project Management Team, District Coordination Teams and Staff to continuously improve

*RTB AK.*

**Plan, Do, Study, Act for District Implementation** The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)

method is a way to test a change, approach or action that is being implemented.<sup>xii</sup> Going through

the PDSA prescribed four steps guides the thinking process by breaking down the task into steps

and then evaluating the outcome, improving on it, and testing again.

The first step in this implementation strategy is the **Plan**, where we lay out the activity

and associated actions, including methods for collecting data. We state the objective of the

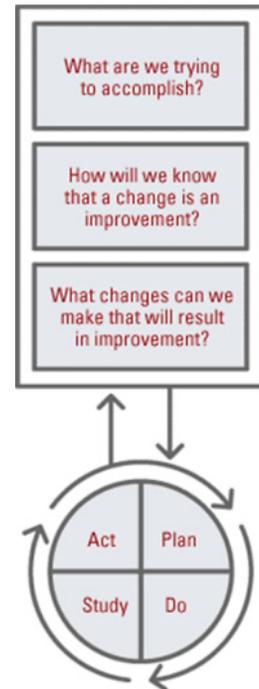
activity, make predictions about what will happen and why, and develop a mechanism to test our

efforts. This is followed by **Doing**. Most often we test out our activity plan on a small scale,

document problems and unexpected results, and collect data. Then it is time to analyze the data and **Study** the results. Here we complete the analysis of the data, compare the data to our predictions, summarize and reflect on what was learned. Then we **Act** and refine the change, based on what was learned from the test. Needed modifications are made, and we prepare a plan for the next test, repeating the Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle.

Reasons to test the changes, modify them, and test again are numerous and include the following: <sup>xiii</sup>

- To increase your belief that the change will result in improvement
- To decide which of several proposed changes will lead to the desired improvement
- To evaluate how much improvement can be expected from the change
- To decide whether the proposed change will work in the actual environment of interest
- To decide which combinations of changes will have the desired effects on the important measures of quality
- To evaluate costs, social impact, and side effects from a proposed change, and,
- To minimize resistance upon implementation.



We chose the PDSA implementation strategy because it has wide use within Quality Improvement efforts, especially healthcare, and has been used for quite some time. The PDSA method originates from industry and Walter Shewhart and Edward Deming's early work<sup>xiv</sup> and it is now part of most wider Quality Improvement (QI) approaches, such as the Model for Improvement (MFI), Total Quality Management, Continuous QI, Lean, or Six Sigma.<sup>xv</sup>

(iii) *The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress towards achieving intended outcomes.*

RGI Research Corporation will be our external evaluator. This independent educational corporation has extensive experience (20 years) in evaluating U.S. Department of Education (USED) grant projects. (See Qualifications and Capabilities of lead Evaluator, RGI Research Corporation, in Appendix B, p. 15.) The lead RGI evaluator will be a member of the *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaska Teachers* Project Management Team to provide ongoing formative and summative evaluation results to the team for decision-making, shaping the program, program improvement and review of measurable objective achievements.

The following evaluation design has been developed to include performance objectives, indicators and measurable outcomes aligned with USED TSL Program requirements. The evaluation plan will use carefully vetted instruments to measure program accomplishments, performance indicators, collect data for the USED Annual and Semiannual Performance Reports and implement a model for continuous program improvement as described below.

The evaluation design will include **qualitative** and **quantitative** data collection instruments to capture the necessary information.

**Formative evaluation** data will include both qualitative and quantitative descriptions of the program's impact on educator learning and student gains. Structured interviews will assess staff, student and school personnel perceptions of the program and identify potential improvements (i.e., different training approaches, types of services, etc.). Evaluators will review the research-based programs and professional development (e.g., Visible Learning) to ensure implementation fidelity and to make adjustments as needed. The formative evaluation will provide ongoing evaluation data to shape the development of the project from start to finish.

**Summative evaluation** data will include both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the project’s impact in terms of numbers of educators trained, teacher turnover rates, retention, recruitment, certifications attained, performance pay/reward, student academic gains and related indicators. The Evaluators will summarize data to provide information to all stakeholders at each Project Management Team meeting and evaluators will use baseline data elements to monitor benchmarks, targets and measure progress. Updated baseline data will be collected in the Fall of 2023 prior to providing services; data for all elements listed in the following table column 2 will be used for baseline data.

**Measurable Objectives** – The project will evaluate the following project Measurable Objectives as presented in the program design. They have been crafted to align with the TSL GPRA Performance Measures, and will be tracked through a web-based data collection system and evaluated. The table below illustrates the type of data to be collected, how often and how it will be analyzed for the project’s performance measurable objectives and specific GPRAs.

<b>Project Performance Measurable Objectives and GPRAs</b>			
<b>Measurable Objectives &amp; GPRA</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Collection Timeframe</b>	<b>How Data is Analyzed</b>
<b>1a.</b> Reduce unfilled teacher and principal positions ... each year by 10%. GPRA d, e	HR records of employment applications/ new hires	Each Year	Analyze # and % change of unfilled positions and hires at each district. (All objectives’ data will be analyzed by regular and high-needs schools)
<b>1b.</b> Reduce ... teacher turnover rate ...by 10% annually... GPRA d, e	HR records of employment departures / new hires	Each Year	Analyze # and % change of departures and hires of teachers at each district. (turnover rates)
<b>1c.</b> Reduce the Special Ed classroom teacher turnover rate ...10% annually... GPRA d, e	HR records of employment SE departures / new hires	Each Year	Analyze # and % change of departures and hires of Special Ed teachers at each district. (turnover rates)
<b>1.d.</b> Increase the retention of teachers by 15% annually ... GPRA c	HR records of employment departures	Each Year	Analyze # and % change of teachers retained at each district.

<b>1.e</b> By May 2026, each District will institute a pay for performance system ... GPRA e, g, h	Implemented Pay for Performance System	May 2026	Search for evidence and document implemented Pay for Performance System as indicated in grant application. Analyze to ensure fidelity and identify educators with highest effectiveness ratings.
<b>1f.</b> By May 2026, each District will institute a pay for performance system that rewards schools ... GPRA a, b, g, h	Implemented Pay for Performance System	May 2024, 2 districts; May 2025, 5; May 2026, all	Search for evidence and document implemented Pay for Performance System with rewards as indicated in grant application. Analyze to ensure fidelity.
<b>1g.</b> By June 2026, seven superintendents earn National Superintendent Certification GPRA g, h	Received AASA Supt. Certification	June 2026	Analyze # of superintendents receiving AASA National Superintendent Certification

<b>2a.</b> By June 2023, 9 additional teacher and three (3) additional principal supports will be added by each District.	Principal and teacher support systems	June 2026	Search for evidence and document implemented supports for teachers and principals as indicated in grant application. Analyze to ensure fidelity.
<b>2b.</b> By December 2023, analyze all Districts' current evaluation systems, pinpoint weaknesses, and suggest modifications. GPRA d	Implemented Evaluation Systems	Dec. 2023	Search for and document evidence of evaluation system analysis of weaknesses and modifications.
<b>2c.</b> Each Year 100% of supervisory staff will receive training in evaluation best practices, and each school will receive training in implementing and operating effective PLCs and Instructional Teams. GPRA e	Participant sign-in rosters and training evaluation forms of training	Each Year	Analyze # of trainings provided to 100% of supervisory staff trainings for schools related topics in this objective.
<b>2d.</b> By June, 2026, 100% of supervisory staff will obtain <i>RTB AK</i> project Evaluator Certification. GPRA g, h	Received Evaluator Certificate	June 2023	Analyze # of supervisory staff at each district receiving Evaluation Certification.

<b>3a.</b> Each year, conduct at least 10 trainings for principals and teachers on elements, strategies and practices of highly effective schools, ... using data to drive PD and instructional programs, professional learning communities ... GPRA e	Participant sign-in rosters and training evaluation forms of training	Each Year	Analyze # of trainings provided for principals and teachers on related topics in this objective.
<b>3b.</b> Each year, conduct at least 5 trainings for district-level staff, principals and teachers on Visible Learning ... GPRA e	Participant sign-in rosters and training evaluation forms of training	Each Year	Analyze # of trainings provided for district-level staff, principals and teachers on related topics in this objective.
<b>3c.</b> Teachers will complete micro-credentials	Records of certificates or badges earned	May, 2024, 20 teachers; May, 2025, 40; May, 2026, 100	Analyze # of micro credentials attempted and completed; analyze micro credential subject areas for relevance to PLC issues
<b>3d.</b> By May of each year, students attending the same school at least 170 days will make one-year gains in math and reading performance. GPRA a, g	MAPS, Dibels, AIMS WEB, AK STAR test scores	May of Each Year	Analyze # and % change PEAKS test scores to measure student math and reading gains.

(c) *Quality of the Management Plan (25 points)* The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

**Who We Are** Seven rural Alaskan school districts, Corwin Publishing, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) have cooperatively developed the *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaska Teachers (RTB AK)*. As a non-profit established in 1973, the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) serves as an umbrella for Alaska’s premier educational leadership organizations:

- Alaska Staff Development Network

- Alaska Superintendents Association
- Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
- Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, and,
- Alaska Association of School Business Officials.

ACSA will serve as *RTB AK* fiscal agent and project manager.

ACSA’s unifying purpose is to support educational leaders through professional forums, providing a voice that champions possibilities for all students and purposeful advocacy for public education. Members include superintendents and other central office administrators, university professors, elementary and secondary principals and school business officials. ACSA is also proud to administer the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), Alaska’s premier long-standing and highly regarded staff development resource. ACSA has directed a number of many large federal grants, including Gear Up and Alaska Native Education Program Grants, and several large grants from the Gates, Carnegie and Melon Foundations. Proven strategies will be used to assess the human resource needs for this grant and to put into action the timeline, actions, responsibilities and milestones for accomplishing our project objectives.

The Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), a department within ACSA, is the major provider of professional learning for Alaska’s teachers and school leaders and will manage much of *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaska Teachers* professional development. Close to half of Alaska’s teachers and school administrators participate in ASDN distance delivered and face-to-face professional learning programs each year (such as the annual Response to Intervention/ Multi-Tiered System of Supports (RTI/MTSS) Effective Instruction Conference in Anchorage), and all seven project partner districts are ASDN members. ASDN has:

- received national recognition over the past 37 years for providing training and technical assistance to Alaska’s highest need, lowest performing schools and districts

- more than thirty years' experience providing distance delivered and face to face professional learning programs in our seven project districts
- been the recipient of four national leadership awards from the National Rural Education Association, the National Dropout Prevention Center and the National Council of States on Inservice Education, and
- directed school improvement grant projects, valued at more than \$75,000,000, for the U. S. Education Department, as well as the Gates, Carnegie and Melon Foundations.

**Project Organization** *RTB AK* activities are closely tied to our seven partner districts and it is important to create a management structure that takes this into account. We will establish a *RTB AK* Project Management Team (PMT) that manages the project as a whole, and seven *RTB AK* District Coordination Teams (DCTs) that work to address the specific needs of individual districts.

The District Coordination Teams (DCTs) include representatives of the district Human Resources and Curriculum and Instruction Departments, two district-level staff, two principals, two teachers and the Project Director. At times the project evaluator joins them. This is the “boots on the ground” group that makes clear the district needs and capabilities in the areas of its HCMS and the Visible Learning professional development system. They assist with determining the near and long term activities schedule, gathering data needed to drive HCMS and professional development needs, ascertain effectiveness, selecting district staff interested and capable of becoming teacher leaders, serving as a sounding board for Performance Based Compensation Systems developed under this project, make PBCS recommendations to the School Board, and serve as sources of information to district and school staff. The Project Director’s role is to facilitate the discussions, troubleshoot any anticipated problems, and communicate to the consultants what professional development is desired and the timetable and

venues for its delivery. These latter tasks are very important, as the activities cannot overlap with subsistence calendars when some staff will be out hunting and fishing.

The Project Management Team (PMT) meets two times a month via Zoom and has as its members the Project Director, representatives from our key consultants (NIET; Corwin), evaluator, and one lead representative from each district. The PMT is charged with providing overall direction to the project, including managing the accomplishment of project goals and objectives; establishing coordinated activities to reduce project costs (such as having all seven districts participate in webinars at the same time), planning the year’s professional development master schedule, keeping track of process evaluation findings and making adjustments based on the findings, discussing and proposing solutions to any project speed bumps, forecasting professional development needs, matching consultants with that expertise to the needs, and sharing districts’ progress.

The chart below lists key project personnel and their roles. Resumes for all project personnel are found in Appendix B, pp. 2-16.

Project Personnel	Title	Project Role
 ACSA	Project Director	Coordinate all project activities; manages the work of external and internal project resources; liaison with USDOE TSL staff; manage the work of project evaluators and project sub grantees (NIET; Corwin); be responsible for submitting reports to USED; ensure communications with all project partners; chair <i>RTB AK</i> management team; and serve on the four <i>RTB AK</i> District Coordinating Teams.
 ACSA	Project Coordinator	Arranges meetings and webinars; produces project documents; handles correspondence; processes travel documents and billings; keeps necessary records (such as in-kind match); coordinates all project activities and

		meetings; arranges for graduate course credit; coordinates all project virtual training activities; serves as communication link to all project participants; documents project match provided by each project district and consultants; manages project expenditures.
National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)	Such as: [REDACTED], NIET Director, West Team, and [REDACTED] Partnership Coordinator	Provide direct support for implementation of NIET Best Practices Portal; work with districts to develop plans for school Instructional Leadership Teams, Teacher Leaders, and Professional Leadership Teams, and train to those plans; develop refined evaluation systems and PBCSs with district; enhance HCMS to improve retention numbers, especially for Special Education teachers.
Corwin, Inc.	Such as: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]	Visible Learning instruction, as well as key VL tenants, such as trust & self-efficacy, collective efficacy, learning equity and teacher clarity.
[REDACTED]	Superintendents of these school districts: Nenana Kodiak Craig Petersburg Kuspuk Nome Bering Strait	District Administrative and program contacts. Chair the <i>RTB AK</i> District Management Teams (DMT) and serve as District representatives on the <i>RTB AK</i> Project Management Team (PMT); work with district principals, teacher leaders and Professional Learning Communities; take a lead in improving the HCMS in their districts, craft possible PBCS with stakeholders, and navigate their possible use with School Board and Teachers' Associations.
NCSD, KIBSD, CCSD, PSD, KSD, NCSD, BSSD	School Principals	Provide support and leadership on-site at schools; support Instructional Leadership Teams, Professional Learning Communities and Teacher Leaders; support school level professional development; assist District level staff as they improve HCMS and PBCS.

Successful project management in partnership grants requires that specific tasks, responsibilities, timelines and milestones/benchmarks are clearly defined and agreed upon by all of the partners. Accordingly, the partners have developed and committed to the following approximate Timeline based upon the *RTB AK*'s scope of work. Each milestone has an associated person responsible and relates to an objective; these milestones will be used as a management tool to assess progress towards achieving objectives. Additionally, the program will use a Project Management Software (PMS) such as ClickUp or Microsoft SharePoint to further identify, assign and manage relational tasks, activities and due dates. The software is web-based and will be used by the project staff and school site staff to manage and complete all assigned tasks. Each year in July, the *RTB AK* Project Management Team will develop, review and update milestones for the next year based on progress in achieving objectives.

<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>COMPLETION DATE</b>	<b>DELIVERABLE</b>
Receive grant award notification	8/30/2023	USED GAN document
Notify districts, consultants and evaluator	9/01/2023	Correspondence
Set up project accounting system	10/01/2023	Accounting records
Evaluator refines evaluation design, develops protocols and information gathering schedule	10/01/2023	Evaluation data collection system; instruments
Publicize program and orient the seven participating school districts	9/15/2023	Media Tip Sheet, organization meeting notes
Consultants scope of work agreed to	Yearly	Signed contracts
Schedule and convene PMT and DMT project management meetings	PMT, 2x mo.	Meeting notes
Data Gathering: NIET HCMS, PBCS, Teacher Leader and PLC foundational data	First ¼ of each year	Analysis of raw data
Data Informed HCMS, PBCS, Teacher Leader and PLC expansion and improvement plans	First ¼ of each year	Action plans

Recruitment of Teacher Leaders	First ¼ of each year	Identification of Teacher Leaders at each participating school
NIET Training in <i>Five Steps of Effective Learning</i> for school Instructional Teams	First ¼ of each year	Professional Development Agendas
NIET Training of Teacher Leaders and PLCs	Each year, two times a year	Professional Development Agendas
NIET led initiative to improve district’s HCMS, PBCS	On-going	Record of Action Plan progress
Identify Superintendents seeking national certification; enroll in program; conduct program activities	Begin 1/2024; then ongoing	Enrollment records, reimbursement requests and certificates
Build Micro Credential catalog for teachers to access when seeking short term, competency-based skills training	Begin 12/2023; then ongoing	Catalog of vetted micro credential providers
Teachers use Micro Credentials as tools to build skills and knowledge	Begin 1/2023; then ongoing	Records of credentials obtained
HCMS and PBCS Action Plans initiated	Year 2, then On-going	Improvements to HCMS listed; existence of a PBCS in each District
Visible Learning PD Yr. 1: See PD Chart, pp. 40	2023/2024 SY	Sign-in sheets and agenda
Visible Learning PD Yr. 2: See PD Chart	2024/2025 SY	Sign-in sheets and agenda
Visible Learning PD Yr. 3: See PD Chart	2025/2026 SY	Sign-in sheets and agenda
Collect project performance data	On-going	Reports, spreadsheets, logs
Attend required federal TSL program meeting	Annually	Travel documents
Prepare and submit annual performance report	10/30 each year	APR
Plan for sustainability and integration into district norms and established practices	May, 2026	Sustainability Plan

(d) *Adequacy of Resources (30 points) The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:*

(i) *The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.*

There are several *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaskan Educators (RTB AK)* factors that impact system change and improvement. The first is the involvement of international level experts such as NIET and Corwin Press Visible Learning. Involvement of recognized experts of this caliber is scarce in Alaska’s rural districts. Our teachers and administrators are as sharp as others, and given the opportunity and challenge we know they will make the absolute most of it.

Second, looping back to the surveys we did as this project was planned (see Needs Section), we believe answering the needs that surfaced is absolutely going to result in systemic change and improvement. *RTB AK’s* District Coordination Teams have district and school staff representatives, and their presence will ensure *RTB AK* coordination with district short and long term goals. Finally, work product and professional development provided through *RTB AK* is comprehensive and extensive, as shown in the following charts:

**National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)**

Audience: District Office level administrators, principals, regular education teachers, special education teachers, specialists such as Literacy Teachers and counselors.

Performance-Based Compensation Support	Description	Time and Effort Detail
Designing performance-based compensation systems (PBCS)	Consulting support to include advising on compensation measures, cost estimates, and best practice recommendations regarding PBCS	4 days each district, all years
Implementing PBCS	Consulting support to include advising on implementation of PBCS	1 day each district, all yrs.

Evaluation Systems and Instruments Support	Description	Time and Effort Detail
Report and recommendations for strengthening evaluation implementation for each participating district based on evidence-based research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review current teacher and principal rubrics, policies, and artifacts</li> <li>• Review evaluation data management practices and systems</li> <li>• Review samples of principal and teacher evaluator feedback</li> </ul>	4 Days each district, Year 1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop individual recommendations report</li> </ul>	
Training on Evaluation Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-day training delivered virtually</li> <li>• Designed for district and school administrators</li> <li>• Virtual training is capped at a ratio of 1:20</li> </ul>	3-day training; 5 times in Y1, 2 times in Y2, 2 times in Y3
Annual Refresher on Evaluation Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-day refresher training delivered virtually</li> <li>• Designed for district and school administrators</li> <li>• Virtual training is capped at a ratio of 1:20</li> </ul>	1-day training; 3 times in Y2, 3 times in Y3

ILTs & PLCs to Support Delivery of Visible Learning Content	Description	Time and Effort Detail
Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) Training (Virtual)	<p>Audience: School Instructional Leadership Teams (Principals, other school leaders, and teacher leaders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify actions that highly effective administrators consistently engage in; self-assess in 4 key areas of instructional leadership.</li> <li>• Develop an understanding of the purpose and value of Instructional Leadership Team meetings.</li> <li>• Identify elements of effective ILT Meetings and describe their own responsibility in planning and facilitating those meetings.</li> <li>• Strengthen ability to monitor, support and continuously improve the quality of ILT meetings and their impact on teaching and learning.</li> </ul>	2-day training offered 3 times in Y1
Refresher Training: School Instructional Leadership Team (Virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training related to ILTs delivered virtually</li> </ul>	1-day training; offered 3 times in Y2, 3 times in Y3
Professional Learning Community (PLC) Training (Virtual)	<p>Audience: School Instructional Leadership Teams (Principals, other school leaders, and teacher leaders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to explain the purpose of Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings and documentation</li> <li>• Develop an understanding for how to plan and implement effective PLC meetings</li> <li>• Understand the structure for cluster meetings known as the Five Steps to Effective Learning</li> <li>• Plan a PLC meeting focused on teaching an area of the teacher evaluation rubric</li> </ul>	2-day training offered 3 times in Y1
Refresher Training: Professional Learning Community (Virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-day refresher training delivered virtually related to PLCs</li> </ul>	1-day training offered 3 times in Y2, 3 times Y2

On-going Virtual Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide quarterly ½ day virtual support for each school</li> <li>• Provide follow-up support as school leadership teams are implementing PLC and ILT meetings</li> <li>• Reinforce PLC/ILT best practices</li> </ul>	4, ½ day support sessions per school
<b>On-Site</b> Summer Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend and support delivery of content on-site at annual summer meeting</li> </ul>	2 days each year
<b>On-Site</b> District Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide 1 on-site support visit per district annually</li> </ul>	5 days each district each year

Educator Effectiveness Preparation and Support System (EE PASS)	Description	Time and Effort Detail
Introduce and train in NIET software that links evaluations to professional development	Training in web-based training portal to support professional learning; features include a resource and video library, data management tools, online evaluator certification, training modules, and NIET conference archives	Done as part of above trainings

**Corwin Press** provides Visible Learning professional development workshops to the same audience as NIET according to the following schedule. Project Years 2 and 3 provide similar training, but go into ever greater detail and each years’ training builds on what comes before.

<b>PROJECT YEAR 1</b>	<p>Audience: Leadership, Including Teacher Leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindframes for Visible Learning</li> <li>• Great Teaching by Design 1</li> <li>• Feedback for Visible Learning</li> <li>• Collective Equity - Workshop for Leaders</li> <li>• Mindframes for Belonging, Identities, and Equity: Fortifying Cultural Bridges</li> </ul>
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	<p>Audience: Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Visible Teacher Workshop for Visible Learning</li> <li>• Collective Equity Workshop 1</li> <li>• Teacher Clarity Workshop</li> <li>• Mindframes for Belonging, Identities, and Equity: Fortifying Cultural Bridges</li> <li>• Custom Focused Topic Workshop 1 (workshop content will be based on a district’s specific needs)</li> <li>• Mindframes Survey</li> <li>• School Capability Assessment</li> </ul>
	<p>Audience: Special Educators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Visible Teacher Workshop for Visible Learning</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Visible Teacher Workshop 1 for Visible Learning - Custom for SpEd</li> <li>• Foundations for Visible Learning - Custom for SpEd - Workshop 2</li> <li>• Teacher Clarity Workshop 1 - Custom for SpEd</li> <li>• Custom Focused Topic Workshop 1 (workshop content will be based on districts specific needs)</li> <li>• Custom Focused Topic Workshop 2 (workshop content will be based on a district’s specific needs)</li> </ul>
	<p>Audience – All Educators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTI/MTSS Conference Support</li> <li>• The Visible Teacher Overview (Training and Dissemination Activity)</li> </ul>

See Appendix L, p. 69, Visible Learning Training Plan for further details.

*(ii) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.*

RTB AK will leave each district with a well-stocked HCMS toolbox and well-trained staff. Competent staff using these research-based tools greatly improves the capacity of the entire district to meet the needs of teachers and students. Some of the tools:

Comprehensive HCMS	Embedded Professional Development
Teacher Leaders in All Schools	Evaluation Systems That Connect to Professional Development
Efficient Professional Learning Communities	Performance Based Compensation Models
Refined Evaluations	Teacher Career Ladder
<i>Visible Learning</i> Trained Teachers and Administrators	Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies, especially for Diverse Teachers
Nationally-certified Superintendents	Micro Credentials

A major reason we will build capacity in partner districts is the fact that we asked them in which HCMS areas they needed to build capacity before the proposal was written, and then developed a project that addressed those missing capacities. (See Appendix F, p. 42 for examples of completed surveys.) As we developed project content and activities in cooperation with the districts we returned to these surveys to ensure we were, in the language of the Continuous Quality Improvement gurus, “Doing the right thing, the right way, most of the time.” This understanding the problem before developing and taking actions to solve it is not a trivial effort; without defining the HCMS problems, our goals may be fuzzy and our actions superficial. Of course, in the 30 days we had to develop this project, even with the lessons learned of our previous TSL project to assist us (*Increasing Performance and Retention in Alaska’s Rural Schools*), the problems facing each district’s HCMS are not completely clarified at this point. That is why our Management Plan includes frequent meetings with the project’s District Coordination Teams’ administrative leaders and Teacher Leaders to discuss what is planned to be done and how it meets the needs of the district and its schools.

The number of educators to be trained in strategies and tools relevant to high quality HCMS systems is significant, and has a direct impact on districts’ abilities to improve schools and schooling. By the numbers *RTB AK* will serve 7 remote and rural school districts; 46

schools; 418 regular classroom teachers; seven superintendents, 62 special education teachers, 42 certificated support staff such as counselors and instructional coaches, and 32 district office educators who support teachers and schools. And, those educators receive training in-depth, as seen in Section (i), above, which research shows has a positive effect on teacher and student learning.<sup>xvi</sup> Studies also show that effective professional development programs require anywhere from 30 to 80 hours of instruction, practice, and coaching before teachers master new skills.<sup>xvii</sup> *RTB AK* gives participants this level of professional development each year for three years. Worth mentioning here is the positive effect on the capacity of the State's educational system: through this project we reach seven of the State's 53 school districts (8% of the total) and 46 out of 501 K-12 Alaska schools (9% of the total).

Also relevant are the lessons learned from another TSL project involving ACSA, ASDN, Corwin and NIET. *Increasing Performance and Retention in Alaska's Rural Schools (IPARS)* was funded during the last TSL cycle and serves four very rural, high need Alaska school districts. This is a successful project as proved by a rigorous independent evaluation, and strategies and activities in *RTB AK* reflect those evaluation findings. The Project Director, ( [REDACTED] ) one participating school Superintendent ( [REDACTED] Nenana), and a representative from the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching ( [REDACTED] , Western Region Lead) were invited to give a presentation on *IPARS* just last week at the annual TSL grantees meeting. Some lessons learned presented during that session and incorporated into *RTB AK*:

- Year 1: Attuning a staff to new ideas – take time to lay a foundation
- Year 2: Intentional professional development calendaring – do everything with a purpose clear to all
- Hold bi-weekly grant team meetings
- Summer Meetings: great value in face-to-face/cross district collaboration

- Year 3: Adjusting professional development based on staff feedback was very well received – be responsive to your customer!, and,
- Onboarding new staff over time needs to be addressed, as does sustainability moving forward.

We have included this PowerPoint presentation in Appendix M, p. 42.

Finally, our professional development approach promotes capacity-building in the districts. The majority of NIET and Corwin professional development is delivered virtually through distance delivered workshops and on-line classes. This accelerates the rate of professional development. While we think the optimum professional development is almost always done on site -and we do that as well- virtual delivery allows for more opportunities to interact with expert consultants because the number of contacts is speeded up. Too, this accelerated professional development of course means that increased amounts of content and knowledge can be shared in any given year.

*(iii) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model, and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.*

Each district has a strategic planning process that drives both short-term (yearly) and long-term (multi-year) budgets. Each District and our two consulting partners are committed to providing substantial Matching Funds (see MOAs in Appendix D, Match Intent and Ability, pp. 38-39) to the grant and to promote sustainability of the project through realignment of district expenditures.

**RTB AK Sustainability Strategies**

<b>Comprehensive HCMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upon completion of grant, a comprehensive research-based HCMS will become institutionalized in all districts, eliminating the need for external funding.</li> <li>• The districts gain the capacity to implement a fully-reconfigured, data-driven HCMS districtwide, beyond the grant period, that will fully inform human capital decisions.</li> <li>• Ongoing costs for HCMS software and maintenance hardware (which are not large) absorbed by the districts’ Technology Departments.</li> <li>• Investment in technology-based evaluation strategies reduces long-term expense of disposable materials through use of digital evaluation, teaching and learning tools.</li> <li>• Each district will work with unions and school boards to revamp the traditional pay system to include compensation practices that reward improved student performance.</li> </ul>
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<b>Educator Quality Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Districts will realign Title I, II, III and IV funds to sustain grant-funded strategies, including Instructional Leaders, Professional Learning Communities, upgraded evaluation systems, and staff professional development plans tied to evaluation</li> <li>• RTB AK selected models (e.g., Instructional Leadership Teams, Professional Learning Communities, Visible Learning) have initial professional development costs with minimal long-term sustainability costs</li> <li>• All digital professional learning will be recorded and available on-demand for future use</li> <li>• Travel expenses beyond grant period are negligible as most travel costs are associated with experts’ professional development; continuing education for maintaining skills is available through on-line platforms at little cost to districts, schools or individual educators.</li> </ul>
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Evidence of broad support for *RTB AK* is to be found in Appendix C(2), pp. 26-37. There reviewers will find letters of support from the Superintendents of each district plus NIET, Corwin Press, The Alaska Statewide Teacher Mentor Program and Alaska State Leadership Academy. The partnership Memorandum of Agreement, while it is focused on roles and responsibilities, also includes language supporting *RTB AK*. When in Washington, D.C. presenting at the annual TSL Grantees meeting in early June, we had the opportunity to talk to our congressional delegation about our current TSL project, *Increasing Performance and Retention in Alaska's Rural Schools*. They were receptive and interested in how our *RTB AK* services, outcomes and goals are designed to advance the Raising The Bar initiative in Alaskan schools. Representative Peltola and Senators Murkowski and Sullivan have sent letters to the Secretary of Education and TSL Group Leader supporting our proposed TSL project. (See Murkowski Letter, Appendix C(2), pp. 36-37)

The considerable amount of match provided by partners is also evidence of their support and commitment. The school districts contribute \$3,093,120 over three years, with NIET adding another \$306,750 and Corwin Press \$769,500. (See Match budget.)

Finally, the planning team for *RTB AK* included representatives from district and classroom-based educators, ensuring the project is based on their HCMS needs and includes practical and obtainable objectives and activities, thereby fostering buy-in by district administrators, teachers and principals.

*Raising The Bar for Rural Alaskan Educators (RTB AK)*

Addressing Absolute and Competitive Priorities

**Absolute Priority 1: Human Capital Management System (HCMS)** The *Raising The Bar for Rural Alaskan Educators (RTB AK)* project will refine the HCMSs in seven rural, isolated school districts serving low income students in high need schools. The improvements to the HCMSs proposed by *RTB AK* will, among other things, refine current evaluation systems to reflect fair measures of educator performance, based in part on student academic achievement, and provide our educators with high quality professional development based on needs linked to individual, school and classroom evaluations.

**Absolute Priority 2: High-Need Schools** Services are concentrated in high-needs schools. 41 of the 47 schools served by this project are high needs schools with 50 percent or more of enrollment from low income families, based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch subsidies.

**Competitive Preference Priority 1: Equitable Student Access To Educational Resources and Opportunities** (up to 5 points) Simply put, we pursue a Human Capital Management System that well serves students of all kinds and develops their educational experience accordingly. This means that no matter what a student’s background, language, race, economic profile, gender, learning capability, disability or family history, a district’s HCMS makes sure each student has the opportunity to get the support and resources they need to achieve their educational goals. *RTB AK* does this partly through the efficient delivery of professional development focused on high-quality instruction that reflects what research says really matters in student learning. Further, *RTB AK* realizes that teachers do not work in isolation and the resources and abilities of the school system to support this instruction is crucial to student

success. Finally, the engagement of Instructional Learning Teams and Professional Learning Communities makes this a collective and not a solitary effort. As a collective, we come together to learn about a shared equity framework, explore culturally fortifying practices, and discover strategies and tools to leverage our collective efficacy. See Appendix F: Optional FY 2023 TSL Competition Applicant Checklist, p. 93 for page numbers where this Priority is addressed.

**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning** (up to 5 points) This Priority is the essential element of the *RTB AK* project. We have objectives to increase the numbers of educators from traditionally unrepresented backgrounds, and to improve the retention of certificated, experienced and effective educators in high needs schools, especially those from traditionally unrepresented backgrounds. Activities that support these objectives include, with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, a review of each of our seven partner district’s recruitment, hiring and retention practices that support a diverse workforce. We also propose, with Visible Learning experts Corwin Press, activities that promote professional growth leading to advancement in the system, reward for performance tied to student learning gains, and opportunities for professional recognition through, for example, becoming Teacher Leaders. These come with incentives, some monetary, for teachers’ and administrators’ completion of professional development tied to student, school and district needs. See Appendix F: Optional FY 2023 TSL Competition Applicant Checklist, p. 93 for page numbers where all the above priorities are addressed.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>ii</sup> In: Carver-Thomas, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. At: [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjw6vz wNLpAhUBOn0KHcapAQIOFjACegQICxAF&url=https%3A%2F%2Flearningpolicyinstitute.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fproduct-files%2FTeacher\\_Turnover\\_REPORT.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2g8Lq3Zvw2jA0LTDx-SqVM](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjw6vz wNLpAhUBOn0KHcapAQIOFjACegQICxAF&url=https%3A%2F%2Flearningpolicyinstitute.org%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fproduct-files%2FTeacher_Turnover_REPORT.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2g8Lq3Zvw2jA0LTDx-SqVM)
- <sup>iii</sup> Wikipedia: Petersburg (2023). Available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petersburg\\_Alaska](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petersburg_Alaska)
- <sup>iv</sup> Garcia, E., Weiss, E. (2007) Education inequalities at the school starting gate. Economic Policy Institute (EPI), at: <https://www.epi.org/publication/education-inequalities-at-the-school-starting-gate/>
- <sup>v</sup> Available at: <https://education.alaska.gov/akedchallenge>
- <sup>vi</sup> Cano, M.V., Amor, H. B., Ashley Pierson, A. (2019). Educator retention and turnover under the midnight sun: Examining trends and relationships in teacher, principal, and superintendent movement in Alaska. Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, at <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=ED598351&id=ED598351>
- <sup>vii</sup> Weiss, C. (1997). Theory-Based Evaluation: Past, Present and Future. In D. J. Rog and D. Fournier (eds.), *Progress and Future Directions in Evaluation: Perspectives on Theory, Practice and Methods*. New Directions for Evaluation.
- <sup>viii</sup> Foster, R., Markley, D., Strand, J. (2016). *Professional Learning Communities Guide*. Published by the Tucson Unified School district. At <https://www.tusd1.org/>
- <sup>ix</sup> A brief explanation from Lesley University teaching department (uncredited) at: <https://lesley.edu/article/empowering-students-the-5e-model-explained>
- <sup>x</sup> This interpretation is supported by this research: H. Timperley, A. Wilson, H. Barrar & I. Fung (2007) *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education <http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/goto/BES>
- <sup>xi</sup> At: New Teacher Center. *New Teacher Center Mentor Practice Standards*. <http://info.newteachercenter.org/1/576393/2018-08-14/346x78b>
- <sup>xii</sup> Taylor M., McNicholas C., Nicolay C., et al (2014) Systematic review of the application of the plan–do–study–act method to improve quality in healthcare. *British Medical Journal Quality & Safety* at <https://qualitysafety.bmj.com/content/23/4/290>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Found at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement website: *Science of Improvement: Testing Changes* <https://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/HowtoImprove/ScienceofImprovementTestingChanges.aspx>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Deming WE (1986) *Out of the Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for Advanced Engineering Study xiii, 1991;507
- <sup>xv</sup> In, Boaden R, Harvey J, Moxham C, et al (2008). *Quality Improvement: Theory and Practice in Healthcare*. NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, 2008.

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<sup>xvi</sup> Yoon, K. S., Duncan, T., Lee, S. W.-Y., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. (2007). Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007–No. 033). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>

<sup>xvii</sup> Germuth, A. (2018) Professional Development that Changes Teaching and Improves Learning. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Teacher Leadership*. Available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1315523.pdf>