

NEtworkED: Creating Communities of Equity and Opportunity in Northeast Ohio

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ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1: HCMS or PBCS

The Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio (ESCNEO) proposes **NEtworkED**: Creating Communities of Equity and Opportunity in **N**orth**E**ast Ohio in partnership with four LEAs. This project will create a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) across 18 high-need schools in East Cleveland, Garfield Heights, Maple Heights, and Warrensville Heights. NEtworkED will expand and improve the Human Capital Management Systems (HCMS) and embedded Performance Based Compensation Systems (PBCS) at all participating schools in collaboration with their teachers, school leaders, and the public.

This project is focused on providing systematic support around strengthening existing HCMS at the network, district, school, and classroom levels. Professional learning will include communities of practice, leadership academies, instructional leadership teams, professional learning communities, and coaching. The NEtworkED NIC provides school and teacher leaders and teachers with a wider network of peers for impactful, job-specific collaboration and support. By focusing on the greatest school-related influencers on student achievement—recruitment, development, support, and retention of teachers, teacher leaders, and principals—the project seeks to elevate teaching and learning in every participating school and close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students.

This project builds upon the districts' current HCMS—putting effective, aligned human capital systems in place across the districts so that schools can improve individually and collectively. For individual schools, this project will ensure a high-quality HCMS that measures, identifies, and produces more effective teachers through robust evaluation and support systems. For the whole network, NEtworkED will provide all schools with consistent structures, data, and language so that schools can get better together. NEtworkED will have two types of PBC: stipends

for teacher and school leaders who are deemed effective, and recruitment and retention bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff areas. All PBC will use student outcomes as the key component.

Specific information about the proposed HCMS and PBCS, including how these systems reflect clear and fair measures of educator performance and provide educators with ongoing support and feedback for improvement, are provided in sections A and B.

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2: High-Need Schools

NETworkED's proposed activities are concentrated on teachers and school leaders serving in high-need schools. All 18 participating schools meet the TSL criteria of a high-need school (at least 50% free or reduced-price lunch [FRPL]). The average FRPL rate of participating schools is 96%, with half of the schools at 100%. A list of all proposed TSL-funded schools and the FRPL data supporting their designation as high-need is provided in section A and Appendix E.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1: Supporting Educators

Too often, recruitment, retention, and promotion are viewed collectively and addressed with overarching, broad strategies. These three critical human capital components are distinct and require differentiated approaches, tools, and systems. However, the approaches to these three components must be aligned in order to ensure coherence across district and school processes, and must be part of a broader strategic plan that considers the district's entire context and builds coherence across stakeholders and systems (Frantzen, 2018).

In order to recruit, retain, and promote highly effective educators, the districts in NETworkED recognize the need to implement a backward design approach (Bowen, 2017) by initially identifying and operationalizing the specific skills and attributes related to highly effective leadership. Given the impact that school and teacher leaders have on teachers (e.g. retention) and students (e.g. academic outcomes), their effectiveness is a cornerstone of this project (Learning Policy Institute, 2017; Grissom et al., 2021) (CPP 1a). While Ohio has evaluation systems and

frameworks for educators, NNetworkED recognizes that “effective” is insufficient. In order to significantly move student outcomes and address the unfinished learning from the COVID-19 disruption, these positions must be better than effective.

Tactically, NNetworkED provides an aligned approach to recruiting and supporting teachers and leaders across the career ladder through training (Leadership Academies, Aspiring Leaders Academies, Leadership Coaching, Problems of Instructional Practice [POIP], Role-Alike Communities of Practice) and support, as well as school-level systems (Instructional Leadership Teams [ILTs], Professional Learning Communities [PLCs], and Individual Instructional Coaching) (CPP 1a; CPP 1b). The NNetworkED approach to Leadership Academies, which focuses on creating a safe climate and culture in buildings, distributed leadership, and individual leaders’ POIP, is designed to increase the effectiveness of leaders and thereby increase teacher retention (CPP 1a). All leaders will receive role-specific upfront training, as well as ongoing Leadership Academies and inter-district peer coaching and support (CPP 1a). This integrated approach to implementing ILTs, PLCs, and coaching is based on evidence of these models’ effectiveness in facilitating educator improvement (Weiner, 2016; Stoll et al., 2006; Kraft et al., 2018) (CPP 1a).

All educators will participate in professional learning in either communities of practice or PLCs (CPP 1d). As part of these processes, educators organically group themselves around similar POIPs and utilize a research-based approach focused on the outcomes of all students. Through improvement science, these communities collaborate on more effective ways to support their most vulnerable students by identifying instances of “positive deviance” within the group (CPP 1d). This concept, described by Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004), asserts that all communities have members who utilize uncommon but effective practices to solve problems. The NNetworkED communities of practice and PLCs provide educators with the data-based tools and protocols to

identify, test, and then replicate the successful practices some of their educators are already using within their classrooms (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.) (CPP 1d).

One of the critical changes around districts' approach to recruitment, specifically for high-need schools, is to view recruitment as an ongoing process (CPP 1a; CPP 1b). As another tool to recruit teachers with certification in critical shortage areas, stipends are available for teachers and teacher leaders who work in these areas and demonstrate effectiveness (CPP 1c).

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2: Increasing Educator Diversity

Multiple studies indicate the positive impact of teachers of color on the academic and non-academic success of students of color (Fregni, 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Partee, 2014b). NETworkED has a two-pronged approach to recruiting additional teachers of color: external recruitment and an internal "Grow Your Own" (GYO) model (CPP 2a). The external focus recalibrates HR departments to approach recruitment as a year-round system to engage candidates via a multi-channel communication process. The district will utilize focus groups of pre-service teachers (specifically, pre-service teachers of color) to provide feedback on the district's website, social media presence, and recruitment collateral, as well to help the districts identify their key disconnects for attracting more teachers of color (CPP 2a; CPP 2d).

Simultaneously, partner districts will focus on more internal and sustainable levers to increase the number of educators of color. NETworkED districts will create a GYO model to provide a vertically aligned curriculum from middle through high school (CPP 2a). This approach scaffolds an introduction to teaching, the science of teaching and learning, the financial benefits of teaching (e.g. affordable healthcare, retirement pensions, etc.), and limited practicum experiences. The creation of the GYO curriculum will be collaborative across the districts and the courses will be a hybrid of in-person and virtual. Given the geographic proximity of these districts, the goal of the GYO is to create pipelines across the network (CPP 2a).

As part of NEtworkED’s focus on retention, promotion, and equity, the NIC will also create an Aspiring Leaders Academy specifically for educators of color (CPP 2b). Current leaders of color from across the NIC will collaborate to create the content and curriculum for this academy. As part of the two year academy, participants will connect with peers and mentors through on-site and virtual sessions, as well as engage in practice with a focus on curriculum and instruction (CPP 2b). Each district will use this academy to establish a cadre of prepared leaders as school-level administrative positions become available.

Equity is one of the foundations of NEtworkED. As a first step, early in Year 1, each district will conduct an external Equity Audit (CPP 2d). The audit will provide an outside perspective and a baseline on the districts’ current efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The audits will have a series of recommendations for steps the districts and schools can take to address the behaviors (e.g. bias and microaggressions) and systems (e.g. class assignment or quasi-leadership roles addressing student discipline) that often lead to higher turnover rates for educators of color and needlessly eliminate effective educators from leadership roles (CPP 2c; CPP 2d). The audit recommendations and the districts’ subsequent plans to address those findings will be incorporated into revised strategic plans and professional development offerings for teachers and administrators (CPP 2c). Leadership Academies provide another mechanism for professional learning for principals on creating an equity-centered culture and climate (CPP 2c).

One major component of the audit is an in-depth analysis of the HR processes and systems across the human capital continuum—from recruitment to retention to promotion (CPP 2d). This includes data analysis, beginning with tracking candidates all the way through the recruitment process in order to identify specific obstacles within the hiring process, especially for candidates of color or other historically marginalized groups (CPP 2a; CPP 2d). Regarding retention data, the audit will examine the patterns and trends in teacher turnover for the district (e.g. across schools,

is there more turnover for educators of color at one particular school or several schools indicating the need for further analysis on the climate and culture in those buildings) (CPP 2c; CPP 2d).

(a) Need for Project

(i) Identifying and addressing gaps and weaknesses (Application Requirement [AR] ii, v, vi)

Cleveland's First Ring

Our proposed district partners for this grant are East Cleveland, Garfield Heights, Maple Heights, and Warrensville Heights. These four districts were intentionally selected based on their shared needs and potential to benefit from this opportunity. The districts are part of the First Ring Schools Collaborative, an association of 16 high-need districts surrounding Cleveland. The average proportion of economically disadvantaged students across First Ring districts is 58% compared to 16% for Outer Ring suburban districts. The schools in this project have a 96% FRPL average (AP 2). First Ring districts include a high minority population with an average enrollment of 46% of African-American students compared to an average of 6% for Outer Ring districts. The schools in this project have a 96% average minority population (Ohio School Report Cards, 2019).

While the partner districts are geographically close in the region of Cuyahoga County, this has not always translated into networking and sharing of successes or impactful practices within the areas of teaching, leading, and learning that might be duplicated across districts, schools, and classrooms. Providing resources that allow for the identification and sharing of successful practices across districts and schools will support educators in their work and, most importantly, the students that these districts and schools serve.

The Unique Needs of Small Districts

This project includes only the First Ring districts with student populations of 3,500 or fewer. NETworkED has an intentional focus on these smaller districts as we know that they do not receive as much attention, resources, or funding opportunities as larger districts. Small districts

with high-need schools face unique challenges in recruiting, developing, and retaining human capital without the infrastructure to provide aligned resources and systems to support their educators’ growth, including coaching and content-specific PD. The NIC provides an opportunity for smaller districts to benefit from the professional learning and development that would be found in a large district, as well as the sharing of resources and best practices. Smaller districts do have inherent advantages over larger districts, including the opportunity for tight-knit communities and less bureaucracy (Johnson, 2006). NETworkED’s NIC concept provides the benefits of a larger district while maintaining these small-district advantages.

The Challenge of Human Capital

NETworkED builds upon the participating districts’ current HCMS to address their weaknesses and create a systemic approach that addresses how teachers are provided feedback and support and given opportunities to lead and advance (AP1). The table below summarizes the most significant human capital gaps and weaknesses that have been identified in our partner districts and how they will be addressed by the proposed project.

Need: Human Capital Management System	
<u>Gap</u> : Overall, the districts lack consistency and alignment in their HCMS. Currently, evaluators are not consistently identifying effective teachers, as evidenced by the high percentage of teachers rated effective or higher in all districts - 86% . Additionally, opportunities for professional development are not consistent, are not linked to building teacher capacity, and do not meaningfully align with evaluation.	<u>Strategy</u> : NETworkED creates a robust HCMS that addresses how teachers are provided feedback and PD, recognized, given opportunities to lead and advance, and given resources to help them succeed (AP 1).

Need: Recruitment & Retention	
<p><u>Gap:</u> All districts are struggling to recruit and retain effective teachers in high-need schools, especially teachers of color. In 2019, the average teacher turnover rate was 13% across partner districts. Research shows that the majority of effective candidates are hired by May 1 for the upcoming school year (Levin & Quinn, 2003); Maple Heights had 0% and Garfield Heights had only 20% of their hiring complete by May 1. Research also shows that hiring teachers after the start of the school year can have negative effects on student achievement and turnover rates (Papay & Kraft, 2016). Last year, the participating schools in Warrensville and Maple Heights still had positions open at the start of the school year. Teachers of color make up less than 6% of all teachers in Garfield Heights.</p>	<p><u>Strategy:</u> Recruiting and retaining highly effective and diverse teachers and school leaders is a key component of NETworkED. Each district will create year-round, multi-stakeholder, multi-channel recruitment and retention systems and will offer recruitment and retention bonuses. The annual regional recruitment event will also focus on recruiting/retaining more educators of color and will convene districts with HBCUs and MSIs.</p>
Need: Teacher and Principal Professional Development/Support	
<p><u>Gap:</u> Professional development and support for teachers is inconsistent (in type, frequency, and alignment to teaching expectations) and not job-embedded, leading to high turnover as teachers are not given the support needed to be successful.</p> <p><u>Gap:</u> While all districts provide some form of PD to principals, most are district-wide sessions that are not tailored to individual principals. Each participating district has at least one first year principal. None of the participating districts derive principal PD from needs that emerge in principal or teacher evaluations.</p>	<p><u>Strategy:</u> NETworkED teachers will have extensive, job-embedded PD opportunities. A coherent system of PD will be created that utilizes ILTs, PLCs, and on-going coaching (AP 1).</p> <p><u>Strategy:</u> School leaders will receive executive coaching and support through Leadership Academies. PD will be more closely aligned to teacher effectiveness and principal evaluation systems (AP 1).</p>
Need: Teacher Evaluation	
<p><u>Gap:</u> All districts utilize the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, a valid evaluation system that incorporates student achievement. However, there is a disconnect between teacher evaluation and student achievement. For example, in Garfield Heights 99% of teachers were rated as effective or highly effective while student proficiency is 32% in math and 43% in ELA. In Maple Heights, 80% of teachers were rated as effective or above while student proficiency is 31% in math and 41% in ELA.</p>	<p><u>Strategy:</u> While each district has a valid evaluation system, NETworkED's focus will be on calibrating evaluators to ensure inter-rater reliability for lesson analysis and instructional coaching. Our online platform will simplify observer calibration training, which observers will take quarterly (AP 1).</p>

Need: Teacher and Principal Performance Pay/Incentive	
Gap: None of the districts tie performance-based pay to student achievement or teacher/principal performance.	Strategy: Schools will use salary stipends for teacher leaders and recruitment and retention bonuses for new teachers (AP 1).

(ii) Building on related efforts

ESCNEO’s mission is to serve the needs of students and the educational community by supporting, collaborating, and partnering with local, regional, state, and national agencies and providing quality leadership, products, programs, and professional services. As one of the largest agencies of its type in the State of Ohio, ESCNEO serves 47 districts (and over 210,000 students) in northeast Ohio by offering the following services: fiscal management, contract services, direct program services, consortium and cooperatives, and interagency programs across many fields of education. As mentioned above, the First Ring partner districts do not always share best practices. ESCNEO serves as a bridge between these districts. This project will leverage and expand upon this existing structure to create a true collaborative network of educators in high-need schools.

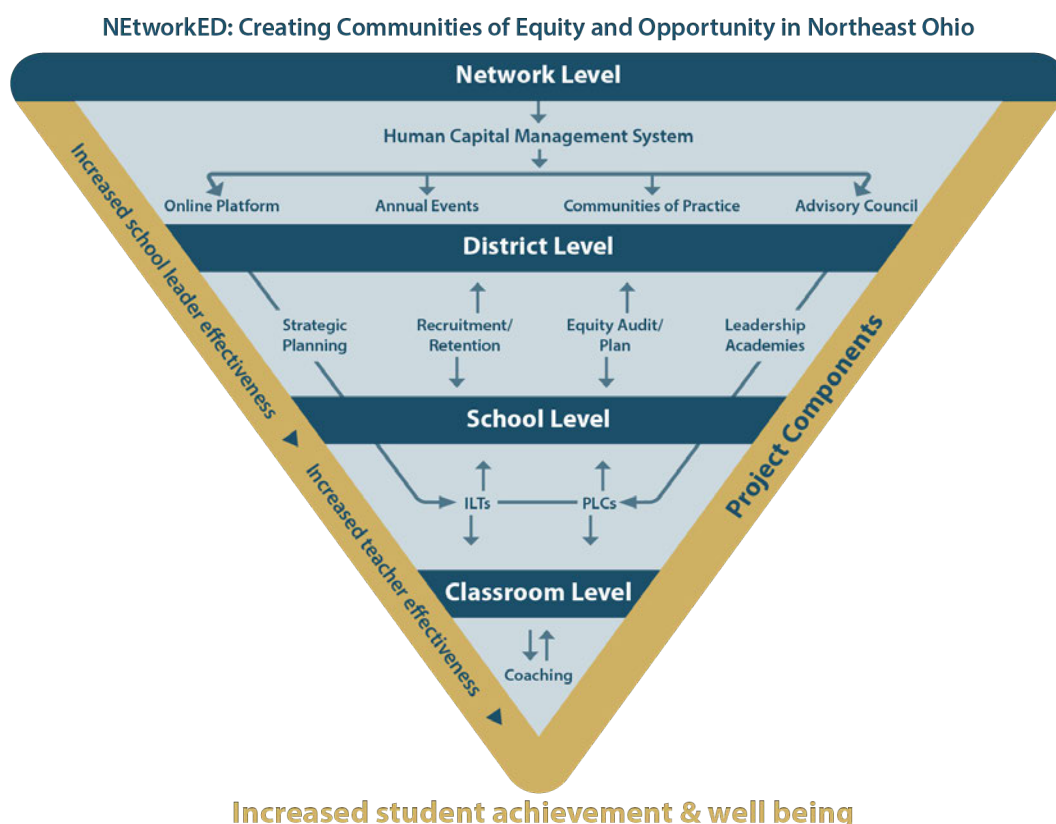
Each partner district utilizes the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) and the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES) for educator evaluation and Frontline to track this data. However, while each school has the components of HCMS based on the state systems, their current structures are too siloed and not aligned. NetworkED serves as a catalyst for weaving together funding streams and local priorities in order to redefine partner districts’ approach to human capital management and professional development (AP 1).

Each district will bring together different existing funding streams—including current local, state, and federal dollars—to integrate district priorities with the goals and processes of this project. While each of the districts have different funding structures, there are several common trends: all will incorporate Title I, Title II, Title III, and ESSER; two will utilize Title IV; and one

will utilize IDEA funds. These funds will allow the project to not only meet the matching requirements of the grant (as detailed in the budget), but also to prepare for sustainability (AR ix).

(iii) A comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

Our project takes a comprehensive approach and utilizes aligned and evidence-based levers with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning by leveraging human capital (AP1). The purposeful alignment of treatments and supports throughout NetworkED is a critical aspect of our logic model, which ensures the supports provided work synergistically rather than in silos. Isolated interventions often fail because they are seen as “add ons” to an already taxed system and individuals (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). An aligned, systems-level approach creates a feedback loop up and down the system, improving districts’ ability to operate as the dynamic interconnected organizations they are. Further, this alignment enhances the likelihood of sustainability and impact over time. This systems-level aligned approach begins at the NIC level with the HCMS.



NEtworkED’s Expanded and Improved Human Capital Management System (AP 1, AR i)

NEtworkED builds upon districts’ existing systems to create a robust HCMS that addresses: teacher and principal professional development, teacher and principal evaluation, recruitment and retention, teacher and principal PBC, and a career ladder.

Online Platform: All districts currently use Frontline to track qualitative and quantitative educator data, including classroom observations and student growth metrics. The data can be aggregated and disaggregated to provide content-area, grade-level, or project-wide trends or granular level data on specific educators to better inform PD. This project will also utilize a NEtworkED online platform to connect all educators virtually across the NIC, acting as the digital connective tissue for professional learning. PD activities—ILT meetings, PLC meetings, and instructional coaching—will be videoed and uploaded into the system to provide feedback for teacher leaders and as a quality control mechanism. The “Feedback” module allows educators to upload videos and receive either synchronous or asynchronous feedback from peers or a teacher leader, either within their school or in a partner school across the network. The “Calibrate” function allows schools to calibrate their observers around best practices, as well as to ensure inter-rater consistency among those observing and evaluating (AR iv). **Career Ladder:** The NEtworkED career ladder provides a trajectory that includes eligibility for additional compensation commensurate with additional work and responsibilities. In order to provide more leadership opportunities for teachers, NEtworkED will implement a career ladder of Classroom Teacher > Demonstration Teacher (DT) > Lead Teacher (LT). These teacher leaders will receive salary stipends and must be deemed effective on each district’s respective evaluation system, as well as on specific metrics related to their role in school-wide PD and support, in order to maintain their

positions each year. Unlike some traditional instructional coach roles, these positions will provide leadership across content, pedagogy, assessment, curriculum, data, and literacy with the singular purpose of building instructional capacity. The goal for the LTs and DTs is to work collaboratively with teachers to provide individual, relevant professional development at the school and across the network. The core responsibilities for each are described in section C.

Educator Evaluation (AR iv): NETworkED will use district evaluation data for teachers and principals to inform key HCMS decisions across all schools. All partner districts use OTES and OPES. However, each district acknowledges that the input data must be greatly improved to be more meaningful. All evaluation data will be housed in the online platforms and used to inform and drive HCMS decisions, such as hiring, retention, promotion, and dismissal. Student growth data (including baselines to track progress) will be the key component (at least 35%) of the teacher and school leader evaluation process. Given the current discrepancy between student performance and teacher evaluation, the HCMS pieces are clearly not aligned. Since a well-functioning HCMS is predicated on accurate inputs, calibration is one of the initial NETworkED milestones. The NETworkED online platform has a calibration section that administrators and teacher leaders will complete quarterly to ensure consistency in how they are identifying effective instruction. As part of the data collection and analysis of this project, each district's evaluation system will be reviewed annually and correlated to student achievement. Based on the correlation, districts will be supported in making any necessary changes to ensure their evaluation systems are fair, rigorous, valid, reliable, and objective processes to evaluate educator performance. ***Performance-Based Compensation:*** The PBC in NETworkED is focused in two areas. First, stipends for teacher and school leaders. The following roles would qualify for stipends based on additional

responsibilities if they are deemed to be effective based on local measures (including student achievement): principals, assistant principals, LTs, and DTs. Second, strategic recruitment and retention (RR) bonuses for teachers in hard-to-staff areas. Each district will have RR bonuses to offer to teachers who a) fill hard to staff areas and b) are deemed effective based on local measures (including student achievement). Districts may differentiate the weight of these stipends by hard to staff grades or subjects, providing local flexibility to fill needs at the building level. Given the balance of participating in an inter-district network while retaining local control, NetworkED leadership will work with each partner district to create the specific metrics for effectiveness and the exact amounts of PBC based on ESCNEO’s recommended amounts below.

Type	Metrics	PBC Amount
Administrator Stipend	Required: Student achievement at a minimum of 35%; Other possible metrics: evaluation data, survey results, student learning objectives, retention, other local (approved) metrics.	\$7,5000/year
Lead Teacher Stipend		\$5,000/year
Demonstration Teacher Stipend		\$3,000/year
Recruitment & Retention		\$5,000-\$10,000

NetworkED’s Comprehensive Support Systems (AP 1)

In order for the HCMS described above to have the intended effects on teacher practice and student achievement, we know that they need to be part of a comprehensive effort to change the status quo in participating schools. The following section provides a summary of the most notable project components/systems-changes that will occur as a result of this project.

NIC-Level Components

NIC: This project will create a “cross-school collaboration” or networked improvement community (NIC) across four districts and 18 schools, which is defined as a collaborative and structured network that allows individuals and groups to develop, test, and scale improvements,

and, thereby, accelerate learning (McKay, 2017). NETworkED will bring together district and school leaders and teachers into one cohesive network, allowing these small districts to benefit from the support and resources that would typically be found in a large district. The network will build capacity among districts and help facilitate the improvement of their staff. Significantly, these schools will use the same processes for strategic planning, recruitment and retention, leadership academies, PLCs, and coaching so that they can get better together. Connected virtually via the NETworkED platform, educators will learn from one another by engaging in professional development, giving/receiving feedback, and leveraging human capital inside and across schools and the community. The NIC will provide district and school leaders, teacher leaders, and teachers with a broader network of peers for meaningful, job-specific collaboration and content-based feedback to permeate across (not just within) schools, allowing educators to learn, share, and hone best practices in teaching and learning. The following are activities that will happen at the network-level. ***Annual Events:*** Bringing leaders from each district and school across the network together is necessary to establish or deepen educator connections. Network leaders will gather at an annual workshop to create a true sense of community, as well as to participate in professional learning. Districts will also convene at an annual, regional recruitment event, described below.

Communities of Practice: The NIC will provide all stakeholders with a broader network of peers for meaningful, job-specific collaboration. The following job-alike communities will form across districts: superintendents, assistant superintendents, HR directors, principals, and assistant principals. These communities will be peer-driven and formed around common challenges.

Advisory Council: This committee will be described in section C.

District-Level Components

Equity Audits and Equity Plan: In Year 1, each district will receive an external Equity Audit that will examine opportunity, access, and outcomes in five key domains: 1) Structures, Systems, and

Resources, 2) Culture and Community, 3) Racial Equity in the Educator Workforce, 4) Professional Learning and Personal Growth, and 5) Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning. The Equity Audit will examine policies, practices, culture, district data, curriculum and instruction, and will result in recommendations for districts to better meet the needs of diverse students and increase the diversity of staff, all with the intent of improving students' academic achievement and eradicating gaps. Through the launch of a district-wide Equity Team in each district, districts will use audit findings to develop an Equity Plan to guide district equity work in future years. ***Strategic Planning:*** As an early step in creating a NIC that is focused on the same goals and long-term thinking, ESCNEO will work with each district to update their strategic plans with priorities and goals aligned to the grant, including with their Equity Plan. This process will inform school improvement goals carried out by ILTs at each campus. A key goal of these plans is to integrate and institutionalize project components into ongoing school priorities and to ensure lasting success and program sustainability, including allocation of non-grant funds to project activities. ***Recruitment and Retention:*** NetworkED will support districts in creating year-long, multi-stakeholder, and equity-driven recruitment systems to attract and retain effective teachers to the schools that need them most. Each district will build a multi-channel, online, and in-person marketing campaign and create its own, context-specific resources. NetworkED will work with leaders to analyze their current recruitment efforts, including social media and websites, in order to create a detailed timeline for increasing the effectiveness of outbound marketing. NetworkED will also provide coaching and support around the interview process. As mentioned above, there will be an HR Director Community of Practice that will work together to create recruitment and retention systems in their own schools. Additionally, community participants will lead cross-departmental working groups in their schools to create their recruitment and retention systems. NetworkED's recruitment and retention efforts are centered around providing an equitable

education to the high-need students we serve by recruiting and retaining effective teachers of color. A centerpiece of this work will be the annual regional recruitment event, which will bring together NETworkED districts and leaders and students from local Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to establish school-university partnerships to provide a direct pipeline of educators of color. Importantly, each district will have the opportunity to meet with college students from nearby MSIs or HBCUs to gain valuable feedback on their recruiting materials, strategies, and incentives from prospective teachers of color, as well as to form relationships with these pre-service teachers. **Leadership Academies:** School administrators will participate in Leadership Academies that focus on the successful implementation of improvement processes. Academy content is informed by Problems of Instructional Practice (POIP) surfaced during PLCs and ILTs, ensuring that the new learning is relevant to impacting teacher practice, student achievement, and teacher and student social and emotional learning (SEL) at their school. There will also be a similarly structured Aspiring Leaders Academy for current teachers of color interested in moving into leadership roles.

School-Level Components

Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs): ILTs work to operationalize school-wide improvement goals, which are driven by and aligned to district-level goals articulated in the strategic plan. ILTs also identify guard rails for problems of practice for teacher-led PLCs. ILTs will be established at all NETworkED schools and ILT members across the four districts will receive training for leading instructional improvement efforts, promoting cohesion among members, and learning the process for managing instructional improvement efforts in authentic situations. **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** As ILTs surface challenges to achieving school-wide goals, teacher-driven PLCs will examine the root causes of those challenges related to classroom instruction and/or SEL and identify solutions that can be scaled across the school (and ultimately the NIC). This project

will utilize a systemic, data-driven PLC structure that guides educators in identifying the assets that can be leveraged and scaled for greater improvement.

Classroom-Level Components

Coaching: The impact of effective instruction on student outcomes is significant (Kraft et al., 2018). Coaching across NNetworkED is approached through two lenses: content and pedagogy. The school-based coaching from Lead Teachers (which is aligned to 21st century skills and OTES) is grounded first in pedagogy with appropriate connections to content, and the inter-NIC peer-to-peer coaching focuses on content with the additional lens of pedagogy. Using this dual approach will ensure that all teachers are engaged in both pedagogical and content conversations with multiple coaches. Given the impact of effective coaching, each ILT will create a Quality Assurance system for coaching to ensure it is routine, observed, and coached (coaching the coach).

(iv) Addressing the needs of the target population (AR v, vi)

Across the project, the average proportion of students receiving FRPL is 96%, with half of the schools at 100% (AP 2). Project schools are 96% students of color; however, only 28% of teachers across the project are teachers of color. Student achievement results across the network are low with 29% proficiency in math and 40% in literacy in 2018-19. However, teacher evaluation data shows 86% of teachers were rated effective or above, highlighting a discrepancy between how teachers are measured and how students are performing. Accurately identifying effective instruction is a common challenge across partner schools.

School	Student Pop.	FRPL % (AP 2)	Minority %	2018-19* Proficient Math	2018-19* Proficient ELA
East Cleveland City Schools (5 Schools)					
Caledonia Elementary	226	100%	99.1%	35%	42%
Mayfair Elementary	182	99.9%	99.5%	23%	31%

W. H. Kirk Middle School	236	99.9%	98.6%	15%	29%
Shaw High School	679	99.7%	99%	4%	23%
Prospect Academy	282	74%	99.3%	N/A	N/A
Garfield Heights City Schools (5 Schools)					
High School	1095	77%	87%	21%	43%
Middle School	859	97%	91%	20%	30%
Elmwood Elementary	345	91%	92%	36%	52%
William Foster Elementary	590	91%	90%	44%	47%
Maple Leaf Elementary	470	93%	91%	38%	45%
Maple Heights City Schools (5 Schools)					
Lincoln Elementary	424	100%	97%	N/A	66%
JFK	489	100%	97%	36%	44%
Obama	519	100%	98%	40%	36%
Milkovich Middle School	838	100%	98%	38%	33%
Maple Heights High School	1279	100%	97%	10%	28%
Warrensville Heights City Schools (3 schools)					
Warrensville Heights Elementary	638	100%	98%	62%	57%
Warrensville Heights Middle School	327	100%	99%	21%	32%
Warrensville Heights High School	496	100%	98%	14%	41%

**As there was no state test data for SY2019-20, SY2018-19 is provided as the most recent available data.*

Educator effectiveness is especially critical for economically disadvantaged and minority students who are disproportionately taught by the least experienced teachers in schools with the highest rates of teacher turnover (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Research shows “near-unanimous findings that the best teachers—those capable of improving student achievement—are not equitably distributed across the spectrum of schools with concentrations of high- and low-poverty students and schools with high and low concentrations of students of color” (Partee, 2014a). Consequently, this project focuses specifically on principal and teacher effectiveness as the levers to improve student outcomes (specifically high-need students) through a systemic focus on principal and teacher recruitment, development, support, and retention.

Identified Need: High Teacher Turnover Rates - Data shows that the highest need schools often have the fewest effective teachers and the highest rates of teacher turnover. In fact, turnover rates are 70% higher for teachers in schools serving the largest concentrations of students of color (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). All schools in NEtworkED serve 87% or more minority students with over half of the schools serving 98% or more minority students. In 2019, every project district exceeded the national teacher turnover rate of 8% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). ***Project Elements Addressing Need:*** 1) Systematic recruitment and retention 2) PLCs and coaching to provide meaningful support and collaboration 3) Career ladders to provide advancement opportunities with corresponding pay incentives.

Identified Need: High Principal Turnover - Almost one-third of the NEtworkED schools had a new principal within the last year and principal effectiveness is the second greatest school-related influence on student achievement growth after teachers (Grissom et al., 2021). ***Project Elements Addressing Need:*** 1) Leadership academies with job-embedded PD for current school leaders 2) Communities of Practice for collaboration 3) ILTs to facilitate effective distributed leadership.

Identified Need: Inexperienced Educators - Research consistently finds that schools with disproportionate shares of minority children employ teachers with lower qualifications than schools with fewer minority students (Carroll et al., 2000). The least experienced teachers are consistently concentrated in low income, high minority schools, yet evidence shows that access to a high-quality teacher can eliminate achievement disparities between high- and low-income children (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012). The partner districts' proportions of inexperienced teachers and principals are 11.7% and 10.6%, respectively. These districts often hire new teachers with no or less than five years of experience and then provide support through the state-required Resident Educator program (at a higher rate compared to the state average among districts) at an additional

cost to the district. These teachers then often leave after the professional license has been achieved. ***Project Elements Addressing Need:*** 1) Systematic recruitment and retention 2) PLCs and coaching to provide meaningful support and collaboration 3) Career ladders to provide advancement opportunities with corresponding pay incentives.

Identified Need: Lack of Diverse Teachers - The NetworkED districts on average serve 96% minority students. However, only 28% of NetworkED teachers are teachers of color. In Garfield Heights, there are only 10 teachers of color out of 270 certified teachers. Recent studies have shown the advantages of a teaching force that more closely resembles the student population (Gershenson et al., 2017), that children of color achieve more when they are taught by effective teachers of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018), and that racially diverse educators have a positive impact on educational outcomes for all students, not just students of color (Kress, 2019).

Therefore, one of the initial areas of focus for NetworkED is recruiting teachers of color and then providing the support systems to develop, promote, and retain them. ***Project Elements Addressing Need:*** 1) Systematic recruitment and retention focused on teachers of color 2) Regional recruitment event bringing together districts and MSI/HBCUs to increase the pipeline of teachers of color 3) Aspiring Leaders Academies for educators of color 4) Equity Audits and Plans.

Another mechanism for ensuring this project has the intended effect on high-need students is annual school reviews. ESCNEO will complete these reviews in Year 1 for baseline data and then each year throughout the project. These reviews will be asset-focused, and will also outline the schools' key challenges for having a greater impact on student achievement.

b) Quality of the Project Design

(i) Demonstrates a rationale (AR x)

NetworkED's project objectives are to: 1) Increase school leader effectiveness; 2) Increase teacher effectiveness; 3) Increase student achievement and well being for high-need

students; and 4) Create sustainable systems of continuous improvement for each of the previous objectives. As such, the NEtworkED theory of action/logic model is designed to improve outcomes for high-need students. The interventions begin with a focus on ensuring the **HCMS produces more effective teachers**. To do this, the project will create and enhance systems for: recruitment and retention (with a focus on teachers of color); professional development (PLCs and coaching); and instructional leadership (leadership academies and calibration). These inputs individually and collectively target the professional learning of all NEtworkED educators to drive improvement in educator effectiveness, as well as to provide the systems to accurately measure and identify educator effectiveness (AP 1). Once identified, NEtworkED will make sure **effective teachers are recognized and retained and equitably assigned to the most vulnerable students** to improve student achievement, and specifically, to improve the academic outcomes for economically disadvantaged students and students of color.

Our logic model (Appendix A), provides detail about NEtworkED’s specific resources, project components, outputs, outcomes, and measures. The research-based evidence behind each proposed support system is outlined below.

Expanded and Improved Human Capital Management Systems (AP 1, AR i): A strong and data-driven HCMS can significantly boost teacher and school leader effectiveness in ways that dramatically improve instructional practice and student learning (Odden, 2011). **Career Ladders (AP 1):** Stipends provided through the additional professional development responsibilities provide teachers with the option to remain at the school and in the classroom, while also advancing their salary and role. Career ladders are a proven strategy for increasing retention of experienced teachers (Partee, 2014b). **NIC:** The value of an inter-district NIC—especially for under-resourced small districts—cannot be overstated. NICs incubate innovation and accelerate

improvement as they enable participants to test new ideas and strategies in different contexts (Feygin et al., 2020). Additionally, research has found that NICs build the capacity of educators to manage complex problems and solutions in high-poverty districts (Pitcher et al. 2016). **Equity Audits and Plan:** For a district or school to provide an equitable, high-quality education, equity must “be present in all parts of the educational system, including environment and resources” (Skrla et al., 2009). Equity audits examine the “fairness of an institution’s policies, programs, and practices...that directly or indirectly impact students or staff relative to their race, ethnicity, gender...or other socio-culturally significant factors” (Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, 2021). These audits provide school leaders with clear and relevant data that should be used to help plan for and monitor school efforts to increase equity (Skrla et al., 2009). **Strategic Planning:** Successful organizations engage in strategic planning to be “more responsive to changing circumstances, underlying trends, and shifting demands” (Hu, Q., Kapucu, N., 2014). In education, researchers have found, “leaders must develop a district wide strategy for improving teaching and learning and then design and manage the entire organization in a coherent way that strengthens and supports the strategy” (Childress et al., 2007). **Recruitment and Retention:** The link between teacher quality and outcomes for students has been well established by recent research (Kraft et al., 2018). Further, teacher quality has a greater impact on student outcomes than any other factor, including race, socioeconomic status, and prior academic record (Schmidt et al., 2017). TNTP identifies four broad teacher retention strategies: feedback and development, recognition, responsibility and advancement, and access to additional resources (Jacob, Vidyarthi & Carrollo, 2012). They also assert that teachers who experience at least two of those strategies plan to teach in their schools for twice as long. Given the high financial costs of teacher turnover

to districts, the negative impact on student learning, and the promise of retention strategies in getting great teachers to stay (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), there is a high-stakes imperative to improving the HCMS across NETworkED schools so that they robustly address how teachers are supported and retained. **Leadership Academies:** Both new and veteran school leaders need training and coaching feedback aligned with self-identified areas of focus. Mitgang and Gill (2012) state, “Getting pre-service principal training right is essential. But equally important is the training and support school leaders receive after they’re hired.” Research shows that leadership academies “develop school leadership capacity to build and nurture school settings that encourage teacher retention” and “have been found effective in developing leaders who both support effective teaching and enable stronger student learning” (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). **ILTs:** ILTs not only set the vision and goals, but as a cohesive group of leaders, they proactively, efficiently, and regularly work through issues that impede progress so that real student growth can be achieved (Wickman, 2011). **PLCs:** Job-embedded PD is key to teacher growth. This type of PD results in increased collaboration among staff, makes common goals more tangible, and reveals higher quality solutions to instructional problems (Hirsch & Killion, 2007). In this project, all schools will use a PLC model for their embedded PD. PLC models are proven to improve teacher practice and research shows that this project’s PLC model leads to a shift in professional culture including an increased openness to collaboration and sharing of practices, which ultimately benefits students. In one study, 92% of teachers reported increased collaboration with peers (AIR Survey Data, 2018). **Coaching:** A recent meta-analysis from researchers at Harvard and Brown University found that one-on-one coaching is the most impactful type of PD to move student achievement (Kraft et al., 2018). When school-based PD is also supported by

coaching, improved student achievement is more likely (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Coaching has also been linked to teacher retention among early-career teachers (De Jong & Campoli, 2018).

ESCNEO's Prior Experience Developing and Implementing these Activities

ESCNEO has extensive experience developing and implementing similar projects and activities across Ohio. ESCNEO supports 47 districts, often serving as an administrative and fiscal agent for programs and services. It partners with more than 100 national and statewide agencies, institutions of higher education, non-profits, and businesses to provide innovative learning opportunities. Importantly, ESCNEO has been awarded multiple state funding opportunities where it serves as the lead agency in coordinating and convening other ESC and community partners. Closely aligned to this project, ESCNEO was awarded a state grant to build an initial framework for the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) HCMS website to be shared with educators statewide. This grant culminated in the creation of a HCMS toolkit and website. ESCNEO continues to support the ODE in building programming and resources around HCMS. ESCNEO was also awarded a multi-year state grant focusing on supporting districts in recruiting and retaining teachers, as well as fostering GYO programs within each participating district.

(ii) Relevant literature, plan for project implementation, and methodological tools

Literature Review

Research emphasizes the importance of teacher and leader quality for student success. Studies indicate that “among school-related factors, teachers matter most” for students’ academic and non-academic outcomes (Oppen, 2019; Doan, 2019). Principal effects on student learning are nearly as large (Grissom et al., 2021). A racially diverse educator workforce is also essential. There is much evidence that teachers of color positively impact the academic and behavioral

outcomes of students of color, while benefiting all students in a school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Partee, 2014b; Partelow et al., 2017). School leaders of color are associated with improved school outcomes such as lower suspension rates and more equitable representation of students of color in gifted courses (Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2015).

Effective educators matter greatly for students, but not all students have access to them. According to Partee (2014a), schools that serve high concentrations of students of color and students living in poverty “get less than their fair share of the highest-performing teachers.” One study suggests that if students in low-income, high-minority schools were to have three years of consistent access to high-quality teachers, it would eliminate achievement disparities between high- and low-income children (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012). This remains a challenge because teacher turnover is 50% higher in Title I schools than non-Title I schools and 70% higher in schools serving mostly students of color compared to majority-white schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Principal turnover is also higher at high-poverty schools compared to the overall rate (21% vs. 18%) (Levin et al., 2019).

NETworkED seeks to ensure students have access to diverse, high-quality educators through evidence-based strategies to improve educator effectiveness and retention. All of NETworkED’s activities draw upon research indicating they are likely to succeed. ILTs, PLCs, and instructional coaching have all been identified as effective supports for teacher improvement (Weiner, 2016; Stoll et al., 2006; Kraft et al., 2018). Career ladders and leadership academies are proven strategies to enhance advancement opportunities for teachers and encourage retention (Booker & Glazerman, 2009; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). HBCU-district partnerships have been cited in the literature as a promising approach to increasing teacher diversity (Underwood et al., 2019). Equity audits identify racial disparities among teachers and ensure the equitable distribution of effective teachers remains a priority (Skrla et al., 2009).

NEtworkED also promotes school leader effectiveness and diversity as principal quality is strongly associated with teacher satisfaction and retention (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

Finally, NEtworkED is—at its essence—a NIC, and a growing body of evidence indicates that NICs are an effective model for “sustaining collective attention on progress toward common goals” (Bryk et al., 2011). The NIC will facilitate job-alike collaboration across schools, which research suggests will benefit school leadership, teacher instruction, and student learning (Drago & Pecchia, 2016; Ermeling, 2010; Poulos et al., 2014).

Plan for Project Implementation

NEtworkED’s implementation plan and detailed timeline are provided in section C.

Appropriate Methodological Tools

All of the formative survey tools described below (e.g., TELL, TRIPOD, PLC-R (modified), BIPOC educator survey) have been validated, approved, and/or utilized previously in the specific context of Ohio public schools. The interview and focus group protocols for PLC members and BIPOC educators have been used by our external evaluator in other studies examining issues of BIPOC educators’ experiences and trajectories and teachers and administrators’ PLC experiences and related outcomes in TSL-funded schools in other locations. The other summative evaluation tools (e.g., Ohio State Testing, graduation rates, the TSL PMs, etc.) are grounded in state-, district-, and school-level data and reporting and thus will ensure reports will support continuous improvement aligned with specific contextual needs and goals.

(iii) Methods of evaluation (AR xi)

ESCNEO and partner districts will cooperate in any program evaluation conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, as well as engage [REDACTED] of the University of Connecticut (see Appendix B for resume) to implement a robust, adaptive external evaluation based on the program logic model (Appendix A). The evaluation will also be tightly coupled with

NETworkED's theory of action for continuous improvement that reform must build capacity across the system (i.e., human, material, organizational and structural) and both formative and summative data must be collected for ongoing enhancements. This orientation, and the elements of the logic model (i.e., Evaluation and Data Use, Educator Pipeline Enhancements, Developing Instructional and Leadership Capacity) guide the evaluation plan. Below we provide insights into the operationalization of our theory of action to provide formative information for ongoing enhancements to program elements and implementation as well as external reporting capturing the more summative aspects of program implementation. The evaluation plan is designed around the TSL Performance Measures (TSL PM) which are referenced below where applicable. NETworkED will utilize the TSL PM in order to gauge implementation progress and determine project impact.

Evaluation and Data Use: Formative measures will focus on changes to educators' views regarding data use and equity and will be captured by internal program review documents (i.e. annual school reviews) as well as in the creation and implementation of the Equity Plan. We will also utilize the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Ohio Teacher Survey, already available to school districts, to capture teachers' changing perceptions regarding data use and evaluation. Finally, we will use the Tripod Seven Cs student survey (state of Ohio contracted) to capture students' perceptions regarding school climate, equity, and their socio-emotional well being. These surveys will be deployed twice per year to evaluate change over time and the data will be fed into the yearly program reviews to support continuous improvement, as well as the Equity Plan. Summative measures will be collected at the end of each year and will be reported to schools and other appropriate constituencies in the summer. Focusing on student achievement outcomes, we will conduct analysis on year-over-year disaggregated student performance using the NWEA MAP, state end-of-course assessments, and student graduation rates. We will also look at the percentage of teachers and leaders within the participating districts and TSL-funded schools

who show improvement each year on the student growth component of their OTES and OPES evaluations (TSL PM b, c). Per the Equity Audit, we will also collect data on the distribution of teachers rated as effective across students' demographic and performance outcomes, as well as gap closure over time and other forms of disproportionality.

Educator Pipeline Enhancements: Formative measures focused on evaluating the quality of the HCMS and PBCS will again include program evaluation tools to be conducted by school and district personnel, as well as Project Coaches. This will include tracking the percentage of teachers and school leaders at the school level for whom evaluation ratings were used to inform decisions regarding recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, dismissal, professional development, tenure, promotion, or all of the above (TSL PM d) as well as the percentage of teachers and school leaders within the TSL-assisted schools rated effective or higher by their districts' evaluation and support systems (TSL PM a). Additionally, and as a key priority of the grant, we have created a more in-depth approach to our formative evaluation of diversifying the teacher and leadership pipeline. Specifically, we track the number of BIPOC identifying teachers and administrators, and those from other traditionally marginalized groups, across their professional trajectory and survey them regarding their pipeline experiences. We will also conduct yearly focus groups with select BIPOC educators across schools to gauge the effectiveness and impact of DEI pipeline efforts. This information will support refinement of the Equity Plan and strategic planning moving forward. For the summative aspects of the evaluation, we will collect the same student data (TRIPOD survey and achievement outcomes), but will disaggregate the information by student demographics and compare this information to BIPOC educator data. The goal in this case is to see whether and how BIPOC teachers' experiences in their schools and the degree of representation in the schools are reflected in the experiences and outcomes of BIPOC students within them. As a further check, each year we will also collect and analyze disaggregated data by

race, gender and, when available, disability status, associated with the number of: (1) teachers receiving performance compensation (2) school leaders receiving performance compensation and (3) teachers receiving performance compensation for leadership responsibilities (TSL PM g,h,i). Together this information will help us see both whether and to what degree the schools are retaining, promoting, and rewarding diverse, high-quality educators.

Developing Instructional and Leadership Capacity: Formative assessment tools will measure the degree to which teachers and administrators find PLCs to be effective and supportive of a collaborative culture oriented towards accountability and enhanced practice. We will deploy the PLC-R, a validated assessment of PLC functioning in the first quarter of each year, starting year two (i.e., once implementation is fully in place). As a follow up, select teachers and leaders from high-performing PLCs will engage in focus groups to capture and share best practices. Program evaluation tools regarding implementation of the PLCs and ILT will also be deployed. The TELL survey (already being collected), will be used to evaluate whether and to what degree teachers leaders' and administrators' skills improve over the course of the leadership academies. Beyond the student-level outcomes and links between student growth and evaluations, we will collect data on the percentages of teachers and school leaders within the participating districts and TSL-funded schools who earned PBC based on their individual evaluation rating (TSL PM e, f).

Performance Feedback and Periodic Assessment: The entire evaluation structure is meant to support performance feedback and periodic assessment of progress towards intended outcomes. We will capture formative and summative evaluation data on a year or twice yearly basis to address each program component. This information is then directly fed back to district- and school-level staff, who with coaching and support, integrate the data into their ongoing planning and implementation efforts. Additionally, and as illustrated in the project timeline in section C, the evaluation team will provide ongoing reports of: descriptive statistics for those data collection

measures (teacher and student surveys including TELL and Tripod and later, in year two, the revised PLC-R) that will be deployed at the beginning of the school year; early findings regarding the focus groups associated with BIPOC teachers experiences; the workings of the PLCs will be provided mid-year; and end of school year reports with comparisons and relevant descriptives per the key TSL PMs. Results from each of these evaluation elements can then be used to inform the ILT and its initiatives, the district HCMS, Equity Plans, and strategic planning more broadly. In these ways, the evaluation system works to engage in the type of data-driven decision-making and constant evaluation and improvement that the program components aim to instill and will help to ensure that all students receive the highest-quality instruction and achieve their potential.

Reporting: As one evaluation goal is to support the continual improvement of program implementation, the evaluator will engage in regular reporting to ESCNEO regarding ongoing findings from data collection efforts. This will include memos with descriptive statistics post survey deployments and other qualitative data collection efforts (e.g., focus groups) and a yearly comprehensive report across all evaluation measures (end of year summary report). These reports will be shared with the public on-line with lessons learned extracted and supported as a series of briefs across the program components. At the end of each of the three years and in-between based on the robustness of the data and its contribution to the field, the evaluation team will also produce formal publishable quality research articles to a series of conferences to share with other researchers and practitioners alike (e.g., AERA, ASCD, UCEA, etc.).

(c) Quality of the Management Plan

ESCNEO recognizes the additional layer of complexity for effectively managing a project implemented across multiple districts. Given this challenge, NetworkED's management plan includes a combination of project-level and school-based positions to effectively and efficiently

support the project and ensure fidelity of implementation, as well as an Advisory Council (AC).

Below are descriptions of key NEdNetworkED positions followed by the project timeline. Provided in Appendix B are job descriptions for all positions, including project responsibilities and relevant selection criteria; a diversity recruitment plan; and resumes for identified key personnel.

Project-Level Positions - *Project Director (PD)*: The PD will provide oversight, management, and leadership for the project and serve as the primary point of contact with the US Department of Education and across all partner districts. The PD will manage the daily implementation of the project and establish and facilitate the AC. The PD will work to ensure alignment of the grant objectives and initiatives to each partner district's strategic plans. The PD will use routine cost-control mechanisms, as well as systematic review of any project costs to ensure alignment to detailed work and budget planning. Each quarter, the PD will present budget updates to the AC. Additionally, the PD will provide sustainability support and training to district-level leaders and board members. [REDACTED], the Director of Operations and Development at ESCNEO, will serve as 100% PD on this project. Jennifer has extensive grant and project leadership experience and has supported districts with fiscal planning data, collection and research, and educational budget and policy review. Additionally, Jennifer has experience delivering the interventions outlined in this project and has worked with districts across Ohio to implement them with fidelity.

***Principal Investigator (PI)*:** The PI is responsible for overall performance management and executive-level guidance. The Principal Investigator provides oversight for the PD. The PI will leverage their extensive experience to help solve the most complex problems that arise over the lifespan of the project. The PI also maintains a focus on sustainability to ensure the work established throughout the life of this project outlives the grant funding. *Michele Shrefler* will

serve as the project's PI. Michele oversees ESCNEO's Educator Quality Programs Department, working with educators and districts on implementing state/local initiatives related to educator effectiveness and student learning. Michele has extensive experience overseeing the key elements of this project in Ohio districts, including teacher and principal evaluation systems, HCMS, PD, and coaching. Michele will provide 20% of in-kind support. **Grant Manager (GM):** A 50% GM will provide overall day-to-day support for the entire grant. The GM will directly report to the PD and work with districts on budgeting, reimbursement requisitions, and data collection. The GM will also serve as point for the administrative and operational support across the project, including preparation of internal and external project reporting and managing partner district adherence to direct cost and matching funds budgets. *Melissa Adipietro*, ESCNEO's Program Specialist, will serve as the GM. **Project Coaches (PCs):** PCs will serve as a coach and thought partner for school leaders by providing day-to-day support in the planning and implementation of project strategies. There will be a PC in each district to focus on providing support, coaching, and professional development to teacher and school leaders. The PC will be instrumental in assisting school leaders in identifying a specific POIP, facilitating and supporting the Leadership and Aspiring Leaders Academies, and aligning the grant strategies with school-level goals and priorities. The PCs will also serve as a coach and thought partner for the school-based Lead Teachers by assisting them in outlining and meeting ambitious teacher performance goals, preparing and executing high-quality, innovative teacher support, and providing effective professional development for teachers. NetworkED will have four 50% PCs, with one assigned to support each partner district. These roles will be filled by *Kathy Clingerman Dann*, *Bob Glavan*, *Gretchen Lawn*, and *Lea Travis*, all ESCNEO consultants with experience supporting these specific districts.

School-Based Positions - *Lead Teachers (LT)*: LTs serve as an instructional coach focused on providing teachers with on-site day-to-day support in the planning, implementation, and assessment of effective classroom instruction. As such, LTs will provide instructional coaching, job-embedded professional development, co-planning (e.g., strategic design, curriculum, assessment), data analysis, and demonstration lessons. The IFs will lead PLC meetings and coaching in their school. ***Demonstration Teacher (DT)*:** DTs will serve as the model for equitable, rigorous, and effective instruction. DTs have one singular area of focus: plan and teach exemplary lessons for classroom visits. The DT's classroom will demonstrate live examples of high-leverage instructional practices. Following vetting by the LT, select lessons will be recorded and uploaded to the NETworkED online platform to be shared across the network.

Advisory Council (AC): In order to balance cross-district collaboration while retaining local control, NETworkED will utilize a quarterly AC composed of the superintendent and one board member from each district, the PD, PI, and External Evaluator. It is essential to have a board member engaged in the project for sustainability. The AC is critical as the initial glue of the NIC and for long-term sustainability. This Council will serve as quality control for project implementation across partner districts and schools. Each meeting will consist of programmatic, fiscal, evaluative updates, questions, and outstanding items for decision. The AC is designed to be a mechanism of support for the districts and schools and to make decisions on local, contextually specific items. This structure will enable local ownership of the goals and initiatives of the grant and create the stakeholder buy-in and leadership necessary to sustain the work.

The following timeline illustrates how we will achieve the objectives of the proposed project (provided in section B) on time and within budget (AR vii).

Legend: PD – Project Director; PI – Principal Investigator; GM – Grant Manager; PC – Project Coach; EE – External Evaluator; TA – Technical Assistance Provider.

Project Activity	Person Responsible	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Establish the Advisory Council to meet quarterly	PD												
Work with each district to create specific metrics for effectiveness at every level	PD, PC, EE												
Create a process for collected data needed for the project	EE												
Create multi-channel communication campaigns for year-round recruitment	PD, PC, TA												
Cross-departmental working groups established in schools to create recruitment and retention systems and carry out year-round activities	PCs												
Develop training on fiscal management and processes of TSL grant for partners	GM												
Each schools PBC metrics approved by Advisory Council	PD												
Equity Audit conducted and Equity Plan developed	PD, TA												
Ensure all districts have strategic plans in place that are aligned to project outcomes; amend strategic plans as necessary	PD, PI												
Post and hire Lead and Demonstration Teachers	PD, PC												
Provide ILT, PLC, and Coaching bootcamp training to all districts	TA												
Provide access to the NETworkED online platform for all teachers	TA												
Regional recruitment event with MSIs and HBCUs	PD, PC, TA												
Creation and implementation of network Grow Your Own model	PD, PC												
Communities of Practice convene	PC												

Begin ILTs, PLCs, and coaching in all schools	PD, PC													
Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leaders Academies	PD, PC													
Calibration activity for leaders, teachers, and coaches	PD, PC													
Annual NIC workshop	PD, PC, TA													
Conduct annual school reviews for baseline data and implementation fidelity	ALL													
Deploy and then report on Teacher and Student Climate Surveys	EE													
Deploy and then report on survey for PLC functioning	EE													
Engage in focus groups for BIPOC teacher pipeline data collection and report early data via memo	EE													
Engage in focus groups for PLC functioning and report early data via memo	EE													
Summative data culling, cleaning, analysis, and reporting	EE													
Annual evaluation report	EE													
Present the activities and preliminary results from the project at relevant conferences and journals	PD, EE													
Creation of Sustainability Resources and Systems of Sustainability	ALL													
Gradual Release Model: ILT	PD, PC													
Gradual Release Model: PLC	PD, PC													
Gradual Release Model: Coaching	PD, PC													
Gradual Release Model: Recruitment and Retention	PD, PC													
Prepare/submit high-quality, data-rich Annual Performance Report to USDOE	PD, GM													

(d) Adequacy of Resources

(i) Likelihood to result in system change or improvement

Because our project focuses activities at every level of the education system—network, district, school, principal, and classroom—system changes and improvements are expected. The NETworkED logic model (Appendix A) clearly outlines the researched-based interventions that are designed to impact student achievement. Further, the logic model is structured around the key capacity areas necessary to transition successful aspects of the project into system-wide improvements both during and beyond the grant period. We are also ensuring this project has the intended effects by closely monitoring project implementation and impacts through annual school reviews and an ongoing external evaluation—and then adjusting accordingly.

The initial project period has a scaffolded set of goals and milestones for each of those years. In Year 1, the focus is on creating the network connections and human capital systems described above. Year 2 has a dual focus of implementing the new systems with fidelity and creating resources to be utilized across the network to provide the critical elements needed for Year 3. The focus of Year 3 is growing the network both in terms of sustainability and impact, recognizing that the critical assets for expansion are results, resources, and cost. The NIC expansion will rely heavily on the evaluation results to determine which aspects of NETworkED are having the intended effects on teacher and student improvement and which should be changed. Following Year 3, the focus of expanding the NIC will be to other smaller districts in Ohio who share the same struggles with limited resources.

As mentioned above, ESCNEO has extensive experience implementing the same system changes of NETworkED in school districts across northeast Ohio with positive results; therefore, we expect system change and improvement from NETworkED. Specifically, ESCNEO has extensive experience providing macro-level supports across Ohio districts. ESCNEO's prior work

with similar projects demonstrates that ESCNEO has successfully changed and improved HCMS systems, and will continue to do so through the NETworkED project.

(ii) Likely to build local capacity

The inherent design of NETworkED is about changing systems. Changing systems is a capacity building endeavor as it creates sustainable improvement that remains beyond the individuals currently in the system (Stoll, 2009). Data will be central to the examination of efficacy of each system-level change. The project evaluation will track implementation data, which will help both the project team and district administrators determine implementation strength and estimate whether the intervention is likely to achieve its intended effect.

The project leadership team will utilize a Gradual Release Model (GRM) with schools to ensure effective knowledge transfer across the second and third year of the project (Fisher & Frey, 2013). The GRM is intentionally designed to build the local capacity necessary to sustain the project and its impact on high-need students. As the project focus evolves during Years 1-3, the project-level team will shift responsibility for and ownership of the activities to participating districts: in Years 1 and 2, ESCNEO's project-level team will provide the training and support to begin the interventions; in Year 3, the responsibility for support will be shared among ESCNEO and districts with ESCNEO serving more as quality-control. The overarching goal for Years 1-3 is to create a self-perpetuating system of support and growth to sustain after the grant period.

Collaboration is embedded at every level of NETworkED as evidenced by the letters of support in Appendix C (AR iii). NETworkED prioritizes stakeholder engagement and local control. Through this partnership, district leaders agree to the basic tenets of participation as outlined in the MOU (Appendix C). However, we believe the specific policy decisions and metrics should be made at the local level for the local level, which is why we created the AC structure. For example, the project provides RR bonuses for effective educators; however, local stakeholders will decide

the specific amounts and distribution metrics. Therefore, the AC will enable local ownership of the goals and initiatives of the grant and create the stakeholder buy-in to sustain the work.

Another human capital building and sustainability mechanism is the Aspiring Leaders Academy. By expanding leadership development beyond current sitting principals, we are ensuring the project practices will become part of the fabric of schools even with new leaders.

Addressing Needs of Target Population: The target population for NETworkED is largely minority. Students of color benefit from excellent teaching and they benefit from teachers who look like them (The Education Trust, 2017). The extensive recruitment and retention systems described above will result not only in securing great teachers, but will also uniquely focus on teachers of color. NETworkED will track teacher assignment by race and ethnicity and will report on teacher assignment by prior student performance.

Scaling to Other Districts with Similar Target Populations: We have selected the participating districts for this project because of their similar needs. As such, there is a high level of scalability and replicability to share our learnings and takeaways with other small districts across the nation.

(iii) Resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant (AR viii)

Sustainability and scalability are built into NETworkED. In our logic model (Appendix A), we separated out sustainability as a key bucket of work to ensure that—from the onset—we are setting up the resources and structure necessary to continue this work. We have structured the sustainability plan around the human, material, organizational, and structural capacity needed for the important work of this project to continue in support of high-need students beyond the grant.

Financial Resources (AR ix): NETworkED has two key approaches for ensuring that schools have the financial resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant: sustaining PBC through public funds and sustaining the NIC through growth. ***Sustaining PBC*** - As evidenced by the MOUs (Appendix C), NETworkED schools will meet the required 50% match for this project,

which illustrates a major commitment of resources to the NETworkED tenets. NETworkED schools will use a combination of public funding to continue PBC after the grant. The PD and PI will work individually with each school to help identify which funds can be used to maintain the work (e.g. Title I and Title II, part A). ***Sustaining the NIC*** - ESCNEO recognizes that TSL grant funding is available for three years (with a reapplication for Year 4-5); therefore, we consider Year 4 and beyond as Phase II of the NIC. Beginning in Year 3, the current districts and ESCNEO will focus on expanding the network through access to the NETworkED online platform and all of its resources to new small districts in northeast Ohio. These districts would be charged a nominal annual fee, which will supplement significant costs of sustaining the NIC. Further, this model of an ESC supporting HCMS systems across partner districts could be replicated with small districts throughout the state and nationally.

Sustainability Resources: Our goal is to provide NETworkED schools with asynchronous and synchronous supports to help educators refine their practice and best serve students, as well as to leave them with a robust library of resources to help sustain this work. Therefore, during the three years of this grant, NETworkED will focus on creating “Sustainability Resources,” the key resources and supports that schools will need to continue to implement the project activities described above after the grant ends. This includes virtual training for key project components through the NETworkED platform. The resources would also include exemplary examples of candidate interviews, PLC meetings, and instructional coaching. Further, during the first three years, the NIC will create a video-library of effective practice across grade levels and content areas with all supplemental material.

Systems of Sustainability: Key to the Sustainability Resources is having the “Systems of Sustainability” to ensure these resources will be continually developed. Systems of Sustainability build upon the actual resources by creating processes and protocols to update, enhance, and create

new resources after the grant. In Year 1 and 2, ESCNEO will play the role of quality control for the resources; however, during Year 3, the responsibility will gradually shift to the districts and schools to curate and update the resources. Additionally, each school has committed to sustain the systemic aspects of the project following the grant. These systems (e.g. PLCs, coaching) can be sustained by the local school in perpetuity at no additional cost.

Organizational Capacity: An essential part of creating the organizational capacity to sustain and expand this work is through the strategic planning process. As mentioned above, ESCNEO will work with each district to ensure it has a high-quality strategic plan aligned to their HCMS in place in Year 1. A key goal of these plans is to integrate and institutionalize NEtworkED tools and resources into the ongoing school priorities and work to ensure lasting success and program sustainability, including allocation of non-grant funds to project activities. The strategic planning refinement process will also help build local capacity as key stakeholders will be invited to participate in the process.

Partner Commitment (AR iii): As evidenced by the letters of support and MOUs (Appendix C), there is broad project support and buy-in from teachers, school leaders, superintendents, union leaders, the ODE, the Ohio State Board of Education, and the Ohio Educational Service Center Association. The districts each also agree to the basic tenets of participation in the grant as outlined in the MOU, including the matching fund requirement (Appendix C). While the basic tenets are common across all districts, local control will still take priority, as local stakeholders will tailor specific policy decisions and granular metrics to their local needs. In addition, each district has committed to sustain the systemic aspects of NEtworkED following the grant. The recurring costs are de minimis and all participating partner districts have a plan and necessary funding to keep all NEtworkED systems in place beyond the life of the grant.