

Texas Improving Management systems for Pincipals And Classroom Teachers (IMPACT)

TSL Grant Application

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
A. Need for Project	3
(i) Identifying and addressing gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities.	3
(ii) Integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve Relevant Outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies.	6
(iii) Part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.	8
(iv) Address the needs of the target population or other identified needs.	10
B. Quality of the Project Design	12
(i) Demonstrates a rationale.	12
(ii) A review of the literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.	14
(iii) The methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.	25
C. Quality of the Management Plan	28
D. Adequacy of Resources	36
(i) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.	36
(ii) Build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.	37
(iii) Resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant.	39

Introduction

The long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students show devastating loss of learning that educators will need to recover for years to come. In fact, the pandemic-related school closures and learning disruptions will cost school-aged children an estimated 6 to 9 percent of their lifetime earnings (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). In Texas, students experienced large learning declines in all subjects, especially in mathematics, where only 35% of students met grade-level expectations in 2021, compared to 50% in 2019 (Texas Education Agency, 2021). The key to turning around learning loss is to get the most effective teachers in front of the students who have lost the most. Unfortunately, it is often the case that the least experienced teachers are placed in the most challenging schools, where students are likely to have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (Bailey et al., 2021; Pier et al., 2021).

For this Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund grant, the Texas Improving Management systems for Principals And Classroom Teachers (hereafter referred to as IMPACT), will focus on increasing teacher and school leader effectiveness and improving teaching and learning in 19 high-need schools (**Absolute Priority 2**). IMPACT seeks to align, expand, and improve the partner districts' Human Capital Management Systems (HCMS) and performance-based compensation for teachers and school leaders (**Absolute Priority 1**). Additionally, IMPACT will provide targeted customized support for partner districts' educator professional growth (**Competitive Preference Priority 1**) and increase the effectiveness of all educators, thereby reducing the variation of effectiveness across and within schools, and also better enable districts to recruit and retain experienced, effective, and diverse educators who are equipped to educate diverse learners (**Competitive Preference Priority 2**). The sustainable HCMS supported through IMPACT will be a strong counter to learning loss, boosting achievement of all students.

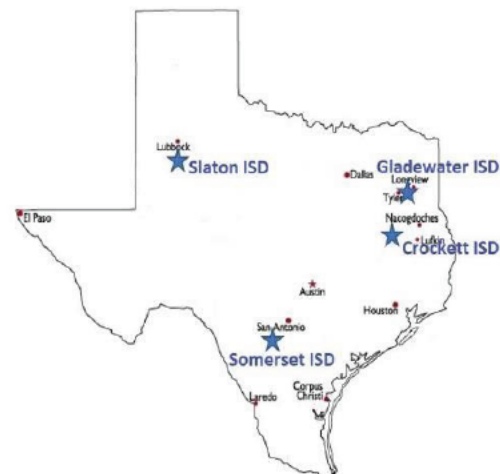
IMPACT brings together a unique partnership equipped to address and ameliorate the challenges of the pandemic for students and educators. The partnership will consist of:

- the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), a national nonprofit leader in developing systems for increasing instructional capacity in high-need schools with extensive experience and strong results from working with other Texas districts,
- the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED), a Texas-based nonprofit organization dedicated to diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity, and
- four small-sized Texas districts (Crockett, Gladewater, Slaton and Somerset Independent School Districts (LEAs).

NIET and BranchED are uniquely positioned to work in combination to guide districts in developing and communicating a compelling vision for excellence in classroom instruction and in building the HCMS systems necessary to deliver results. The IMPACT districts represent diverse geographic regions across the state and have leadership experience implementing innovative instructional strategies to improve student achievement (Figure 1). These four anchor districts from east, south, and west Texas regions will serve as models to other small districts within their regions, statewide, and nationally on how to strengthen their support, retention, and strategic compensation model for experienced and diverse educators.

IMPACT's core strategies are: 1) Create a clear vision for improvement and alignment of the HCMS; 2) Implement a valid and reliable evaluation processes

Figure 1. IMPACT Districts



using research-based rubrics; 3) Create formal, instructionally focused roles for teacher leaders; 4) Implement job-embedded, collaborative professional learning; and 5) Create a system of performance-based compensation. The districts will use NIET's evidence-based TAP System as the base to align these five HCMS strategies. TAP System implementation has been shown to increase the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders, increase educator retention, as well as attract effective educators to IMPACT districts, thereby improving students' access to effective educators. BranchED's trainings and site visits will further support strategy alignment by addressing educator diversity through the lens of equity and inclusion. These structures will enable IMPACT to attain project objectives to 1) increase the percentage of effective teachers, 2) increase the percentage of effective school leaders, and 3) improve student achievement, impacting directly 42 school leaders, 640 teachers, and 8,611 students, while creating a replicable and sustainable model of success in small-sized school districts nationwide.

A. Need for Project

(i) Identifying and addressing gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities.

IMPACT districts share a pressing need to improve the academic success of their high-poverty, high-minority student populations. This need is driven by the struggle to attract and retain effective teachers and school leaders – a challenge that is more often experienced by high-poverty schools across the country (Gracia & Weiss, 2019). While research consistently documents that teachers and school leaders are the most important school-based factors influencing student achievement (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Lee & Mamerow, 2019), high levels of educator turnover in IMPACT districts drain valuable resources and make it difficult to build a high performing, stable teaching faculty. School leaders also have limited years of experience and face the challenge of creating meaningful, job-embedded professional learning and

instructional supports for teachers to make significant and sustained gains with students. As small school districts with high turnover and challenging populations, these districts struggle to create sustained services and distributed leadership team structures and opportunities for attracting and retaining highly effective educators. Further, in these districts, disparities exist between the racial composition of the students and the teaching force.

Student Characteristics. IMPACT districts serve large populations of students of color and students from low-income families (Table 1). District-level percentages of economically disadvantaged students range from a low of 73% to a high of 89%, higher than the state average of 60%. Additionally, all 19 schools meet the high-need criteria (Appendix E).

Table 1. Student Enrollment Characteristics, by District (2019-20)

	Crockett	Gladewater	Slaton	Somerset	State
Total Students	1,309	1,835	1,356	4,111	5,493,940
African American	49%	20%	5%	0%	13%
Hispanic	33%	17%	64%	91%	53%
White	14%	54%	29%	8%	27%
Economically Disadvantaged	89%	73%	75%	82%	60%

Low academic achievement for all students and student learning gaps. IMPACT districts experience low levels of student achievement. In all four districts, the average percentage of students passing the state assessment in 2019 was more than 10% below the state average. Further, district partners are experiencing very low levels of achievement for student subgroups. In all IMPACT schools, the average percentage of African American students meeting grade-level expectations is 25%, lower than the state average of 37% - a 12 percentage point difference. Similarly, the average percentage of Hispanic students meeting grade-level expectations is 39% compared to 44% statewide. As part of the state accountability system, one-third of the partner

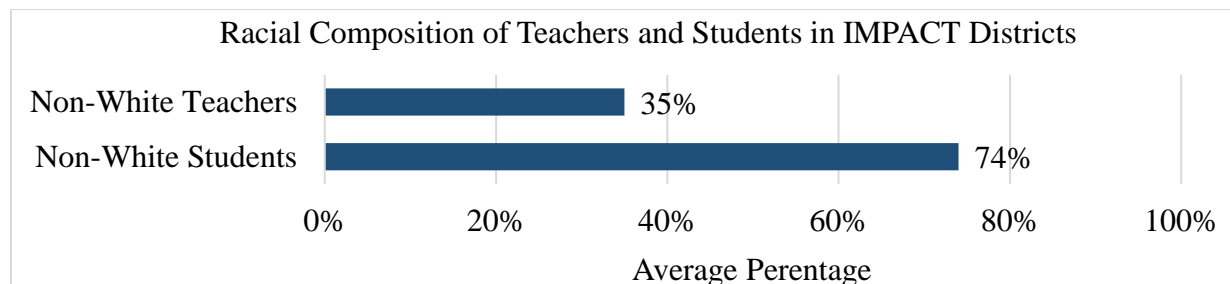
schools received a D or F rating. Additionally, all districts earned letter grades of C for “Closing the Gaps”, a measure of success in supporting all subgroups of students to meet state goals.

Equity of access to effective and experienced educators. IMPACT districts face challenges staffing classrooms with effective teachers and have high educator turnover rates. In 2020, the teacher turnover rate in IMPACT districts exceeded the state teacher turnover rate by more than 30%. In addition, IMPACT districts have large populations of new teachers. For example, in Slaton ISD, 42% of teachers have five or fewer years of experience. As small-sized districts, IMPACT districts often compete with neighboring, larger districts that have salaries that are more than 10% higher on average. Rural Somerset ISD is about an hour from San Antonio and must compete against the more attractive salaries and “big city” amenities of nearby districts. Slaton ISD is competing with three large school districts in the county that pay about \$7,000 more for beginning teachers. Additionally, IMPACT schools, on average, are led by less experienced principals. The average years of principal experience in these districts is 20% less than the state average. These recruitment and novice school leader issues exist in combination with the critical challenge of retaining school leaders.

Lack of a diverse teaching force. Research suggests that diversifying the teacher workforce can positively impact students’ academic, social, and emotional outcomes (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Student-teacher racial match has been shown to boost student academic performance (Grissom et al., 2017), lower the likelihood of chronic absenteeism and suspension (Holt & Gershenson, 2015), and increase college aspirations (Gershenson et al., 2017). Increasing teacher diversity may also help reduce feelings of isolation and fatigue often experienced by teachers who are one of a few teachers of color in their schools (Griffin & Tackie, 2016), which in turn, may improve teacher job satisfaction and retention (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Figure 2 shows the

disparities between the racial composition of teachers and the racial composition of their students in IMPACT districts. Across IMPACT districts, almost three-fourths of students are of color. However, only 35% of teachers are of color.

Figure 2. Racial Composition of Students and Full-Time Teachers, by District (2019-20)



(ii) Integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve Relevant Outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies.

State policy and funding alignment. The key elements of our approach in supporting educator growth and improvement align to the Texas state equity plan, the state ESSA plan, the state House Bill 4545, and the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) enacted in 2019 through House Bill 3. The Texas ESSA/strategic plan highlights five priorities starting with “recruit, support and retain teachers and principals.” The Texas plan for Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Teachers calls for “targeted training for teachers and principals” and “opportunities for reward, recognition and career advancement for teachers,” which closely aligns with our project strategies (Appendix F1: IMPACT Alignment to State Policy). Allison Friedlander, Director of Teacher Leadership at the Texas Education Agency, states in her letter of support, “Given the alignment between our state goals and the proposed TSL project, and the track record of success that Texas districts have had in partnership with NIET, I strongly support this grant proposal.”

To access state TIA funds, districts must submit and receive state approval of a valid and reliable evaluation system based on multiple measures of performance including student

academic achievement growth, as well as a state-approved plan for awarding performance compensation to teachers. IMPACT provides partner districts with a roadmap for meeting these state policy goals and requirements because the districts will use NIET's evidence-based, state-approved rubrics for teacher and school leader evaluation. The Principal Standards Rubric will be used as the school leader evaluation instrument (Appendix F2) and the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric (Appendix F3) will be used as the teacher evaluation instrument. NIET's teaching standards rubric has been named among the top in the country by the National Council on Teacher Quality, a nonpartisan, not-for-profit research and policy organization, for strong training in classroom management strategies (Pomerance & Walsh, 2020).

Integrating with and building on existing community and federal investments. As described by Superintendent John Emerich of Crockett ISD in his letter of support, "This grant will strengthen classroom instruction and offer teachers and principals opportunities for additional compensation and career advancement based on successful work." In all districts, IMPACT will strengthen evaluator training and create processes to ensure valid and reliable results and high-quality feedback. Similarly, the grant will support districts to create job-embedded professional learning that will build on investments the districts have made in professional development using Federal Title I and Title II funds, including training from regional services centers in curriculum, assessment, and PLCs.

Additionally, the district partners have worked to create opportunities for teachers to grow into leadership roles, receive coaching and feedback, and implement strategies they identify for best practice. Where the districts are seeking additional support, and excited for this grant opportunity as reflected in the 87 letters of support from educators and community members, is to unify and integrate best practices through a system of aligned support and structures that

includes support on identifying and developing teacher leaders, providing support for school and district leaders, and coaching teachers to improve practice all aligned to a common language and definition of educator effectiveness. These partners are excited to expand these practices for improvement into their human capital decision making for promotion, tenure, additional targeted professional development and other decisions.

(iii) Part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

IMPACT is designed to create coherence and shared goals through the HCMS and provide the structures, protocols, and tools for educators to build their instructional expertise collaboratively. The project will accomplish this by enabling districts and schools to implement a fair, rigorous, valid, reliable, and objective process to evaluate educator effectiveness based on multiple measures of performance, including student academic achievement. Districts will use *performance-based evaluation data* measuring student growth, classroom practice, and leadership practice to align elements of their HCMS. *Professional development* will be guided by ongoing analysis of student performance and teacher evaluation data; teacher and principal standards rubrics will be used across evaluation and professional development, coaching, induction, and mentoring. Teacher leader roles and responsibilities will be used to attract, develop, and retain highly effective teachers and create *career advancement* opportunities based on effective performance. In addition to the professional learning from NIET, the partnership with the Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED), a Texas-based national leader in diversity and equity training and support will also support professional learning for district partners and connect that professional learning to on-site coaching. The unique approach to the project will be to focus on supporting teachers and school leaders to increase their knowledge

and practices to effectively manage diversity, equity, and inclusion needs. *Retention and dismissal* decisions will directly consider performance data. *Performance-based compensation* will provide salary augmentations for teachers effectively accomplishing leadership roles and responsibilities with additional compensation for teachers and school leaders who demonstrate effectiveness using multiple measures. *Hiring and placement* decisions will use evaluation data to identify areas of need and promote equitable access to effective educators for all students. *Recruitment* efforts will use evaluation data to highlight areas of need and identify effective candidates (Appendix F4: Aligned HCMS). Implementing a valid and reliable system for measuring effectiveness and providing feedback on teacher and school leader practice will provide a framework that connects improvements in educator practice to improvements in student learning. All elements in the system will bring coherence to the process and will be essential for teachers and school leaders to improve instruction.

Root Causes of Equity and Opportunity Gaps. Districts identified root causes of weaknesses in services and infrastructure that prevent them from addressing equity and opportunity gaps. IMPACT’s evidence-based project strategies directly address these root causes and are part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning to support rigorous academic standards for all students (Table 2).

Table 2. Root Causes of Needs Drive IMPACT Strategies

Root Cause	IMPACT Strategies
<i>HCMS misalignment:</i> Elements of HCMS are not connected; evaluation is not connected to professional learning; district leaders are in need of additional professional learning opportunities to support change management and sustainability	Create a clear vision for HCMS improvement and alignment; engage stakeholders; create a multi-year plan to manage implementation, and provide training and coaching to district leaders as they lead HCMS improvements

<i>Inconsistent evaluation and feedback:</i> Teacher evaluations are inconsistent and score inflation is evident in schools; school leader evaluations do consistently occur with actionable feedback	Implement valid and reliable evaluation processes to measure educator effectiveness; train and certify observers annually; include multiple cycles of observation and feedback; use data to inform HCMS decisions
<i>Lack of career opportunities:</i> Lack of opportunities/processes for career advancement or building instructional capacity across schools; limited plan for building a leadership pipeline	Create formal opportunities for career advancement through identification and training of teacher leaders, leading to the development of a leadership pipeline
<i>Professional learning not job-embedded:</i> Professional development is not job-embedded, or directly tied to student or educator needs; professional learning communities (PLCs) lack protocols, consistency, and follow-up	Implement job-embedded, collaborative professional learning for teachers, teacher leaders, and school leaders with classroom follow-up and coaching
<i>Compensation not tied to performance:</i> Few recruitment incentives for hard-to-staff positions; lower salaries compared to nearby larger districts	Create a PBCS for teachers and school leaders to recruit and retain highly effective educators and build an infrastructure of teacher leaders

(iv) Address the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

This grant will enable high-need partner schools to use strategic staffing, compensation, and other HCMS strategies to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and highly effective educator workforce in the competitive Texas education marketplace. The project strategies serve students by improving their access to quality instruction through intensive on-site support for district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders:

- District leader coaching will occur monthly using NIET’s District Instructional Framework

(Appendix F5) to align and strengthen HCMS elements, establish a District Leadership Team (DLT) to monitor and support high-quality TAP System implementation in schools, and build stakeholder support for systems change.

- School leader coaching will occur monthly with comprehensive training on evaluation and leadership practices. This includes monitoring and ensuring a valid and reliable evaluation process is in place with regular checks for inter-rater reliability, monitoring for score inflation, as well as establishing congruence between student and teacher performance. NIET will also provide ongoing support for school leaders through leadership team training, implementing PLCs for teachers, and providing coaching support for their teacher leaders. Planning and coaching support for school leaders will ensure that they can plan and facilitate strong leadership team meetings to meet school goals and increase the instructional capacity of teacher leaders and teachers in their buildings.
- Teacher leader training and coaching will occur monthly. NIET will provide monthly customized support for teacher leaders so that they deepen their understanding of strong instructional practices, lead professional development for teachers, and support teachers in the classroom by providing student-centered coaching. In addition to the monthly support, quarterly on-site trainings will be provided to teacher leaders to enhance their understanding of data analysis/student performance tracking, impact coaching, and strategies for building student ownership, and ensuring strong PLC learning for teachers that transfers to effective instructional practices.
- In Year 1, BranchED will lead a three-part workshop series focused on building culturally responsive teachers and school leaders to create inclusive school environments where educators are equipped and empowered to embrace identity and diversity as an asset for

learning. In the final two years of the grant, additional workshops will be provided and content will be tailored to educator needs based on conversations during on-site visits with school partners. Together, these activities further support district professional learning efforts for the recruitment, preparation, support, development, and retention of diverse educators by fostering an inclusive, equitable and supportive workplace and school climate for educators consistent with Competitive Preference Priority 2.

B. Quality of the Project Design

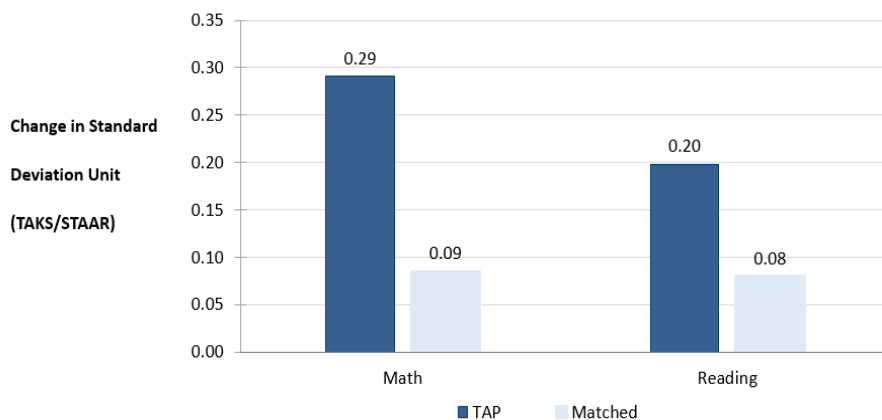
(i) Demonstrates a rationale.

The rationale behind IMPACT is that increases in teacher and school leader effectiveness will result from both increases in the skills of *current* educators as well as improved *recruitment and retention* of effective, diverse educators due to the combination of increased support and opportunities for leadership roles and additional compensation (i.e., Berry et al., 2010; Center for American Progress, 2014; Hudgens et al., 2020; Hudson, 2010). Drawing on this rationale, districts will develop coherent HCMS structures through a clear vision for improvement and a plan for continuing to build alignment across elements of the HCMS. Additionally districts will establish systems to support educators and their professional growth through four research-based strategies that form the foundation of the TAP System and our school-level IMPACT strategies: 1) implementing valid and reliable evaluation processes using research-based rubrics; 2) creating formal, instructionally focused roles for teacher leaders; 3) implementing job-embedded, collaborative professional learning; and 4) creating a system of performance-based compensation. These elements are further supported by a fifth strategy at the district level, dedicated to creating a clear vision for improvement and alignment of the HCMS. Together, these strategies form a project design that is aimed at improving teacher and school leader

effectiveness and, as a result, raising student achievement.

IMPACT’s theory of action has an extensive record of effectiveness in supporting high-need districts in multiple states to increase student achievement. Examinations of the impact of the TAP System across several locations by different researchers using varied methodological frameworks consistently show positive impacts on student and school outcomes (Barnett & Wills, 2016; Mann et al., 2013; Schacter & Thum, 2005; Solmon et al., 2007). Existing TAP System schools in Texas have experienced success in raising student achievement in high-need schools as illustrated below (Figure 3). ██████████, and ██████████ (2018) employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of TAP System implementation on student achievement in Texas. Results showed that schools that implemented the TAP System for at least two consecutive years outperformed their propensity-matched schools, as measured by the state assessment. Additionally, paired sample *t* tests suggested that the average student achievement growth in TAP System schools was statistically significant for math ($t(27) = 3.74, p = .001$) and reading ($t(27) = 2.85, p < .01$). In contrast, the average student achievement growth did not reach statistical significance in matched non-TAP System schools for either subject area.

Figure 3. Texas TAP System Schools Outperform Matched Comparison Schools



A recent third-party evaluation of the impact of the TAP System in high-need schools in Louisiana found a statistically significant and positive effect on math achievement during the

second and third year of TAP implementation (Eren, 2019). By the third year, the effect was reported to be “roughly equal to the observed effect from a one standard deviation increase in teacher quality” (p. 880). The author identified TAP as a cost-effective program and suggested future incentive programs include elements of TAP such as 1) multiple performance metrics (e.g., instructional practices and student performance), 2) both individual and group-based incentives, and 3) regular feedback to teachers about performance (Eren, 2019).

(ii) A review of the literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.

IMPACT’s theory of action is grounded in the literature (for a full list of the references, see Appendix F9). It employs structures that have individually been proven on their own to promote teacher and student growth—instructional accountability, professional development, teacher advancement roles, performance-based compensation, and targeted support from district administration—and maximizes their capacity by aligning each element within a central system. A cohesive approach for school reform that focuses on supportive structures for teachers has been shown to be highly effective for improving student achievement (Park et al., 2019).

Teachers are often dissatisfied with professional development offerings that they see as irrelevant to or ineffective at improving instruction (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). The NIET model of professional development adheres to features that teachers have identified as desirable: models effective practice, incorporates active learning, promotes collaboration among teachers, can be sustained over time, and relates to their needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone et al., 2002). Indeed, research shows that student achievement and teacher learning increase when professional development is teacher-led, ongoing, and collaborative (Archibald et al., 2011; Bowgren & Sever, 2010).

Increasingly, schools are shifting away from traditional leadership structures toward an approach in which administrators work with teacher leaders to drive instructional improvements (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Empowering teachers to take on formal leadership roles, such as the mentor and master teacher roles in NIET's model of teacher leadership, can improve job satisfaction and self-esteem, which will eventually lead to improved performance and potentially higher retention (Muijs & Harris, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Shared instructional leadership contributes to a culture of growth as effective teachers remain in classrooms rather than leaving for administration, instead sharing their expertise in teacher leadership roles through modeling effective instruction and mentoring other teachers (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Schools with higher levels of teacher leadership have been shown to have higher student achievement compared to schools with lower teacher leadership levels (Ingersoll et al., 2017).

Increased responsibility and effectiveness should be paired with increased compensation, which is an important factor in teacher satisfaction and retention. Teachers receiving PBC through TIF-sponsored programs reported satisfaction with their jobs to the same or greater degree than teachers in control schools (Chiang et al., 2017). Further, this study demonstrated higher teacher observation ratings and student achievement in reading and math for schools implementing PBC compared with control schools. Additionally, a recent meta-analysis has shown that the positive effects of teacher merit pay on student achievement were equivalent to about four additional weeks of learning (Pham et al., 2020). NIET's performance-based compensation system follows the best practices identified in the literature in that it is integrated with strong leadership, professional development, reliable analysis of student performance and strong feedback (Boyd et al., 2005; Chingos & West, 2012; Ritter & Barnett, 2013).

Improvement at the school level requires districts to shift central office personnel from a role of oversight to one of working with educators to enact district initiatives and goals (Bjork & Blasé, 2009) and building their capacity for improvement (Honig et al., 2010). A district level focus on instructional leadership has the potential to increase the effectiveness of principals (Goldring et al., 2018), which has recently been identified as nearly as important as teacher effectiveness for increasing student achievement, and most important when considering student achievement at the school level (Grissom et al., 2021).

Informed by the literature and prior evidence of TAP, the five project strategies will be accomplished using the following key actions at the district, school leader, and teacher levels.

1. Create a clear vision for HCMS improvement and alignment, engage stakeholders, and create a multi-year plan to manage the implementation

In Year 1, NIET will work with districts to *create a clear vision for how HCMS will advance strategic goals and use performance data at key decision points*. Specifically, NIET will work with district leaders to 1) assess their district structures and create a plan for aligning elements of their HCMS to district goals; 2) strengthen their evaluation process to produce valid and reliable measures of teacher and school leader performance; 3) identify key decision points where performance data will drive HCMS decisions including recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, and career advancement; and 4) develop a strategic compensation plan that will advance more effective staffing structures in schools. In the first two months of the grant, NIET's Texas Director alongside the lead Texas Strategist, who both have extensive experience supporting district leadership and strategic compensation, will guide a contextual analysis of district HCMS structures and practices using NIET's District Instructional Framework

(Appendix F5) and develop an action plan that will form the foundation of subsequent school-level work.

Based on NIET’s extensive experience facilitating the change management process with school districts in Texas, NIET will *strengthen the capacity of district leaders to engage stakeholders in the systems change process*. This process will build on the support for district leaders to analyze and identify needed changes in their HCMS. The process begins with a review of district organizational structures, practices, student data trends, principal surveys, recruitment, retention, and other data. NIET will facilitate an on-site collaborative session with leaders to analyze practices, identify high-impact strategies for improvement, and develop an action plan. Following each training, NIET will provide follow-up executive coaching for district leaders utilizing a “coaching the coach” model to support district leaders as they lead and coach school leaders during and after the life of the TSL funding years.

NIET will work with district and school partners to create a communications plan to share progress and continue to sustain the commitment to improvement. An Advisory Board will also be established to oversee the project, meeting annually to provide guidance, and a PBCS Committee will be created to oversee PBC quarterly (described in more detail in later sections).

Additionally, NIET will *provide executive coaching for district leaders as they work to implement a multi-year plan for continuous improvement*. District partners will use the vision established through the NIET district planning visit and stakeholder engagement sessions to guide the development of an overall plan for implementation of the TAP System.

2. Implement a valid, reliable evaluation process to measure teacher and school leader effectiveness

In the first year of the grant, NIET will *train and (annually) certify observers to conduct evaluations using the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric and Principal Standards Rubric*. The goal of this activity is to build a common understanding of strong classroom teaching that aligns to student learning growth and creates consistency in observation scores across classrooms and schools. This process helps to avoid rater drift as well as supports inter-rater reliability efforts. A three-day evaluator training will enable district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders to more accurately use the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric (Appendix F3) and create inter-rater reliability in their assessments of classroom practice. Evaluator training also provides district and school leaders with a process for delivering high-quality feedback designed to impact instructional practices and student achievement. An area of strength and an area of growth are identified for teachers with specific classroom follow-up support so that teaching and learning are strengthened. Trends in areas of growth will be used to inform the new learning provided to teachers through weekly PLC meetings, where teacher and school leaders provide instructional strategies that have been shown to be effective through field testing students in that school. Through these structures of evaluation and professional development, teacher capacity is continuously built, both individually and collectively.

School leader evaluation will be based on the NIET Principal Standards Rubric, which describes effective leadership across multiple domains and indicators of leadership practice (Appendix F2). The rubric will serve to foster collaboration around a common language and vision that correlates with student achievement. School leaders and their supervisors will be trained in a mutual understanding of strong leadership practices and a process for feedback and support. Following training, evaluators of both teachers and school leaders must pass a certification exam before conducting evaluations. The rigorous certification process includes

scoring accurately with evidence, identifying appropriate evidence and artifacts, and planning a post-conference coaching session. Evaluators will be required to recertify annually to ensure that they are able to provide consistent, valid, and reliable scores, as normed against national raters.

Teacher and school leader evaluators in IMPACT districts will ***conduct multiple cycles of observation and feedback for teachers and school leaders***. Every classroom teacher receives multiple cycles of formal evaluation with clear evidence of the level of teaching and learning and action-oriented feedback for improvement delivered through a post-conference within two days of the observation. School leader supervisors will allocate time for site-based observations of school leaders through multiple cycles of formal evaluation to strengthen their ability to accurately evaluate school leader practice and provide high-quality feedback for improvement. School leaders and their district-level supervisors will train together and receive job-embedded coaching to strengthen processes for observation and feedback.

IMPACT districts will ***use evaluation to inform recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, dismissal, professional development, tenure, and promotion***. Evaluation data from multiple measures of performance, including both teacher and student learning measures, inform retention decisions as well as a more informed process for equitable placement of effective and highly effective teachers. IMPACT schools will have access to NIET's EE PASS web-based portal of reporting tools to support their analyses and tracking of evaluation data and trends (Appendix F6). These data will help identify needs within the district for personnel, specifically capacity needs for teacher leadership roles. These roles and opportunities provide a powerful strategy for recruiting high-quality teachers. Data from school leader evaluations will be used by districts to inform retention and placement decisions for leaders. Data and feedback from the evaluation process also inform high-quality coaching and professional learning opportunities that will be

differentiated for individual teachers based on their needs. For school leaders, the standards for effective leaders that drive the evaluation process provide clear descriptions of leadership practices, providing a roadmap for improvement. The high levels of support and coaching provided for teachers and school leaders create a strong recruitment tool.

3. Create formal opportunities for career advancement through identification and training of teacher leaders.

A core IMPACT strategy, based on the TAP System approach, is the creation of teacher leadership roles in each school. NIET will work with district partners to *establish teacher leadership roles and responsibilities*. Teacher leaders will be interviewed, hired, and trained by the summer of the planning year (Year 1). By creating formal, instructionally focused teacher leadership roles, districts will significantly increase the expertise and capacity at each school. These teacher leaders will provide high-quality observation and feedback for improvement and lead weekly collaborative learning groups. Two school-based roles will be created: master teachers and mentor teachers. Master teachers will lead professional learning, conduct classroom observations and provide feedback, and participate in the school leadership team. Master teachers will support approximately 20 classroom teachers. Mentor teachers will remain teachers of record, and they will be released for several hours each week to lead professional learning, observe classroom practice, and serve on the school leadership team. Mentor teachers will support approximately 8-10 classroom teachers. Each school will have one to three full-time master teachers, depending on school size, and a minimum of two mentor teachers.

One of key IMPACT strategies is to *use teacher leader roles to attract and retain highly effective teachers and develop a leadership pipeline*. The opportunity to receive high-quality support for improvement is a strong tool for recruiting effective teachers, as are leadership roles

that enable teachers to remain connected to the classroom while playing a role in school leadership. Formal leadership roles enable teacher leaders to influence their colleagues to engage in instructional improvement (Supovitz, 2018). This creates a pipeline of leadership in schools, with effective classroom teachers moving into mentor or master roles as well as administrator positions. Strategic and intentional recruitment activities will be guided and supported by the NIET project director.

NIET will *support teacher leaders through on-site, job-embedded coaching and training*. Teacher leaders will receive robust training in the observation and evaluation system, PLCs, and coaching. These trainings will take place within the summer of the planning year once teacher leaders are hired and onboarded with the district. NIET will provide six days of on-site support for teacher leaders in each district every month as implementation begins in Year 2, with planning visits to coincide with district monthly collaborative learning meetings for teacher leaders. Teacher leaders from IMPACT districts will have an annual opportunity for additional training and collaboration with teacher leaders from across the country during NIET's national conference and summer institute.

4. Implement job-embedded, collaborative professional learning for teachers, teacher leaders, and school leaders that fosters an inclusive, equitable, and supportive workplace and school climate.

To support educators and their professional growth (Competitive Preference Priority 1) NIET will *train school leadership teams to plan, deliver, monitor, and improve professional learning*. NIET will train principals to lead a high-functioning, school-wide Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), since this team is essential to the success of the TAP System. The ILT, led by the principal and joined by other school leaders and teacher leaders, develops the school

plan for improving student learning and manages the school's core instructional improvement strategies. Teacher leaders bring expertise and knowledge to the leadership team, given their role in leading collaborative professional learning, observing lessons and providing feedback, and coaching individual classroom teachers. School leaders' effectiveness in leading the ILT will be measured using the ILT observation rubric and is a significant part of the school leader evaluation process.

Each partner school will ***create weekly collaborative professional learning for teachers through PLCs***. NIET will provide intensive, practice-based training for teacher leaders to enable them to provide high-quality professional learning for classroom teachers. Teacher leaders will be trained to lead weekly collaborative professional learning teams, analyze teacher and student data, identify and field test student learning strategies, and develop coaching plans for classroom teachers. In the TAP System, teacher leaders align professional learning to specific teacher and student needs, making it teacher-led, ongoing, and collaborative. School leaders attend trainings with teacher leaders, which strengthens the overall effectiveness of the ILT. NIET's training for leadership teams builds their capacity to manage and implement research-driven practices, utilize high-impact levers for improving instruction, lead collaborative learning teams, conduct meaningful observations, and ensure all teachers benefit from individual coaching. District leaders also receive training to ensure the intervention strategies are implemented and will be sustained and supported.

NIET will ***provide robust professional development for school leaders*** to grow their capacity to serve all students by focusing on three areas: 1) creating and communicating a more equitable school culture, 2) building shared instructional leadership, and 3) sustaining reflective practice through continuous improvement. NIET will support principals and other school leaders

and principal supervisors in IMPACT schools to strengthen their coaching skills beginning in Year 1 with an intensive three-day training. In addition to individual coaching, observation, and feedback, districts will create monthly collaborative learning groups for school leaders across the district to collectively hone their skills. NIET's initial and ongoing training for school leaders and principal supervisors will support the development of a shared and sustained vision of effective leadership and, through school-based visits and coaching, better connect principal supervisors to the daily work of principals. This training will be reinforced through participation in NIET's national conference and summer institute trainings where principals and other school leaders will have the opportunity to connect with other leaders from across the country.

5. Create a system of performance-based compensation for teachers, teacher leaders, and principals that advances district and school goals.

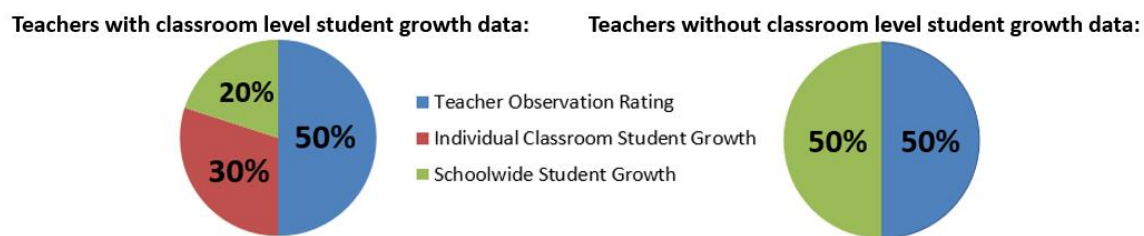
The TAP System supports districts to use performance-based compensation for high-performing teacher leaders who lead professional learning for groups of teachers as well as provide coaching and support for individual classroom teachers in their schools. IMPACT will *use performance compensation for teacher leaders to recruit and retain instructional experts in high-need schools*. By strengthening the observation system and all evaluation processes, the TAP System enables districts to link compensation to clear, detailed measures of performance. All districts will allocate [REDACTED] for principal performance compensation, [REDACTED] for assistant principal compensation, and [REDACTED] per teacher into the teacher performance-based compensation pools for those positions. By creating a pool for performance compensation, districts can offer significantly higher compensation to the most effective educators.

Starting in Year 1 of the grant, NIET will work with district partners to *develop and implement a valid and reliable PBCS that is based on multiple performance metrics including*

demonstrated improvement in student academic achievement for teachers and school leaders.

As shown in Figure 4, an example model could include teachers who are evaluated and earn PBC using: 1) teacher observation ratings based on formal evaluations using the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards, 2) individual classroom student growth measures, and 3) schoolwide student growth measures.

Figure 4. Teacher Performance Pay Measures



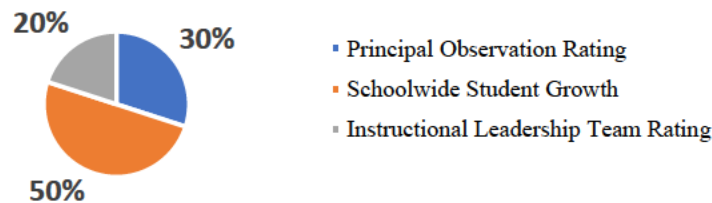
Observation Rating (50%) is based on multiple observations using the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric. Student growth will be measured based on the Texas State Accountability System and the state assessment (STAAR). These valid and reliable measures of student achievement based on student performance on statewide assessments will serve as key indicators of teacher overall effectiveness.

Individual Classroom Student Growth (30%) will be based on the statewide student growth performance standards set by the Texas Education Agency.

School-wide Student Growth (20%) will be based on the campus performance on the State Accountability System for School Progress, Academic Growth.

Similarly, school leaders will earn PBC based on the following measures (Figure 5): 1) evaluation rating determined by performance on the NIET Principal Standards Rubric; 2) student achievement growth at the school level based on the State Accountability System for School Progress, Academic Growth; and 3) ILT rubric scores based on two observations a year by the IMPACT project director using the ILT Observation Rubric.

Figure 5. School Leader Performance Pay Measures



Districts will establish a PBCS Committee that will meet regularly to develop the plan for PBC. The PBCS Committee will provide support to the district on its plan for sustaining PBC with local, state, or federal funds, after the grant period. In Year 2 of the grant and beyond, the PBCS will be fully implemented.

For taking on additional roles and responsibilities, teachers may increase their pay with salary augmentations of [REDACTED] as a mentor teacher and [REDACTED] as a master teacher. Teachers earn an effective rating to retain their additional roles and responsibilities. By using PBC as one element of a strategic system of support, growth, and advancement for teachers, districts will create opportunities for improved recruitment and retention in IMPACT schools.

(iii) The methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

The project evaluation will be led by NIET's Research and Evaluation Department, a department with extensive experience supporting large-scale evaluations of education programs (Appendix B: Resumes of Key Personnel). The evaluator will work collaboratively to lead a formative and summative evaluation with two purposes: 1) to supply grant partners with timely data to improve the project for the populations served and 2) to assess program impacts. The evaluation plan aligns with the program's theory of action stating that if programmatic structures, trainings, and supports are put in place at the district and school level to help strengthen and align district HCMS, there will be 1) an increase in teacher effectiveness, 2) an increase in school

leader effectiveness, and 3) improvement in student achievement. The evaluation plan (Appendix F7: Evaluation Plan Summary) is organized around four research questions aligned with the nine Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 measures; it will serve as a working document to ensure the project is on track to meet objectives.

The project's logic model (Appendix A) will be used to communicate clearly the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes expected from the intervention. The evaluator will identify program implementation measures and data collection instruments that can be embedded into the program delivery (such as systems for tracking training session attendance and engagement) as well as data reporting systems that can be used to drive continuous monitoring and improvement of program implementation. The evaluator will track program progress and analyze fidelity of implementation (Research Question (RQ) 1: How is IMPACT being implemented and to what extent is implementation sustainable by districts and schools?). Qualitative data used to assess fidelity of implementation will include program artifacts, surveys, and interviews with partners. NIET's annual school review process, which consists of classroom, ILT, and PLC observations, will serve as one of these critical data sources for assessing fidelity of implementation and providing feedback to district and school leaders.

Each year IMPACT will interview school and district personnel to assess perceived quality of the program and program impact. To ensure reliability and validity, interview responses will be used in combination with a review of documents and system reports. This data triangulation allows for a higher level of validity in the qualitative research process. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded by at least two researchers. This work, along with analyses of implementation fidelity measures, will help identify key variables that impact implementation.

Qualitative and quantitative data will also be used to address the remaining research questions about program impact (RQ2: What are the effects of participation in Texas IMPACT on teacher outcomes? RQ3: What are the effects of participation in Texas IMPACT on principal and other school leader outcomes? RQ4: What are the effects of participation in Texas IMPACT on student achievement?). In addition to interview and survey data, the evaluator will obtain longitudinal administrative data on educator retention, leadership and teacher practices and skills, and student achievement. State and district data will include administrative records (e.g., position vacancies, new hires, and educator demographics), school leader and teacher retention rates, educator evaluation ratings, and student outcomes (primarily student achievement).

The evaluation will incorporate regular communication between the evaluator, key project personnel, and each district through quarterly update meetings to review plans, progress, and preliminary data. As detailed in the evaluation plan, the evaluator will provide timely summaries of findings from analyses of program implementation and impact data. For example, program data and artifacts will be discussed during monthly meetings with the project director, and educator effectiveness and student achievement data will be examined and shared with district partners and other key personnel annually. At the conclusion of the grant, the evaluator will assess the overall accomplishment of goals and conduct a thorough analysis of lessons learned.

The evaluator, NIET, and district partners will disseminate reports at the local, state, and national levels through in-person presentations, academic conferences and journals, and print and online media. At the **local level**, NIET and district partners will establish quarterly communications to monitor progress, ensure implementation is on track and address any challenges they may be facing, and to share the results of IMPACT. Additionally, NIET's Communications team will work with district partners to promote schools' success in local

media. Ongoing communications efforts will build awareness, understanding, and support for the PBCS and educator evaluation systems among teachers, principals, other school personnel, and the community. In addition, IMPACT districts will disseminate information through their newsletters, websites, and other public forums throughout the year (Appendix F8: Communications). Other communication outreach will include the district improvement committee (which includes parents and community members) and board presentations. NIET will provide opportunities for districts to share their results at the national level through our national conference, summer institutes, research and policy reports, and social media networks.

At the **state level**, information about project implementation and findings will be shared with IMPACT districts and community stakeholders by presentations in partnership with BranchED and TEA. Finally, at the **national level**, the project results will be presented at the annual NIET National Conference and at least two other professional research conferences (e.g. AERA; AACTE). NIET has also taken the opportunity in the past to present our most promising findings to policymakers in Washington, D.C. in efforts to impact education reform on a national scale. These efforts have included testimony at Congressional Hearings, meetings with policymakers and legislators, and partnerships with other educator quality advocates. Findings will also be disseminated via NIET publications, including research briefs, reports, and newsletters posted on the website and publicized in social media, and submitted for publication in appropriate professional journals. The evaluator will also incorporate findings into the annual performance reports to address progress toward key performance measures.

C. Quality of the Management Plan

Achieving project objectives on time, within budget. NIET will serve as the fiscal agent for IMPACT. NIET has served successfully as the fiscal agent for multiple federal and state grants

and will utilize these experiences and strategies to implement IMPACT’s clearly defined responsibilities and milestones on time and within budget. Table 3 is organized around three key components, including: 1) the project milestones and tasks, 2) key personnel who will perform these tasks, and 3) timeline for completing them. The milestones described on Table 3 are aligned to the logic model (Appendix A) and project description within Section B, including each of the five project strategies represented as S1-S5. Under the responsible party column, NIET includes the principal investigator (PI), project director (PD), senior specialists (SS), research team (Research); local education agencies (LEAs) include the school and district leadership team members; and BranchED, which includes the BranchED training development and delivery team. The submitted budget narrative provides the cost details. NIET’s leadership and budget teams are well experienced in managing and executing large-scale projects, including federal grants on time and within budget.

Table 3. Milestone and Key Tasks Summary

Milestones (bold)	Responsible Parties	Quarter			
Key Tasks to meet each milestone (connection to Strategy 1-5)		1	2	3	4
Year 1 – Milestones and Key Tasks					
Complete Project Start-up				✓	
Establish TSL Advisory Board (S1)	PI, PD	✓			
Kickoff meeting with each district leadership (S1)	PI, PD	✓			
IMPACT data-driven implementation workshops (S2-S5)	PD, SS, LEAs	✓			
Conduct Strengths-based Needs Assessment in each school (S1)	PD, SS	✓			
Establish PBCS committee (S1, S5)	PD, LEAs			✓	
Establish Project Advisory Committees and Schedules					✓

TSL Advisory Board meetings (quarterly) (S1)	PD, LEAs		✓	✓	✓
PBCS committee meetings (quarterly) (S1, S5)	PD, LEAs				✓
Establish PLC schedule for 2022-23 (S4)	PD, LEAs			✓	
Hire Teacher Leaders				✓	
Establish committee for master and mentor teacher selection (S3)	LEAs	✓			
Recruit, interview, hire master and mentor teachers (S3)	PD, SS, LEAs		✓	✓	
Deliver Foundational Training				✓	
CORE Training on HCMS (evaluation, professional learning, goal setting, instructional leadership) (S2-4)	PD, SS			✓	
NIET Annual Conference and Summer Institute Training (S2-4)	PI, PD, LEAs		✓	✓	
Educator diversity training workshops (S4)	BranchED		✓	✓	
Deliver Annual Coaching and Support					✓
Provide 15-days of school support and coaching per year (S2-5)	PD, SS	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide district support (bimonthly) (S1)	PD, SS	✓	✓	✓	✓
Master teacher meetings (quarterly) (S3)	PD, SS				✓
Educator diversity onsite coaching visits (S4)	BranchED			✓	✓
Begin TAP Implementation for school year 2022-23					✓
Teacher observations, PLC meetings, ILT meetings (S2-4)	LEAs				✓
School leader and ILT observations, goal setting (S2-4)	LEAs				✓
Complete Project Monitoring and Evaluation Tasks					✓
Baseline data collection (observation, survey, interview, student growth) (S1, S5)	PD, Research			✓	✓
Implementation and quality assurance meetings (monthly) (S1-5)	PD, SS, LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓

Years 2 and 3 – Project implementation Milestones and Tasks					
Conduct Project Advisory Committees (Hire as needed)					✓
TSL Advisory Board meetings (quarterly) (S1)	PD, LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruit, interview, hire new teacher leaders (if necessary) (S3)	LEAs			✓	
Continue Delivering Trainings					✓
Quarterly trainings with master teachers (S3, S4)	PD, SS	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quarterly trainings with school leaders (S2-4)	PD, SS	✓	✓	✓	✓
NIET Annual Conference and Summer Institute Training (S2-4)	PI, PD, LEAs		✓	✓	
Educator diversity training workshops (S4)	BranchED		✓	✓	
Deliver Coaching and Support					✓
Provide 15-days of school support and coaching per year (S2-5)	PD, SS	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide district support (bimonthly) (S1)	PD, SS	✓	✓	✓	✓
Master teacher meetings (quarterly) (S3)	PD, SS	✓	✓	✓	✓
Educator diversity onsite coaching visits (S4)	BranchED	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue TAP Implementation					✓
Teacher observations, PLC meetings, ILT meetings (S2-4)	LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓
School leader and ILT observations, goal setting (S2-4)	LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓
School Reviews (S1-4)	PD, SS			✓	
Calculate and Award Performance-based Compensation					✓
PBCS committee meetings (quarterly) (S1, S5)	LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enter PBC data into data management system (S5)	LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Calculate PBC awards for teachers and school leaders (S5)	PD, LEAs				✓
Award PBC for teachers and school leaders (S5)	LEAs				✓
Complete Project Monitoring and Evaluation Tasks					✓

Implementation and quality assurance meetings (monthly) (S1-5)	PD, SS, LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data collection (observation, survey, interview, growth) (S1-5)	PD, Research			✓	✓
Analyze data for human capital decisions (S1)	PD, LEAs			✓	✓

NIET's project leadership team is extremely qualified with the necessary skills, abilities, and experience to carry out this work successfully from implementation to evaluation, reporting, and fiscal management. As an organization, NIET has more than 20 years of experience implementing direct services to school districts and supporting more than 1,000 districts across the nation. NIET has a proven track record of implementing services that lead to clear outcomes including increased educator effectiveness and student achievement gains. Key project personnel in Table 4 below will be responsible for ensuring that project tasks are completed on time and all milestones are met.

Table 4. Key Personnel for IMPACT Project Team

Key Personnel	Qualifications, Duties
<div>██████████</div> CEO In-kind	<div>██████████</div> will serve as an escalation point for issues that arise in grant implementation. <div>██████████</div> will work to ensure effective implementation and ensure the vision and goals of the project are met. She has served as a state commissioner of education and overseen large-scale grants.
<div>██████████</div> Co-president & Chief Operating Officer (2.5% FTE)	<div>██████████</div> will serve as the principal investigator (PI) for this grant. He has served as a PI, Co-PI, and/or external evaluator for numerous large-scale grants. He has extensive experience working with federally funded projects, having led projects with the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Labor.
<div>██████████</div> Lead Texas Strategist (2.5% FTE)	<div>██████████</div> will provide strategy oversight and provide feedback as questions or needs arise regarding implementation efforts. She has extensive experience working with

	schools and districts to implement the TAP System. She has managed multiple large state and federal grants.
<p>██████████</p> <p><i>Project Director</i></p> <p><i>(1 FTE)</i></p>	<p>██████████ will serve as the IMPACT Project Director. She is a Texas-based NIET team member who has worked with districts, implementing the TAP System and providing support to school and district leadership. ██████████ will provide direct oversight to the project, the implementation, and monitor the quality of training and support for the IMPACT partnering districts.</p>
<p>██████████</p> <p>& one new hire <i>Senior Specialists</i></p> <p><i>(2 positions at 1 FTE)</i></p>	<p>The Senior Specialists will work with the project director to ensure strong implementation across each of the partnering schools. These individuals will work with each district during implementation, delivering training and coaching tailored to each school. ██████████ is based in Texas, and has previously supported state and federal grants, and has deep experience supporting districts and schools.</p>
<p>██████████</p> <p><i>Senior Director of Research</i></p> <p><i>(10% FTE)</i></p>	<p>██████████ will evaluate the impact of the intervention and inform NIET and partner leadership teams. She will disseminate reports and data to external audiences. She has extensive experience conducting evaluations of numerous federal grants.</p>
<p>██████████</p> <p><i>Senior Director of Grant Management & Business Operations</i></p> <p><i>(10% FTE)</i></p>	<p>██████████ will provide budget and reporting oversight for the grant. ██████████ has led budget and grant management for numerous of federal and state grants, and he will work with each district contact to ensure all budgets are utilized as provided within the budget narrative.</p>
<p>██████████</p> <p><i>Assoc. Vice President for Leadership, Learning, and Activation</i></p> <p><i>(20% FTE)</i></p>	<p>██████████ has experience leading organizations and initiatives that provide ongoing academic and support services for all educators. ██████████ will serve as the project lead for developing and delivering the BranchED trainings to partner LEAs to build knowledge and implement best practices for understanding the needs of all educators and students.</p>

██████████, NIET's CEO, has been involved in a number of federal and state grants. Her knowledge of working with and leading schools is a vital element to the success of IMPACT's implementation. ██████████ will serve as the principal investigator for the project and will provide primary oversight and direction for implementation, evaluation, and budget. Daily management and coordination of this project will be the responsibility of ██████████ ██████████, the Project Director, who will work most directly with the school partners. This responsibility will include three subsets of activities to ensure the goals and objectives are achieved on time and within budget: 1) oversight of grant execution; 2) management of grant activities; and 3) work to implement the proposed HCMS in the districts. The Project Director will communicate weekly along with key district points of contact and NIET personnel to ensure effective and proactive management.

NIET will dedicate two Senior Specialists (SS) to this grant who will be responsible for training school-based leadership teams and conducting regular site visits. These SS will work with district leaders, school-based administrators, and master and mentor teachers to anchor the training process. NIET will assign one current SS, ██████████, who has deep expertise in implementing the TAP System along with providing support to principals, school leaders, district leaders, and higher education faculty. Angela currently supports partnerships in Texas and has extensive knowledge of the state and local context for each participating district. NIET will work in collaboration with representatives from the IMPACT districts to hire the additional SS. NIET will seek applicants who have at least five years of classroom teaching experience, preferably as a master teacher in a TAP System school; demonstrated expertise in curriculum aligned to state standards, mentoring, coaching, and professional development; and the ability to lead, train, and coach in a diverse cross-section of schools.

NIET will use cost-control mechanisms that involve work and budget planning and systematic review to ensure the project is delivered within budget. NIET believes that paramount to effective control of any project's costs are detailed work and budget planning, coupled with systematic reviews of actual performance against those plans and the ability to adjust as required. Actual accomplishments and their costs will be compared to the planned work flows and budgets. Each quarter, NIET will generate financial reports for the districts, which will allow NIET and districts to monitor expenditures and review progress toward outcomes. The qualifications of the staff identified in Table 4 represent the full range of skills needed to guarantee quality and timely work on all tasks.

Upon notification of funding NIET will convene an IMPACT Advisory Board that will include: Principal Investigator; Project Director; Senior Specialists; the superintendent (or designee) from each district; representative from BranchED; and school leader and teacher representatives. The Advisory Board will meet quarterly to provide a consistent platform for systematic review of the implementation status and improvement of the project. Specifically, the Advisory Board will also monitor the quality of implementation of the grant activities and the impact of the interventions on student performance, instruction, professional learning supports for teacher growth, and the retention, recruitment, preparation, and development of experienced, effective, and diverse educators.

Finally, NIET will have individual quarterly meetings with each partner district to monitor progress, ensure implementation is on track, and address any challenges that arise. Through the execution of this management plan, IMPACT will achieve its short- and long-term outcomes and the project objectives, including increasing the instructional effectiveness of teachers, improving the leadership capacity of school and district leaders, and increasing student achievement.

D. Adequacy of Resources

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

The implementation of the TAP System in IMPACT schools will result in significant changes to HMCS and PBCS in the IMPACT districts and create the conditions necessary for change in classroom practice. IMPACT will create change in *classroom practice* through: 1) multiple measures of teaching and learning to provide the data to set goals and monitor progress, 2) weekly collaborative learning teams led by trained teacher leaders that provide job-embedded professional learning tied to specific classroom challenges, and 3) individual instructional coaching to provide teachers with hands-on guidance as they implement student learning strategies and improve their practice. School leadership teams build overall instructional leadership capacity to drive *school-level change*, including using data to set goals, designing professional learning, and ensuring that coaching and feedback are having an impact. District leadership teams create direct communication and collaboration among central office staff working to support *district-level change* and coordinate these changes in the schools they support. This coordination is enhanced as district leaders plan and deliver training for school leaders and use observation and feedback along with school visits to create a consistent and coherent message for principals about priorities and goals.

Data and online resources will support continuous improvement. IMPACT districts will use evaluation data to closely integrate evaluation results with professional development through: 1) the evaluation system which produces detailed data on teacher practice and 2) master and mentor teachers who are trained in the rubric and evaluation process, observe in classrooms, and provide job-embedded professional development. As a result of the evaluation process, every teacher receives an area of reinforcement (strength) and an area of growth through the post-

conference. School leadership teams analyze school-wide areas of strength or weakness, trends by grade or subject, and individual teacher performance. Data are used to differentiate professional development based on the needs of individuals and groups of teachers in schools, creating a cycle of continuous improvement.

NIET provides districts with individualized training, resources, and support for all educators through the EE PASS portal, an interactive web tool (Appendix F6). This online resource has been significantly expanded as NIET has developed new tools and supports for schools to use in delivering virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, NIET has developed a companion tool to the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric that illustrates how strong instructional practices can be used effectively in virtual instruction.

Districts will have access to the data analysis functionality of EE PASS to analyze how teachers scored on individual indicators of instructional practice to inform planning for professional learning and other HCMS decisions. The data analytics also support analysis of inter-rater reliability, enabling districts to look at scoring patterns across schools or classrooms, by different evaluators. Analytics and reports also support school and district leaders for how to tailor PLC meeting content and follow-up coaching and support for all teachers according to the rubric indicators and/or subject areas they need the most help with.

(ii) Build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

IMPACT districts recognize the importance of building local capacity to implement the TAP System with fidelity and continuously improve the model, while maintaining support from diverse stakeholders. NIET's district-level coaching and support will improve district practices and embed those improvements in ongoing structures and systems to ensure their continuity

using the District Instructional Framework, which provides clearly defined indicators for instructional excellence. This support will strengthen district systems of instructional support for schools by collaboratively identifying high-impact action steps with districts to improve instruction and providing coaching for district leaders aligned to those action steps. In addition, NIET will support IMPACT districts to create structures at the district level to provide professional learning and coaching for school and teacher leaders. The district leadership team (DLT) provides a critical focal point for strategic support for schools – bringing together central office leaders with different portfolios or areas of focus to work collaboratively to create coherence in these initiatives at the school level.

Support for school leaders includes quarterly collaborative meetings initially led by NIET that will later be facilitated by a member of the DLT and focused on specific areas for improvement based on school visits and observations. This collaborative work helps to extend strong practices and develop a shared commitment to district goals while building leadership capacity. Through these meetings, principals and other school leaders will develop a more consistent approach to evaluating classroom practice, reinforcing expectations across buildings.

Teacher leaders attend similar collaborative monthly meetings led by NIET and a designated DLT leader. Quarterly master teacher meetings provide opportunities to address shared problems of practice based on teacher and student needs and develop strategies for supporting more effective professional learning teams at the school level. Master teachers will work together to calibrate their understanding of strong instruction, creating consistency across the district. This systematic approach of targeted support builds capacity at all levels, including acting as a strong influencing factor in teachers' decisions to apply to and remain in jobs in partner districts.

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

Stakeholder Support. IMPACT has broad support from stakeholders as evidenced by the 87 letters of support submitted by teachers, school leaders, district leaders, community leaders, and elected officials, including the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (Appendix C: Letters of Support). Teachers and school leaders in particular express strong support for IMPACT and how it will support their growth and improvement. NIET's designation by the TEA as an approved provider of services in the areas of school improvement, teacher leadership, evaluation, and mentor teacher support illustrate the strong alignment for this project and the state's efforts to increase equitable access to effective educators for students in high-need schools.

Sustainability planning. Our sustainability and success plan for this project begins with the first kickoff meeting with grant partners and continues to be part of every conversation and advisory meeting throughout. From our 20 years of implementing comprehensive reforms, we understand that sustainability requires building collective buy-in, creating capacity through intentional training and support, increasing educator skills and student growth, and establishing financial sustainability. To demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, IMPACT district partners are providing a more than 50% in-kind matching contribution (Budget Narrative and Appendix D: Match Intent and Ability Letter). This contribution is based on the transition of the structure of the school day, personnel time and effort, and implementation of the IMPACT HCMS, as well as preparing for the financial sustainability from day one. In addition, districts and schools will continue to review other expenditures to determine how funds will be shifted as the improvements supported by the project show impact.

After the initial three years, IMPACT school and district leaders will have built instructional capacity among the faculty; thus, districts will be able to reduce the number of master and

mentor teachers needed and still sustain the TAP System strategies. NIET support will intentionally lighten as the districts build their own training capacity. As a result, costs of implementation will be reduced after the project period, contributing to fiscal sustainability. Additionally, by the end of the grant period, the partnering districts will have established programmatic structures based on the IMPACT training, coaching, and support provided by NIET. These structures will be solidified and their ability to sustain the best practices well-ingrained to their everyday practices.

State-level funding. Compensation for teacher leader roles is a core strategy included in the state's Equitable Access to Excellent Educators plan and is an approved use of state funds for schools in need of improvement. IMPACT districts are also committed to drawing upon these state funds and reviewing existing uses of local, state, and federal Title I and II funds to continue implementing the best practices learned from the training and support provided through this opportunity. These sustainability strategies will enable the partners to integrate the improvements made to their HCMS through IMPACT into budgets, policies, and most importantly their everyday practices. This integration of strategies from the IMPACT will support the district and school culture shifts required to sustain and grow a system of continuous improvement and high expectations. Overall, the IMPACT project will result in long-term, systemic change to district and school structures and systems across four participating districts.

These results will increase the effectiveness of *current* teachers and school leaders and increase the recruitment and retention of *more effective* teachers and school leaders. By creating equitable access to effective educators and significantly improving student academic growth in partner schools and districts, the IMPACT partnership will provide a model for other Texas districts and nationally.