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A. SIGNIFICANCE

The Cultivate System addresses Absolute Priority 1 - Demonstrates a Rationale (see appendix G for logic model) - and Absolute Priority 4 -Field-Initiated Innovations - Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs, as well as Competitive Preference Priority 2 — Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty. This project builds Teach For America (TFA) successful two-year pilot of the Cultivate System in school year 2022-23 across 4 TFA regions, 60 TFA teachers (referred to as corps members), and over 4,000 students, which was expanded during the 2023-24 school year to include 19 TFA regions, 400 corps members, and over 40,000 students.

TFA and The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (Consortium), in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), is seeking EIR Early-phase funding for a five-year research and development project that utilizes the *Cultivate System,* a two-year, student-centered, data-rich professional development program designed to support novice teachers' classroom practices. The design of the Cultivate System draws heavily on [redacted] work at the University of Chicago and TFA's experience training novice teachers. This partnership has piloted and refined the Cultivate System on expanding samples of teachers in low-income schools over the past two years. With this grant, we will continue to scale, test, and refine the Cultivate System in approximately 600 low-income schools in 25 states across the country. In the first year of funding, we aim to administer the Cultivate system to 770 novice teachers, teaching approximately 75,000 students; we will continue to scale and refine the program over the course of the grant period, eventually reaching 3,800 teachers and approximately 350,000 students.

The goal of this project is to improve post-pandemic attendance and academic achievement by improving students' classroom learning conditions, teachers' instructional practices, and students' academic mindsets and academic strategies, through a professional development program that centers on student voice. Specifically, the Cultivate System is comprised of: (1) training for novice teachers and their TFA coaches on the importance of student academic mindsets, academic strategies, and learning environments for social, emotional and academic development; (2) a survey of students' mindsets, strategies, and perceptions of the learning environment that teachers administer *to their students* twice a year; (3) a customized report provided to each teacher that shares results from the student survey and indicates prioritized areas for improvement based on student responses; (4) two years of ongoing professional learning, coaching, and resources to support teachers in making meaning of students' experiences and data and prioritize areas for improvement; (5) research-backed resources and guides to support teachers' prioritized areas for improvement; and (6) ongoing data collection to assess implementation fidelity and inform continuous improvement.

Absolute Priority 1: Research demonstrates that differences in academic performance are not solely due to student aptitudes and interests but are also impacted largely by *learning mindsets and strategies*. *Learning mindsets* are the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions students have about their learning and intelligence (e.g., growth mindset, self-efficacy, impacting their motivation, resilience, and academic performance). *Learning strategies* are methods students use to improve their understanding, retention, and application of knowledge (e.g., organization and time management). Academic mindsets and academic strategies are part of the Cultivate System; empirical and theoretical research from [redacted] and colleagues indicates that learning

mindsets and strategies have a positive impact on student behaviors and outcomes ([redacted] and Klugman, 2019; Yeager et al., 2019, What Works Clearinghouse, 2022).

The *learning environment* matters for developing strong academic mindsets, academic strategies, academic behaviors (e.g., attendance), and academic performance (e.g., grades/test scores) ([redacted] and Klugman, 2019; Paunesku and [redacted] 2020; [redacted] et al., 2023). Students' mindsets and strategies fluctuate from class to class in response to the learning environments they encounter and are known to be malleable and highly influenced by the classroom teacher ([redacted] et al., 2016; [redacted] and Klugman, 2019, Paunesku and [redacted] 2020). The relationship between classroom environments and academic performance is supported by culminating research from the science of learning and development, spanning many academic disciplines (e.g., neuroscience, biology, developmental psychology) (Walton and Cohen, 2011; Jones and Kahn, 2017; Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey, 2019; Osher et al., 2018; Cantor, et al., 2018; Yeager et al., 2019; Paunesku and [redacted] 2020). This body of research provides irrefutable evidence that child development is malleable, shaped by interacting factors including environmental contexts. Key insights for educational practice from the science of learning and development (Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey, 2019; Osher et al., 2018) highlight the importance of learning environments which support students' sense of belonging (Walton and Cohen, 2011) and strong relationships with their teachers and peers (Gehlbach et al., 2016) which in turn further academic performance. Questions related to learning conditions that foster belonging and teacher-student relationships are asked throughout the Cultivate survey.

Student voice is a powerful tool in creating classrooms that are responsive to students' needs, preferences, and interests (Kahne et al., 2022; Conner et al., 2022). When educators actively seek out and incorporate students' opinions on their educational experience and have the

tools and resources to use that student feedback effectively to improve the learning environment, it can lead to stronger student learning mindsets and strategies that positively impact student achievement. When students feel heard and valued, their engagement and investment in learning increases, leading to improved motivation and academic outcomes (Holquist et al., 2023). Furthermore, research indicates that when students perceive their classroom environment positively and feel a sense of autonomy and self-efficacy, it improves their social emotional well-being, which leads to improved academic performance (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010).

For low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), among other disadvantaged students, incorporating student voice is essential to addressing educational inequities. These students, TFA's target demographic, often face systemic barriers and biases that can hinder their academic success. Research indicates that when their voices are included in shaping their educational experiences, it can lead to more culturally responsive teaching practices and curricula that reflect their backgrounds and experiences (Gutiérrez, 2008). Studies show that schools serving predominantly low-income and BIPOC students benefit significantly from practices that elevate student voice. These practices can help bridge the engagement gap and foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among students who might otherwise feel marginalized (Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). By prioritizing student input, educators can create more equitable learning environments that support all students' academic and social-emotional development.

In the Cultivate System, student voice is measured using the Cultivate for Coaches survey, which provides insight into student perceptions of their classroom conditions and social-emotional learning mindsets and strategies for students in grades 5-12. Research demonstrates that student surveys can provide reliable information on students' lived experiences in schools

and can predict meaningful differences in student behavior, achievement, and longer-term outcomes. For example, Kane and Staiger (2012) show that students' perception of their teachers, collected as part of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Study, added new and significant information about teachers' effect on student growth, above and beyond standardized test scores and teacher observations. [redacted] et al.'s study (2019), based on survey data that is a precursor to Cultivate for Coaches, found that when, "a student's classmates rated the classroom environment of one class more highly than another, the student reported feeling more belonging, more motivation, less of a fear of attracting negative attention, better organization and time management, more self-monitoring of their learning, a greater likelihood of getting homework done before doing other things, and better participation in the more highly-rated classroom—and in turn, earned a higher grade in that class than in the lower-rated classroom." (p. 17-18).

Coaching, a key component of the Cultivate System, improves teacher practice in ways that improve student outcomes more than most other educational interventions and traditional professional development (Kraft and Blazer, 2018). TFA's programmatic model utilizes experienced coaches to support first- and second-year teachers and does, as part of the Cultivate System implementation, support teachers in understanding student survey data and using the results to improve practice. Kraft et al. (2018) offer research-backed definition of coaches which is reflected in the role that coaches play in the TFA model, "instructional experts [who] work with teachers to discuss classroom practice in a way that is: (a) individualized — coaching sessions are one-on-one; (b) intensive — coaches and teachers interact at least every couple of weeks; (c) sustained — teachers receive coaching over an extended period; (d) context-specific — teachers are coached on their practices within the context of their own classroom; and (e)

focused — coaches work with teachers to engage in deliberate practice of specific skills." Across 60 studies of randomized evaluations examining the impact of coaching, the authors found a pooled effect size of 0.49 (SD) on instruction - which is greater than the difference in instructional quality often found between novice and veteran teachers – and 0.18 SD on student achievement.

TFA and The Consortium piloted the Cultivate System over two school years and generated promising insights and areas for improvement. After the year-one pilot, there were several key learnings that informed implementation in year two. Changes to the Cultivate System included fully embedding Cultivate into TFA's evolved preservice and ongoing training model at scale; thus, the Cultivate System became more embedded within TFA's programmatic model. For example, all CMs, regardless of participation in Cultivate, are positioned to gather, co-analyze, and reflect on the perspectives of students and stakeholders related to their perceptions of their classroom experiences and the extent to which students are equitably experiencing inclusive classroom learning environments. CMs eligible for Cultivate could then expand on this training to collect student data through the Cultivate for Coaches survey. At the same time, more time was provided for coaches to engage in data-review and guiding conversations with corps members. We also developed a program-wide calendar for coaches and corps members to help them understand the scope and sequence of different programs for the year and to formalize the expectations around the Cultivate System.

For SY24-25, TFA is seeking to expand this partnership to include 770 teachers and 75,000 students across 30 regions and provide additional training and support to increase the use and impact of examining the student survey results in coaching conversations. Updates to the Cultivate system for SY24-25 include shortening the survey and streamlining the report to make

it easier for our corps members to administer and use. Our goal is to take our initial learnings, refine the programmatic components of the Cultivate System, and evaluate the Cultivate System's impact on student outcomes on a larger scale across our network.

Absolute Priority 4: Social emotional learning includes the development of those academic mindsets (e.g., growth mindset) and academic strategies (e.g., organization and time management) that are included in the Cultivate survey and supported through the accompanying resources. Research suggests the importance of students' social emotional development or noncognitive factors in shaping academic and life outcomes (Yeager et al., 2019; Durlak et al., 2011; Cipriano et al., 2023). Cipriano et al. (2023) updated Durlak's 2011 meta-analysis looking at 252 SEL interventions, involving 575,361 students and spanning nearly 600,000 students, and found that students who received SEL interventions experienced improved skills, attitudes, behaviors, school climate and safety, peer relationships and achievement compared to those who did not participate in SEL interventions. Moreover, promoting SEL skills at a young age leads to longer-term outcomes, such as greater likelihood of employment, greater financial stability, and less likelihood of being incarcerated (Moffitt et al., 2011).

Further, research demonstrates that teachers have significant influence on creating those conditions that improve student SEL and behaviors (Jackson, 2012; Brown et al., 2010). In a recent study by [redacted] and Klugman (2019), based on student data from the Becoming Effective Learner Survey (BEL-S), a precursor to Cultivate for Coaches, the authors find that "student noncognitive factors are malleable within classrooms, and that teacher practice can influence their development in ways associated with students' course performance." The Cultivate for Coaches survey, in particular, allows teachers to incorporate student voice into

classroom practices, which can help build students' social– emotional competencies (Caetano et al., 2020; Dobson & Dobson, 2021; Graham, 2018; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

Research demonstrates that student-reported data on student SEL competencies and classroom environment can reliably support an understanding of differences in students' lived experiences and can predict meaningful differences in student behavior, achievement and longer-term outcomes (Jackson et al., 2020; Kane and Staiger, 2012; [redacted] et al., 2019). For example, [redacted] et al. (2023) utilized student self-report measures of SEL and school climate and found that results from these surveys were more predictive of future attainment than traditional achievement scores.

Competitive Priority Preference 2: Post-pandemic results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show the profound impact the pandemic had on student learning. There were significant and alarming declines in average scores across all tested content areas, with the most significant decreases among American Indian/Alaska Native (20 points), Black (13 points), and Latinx students (10 points) as well as students of two or more races (8 points) compared to white students (6 points). And the gap between the lowest- and highest-performing students and students in the poorest and wealthiest districts also widened (U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Educational Science, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Math Assessment). These gaps and losses in student learning are coupled with increased rates of chronic absenteeism, depression and persistent feelings of sadness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). These feelings are understandable, as more than 142,000 children lost a caregiver during the COVID-19 pandemic, and these children were disproportionately racial and ethnic minorities. According to the National Institutes of Health, "Compared to white children, American

Indian/Alaska Native children were 4.5 times more likely to lose a parent or grandparent caregiver, Black children were 2.4 times more likely, and Hispanic children were nearly 2 times (1.8) more likely." And post-pandemic increases in classroom disruptions and chronic absenteeism threaten academic recovery (an astonishing thirty percent or 14.7 million students were chronically absent the first post-pandemic school year). Recovery efforts have fallen short with small increases in learning—students have made up only about one-third of the loss in math and one-quarter of the loss in reading (Dewey et al., 2024). It is estimated that learning loss from the pandemic will lead to almost $900 billion in lost lifetime income for the 48 million students in school during 2020-2021 (Kane et al., 2022). At the national level, this could equate to economic losses totaling approximately $31 trillion (Handel & Hanushek, 2023). Simply put, our business-as-usual approach to schooling will not suffice; we must develop innovative solutions to address the significant challenges the pandemic left in its wake.

Although the Cultivate System incorporates research-backed elements (e.g., targets instructional practices over content knowledge, emphasizes student/teacher relationships, is delivered through one- on-one coaching, and includes follow up meetings and accountability for improvement), it is an innovative solution to post-pandemic recovery because it is driven by student voice. The Cultivate survey gives students an avenue for expressing their lived experiences in their classrooms and gives teachers a window into their students' mindsets and learning strategies. Acting on those student surveys strengthens teacher/student relationships and fosters student community and belonging, leading to greater student engagement and improved attendance. And incorporating student voice into classroom practices has several advantages, including building students' social and academic skills (Conner et al., 2022; Kahne et al., 2022), allowing teachers to address root causes of inequities in education (Biddle, 2019; Davis & Hall,

2020; Warren & Marciano, 2018), and supporting systemic educational change efforts around classroom teaching and school culture (Brasof & Spector, 2016; Mager & Nowak, 2012; Mitra, 2018; Zeldin et al., 2005).

The pandemic had a significant and detrimental impact on students' social, emotional, and academic well-being. Recovery, especially at a time of increased classroom disruptions and unprecedented absenteeism, will be accelerated if schooling is redesigned with significant input from students. The Cultivate System places students at the center of the educational experience, and with the critical component of instructional coaching, it works to ensure their voices drive teachers' actions in real-time. The use of the Cultivate System, especially in in the schools serving large populations of students who are chronically absent and who have experienced the greatest pandemic learning loss (low-income students, students of color), offers an opportunity to redesign how schools approach teaching and learning, addressing long-standing gaps in educational opportunities and better preparing students for college and careers by prioritizing student voices (Holquist et al., 2023; Mitra 2004).

B. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

B1. Conceptual Framework

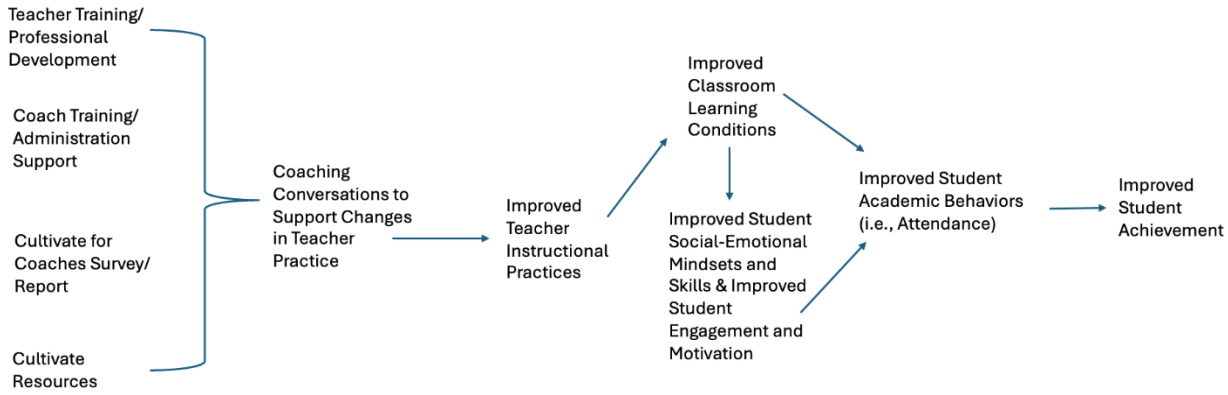
TFA attracts exceptional, equity-oriented, and diverse leaders into education by recruiting and selecting individuals who demonstrate the values and leadership necessary to transform high-need classrooms. We position these corps members to increase student academic and social-emotional achievement by providing intensive, research-backed, best-in-class training and ongoing support that includes rigorous and continuous development. This approach promotes continuous improvement, enabling effective instruction to enhance student outcomes across

social, emotional, and academic dimensions, while also cultivating corps members' leadership capabilities.

The Cultivate System is embedded in TFA's training and ongoing support program and the goal, depicted in Exhibit 1, is to increase academic achievement. Effecting the change in student achievement is increased student attendance, which can be positively impacted, in part, by strong academic mindsets and academic learning strategies. Student mindsets are shaped by classroom learning environments which are driven largely by teachers' instructional practices. Of course, we know from research that student development is not a linear process but instead includes interacting systems and processes that form an ecological system driving individual student development (i.e., student achievement is both impacted by academic mindsets, and in turn, impacts academic mindsets) (Jones et al., 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Brofenbrenner, 1981). However, we simplified the conceptual model below for clarity in this proposal (see Appendix G for Logic Model).

To support corps members in improving classroom learning environment and instructional practices, they will administer the Cultivate Survey in their classrooms twice a year, engage with insights from student surveys and structured professional development, and engage with professional development trainings and resources, along with 1:1 coaching, to interpret the survey data and implement strategies that foster positive classroom conditions.

Exhibit B1: The Cultivate System Conceptual Model



Through coach-educator conversations rooted in student survey data, individualized teacher reports based on survey data, and aligned resources to improve those learning conditions, corps members can set improvement goals and identify practices aligned with their goals and school contexts. As part of the TFA preservice and ongoing training model, corps members receive intensive support to increase their comfort and skill in front of students and in their teaching practice. As former successful teachers, instructional leads, and school leaders, coaches conduct regular cycles of observation and feedback from 2-4 hours a month with each corps member. Working closely with each of their assigned corps members, coaches analyze data and teacher leadership dispositions and mindsets, support corps members' development of culturally relevant teaching practices, and work with corps members to create individual plans for progress.

B2. Project Design

The Cultivate System includes an anonymous student survey administered twice a year: once in the fall and once in the spring. As such, a key component of Cultivate implementation is securing Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs) with local education agencies (LEAs) that allow corps members to administer the Cultivate student survey and allows TFA to collect student responses. For SY23-24, we secured DSAs in over 140 LEAs across 19 regions. We anticipate doubling the number of DSAs that enable Cultivate administration for SY24-25 (regions have

until July 31st to finalize DSAs for SY24-25). For a full list of our Cultivate school partners where we have obtained DSAs, please see Appendix J1 and J14.

After survey completion, corps members receive a comprehensive report that includes students' perceptions of their classroom learning environment and their mindsets and strategies within it. Interpretation and use of the survey results are supported by two 90-minute learning experiences for eligible corps members, two 90-minute learning experiences for coaches, ongoing coaching opportunities for corps members to embed their learnings from the Cultivate student survey into practice, and a toolbox of Cultivate resources that are designed to support corps members in improving their classroom learning conditions. Each coaching conversation is grounded in the ORID Coaching Framework, which was developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs and is a field-recognized best practice for facilitating coaching conversations grounded in data, reflection, analysis, and decision making (Stanfield, 2000). See Appendix J2 for ORID Coaching Framework.

Project Implementation Strategy: A collaborative team was created to pilot the Cultivate System over the last 2 years. To implement the proposed project, this team will continue to work together to: (1) scale Cultivate for Implementation to more regions, corps members, and students, including securing a significant number of DSAs and creating systems for large-scale survey administration; (2) further embed Cultivate seamlessly into the Pre-Service and ongoing training support model; (3) design and refine CM and coach trainings as necessary for scaling; (4) ensure high response rates for student survey administration; (5) support the use of the ORID coaching framework to ground Cultivate data in coaching conversations; and (6) gather data for continuous improvement (see section B3 below).

As part of project implementation, there are key components necessary for fidelity implementation of the Cultivate system (see Exhibit 2 below, and Appendix J3 for implementation timeline).

Exhibit B2. Cultivate System Key Project Components

1. **Cultivate Survey** will be administered by teachers to students in the fall and spring of each academic year. The survey takes about 20 minutes and asks students questions about their mindsets, strategies, and motivation they experience within the CM's classroom (see Appendix B for Cultivate survey questions). Students are also asked to provide their race/ethnicity, gender, and classroom period. *TFA will provide training and direct assistance to teachers administering surveys.*
2. **Cultivate Report** will be shared with coaches and corps members after each administration summarizing their students' perceptions of their classroom learning environment and their mindsets and learning strategies within it. In addition to breaking down the data by classroom period, race/ethnicity, gender, and administration window, the report also uses an algorithm to produce a prioritized set of learning conditions for the teacher to consider (See Appendix C for an example Cultivate report teachers receive after each student survey). *The report has undergone user testing.*
3. **Corps Member Learning Experiences** for corps members participating in the Cultivate System (i.e., those teaching in grades 5-12, in schools covered by a DSA allowing for Cultivate administration), they must participate in two 90-minute learning experiences. The first experience happens at the start of the academic year before corps members administer the Cultivate survey. In this experience, corps members learn about the links between student performance, student mindsets, and the environments teachers create in their classrooms. Additionally, corps members learn about how to prepare and administer the Cultivate student survey. The second experience happens after corps members receive their first report (late fall/early winter). The second experience is differentiated by corps year. Corps members in their first year of teaching learn about how to reflect and act on their Cultivate report after the survey is administered, while corps members in their second year of teaching learn about participatory data analysis and create a plan to co-analyze and interpret the survey data to strengthen the classroom learning conditions (See Appendix J4 for objectives for each learning experience). *These learning experiences are embedded into the scope and sequence of TFA's preservice and ongoing training program.*

4. **Coach Learning Experiences** consists of two 90-minute learning experiences to support their corps members throughout the year, including planning for structured conversations about the Cultivate data. The first experience happens at the start of the year before corps members administer the Cultivate survey. In this experience, coaches learn about Cultivate implementation throughout the year, developing a vision and strategy for how they will utilize Cultivate in their coaching work, and how to support corps members as they are preparing to administer the Cultivate survey. The second experience happens prior to the return of the fall Cultivate reports. In the second experience, coaches learn how to read and analyze the Cultivate reports, review and internalize the second corps member learning experience that they will facilitate, and prepare for upcoming coaching conversations in which Cultivate will be a focus. *These learning experiences are listed in coaches job descriptions and tied to performance.*
5. **Coaching Conversations:** Drawing on a set of learning condition guides that lay out the key principles and suggested classroom strategies for each prioritized learning condition (see Appendix D for a full list of resources available to coaches and corps members during these conversations), coaches are able to support CMs in reflecting and making adjustments to their teaching practice based on the Cultivate survey student data. Attention to fostering corps members' prioritized learning condition(s) (see Appendix J4) is then woven into action planning and other protocols used by corps members and coaches throughout the year. For example, coaches may look for evidence of this condition during observations, they may point the corps member to other teachers/teacher leaders in the school for support, and they may direct the corps member to other resources provided by TFA to further support the development of this skillset (e.g., additional coaching and resources). *The Cultivate results will be embedded in structured coaching conversations.*

B3. Continuous Improvement

Key to the design of this project is using the findings collected through the performance metrics (section B3) and evaluation results (Section E) to generate insights for programmatic improvement. We will rely on data from participants (corps member and coach) pre- and post-surveys, participant attendance data, student survey data, and student response rates to inform changes from year to year. In line with Guskey's (1999) framework, the data we are collecting includes participation perceptions (e.g., % of corps members that agree that it was easy for

students to access the survey); participant knowledge; (e.g. % of corps members that agree that Cultivate professional development was effective at developing their own knowledge and skills to support teachers); participant mindsets (i.e., % of corps members that agree that they have deeper understanding of their students based on the cultivate survey); enabling conditions (e.g., survey administration rates); participant practice (e.g., % of corps members that indicate they tried out at least one new practice based on the student data); and student outcomes (e.g., the impact of TFA's use of the Cultivate program on student achievement in Grades 6–8). As with the prior two years, we will use the data to make improvements to the Cultivate System to ensure greater fidelity of implementation across corps members and coaches.

Dissemination: A final aspect to the design plan is the dissemination of learnings, which is vital to engaging the larger field, particularly policymakers and practitioners, in supporting the development of our teaching workforce. Dissemination activities will include sharing findings through social media, scholarly journals, and publications and conferences aimed at practitioners and non-profit organizations. With our partners at the University of Chicago, TFA will actively share implementation and impact findings in clear and user-friendly language, through pathways that are accessible to educators, policymakers, universities, and nonprofit organizations supporting teacher development. This will include Op-Eds, infographics, webinars, and practitioner-friendly reports. Both organizations will use their respective networks and their respective communications team to disseminate all public-facing products from this project. This includes social media, email listservs, and organization-sponsored events and webinars. AIR, TFA and the Consortium will jointly publish articles in journals, including peer-reviewed journals, as well as present the results of this project at scholarly conferences (e.g., AERA) practitioner-facing conferences (e.g., CASEL's SEL Convening). These dissemination activities

are intended to share with districts, teacher preparation and certification programs, coaching programs, and professional development providers what we are learning about designing, delivering, and scaling the Cultivate System to further support educators in creating inclusive, equitable, and rigorous learning environments driven by student voice.

B4. Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Over the course of a five-year EIR grant, TFA, in partnership with The Consortium and AIR, aims to test the impact of the Cultivate Framework integrated into the TFA model and understand its effects on corps members' teaching practices and the role that it plays in creating positive learning environments in underserved urban and rural schools across the country.

Our primary goals target three groups: TFA coaches, TFA corps members, and their students. For coaches, the aim is to train them to help teachers use student survey data to create more rigorous and equitable learning environments. For corps members, the goal is to utilize data from the Cultivate student survey to enhance classroom conditions, benefiting student mindsets, behaviors, and development. For students, the goal is to help them develop stronger social-emotional learning mindsets and strategies, improved academic behaviors, and demonstrate greater engagement and motivation, ultimately leading to greater academic achievement. Appendix J5 specifies the objectives, strategies, and outcomes to be achieved, and how each outcome will be measured.

B5. Addressing the Needs of the Target Population

The Cultivate Framework is specifically designed to address the needs of high-need students in grades 5 through 12 and their teachers. As one of the nation’s largest producers of teachers for high-need schools, TFA leverages its extensive experience in recruiting and preparing thousands of teachers nationwide to serve low-income and historically marginalized

students. To that end, approximately 90% of the students taught by TFA corps Members are students of color (including AAPI, Black, Latino/Hispanic, Native, or 'Other'); specifically, about 44% are Black, and another 44% are Latino/Hispanic, and over 80% qualify for the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program. Additionally, over 90% of the schools we serve are Title I eligible, a designation often associated with teacher shortages in high-priority areas (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017).

Research underscores the critical need for effective teachers in low-income schools. Studies have shown that a disproportionate number of low-income students in public schools are taught by less effective teachers compared to those in high-income schools (Chetty et al., 2014; Goldhaber et al., 2022; Sass et al., 2012). Our proven approach to recruiting and preparing teachers is designed to meet this challenge. In fact, six studies that meet the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards demonstrate that teachers recruited into and supported by TFA's model of preparation and development improve student achievement. Three studies meet WWC standards without reservations, (Clark, et al., 2013; Clark, et al., 2017; Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004) and the remaining three meet WWC standards with reservations (Henry, et al., 2014; Turner, Goodman, Adachi, Brite, & Decker, 2012; Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor, 2011). As such, we are confident that embedding the Cultivate Framework within our existing model will only further enhance the effectiveness of our corps members, providing the students we serve with the high-quality education they deserve.

In addition to the diversity of the high need students our corps members teach, a key component of our strategy is the recruitment and development of a diverse corps, as research demonstrates that having a teacher of color significantly impacts not only students' academic growth but also their social-emotional development (Kraft et. al, 2018). Currently, nearly 60% of

our corps members identify as people of color, and 60% of our corps members identify as low-income. This diversity – both racial and socio-economic – allows our teachers to relate to their students, fostering inclusivity and belonging in the classroom while bringing a wide range of experiences to their teaching practice.

To prepare these educators to enter diverse classrooms across the country, we place a particular focus on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) training. Embedding CRP in curriculum leads to increased academic success, higher student engagement and motivation, and the development of critical thinking skills (Christianakis, 2011; Ensign, 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2004; Tate, 1995). By understanding the importance of CRP, our corps members are better equipped to lead classrooms where high-need students can meet rigorous standards and where their identities and strengths are valued and affirmed.

TFA's collaboration with the Consortium further strengthens our efforts to meet the needs of the students we serve. Their work focuses on supporting stronger and more equitable educational outcomes through high-quality research that informs and assesses policy and practice in Chicago Public Schools, one of the most diverse school districts in the nation. [redacted] extensive experience as a public-school educator and her efforts to challenge inequitable practices in education bring valuable insights to our approach. Her work supports the ongoing growth and development of educators, aiming to transform the daily schooling experience and life outcomes for educationally marginalized students and communities.

C. QUALITY OF PROJECT PERSONNEL

The project team, comprising personnel from Teach For America (TFA), the University of Chicago, and AIR, has collaborated for two years to successfully develop and pilot the Cultivate System. Each organization brings extensive experience working in low-income schools and

communities. All organizations are equal opportunity employers. All team members are dedicated to ensuring that historically underserved students and teachers receive the necessary resources and experiences to succeed, with a focus on inclusion, belonging, and equity.

TFA believes that achieving educational equity and excellence requires a diverse coalition united by common goals and values. Change must be driven by those directly impacted by educational inequity. Progress relies on effective collaboration across differences—with students, parents, partners, and each other—and on leveraging our unique identities and experiences. Consequently, TFA strives to build a diverse team to meet the varied needs of communities, with over 50% of TFA staff identifying as BIPOC.

Similarly, the University of Chicago values the rich diversity of its campus community. All leadership team members of this project come from historically marginalized populations, underscoring our commitment to equity and representation.

100% of the project leadership team, comprised of team members from both organizations, come from historically marginalized populations.

TFA, which will serve as the prime on this proposal, is a national nonprofit dedicated to ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students by developing the leadership of teachers. Since 1990, TFA has recruited, placed, and supported over 62,000 teachers in underserved schools, positively impacting more than 3 million students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes. TFA corps members, who will participate in the Cultivate System, were selected through a rigorous admissions model that prioritizes diversity in lived experiences and a commitment to TFA's mission to expand opportunities for all children.

The Consortium on School Research at the University of Chicago, a key partner on this project, conducts high-quality research to inform educational policy and practice and foster

systemic school improvement. The team of collaborators at the Consortium have extensive experience building evidence and advancing practice related to cultivating student voice and equitable learning environments, AIR, which will serve as the project external evaluator, conducts rigorous evaluations of education programs, practices, and policies has been evaluating TFA's impact for nearly a decade. As a leading education evaluation organization, AIR has strong standards for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Together, TFA, the University of Chicago, and AIR have formed a robust partnership aimed at expanding educational opportunities and addressing the needs of students in low-income and marginalized communities, thereby improving both their social-emotional development and academic performance.

Staffing Plan: A team of diverse and experienced researchers, subject matter experts, teacher preparation designers, coaches, operations managers, and evaluators will implement the Cultivate System and the project plan on time and within budget. We have two years of experience working as a team to implement the Cultivate System and have met all deadlines and budget allocations. All staff working on this project have relevant training, years of experience, and an abundance of knowledge and skills to start immediately upon award of the grant. [redacted] Project Director, has 25 years of research and evaluation experience and has led many multimillion-dollar projects, including a national content center funded within the National Comprehensive Center Program. [redacted] Co-Project Director, has 15 years of research and evaluation experience, focused on students' social, emotional and academic development, and has worked on several large federal grants and centers, including the Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety, the Northeast and Islands Regional Education Laboratory, and several i3 grants. [redacted] is a former educator who

has held senior roles including Chief Schools' Officer for Indianapolis Public Schools, Area Superintendent of the Central Learning Community in Fulton County Schools, and Instructional Leadership Director for Oklahoma City Public Schools. [redacted] Senior Research Associate at the University of Chicago and Managing Director of UChicago's Consortium on School Research, leads the UChicago Consortium's Equitable Learning & Development Group. Her research and partnerships have focused on understanding the role of structural factors in shaping social, emotional, and motivational experiences—particularly during key transitions along the life trajectory and for students served by large school districts. [redacted] serves as PI on several grants, has developed multiple tools to facilitate large-scale, interdisciplinary education research, and has developed and directed three national fellowships for education scholars; her work has been featured in psychology and economics journals and has been translated for a number of outlets. [redacted] MA, PMP, AIR Project Director, has extensive experience managing complex, cross-organization communication and data collection efforts to support research and collaboration, including work on multiple regional educational laboratory contracts, Investing in Innovation evaluations, and Education Innovation and Research (EIR) evaluations (See Appendix B for resumes).

Exhibit C2. The Leadership Team

Role/Organization	Name/FTE	Roles & Responsibilities
Project Director, TFA	[redacted] (.25 FTE)	Provides high-level administrative and operational oversight of project administration, ensure goals and outcomes are effectively met on time and on budget. Primary liaison with evaluation team.
Co-Project Director, TFA	[redacted] (.90 FTE)	Responsible for daily operation, manages deadlines, and works with fiscal team to manage budget and ensure fiscal compliance. Lends subject matter expertise and leads continuous

		improvement process. Communicates objectives, progress, and outcomes to leadership team and other stakeholders and disseminates results through myriad communications channels, including national conferences and stakeholder engagements.
Senior Advisor	[redacted] (.10 FTE)	Responsible for preservice and ongoing training for corps members and will ensure that the Cultivate System is seamlessly embedded in the program.
Implementation Lead, TFA	[redacted] (.60 FTE)	Leads implementation team and responsible for implementation fidelity. Leads programmatic refinement. Communicates implementation progress to LT, project team members, and other stakeholders.
Project Director, AIR	[redacted] MA (.13 FTE)	Will manage the day-to-day operation of the impact and implementation evaluations and oversee project management of the evaluations, including communicating objectives, progress, and outcomes of evaluation and overseeing on-time deliverables.
Project Director, Consortium	[redacted] (.10 FTE)	Will serve as subject matter expert for implementation and continuous improvement, oversee work of the Consortium, including refinement of PD and data collection tools, and will be the Consortium liaison with evaluation team. Will support dissemination through Consortium channels.

D. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

To successfully execute the management plan (see Appendix J6), TFA, as the prime and fiduciary organization, will be responsible for project oversight and coordination, including recruiting and retaining teachers and school partners, monitoring implementation fidelity, overseeing continuous improvement, and collaborating partners, researchers and evaluators. TFA's fiscal manager will work closely with project leadership to monitor the budget and

expenses and ensure invoicing and required fiscal reporting are completed on time. TFA will provide the overall project management necessary for a project of this scope. TFA has the infrastructure and capacity to manage large-scale, multiyear grants and has a history of managing projects so that they remain on time and within budget and produce high-quality deliverables (See Exhibit D1 below).

Exhibit D1: Federal Grant Projects Overseen by TFA

Year	Department	Grant
2013-2023 (6 grants)	U.S. Department of Education	Supporting Effective Educator Development
2018-2023	U.S. Department of Education	Education, Innovation, Research
2018-2021	National Science Foundation	Computer Science for All
2013-2015	National Science Foundation	Early-concept Grants for Exploratory Research
2010-2015	U.S. Department of Education	Investing in Innovation

As a key partners:

- Consortium will support the development of trainings and resources for corps members and coaches, including the collection and reporting of corps member and coach and pre- and post-surveys.
- Impact will oversee the on-time administration and reporting of the Cultivate for Coaches Student Survey.
- AIR will conduct an independent impact study and provide formative feedback and periodic assessment of progress toward outcome.

Seven teams will support the execution of the project (see Exhibit D2 below). This includes the Leadership Team, which will be responsible for careful and detailed monitoring of the project and will be collectively responsible for implementation timelines, project budget, and management of the project team. The Leadership Team will meet weekly to review progress and

quarterly to review budget and expenses. The Implementation Team will meet weekly to discuss implementation goals, design key resources, troubleshoot challenges, and assess progress towards timeline and implementation goals. Additionally, members of the Implementation Team meet with members of the Coaching Team at key points throughout the year (up to five times) to support development, implementation, and coaching. The Implementation and Survey Administration and Data teams will meet weekly to monitor data collection and reporting and identify means to improve quality and efficiency. The Senior Advisors and Leadership Team will meet quarterly and as needed to support integration and identify ways to communicate and advocate for the project internally. Finally, the leadership team will facilitate meetings with the Advisory Board twice a year to provide ongoing feedback on project implementation and continuous improvement.

Exhibit D2. Cultivate System Key Team Member Roles and Responsibilities

Team	Members/Organization	Roles & Responsibilities
Leadership Team (LT)	[redacted] TFA (.35 FTE); [redacted], TFA (.90 FTE); [redacted] TFA (.10 FTE); [redacted] TFA (.60 FTE;) [redacted] Consortium (.10 FTE); [redacted], MA, AIR (.13 FTE)	Meets weekly to ensure project activities and timelines are on track, make meaning of data and evaluation findings, lead continuous improvement plans, and provide oversight and management.

(external) Advisory Board	[redacted]: CEO, Urban Assembly [redacted]: Senior Director of Education Measurement and Assessment, American Institutes of Research [redacted]: Senior Program Officer, Gates Foundation [redacted]: Co-founder and Executive Director of Da Vinci RISE High School; Assistant Superintendent of Student Services across the Da Vinci Schools network	The Advisory Board is composed of leaders from the field who have been serving in this role for the past 2 years. Provide high-level technical, subject matter, and implementation support. Identify and share additional resources. Support dissemination through their networks The Advisory Board will meet with leadership team and additional staff as necessary, two times a year for duration of project
(internal) Senior Advisors	[redacted] TFA (.10 FTE); [redacted] TFA (.05 FTE); [redacted] Consortium	Provide high-level program design and integration support. High-level support mobilizing support and resources for project within TFA. Communicates and advocates for project with key internal and external stakeholders.
Implementation Team	[redacted], TFA (.50 FTE); [redacted], TFA (.25 FTE); [redacted] TFA (.25 FTE); [redacted] TFA (.20 FTE); [redacted] MA, Consortium (.20 FTE); [redacted] MA, Consortium (.20 FTE);	The Implementation Team is charged with assessing progress towards implementation goals and timeline, designing key resources, and troubleshooting challenges. Regularly prepares to meet with and support Coaching Team.
Coaching Team	5 Coaches (.25 FTE)	The Coaching Team attends five (5) experiences throughout the year, in partnership with the Implementation Team, to support Corps members in utilizing the Cultivate system and improving practice
Survey Administration & Data Team	[redacted], MA, TFA (.25 FTE); [redacted] TFA (.25 FTE);	Oversee survey administration and reporting through Impact's platform. Mange ingestion of survey data and survey response rates into TFAs internal systems. Refine TFA aggregate data

	[redacted] TFA (.30 FTE)	reporting tool and internal reporting. Oversee and execute DSA strategy, supporting regions in renewing/establishing DSAs to enable Cultivate administration
Evaluation Team	[redacted] Principal Investigator, AIR (.09 FTE); [redacted] MA Project Director AIR (.13 FTE); [redacted] Impact Lead (.10 FTE); [redacted] Implementation Lead (.11 FTE)	The evaluation team will oversee most aspects of the implementation study and impact study, including development of implementation instruments, data collection, conducting and analyzing interview data, preparing data sharing agreements with districts/CMOs, collecting student attendance and achievement data, analyzing implementation and impact data, and preparing final reports.

E. Quality of the Project Evaluation

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) will conduct a rigorous and independent evaluation of the TFA Cultivate program, designed to meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards with reservations. The evaluation will provide TFA timely and actionable formative feedback essential for ongoing monitoring and improvement of program implementation and will examine the impact of Cultivate on teacher practice, student achievement, and student engagement (defined as attendance). The evaluation will draw on multiple data sources to address the research questions (RQs) in Exhibit E.1 and use a quasi-experimental design (QED) to evaluate program impacts.

Exhibit E.1. Research Questions and Data Sources

Research questions (RQs)	Primary data source(s)
Confirmatory impact questions	
1. What is the impact of TFA's use of the Cultivate program on student achievement in Grades 6–8?	Grades 6–8 statewide mathematics and English language arts (ELA) test scores from administrative records Cohort 1: spring 2026 test scores (baseline) and spring 2027 test scores (outcome) Cohort 2: spring 2027 test scores (baseline) and spring 2028 test scores (outcome)
2. What is the impact of TFA's use of the Cultivate program on student attendance in Grades 6–8?	Grades 6–8 student attendance records from administrative records Cohort 1: 2025–26 attendance records (baseline) and 2026–27 attendance records (outcome) Cohort 2: 2026–27 attendance records (baseline) and 2027–28 attendance records (outcome)
3. What is the impact of TFA's use of the Cultivate program on the quality of Corps Member (CM) teacher practice?	Classroom Assessment Scoring System–Secondary (CLASS-S) classroom observation ratings Cohort 1: fall 2026 observation ratings (baseline) and spring 2027 observation ratings (outcome) Cohort 2: fall 2027 observation ratings (baseline) and spring 2028 observation ratings (outcome)
Exploratory impact questions	
4. To what extent does the impact of Cultivate on teacher practice vary across subjects, grades, or teacher experiences?	Primary data source for RQ 3
5. To what extent is the impact of Cultivate on student achievement mediated by CM teacher practice?	Primary data source for RQ 1 and RQ 3
6. To what extent is the impact of Cultivate on student attendance mediated by CM teacher practice?	Primary data source for RQ 2 and RQ 3
Implementation evaluation	
7. To what extent is the Cultivate program being implemented with fidelity?	2026–27 and 2027–28 program records (e.g., TFA implementation plans, records of program delivery, coaching schedules, CM attendance, coaching/observation logs)
8. What factors help or hinder effective program implementation and student engagement?	Interviews and surveys with coaches, CMs, and TFA and UChicago staff

	Midyear surveys: 2026–27 and 2027–28 Year-end surveys and interviews: spring 2027 and spring 2028
9. What are CMs' and coaches' perceptions of the Cultivate program and its usefulness and relevance to their practice?	Primary data source for RQ 8

TFA will implement Cultivate in middle school Grades 6–8 in approximately eight TFA regions and across two cohorts. TFA is currently negotiating service agreements with a number of districts. Please refer to Exhibit J.14.1 in Appendix J.14 for a list of TFA regions which include districts that have existing agreements with TFA to administer Cultivate. The evaluation will focus on middle school grades because teachers typically maintain continuous relationships with students throughout the academic year and because the impact measures (Classroom Assessment Scoring System–Secondary® [CLASS-S®], student attendance, and state scores) are valid and reliable measures for students in this grade band. Cohort 1 will begin implementation in the 2026–27 academic year, and Cohort 2 will begin implementation in the 2027–28 academic year. TFA and AIR will use spring 2025 and the 2025–26 academic year to finalize project activities, develop and pilot-test implementation instruments, recruit participants, and secure data-sharing agreements to administer the Cultivate survey with participating schools and districts. In the 2028–29 academic year and fall/winter 2029, AIR will conduct data analysis and disseminate findings. See Appendix J.7 for a detailed timeline of study activities.

E1. Methods to Generate Evidence That Meets WWC Standards With Reservations

To estimate the impacts of Cultivate on teacher practice and student achievement and attendance, AIR will use a QED with propensity score matching that is expected to **meet WWC standards with reservations**. This design allows for rigorous evaluation of outcomes with large samples of students across the communities served by TFA. Empirical within-study comparisons

demonstrate that studies using propensity score methods can reproduce the results of randomized controlled trials (RCTs; Pohl et al., 2009; Shadish et al., 2008).

For this evaluation, the treatment group will include CMs placed in districts with which TFA has an agreement to administer the Cultivate survey. The agreements will allow TFA coaches to access survey data, enabling them to discuss individual classroom data with treatment CMs, prioritize areas for improvement, and use Cultivate resources to support teaching practices.

To ensure a valid contrast between the treatment and comparison CMs, AIR will construct a propensity score model matching treatment CMs with other CMs in the same TFA regions and who share similar characteristics (demographics, years of teaching experience, grade and subject taught), work in similar schools, and teach students with similar prior achievement or prior attendance and demographic composition (Nathenson et al., 2021). These matched CMs, who do not participate in the Cultivate program, will form a closely balanced comparison group. Matching between CMs provides a better match than employing non-CMs so that the impact of Cultivate will not be confounded with the impact of other aspects of the TFA model (e.g., social-emotional learning preservice training). AIR will conduct separate matching for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 CMs to ensure valid matches for each cohort. This process will result in **two main analytic samples** and contrasts: (a) Cohorts 1 and 2 TFA treatment CMs who fully participate in Cultivate and matched comparison CMs in school years 2026–27 and 2027–28 (RQs 3 and 4), and (b) students of Cohorts 1 and 2 TFA treatment CMs who fully participate in Cultivate and students of matched comparison CMs in school years 2026–27 and 2027–28 (RQs 1, 2, 5, and 6). See Appendix J.2 for more information on propensity score matching.

AIR will assess baseline equivalence using the standardized mean difference measure on all baseline variables used in this matching process at the teacher level for the teacher outcome

(CLASS-S observation ratings) and at both the teacher and student levels for each student outcome (achievement and attendance), ensuring that the analytic samples satisfy the WWC's baseline equivalence standards (What Works Clearinghouse, 2022). See Appendix J.8 for more information.

After constructing the matched groups and assessing baseline equivalence, AIR will measure the **impact of Cultivate on student achievement (RQ 1) and student attendance (RQ 2)** using regression analyses that will estimate mean differences in achievement scores and student attendance rates between students taught by treatment CMs and students taught by matched comparison CMs. Models will be multilevel, with students nested in teachers, include cohort fixed effects and teacher random effects, and control for prior year student achievement or prior year student attendance and other covariates used in the matching process. A power analysis estimated that the minimum detectable effect size (MDES) is 0.10 for student outcomes (sample of 5,160 students nested within 258 CMs, including 129 treatment CMs and 129 matched comparison CMs, assuming 20 students per CM). This is well powered given the average student achievement effects of 0.16 in a meta-analysis of RCTs of teacher coaching (Kraft et al., 2018). AIR also will measure the **effect of Cultivate on the quality of teacher practices (RQ 3)** using regression analyses to estimate mean differences in overall teacher practice scores between treatment and matched comparison CMs, as measured by CLASS-S. The analysis will control for characteristics related to teacher background, grades, subjects taught, and student composition. A power analysis estimated an MDES of 0.22 for teacher practice outcomes, well below the average effects of 0.42–0.74 on teacher practice found in teacher coaching and professional development meta-analyses (Garrett et al., 2019; Garrett et al., 2021; Kraft et al., 2018).

AIR also will address exploratory RQs. To examine the extent to which the **effects of Cultivate on teaching practice differ across teacher characteristics (RQ 4),** AIR will estimate a series of exploratory moderation models that follow the same structure as the impact analysis model but will include interaction terms between specific moderators and the treatment indicator. The list of moderators includes the subjects taught, grade levels taught, and teachers' years of teaching experience. AIR will examine how **teacher practice mediates student achievement effects (RQ 5)** and **attendance effects (RQ 6)**, as hypothesized in the logic model. See Appendices J.9 and J.4 for information on the power analysis and analytic models.

E2. Methods That Provide Feedback and Periodic Assessment of Progress

Using a blend of data sources, AIR will provide performance feedback on: (a) implementation of the Cultivate program; (b) the factors that help or hinder implementation; and (c) perceived usefulness and relevance of the Cultivate program to CM practice. Data sources include program records such as schedules, session attendance records, and coaching and observation logs, as well as interviews and surveys of CMs, coaches, and TFA and UChicago staff.

Measuring Implementation: To assess implementation fidelity **(RQ 7)**, AIR will work with TFA to identify key program components, indicators of successful implementation, and appropriate thresholds to examine whether the program was implemented as intended in Cohorts 1 and 2. AIR will compare TFA's delivery of the program (i.e., performance on indicators) during the implementation period to the thresholds set a priori. Components include administration of the Cultivate survey, preparation of coaches, and development of CMs' use of classroom data. See E3 and Appendix J.11 for additional details on the component indicators, thresholds, and their alignment with data sources. AIR will analyze the data descriptively.

To understand what **helped or hindered effective program implementation and student engagement as well as perceptions of the program's usefulness and relevance (RQs 8 and 9),** AIR will administer online surveys twice a year and conduct interviews. The survey will be administered once at the midpoint (late fall) and once at the end of each implementation school year for each cohort. Surveys will ask about CMs' and coaches' perceptions of each of the program components (e.g., Cultivate survey administration, professional learning sessions and communities, coaching and resources). AIR will ask CMs about the usefulness of the program in building their capacity and self-efficacy to use classroom data to improve their instructional practice. The data collected will be analyzed using both quantitative methods, such as descriptive statistics, and qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis of open-ended items.

AIR also will conduct up to 20 CM interviews, five coach interviews, and three TFA staff and UChicago staff interviews at the end of academic years 2026–27 and 2027–28 for each cohort. AIR will select a random sample of CMs from regions receiving Cultivate, stratifying across teaching experience (e.g., first-year CMs and second-year CMs), and randomly sample five coaches from participating regions. In addition, AIR will conduct follow-up interviews with a purposive sample of up to 10 CMs from Cohort 1 at the end of academic year 2027–28 to examine how their experiences with the program have evolved over time. All interview data will be analyzed using qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis, to identify key themes and patterns in participants' responses. This process includes coding the data to categorize significant concepts and insights, followed by an examination to discern relationships and trends.

Performance Feedback: To support continuous improvement and future replication, AIR will meet regularly with TFA and prepare Power BI templates, an interim report, and a final public-facing summative report on the implementation and impact of Cultivate. In the first

quarter of 2025, AIR will conduct a kickoff meeting with TFA to finalize the implementation measurement framework, research questions, and timeline, after which AIR will meet with TFA biweekly to support communication and coordination of project activities. To **provide periodic assessment toward intended outcomes**, AIR will work with TFA in winter 2025/spring 2026 to pilot evaluation instruments (e.g., survey and interview items) and build out Power BI templates to automate the aggregation of quantitative survey, Cultivate, and CLASS-S data. The Power BI templates will be directly integrated into TFA systems and provide real-time performance information to TFA executive directors and coaches regarding overall teacher practice, implementation, and CMs' perceptions of the Cultivate program's usefulness and relevance to their practice throughout the implementation period. AIR also will summarize interview findings and assess program implementation in summer 2027 and summer 2028 to inform program adjustments and support strategic decision making for future implementation. The interim interview report will enable TFA to identify program strengths and challenges and opportunities, continue program refinement, further tailor its approach to regional contexts, and improve the delivery and scale of the Cultivate program. AIR will deliver the final summative report to TFA in spring 2029, which will be made public to support knowledge-building in the field. The results will be disseminated through various channels, including posting on AIR.org, cross-promotion via both organizations, and presentations at researcher and practitioner conferences. In addition, AIR will consult with TFA to develop easy-to-digest products, such as webinars, infographics, and other materials, for broad dissemination to program participants.

E3. Clear Articulation of Components, Mediators, Outcomes, and Thresholds

The proposed evaluation design is informed by clearly articulated key components, mediators, and expected CM and student outcomes as depicted in the logic model (Appendix

J.6). The key components of the Cultivate program support CMs through professional learning sessions (PD), professional learning communities (PLCs), one-on-one coaching, and use of Cultivate data. The program also supports coaches' capacity to support CMs with parallel PD, PLCs, and one-on-one coaching experiences. These components are designed to improve the quality of teacher practice in creating an equitable learning environment that reinforces adaptive mindsets, positive academic behaviors, and engagement among students. Teacher practice, in turn, mediates the impact of the Cultivate program on student academic achievement and student attendance.

Outcomes and Mediators: AIR will use multiple well-established, valid, and reliable measures that capture outcomes. For **RQs 1, 2, 5, and 6 (impact on student achievement and attendance)**, AIR will collect administrative student achievement and attendance data for students in the classes of CMs in both the treatment and comparison groups. AIR will request student scale scores in mathematics and ELA on state achievement tests in school years 2025–26 (baseline) and 2026–27 (outcome) for Cohort 1 and scale scores in school years 2026–27 (baseline) and 2027–28 (outcome) for Cohort 2. Scaled scores will be standardized within grade and state to make them comparable. All statewide tests are considered valid and reliable by WWC standards. Similarly, AIR will request student attendance records in school years 2025–26 (baseline) and 2026–27 (outcome) for Cohort 1 and student attendance records in school years 2026–27 (baseline) and 2027–28 (outcome) for Cohort 2. Attendance records collected by school districts are considered valid and reliable by WWC standards.

For **RQs 3 and 4 (impact on teacher practice)**, trained TFA observers will rate classrooms on CLASS-S domains and dimensions (Pianta et al., 2012) aligned with the Cultivate framework. CLASS-S is a valid and reliable instrument predictive of student learning gains (Gill

et al., 2016). See Appendix J.7 for information on CLASS alignment with the Cultivate framework. TFA coaches will be certified and will observe and rate CMs in treatment and comparison groups. AIR will monitor data collection, ensuring active certifications, timing of observations, number of cycles, and other relevant aspects. AIR will request CLASS-S data for fall 2026 (baseline) and spring 2027 (outcome) for Cohort 1 and fall 2027 (baseline) and spring 2028 (outcome) for Cohort 2 to allow AIR to test for baseline equivalence and outcome analysis. All baseline CLASS-S observations will occur prior to the start of the intervention for that cohort. The observation scores also will serve as a mediator when examining the extent to which effects on student achievement and attendance are mediated by teacher practice (**RQs 5 and 6**).

Measurable Implementation Thresholds: AIR will develop indicators and thresholds to define acceptable levels of implementation for each core component of Cultivate. During Year 1, AIR and TFA will identify implementation expectations aligned with the Cultivate logic model. Key program components include Cultivate survey administration, preparation of coaches, and development of CMs' use of classroom data to improve instructional practice. Fidelity indicators may include: CMs' administering Cultivate, coaches participating in professional learning, CMs receiving one-on-one support, and coaches engaging with CMs monthly. AIR will identify a threshold of acceptable implementation for each component and indicator. Program components, indicators, and their implementation thresholds will be captured in a fidelity matrix, and AIR will examine implementation fidelity the summer following each cohort implementation year. Information from the fidelity matrix will serve as a tool for TFA to include in the planning conversations with participating regions. See Appendix J.11 for a list of components, fidelity indicators, their data sources, and preliminary thresholds for adequate implementation.

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