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Promoting Educator Effectiveness in Rural Arkansas (PEER 2.0)

Introduction

The Arkansas Public School Resource Center (APSRC), in partnership with the Crowley's Ridge Educational Service Cooperative (CRESC), LEA number 5620000, and charter and rural public school member districts, is requesting 2023 Teacher and School Leader (TSL) Incentive Program funding totaling \$5,274,636 in the first year to expand the implementation of a human capital management system (HCMS) and performance-based compensation system (PBCS). This proposal represents the expansion of a previous model, Promoting Educator Effectiveness in Rural Arkansas (PEER) which was funded through a TSL 2021 competition. This expansion will leverage lessons learned from the original PEER initiative and feedback from stakeholders to further refine and improve the effectiveness of the model. The expanded model, PEER 2.0, will serve an additional 45 High-Need schools and maintain the original emphasis on building a diverse and equitable workforce and expanding the equitable access to effective educators in rural Arkansas.

APSRC is a service-oriented, nonprofit membership organization that offers support, technical assistance, and training to charters and rural school districts across the state. APSRC's full-time and highly trained staff provide technical assistance in five main service areas: 1) Teaching and learning, 2) Legal, 3) Financial analysis and management, 4) Technology and 5) Communications. Membership in APSRC is open to charter schools, rural school districts, regional educational service cooperatives, and education-related entities and businesses. Currently, APSRC has a membership of 100% of charters and 84% of rural districts in the state. APSRC is recognized as an innovative leader in educational service delivery and as an advocate

for rural and charter schools. It has a twelve-year history of providing high-quality, innovative services to its members. APSRC also has partnerships and grant applications funded by the Arkansas Department of Education Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Governor's Office that focus on innovative educational practices that are being delivered to Arkansas schools.

CRESC is located in Harrisburg, Arkansas and serves the Delta region in Northeast Arkansas including 22 member districts. Education service cooperatives (ESCs) were created by Title 6, Chapter 13, Subchapter 10 of the Arkansas Code to meet the definition of “local education agencies” (*Appendix G1*). These ESCs focus on delivering support services to their member districts including curriculum development assistance, educational materials, and staff development services to teachers. The PEER 2.0 initiative will provide training and tools to assist the CRESC staff in providing these services to the partner schools.

APSRC and CRESC have developed a comprehensive model of school enhancement entitled **Promoting Educator Effectiveness in Rural Arkansas (PEER 2.0)**. The model is built upon the research and human capital management strategies of Allan Odden, Senior Research Specialist at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), and other educational leaders including James Kelly, the Founding President for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). As Odden and Kelly highlight, finding and hiring top talent is merely one piece of a human capital management strategy (Odden & Kelly, 2008). Effective human capital management systems consider the entire system including recruitment, development, and retention to ensure “top talent is acquired, strategically placed and equitably distributed in key roles in schools and districts, developed and retained over time, all driven by

metrics on teacher and leadership performance and effectiveness” (p. 2). The comprehensive school change model built on Odden and Kelly’s research has been at the heart of the original PEER initiative and will continue with PEER 2.0.

The PEER 2.0 model of human capital management includes the use of Career Advancement Opportunities for teachers to become *teacher leaders*. These *teacher leaders* receive annual leadership training and quarterly training in evidence-based strategies. *Teacher leaders* implement the strategies in their own classrooms then provide training on the strategies to all staff. School and *teacher leaders* provide support to all staff in the understanding, implementation, use, and growth of these strategies. School and *teacher leaders* monitor the progress of school improvement efforts through qualitative and quantitative data gathered through direct and indirect observations, annual surveys, and interim and summative student achievement results. In addition, in Years 2 and 3, *teacher leaders* have the opportunity to demonstrate even greater leadership as *teacher leader mentors*. These *teacher leader mentors* provide coaching and ongoing support to *teacher leaders* and professional learning across the network, outside their district or charter. The PEER 2.0 PBCS rewards all levels of this distributed leadership model for additional responsibilities, additional certification, and increased student achievement. This model focuses on increasing the effectiveness of the district's staff, school leaders, *teacher leaders*, and classroom teachers to significantly increase the overall academic achievement of the student population.

CRITERION A: NEED FOR THE PROJECT

A(1): How well the proposed project will address gaps or weaknesses in services

Arkansas is a state divided along poverty lines with a delineated set of high-performing districts located in prosperous, high-income communities, including the Northwest Walmart home office area, and a disproportionately large set of low-performing districts that cluster in the south, eastern, and northeastern portions of the state. These schools are often low-performing and located in communities with high poverty indicators, such as those in the Eastern agricultural Delta.

Staff members in rural Arkansas schools often serve in many local roles. These staff members often acknowledge the need for support but perceive the commitment required for engaging in support as an additional task to complete. This perception sometimes results in hesitance or resistance to participation in professional learning opportunities. The staff members in these schools would benefit greatly from the on-going, targeted, and strategic support. PEER 2.0 identifies High-Need schools that have been invited to participate in other programmatic initiative but whose participation has often been inhibited by the capacities of local staff members.

In recognition of the obstacles to participation, the PEER team has identified a pool of potential partners that includes 119 High-Need traditional public and charter schools. If awarded funding, the PEER team will engage in outreach to invite partners from this pool until the 45-school network is complete. APSRC and the PEER team are committed to these 45 member schools and will assist them in building the capacity of their teachers, principals, and other school leaders to increase student academic growth.

The identified charters and districts for the cohort for the PEER 2.0 initiative were identified based on multiple criteria. PEER 2.0 partners must have current membership in APSRC and must be identified as a High-Need school with evidence of low achievement across multiple measures. **High-Need School** is defined as a public elementary or secondary school that is located in an area in which the percentage of students from families with incomes below the poverty line is **50% percent or more**. This definition applies to both traditional public and charter schools. Data used to identify qualifying High-Need schools for PEER 2.0 was based on 2022-2023 state-identified enrollment, as reported using eligibility for free or reduced price lunch subsidies under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, or other poverty measures that LEAs use consistent with ESEA section 1113(a)(5) (20 U.S.C. 6313(a)(5)).

Entire districts and charters were determined to be eligible for PEER 2.0 partnership when at least half of the schools in the district had 50% or more students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. Individual schools with 50% or more students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch remained eligible for PEER 2.0 even when the district or charter overall was ineligible for partnership. In 106 of the 119 schools in the PEER 2.0 pool of potential partners, more than 50% of the student population qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch. More than half of the identified schools have a **poverty rate of 65% or greater** demonstrating “extreme” need. Across the pool, the average free and reduced-price lunch proportion is 65.32% of students. The 119-school pool of PEER 2.0 potential partners is drawn from regions that are in relatively close geographic proximity to the initial cohort of PEER partner schools. This proximity to schools that have already begun developing expertise will provide an additional layer of support as the new PEER 2.0 schools apply the existing PEER model.

Demographic statistics are as follows for the identified cohort of PEER 2.0 schools:

Black/African American 20.27%, White/Caucasian 63.03%, Hispanic/Latino 10.36%, Two or More Races 4.18%, English Learners 6.5%, and Special Education 16.12%. The target population is disproportionate when compared to the state percentage of special education, economically disadvantaged, and Black/African American students identified and served. Arkansas is listed as

the sixth poorest state in the nation as reported by Forbes

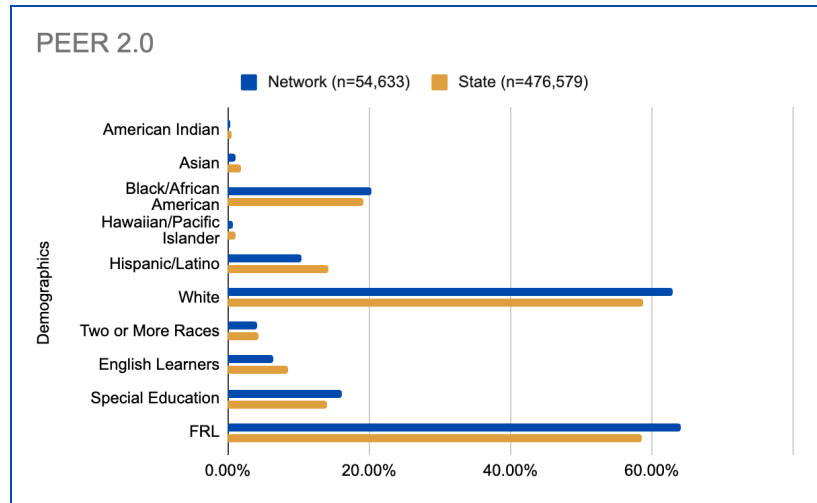
Magazine (DePietro, 2021). The

number of economically

disadvantaged students from

this pool of schools is

disproportionate when



compared to the state, demonstrating an even more extreme need for focused, systematic support. The PEER 2.0 model provides targeted support to these historically underserved populations so that all students have access to equitable and high-quality instruction.

A major deficit in the current educational improvement system in Arkansas is the lack of any systemic efforts focused on retooling and increasing the effectiveness of the human capital management strategies that have traditionally determined salaries, promotions, and the focus of staff professional development. APSRC has designed a **Human Capital Management (HCMS)** model that includes a **Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS)** which has never been implemented in any of our High-Need charters or districts. There has been one legislative incentive program which established the Arkansas School Recognition Program to provide

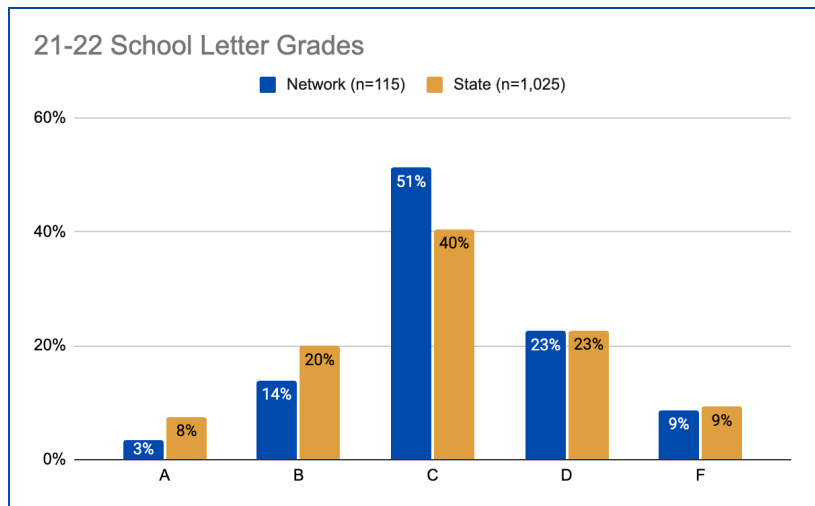
financial awards to public schools with high student performance or academic growth. Arkansas Code Annotated § 5-15-2107 authorizes rewards of up to \$100 per student in the top 5% of all public schools and up to \$50 per student enrolled is awarded for schools in the top 6-10%. There are no incentive programs that recognize changes in performance for any of the public schools/charters who are currently performing below 90%.

A second deficit in current support systems is the lack of systematic implementation of high-quality educational interventions designed to equitably address academic achievement and growth. Building awareness of effective, evidence-based practices was an identified need for the state and especially in our identified High-Need districts and charters. All of the current initiatives designed to incentivize increasing academic achievement focus on punitive interventions identified in the Arkansas ESSA Accountability plan. The ESSA plan identifies Title I schools with School Index scores at or below the lowest 5% as needing Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and provides limited support services to those schools. Schools with consistently underperforming subgroups of students are identified by the state as needing Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI). Schools that were identified for CSI in 2018 who did not exit support in 2022 are identified for More Rigorous Interventions (MRI-CSI). The schools identified as potential partner schools for the PEER 2.0 cohort are not identified as high achieving and have not received incentives. Currently, 24 of the schools chosen for the PEER 2.0 initiative are ranked in the bottom 5% of all schools in the state and meet the definition of “in need of comprehensive support and improvement,” and 21 schools are identified in more than one category (e.g., CSI-ATSI or MRI-CSI).

In 2013, the Arkansas Legislature passed Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2101 which requires the state to implement an A-F grading scale for schools. At the request of Arkansas stakeholders, DESE aligned the state’s accountability system with the Arkansas Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan (federal accountability) approved January 18, 2018. In the ESSA plan, Arkansas utilizes a summative (one final score) accountability system based on the following indicators: weighted achievement, value-added growth and English learner progress toward English language proficiency, cohort graduation rates, and school quality and student success.

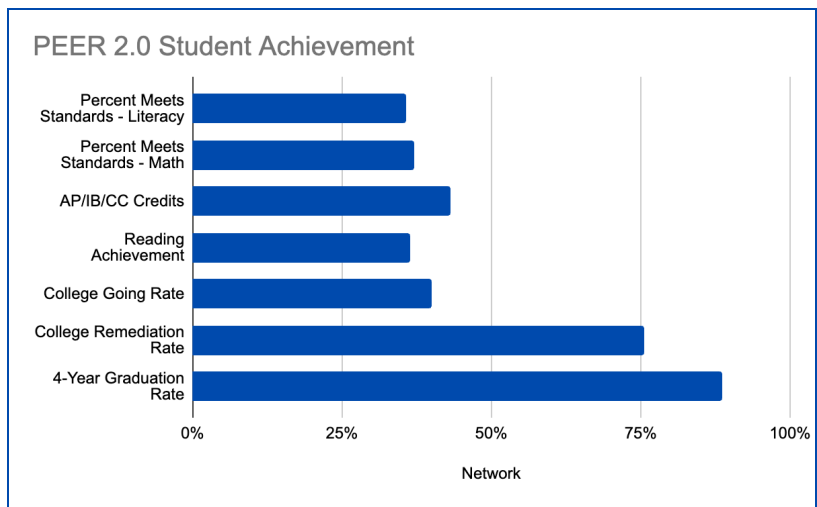
Arkansas’s system is known as the ESSA School Index. The ESSA School Index score and stakeholder recommended

rating scale are used to determine the letter grades (ratings) for schools. The results of the most recently available state A-F rating scale for 2021-2022 shows a disproportionately low number of



High-Need schools identified as PEER 2.0 potential partners receiving an “A” rating, 3% compared to the state’s 8%, or a “B” rating, 14% compared to the state’s 20%. In addition, the potential partner schools have received a disproportionately high number of “C” ratings with 51% compared to the state’s 40%. Within the identified cohort, 36 schools have received a “D” or “F” rating. These ratings indicate a strong need for systematic support for identified schools.

The most recent state summative achievement results from 2022 reveal that only 35.7% of identified High-Need schools are meeting grade level standards in *literacy*. This is compounded by the inadequate percentage of students in the target population *reading on grade level* at only 36.5%. Reading is one of three measures (English, reading and writing) that make up the reported overall *literacy* score. Similar performance is seen in *mathematics* in that only 37.1% of identified High-Need schools are meeting grade-level standards. The ACT, a student achievement metric beyond the summative measures that conclude at grade 10, is



state funded and administered to all students in grade 11. The average ACT composite score is 18 across the network, which is significantly below the ACT Readiness Benchmarks (Math - 22; Science - 23; STEM - 26; and

ELA - 22) (Allen & Radunzel, 2017). Data from Advanced Placement (AP) programs in identified High-Need schools show performance discrepancies with only 43.2% of students scoring at a 3, 4, or 5 compared to the state performance at 47.9%. Although the average graduation rate is 89%, over 75% of students in identified High-Need schools that enroll in postsecondary learning are in need of remedial support and/or coursework. The permeation of low academic achievement and the high rates of college remediation demonstrate the critical need for effective teachers, especially in these hard-to-staff, High-Need schools.

These performance indicators provide strong evidence of systematic weakness in student achievement and instructional practice among High-Need schools. The data support a tremendous need for an *equitable instructional vision* and investment in effective instructional practice in order to promote educational outcomes and grow student achievement. These academic deficits are further compounded by the disproportionate workforce of effective teachers serving schools identified for PEER 2.0. Staffing in these schools has required the use of non-certified teachers through Act 1240 waivers from licensure (AWLs) and/or the use of certified teachers teaching out of area through additional licensure plans (ALPs) or emergency teaching permits (ETPs). Of the 119 schools in the cohort pool, 88 utilize these types of licensure exceptions, and 34 use multiple types of exceptions. Overall, the 2022-2023 number of exceptions across the pool is 55 AWLs, 172 ALPs, and 119 ETPs. Although this pool represents 11% of Arkansas schools, it holds 13% of the state's ALPs, 15% of the CWLs, and 18% of the ETPs. The licensure exception data show that the schools identified are High-Need and would benefit greatly from the strategic ***teacher recruitment, development, and retention*** included with the PEER 2.0 model.

Using baseline data, APSRC conducted a needs assessment to identify gaps in services to the pool of potential schools and identify related strategies utilizing the Odden and Kelly research to address the deficits through the design of the PEER 2.0 model.

- 1) *Lack of an HCMS*. The pool of potential PEER 2.0 schools have limited Career Advancement Opportunities and do not have an established human capital management system.
- 2) *Difficulty staffing all positions with certified staff members annually*. High-Need schools have difficulty staffing with fully certified educators (which does not translate into highly-qualified). Staffing issues are evident in the 3,673 Arkansas classrooms with teachers without full credentials as shown in the licensure exceptions reported for 2022-2023. Like many southern states, Arkansas has chronic shortages of qualified teachers in math, science, and other areas. Each year the DESE distributes a list of critical

academic shortage areas. The most recent shortage list is from the 2020-2021 school year. The Arkansas State Board has designated the following areas as critical academic shortage areas: Art (K-12), Business (4-12), Biology (7-12), Chemistry (7-12), French (7-12), Mathematics (7-12), Physics (7-12), and Special Education (K-12) (*Appendix G3*).

- 3) *High turnover, particularly in high-poverty, low-achieving rural and charter schools.* This is a chronic issue as evidenced by research by Ingersoll, 2003 and Lankford, Loeb & Wychoff, 2002. In the pool of potential PEER 2.0 schools, the average teacher attrition was documented at 22.42% using the most recent data from 2020-2021.
- 4) *Difficulty in gaining certification.* In response to an increasing teacher shortage, Arkansas has developed a number of alternative pathways to licensure. Many of these pathways allow candidates to become teachers of record while they simultaneously earn their full credentials. In addition, Arkansas has developed the Alternative Assessment Plan (AAP) for candidates who experience difficulty in passing the required certification exams. Despite these efforts, certification remains an obstacle.
- 5) In examining High-Need districts, they are always the *lowest-paying* based on the funding formula utilized for the acquisition of school funds which includes a local tax component.

Although the schools identified for PEER 2.0 demonstrate a need for support across multiple measures, few initiatives focus on closing the achievement gap or increasing the performance of High-Need charters and districts in Arkansas until they consistently fall into the lowest 5%. PEER 2.0 will address these deficits and the disproportionate distribution of effective teachers by utilizing an HCMS and PBCS tied to Career Advancement Opportunities that develop and leverage *teacher leaders* to ensure all students have access to highly qualified teachers. The PEER 2.0 model aims to support schools with the greatest need and other High-Need schools before they are identified in the lowest 5%.

The design of the PEER 2.0 initiative includes a comprehensive logic model based on three (3) overarching components: ***system development; teacher recruitment, development, and retention;*** and ***student achievement and school improvement*** (see Appendix D). The PEER 2.0 model will address the gaps in service identified in the needs assessment. The

implementation of an HCMS and PBCS with Career Advancement Opportunities targets the issues related to teacher compensation and turnover. In addition, the PEER Staff Pipeline Subgrant provides funding for partner districts and charters to address identified recruitment and retention issues. In the initial implementation of the PEER model, many Staff Pipeline subgrantees utilized the funding to provide additional support for teachers who are utilizing alternative pathways to licensure and working to pass the required assessments. While Arkansas strives to address certification issues, the PEER 2.0 model provides support for teachers through a distributed leadership model. Although distributed leadership provides support for all teachers, this support of the PEER 2.0 model is especially critical for teachers who are teaching out of area or teaching while earning their credentials, a clearly identified need in these schools.

By establishing an HCMS that provides Career Advancement Opportunities with a PBCS that rewards leadership responsibilities and improvements in student achievement, the PEER 2.0 model systematically addresses the identified gaps in service to students and teachers in the identified schools. PEER 2.0 is designed to dramatically improve student achievement in districts/charters that serve a significant number of High-Need students by substantially improving the instructional practices and the effectiveness of teachers, *teacher leaders*, and school leaders. The HCMS and PBCS address the most important resource in schools - human capital. By establishing the PEER 2.0 model in this regional networks of schools, the HCMS will align all aspects of human resource management, the evaluation and support of staff, curriculum and instructional practices, data-driven decision making based on multiple

measures, the implementation of professional learning including sessions on equity, and the development of distributed leadership through the PBCS.

The PEER team is committed to supporting and honoring the evidence-based evaluation system in Arkansas through the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) and the Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS 2.0). The use of established, familiar systems will support the sustainability of the PEER 2.0 model. Developed with Act 295 of 2017, TESS uses a rubric based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework of Teaching (*Appendix G2*). Extensive professional development was required by law for this system, and all teachers and administrators in the state were required to document their specific training. TESS evidence includes direct observation, indirect observation, and artifacts that are submitted by the observer and/or teacher. In 2022, Arkansas implemented the Educator Effectiveness System (EES), an online system utilized by all Arkansas educators to collect information and artifacts of professional practice. The PEER 2.0 model will leverage data and artifacts to demonstrate teacher growth and build student-focused learning.

The establishment of an equitable HCMS with a defined PBCS in the PEER 2.0 model ensures that top talent is acquired and equitably distributed in innovative key roles across the network that supports High-Need students. The following quote from Odden and Kelley's work (2002) guides the work of the PEER 2.0 model: "To be strategic, human capital management practices must be aligned and devolve from a district's educational improvement strategy. The strategic management of human capital and the education system's educational improvement strategy are inextricably linked."

A(2): How well the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts

The High-Need schools identified for PEER 2.0 do not have the resources to systematically enlist the support of external partners. Grant resources will be utilized to establish collaborative, outcomes-based implementation plans with partners to support teacher leaders and school leaders in establishing and achieving personalized goals through PEER 2.0 Career Advancement Opportunities. Each school will develop plans for implementation to ensure locally-identified needs are met. APSRC examined its current partners that support significantly under-resourced charters and districts and identified those within the region with aligned missions and service delivery to integrate services with the PEER 2.0 model.

Arkansas State University - College of Education and Behavioral Sciences: Arkansas State University (A-State) is the predominant producer of teachers in the state. One of the strengths of A-State's preparation of teachers is its commitment to continuing education as evidenced through its recognition as 13th in the nation by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) for producing an exceptional number of National Board Certified Teachers. Participating in gaining advanced degrees or certifications, including the National Board Certification, generates an outcome for the PEER 2.0 initiative to increase the number of teachers who seek to increase their credentials.

Education Renewal Zone (ERZ): A-State hosts a regional ERZ, a broad-based P-20 initiative to concentrate and coordinate available resources to improve school performance and student achievement. ERZs were passed into law in 2003 as Act 106 (HB 1065) by the Second Extraordinary Session of the 84th General Assembly to address the growing number of schools across the state designated as "in need of improvement." Resources from PEER 2.0 can support

collaborative service delivery established by the ERZ with an emphasis on service delivery to our network schools, the dissemination of evidence-based strategies, and interventions to network schools. In return, the *teacher leaders* developed in this partnership can provide reciprocal future support to the ERZ.

Educational Service Cooperatives (ESCs): ESCs were created in 1985, with the Education Service Cooperative Act of 1985. Education Service Cooperatives are a network of fifteen regional service agencies created to help schools meet accreditation standards, equalize educational opportunities, use resources effectively, and promote coordination of DESE initiatives. Each cooperative has a team of educational specialists who provide professional development, promote effective teaching and learning, support educators in the field, and provide early intervention services for their region. One of the outcomes of the PEER 2.0 initiative will be to advocate for involvement with the cooperative specialists based on a calendar of professional development opportunities provided regionally. The PEER 2.0 initiative will provide systematic opportunities to coordinate the specialists' services with the PEER 2.0 Coaches.

Teacher Practice Network #tpnlead: APSRC received two grants from the Gates Foundation focusing on building *teacher leaders*. The Teacher Practice Network is a social media tool established in 2014 which is still providing a virtual network of over 1,500 active members. All network participants will be encouraged to join the network and use it to share their learnings with other *teacher leaders* across the state.

DESE Educator Support Office: The National Board Certified Teachers Program was created with legislative Act 1060 of 2001 as amended by Act 1803 of 2003 which authorizes DESE to provide a support program for teachers who wish to become National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs).

However, few educators in the identified regions are NBCTs. Because National Board Certification is highly correlated with student success and is an approved pathway to the Master Professional Educator designation on the DESE career continuum, PEER 2.0 will provide support for teachers to become NBCTs along with support for other designation pathways.

Novice Teacher Initiative: DESE has established this initiative to address the needs of novice teachers in charters and districts based on their teacher mentoring program. Teachers with fewer than three years of classroom teaching experience and employed in an Arkansas public school must be mentored. CRESC provides these services and matches mentors with novice teachers. The importance of new-teacher mentorship is essential to building the skills of the novice and will support the PEER 2.0 outcome of increasing the development of *teacher leaders* in our cohort schools.

Active and engaged partners are essential to the design of PEER 2.0. An examination of the data indicated a striking limitation of involvement by the identified High-Need schools in major state initiatives. The identified needs of these schools require a robust network of partners to provide collaborative services aligned to the PEER 2.0 model. Through incentivized participation, PEER 2.0 will bridge the gap between the support services available and those utilized by these schools. Through these partnerships, *teacher leaders* can pursue additional Career Advancement Opportunities by leveraging their leadership roles in regional and state initiatives, supported with incentives for their expertise.

A(3): The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

Teaching and Learning (TL) is one of the five APSRC service-delivery focuses. The TL team actively participates in national and regional initiatives and annually trains within the more than

200 APSRC member districts and charters. The TL model has several major components including:

- Professional Development (PD)
- Teaching Standards
- Evaluation Processes leading to data-driven decision making
- High-quality Instructional Strategies
- Leadership Development
- Increasing Educator Effectiveness
- Statewide initiatives like Reading Initiative for Student Excellence (RISE) or Administrator and Teacher training on the TESS and LEADS 2.0, and
- Building *teacher leaders*, the essential element of the design of the PEER 2.0 model.

These services are offered to all member schools and districts and charters can annually request up to two days of support at no cost. The services are designed for implementation across a broad set of audiences including school-based faculty sessions, regional keynote or PD sessions, conferences, and virtual PD components.

APSRC has developed and implemented personalized, long-term, systematic initiatives around the need for school improvement support and identified district and charter needs. APSRC has established, with a memorandum of understanding, a long-term school support plan that specifies the area of need, services to be provided, and the cost to the district. PEER 2.0 will utilize this long-term, systematic improvement model, utilizing a MOU (Appendix F) to develop the support systems needed and provide ongoing sustainability. The PEER 2.0 model includes measurable goals aligned to educator skill development, instructional improvement through classroom walkthrough observations, and progress monitoring of schoolwide growth goals in interim and summative assessment data. PEER 2.0 includes the provision of Data Optimization Tools (DOTs), a data system that allows users to access multiple measures of student data, complete with real-time professional development to grow data

analysis skills, and designed in partnership with educators to grow stronger data-informed learning communities. The PEER 2.0 model increases educator skill by integrating training, job-embedded support, and coaching with data literacy that measures the evidence of student achievement.

APSRC has a long history of providing high-quality PD to members based on their needs. Previous work aligned to a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning included the receipt of two grants focusing on building the capacity of teachers. The first was a Walton Family Foundation grant focusing on *building teachers' knowledge*, and the second was a Gates grant focusing on supporting *teacher development and leadership*. APSRC also received a second Gates grant entitled "Teacher Practice Network" (TPN) that focused on building *teacher leaders*. Each of these grants built the infrastructure and capacity of the APSRC TL team to provide high-quality support services based on a regional network implementation model. This proven and cost-efficient design is the foundation of the PEER 2.0 initiative.

One of the guiding principles identified during the design and development of the original *teacher leaders* cadre was to always honor the work of the teachers. We have utilized this simple criterion in our PEER 2.0 design to support teachers as they transition to meet the rigors of *teacher leadership*, moving from a perspective of teachers as consumers of PD to a stance of teachers as service providers. The implementation plan of the PEER 2.0 model is designed around regional hubs where training will be provided in a Training-of-Trainers model then replicated back at the home school/charter by the *teacher leaders*. Incentives will be provided to support the teachers as they transition to the new *teacher leader* role in this "grow-your-own" strategy.

The PEER 2.0 model of ongoing applied professional development is built upon the use of two essential elements that research has identified to be effective: Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and instructional coaching (Biancarose et. Al, 2010; Sanders et.al, 2009). The PEER 2.0 design maximizes the impact of these two strategies. *Teacher leaders* will provide additional support for school improvement strategies including the results orientation promoted through PLCs, teachers will receive training on evidence-based strategies and coaching from *teacher leaders*, and novice teachers will have additional support through their mentors. APSRC has been utilizing this design for ten years with member schools who purchased the services and have evidence of the importance of structured teacher-to-teacher professional development.

PEER 2.0 Coaches will provide on-site visits to monitor the implementation of learning through facilitated classroom walkthroughs. These Coaches will support the teachers as they assume new leadership roles with their colleagues and provide direct training or model lessons. Along with the PEER team, school and *teacher leaders* will use DOTs to analyze school-wide areas of strengths and weaknesses, trends by grade level and other groups, and teacher progress. These data will be used to identify the professional learning needs of the network. The TSL grant will allow the PEER team to implement the model with a network of High-Need schools that have not engaged services. This design has led to documented increases in student achievement.

APSRC has established a set of benchmarks based on teacher participation rates, a continuation of the commitment to the work over time, teacher persistence with tasks, the development of *teacher leaders* as evidenced by the level of involvement, production of

products and artifacts, and provision of PD training hours to educators. The value of involving teachers is evident in the *teacher leader* development of professional learning and modeled instruction available in the online repository of professional learning videos, the PEER PD Hub. PEER 2.0 will provide support for increasing knowledge of and skills using evidence-based strategies, time to work in collaborative teams, and the opportunity to share learning across the network. The PEER team will invite and support *teacher leaders* to present at state and regional conferences, co-present with them, and recommend them for recognitions like the PEER Teacher of the Month. Additionally, recognized teachers contribute videos, resources, and instructional strategies to the PEER PD Hub.

PEER 2.0 will develop a new set of *teacher leaders* in High-Need member districts and charters. These *teacher leaders* will have the skills to train their colleagues through a wide array of professional development strategies. By Year 2, *teacher leaders* will have the opportunity to further develop their leadership skills by becoming *teacher leader mentors*. These *teacher leader mentors* will actively facilitate collaborative learning environments outside of their own school, district, or charter and provide direct support to other *teacher leaders*. The PEER team is committed to the Career Advancement Opportunities of the next generation of *teacher leaders* and the *teacher leader mentors* will provide an additional layer of support for this distributed leadership model. This new focus will result in meeting the following outcomes:

- **Establish the PEER 2.0 Network** and increase educator participation in the PEER 2.0 network through communications resources like the PEER website, shared online repositories, and the PEER Facebook page;
- **Identify and provide training to the *teacher leaders*** in the participating High-Need targeted schools;
- **Improve data literacy and its use** by operationalizing the data collection and analysis by each partner and establish evaluation benchmarks of performance that track growth;

- **Identify priorities in Literacy and Math:** Identify the professional learning needs and develop PD sessions focused on evidence-based instructional strategies with additional support for literacy and math achievement and growth;
- **Track academic achievement changes** with a focused and specific tracking of growth data for *teacher leaders* and continual examination of comparison data of target PEER 2.0 network schools and state performance;
- **Build a digital asynchronous professional development delivery system** by providing teachers access to the design, planning, publication and implementation of professional development to their colleagues at the grade, school, district and regional levels published on the PEER 2.0 website and PEER PD Hub;
- **Develop, implement and pilot tools that support teacher growth** with a plan for distribution across the network, including equity PD discussions, leadership, instructional, and curricular tools each quarter;
- **Publicize the PBCS** by defining the support of *teacher leaders* through the HCMS;
- **Implement the PEER 2.0 model** with the establishment of a monthly calendar for the implementation of instructional strategies, use of classroom walkthroughs to document classroom change, sharing of instructional strategies, regional hub meetings, weekly communications, and all other current services;
- **Design a teacher recognition program** utilizing the PEER 2.0 Network Teacher of the Month to be interviewed, acknowledged on the PEER website, and contribute to the PEER PD Hub;
- **Develop personalized growth plans** for *teacher leaders* and school leaders supported by an incentive commitment;
- **Identify and provide additional training for *teacher leader mentors*** to provide additional targeted support and coaching to teachers and *teacher leaders*;
- **Encourage teachers to share** a tool, lesson, and/or strategy via video clips featured on the PEER PD Hub;
- **Establish regular virtual convenings** of the network's school leaders; and
- **Document changes in personalized *teacher leadership* development** with the collection and documentation of *teacher leader* outcomes as evidenced by student achievement growth, the publishing of PD modules, number of sessions of training, documentation of PD hours provided to participants, and presentations at state and regional events.

As shown through the alignment of assets, programs, and partners, PEER 2.0 has the background knowledge, expertise, documented success, and passion to assure that this action plan can be operationalized in 45 High-Need schools in this network as part of a comprehensive support system to improve teaching and learning.

A(4): The extent to which the design of the proposed project will address the needs of the target population

While the identified areas of improvement for the High-Need schools are extensive, PEER 2.0 leverages research-based strategies that have been implemented by APSRC and support the PEER 2.0 strategies detailed in our logic model: 1) Establish and implement a HCMS that identifies and implements management strategies designed to improve public school performance and student achievement and a PBCS that rewards additional responsibilities, additional certification, and student achievement, 2) Identify and implement evidence-based strategies explicitly designed to improve staff competencies, build *teacher leaders*, and meet high-quality standards around credentialing and certification, and 3) Dramatically improve student achievement.

The essential elements of the implementation plan are designed to address the identified needs. In the design-planning process, the PEER team focused on aligning components to state initiatives, requirements, assessments, research-based strategies, and the use of existing tools to ensure sustainability of the work after federal funding is completed. The design focus was three fold: 1) to enhance the school's ability to participate in state initiatives with the support to gain credentials, certifications, and instructional skills to change classroom instruction and increase academic achievement; 2) to implement our proven School Support Services coaching model which is research-based and has evidence of increasing academic achievement; and 3) to build the skills of the network staff based on their Career Advancement plan and personalized career pathway.

An example of how this approach is operationalized includes the design of collaborative partnerships that engage the region's resources that these schools have not previously

accessed. The proposed design utilizes incentive funding to fuel the network school's participation in partnership initiatives. These efforts will be supported by the designated PEER Coach who will be responsible for maintaining the school's participation in high-quality partnership activities, providing specialized support to staff, including those who are seeking initial or additional certification, and assisting the school in increasing academic achievement.

The PEER 2.0 design plan focuses on removing barriers to systematic school improvement. Through distributed leadership, this model provides teachers accessibility to learning opportunities in the local district or charter through *teacher leaders*, allowing the staff to continue developing competence and instructional skills without additional expense or necessary travel. APSRC has the infrastructure, staff, and expertise paired with these grant resources to enable high-quality learning in local schools and classrooms. The coaching component of PEER 2.0 is the critical link that will support and promote staff change. The PEER service-delivery model focuses on providing support at the school site while supporting implementation through synchronous and asynchronous options.

The incentive component of PEER 2.0 will allow these schools to receive rewards for the first time, and we believe that this will positively impact student academic growth and additional training for teachers. Incentive pay will encourage educators to remain in their schools based on the recognized success they have with their students since these schools have never been recognized in the current system.

We also honor the expertise of the network's educators by assuring that their "voice" will be part of the overall governance of the PEER 2.0 initiative. We are intentionally developing leadership roles for the *teacher leader* and school leader participants that provide them a

Career Advancement Opportunities in their schools, ESCs, and regions. Most significantly, we will use the grant resources to support our third area of focus to assist the district in developing a HCMS to retain staff, implement a teacher career pathway, reduce the number of staff who are not fully certified, and recruit widely to increase the quality of applicants. Through the PEER Staff Pipeline Subgrant, this model recognizes the unique needs of various schools and equips districts and charters to address these needs through systematic local projects. These recruitment and retention projects reveal the strategic planning and implementation available through the subgrant component of the HCMS.

To address the identified areas of improvement in our network of High-Need schools, we built our implementation plan on enhancing the schools' participation in research-based initiatives, aligning the goals of PEER 2.0 to state requirements, programs, and regional resources, honoring the staff's personalized Career Advancement and growth plans, supporting the change process with a proven coaching component, and establishing an equitable HCMS. With the set of identified inputs and strategies documented in our logic model, we believe the outputs and results are obtainable and will increase academic achievement.

CRITERION B: QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

B(1): The extent to which the proposed project will demonstrate a rationale

The design of the PEER 2.0 initiative includes a comprehensive logic model based on three (3) overarching components: ***system development; teacher recruitment, development, and retention;*** and ***student achievement and school improvement*** (see Appendix D). The ***system focus*** allows schools to establish and implement an equitable HCMS with performance-based incentives that identifies and implements management strategies designed

to improve staff diversity and skills, public school performance, and student achievement. The ***teacher focus*** is the framework to identify and implement educational strategies designed specifically to improve staff competencies, build *teacher leaders*, and meet high-quality standards around credentialing and certification. The ***student focus*** is tied directly to improving student achievement and is the measurable outcome at the heart of the PEER 2.0 initiative. This strategy ensures the focus remains at the student level to grow student outcomes.

The ADE Data Center provides a repository of comprehensive measures through the annual, state-produced School Report Cards and ESSA School Index reports. These multiple measures provide a foundation on which to establish school-level baselines and annual improvement goals. State ratings and published letter grades will also serve as additional evidence of school performance and will provide external metrics for progress monitoring within an overall state system of school improvement. Locally administered interim assessments will provide real-time data, analyzed through DOTs, throughout the school year to frequently inform instruction and provide nationally normed comparison data to track student growth and achievement. The Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) provides a statewide system for observation & support of K-12 teachers. TESS evidence includes summative ratings, direct and indirect observation, artifacts, and data from both the observer and the teacher.

By integrating multiple levels of support within a comprehensive model, High-Need schools will grow the capacity within the initiative and have greater opportunity to sustain the model through expanded levels of support both *within* the system and *beyond*. This model creates systematic processes with tiered levels of assistance, leadership, and regional networking to ensure success and sustainability in moving the system forward. The model will

provide schools with greater leadership capacity beyond traditional roles and structures to achieve greater growth and support among classroom teachers and ultimately students. Using incentives to promote and support the school improvement process by growing human capital at the teacher and school leader levels, recognizing and rewarding student achievement, and identifying regional partners to provide prescriptive service delivery ensures the model will scale beyond the life of the grant and provide long-term sustainability.

The PEER 2.0 model will provide resources, training, and asynchronous tools through the PEER PD Hub to support the network of targeted schools with opportunities to scale services and resources to new and existing partners within the state and beyond. By growing a network of diverse *teacher leaders* supported by regional partners and available service providers, schools can build capacity that is sustainable, reproducible, and comprehensive for systematic change. The PBCS, paired with scalable resources and services, further supports ***system development; teacher recruitment, development, and retention; and student achievement and school improvement***. Additionally, the PEER 2.0 model supports the state vision by supporting the Master Professional Educator and Lead Professional Educator designations on the DESE Career Continuum and adding value through additional leadership development and support. PEER 2.0 will utilize its partnership with the Arkansas Leadership Academy as a DESE-approved pathway to support teachers and school leaders with Career Advancement Opportunities. The HCMS and PBCS established through PEER 2.0 is designed to implement student-focused, evidence-based strategies designed to increase academic achievement and growth while also attracting, preparing, developing, and retaining a diverse set of effective educators who reflect the diversity of their students.

B(2):The extent to which the proposed project includes a review of literature and a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives

Arkansas, like all states, has a significant issue with the underperformance of school districts serving disadvantaged student populations with High-Needs. Since research shows that teachers are the most important school-based factor affecting student achievement (DeMonte, 2015, Hanushek and Rivkin, 2006) the PEER 2.0 initiative was designed to address targeted High-Need districts and charters that are low achieving, without a strong infrastructure to support change, and lack an equitable recruitment, promotion, and retention process.

Based on the target school profile, our design had to provide support for the infrastructure development needed for the PEER 2.0 schools to be successful. We designed PEER 2.0 to include an HCMS model with a PBCS as the driver for the development of the focused, systematic change process paired with an incentive program. We believe the use of the HCMS model will establish the necessary infrastructure to support the creation of successful Career Advancement Opportunities that will increase staff diversity while growing leadership capacity and increasing academic achievement.

Based on our focused design approach and our commitment to support the PEER 2.0 schools in meeting state expectations, we began a systematic data collection process of current state indicators and rankings of the PEER 2.0 schools using an external evaluator. This approach has generated a strong data set of baseline data that will be used as the starting point in our PBCS. To support our focus on incentives, the PEER team completed a scan of state initiatives implemented from DESE or created by a legislative act that are designed to incentivize school improvement. When we examined those opportunities, we found that few, if any, of the

targeted High-Need schools or their staff were ever recipients of state designed incentives. This context emphasizes the need for PEER 2.0 intervention that leverages a PBCS to motivate the High-Need, low performing districts and charters. The HCMS focuses on increasing academic achievement as the outcome of all the interventions that PEER 2.0 implements. We believe that by raising academic achievement over time, the PEER 2.0 schools will be more likely to enter the competitive state incentive system.

PEER 2.0 includes training sessions that will address Cultural Competency and Collective Efficacy and serve as the initiation of our equity focus. We will use the National Education Association definition of Cultural Competency: "Cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who come from a culture or cultures other than our own." This is a research-proven strategy that builds its influence on positive teacher-student relationships, which has an effect size of 0.72, and on teacher expectations, which has an effect size of 0.43 (Hattie, 2015). We are pairing these professional development conversations with a focus on Collective Efficacy which is the shared conviction that educators make a significant contribution in raising student achievement as defined by Arzonetti and Donohoo. An abundance of research demonstrates that schools that have a firmly established sense of collective efficacy have higher student achievement. This is because when collective efficacy is present, it results in greater persistence, increased motivation, and sustained effort required to implement evidence-based practices that help to support student learning (Donohoo & Katz, 2019). Goddard, Skrla, and Salloum (2017) demonstrated that collective teacher efficacy not only fosters high overall achievement, but it also results in reduction of achievement gaps.

Through the baseline data-collection process, we discovered that the High-Need schools were not participating in professional learning about Cultural Competence and Collective Efficacy at the same level as high-performing schools in the same region. As a result, we have included in the HCMS incentives to support the PEER 2.0 schools' involvement in these initiatives and coaching support to enhance the implementation. The PEER 2.0 model supports the creation of an equitable school culture that supports diversity in staff hiring and Career Advancement Opportunities, conversations about equitable teaching practices, clearly defining the progress of each network school. We believe that a lack of resources, and coordinated support are the reasons for low participation in these reform efforts.

We believe that those closest to the students are best positioned to make instructional decisions. Therefore, PEER 2.0 will invest in identifying and developing *teacher leaders* in every PEER 2.0 district. *Teacher leaders* will be empowered and trained to add a new level of instructional leadership in PEER 2.0 schools. Based on the training they will receive and support through a coaching model, they will add to the capacity of the PEER 2.0 schools, disseminate research and best practices, lead PLCs focused on student learning, and provide individualized PD to teachers based on identified needs from the evaluation system. This is a critical position and PEER 2.0's budget reflects the value-added supports put in place to assure they are successful as they develop and grow into this new leadership role. Our theory of change for the teaching and learning component of the PEER 2.0 model is: If we provide training, coaching, networking, and job-embedded support, and we monitor educator performance and student achievement through multiple measures, and we recognize and reward educator performance

and student achievement, then we will increase equity and access to quality learning and increase student achievement.

We believe that a focused HCMS system will significantly address issues of recruitment and retention of high-quality, diverse educators to the PEER 2.0 districts and charters and can increase their capabilities to become academically aligned and student-focused educational environments. The support for Career Advancement and student achievement and growth will be provided by PEER Coaches, *teacher leaders*, and APSRC staff. This support will address the tremendous needs of the PEER 2.0 schools that are negatively impacted by the continual cycle of hiring staff that are non-certified or teaching out-of-area. The PEER 2.0 initiative will institute a systematic plan designed to address the equitable access to excellent teachers in identified schools and retain their trained teachers.

Historically, High-Needs districts and charters have been unable to recruit and retain talented teachers. Many of these districts have been used as "stepping stones" or entry points into education by employees who need to complete their certification pathway before they move on to other districts once certified. We believe that investing in only one person is an ineffective design. When teachers leave, most of the skills go with them. With the *teacher leaders* concept, we are investing in all of the instructional staff and creating a systematic change designed to build teacher capacity across the school. The PEER 2.0 "grow-your-own" model supports professional and academic growth with incentives. PEER 2.0 includes a "wrap-around" support system for teachers serving the in High-Need districts and charters. The outcomes are to "grow" all teachers, not just those who are a novice or lack certification. The

competitive PEER Staff Pipeline Subgrant supports the recruitment and credentialing efforts of districts resulting in a diverse set of educators.

The PEER team has made a concerted effort to align the planned interventions to support the existing state-sponsored initiatives and requirements. We will utilize the state evaluation system (TESS) and build research-based instructional support and training aligned to the existing framework. We will utilize the state Report Card and ESSA School Index to align our data analysis and performance incentives based on those metrics. We will focus on specific state opportunities like the Master and Lead Professional Educator designations that provide Career Advancement Opportunities. The focused, HCMS approach to our planning and design and clear alignment to the existing state systems will to build sustainability for the PEER 2.0 model.

B(3): The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress towards achieving intended outcomes.

The PEER 2.0 model includes both a priority for **periodic** observation and collection of data of teacher performance as well as frequent monitoring of student academic progress. The PEER 2.0 model will leverage the TESS framework and included rating system as well as the alignment of evidence-based strategies to regularly monitor the performance of classroom teachers through a calendar of classroom walkthroughs, direct and indirect observations, and review of shared artifacts in support of the *teacher leaders'* professional growth plans. The PEER team will support school and *teacher leaders* in using artifacts and evidence to document professional growth and provide student-focused learning.

Student academic progress will be systematically measured throughout the instructional year to determine baseline performance measures and establish schoolwide goals. The PEER 2.0 model will utilize state-approved interim assessments to provide nationally normed

achievement and growth metrics in reading and mathematics. The PEER 2.0 model strategically plans for *periodic*, job-embedded PD on data analysis, including DOTs, and using a data-driven management system to improve instruction. Data from approved interim assessments allow for the performance of students in the PEER 2.0 schools to be compared with a nationally representative sample of students. Teachers will use formative student achievement and growth data to plan and revise instruction and implement effective teaching strategies to ensure personalized learning opportunities for all students. PEER 2.0 schools will be monitored toward closing achievement gaps in literacy and mathematics.

The PEER 2.0 initiative will additionally utilize the services of our staff, Melody Morgan, APSRC Director of Teaching and Learning, who has served in leadership roles at DESE over State student assessment and the National Office for Research, Measurement and Evaluation Systems (NORMES) at the University of Arkansas to support our external evaluator. The evaluation methods for the PEER 2.0 initiative will ensure: 1) performance feedback for continuous improvement in the implementation of PEER 2.0 and 2) an analysis of the evidence that the project is achieving its objectives and goals.

Performance measures will be analyzed as evidence for *each* of the PEER 2.0 initiative focus areas: students, teachers, and systems. Data will include local and state-level student achievement and growth measures in math and literacy, including interim assessments with national norms and ESSA student achievement and growth indices based on the summative assessment. Additional measures will be considered including minority English language proficiency and college readiness performance indicators (Advanced Placement course enrollments/scores, ACT composite and benchmarks, graduation rates, concurrent credits, and

college-going rates) (Appendix G5). Locally administered interim assessments will provide real-time data using DOTs throughout the school year to frequently inform instruction and provide nationally normed comparative data to chart progress with student growth and achievement. State and interim assessments with national norms will be utilized to set schoolwide and grade-level growth and achievement goals across the content areas of literacy and mathematics. Incentives will be implemented to reward academic achievement and annual growth goals.

TESS provides a statewide system for observation and support of K-12 classroom and specialty teachers. Evidence includes summative ratings, direct and indirect observations, artifacts and data from both the observer and the teachers. The TESS framework will be combined with the implementation of evidence-based practices documented through classroom walkthrough observations. Additional measures will be considered including licensure, additional certification, and documented on professional growth plans. Annual performance metrics also include progress with Career Advancement Opportunities such as the Master and Leade Professional Educator designation. To ensure equity remains a focus, teacher recruitment and retention data will be formally analyzed for progress towards Minority Recruitment Plan goals and included in the annual report.

Reliance on multiple data indicators within the state produced annual School Report Cards and ESSA School Index reports as well as the dynamic ADE Data Center provides a repository of comprehensive measures on which to establish school level baselines and annual goals. State ratings and published letter grades serve as additional evidence of school performance and will provide external metrics for progress monitoring within an overall state

system of school support. PEER 2.0 schools will receive in-depth analysis training on student performance measures that contribute to the overall ESSA School Index and how multiple measures contribute to school-wide performance. This will include review of state summative achievement and growth indices as well as school quality and student success indicators.

CRITERION C: QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

C(1): The extent to which the project proposal has a quality management plan

We attempted to develop the entire PEER 2.0 initiative by strategically aligning human capital management practices to the grant's strategies. Since the management of grant resources is an essential element of best practices, we reviewed human capital management research focusing on the redesign of key roles in initiatives that can be developed and retained over time. These strategies are all driven by metrics focusing on performance and effectiveness. With this goal in mind, we have established a set of project management tools and established a calendar of events that provides access to data based on management tasks. These data will be shared across all levels to assure that every support personnel will have an operational view of PEER 2.0 as a whole supported by set expectations, timelines for delivery of services, and completion of tasks.

Oversight, management, and coordination of the PEER 2.0 initiative will ultimately be the responsibility of the PEER 2.0 Project Director, who will oversee and administer the grant supported by the APSRC staff and Executive Director. The Project Director's key responsibilities will include maintaining the integrity of the PEER 2.0 vision, monitoring project goals, maintaining partnerships with LEAs and regional team members, supervising the coaching staff, budget management, monitoring and managing project plan implementation, and updating the

charter, rural, and policy advisory boards at APSRC. The Project Director will also provide leadership at quarterly meetings, summer institutes, and regional convenings. The PEER 2.0 plan has identified three defined goals for the Project Director to assure that the grant goals and objectives are on time and within budget and they are to 1) Provide oversight to the grant execution; 2) Manage grant activities; and 3) Lead the data collection and analysis of the outcomes to assure implementation is being successful in meeting all grant expectations.

APSRC will serve as the fiscal agent for the PEER 2.0 partnership. APSRC has a strong history in the management and implementation of statewide initiatives funded by federal grants, philanthropic partners, and the State of Arkansas. The staff is highly qualified and there is a specific finance team led by Ken Rich, Director of Finance, who will provide oversight to the budget and its resources. This strong team will be working collaboratively with the management team made up of members of the APSRC staff who have responsibility for the full implementation of the PEER 2.0 timeline, including meeting all goals and objectives on time and within budget. These two teams are supervised by Scott Smith, APSRC Executive Director, who will maintain a leadership role with the grant. CRESC, led by Director Pam Castor, will support APSRC through a Memorandum of Understanding to process the various components of the HCMS and PBCS. These teams will support the Project Director to ensure grant outcomes are met. Resumes for key personnel documenting their relevant training and experience are available in (*Appendix E*).

The PEER 2.0 organizational team has a focused and comprehensive management plan component to address the **oversight of the grant's execution** with a review of budget information monthly by the Project and Financial Director. The organizational implementation

team has a long history serving in the role of designer, provider, and facilitator of grant-funded service delivery for national (Gates and Facebook) and regional funders (Walton Family Foundation) who are interested in providing fiscal or intellectual resources specifically to charter and rural schools across Arkansas. Institutionally, our unique nonprofit has established the necessary infrastructure to successfully disseminate the communication regarding the grant opportunities, distribute the funding, develop a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding with an established timeline of reporting and evaluation requirements, and provide press release documents.

APSRC has also established a strong collaborative framework of critical partners who will assist in the design and services or have direct responsibilities for the implementation of the grant activities as in-kind resources that are detailed in the budget narrative. The partners in the initiative including CRESC, service providers, the external evaluator, teacher and school leaders, and coaching staff will serve as members of the PEER 2.0 advisory group. This advisory group will serve as a critical element of the PEER 2.0 network's focus on the **data collection/analysis**. *Teacher leaders* will meet quarterly, virtually or face-to-face, to share promising approaches and discuss problems of practice. The advisory group will meet semi-annually, virtually or face-to-face, to report on data collection and analysis, and announce the incentives awarded. One of the most critical roles of the advisory group is to assume responsibility for the examination of PEER 2.0 data outcomes, analyze the effectiveness of major programmatic interventions, and provide assistance in defining any mid-course adjustments during the three-year grant.

Annually, there will be two PEER 2.0 network updates, virtually or face-to-face, led by the project director supported by staff and partners. These two events will be the culminating activity for two monitoring plan components. The first virtual meeting will focus on data analysis leveraging the DOTs system. This meeting will be scheduled after the fall interim assessment has occurred and will provide the results of the classroom walkthrough observations. This meeting will also include an analysis of the virtual review of *teacher leader* progress documentation. The *teacher leaders* will share this information with their schools. This meeting will also have a component for the PEER 2.0 leadership team to gather information for the discussion of assessment with the utilization of a survey to provide feedback in real-time. The feedback will include suggestions, questions, and opportunities to share strategies across the network. This feedback will be shared in a report created by the external evaluator.

The second PEER 2.0 networking meeting will focus on the Annual Report and will provide an update on each PEER 2.0 school's evaluation results an aggregate data summary. This will also include the awarding of the incentives that have been earned by each campus in the network. During this meeting, campuses will work collaboratively to define their two greatest achievements and two areas of focus for the next academic year and share these outcomes using a shared online repository.

C(2): The extent to which the project proposal has an adequate management plan to achieve the objectives

While we have provided an example of each of the areas of responsibility that are major components of our management plan, we have included an implementation plan that establishes an achievable timeline for accomplishing activities essential to meeting the grant objectives with major activities and milestones, responsible staff, annual indications of

programmatic implementation, and timeline. These are the activities and milestones for the first month. The comprehensive three-year management plan is in Appendix C.

*Major Activities & Milestones	Responsible Staff	Timeline
Convene Leadership team to participate in USDOE GANS contract	Leadership Team	October 2023
Update all PEER 2.0 target schools regarding grant opportunity	Executive Director	October 2023
Update APSRC Policy, Charter, Rural Board & write thank you letters notifying letters of support providers	Executive Director	October 2023
Press Release issued on PEER 2.0 grant	Project Director	October 2023
Invite all targeted PEER 2.0 charter & rural schools to a Zoom announcement session	Executive & Project Director	October 2023
Send MOUS for signature by Superintendents of each targeted charters/districts with updates at local board meetings	Legal staff, Project & Executive Directors	October 2023
Provide guidance to districts to procure interim assessments and onboard districts to the DOTs system	Project & Finance Directors	October 2023
Increase educator participation in the PEER 2.0 Network through the PEER website, shared online repositories, and the PEER Facebook page	Project Director & Coaches	October 2023
Publicize the incentive component by defining the support of <i>teacher leaders</i> based on the Human Capital Management System	Project Director	October 2023
Implement the PEER 2.0 model with the establishment of a monthly calendar for the implementation of instructional strategies, use of classroom walkthroughs to document classroom change, sharing of instructional strategies, regional hub meetings, weekly communications, and all other current services	Project Director & Coaches	October 2023
Initiate introductory PD for leadership development and effective, evidence-based practices	Project Director & Coaching Staff	October 2023
Send a communications toolkit for district and school leaders to identified districts and charters including the Incentives Brochure	Project Director & Coaching Staff	October 2023
Hire coaching staff or reassign staff commitments	Executive Director	Oct- Nov 2023
Provide an overview session, virtually or in person, for all PEER 2.0 staff	Project Director & Coaching Staff	Oct-Nov 2023
<p><i>*Please Note: The Management Plan above addresses the first month of the initiative. A comprehensive three-year plan is located in (Appendix C).</i></p>		

CRITERION D: ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

D(1): The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.

We have utilized a systematic planning approach that has generated a set of baseline data documenting the current student achievement. We have examined regional and state incentive programs and identified the disconnect of these resources supporting PEER 2.0 districts and charters. We have aligned our successful *teacher leader* training model to the identified needs for improved academic achievement improvement. We have strengthened the coaching model and regional delivery design to focus on intensive, systematic service delivery to PEER 2.0 schools utilizing both face-to-face and virtual coaching components of PD delivery.

Our logic model, located in (*Appendix D*), has a strategy aligned to systems change with a focus on equity (strategy 1), redesigned to allow decision making at the classroom and teacher level and providing incentives for teacher capacity building (strategy 2) resulting in increased student academic achievement (strategy 3). One of the major supports of the PEER 2.0 network is the structured approach to establish systems, including DOTs, that leverage assessment data to drive instruction. These systems are designed to operationalize the *Student Focus* goal of increasing academic achievement. We have designed a systematic plan to impact every major component of school reform efforts by applying the focus on student achievement. An example of systems change implementation includes evidence of building teacher capacity while also impacting student achievement. For example, classroom walkthrough observations will have specified focus areas aligned to the TESS framework and research-based instructional strategies provided in the *teacher leaders* PD sessions. Classroom walkthrough data will be analyzed alongside interim assessment data to determine progress toward strategies 2 and 3. Because

our system is built upon honoring the teachers' decision making, *teacher leaders* will select specific strategies as the focus of their professional growth plans. This approach supports the development of a comprehensive set of strategies that build teacher capacity to provide high-quality instruction based on grade-level standards. We will reward success with incentives through the PBCS.

D(2): The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population

The PEER 2.0 model has implications beyond the life of the grant to expand educational opportunities, teacher quality, and student outcomes. This model systematically grows sustainable structures and practices that allow for equitable, distributed leadership and staff ownership in school improvement processes. Schools will learn specific strategies to grow and manage human capital beyond traditional building roles to establish a diverse staff. School leaders will learn how to equitably utilize, support, and compensate *teacher leaders* by using differentiated roles, incentives, and support systems.

The PEER 2.0 model promotes collaboration among leadership roles to ensure PD planning is equitable, collaborative, job-embedded, aligned to content standards, and sustainable over time. Organizations will be taught the value of reflective practice and how to design, collect, analyze, and utilize assessment and data to promote changes in instructional practices to improve student learning. The DOTs system will be utilized to securely share data to monitor student achievement and inform instructional practice.

The PEER 2.0 model of distributed leadership promotes professional growth of all teachers through the use of *teaching leaders*. The DESE Career Continuum provides unique Career Advancement pathways to support the future goals of all teachers (*Appendix G6*). APSRC

has incorporated support for these Career Advancement pathways, including support for National Board Certification, into the PEER 2.0 model. In addition, the *Arkansas Teacher Leader Model Standards for Lead Designation* found in (Appendix G7) will be incorporated into the *teacher leader* training. This integration promotes the professional growth of teachers in target schools.

D(3): The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond

The sustainability of the PEER 2.0 initiative was a focus that we visited during the design process. APSRC and CRESC will utilize its infrastructure of highly qualified staff, coaches, and consultants in a cost-effective design to implement PEER 2.0. APSRC will leverage its successful reputation as a leader in creating and implementing statewide initiatives to support the continuation of the PEER 2.0 model. Previously, APSRC was able to establish a statewide, teacher-focused approach to the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with an annual training of more 1,100 teachers for three years. This project had a fee-based fiscal design that allowed new schools to access training and units of study with the coaching support model. We plan to use this model as part of our sustainability plan. The funding generated through this model allowed APSRC to build and maintain a highly trained coaching cadre available to offer support services across the state. We paid highly effective teachers who had completed the training cycle to develop the units of study in a self-perpetuating cycle of innovation, leadership development, and instructional improvement. This fiscal model rewarded the teachers who had been trained and who were interested in expanding their skills. It supported schools with focused PD and tools that had been tested and implemented at the

specific grade, content, or classroom level, and it built a cadre of teachers who trained in the summer to create virtual learning opportunities.

During the third year of the Common Core model, some schools that had completed the initial training requested the newly developed instructional strategies which we offered at a reduced price if they would utilize virtual coaching. This virtual coaching model allowed us to establish a cost-effective option for schools to receive ongoing support. APSRC's creation of asynchronous PD continues to evolve, but was substantially implemented during COVID. Because APSRC is a state-recognized professional development provider, all of the established courses generate credit toward the required PD hours needed for certification. Our PD system that was leveraged during that time period provided teachers who were unable to attend in-person sessions access to digital PD tools for support. In addition, school leaders could assign staff members to view specific asynchronous content to build shared knowledge before the next PLC meeting. The flexibility provided to teachers and schools through asynchronous options is appreciated and valued because skill development is no longer restricted to on-site sessions during specific time constraints. We plan to utilize this highly replicable model after evidence of the effectiveness of the PEER 2.0 initiative has been documented.

Through the asynchronous PEER PD Hub content and synchronous virtual sessions included in the PEER 2.0 model, teachers have the flexibility to fit PD into their schedule. This combination of professional learning addresses equal access and quality across the network of PEER 2.0 schools and models for teachers how to create collaborative learning environments that they can replicate with their students. We see this as our sustainability model based on its

cost-effective design and lower cost for initial service delivery as well as research that has proven that asynchronous PD can be as effective as traditional face-to-face sessions.

We will invite every teacher in the PEER 2.0 schools to join the PEER 2.0 web-based network which will function as place to share resources, ideas, and engage with other teachers. This web-based network will include the PEER website, PEER Facebook page, and the PEER PD Hub. This network can function similarly to the Teacher Practice Network #tpn page which is still functioning and supporting teacher development and growth. We look forward to the creation of new web-based networking tools that will support teacher interaction using digital resources.

The PEER 2.0 initiative has a unique opportunity to develop some of the first PD training components designed to support the new role of *teacher leaders*. The PEER 2.0 process will provide leadership support to school and *teacher leaders*, generate training on evidence-based strategies, and provide networking opportunities to support long-term sustainability. After the three-year grant cycle, the training developed through the grant will be marketed across the region and made available for a fee to other member schools and aspiring *teacher leaders*. The PEER 2.0 *teacher leaders* will be able to assist new teachers as mentors in meeting the state certification rules. The support provided through PEER 2.0 for Career Advancement Opportunities provides opportunities for teachers to utilize existing pathways on the DESE Career Continuum and promotes a long-term network of support. The *Arkansas Teacher Leader Model Standards* are located in (*Appendix G7*).

The implementation of the PEER 2.0 initiative, with the involvement of both charters and traditional school districts, creates an opportunity to provide the tools, training, job-embedded support and coaching, *teacher leadership* development, and asynchronous PD to two very

different markets. APSRC has utilized a tiered marketing plan with past initiatives where the first level of implementation is with a pilot group. After successful implementation with a set of operational results, the second tier is to provide services (for a fee) to our APSRC membership schools - both charter and traditional districts. The third tier is to actively explore private philanthropic resources to assist in the statewide implementation of a comprehensive *teacher leaders* certification model. We are committed to supporting the growth of this expanding concept in our state.

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