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A. Need for Project

(i) Gaps or weaknesses. Montgomery County Schools (MCS) is a rural school district located adjacent to the Uwharrie National Forest in North Carolina’s Piedmont region. We serve 3,494 students in grades PreK-12 in our 11 high-poverty target schools with free/reduced lunch data provided as follows and in *Appendix E*, including six elementary schools: Candor (95%), Green Ridge (90%), Mt. Gilead (90%), Star (79%), Troy (77%), and Page Street (76%); two middle schools: East (86%) and West (74%), Montgomery Learning Academy (6-12: 79%), and two high schools: Montgomery Early College (57%) and Central (75%)^{1,2} (**Absolute Priority 2: High-Need Schools**) [**Requirement 5**]. Our student demographics are 37% White, 36% Hispanic, 19% Black, 6% Multiracial, 2% other; but 82% of our educators are white.^{3,4} Concerned by decreased student achievement, increased student behavioral issues, and difficulties staffing our high need schools, MCS leaders convened a task force comprised of educators, district and school leadership, parents and community members to examine student academic and behavioral data, educator evaluations and surveys, and community data which found three significant gaps [**Requirement 2**].

► **Gap 1: Low Academic Achievement and Increased Behavioral Issues.** MCS was cited by the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) for inclusion on the 2021-22 low-performing district list, as a majority of our schools appeared on the NC Low-Performing Schools list.⁵ As seen in the tables below, a significant percentage of our students are scoring below proficiency in every tested subject with failure rates above state averages in all tested subjects [**Requirement 5**].⁶

Table 1. Students Scoring Below Proficiency Levels in State-Tested Subjects⁷			
Grades 3-8	Math	Reading	Science
MCS Average	63%	62%	42%
NC State Average	50%	52%	32%

Table 2. Students Scoring Below Proficiency Levels in State-Tested Subjects⁸				
Grades 9-12	Math I	English II	Biology	Math III
MCS Average	72%	51%	52%	60%
NC State Average	67%	42%	48%	47%

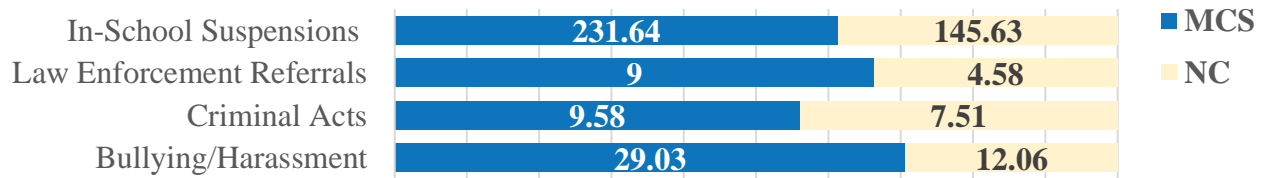
There are also striking differences between scores for our Black, Economically Disadvantaged (ED), English Learner (EL) and Students with Disabilities (SWD) subgroups [**Requirement 5**].

Table 3. Students Below Proficiency on State Tested Subjects by Subgroup⁹							
Grades 3-8	ED	EL	SWD	Black	Hispanic	White	2 or More
Math	66%	79%	92%	76%	69%	66%	69%
Reading	68%	89%	87%	77%	63%	68%	63%
Science	64%	64%	78%	57%	32%	47%	32%
Grades 9-12							
Biology	61%	90%	74%	74%	56%	41%	42%
English II	58%	91%	88%	70%	53%	40%	60%
Math I	78%	>95%	>95%	88%	66%	69%	N/A
Math III	70%	>95%	88%	79%	65%	64%	50%

Childhood poverty is linked to negative socio-emotional, mental health, and behavioral issues.¹⁰ This is reflected in our disciplinary and behavioral incident rates, which exceed state averages, as seen *Figure 1*.¹¹ We identified glaring disparities in disciplinary rates across subgroups, including in-school suspensions which average 458 per 1,000 students for black students, 358 for EL, and 318 for SWD compared to 184 for white students [**Requirement 5**].¹² These infractions lower

school climate and negatively impact teacher recruitment, retention and student achievement.^{13,14}

Figure 1. Disciplinary/Behavioral Incidents per 1,000 students



► **Gap 2: High Educator Attrition and Vacancies.** MCS faces numerous challenges staffing our high-need schools. This includes a LEA attrition rate of 13%, which is 21% higher than the state average.¹⁵ Our mobility rate, the percentage of personnel lost to other districts within NC, is 72% higher than the NC average.¹⁶ Our recoupment rate, the ability to hire teachers from other districts, is also far lower, forcing MCS to hire international teachers. An alarming 17% of teachers in our schools are lateral entry, have provisional licensure, or are teaching outside their content areas, a 39% increase from 2021-22. Those with provisional licensure or teachers new to the profession, are generally less effective initially than experienced teachers and statistically, more likely to leave our district or the teaching profession.¹⁷ Our rural location makes our area a tough sell to recent college graduates who are attracted to more populated areas.¹⁸ We have also faced difficulties recruiting math, science, elementary, and Exceptional Children (EC) teachers.

► **Gap 3: Diversity and Inequitable Access to Effective Educators [Requirement 2].**

Diversity: Teachers of color are linked to positive academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes for *all* students.¹⁹ While our student population is 64% minority, our teacher population is 82% white with just 2.4% Hispanic teachers in a district that is 36% Hispanic.²⁰ Recruiting highly-qualified, effective minority teachers has been difficult, in part, because teachers of color are more likely to enter teaching through alternative certification pathways, which often do not include student teaching which further increases their likelihood of leaving teaching altogether.²¹

Effectiveness: NCDPI calculates teacher effectiveness ratings based on teacher evaluations plus a student growth component. As seen below, our district has more teachers rated as in Needs Improvement and less teachers rated as Effective, compared to state averages [*Requirement 6*].

Table 4. 2021-22 NCEES Teacher Effectiveness Ratings²²			
	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective
MCS	22%	57%	22%
NC State Average	15%	69%	16%

Our needs analysis divided our schools into three groups using state growth indicators: **1 Exceeds** includes our five highest performing schools who exceeded growth; **2 Met** includes one elementary and one middle school who met predicted growth; **3 Not Met** includes two elementary, our only high school, and the alternative school [*Requirements 2, 6*]. As seen in *Table 5*, students in our lowest performing schools are 24% more likely to be taught by a beginning teacher (BT) than students in an exceeds schools and 81% more likely to have a teacher identified as needs improvement.²³

Table 5. Teacher Effectiveness and Distribution across High-Need Schools²⁴						
School Group	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Beginning Teachers	Experienced Teachers	Provisional Licensure
Exceeds	16.76	47.3	38.8	13.3	83.6	6.74
Met	16.3	69.0	14.7	16.3	83.7	7.6
Not Met	29.1	56.7	14.2	16.6	83.4	0.4

The starkest discrepancies are seen in *Table 6*, between our highest performing school, Montgomery Early College (MEC) and our lowest performing school, Page Street Elementary.

Table 6. Inequities in High vs. Low-Performing Schools²⁵				
School	Poverty	Needs Improvement	Highly Effective	BT
Montgomery Early College	16.76	0	84%	0
Page Street Elementary	16.30	44%	0	27%

Three MCS schools have been cited by NCDPI as Lowest-Performing in our state due to consistently underperforming subgroups: East Middle (SWD), Mt. Gilead Elementary (Black), and West Middle (Black, SWD) [**Requirement 2**].²⁶ Compounding these issues are the fact that nearly 60% of our principals and APs are inexperienced, as new leaders contribute to lower student academic achievement and increased inequities in student disciplinary infractions.²⁷ Further, teacher and school leader input is included in *Appendix F* and shows that nearly 2/3 of teachers and school leaders strongly agreed MCS should apply for TSL funding [**Requirement 3**].

(ii) Integrate or build on similar efforts. [**Requirement 9**] MCS will increase student academic achievement and improve equitable access to effective educators in our high-need schools by redesigning our existing HCMS and PBCS to better attract, place, retain, and sustain effective educators and develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness through our planned TSL program, **TEAM: Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Acceleration in Montgomery** which will impact 320 educators, 22 school leaders and 3,494 students. Our project will build on similar efforts to improve student outcomes and build a more effective instructional and school leadership staff including: ► **Federal:** We have a School Climate Transformation Grant which implements a multi-tiered system of supports to address student academic and behavioral issues, including exposure to traumatic stress and adverse childhood experiences, common in our high-poverty community. Prior US ED grants include a 2015 Investing in Innovation grant, which embedded technology across our rural schools and a 2018 Innovative Approaches to Literacy grant which

targeted PreK-6 students with literacy resources, improved literacy curriculum, and digital content access. As a high-need district, we also receive a variety of federal block grant funding which will be leveraged during our grant project period and for post-grant sustainment. This includes ESSA which provides academic enrichment and student supports, via Title I, Part A for teacher PD to promote better academic outcomes for high-poverty students most at risk; Title II, Part A is used to develop teacher effectiveness; Title III provides support for English Learners, and Title IV provides student academic enrichment. ► **State:** NCDPI offers a robust training portal which provides training for mentors and beginning and experienced teachers and school leaders. These tools include full-length modules, mini-modules, instructor-led courses, evaluation standards, and NC Digital Learning Competencies.²⁸ ► **Local:** Each school has an instructional facilitator who provides coaching, PD, and curriculum support to teachers on-site. They work with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which are organized by grade level or subject area. Existing PLCs will be used to create Collaborative Teaming refocusing efforts on use of inquiry-based, data-driven solutions to address student and educator needs to promote teacher effectiveness for new and experienced instructional staff and leaders. To improve school climate and educator working conditions, a school resource officer in each school will redirect their time and efforts to align with the objectives our TSL grant to help reduce disciplinary infractions using MTSS and equity-driven strategies such as restorative justice to reduce inequities in disciplinary infraction citations.

(iii) Comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning. ① Framework for Teaching

(FFT): We use the Danielson FFT to build teacher skillsets to positively impact student learning.²⁹ Updated in 2022, the framework divides teaching into four domains: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. The FFT includes creation of equitable learning environments and promotion of social-emotional development, to better

create inclusive classrooms that promote student learning by meeting the needs of all students.³⁰

● **NCEES** (NC Educator Effectiveness System) supports the professional growth of K-12 educational leaders and teachers with online modules including evaluation components (i.e. training, rubrics, observational tools) and PD aligned with teacher and school leader evaluation standards.³¹ NCDPI teacher standards are aligned to the FFT and include: Leadership, Respectful Environments for Diverse Student Populations, Content, Facilitation of Student Learning, and Professional Reflection while school leader standards include: Strategic, Instructional, Cultural, HR, Managerial Leadership, External Development, and Micropolitical Abilities.³² For teachers, the evaluation cycles include:³³ a) principals, teachers, and peer evaluators are trained; b) orientation to the evaluation rubric and schedule; c) self-assessment; d) pre-observation conference to discuss self-assessment, growth plan, and written description of lessons to be observed; e) at least 3 observations by principal and peers; post-observation meeting to discuss strengths and weaknesses; f) summary evaluation conference and scoring using a rating form; and g) design of professional learning plans based on ratings. School leader evaluations follow a similar process:³⁴ a) orientation; b) pre-evaluation planning through self-assessment and performance goals; c) initial meeting to discuss self-assessment, goal development, and evidence with data and artifacts; d) data collection to support evidence; e) mid-year conference to discuss goal progress and review school-wide student growth data; f) preparation of a consolidated performance assessment; and g) meeting to conduct a summary evaluation conference and agree on progress towards performance goals. Teachers are evaluated on Standards 1-5 and School Leaders on Standards 1-7 using a 5-point scale: 1) Not Demonstrated, 2) Developing, 3) Proficient, 4) Accomplished and 5) Distinguished.³⁵

● **EVAAS** (Education Value-Added Assessment System) is used to assess the impact of teachers, school leaders, schools, and districts on student learning growth in state-tested subjects and is

incorporated into both teacher (Standard 6) and school leader (Standard 8) evaluations.³⁶ Individual growth for teachers of state-tested subjects is calculated at the classroom level with a 3-year rolling average of student growth values necessary to derive an effectiveness rating on a 3-point scale (Does Not Meet, Meets, Exceeds). Schoolwide growth ratings are used to determine growth ratings for teachers in non-tested subjects and school leaders. **④Educator Effectiveness:** EVAAS and NCEES work together to provide a fair, rigorous, valid, reliable, and objective approach to educator evaluations which intertwines professional skills and knowledge (NCEES) with measures of student growth (EVAAS) [**Requirement 4**]. This data is used to calculate educator effectiveness ratings on a 3-point scale: 1) In Need of Improvement: Did not receive Proficient or higher on NCEES and Did Not Meet expected growth on EVAAS; 2) Effective: Proficient or higher on NCEES and Meets expected growth or higher on EVAAS; 3) Highly Effective: Accomplished or higher on NCEES and Exceeds expected growth on EVAAS.³⁷

⑤Accountability Model: NCEES and EVAAS are part of NC's accountability model which provides an overview of student, school, and district performance against state and national standards. This data is used by districts and schools to determine where and what supports are needed to improve student learning.³⁸ This includes results from EOG and EOC tests, academic growth outcomes, and graduation rates which are used to assign each school a letter grade (A-F) and growth (Exceeds, Met, Did Not Meet).³⁹ The accountability model is used to make a variety of human capital decisions including preparation, recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, dismissal, compensation, and promotion. For example, at the end of the 3-year induction period, beginning teachers, who are not proficient, are not awarded a continuation license and are not eligible to remain employed as a teacher. Experienced educators who score below proficiency can be recommended for dismissal, demotion, or nonrenewal. Results from teacher evaluations and

student assessment are used to identify PD needs at the individual, grade, and school levels. NCDPI hosts an online PD portal aligned to the teacher and school leader evaluation standards which we supplement with targeted PD aligned with district and school improvement plans and results of educator evaluations. **ⓄPBC Pilot:** Currently, we provide bonuses for hard-to-staff schools for teachers, principals, and assistant principals in the form of an annual retention bonus which averages \$3,000. We also provide PBC for Principal Performance, Teacher Performance in Reading for exceeding state average scores on 3rd Grade Reading exams, and Teacher Performance in Math and Reading across Grades 4-8 for exceeding state average scores. We have also used ESSR funds as a retention bonus for instructional staff upon signing on for the next school year at \$1,500 each. This pilot program contributes to our required match and informed our PBC framework for *TEAM [Requirement 9]*.

(iv) Design will address needs. Alignment of gaps and strategies to address gaps are in *Table 7*.

Table 7. Identified Gaps and Aligned TSL Project Strategies	
Gap 1: Low Academic Achievement and Behavioral Issues; Challenging Working Environment	Strategy: Teacher Collaborative Teams, Feedback and Coaching, MTSS, School Climate Professional Development, School Resource Officers
Gap 2: High Educator Attrition and Vacancies Resulting in Difficulties Staffing Schools and Onboarding BTs and School Leaders	Strategy: Comprehensive PBCS, HCMS Enhancements and Upgrades, Recruitment Efforts, BT and School Leader Boot Camps, 1:1 Mentors for BTs, NI Teachers, School Leaders, PD aligned to Evaluations
Gap 3: Recruiting Diverse, Qualified Educators and Inequitable Access to Effective Educators	Strategy: In-and-out of state, HBCU partnerships, Grow our Own, Incentives, Job-embedded PD aligned with NCEES, Instructional Facilitators, Master Teachers

We have aligned these strategies across four key program components: ❶ Redesign HCMS and expand PBCS in high-need schools; ❷ Recruit effective, diverse educators; ❸ Support and retain effective teachers and school leaders; and ❹ Reward effective educators. ❶ ***Redesign HCMS and expand PBCS in high-need schools.*** We will redesign our existing HCMS and PBCS to better attract, place, retain, and sustain effective educators and develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness which will include career advancement opportunities that will reward and recognize our most effective teachers, principals, and school leaders (**Absolute Priority 1**). Currently, we utilize the NCDPI subsidized *Home Base* data platform which incorporates a myriad of programs (i.e. *PowerSchool*, *SchoolNet*, *NCStar*, *GoOpenNC*, and *NCEES*). These state systems are in addition to our own internal operational systems which results in the need to pull data from multiple systems for a variety of tasks including evaluations, tracking and providing PD, and pulling data to inform human capital decision making. *TEAM* will allow us to triangulate and streamline data from these various platforms into a single user interface via PowerSchool's *Unified Insights and Talent* portals. This will empower district and school leaders to make data-informed HR, instructional, and district operational decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels.⁴⁰ These systems will better facilitate the recruitment, application, hiring, and onboarding of educators new to our district. It will also unite the results from educator and school leader evaluations and ensure better alignment of PD to address identified needs and identify rising leaders across our 11 high-need schools (**Absolute Priority 2**).⁴¹ ❷ ***Recruit effective diverse educators:*** Increasing our pool of effective, diverse teachers and school leaders begins with increasing the number of diverse college students enrolling in and completing teacher preparation programs. a) ***Historically black colleges and universities (HBCU):*** We will partner with key HBCUs in NC to recruit a more diverse workforce to increase the number of experienced, fully

certified effective educators in our district, particularly those from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds to more closely align with our student population which is 64% minority (**Competitive Priority 1**). Our efforts will include: raising our district's profile within HBCUs through participation at on-campus recruitment events including on-campus interviews, resume referrals, career fairs, presentations, campus information tables, and opportunities advertised on university bulletin boards or via university online services. **b) Paraprofessionals:** Our HR Team will work to identify promising teacher candidates from our own pool of paraprofessionals recruiting them into high-need shortage areas. We will provide these candidates with links to our IHE partnerships (Montgomery Community College, UNC-Pembroke, and UNC-Greensboro) so they can attain educational credentials necessary for teacher licensure. **c) Community Outreach:** We will conduct ongoing outreach in our community to identify external candidates including recent college graduates, lateral entry teacher candidates, and mid-career changers who may possess a wealth of content knowledge and career-related experience and who want to attain educator licensure. **d) Grow Your Own:** We offer a Teacher Cadet program designed to create a pipeline of students to be the next generation of teachers and reflective of the diverse demographic makeup of our population. This year-long class provides active career exploration for juniors and seniors to encourage them to pursue a career in education. **e) Articulation Agreements:** We have worked with Montgomery Community College and UNC-Pembroke to establish an articulation agreement which allows our Teacher Cadets to complete their Associate of Arts in Teacher Education or Associate in Science in Teacher Education at MCC for transfer to UNC-Pembroke to attain their bachelor's degree and return to MCS as a teacher. We will collaborate with IHE partners to focus our recruitment efforts on their most promising beginning teachers (student teachers) for our high need schools. **3 Support and retain effective teachers and school leaders:**

Our survey of teachers and school leaders across our district (*Appendix F*) found that 61% of our educators indicated they need additional support to boost their professional growth and improve their effectiveness.⁴² Nearly 90% agreed or strongly agreed they are interested in leadership roles and 77% wanted improvements to the beginning teacher onboarding program [**Requirement 3**].⁴³ A key goal of *TEAM* is to build teacher and school leader effectiveness so that all students in our district have equal access to highly effective teachers. Our plan begins with enhancement of our existing *a) Beginning Teacher (BT) Support Program* to support educators during their first three years in the classroom. BTs, including Lateral Entry teachers (LET), will receive targeted PD in classroom management, assessment, student diversity, differentiated instruction and best teaching practices. Each teacher will be given a 1:1 mentor (rated as effective or higher) for their first three years in the classroom at either the same grade or subject level with whom they will meet weekly. Each school will have a Lead Mentor in addition to an Instructional Facilitator to provide additional mentoring and PD support for BTs and LETs. NCDPI Regional Education Facilitators monitor all BTs in NC and have established BT Support and Mentor Standards and training modules for both BTs and mentors. Our *TEAM* BT program will be led by the *TEAM* BT Specialist, who will meet with all BTs, LETs, and their mentors each month to discuss questions, concerns, and provide PD. In addition to individual mentoring, new teachers will have support through the following: collegial monthly group sessions to discuss struggles; targeted professional learning from instructional facilitators; and strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners and address bias in instructional practice (**Competitive Priorities 1 and 2**). *b) NC New Teacher Support Program (NTSP) for BTs and LETs*: We will contract with NTSP, a partnership between East Carolina University and the University of NC System, to provide in-person and virtual instructional coaching combined with quarterly PD in instructional skills. BTs and LETs will have access to

virtual PD modules which align with NC teacher standards during their first three years in the classroom. *c) New Leaders Mentoring and Coaching:* Like our BT supports, we will provide in-depth professional coaching for new school principals and assistant principals. This will be provided by internal district mentors and a retired superintendent who will provide a trajectory of learning experiences that will include aligning sample teacher evaluations to PD plans to improve teacher effectiveness; implementing strategies to support, develop, and retain qualified, experienced, effective, and diverse educators; addressing bias in instructional practice; and promoting inclusive and bias-free hiring practices. *d) Instructional Facilitators (IF):* Each school currently has an onsite IF who provides coaching and support for instructional staff. We will repurpose our IF staff to guide transformation of our current PLCs to create *e) Teacher Collaborative Teams*. The work of each team will focus on raising achievement and closing existing gaps, led by teachers, and coached and supported by IFs. Each team will use data analysis

techniques to identify students' academic needs, purposefully plan instruction, and share effective strategies from their own practice. Our Continuous Improvement Model (*Figure 2*) is designed to build a stronger culture of shared responsibility for student learning outcomes through these collaborative teams. Similar



collaborative approaches have helped improve student achievement and increase teacher job satisfaction, and retention.⁴⁴ *f) Teacher Affinity Group (TAG):* As part of our Diversity and Inclusion Plan, we established district-wide TAG groups for Black and Hispanic teachers who

meet monthly to discuss mutual concerns and provide support for one another. Through TSL, a DEI specialist will lead this. Similar groups have been shown to help promote teacher retention.⁴⁵

g) Professional Learning: We have created a PD schedule with quarterly early release days for students so teachers and school leaders can participate in focused PD. We will enhance this by adding an annual 2-day Summer Symposium for teachers and school leaders. Topics will focus on increasing educator effectiveness and promotion of student academic growth. This will include a focus on our instructional model (Framework for Teaching), NCEES, EVAAS, and our Continuous Improvement Model in addition to content specific instructional strategies. Each school's leadership team will set annual PD goals based on results from educator evaluations and student assessments to determine common problem areas. This information will be used to design targeted training supported by content experts and our online Professional Learning platform which hosts virtual, facilitator, and self-paced learning on topics including technology tools, digital learning and teaching, and developing students' critical thinking skills. Increasing school climate and supporting diverse students will also be incorporated into each school's PD plan.⁴⁶ For example, we have already contracted with a university professor to deliver monthly *Teaching-In-Color* PD, designed to build teachers and school leaders' ability to support diverse students through equitable instructional and disciplinary practices to increase student achievement and decrease incidences of inequitable disciplinary practices. Additionally, we are working with UNC-Greensboro to provide micro-credential badging across 3 tracts: 1) Advancement of Teaching and Learning, 2) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and 3) Technology Enhanced Pedagogy aligned with our district and school improvement plans. **4 Reward and promote effective teachers and school leaders:** *TEAM* will use two key strategies for this component: 1) Creation of Career Ladder positions and 2) Provision of PBC for effective and highly effective educators and taking on

leadership positions. New career ladder positions include: *a) Master Teachers* (2 per school) who are rated as highly effective educators with a track record of impacting student achievement growth who take on additional leadership responsibilities for supporting new educators through coaching, mentoring, and co-teaching during planning periods and afterschool. Similarly, they will work with struggling teachers in each school to help improve their effectiveness ratings. *b) Teacher Leadership Roles:* Effective and highly effective teachers will have the opportunity to earn a cash incentive if they take on a leadership role by participating in growth and leadership opportunities to inform school, district, or state policies and practices to improve educator diversity; sponsoring a club; or facilitating the creation of a parent-teacher organization to enhance school climate and family engagement before or after the teacher's contracted hours. This will be documented via a portfolio with requirements such as number of members and meetings, meeting minutes, photographs, videos, and artifacts. *c) Leadership Academy:* We will establish a Leadership Academy to develop a cohort of aspiring leaders, choosing one candidate per school annually who will meet quarterly and one week each summer to participate in a variety of problem-based, action-learning experiences that simulate challenges school leaders encounter daily. Led by district and school administrators and a retired superintendent, the Academy will serve as a venue to identify a more diverse group of potential school leaders as district openings occur. *d) PBC:* Our teacher and school leader survey (*Appendix F*) found that nearly 90% of respondents indicated they would like opportunities for leadership roles and 77% wanted improvements to our BT and onboarding programs [*Requirement 3*].⁴⁷ Additionally, 86% were in favor of increases in educator compensation for student growth and teacher leadership roles as NC ranks 32nd nationally in average teacher pay and 46th lowest in BT pay.^{48,49} *Table 8* describes the types of PBC that will be awarded via *TEAM* based on our pilot, best practices, and stakeholder input [*Requirement 1*].

Table 8. Individual and School-Wide PBC Framework	
Individual Growth for Tested Subject Certified Teachers	
Purpose	Teachers use effective instructional practices to increase student growth
Criteria	Effective or highly effective teacher evaluation rating
PBC	Proficient or higher AND meets growth (\$1,500) or exceeds growth (\$4,000)
School-Wide Growth for Educators	
Purpose	Educators use effective instructional practices to increase student growth
Criteria	Teachers and specialized instructional personnel (i.e. Early Learning, Guidance, Behavioral, Paraprofessionals) who help contribute to school-wide growth
PBC	Meets growth (\$2,000) or exceeds growth (\$4,500)
School-Wide Performance for Principals and Assistant Principals	
Purpose	School leaders contribute to school-wide student growth
Criteria	Effective or highly effective principal or assistant principal evaluation rating
PBC	Principal/AP effective (\$5,000/\$2,500) or highly effective (\$8,000/\$5,000)
Hard-to-Staff Subjects (determined by the district annually)	
Purpose	Effective educators within or outside district teach hard-to-staff subjects
Criteria	Rating of effective or highly effective teaching hard-to-staff subjects
PBC	One-time signing bonus of \$3,500 with commitment to stay at least 3 years
High-Needs School Retention	
Purpose	Experienced teachers who return the following school year to a high need school
Criteria	Rating of effective or highly effective with commitment for next school year
PBC	\$1,750 annually
Teacher Leadership Roles	

Table 8. Individual and School-Wide PBC Framework	
Purpose	Enhancement of school climate, policies and practices, and parent engagement
Criteria	Effective or highly effective teacher rating with submission of portfolio
PBC	\$1,000 annually
Teacher Cadet Leadership Roles	
Purpose	For teachers who agree to teach Teacher Cadets course to help Grow Our Own
Criteria	Highly effective teacher evaluation rating
PBC	\$5,000 annually (up to 2 teachers per year)
Master Teacher Leadership Roles	
Purpose	Hands-on, targeted support for new or needs improvement teachers
Criteria	Highly effective teacher evaluation rating with submission of portfolio
PBC	\$5,000 annually (up to 2 master teachers per school)
Leadership Mentors	
Purpose	Experienced leaders mentor new principals or APs to ensure a smooth transition
Criteria	Rating of highly effective principal or assistant principal evaluation rating
PBC	\$2,700 annually for 12-month commitment
Beginning Teacher Mentor	
Purpose	Effective teachers mentor new teachers to ensure a smooth transition
Criteria	Rating of effective or highly effective teacher evaluation rating
PBC	\$1,250 annually for 10-month commitment

B. Quality of the Project Design

(i) Demonstrates a rationale. As seen in our project’s logic model (*Appendix A*), our theory of action purposes that if educators are exposed to high-quality experiences that **a)** recruit, **b)** prepare

and support, c) lead, and d) reward, then this change will lead to equitable access to effective, diverse educators who have a positive impact on student academic achievement [**Requirement 10**]. Instead of taking a siloed approach, we hypothesize that the additive effect of all four components working together will result in a high-quality, streamlined HCMS and PBCS (**Absolute Priority 1**) on a continuum from recruitment to retirement that supports educators and their professional growth. The model articulates key components (HCMS, PBCS, recruitment, leadership roles, PD, mentoring) and mediators including short-term (diverse educators, PBC, mentor satisfaction, earned credentials), mid-term (retention of effective teachers in high-need schools, student growth, positive school climate), and long-term (student achievement in math and reading) outcomes. Our underlying theory of change is based on motivation theory—people will change their behavior to increase the likelihood they will receive compensation, and the education human capital framework, described below, which intertwines performance pay with improved professional growth and support with improved student academic achievement.^{50,51}

(ii) High-quality review of literature, plan for implementation, use of methodological tools.

► **Review of Literature:** Our project design is based, in part, on the education human capital framework approach, which includes four key activities⁵² ❶ acquire (hire the right educators in the right positions); ❷ develop (professional growth in learning communities); ❸ sustain (reward and challenge effective educators); and ❹ evaluate (enlighten evidence-based staffing choices). Our planning committee also studied resources from the US Department of Education’s Effective Educator Development TA Center “Playlists”—an extensive set of research and case studies on HCMS, recruitment and retention, and sustainability. Our research citations are documented in *Appendix F*, with our project design based on research supporting our program strategies that suggests our approach is likely to improve student and educator outcomes. These strategies include

the following: **a)** We will engage in high-quality strategies to recruit and retain effective educators that increase diversity, so our educators and student body more closely mirror each other.⁵³ We will use a range of recruitment practices connected to higher educator qualifications: recruiting from multiple sources, automating algorithmic recruitment tasks, using a customer service orientation towards potential candidates, and creating a compelling recruitment message.⁵⁴ This process emphasizes activities such as funneling a pipeline of effective and diverse educators through our partnerships with HBCUs and other IHEs within NC.⁵⁵ Educators of color positively impact improvements in academic achievement, student scores in math and reading, and graduation rates.^{56,57,58,59} Further, diverse educators help students develop college aspirations and enroll and succeed in more rigorous coursework, while reducing the number of students referred to special education or for behavioral issues.^{60,61,62,63,64} Social and emotional benefits for students of color are also enhanced when they have a teacher who reflects their race and gender with reduced likelihood of suspensions, unexcused or chronic absenteeism.⁶⁵ **b)** Activities will increase teacher effectiveness through beginning teacher mentors and ongoing support for all instructional staff from master teachers and instructional facilitators. Research finds a supportive rapport with an experienced teacher boosts new teacher capacity and retention as an educator.⁶⁶ Additionally, coaching support can promote school climate improvements, boost whole-school reforms, and promote increases in teacher effectiveness.⁶⁷ First-year teachers who engage in induction and mentoring support are twice as likely to remain in teaching than those who did not get support, particularly for teachers of color.⁶⁸ **c)** Effective school leaders are crucial to strengthening teaching and school communities and play a critical role in academic success by creating cultures of high expectations for students and educators.⁶⁹ Activities will increase leader effectiveness with support through new principal and AP mentors and coaching from a retired superintendent. Research finds

effective school leaders are essential in creating supportive schoolwide environments which increase teacher retention rates.^{70,71} Evidence demonstrates that administrative support is particularly vital in increasing the retention of teachers of color. Expert coaching and mentor support has been shown to increase school leader effectiveness and positively impact teacher instruction which in turn, boosts student achievement.⁷² It has also been shown to improve working conditions and increase teacher retention rates in high-need schools. **d) Professional learning** that is content-focused leads to improvements in educator practices.⁷³ Our PD framework will include the following components known to lead to a successful impact on student learning:⁷⁴ appropriate content (subject-specific and pedagogical); collaborative culture (PLCs); active engagement (hands-on learning); job-embedded (classroom based); systems perspective (linked to instructional goals); sustained efforts (supported over time); and student-focused (centered on student learning). PLCs build collective responsibility for student learning, helping students achieve at higher levels and producing higher levels of teacher satisfaction. High-functioning PLCs assist in skill-building for new educators and lead to greater teacher retention.⁷⁵ Professional learning delivered in PLCs has shown to be one of the most effective modes of delivery, improving teacher practice and student achievement.⁷⁶ **e) We will provide PBC** to recognize effective educators who meet or exceed individual or school-wide performance objectives that lead to student growth. Studies find positive and statistically significant effects of teacher merit pay based on student test scores.⁷⁷ A recent meta-analysis of teacher pay incentives found positive, statistically significant effects on student teacher scores.⁷⁸ Research shows positive impacts of pay-for-performance on teacher and principal ratings based on student growth, with teachers earning higher classroom observation ratings⁷⁹ and resulting in higher student math and reading scores.⁸⁰ Studies find that performance pay structures paired with high-quality PD, such as those planned via *TEAM*, result in significantly

higher student academic gains.⁸¹

► **Implementation Plan:** Our plan will emphasize the following core focus areas: **a) HCMS (Absolute Priority 1):** Building a sustainable human capital infrastructure and increasing capacity to attract and retain effective educators by aligning with our district instructional improvement vision; building capacity and sustainability by improving current HCMS; and designing an integrated process to inform essential human capital decisions. **b) PBCS (Absolute Priority 1):** Implementing a robust educator evaluation system that supports incentives, leadership roles, and effectiveness by developing a strategy and process to involve educators in the design of the PBCS; continuing to develop the capacity of the educator evaluation process that provides valid, reliable, and objective measurements of skills and student achievement; and integrating data warehousing and integration systems. **c) Professional Development (PD):** Providing ongoing, personalized support to ensure educators develop high-quality skills as an effective educator using disaggregated data to identify PD needs. **d) Access to Effective Educators:** Ensuring students in high-need schools (Absolute Priority 2) have equitable access to educators with experience, credentials, and a record of success by using high-quality evaluation and support systems. High-quality implementation will be guided by a variety of tools and processes which are highlighted in *Section D* and include: our strategic plan and our equity and diversity plan. These documents guide our strategic plan goals and include: 1) Elimination of opportunity gaps, 2) Improved school and district performance, and 3) Increased educator effectiveness;⁸² through high-quality PD that builds team-based improvement approaches in each school and empowers our educators to use data to sustain our continuous improvement process to positively impact curriculum, instruction, and assessment.⁸³ Our logic model (*Appendix A*) and evaluation will ensure implementation is focused on system change while the SWOT analysis will evaluate progress towards goals.

► **Methodological Tools:** *Table 9* highlights our methodological tools to ensure achievement of objectives. In addition to the GPRAs, project-specific performance measures have been written with annual benchmarks to monitor progress. Baseline data is provided below if available.

<i>Table 9. TEAM Goals and Objectives</i>
Goal 1: Redesign our district’s existing HCMS and PBCS in high-need schools
1. <u>Staff diversity</u> will increase at least 3 percentage points in each of Years 1 – 3. Measure: Teachers and leaders of color. Baseline: 18% in 2023.
2. <u>Retention</u> of the most effective teachers in high-need schools will increase at least 1 percentage point in each of Years 1 – 3. Measure: Retention data. Baseline: To be established in Fall 2023.
3. <u>Lateral entry or out-of-subject teachers</u> will decrease at least 2 percentage points in each of Years 1 – 3. Measure: Lateral or out-of-subject teachers. Baseline: 17% in 2022-23.
4. (GPRA D) Annually, at least 90% of decisions about recruitment, hiring, placement, retention, dismissal, PD, tenure, or promotion will come from evaluations. Measure: NCEES/EVAAS.
5. (GPRA E) Percent of teachers and school leaders within the district who earn <u>PBC</u> based on their individual evaluation ratings. Measure: NCEES/EVAAS.
6. (GPRA F) At least 80% of teachers and school leaders in TSL schools will earn <u>PBC</u> based on their individual evaluation ratings in Y1, 85% in Y2, and 90% in Y3. Measure: % of teachers and school leaders evaluated in a given year who earn PBC based on ratings. Baseline: Year 1.
7 and 8. (GPRA G and H) The number of teachers (G) and leaders (H) <u>receiving PBC</u> by race, gender, and disability status. Measure: PBC list by race, gender, and disability status.
9. Annually, at least 90% of <u>BTs receive support</u> from a mentor, reporting that their mentor is instrumental in professional growth. Measure: Evaluator-developed survey.
10. Annually, at least 90% of <u>new leaders receive support</u> from a mentor, reporting that the mentor

Table 9. TEAM Goals and Objectives

is instrumental in professional growth. **Measure:** Evaluator-developed survey.

Goal 2: Develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness

11. Decrease provisionally licensed teachers in TSL schools by at least 1 percentage point in each of Years 1-3. **Measure:** Licensure status. **Baseline:** 5%.

12. At least 80% of teachers report effective job-embedded PD in Year 1, increasing to at least 85% in Year 2 and at least 90% in Year 3. **Measure:** Evaluator-developed survey.

13. (GPRA A) Increase the percentage of effective teachers and school leaders in TSL schools by at least 2 percentage points in Years 1-3. **Measure:** NCEES. **Baseline:** 78% in 2022.

14 and 15. (GPRA B and C) The percentage of teachers and school leaders across the district (B) and in TSL schools (C) that show improvements over the prior year student growth component of their EVAAS evaluation rating. **Measure:** EVAAS score.

16. (GPRA I) Annually, provide PBC for teacher leadership for at least 100 teachers. **Measure:** PBC for leadership roles disaggregated by race, gender, and disability status. **Baseline:** 0.

17. Increase the percentage of teachers reporting a positive school climate by at least 2 percentage points in each of Years 1-3 or until 90% report a positive climate. **Measure:** Equity and Safety scales from North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey.⁸⁴ **Baseline:** 85% in 2022.

18. Increase math proficiency by at least 3 percentage points in each of Years 2-3. **Measure:** % proficient on State math assessment (Grades 3 – 8) and Math I & III.⁸⁵ **Baseline:** 33% in 2022.

19. Increase ELA proficiency by at least 3 percentage points in each of Years 2-3. **Measure:** % proficient on State ELA assessment (Grades 3 – 8) and English I.⁸⁶ **Baseline:** 44% in 2022.

20. Annually, at least 70% of teachers score at least 4.2 (out of 6.0) on the multicultural teaching competency scale. **Measure:** Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale.⁸⁷ **Baseline:** Year 1.

(iii) Methods of evaluation provide performance feedback and assessment of progress.

► **Methods of Evaluation:** Our primary evaluation components are depicted in our logic model (*Appendix A*) which will be used to guide *TEAM's* development from beginning to end.⁸⁸ Our evaluation will be led by The Evaluation Group (TEG), a firm with over 35 years of experience including current and prior TSL/TIF grant programs. Identified via a procurement process, TEG incorporates a mixed-methods approach that will triangulate our data and significantly contribute to the validity of the evaluation process.⁸⁹ Combining qualitative and quantitative methods will increase the depth of our information and provide feedback that will enable us to make critical mid-course corrections in a timely manner. Quantitative data sources include student standardized test scores, PBC, teacher promotion, turnover, and retention rates, and teacher and leader surveys. Qualitative data sources include interviews, focus groups, and open-ended survey questions. Annual administrative interviews will assess MCS's role in building awareness, communicating goals, promoting effective communication, supporting implementation, and will gauge the perceived outcomes of the program on teaching and any unexpected or unintended consequences. Annual educator focus groups will assess reactions to the program, identify areas of concern, and assess the extent to which the PBC influences teaching and leading, as well as the decision to return to (or leave) the high-need school. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages). Parametric and non-parametric inferential statistics (i.e., regression, time series and trend analyses, difference-in-differences analyses) will be used, where appropriate, and effect sizes will be computed across time and between groups. Results will be reported in aggregate and disaggregated by school to promote utilization at the school-level. Qualitative data will be coded and analyzed thematically⁹⁰ to gain a richer and deeper understanding of stakeholder reactions. ► **Performance Feedback:**

Our evaluation will include a formative evaluation to provide feedback to guide implementation and make mid-course corrections and a summative evaluation to assess progress in achieving outcomes and objectives. The extent to which any program achieves its desired outcomes is strongly linked to fidelity of implementation.⁹¹ Formative evaluation will include tracking implementation quarterly with a Fidelity Index (*Appendix F*) based on the activities and outputs identified in the logic model. The index will assess type, quality, and quantity of activities being delivered; extent to which participants are exposed to and engaged in activities; and reactions of stakeholders, such as administrators and teachers. Assessing reactions throughout our project's life cycle is important as PBCS cannot be sustained in a climate of negative reactions from stakeholders. The key questions to assess stakeholder reactions include the extent to which teachers and school leaders: **(a)** are aware of, understand, and accept *TEAM* goals; **(b)** believe they have the competencies, resources, and support to succeed; **(c)** trust that positive consequences, including rewards and recognition, will result from their success; **(d)** value the rewards; and **(e)** understand their performance results, accept the validity of the results, and recognize why they did or did not receive PBC. *TEAM's* success relies heavily on continuous high-quality feedback. Our evaluator will participate in monthly management team meetings to build consensus on evaluation questions, methods, instruments, data collection protocols, and reporting formats. Evaluation results will be shared through interim and annual reports; survey and focus group snapshots; and briefings. This participatory approach builds stakeholders' ownership, increasing the likelihood that results will be used to improve the program and achieve positive outcomes.⁹² We will share evaluation findings with US ED, ERIC and applicable journals, as well as through conferences, networking, and promoting replication in other districts. ► **Assessment of Progress:** Throughout implementation, we will monitor progress by collecting, analyzing, and reporting data on the

GPRA and project-specific performance measures detailed in *Table 9* above. Our overarching summative question is how, if at all, did the PBCS affect student performance? The summative evaluation will use a comparative short-term interrupted time series design (CSITS)⁹³ to assess program impact on school-level standardized achievement scores in math and reading for Grades 3-8, and English I, Math I and Math III. The CSITS will measure program impact on student performance by comparing standardized test scores for annual student cohorts in a specific grade after a reform is launched (its follow-up period) with the scores of cohorts from several years before the reform (pre-intervention) was launched (baseline).⁹⁴ Impact is measured as a deviation, or difference, from the baseline pattern of performance. We will compare trend data for all schools (11 treatment, 55 comparison) five years before and three years after program implementation. Comparison schools will be selected using propensity score matching.⁹⁵ Deviation differences from follow-up versus pre-intervention performance in *TEAM* schools and comparison schools will be used to determine impact. Although this type of summative data will not be available until 2026, we are committed to assessing our program’s annual impact. While our study will contain the N=1 confound in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook 5.0 standards⁹⁶ as all 11 schools receive the intervention; the results of our study can provide valuable data of whole district interventions. Data will be analyzed using 3-level hierarchical linear model over time (level 1) on grades (level 2) in schools (level 3). Our study’s power analysis is included in *Appendix F*.

C. Quality of the Management Plan

(i) Adequacy of the management plan. In our *TEAM* management structure, we have laid out a roadmap to ensure efficient administration and implementation to achieve our objectives in a timely manner and within budget. MCS has extensive experience implementing HCMS and PBCS activities along with federal, state, and local grant programs including prior Department of

Education grants such as School Climate Transformation, Investing in Innovation, and Innovative Approaches to Literacy, and will provide oversight for the delivery of high-quality services. Our management structure includes: **a) *Management Team (MT)***: The MT will concentrate on improving service quality and allocating resources to optimize overall effectiveness and impact. Central to the MT's role is the enhancement of the HCMS and PBCS through collaboration with educators and stakeholders. Building on this foundation, our team will pivot to actively recruit and retain a diverse cohort of educators, while implementing evidence-based strategies to bolster teacher performance. In a move to secure transparency and ensure efficacy, the MT will delve into a school data analysis, validating the achievement of outcomes, and maintaining a steady stream of updates to stakeholders regarding the progression and influence of *TEAM*. Continuing this forward momentum, the team will develop a comprehensive sustainability plan that ensures the longevity of our program. By combining their expertise and collective efforts, the MT will play a vital role in driving the success of our program, ultimately boosting student performance and narrowing the achievement gap in high-need schools. Our MT consists of nine district staff, each contributing an in-kind contribution of .25 FTE and whose resumes are included in *Appendix B*. The team encompasses a wide array of roles: Led by the Associate Superintendent of Operations for HR (Project Advisor), the MT includes the Assistant Superintendent for Learning, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services, CFO, Executive Director of Student Services, Director of Elementary Education, Director of Secondary Education, Differentiation Coordinator, and BT Coordinator. **b) *Project Director (PD)***: A full-time, grant-funded master's level Project Director will execute our program as outlined in the logic model. Their duties will encompass fiscal management; maintaining open channels of communication with school staff, independent evaluators, partners, and the federal program office; ensuring program milestones are met;

orchestrating grant components and PD activities; spearheading efforts for sustainability; and engaging in MT meetings. **c) *Accountability Specialist (AS)***: A full-time grant-funded AS, will be responsible for maintaining accurate reporting in compliance with federal regulations. Their duties will include budget management, tracking matching funds, and providing guidance and training to schools on the utilization of student and teacher data. They will collaborate with the finance and HR departments to establish connections between educator contracts, employee compensation, and testing data. Additionally, the AS will play a vital role in assisting with federal reporting requirements, ensuring that all necessary documentation is prepared and submitted accurately and on time. **d) *Beginning Teacher (BT) Specialist***: A full-time, grant-funded BT Specialist will oversee the BT program, providing support to teachers and Lateral Entry Teachers in their first three years. Responsibilities include updating program policies, training BT Mentors, facilitating the Aspiring Leadership Academy, incorporating evaluation data into PD, and implementing the Teacher Affinity Group for minority educators. **e) *HR Team***: Under the guidance of our Associate Superintendent of Operations for HR, the HR Team meets monthly to collaborate on various initiatives. Leveraging PowerSchool data systems, they will integrate *TEAM* evaluation data with insights from our data analytics platforms. This integration will enable the enhancement of the HCMS and PBCS. Our HR Team will closely monitor progress in fostering educator diversity, ensuring inclusive HR practices, and implementing the logic model within the designated timeline. **f) *School Resource Officers (SRO)***: Eleven full-time, in-kind SROs will play a vital role in enhancing school climate and supporting teacher working conditions, satisfaction, and retention. These dedicated SROs will realign their responsibilities to the objectives of *TEAM*. They will actively engage students in positive activities and provide outreach efforts. By fostering a safe and supportive environment, the SROs contribute to a positive school climate that enhances the overall

educational experience for students and supports the well-being of teachers. **g) *Instructional Facilitators (IF)***: Eleven full-time, in-kind site-based IF will play a crucial role in supporting educator professional growth and enhancing instructional practices in our schools. These IF will serve as core content or grade-level coaches, providing targeted support and personalized PD based on teacher evaluations. Through collaborative and embedded practices, they will model effective instructional strategies, promote alignment of teaching methods and assessments, co-teach and model lessons in classrooms, assist with data analysis for instructional planning, and facilitate Multi-Tiered System of Support processes. Their expertise and guidance will empower teachers to improve student achievement and foster a culture of continuous professional growth.

h) *Stakeholders*: Stakeholder involvement is essential to the design, implementation, and effectiveness of our PBCS. In collaboration with our evaluator, we will conduct annual educator focus groups to give stakeholders a voice in shaping the PBCS. These sessions will assess program feedback, identify concerns, and evaluate the PBC's impact on teaching, leadership, and tenure decisions in high-need schools. Our project administration and staff, described in *Section D*, will work with our HR and Finance Departments to facilitate planning and development of action plans to finalize our PBCS. Input will be gathered annually to find out what worked, what did not, for whom, and why. This information will be used to make modifications. **i) *The Evaluation Group (TEG)***: Identified through a procurement process that complies with 2 CFR 200.317-200.327, TEG will conduct an impact study to gauge program effectiveness, inform fidelity of implementation, and disseminate findings for continuous improvement and replication. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], MPH will lead the evaluation efforts. Both have extensive experience with US ED program evaluations including prior and current TSL/TIF grant programs. Please see *Appendix B* for resumes and job descriptions for positions listed above. *Table 10* outlines our 3-year

management plan. This plan includes soliciting stakeholder feedback, making modifications, and conducting information sessions to ensure understanding of the PBCS. The management plan underscores key milestones, responsibilities, a timeline for implementing activities, and our commitment to equitable and bias-free HR practices (**Competitive Priority 2**). Our proposal also includes a detailed budget narrative which describes how the grant funds will be used under the program in each year of the grant per Section 2212 of the ESEA [***Requirement 7***].

Table 10. TEAM Management Plan: October 2023 – September 2026		
Milestones (marked with *) and Activities	Timeline	Responsibility
Convene Management Team* and prepare to implement	10/23, monthly	MT
Confirm grant timeline, partners, and vendors*	10/23	MT
Post job openings, hire, and orient new grant staff*	10/23-12/23	MT, HR
Oversee accurate records of compensation, contracts, and PBC	10/23, ongoing	HR, AS
Develop criteria to support inclusive and bias-free practices*	11/23, ongoing	HR, MT
Participate in ED program calls and other requirements	11/23, ongoing	PD, TEG
Begin program evaluation (plan, data analysis, tools)*	11/23, ongoing	TEG
Compile fidelity of implementation data by school	1/24, quarterly	TEG
Enhance key partner relationships through regular meetings	1/24, quarterly	PD, MT
Implement ongoing sustainability planning	1/24, quarterly	PD, TEG, MT
Provide snapshot reports and evaluation briefs	9/24, bi-annually	TEG
Submit APR to program office and share with MCS Board*	12/24, annually	PD, TEG
Participate in grantee meetings and summit	12/24, annually	PD, TEG
Conduct an evaluation impact study*	1/26-9/26	TEG
Request TSL renewal funding for Years 4 and 5*	5/26	PD

Table 10. TEAM Management Plan: October 2023 – September 2026

Strategy 1: Redesign HCMS and PBCS		
Study data to inform HCMS and PBCS modifications*	12/23-3/24	MT
Solicit further input on HCMS and PBCS (focus group, survey)*	12/23-4/24	PD, TEG
Analyze stakeholder input and identify areas to modify	5/24, ongoing	PD, HR, MT
Conduct procurement for HCMS modifications	5/24	MT, HR
Make key HCMS and PBCS modifications based on input*	5/24-7/24	MT
Implement Unified Insights and Unified Talent*	5/24-8/24	PD, MT
Strategy 2: Recruit effective, diverse educators		
Implement diversity recruitment improvements	1/24, ongoing	PD, HR
Conduct recruitment through community outreach	1/24, ongoing	MT
Implement articulation agreements with current IHE partners*	1/24, ongoing	PD, MT
Confirm and develop partnerships with new IHEs and HBCUs	2/24	PD, HR
Enhance Grow Your Own Teacher Candidate Pathways*	4/24, ongoing	MT
Identify/recruit effective educators for transfers in district	4/24, annually	PD, HR, MT
Identify/implement recruitment and retention improvements	4/24, ongoing	PD, HR
Identify highly effective teachers in high-need areas	4/24, ongoing	PD, HR, MT
Strategy 3: Support and retain effective teachers and school leaders		
Foster a safe and supportive learning/working environment	10/23, ongoing	SROs
Create program-wide PD schedule aligned with program goals*	12/23	MT
Develop school-wide and targeted PD plans	12/23, quarterly	MT, PD, AS
Ensure PD incorporates inclusive and bias-free practices	12/23, monthly	HR, PD
Provide PD training and support to enhance teacher skills	1/24, ongoing	HR

Table 10. TEAM Management Plan: October 2023 – September 2026

Expand and promote TAG (Teacher Affinity Group) program*	1/24, ongoing	MT
Expand and promote BT and MT programs and IF coaching*	1/24, ongoing	MT
Provide individualized coaching based on NCEES data	1/24, ongoing	IF, MT
Implement New Teacher Support Program for BTs/LETs*	2/24, ongoing	MT
Implement New Leaders Mentoring and Coaching*	2/24, monthly	IF, MT
Implement Leadership Academy and Principal/AP Mentorship*	3/24	HR, MT
Identify effective educators as BT Mentors and Master Teachers	3/24, ongoing	MT, PD
Implement BT and MT Mentorships and IF Coaching*	4/24	HR, MT
Strategy 4: Reward effective educators		
Analyze data re: teacher effectiveness and student outcomes	11/23-12/23	MT
Review PBC criteria with stakeholders	1/24	MT
Implement performance-based compensation (PBC)*	5/24, annually	PD, AS, HR
Provide sessions to ensure educator PBCS awareness	7/24, biannually	PD, AS, HR
Pay PBC stipends and signing bonuses for all eligible staff	7/24, annually	PD, AS, HR
Pay PBC for school-wide growth	9/24, annually	PD, AS, HR
Pay PBC for individual growth	11/24, annually	PD, AS, HR
Leverage existing funding pathways to sustain PBCS	1/25, quarterly	PD, MT

D. Adequacy of Resources

(i) Project will result in system change. The driving force behind the MCS 2025 strategic plan is our mission: to guarantee that each school produces globally competitive graduates, fully prepared for college and career paths. The *TEAM* plan draws its principles from our core values, which include stringent ethical standards, an unending focus on student-centered improvement,

and use of data to promote inclusive practices. Our project design is based on the educator human capital framework and is rooted in a continuous improvement model to boost student success rates and diminish the existing disparities in achievement levels. This ongoing improvement process empowers our educators to make decisions affecting the curriculum, instruction methods, and assessments and vital HR processes like recruitment, hiring, retention, and salary considerations. Our logic model (*Appendix A*), combined with a robust evaluation plan, anchors our efforts towards achieving significant systemic change. Our strategy relies on high-quality tools and processes, including our equity and diversity plan. These components form the foundation of our Theory of Action: if educators are exposed to high-quality experiences that **a) recruit, b) prepare and support, c) lead, and d) reward**, then this change will lead to equitable access to effective, diverse educators who have a positive impact on student academic achievement. Our multi-dimensional approach puts PBC and HCMS strategies at its heart, rewarding those educators who regularly achieve or surpass individual or school-wide goals, ultimately contributing to student growth. Our approach includes high-quality professional development, offering our educators the opportunity to realize their maximum potential and offering continuous support via master teachers, instructional facilitators, and programs tailored to help novice teachers. Understanding the pivotal role of effective school leaders, we will employ professional learning and to ensure we are making meaningful progress, we will use program evaluation and feedback methods such as annual focus groups and SWOT analysis. This approach will provide a comprehensive framework for tracking progress towards our goals to foster lasting systemic change. To ensure our activities align with the most effective practices for improving teacher performance and student success, our planning team has reviewed relevant academic literature and has included research citations in *Appendix F*. An overview of key strategies and their evidence-base, follows in *Table 11*.

Table 11. Evidence-Base for TEAM Key Strategies

HCMS: Promising evidence indicates HCMS practices contribute to increased educator engagement, job satisfaction, and PD, which positively impacts student achievement.⁹⁷

PBCS: Promising evidence indicates that PBCS improves teacher and school leader performance on educator evaluations leading to improved effectiveness ratings.⁹⁸ It increases principal retention of high-performing leaders and exiting of lower-performing principals, and has been shown to have small, but positive impacts on student achievement in core academic subjects.⁹⁹

Professional Learning Communities: PLCs build collective responsibility for student learning, helping students achieve at higher levels, and producing higher levels of teacher satisfaction.¹⁰⁰ PD delivered in the context of a PLC has shown to be the most beneficial form of PD delivery and can improve teachers' practice and student achievement.¹⁰¹ PLCs remediate weaknesses in the developing skills and knowledge of new educators while keeping existing teachers up-to-date on emerging research.¹⁰²

Career Ladders: Student achievement was significantly higher in districts where teachers had career ladders compared to districts without them.¹⁰³ A similar study found they also improve teacher recruitment and retention.¹⁰⁴

School Leader Effectiveness: Promising evidence indicates that effective school leaders are crucial to strengthening teaching and school communities and play a critical role in students' academic success by creating cultures of high expectations.¹⁰⁵ Studies show that first-year teachers who engage in induction and mentoring support are twice as likely to remain in teaching than those who did not get support, particularly for teachers of color.¹⁰⁶ Principals play a role in impacting the quality of instruction in a school via hiring decisions and providing instructional leadership which in turn help support and develop teachers and ultimately, improve student achievement.¹⁰⁷

(ii) Project is likely to build local capacity. *TEAM* will address the three needs identified in our gaps analysis (*Table 7*) by focusing on increasing student achievement and improving equitable access to effective educators. By redesigning our HCMS and expanding our PBCS, *TEAM* builds local capacity by attracting effective, diverse educators into hard-to-staff positions; recruiting and supporting aspiring administrators into leadership roles; increasing educator effectiveness through mentoring and PD; disseminating effective strategies; strengthening content knowledge; and providing opportunities for leadership roles. Highlighted in *Section A*, our project builds on prior experiences and existing initiatives to address the needs of our population displayed in *Table 12*.

Table 12. Local Resources to Build Capacity to Expand Services	
Title I and II professional learning (federal)	<i>TEAM</i> Leadership Academy (local)
Instructional Facilitators and SROs (local)	Beginning Teacher Support Program (local)
NC DPI PL and Restart Model Schools (state)	PLC Rubric (local)
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (local)	One federal and two state grants
Data-Based Systems: EVAAS and NCEES (state)	NC DPI Beginning Teacher Facilitator (state)

(iii) Resources to operate the project beyond grant. Our district has multiple forms of evidence to confirm that we have secured sufficient resources for operation beyond the grant's lifespan. This includes a multi-year financial plan, pledges from our partners, and backing from our stakeholders.

► **Financial and Operating Model:** Building the capacity of our educator effectiveness initiatives and improving the diversity of our educators has been a long-term focus to help improve academic outcomes for students at our high need, low-performing schools. Our commitment to future expansion and sustainability is evidenced by our 2025 Strategic Plan which is organized into three focus areas: Eliminate Opportunity Gaps, Improve School and District Performance, and Increase Educator Preparedness. Each of these areas seamlessly integrates with *TEAM*, enabling continuous

improvement and affirming our commitment to provide resources beyond the duration of the grant. Seven key TSL-related objectives demonstrate this commitment: **(a)** The diversity of staff will increase annually. **(b)** The retention rate of highly effective teachers in high-need schools will increase each year. **(c)** BTs will receive support from a mentor each year. **(d)** New leaders will receive support from a mentor each year. **(e)** The percentage of effective teachers and school leaders will increase. **(f)** The satisfaction on MCS Climate Survey will increase. **(g)** Educators will score at least 4.2 on the multicultural teaching competency scale. Further, for *TEAM*, we have committed substantial investments and in-kind resources to ensure success and sustainability as indicated by our 50% match detailed in the budget narrative and the Match Intent and Ability Letter (*Appendix D*). Our multi-year operating plan includes piloting an enhanced PBCS, refining the PBCS based on feedback, initiating educator recruitment strategies, delivering incentives, bolstering recruitment efforts, and crafting a comprehensive sustainability blueprint. This leads to full implementation of the PBCS and finalization of our sustainability plan incorporating strategic resource reallocation, PBC budgeting, and mentorship in PLCs. These strategies, complemented by our partnerships, position *TEAM* for sustained success beyond the grant term, ensuring a lasting positive impact on our community. Our **multi-year operating plan** is summarized in *Table 13*.

<i>Table 13. District Multi-Year Long-Term Plan</i>	
Current	Pilot PBC strategy: principals, teachers, hard-to-staff subjects and schools
Year 1	Solicit input on <i>TEAM</i> PBCS; modify; begin recruitment strategies
Year 2	Pay incentives; continue recruitment strategies; begin sustainability planning
Year 3	Continue full PBCS implementation; complete development of sustainability plan
Years 4+	Request TSL renewal funding; identify best practices; continue applying PBCS; implement sustainability plan including reallocating funds, embedding strategies

To ensure the continuation of activities assisted under the grant after the grant period ends, we will formulate a multi-year sustainability plan. This plan will describe a financial and operating model designed to continue grant activities after the grant period ends, preserving the best practices, incorporating state, local, and private funds and ensuring long-term success [**Requirement 8**]. Our plan for sustainability will greatly benefit from the input of our evaluators. They will routinely offer unbiased feedback on implementation, its impact on student success, and the effectiveness of educators. Our strategies, grounded in research, will be strengthened by these insights, helping us identify the most impactful strategies. We will integrate this knowledge into our district procedures and yearly budgets, assisting us in choosing which strategies to continue, modify, or discard. From the first year, we will collaborate with stakeholders to draft a sustainability plan, complete with action plans to guide resource allocation. This enables us to adapt our strategies based on their effectiveness. In parallel, we will review our investments in HR to locate funds that could be reallocated to support sustainability. We will upgrade our HCMS capabilities to synergize different data sources, enabling us to better attract, assign, retain, and support educators. Utilizing platforms like Unified Insights and Talent, will allow us to make informed, data-driven HR decisions that will sustain beyond the grant. We anticipate that enhancements to our program for new teachers, mentorship components, recruitment efforts, and PD initiatives will yield positive outcomes, thereby becoming ingrained as we strive to enhance the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders. In addition to these initiatives, our sustainability plan will detail: **a)** The past, present, and future of each school, with strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. **b)** The process of reaching goals and considering strategic implications of external circumstances impacting our schools will be detailed, explaining how we aim to achieve our objectives under various scenarios. **c)** A comprehensive financial plan will outline assumptions about future funding requirements and

strategies to fulfill them, ensuring our financial readiness for long-term sustainability. **d)** A detailed action plan and timeline, which includes tasks for each strategy, and identifies who is responsible, ensuring accountability. **e)** A conclusion summarizing the expected outcomes, resulting in a self-sustaining program model. This will provide a clear depiction of our intended impact and the sustainable model we aim to achieve. ► **Commitment of Partners:** Collaboration with partners is critical to maximizing the effectiveness of *TEAM* and continuing services beyond the life of the grant. Letters of commitment (*Appendix C*) highlight support and matching funds to successfully carry out activities including: **a) *Montgomery Community College (MCC)*:** Will continue to honor its articulation agreement in which students who complete the required hours for the Associate of Arts in Teacher Education or the Associate in Science in Teacher Education are eligible to transfer to UNC-Pembroke and complete a major in the Educator Preparation Program. MCC will share job listings; identify opportunities for the district to connect with diverse students such as career fairs and mock interviews; and facilitate students' participation in the Grow Your Own Teachers program. **b) *UNC-Pembroke*:** Is a majority-minority institution, with a student body that comprises 61% minority students. UNC-Pembroke will work to recruit diverse students into our Grow Your Own program; share job postings with students; and invite MCS to participate in job fairs. **c) *UNC-Greensboro*:** Is a minority-serving institution, and approximately 50% of students are people of color. Over the past year, the University has focused its equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts in three primary areas: social justice, campus climate, and student success. UNC-Greensboro will work with MCS to place teacher candidates in district schools for internships and employment; and invite MCS to participate in job fairs and other activities that will be beneficial for recruiting future teachers and school leaders to work at the district. **d) *Montgomery Sheriff's Office, Star Police, Mount Gilead Police, Candor Police, and Troy Police*:** Will provide trained SROs to

engage students in positive activities and outreach efforts. By fostering a safe and supportive environment, the SROs contribute to a positive school climate that enhances the overall educational experience for students and supports the well-being and retention of teachers, a contribution valued at \$464,038 plus cost of living increase annually. **e) Eury Consulting:** Will provide Praxis bootcamps to support lateral entry and needs improvement teachers and educators working towards licensure along with a badging program at a reduced rate. This discount of \$18,000 per year represents a total in-kind contribution of \$54,000 for 60 participants a year who can earn up to 3 badges per year. **f) PowerSchool:** Will provide a discount of \$36,447 per year on the Unified Talent and Insight packages, a contribution of \$109,341 over the 3-year grant period. **g) Troy Lumber Company:** Will continue providing an annual contribution (typically \$300) to each teacher in the district to support professional development. ► **Stakeholder Support:** Critical to our long-term success, we have secured support and commitment from stakeholders (*Appendix C*) and a MOU from principals [**Requirement 3**] including: **a) School Board and Superintendent:** Through district initiatives and our strategic plan, ensuring students have access to highly qualified, diverse educators has been a longstanding effort of our district. Outlined in our budget and our Match Intent and Ability Letter (*Appendix D*), leadership has shown their support by ensuring we have 50% match (totaling \$10,998,295) to implement activities supported by the grant such as management team time and fringe benefits, teacher and principal incentives, Instructional Facilitators, SROs, and PL support through our PTECH membership. **b) Management Team:** Each team member has been involved in the design of *TEAM* by conducting a gap analysis and reviewing results from our 2023 TSL Educator Support Survey, examining best practices, and assessing educator feedback. Team members will support our project by applying unique knowledge promoting success from developing the initial framework to implementation to

sustainability and working in collaboration with the Project Director. **c) *Community***: We have a variety of district- and school-level structures that have community and parent stakeholders to offer feedback, which include School Improvement Teams and strategic plan focus groups and surveys. **d) *Principals***: As evidenced by an MOU (*Appendix C*), each principal has committed to collaborating with grant staff to reach goals in areas such as streamlining our HCMS; expanding our PBCS; incorporating recruitment practices aimed at increasing diversity; recruiting skilled educators to fill hard-to-staff positions; improving BT and lateral entry efforts; and identifying and recruiting master teachers. **e) *Educators***: We conducted a 2023 TSL Educator Support Survey (*Appendix F*) with educators from our 11 schools providing input. 83% of teachers agreed that there should be compensation for teachers who take on leadership roles. Teachers also indicated a need for recruiting and retaining diverse leaders who are reflective of the student population; enhancing the onboarding process for new educators; providing targeted PD to support educator growth; and increasing opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles. School leaders indicated a need for recruiting and retaining diverse educators; recruiting high-quality, experienced educators; and providing compensation for leadership roles. Building on the survey insights, we will conduct educator focus groups in Year 1 to refine our PBCS, ensuring continued stakeholder involvement. We will carry out activities in coordination with partners to ensure that our educator evaluation and support systems are fair, reliable, and credible, and are conducive to enhancing educator growth. As evidence throughout our narrative, ***TEAM: Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Acceleration in Montgomery***, seeks to comprehensively redesign and expand our existing HCMS and PBCS to better attract, place, retain, and sustain effective educators. Most importantly, this districtwide *TEAM* approach will result in improved academic growth and long-term outcomes for 3,494 high-need students attending our district's 11 rural schools.