

K-12 School and Higher Education Reopening Plan Consulting Services

Technical Proposal

Solicitation Number RFP21000563

Submitted to:

**State of Rhode Island and
Providence Plantations
Department of Administration
Division of Purchases
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5855
www.ridop.ri.gov**

Submitted by:

**WestEd
Dana Chambers
Project Director
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703.470.8866**

Due Date:

April 13, 2021



excellence in research, development, and service

April 12, 2021

Nina Lennon
State of Rhode Island
1 Capitol Hill, 2nd Floor
Providence, RI 02908

Re: RFP21000563 K-12 School and Higher Education Reopening Plan Consulting Services

Dear Ms. Lennon,

WestEd is pleased to submit this proposal for K–12 and Higher Education Reopening Plan Consulting Services.

Critical to post-pandemic recovery are public health and safety — including physical, mental, and social– emotional well-being — and reopening schools with equitable engagement in fully in-person learning and out-of-school time programming. Rhode Island’s efforts to consolidate and coordinate oversight of school-related recovery activities require a partner with experience and understanding of how to support and implement an approach that is data-driven, advances equity, incorporates strategic resource planning for one-time federal funding, and improves collaboration across entities supporting students in K–12 and higher education.

For over 50 years, WestEd has been a leader in moving education research into practice by conducting research and development (R&D) programs, projects, and evaluations; by providing training and technical assistance; and by working with policymakers and practitioners at state and local levels to carry out largescale school improvement and innovative change efforts.

Throughout this proposal, we elaborate on the following distinguishing features that uniquely position our project team, led by WestEd in partnership with the Public Health Institute (PHI) and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), to support Rhode Island with its integrated approach to recovery and student learning acceleration.

- Going beyond “back to normal” educational system operations by **reimagining an equity-centered “renewed normal”** that focuses on school communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, dives deeply to understand needs and priorities, and aligns resources to advance health and academic outcomes
- Deep bench of **nationally renowned experts**, flexibly deployed to provide thought partnership and meet real-time needs
- Track record of leading successful cross-disciplinary systems change efforts at the federal, state, and local levels, with a **focus on alignment and coherence** to improve measurable health, wellness, and learning outcomes

- Consulting services and implementation supports **tailored to the local context**, informed by a long history of partnering with RIDE and the state's LEAs, combined with the robust stakeholder engagement woven into our approach
- **Strategic approach to testing and mitigation** activities, involving ongoing surveillance, contact tracing, and timely interventions as warranted by the ebb and flow of the pandemic

If you have any technical questions regarding this proposed work, please contact Project Director, Dana Chambers at 703.470.8866, or via email at dchambe@wested.org. For contractual questions, please contact the Contracts Management Department at 415.615.3136 or via email at contracts@wested.org.

Regards,



Lauren Wrotniak

Interim Director of Contracts & Grants

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A. Staff Qualifications

Rhode Island will lay the foundation for an enduring recovery post-pandemic and stand ready to reopen schools safely for fully in-person learning with consultation from the project team's deep bench of nationally renowned experts in public health and education, flexibly deployed to support project planning and logistics, provide thought partnership, and meet real-time needs.

Our project team, led by WestEd in partnership with the Public Health Institute (PHI) and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), possesses:

- (1) A proven **repertoire of technical assistance skills** (e.g., leading and managing complex projects, conducting needs assessments, facilitating strategic planning, engaging stakeholders);
- (2) **Specialized content expertise** (e.g., equity, public health, strategic resource allocation, social-emotional learning, out-of-school time programming) across the range of activities required for safely reopening schools, often serving as national subject matter experts (SMEs); and
- (3) **Leadership experience in the health and education sectors** at state and local levels, working with vulnerable populations in Rhode Island (RI) and across the country.

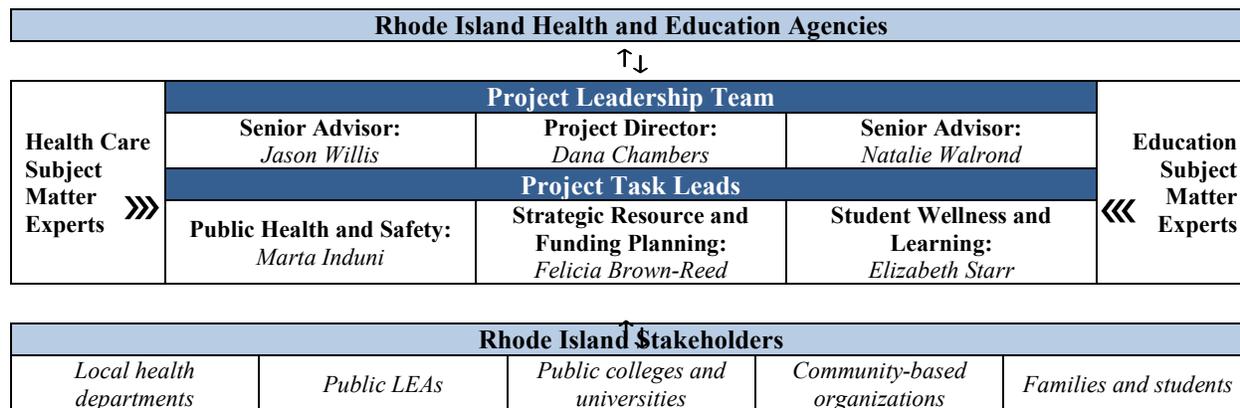
We bolster our project team's expertise (Exhibit 1) with a robust network of SMEs in public health, student well-being, and accelerated learning who can be seamlessly integrated to meet emerging project needs. This extensive content expertise is complemented by our long history of partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and other RI stakeholders to deliver technical assistance (TA) and research supports for more than two decades.

The project team's organizational structure (Exhibit 2) will enable team members to lead and manage the work across tasks in collaboration with Rhode Island's health and education leaders and stakeholders. Resumes for key personnel, as well as brief biographies of additional staff and SMEs, follow this exhibit. Dana Chambers, who has more than a decade of experience leading large-scale education consulting projects, will serve as project director, overseeing the strategic design and delivery of the project and serving as the key client point of contact. Senior advisors Jason Willis and Natalie Walrond, who are national experts in their fields, will provide strategic advice and quality assurance oversight to ensure the project delivers best-in-class services and deliverables aligned to evidence-based practices. Task leads with extensive consulting experience will support the project director in three key areas — public health and safety, strategic resource and funding planning, and student wellness and learning. Each task lead will support a staff team and SMEs to carry out the work under that task.

Exhibit 1. Expertise in Health Care and Education Consulting: *The project team comprises nationally renowned experts that lead and manage complex projects with state and local agencies across the country.*

*Key Personnel	Project Planning and Logistics					Health Care Consulting				Education Consulting				
	Leading complicated projects	Strategic consulting	Stakeholder engagement	Needs assessments	Equity reviews and initiatives	Health and safety mitigation measures	COVID testing planning and communication	Contact tracing	Passive surveillance and evaluation	Learning program development and	Strategic resource and funding planning	Outcome metrics and accountability	Student well-being	Higher education
WestEd														
Felicia Brown*	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		
Dana Chambers*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	
Joseph McKenna	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓					✓	
Rose Owens-West	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓				
Natalie Walrond*	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						✓	
Jason Willis*	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓		
Public Health Institute														
Marta Induni*	✓					✓	✓	✓						✓
Lynn Silver				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
Gina Solomon						✓			✓					
National Institute on Out-of-School Time														
Elizabeth Starr*		✓	✓	✓						✓		✓		

Exhibit 2. Project Team Organization: *The project team’s organizational structure will facilitate collaboration and coordination among Rhode Island’s health and education leaders, project team members, and Rhode Island stakeholders.*



Dana Grayson Chambers – Proposed Project Director

WestEd • 1140 3rd Street NE • Suite 360 • Washington, DC 20002

SUMMARY OF RELATED EXPERIENCE

Dana Chambers is a Project Director at WestEd, where she specializes in strategic resource planning, implementation, and systems coherence for states and school systems. Building on a career that began as a public school teacher and dean of students, Ms. Chambers has spent the last decade leading large-scale consulting and technical assistance projects on the topics of school improvement, educator talent management, student engagement and attendance, and data-driven implementation planning. As deputy director of the Center on Great Teachers & Leaders, supported RIDE in talent management, school improvement, and teaching and learning conditions planning and implementation. Ms. Chambers currently serves as a strategic thought partner for Alexandria City Public Schools on their COVID-19 response reopening committee, providing guidance on academic and wellness programming, family engagement, and coordinating community programs to provide learning programming during the pandemic.

EDUCATION

- 2008 MA, Sociology of Education/Education Policy, New York University
 - 2005 MS, Elementary Education, Pace University
 - 2002 BA, Journalism, cum laude, New York University
-

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2021–Present

Project Director, State Systems Coherence, WestEd

Leads projects and strategic planning for resource planning and implementation team.

2020–2021

Associate Director of Education, Insight Policy Research

Directed the \$3.5 million Student Engagement and Attendance Center, supporting states and districts in strengthening attendance and engagement during pandemic disruptions to schooling.

2014–2020

Principal Consultant, American Institutes for Research

Served as deputy director of two multi-million-dollar centers supporting educator talent management and school improvement. Led the Talent for Turnaround Leadership Academy project supporting 7 states, including Rhode Island (RI), in aligning their talent management and school improvement efforts. Led a northeast equitable access initiative supporting northeast states, including RI, in improving teaching and learning conditions through data driven planning.

2010-2013

Senior Associate, edCount LLC

Led and managed state and district projects to design and implement standards-aligned curriculum and professional development and improve learning outcomes.

2009-2010

Dean of Students, Kings Collegiate Charter School

Led school culture initiatives and overhauled student discipline policy as part of leadership team

Jason Willis – Proposed Senior Advisor

WestEd, 730 Harrison Street • San Francisco, CA • 94107

SUMMARY OF RELATED EXPERIENCE

Jason Willis is the Director of Strategic Resource Planning and Implementation at WestEd. In this role, Willis oversees and guides the expansion of the agency’s school finance, state policy, governance and accountability support, which includes research and technical assistance to state and local education agencies. This support translates to implementation of new policies, regulations, financing, and system infrastructure to support school system reform aligned to evidence and research. It is delivered through a variety of vehicles including cost analysis and review of school funding formulas, original policy research and analysis, system improvement reviews, and capacity building techniques.

EDUCATION

2005 MA, Policy and Finance, Teachers College, Columbia University

2003 BA, Educational Studies and Psychology, The Catholic University of America

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2016–Present

Director, Strategic Resource Planning & Implementation, WestEd

Oversees and guides the expansion of the agency’s school finance, governance and accountability supports, which include support to state and local education agencies to implement policies and financial infrastructure to support school system reform.

2011–2016

Assistant Superintendent, Engagement & Accountability, San Jose Unified School District

Guided the design, development, and implementation of the school district’s strategic plan for 2012-2017, including significant reforms such as teacher evaluation and compensation, transformational school redesign, and school performance management systems.

2009–2011

Chief Financial Officer/Chief Business Official, Stockton Unified School District

Led and oversaw all non-instructional operations for the school district including finance, facilities, information technology, transportation, food services, and procurement. Balanced the district budget totaling approximately \$475 million and managed approximately 600 staff.

2007-2009

Budget Director, Oakland Unified School District

Supervised and managed the overall OUSD budget functions.

2003-2006

Assistant Product Manager, School Evaluation Services, Standard & Poor’s

Helped lead efforts to implement the Resource Management Service (RMS) for education leaders. Provided tools, analysis, and training to improve the management of school districts through a data-driven decision-making framework.

Natalie A. Walrond – Proposed Senior Advisor

WestEd, 730 Harrison Street • San Francisco, CA • 94107

SUMMARY OF RELATED EXPERIENCE

As the Director for Resilient and Healthy Schools and Communities at WestEd, Ms. Walrond oversees the growth and dissemination of the agency’s body of work related to creating safe, supportive, responsive, and equitable conditions in which every child, youth, and adult can learn, grow, and thrive. Walrond brings to her work 25 years of experience in K-12 education, finance, and strategy, for both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Walrond also serves as director of the national Center to Improve Social & Emotional Learning and School Safety housed at WestEd.

EDUCATION

1995 MBA, Analytic Finance and Policy Studies, University of Chicago

1993 BA, International Studies and International Business, cum laude, Trinity University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2018–Present

Director, Resilient and Healthy Schools and Communities, WestEd

Oversees the growth and dissemination of the agency’s body of work related to creating safe, supportive, and equitable conditions in which every child and adult can learn and thrive.

2018–Present

Director, Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety, WestEd

Leads the vision, strategic direction, and external engagement of the national Center to Improve Social & Emotional Learning and School Safety housed at WestEd.

2011–2018

Founder & Principal, Natalie Walrond Consulting LLC

Guided education organizations through strategic questions about their growth and impact.

2007–2009

Associate Partner, NewSchools Venture Fund

Managed and co-led the NewSchools Academic Systems Initiative to invest in the leading-edge instructional software, content, and services that high-performing school systems need to support academic achievement for all students, to promote innovation in the field.

2005–2007

Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, Creative Commons Corporation

Corporate officer and executive responsible for every aspect of financial management.

2000–2004

Senior Equity Research Analyst, Business & Education Services, Pacific Growth Equities, LLC

Responsible for firm’s equity research of Consulting, Outsourcing, and Education industries.

Felicia Brown-Reed – Proposed Task Lead

WestEd 300 Unicorn Park Drive, 5th floor • Woburn, MA • 01801

SUMMARY OF RELATED EXPERIENCE

Felicia Brown-Reed currently provides technical assistance and strategic support to state education agencies in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Region with WestEd. Prior to joining WestEd, Brown-Reed completed the Broad Residency with a fellowship at the Rhode Island Department of Education and served on the national team of City Year, an education non-profit. Felicia's professional experience has included a wide array of content and is tied together with the application of skills in community engagement, policy and strategy development, project management, systems building, technical assistance and coaching, and organizational partnership building.

EDUCATION

2017 M.Ed., Educational Leadership, The Broad Center, Los Angeles, CA

2009 M.Ed., School Leadership, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA

2006 B.A., Human Development/East Asian Studies, Connecticut College, New London, CT

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017–Present

State Technical Assistance Specialist, Learning Innovations, WestEd

Provide technical assistance and strategic support to state education leaders in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regions in the areas of school improvement, systems planning, stakeholder engagements, and project management.

2017–2015

Broad Resident Fellow, Office of the Commissioner, Rhode Island Dept. of Education

Co-led engagement and implementation process to develop a more responsive and flexible state diploma system and revised the RI Secondary School Regulations. Designed and facilitated state-wide stakeholder consultation process and input to inform state ESSA plan.

2015

Coaching Partnerships Consultant, Office of Early Childhood, NYC Dept. of Education

Established systems and strategies to streamline effective coordination between internal coaching staff and coaching specialists from partner organizations to improve professional development in early childhood programs

2012–2014

Regional Impact Director, Midwest Regional Site Operations, City Year, Inc.

Developed strategies to implement against new national vision and trained and coached staff to execute. Built and supported use of systems to collect, analyze, and utilize data.

2010–2012

Senior Manager of School and District Partnerships, Office of Strategy, City Year, Inc.

2009–2010

Program and Operation Manager, National Start-up Team, Summer Advantage USA

2006–2008

AmeriCorps Member, Whole School Whole Child Team, City Year Boston

Marta Induni, Ph.D. – Proposed Task Lead

SUMMARY OF RELATED EXPERIENCE

Principal Investigator (PI) at the Public Health Institute (PHI) for more than 25 years. Serves as the Director of Tracing Health, a program launched in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency pandemic. Leading contact tracing and scientific support services to counties and local health departments on the West Coast. Born in Argentina and a native Spanish speaker, committed to providing culturally and linguistically responsive services to people with COVID-19 and their contacts by onboarding staff who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

EDUCATION

2006 Ph.D., Educational Psychology, with distinction, University of California at Davis

1997 M.A., Women and Gender Studies, San Francisco State University

1988 B.A., Women and Gender Studies, University of California at Davis

RECENT LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Public Health Institute

As **Research Program Director IV (2020 - Present)**, Lead and manage Tracing Health, a large rapid response program to address COVID-19 pandemic support to counties in Oregon, Washington, and California. This program launched in response to the public health emergency pandemic of COVID-19 that provides contact tracing and scientific support services to counties and local health departments on the West Coast. Have grown this \$100 M program to more than 500 staff members who reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

As **Senior Director of Research (2017 - Present)**, Fostered a research environment that promotes the responsible conduct of research, providing outstanding leadership to Research PIs.

As **Senior Director of Operations (2013 – Present)**, Managed Cancer Registry of Greater California (CRGC) operations, providing guidance to the regional directors of the six regional registries that comprise the CRGC, and ensuring compliance with State, National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR), and for the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) grant provisions and required deliverables. \$8M annual budget.

As **Interim Director (2015 - 2017)**, Managed Center for Wellness and Nutrition (CWN) operations, providing guidance through program transition, responsible for staffing, performance, strategic planning, and budgeting. Provided direction to the nascent program to assure its sustainability. Grew program to train counties and institutions to be trauma-informed. \$1.5 M annual budget.

Elizabeth J. Starr – Proposed Task Lead

Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street • Wellesley, MA • 02481

EDUCATION

2000 Ed.M. Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA

1997 A.B. Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME

EXPERIENCE

2007-Present

The Wellesley Centers for Women, National Institute on Out-of-School Time, Research Associate, Wellesley, MA

Bridge research and practice with a focus on out-of-school time program system-building. Provide technical assistance to city and state leaders around quality initiatives, including standards development, workforce issues, and quality improvement. Master Program Quality Observer for NIOST using APASS tools including Assessment of Program Practices Tool (APT).

Select Projects:

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment, 2015-present

- Facilitate peer-learning opportunities focused on quality improvement.
- Co-lead internal working group on quality and workforce issues.
- Lead developer of the Professional Development System Building Toolkit

21st Century Community Learning Centers State Monitoring and Technical Assistance Project, 2015-2020

- Served as the Monitoring Assistance Team Lead, supporting ED Program Officers with comprehensive monitoring reviews of state 21st CCLC programs
- Participated in biannual monitoring calls with 21st CCLC State Coordinators to build relationships, identify best practices and individual challenges

Program Manager Core Competencies and Coaching Guide, 2017-2018

- Facilitated focus groups, administered surveys, and integrated research.
- Co-developed a guide to support New York Department of Youth and Community Development's intentional shift from a compliance monitoring approach to a continuous quality improvement model.

Next Generation Afterschool System Building Initiative, 2012-2016

- Provided TA related to program quality to nine cities as they strengthened their afterschool systems.

Achieve! Wyoming, 2015-2018

- Facilitated focus groups and led survey efforts to inform development of quality standards.
- Created quality framework, including quality practices and indicators.
- Developed a User Guide and partnered with the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance to put the new framework into action.

Core Knowledge and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals

- Conducted research and created document.
- Adopted by NAA in 2011.

Additional Staff and Subject Matter Experts

Joseph McKenna, PhD, is a Senior Research Associate in WestEd’s Justice and Prevention Research Center. He is the Principal Investigator on an NIJ-funded evaluation of statewide school safety centers and collaborates on other research and TA projects in the areas of juvenile justice, mental health, and trauma. Before joining WestEd, McKenna served as Executive Director of Safety and Student Support for Comal ISD (Texas), where he oversaw the district’s safety, student support, and health service departments. Recently, this work included the district’s efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which involved establishing operational guidelines for district programming to meet health and safety protocols, implementing mitigation activities, and maintaining robust reporting system that allowed for effective contact tracing.

Rose Owens-West, PhD, is the Equity Project Director at WestEd. She has served in leadership roles for several federally funded technical assistance centers, including as Director of the Region IX Equity Assistance Center and as Associate Director of the former California Comprehensive Center. Dr. Owens-West has also worked with multiple federal programs, including ESEA Title I, Neglected and Delinquent, Indian Education, Smaller Learning Communities, and Comprehensive School Reform and Demonstration programs, and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act.

Lynn Silver, MD, MPH, FAAD, is a pediatrician and public health expert who serves as senior advisor at PHI, coordinating the Prevention Policy Group. Dr. Silver currently directs Safely Opening Schools, focusing on creating and evaluating a learning collaborative to model routine rapid antigen testing for students and staff with a diverse group of California elementary schools serving historically marginalized communities and aimed at supporting a safer school reopening during the pandemic. Main areas of work include environmental changes to prevent chronic disease, including reducing smoking and physical inactivity; health care organization and evaluation; and reduction of health disparities. Recent accomplishments include leading New York City’s policy and systems change efforts to prevent noncommunicable disease.

Gina M. Solomon, MD, MPH, is an expert on environmental health science and policy. Her current work focuses on drinking water contaminants in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities in California, and in communities affected by wildfire. Dr. Solomon also leads the Achieving Resilient Communities/Alianza de Resiliencia Comunitaria (ARC) project, engaging and empowering California farmworker communities to strengthen health despite a changing climate. She served former Governor Jerry Brown as the Deputy Secretary for Science and Health at the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) from 2012–2018, and was a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council from 1996–2012.

B. Capability, Capacity, and Qualifications of the Vendor

*Rhode Island’s state-level health and education agencies will consolidate oversight and coordination of school-related recovery activities supported by the project team’s **track record of leading successful cross-disciplinary systems change efforts at the federal, state, and local levels**, with a focus on alignment and coherence to improve measurable health, wellness, and learning outcomes.*

We know from experience leading large-scale systems change efforts that alignment and coherence of service providers and strategic plans are essential to achieving mutual goals. Safely reopening schools to achieve ambitious learning goals requires complex coordination of public health, student wellness, and student learning institutions and community-based organizations, including seamless data-sharing agreements, joint planning efforts, and shared accountability for programmatic goals. Our unique partnership harnesses the strengths of three firms to achieve a cross-disciplinary support effort, combining WestEd’s extensive experience leading strategic resource planning and implementation with PHI’s deep knowledge of public health and safety best practices and with NIOST’s rich out-of-school time programming expertise. Following are descriptions of each organization and examples of relevant experience (also summarized in Exhibit 3; and Exhibit 4 provides references for select experience).

WestEd

WestEd is a research, development, and service agency that works with education and other child-serving sectors to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. In light of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on underserved communities, WestEd aims to leverage its expertise in benefit to state and local education leaders as they use the recent infusion of federal stimulus funding to reimagine and implement structures for learning in order to have a positive, meaningful, and equitable impact on students.

From Fiscal Year 2016 through 2020, WestEd carried out almost 3,200 new contracts representing major contributions to the nation’s R&D and TA resources, for an average of 636 new contracts per year. In 2021, the agency is expecting to operate on program funding of approximately \$174 million, with contracts from federal, state, and local agencies; social service agencies; schools; philanthropies; and private industry. This variety provides a stable funding base and hence a stable organizational structure for carrying out the work of this proposal.

Region 2 Comprehensive Center. WestEd leads the Region 2 Comprehensive Center (Center), serving Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York to build capacity of SEAs, regional and local education agencies, and schools to improve instructional quality, address achievement and equity gaps, and provide support for state-identified priorities. The Center recently supported RIDE in gathering stakeholder feedback to inform the Learning, Equity & Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force recommendations report in response to learning loss concerns as a result of the pandemic. Additional examples of recent Center supports include these three projects:

Supporting Diverse and Culturally Responsive–Sustaining Educators in Rhode Island: The Center works in collaboration with the RIDE Commissioner, cabinet, and key stakeholders assembled by a RI legislative commission to evaluate the root causes of the lack of racial diversity in the state’s educator workforce; identify policies and practices to support greater diversity in the workforce; and develop an implementation plan that leverages research- and evidence-based practices to achieve greater educator diversity within the next decade. Center staff are also collaborating with RIDE to design an equity decision tool for use by SEA staff as part of building their capacity to make decisions and implement policies that are equitable and culturally responsive-sustaining to students, educators, families, and communities.

Implementing the RIDE Blueprint for Multilingual Learner (MLL) Success: In 2018, the Providence Public School District (PPSD) signed a settlement agreement with the U.S.

Department of Justice entirely centered on insufficient services for MLL students. In the spring of 2020, RIDE sought support from the Center to guide the creation of “Rhode Island’s Blueprint for MLL Success” meant to anchor the systemic improvement of policy, regulations, guidance, services, resources, and supports at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. Between February–September 2020, with the Center’s support, using RIDE data and evidence-based research related to MLLs, RIDE developed the Blueprint with an accompanying Strategic Plan.

New York State Education Department (NYSED) Reopening Schools Task Force. The Center assisted New York state leaders in convening and conducting regional meetings on school reopening. NYSED described this effort as follows: “Creating a framework to reopen schools is a monumental undertaking — made even more challenging by the tremendous size and complexity of NY’s education system, the vast array of languages spoken by students and their families, and the uniquely devastating impact the pandemic has had here in NYS. To help guide this work, the Board of Regents convened four regional Task Force meetings, which were conducted virtually, between June 15 and June 24, 2020. Each regional meeting included more than 350 experts and stakeholders from health and education fields. In all, more than 1,650 parents, students, teachers, administrators, school board members, and stakeholders, representing NY’s diversity, attended and provided valuable feedback.”ⁱ

Strategic Resource and Funding Planning in New Mexico. Through the Region 13 Comprehensive Center, WestEd designed and implemented a revised budget planning process intended to increase coherence and coordination while supporting the strategic allocation of resources. At the center of this project is New Mexico’s goal of tying resources closely to the identified needs of students, especially the most vulnerable.

Effective Resource Management in Response to COVID-19. In recognition of the unprecedented disruption nationwide due to the pandemic, WestEd facilitated a timely multipart workshop series that presented best practices for state leaders to make the best use of available resources during this critical time. Experts from WestEd shared vital information to ensure that leaders were poised to continue high-quality educational programming for students and families. Teams from 10 SEAs across the country received guidance on budget changes, how to effectively use Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funding, tips for leveraging education resources, and understanding funding flexibilities.

Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina.ⁱⁱ In 2018, WestEd was appointed by North Carolina Judge W. David Lee to lead a comprehensive investigation into the major needs of the state’s public education system in four overarching areas: access to effective teachers, access to effective school leaders, adequate and equitable school funding and other resources, and adequate accountability and assessment systems. WestEd’s project team engaged 1,300+ education stakeholders in providing input and information for the research. Focus groups also included representatives from the Department of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, and the Chairman of the House Education Committee. In direct response to this work, WestEd was asked to revise the funding formula for North Carolina’s Smart Start program and, through intensive stakeholder engagement, provide specific recommendations for utilizing funding streams to advance equity goals for the state’s youngest children.

Carnegie Math Pathways and Reading Apprenticeship. To address the issue of college attainment and completion and to support students whose learning was disrupted due to the coronavirus pandemic, WestEd collaborated with RIDE to develop and help implement high school and college readiness courses in reading and math with two WestEd initiatives with demonstrated impact on student outcomes — Reading Apprenticeship and Carnegie Math Pathways. As part of RIDE’s Summer Academy for Interactive Learning (SAIL), these online courses launched in summer 2020 and built upon these WestEd initiatives’ research-based content and proven instructional approaches that have been successfully adapted for remote learning. Seventeen hundred students enrolled in the summer program, and evaluation data indicated that the courses yielded promising student outcomes.

Public Health Institute (PHI)

PHI is a proven partner to a range of funders, including philanthropy and U.S. federal and state agencies, and is home to 1000+ employees and 200+ programs in more than 25 countries. PHI’s comprehensive operational infrastructure and expansive coverage of the public health landscape make it one of the largest and well-respected public health institutes in the U.S. With an average annual revenue of \$100 million, PHI has a reputation for being an evidence-based convener of multiple stakeholders across sectors to address critical public health challenges.

Since March 2020, PHI has been engaged in finding innovative ways to address the COVID-19 pandemic and support local governments, grassroots organizations, and local institutions in reducing the inequitable effects of the virus on the most at-risk communities and the hardest to reach populations. Through the work of various PHI programs, we have provided COVID-19 programming and technical assistance in areas such as contact tracing and case investigation, school testing, wastewater surveillance, vaccine communications, research, and public policy.

Tracing Health Program. In the early stages of the pandemic, PHI launched its Tracing Health Program based on a core set of historical competencies leading the CA Behavioral Health Risk Factor Survey (BRFSS) – whereby we brought experience collecting confidential health information in a variety of different languages through phone and in-person surveys. Like contact tracing for COVID-19, these personal behavior surveys required a team of trusted and trained survey personnel, multilingual and multicultural staff, and well-crafted scripts. Based on our history with BRFSS and other related health outbreak tracing work, we created a scalable, flexible model for a team of contact tracers and resource navigators to support contact investigation and tracing in high impact communities. PHI’s nearly 500 contact tracers speak over 30 different languages and can effectively reach disenfranchised community members.

Safely Opening Schools (SOS). The SOS project is piloting rapid antigen testing in CA school districts to support schools’ reopening and ensuring K–12 teachers and students get back into the classroom full-time safely. In coordination with the Governor’s Office, the California Department of Public Health, and LEAs, the project brings together CA educators and school health professionals to develop and share best practices for testing including testing all onsite students and staff up to twice weekly using Abbott’s BinaxNOW rapid antigen test. The SOS goal is to implement a routine rapid antigen testing model with CA elementary schools that supports their reopening during the pandemic and to ultimately develop a model which can be scaled and replicated nationally. SOS utilizes intensive COVID-19 surveillance and testing strategies to safely support teachers and children to return to the classroom and is currently being

implemented in 10 CA school districts. Additionally, SOS is committed to advancing racial equity in health and education across CA and prioritizes pilots where reopening is most urgent.

Together Toward Health. Launched in September 2020, PHI’s Together Toward Health Program is working closely with the Governor’s Office and other CA state agencies as well as local health departments to design communication strategies for the hard to reach and hardly reached populations who are essential workers, isolated and marginalized individuals, and families. PHI’s teams are working hand in glove with community-based organizations (CBOs) who have intimate knowledge of the populations in need and have designed innovative ways to reach these communities with effective COVID-19 messaging around vaccines, quarantine, symptoms, testing, and other public health recommendations.

National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)

For more than 40 years in the out-of-school time and education fields, NIOST has influenced policy, guided community action, developed research-based standards, enhanced leadership, and facilitated collaborative system-building in cities, states, and regions across the nation. NIOST is part of the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College, one of the most prestigious and highly respected institutions of higher education in the country. NIOST has provided research, evaluation, data analysis and reporting, training, tool development, and other technical assistance work to numerous community-organization, school district, and municipal partners in order to foster continuous program improvement and support student achievement and the well-being of children and youth. Much of NIOST’s work encompasses projects of national scope and influence. NIOST plays a lead role in building a wide range of OST systems across the country — initiatives that use a multilevel, multifaceted, collaborative approach, integrating research, evaluation, and promising practices to build staff skills and create stronger, more sustainable, higher-quality programs for all youth in the community.

Providence After School Alliance (PASA). NIOST’s work with the PASA has included conducting onsite program quality observations using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), measurement debriefing sessions, and pre-program assessment training. NIOST has organized program participation in youth outcomes measurement work and provided data analysis and reports.

United Way of Rhode Island. Between 2016–2019, this work included working as a research and measurement partner to the United Way of RI’s cohort of summer programs. NIOST organized and managed participation in youth outcomes measurement via its *A Program Assessment System* (APAS) tools. NIOST also conducted pre- and post-summer meetings with program providers and provided individual and overall data analysis and reports.

Exhibit 3. Experience in Health Care and Education Consulting: *Each project team partner organization boasts a track record of leading successful cross-disciplinary systems change efforts at the federal, state, and local levels.*

	Project Planning and Logistics					Health Care Consulting				Education Consulting				
	Leading complicated projects	Strategic consulting	Stakeholder engagement	Needs assessments	Equity reviews and initiatives	Health and safety mitigation measures	COVID testing planning and communication	Contact tracing	Passive surveillance and evaluation	Learning program development and	Strategic resource and funding planning	Outcome metrics and accountability	Student well-being	Higher education
WestEd														
Region 2 Comprehensive Center	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓
Strategic Resource and Funding Planning in NM	✓	✓		✓	✓						✓			
Managing Education Resources in Response to COVID-19		✓		✓						✓	✓			
Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	
Carnegie Math Pathways and Reading Apprenticeship	✓	✓								✓		✓		✓
Public Health Institute														
SOS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Tracing Health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
National Institute on Out-of-School Time														
PASA	✓	✓	✓							✓		✓	✓	

Exhibit 4. Client References: *Clients confirm the project team partner organizations' success in leading cross-disciplinary systems change efforts at the federal, state, and local levels.*

Client	Contact Information	Dates of Service	Types of Services Provided
WestEd			
Rhode Island Department of Education	Name: Krystafer Redden Title: COVID-19 Response Project Manager for Operations & Resources Email: krystafer.redden@ride.ri.gov Phone: (401) 222-8401	February–April 2021	Project Title: Learning, Equity, and Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force - Summarized recommendations generated as a result of the LEAP Task Force meetings - Drafted and produced a final report from the Task Force
New York State Education Department	Name: Kimberly Wilkins Title: P-12 Instructional Support Deputy Commissioner Email: Kim.Wilkins@nysed.gov Phone: (518) 474-5915	May–August 2020	Project Title: Reopening Schools Task Force - Supported design and planning of regional stakeholder meetings - Synthesized data from stakeholder discussions to inform guidance for LEAs

Client	Contact Information	Dates of Service	Types of Services Provided
Utah State Board of Education	Name: Sydnee Dickson Title: State Superintendent of Public Instruction Email: Sydnee.Dickson@schools.utah.gov Phone: (801) 538-7500	April–June 2020	Project Title: Effective Resource Management in Response to COVID-19 - Provided overviews of federal COVID-19 funding, including CARES Act, ESSER, CRRSA - Identified emerging trends to inform state-level strategic resource planning for recovery
North Carolina Office of the Governor	Name: Geoff Coltrane Title: Senior Education Advisor Email: geoff.coltrane@nc.gov Phone: (919) 814-2024	March 2018–October 2019	Project Title: Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina - Created Action Plan for providing equitable educational opportunities for all NC students - Created state roadmap for civil rights and equity to address court case (<i>Leandro v. State</i>)
Public Health Institute			
McSwain Union Elementary School District	Name: Roy Mendiola, EdD Title: District Superintendent Email: rmendiola@mcswain.k12.ca.us Phone: (209) 354-2700, ext. 623	December 2020–present	Project Title: Safely Opening Schools - Supported design, planning, and implementation of model for rapid antigen testing in 11 CA LEAs - Developed and shared best practices for elementary school testing, including testing onsite students and staff up to twice weekly using a rapid antigen test
Clark County, WA Department of Public Health	Name: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH Title: Director/Health Officer Email: Alan.Melnick@clark.wa.gov Phone: (564) 397-8412	May 2020–present	Project Title: Tracing Health Program - Created and implemented scalable, flexible model for contact tracers, case investigators, and resource navigators to support local health departments - Hired over 500 contact tracers that 30+ different languages, successfully recruited from communities most impacted by COVID-19
The California Endowment	Name: Anthony Iton, MD, JD, MPH Title: Senior Vice President Email: aiton@calendow.org Phone: (510) 207-3251	September 2020–present	Project Title: Together Toward Health - Distributed over \$17M to 275 CBOs throughout the state to address the impacts of COVID-19 in disproportionately-impacted communities - Addressing immediate needs and laying the foundation for strong community–public health platform to support post-pandemic
National Institute on Out-of-School Time			
Providence After School Alliance (PASA)	Name: Ann Durham Title: Deputy Director Email: adurham@mypasa.org Phone: (401) 490-9599, ext. 10	2012–present	Project Title: Providence After School Alliance - PASA Program Quality Improvement Observations (YPQA) - Youth Outcomes Measurement (SAYO) - Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting for AfterZone and AfterZone Summer Scholars

C. Work Plan

Rhode Island’s health and education leaders will establish systemic enabling conditions for improved health, wellness, and learning outcomes through the project team’s tailored consulting services, informed by a long history of partnering with the state on strategic planning and robust stakeholder engagement.

WestEd brings an understanding of Rhode Island’s education context stemming from more than 20 years of supporting RI education leaders and stakeholders, including support for implementation of RIDE’s LEAP Task Force on COVID-19 response. Furthermore, NIOST has worked extensively in the OST space in RI through its work with United Way of RI and the Providence After School Alliance to support quality program implementation. We will build upon these established relationships and understanding of local needs to engage in sustained stakeholder engagement that uses culturally responsive best practices to establish trust, identify

local priorities, successes, and lessons learned, and design program supports that speak directly to these needs.

Project Management and Quality Assurance

WestEd’s project management methodology enables us to consistently and effectively meet the commitments we make to our partners and clients. Our approach includes clear and detailed project plans, regular communication, resource tracking, and issue tracking and management. We are equipped with communication, file sharing, and other collaboration tools that keep team members connected to one another and that keep our partners connected with our work.

To ensure quality and timeliness, we will maintain ongoing and open communication with RI, providing iterative opportunities for feedback on project plans and deliverables to ensure that services and products are closely aligned to client needs. All project plans and deliverables undergo internal expert review by a senior advisor and benefit from WestEd’s in-house editing services to produce polished, professional products.

Task 1. Project Planning, Needs Assessment, and Strategic Consulting

The project team proposes a **comprehensive needs assessment and equity review process** that will draw upon extant and new data and current program information across agencies and stakeholders to inform consulting supports across the education consulting (Task 2) and health care consulting (Task 3) workstreams. The process will:

- Affirm with stakeholders the shared vision and goals for the work as initially defined by the LEAP Task Force and articulated in its recommendations and absolute priorities;
- Identify and more deeply understand the specific prioritized needs and challenges facing RI school systems today in terms of student learning, wellness, and public health;
- Identify any disproportionate impacts on specific student populations or school communities to understand equity gaps and disparities; and
- Target resource allocation and programming toward the identified needs and priorities to address disparities and improve academic, wellness, and health outcomes for all students, particularly those who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Subtask 1.1 Recruit & facilitate RI Equitable Reopening Steering Committee

Building on the success of RI’s LEAP Task Force, we propose identifying a RI Equitable Reopening Steering Committee that will advise and inform the planning, design, and implementation of the process from needs assessment through implementation and ongoing improvement. The steering committee will include representation from the project team, state government agencies; experts from the state’s preeminent health and OST organizations; LEA leaders; and of critical importance, students and families mirroring the diversity of the state’s population. This steering committee will meet virtually at key points in the planning process to inform the needs assessment, equity review, and subsequent program supports. WestEd leadership will support RI in identifying, recruiting, and facilitating virtual meetings of the steering committee.

Subtask 1.2 Equity review & needs assessment (Req. vi)

- **Step 1. Gather data:** Gather relevant data and program information related to student learning (e.g., RICAS), student wellness (e.g., SurveyWorks climate data, CLEE audit of

SEL offerings), and public health (e.g., test positivity rates), as well as audit existing programming in these areas

- **Step 2. Conduct initial analysis:** Conduct analysis to determine strengths, areas for improvement, and concerning disproportionalities, and produce an initial presentation of findings at this stage to share with the RI Equitable Reopening Steering Committee
- **Step 3. Engage stakeholders (Part 1):** Facilitate three to five virtual focus groups with key student, family, and educator stakeholders, mirroring the diversity of the state’s student population, to affirm vision, share initial findings, and uncover root causes
- **Step 4. Conduct onsite review:** Conduct full-day “virtual onsite review” of findings from initial analysis and stakeholder engagement and strategic resource review (see Subtask 1.3) and engage in a data co-interpretation process, across the multiple data sources, to yield themes, key takeaways, and early action plan proposals
- **Step 5. Engage stakeholders (Part 2):** Engage stakeholders in second round of focus groups to share and refine proposed plans based on stakeholder feedback
- **Step 6. Develop and disseminate plans:** Create summary of findings and detailed programming plan and present to the steering committee

Higher education needs assessment for reopening planning (Req. viii). In addition to carrying out the process described above for K–12 reopening, we will design and carry out a needs assessment process to support reopening the state’s public higher education institutions (IHEs) for in-person learning. This effort will follow a similar process of data collection, stakeholder engagement, consultation with the steering committee, and development of a reopening plan.

Subtask 1.3 Advice & consulting for American Rescue Plan resource allocation to address learning loss (Req. iii)

A key component of the needs assessment and equity review is a review of RI’s current resource allocation practices to support student safety, health, and learning. In the early months of the project timeline, we will assess the amount, timing, and scale of available resources for LEAs. This analysis will involve several dimensions to create a holistic picture of resources, including:

- ***Allocation*** accounts for the formula by which funds were distributed in order to characterize the amount (total, per pupil), provide a sense of scale relative to other resources, and indicate whether resources are ongoing or one-time.
- ***Expected Expenditures*** accounts for the agency providing the resources and assesses the allowable uses of funds as well as other provisions that might influence the use of those resources (e.g., maintenance of effort/equity requirements). This dimension also enables an understanding of the degree to which LEAs are able to blend and braid funds toward common strategies developed in response to the analysis of learning loss.
- ***Manifested Resources*** accounts for how purchased resources are structured, which most prominently includes staff and their time, collaboration, and organization to support new and innovative learning environments.

Results of the strategic resource review will be integrated into the needs assessment process.

Subtask 1.4 General advice & consulting across RI government agencies (Req. ii)

Findings from needs assessment will inform the project team’s development of a plan to provide general advice and consulting across RI agencies to ensure coherence and alignment of program

implementation and continuous improvement. In addition to regular engagements with RI leadership throughout the needs assessment and consulting process, these services include:

Ongoing Strategic Consulting. Our team will facilitate monthly virtual consultations with state-level leaders, including RIDE and RIDOH, to monitor the progress of the work across tasks.

“Just-in-Time” Consulting Support. WestEd, PHI, NIOST, and our network of SMEs will offer responsive consulting services as appropriate via virtual “just-in-time” consultations. These 60- to 90-minute sessions will be available to connect stakeholders with project staff, SMEs, or peers to get expert advice, feedback, or other support on particular problems of practice related to public health, student wellness, or student learning programming.

Community of Practice. We will facilitate a virtual community of practice (CoP) with RIDE, RIDOH, and interested LEAs, along with selected learning program partners to engage in peer learning and problem solving. This CoP will meet up to four times annually to elevate promising practices that have emerged as part of their program design, implementation, evaluation, and accountability efforts, engage in peer-to-peer consultancies to troubleshoot vexing problems of practice, and connect with SMEs to learn about national best practices. As appropriate, this CoP may also address challenges related to LEA implementation of public health protocols.

Task 2. Education Consulting Supports

Task 2 consists of support for the planning, development, and implementation of learning and wellness-related recovery programs in Subtask 2.1; the development of evaluation resources to support these programs in Subtask 2.2; and the development of resources to support program accountability in Subtask 2.3. RI understands that LEAs are best positioned to make local decisions related to the specific programming they offer to their school communities. To that end, the project team will support RIDE in offering a flexible menu of resources and supports to LEAs for identifying, designing, implementing, and strengthening the quality of OST programming and establishing systemic enabling conditions for successful implementation of quality learning programming (e.g., funding streams, policy guidance, flexibility). Our partnership with NIOST will enable some “quick wins” to roll out resources concurrently with the needs assessment to meet urgent needs, drawing upon existing materials.

Subtask 2.1 Planning, development, & implementation of learning programs (Req. iv)

We propose developing a suite of resources and tools that RI can use with LEAs, schools, and other education entities. We will draw on NIOST’s suite of evidence-based resources as a starting point for developing new resources tailored to the RI context. While the specifics will be identified as part of the needs assessment, these resources may include resources to support:

- Local needs assessment, equity review, and resource allocation reviews to inform programmatic decision-making
- A comprehensive list of RI vendors that provide quality OST or summer learning programming aligned to needs identified in the needs assessment and equity review, drawing upon the audit of RI programs done in Subtask 1.2
- Criteria for selecting quality OST programs, including tools for identifying programs aligned to needs assessment findings and specific student populations or learning settings, and tools for identifying/establishing programs in communities with limited CBO access

- Coordination and alignment of programming across providers, including OST and summer program providers
- Alignment of OST learning curriculum with RIDE classroom curriculum and standards
- Attracting and supporting diverse OST program staff that mirror diversity of student population, to mitigate additional burden on RIDE teaching workforce to fill these roles
- Training and implementation of OST programming grounded in anti-racist principles
- Resources to support communication and dissemination of learning program opportunities to families, schools, and students

Subtask 2.2 Design, analysis, and evaluation of learning programs (Req. v)

To ensure that funds are spent on programs yielding the desired outcomes to address identified needs, we will produce a suite of evaluation resources that RI can provide to OST vendors and to LEAs for evaluation and quality improvement. We will leverage NIOST’s [APAS](#) suite of tools as a starting point for tailoring tools that RI can provide to LEAs. The APAS evaluation system includes self-assessments and survey tools to support improvements to program quality and youth outcomes in afterschool programs, and can be used for summer learning programs. Other resources for consideration include: guidance for measuring and collecting data on SEL outcomes, and training for program data literacy, aligned to LEAP Task Force recommendations.

Subtask 2.3 Accountability metrics for learning programs (Req. vii)

To support LEAs in holding local programs accountable for desired outcomes, and to support RIDE in understanding statewide impacts of OST programming, we will develop an additional suite of resources. Should RIDE wish to collect information from LEAs regarding program implementation and impact, we can develop planning and reporting templates that LEAs can incorporate into their annual LEA plan submissions to describe: their use of funds related to OST learning programming; how they are selecting, implementing, and holding accountable these programs for meeting program goals; and the impact these programs have had on key outcomes of interest related to student engagement, wellness, and learning. In Option Year 2, WestEd could provide state leaders with support for reviewing the plans that LEAs submit and identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This review could inform a broader evaluation of the impact of the consulting project on health, wellness, and learning outcomes in RI.

Task 3. Health Care Consulting Supports

Extensive testing for staff and students along with careful follow up through contact tracing of positive cases is a critical part of any school district’s reopening plan. PHI is directly implementing contract tracing services for various counties in the states of Washington (WA) and Oregon (OR) through our Tracing Health Program, and serving as the lead implementing partner for the first national clinically embedded contract tracing model with Kaiser Permanente for five counties in CA. As a result of successful work in multiple states, we are prepared to bring evidence-based models of school testing and contact tracing programs to RI.

Subtask 3.1 COVID testing supports (Req. i)

As RI and the nation continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team’s public health experts are prepared to support the state, and work in close collaboration with local health authorities, to determine the right plan and strategy to help RI reopen schools for fully in-person

learning. We will provide critical technical assistance and consulting support for COVID-testing planning for schools, including the following:

- Advising on the frequency and method of testing in schools with high transmission rates;
- Helping to determine the human resources needed to make sure that everyone is tested according to the testing plans;
- Supporting the development of a hotline or other online resources for staff and parents to report concerns; and
- Advising on the design and development of a new online dashboard that could list schools' reopening status and in-school transmissions of virus cases.

The project team will work with RIDOH and LEAs to design and determine the most appropriate contact tracing and case investigation models for the state. Based on best practices implementing contact tracing models across OR, WA, and CA, PHI can also support protocols and communication for isolation, quarantine, and also share scripts in over 30 different languages related to the case investigation, contact tracing, and regular monitoring.

Subtask 3.2 Pool testing for K–12 and IHEs (Req. ix)

The project team will provide technical public health expertise, consultation, and support to lead project design and project management of an evidence-based model for pool testing in K–12 schools and public IHEs in RI. Whether using rapid antigen testing for interrupting transmission, pooled PCR for surveillance, or other approach, PHI can provide expert consultation, training, and management to support the selection and implementation of an appropriate testing strategy working with RI partners. PHI can also provide wraparound project management services for testing or a more limited suite of services based on RI needs and what systems have already been selected or implemented by the state, which can include the following: supporting outreach to LEAs; training of existing staff and roll-out planning; developing linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach materials for families; identifying data and reporting platforms; selecting laboratory partners; test supply planning; and developing and monitoring program metrics.

Subtask 3.3 Wastewater surveillance

Wastewater monitoring has demonstrated its potential as an effective tool for public health surveillance. Because people shed SARS-CoV-2 in stool for up to a week before clinical illness, and wastewater aggregates samples from thousands of people, wastewater testing during the COVID-19 pandemic has proven effective for quickly detecting local outbreaks, highlighting areas for contact tracing, identifying emerging variants, and providing reassurance if virus control strategies are working (Jones, et al., 2020; Medema, et al., 2020).

Through the expertise and leadership of Dr. Gina Solomon, PHI will facilitate technical assistance and consulting support in environmental science and public health to help RIDE, school districts, and public IHEs in RI conduct a feasibility assessment and determine an appropriate strategy for incorporating wastewater surveillance for COVID-19 into school reopening plans. In parallel, PHI can organize focus groups and conduct outreach and communication with public officials, educators, and other local leaders to educate them on the importance of wastewater surveillance for COVID-19 and ensure local buy in at all levels.

Project Timeline

Exhibit 5. Project Work Plan Gantt Chart, by Task: *The project team will provide tailored consulting services throughout the year-long project period, informed by needs assessment results and stakeholder engagement.*

Tasks and Deliverables	2021										2022		
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	
Task 1. Project planning, needs assessment and strategic consulting													
1.1 Facilitate Equitable Reopening Steering Committee <i>Deliverables: Steering committee outreach/facilitation materials</i>	Recruit and launch		X		X			X			X		
1.2 Conduct needs assessment & equity review <i>Deliverables: Needs assessment/equity review plans, data templates, engagement protocols, initial memo, final report</i>	Steps 1–2		Steps 3–6		Leverage findings to inform Tasks 2 and 3								
Higher education needs assessment for reopening planning					Launch reopening plans		Provide ongoing guidance on reopening efforts through consultation						
1.3 Advice & consulting for resource allocation <i>Deliverables: Financial data-gathering templates, review protocols, financial assessment outputs</i>	Conduct resource review		Integrate findings into NA and recommendations			Provide ongoing guidance for monitoring use and impact of funds							
1.4 General advice & consulting across agencies <i>Deliverables: Consulting call agendas/notes; facilitation materials for 12 just-in-time responses; CoP implementation plan, facilitation materials for up to 4 COP meetings</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Virtual COP facilitation	Plan and recruit		CoP 1		CoP 2			CoP 3		CoP 4			
Just-in-time responsive TA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Task 2. Education consulting supports													
2.1 Planning, development, & implementation of learning programs <i>Deliverables: Up to 5 resources</i>	Audit existing programs		Develop planning and implementation resources			Disseminate and support use of planning and implementation resources							
2.2 Design, analysis, evaluation of learning programs. <i>Deliverables: Up to 5 resources</i>			Develop evaluation resources			Disseminate and support use of evaluation resources during 2021/22 school year							
2.3 Accountability metrics for learning programs <i>Deliverables: Up to 5 resources</i>			Develop accountability resources			Disseminate and support use of accountability resources during 2021/22 school year							

Tasks and Deliverables	2021										2022		
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	
Task 3. Health care consulting supports													
3.1 COVID testing & contact tracing <i>Deliverables: Needs assessment and implementation plans; template testing and contact tracing plans; best practices guidance</i>	Needs assessment/ audit of existing efforts	Implementation plan	Establish lab/partner relationships	Develop template testing and contact tracing plan and individualize with LEAs			Support contact tracing/case investigation staffing		Support implementation of contact tracing programs				
3.2 Pool testing for K–12 and IHEs <i>Deliverables: testing pilot model design; LEA outreach materials</i>		Design pilot model		Confirm buy-in from priority LEAs and partners			Determine staffing needs, test supply planning, program metric and monitoring		Support implementation				
3.3 Wastewater surveillance <i>Deliverables: feasibility assessment plan and results; stakeholder engagement protocols</i>	Feasibility assessment	Stakeholder engagement	Establish relationships with labs, IHEs, utility companies and other partners			Support design of pilot, determine resource needs, determine priority IHEs		Ongoing TA					

Once the feasibility assessment is complete and local officials are committed to a wastewater surveillance program in RI, the project team can support the design of a pilot program at one or more public college/university campuses and/or provide technical assistance to develop a statewide program if appropriate. In addition, PHI is prepared to share best practices, testing methods and protocols, identification of appropriate lab partnerships, data protocols, and facilitate partnerships with local utilities and develop sampling plans for various stakeholders, including under-resourced communities to consider the following: where to sample, how often to sample, what to sample, how to sample and safely collect, store, and ship samples, etc. PHI can also support the incorporation of wastewater surveillance data into public facing portals for testing (described above), including the development of a public website with information about the role of wastewater testing.

D. Approach/Methodology

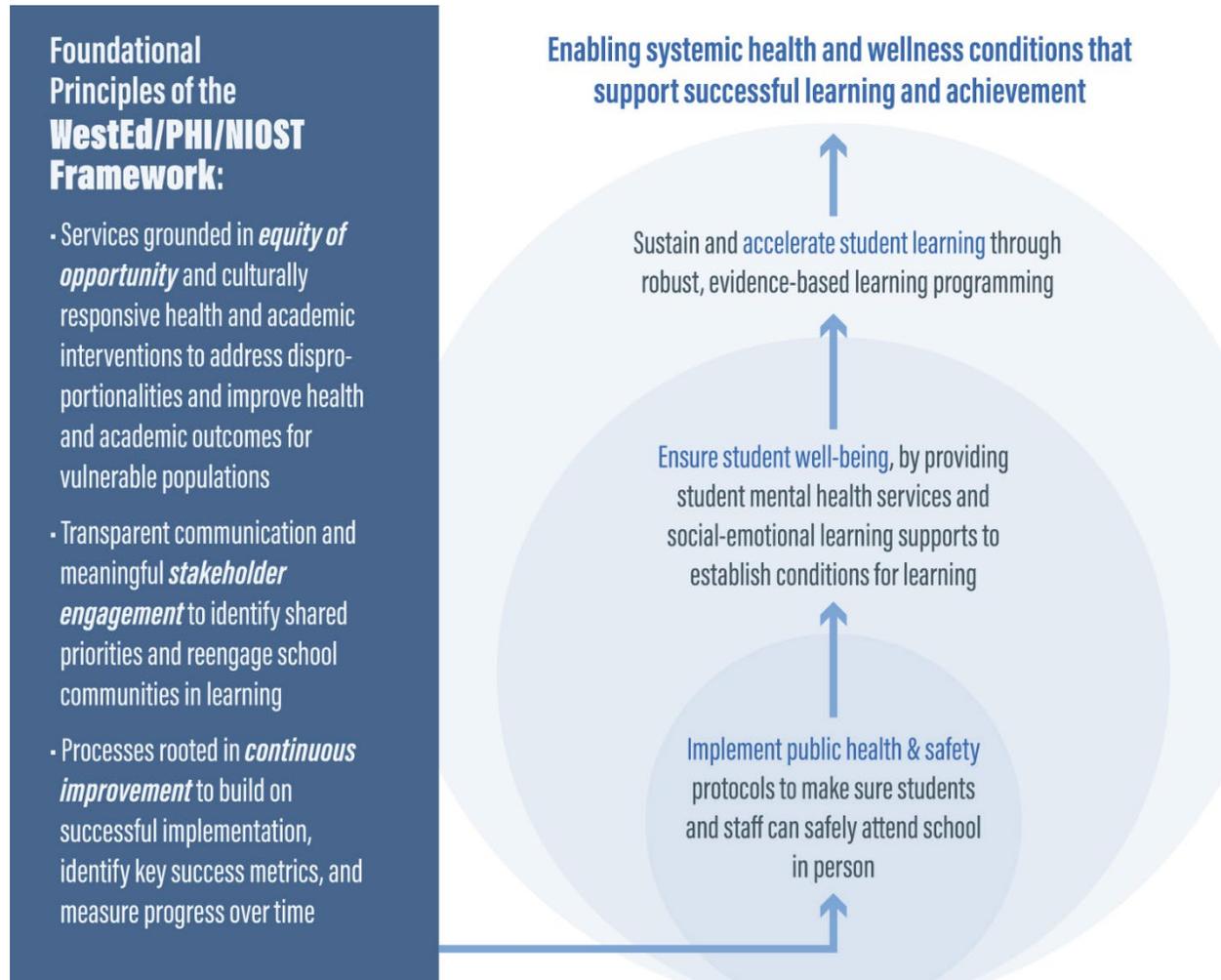
*The state will protect its citizens and LEAs will safely reopen schools for full in-person learning with the project team’s **strategic approach to testing and mitigation activities**, involving ongoing surveillance, contact tracing, and timely interventions as warranted by the ebb and flow of the pandemic.*

*RIDE, RIDOH, and public LEAs will continue to deliver on the promise of a high-quality education for each student with the project team’s **approach which goes beyond “back to normal” and reimagines an equity-centered “renewed normal” that focuses on school communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, dives deeply to understand needs and priorities, and aligns resources to advance health and academic outcomes.***

The pandemic has laid bare the fragility and fractures of our education systems, especially highlighting the need to address equity. As we work to return to “normal” schooling, opportunities exist to address the conditions that contributed to gaps in equity of opportunity for persistently underserved students and communities across the state. Early data on learning loss from Curriculum Associates indicate that students of color, differently abled students (DAS), and MLLs are experiencing gaps in opportunity to learn. According to RIDE, on the first 80 days of the 2020-21, total RI student absences increased by 46% compared to the previous school year, with greater rates of absenteeism among low-income and Hispanic students. Projections of learning loss, spikes in chronic absenteeism, and drops in student enrollment present long-range concerns, pointing to the need for robust student and family reengagement efforts, intensive learning acceleration, and differentiation of programs. These needs are especially critical for historically underserved students such as students of color, low-income students, MLLs, and DAS. With so much learning time lost over the past year, OST programming, engagement with community-based organizations (CBOs), and summer catch-up programming provide critical opportunities to bolster the regular school day’s learning and wellness efforts and to target resources on students who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

We propose a framework that provides Rhode Island with the critical public health and safety protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during in-person learning and that provides student wellness supports that are essential to enable effective conditions for sustaining and accelerating student learning (see Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Integrated Approach to Enabling Systemic Health and Wellness Conditions: *The project team will employ an approach which goes beyond “back to normal” and reimagines an equity-centered “renewed normal” to advance health, wellness, and learning outcomes.*



The framework aligns closely with the recommendations and absolute priorities identified by RI’s Learning, Equity, and Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force as presented to their [Board of Education’s Council on Elementary and Secondary Education meeting](#) on April 6, 2021. Each area of the framework is further described below.

Public Health and Safety. Implementing public health and safety protocols that enable students to safely join in-person learning while mitigating the spread of COVID-19 are foundational to the success of any reopening plan. When done well, these protocols will both prevent spread and proactively neutralize potential threats to public health and wellness. Public health creates an essential condition for learning through the rollout, monitoring, and evaluation of critical public health and safety components such as personal protective equipment (PPE) supply, surveillance testing, adherence to CDC distancing guidelines, and appropriate scheduling. Successful implementation of these protocols and transparent, clear communication about their use will help establish a mutual trust between LEAs and staff, students, and families so that students can return safely to school buildings.

Student Well-Being. In addition to safety, student wellness — including student mental health services and social-emotional supports — is an essential precursor to establishing the conditions for successful learning. The pandemic amplified wellness needs for many students, underscoring the importance of embedding wellness-focused services into educational programming. LEAs and municipal program providers must coordinate services in a coherent way to identify, deploy, and execute wellness services for students in a manner that is targeted to the need of the school or student group population. Doing so includes diagnostic/intake services, matching providers to students (and staff, as appropriate), and ongoing evaluative steps to understand the extent to which these services are improving outcomes for students.

Accelerated Learning. With public health and safety measures and student wellness services in place, LEAs and CBOs can focus attention on accelerated learning, just-in-time review, and expanded learning programming for students who need these opportunities the most. We ground our approach in a comprehensive needs assessment and equity review, drawing upon the best available data and engaging diverse stakeholders who are representative of the student population to deepen understanding of local priorities. Based on the results of needs sensing, we tailor the development of supports and resources to meet identified needs, establish clear success metrics, and facilitate ongoing formative reflection on program impact. Implementing quality OST and summer catch-up programming requires complex coordination across government agencies, LEAs, and CBOs — our approach draws upon WestEd’s strategic alignment and coherence planning tools and uses NIOST’s suite of tools to support both program alignment and program quality.

Methodology

Our work leverages a continuous improvement methodology, grounded in a needs assessment and equity review to pinpoint specific needs and priorities and uncover disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on specific student groups or school communities. We will draw upon the findings of the needs assessment and equity review to develop a framework for supporting LEAs in designing learning programming and identifying meaningful, measurable metrics for tracking improvement over time. These findings will also enable our team to provide strategic consulting advice across RI agencies and education entities to inform the coherence and alignment of program delivery, including through ongoing virtual consulting, a virtual community of practice, and “just in time” responsive consulting supports. Finally, we will build upon the success of the LEAP Task Force to establish an RI Equitable Reopening Steering Committee that will help guide and oversee the project design and delivery, ensuring that the work remains aligned to state priorities and local context. To enable these programmatic supports to be carried out safely, our public health protocols for COVID testing and surveillance provide the necessary investments in safety to build school and community trust.

Should the work continue beyond Year 1, our team will examine the impact of RI’s investment in strategic resource allocation and strengthened public health and learning programming and will report to RI on outcomes, successes, and lessons learned in order to inform the path forward. An overview of how these pieces of the work fit together over time is provided in the workplan section, including a Gantt chart showing a timeline for how each task is carried out, and a task-by-task description of the scope of work and deliverables for the project.

CITATIONS

Jones DL, Baluja MQ, Graham DW, et al. Shedding of SARS-CoV-2 in feces and urine and its potential role in person-to-person transmission and the environment-based spread of COVID-19. *Sci Total Environ.* 2020; 749141364.

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ⁱ See NYSED's [*Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York's Schools Reopening Guidance*](#).

ⁱⁱ A link to access the research studies conducted for the project, the Executive Summary, and the action plan, *Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina*, can be found [here](#).