



# Evidence + Engagement:

## A New Research Partnership for DC Education

*GW Consortium Supplemental Information*  
*14 December 2020*



## GW Consortium Supplemental Information

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The GW Consortium—George Washington University (GW), American Institutes for Research (AIR), Child Trends, Howard University, and Policy Studies Associates (PSA)— is pleased to provide supplemental responses to our District of Columbia Education Research Practice Partnership (DC RPP) proposal submission. Our Consortium’s commitment is that every student—no matter their background or which Ward they live in—will have access to a high-quality public school education that supports their academic, physical, and social success. We are confident that a powerful research-practice partnership, built around *evidence* and *engagement*, will move us toward that essential goal.

We hope these responses inform the selection committee’s decision and look forward to our presentation and question session with the committee later this week.

### Question 1

*D.C. Code §38-785.04 charges an advisory committee to provide intellectual guidance to the research practice partnership, and D.C. Code §38-785.05 outlines responsibilities of the partnership. Please provide a plan about how the partnership will onboard advisory committee members regarding their responsibilities. Specifically, what steps will you take to arrive at the 5-year research agenda with the advisory committee?*

As a Consortium we look forward to working with the Advisory Committee on developing the 5-year research agenda and the foundation for a successful DC RPP. We are proud to offer a unique blend of scholarly expertise along with a track record of building useful links among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. We intend to use Committee members’ substantive expertise and community perspective in the research, or *evidence-generation* process, as well as in *engagement* with stakeholders and the community. Our strategy and plan of work builds on the core principle that engagement with decisionmakers and other stakeholders is a prerequisite for application of research evidence. Together, we will co-develop an agenda for research and co-determine indicators of success.

The statutory requirements for the Advisory Committee speak to both research guidance and committee operations. While creation of the 5-year research agenda is primary, the Committee must set management practices and expectations in order to operate collegially and efficiently. Below, we outline first the activities related to setting standard committee operations that support the onboarding of Committee members, and then the activities related to guiding RPP research.

### Committee Operations

Based on D.C. Code, the Committee must establish by-laws that, at a minimum, describe processes for appointing and reappointing members as well as electing chair leadership positions. The Committee must also determine the meeting schedule, attendance requirements, term limits and the extent to which meetings are open to the public. In addition, the members must establish ways of engaging collegially and making decisions as an expert body representing diverse perspectives.

Our goal for the first two meetings, then, is to support the Committee as it determines leadership and operating structures, clarifies common objectives, and establishes working rules and by-laws. The Advisory Committee will also articulate its goals and priorities, a task that will benefit from – and

prepare the terrain for – constructive cooperation with stakeholders across the District. Onboarding activities include establishing practices and building shared knowledge around at least the following topics:

- **Community Building and Norm-Setting** through get-to-know you activities, setting meeting procedures and planning a system for regularly revisiting norms and procedures.
- **Public Board Legal and Logistical Foundations** through interactive sessions with D.C. government experts on public board requirements (i.e., accessibility, transparency, etc.) and sound board practices; and review of D.C. legal requirements, example by-laws, and templates for Committee meeting agendas.
- **RPP Background and Best Practices** through interactive sessions with leaders and staff from other prominent RPPs on issues such as practitioner-oriented research, board-researcher relations, community outreach and feedback loops, and dissemination and communication protocols.
- **Articulating the Advisory Committee Purpose** through a review of statutory requirements, hearing directly from the Mayor’s Office and D.C. Council on intent and aspirations, and drafting statements that will guide ongoing work.

Our support and guidance for early meetings will be designed and facilitated to help the Committee construct a collaborative learning culture, capitalizing on the diverse strengths and backgrounds of all Committee members but ultimately working towards a common vision. *The Consortium will use an external meeting facilitator to conduct Advisory Committee large-group discussions and decision-making steps.* With multiple people at the table, all of whom must have a voice in the proceedings, the task of getting to consensus will be challenging. With the facilitator’s expertise, and potentially using a formal process such as “structured workshops” or Results-Based Facilitation,<sup>1</sup> we will engage members in small-group discussions to encourage sharing of ideas and opinions, and in whole-group discussions that encourage common learning and lead to decision making. These meetings will begin as virtual convenings, but as the public health situation allows we will include in-person meetings to move the agenda forward.

### Research Guidance

Einstein is credited with saying that if he had an hour to save the world, he would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and five minutes solving it. We are not Einsteins, and the partnership may divide time a bit differently, knowing from experience that problem solving can’t be assumed as quick or easy. That said, we know that the partnership will need to devote quality time upfront to enumerate existing strengths and capacities, understand the scope and complexity of the problems, and be clear-headed about the challenges that vary widely across schools, educators, families, and students. This means listening to and learning from leaders and educators from OSSE, DCPS and other LEAs as well as hearing directly from families and community members. *Based on this input, we will start right away to identify learning topics and problems of practice, build shared knowledge of D.C. education data, and consider important research questions.*

Our proposal suggests that the Committee develop a learning agenda and a more specific 5-year research agenda based on input from education agencies, school leaders and teachers, community

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<sup>1</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2020, June 25). *Results-based facilitation in virtual settings.* <https://www.aecf.org/m/blogdoc/aecf-resultsbasedfacilitationinvirtualsettings-2020.pdf>

members, and other stakeholders. The learning agenda is slightly broader than a research agenda in that it takes note of existing evidence, identifies gaps in our knowledge, and captures a range of learning activities, such as literature reviews or expert learning sessions, that serve stakeholders. The research agenda will describe the major buckets of work and delineate specific research projects that will support educational improvement. We will also encourage the Advisory Committee to consider identifying select focus areas, and a series of studies within each focus area, that will help build local bodies of knowledge related to key challenges.

Our goal is to work with the Advisory Committee and draft a research agenda in the first six months of Committee operations. In collaboration with OSSE and other stakeholders, the Committee would also prioritize research activities across the five years. Steps to arrive at the research agenda include:

- **Understanding D.C. Education Today** through community outreach—virtual focus groups and interviews—to gather stakeholder input from teachers, leaders, parents, and students as well as local education-oriented groups and associations; individual Committee member presentations; presentations from the Mayor’s Office, D.C. Council, OSSE, SBOE, DCPS, PCSB and local researchers and research organizations.
- **Understanding D.C. Data and Previous Research** through tailored research literature reviews; interactive sessions with agency data managers; presentations from local researchers and research organizations; and through creating topical subcommittees that will review studies and speak with expert researchers to understand strengths and gaps in current research and, importantly, connections with D.C.’s needs.
- **Formulating a Learning Agenda** through a formal consensus-building process to generate common support and agreement from multiple perspectives on what is known and where there are gaps in our knowledge on school improvement, and to identify the short- and long-term learning activities necessary to inform decision making in policy and practice.
- **Formulating a 5-Year Research Agenda and Setting Priorities for Research** through a review of key findings of previous research, articulating local “problems of practice,” establishing a coherent and feasible scope of work for critical areas of study; submitting a draft agenda for stakeholder review; and exploring options for communication and dissemination practices that will contribute to educational improvement.

While developing the 5-year agenda and priorities, we can also work with the Advisory Committee to develop a “fast-track” agenda with mini-projects that are up and running within a couple of months. Fast-track projects would focus on short-term research reviews and data analyses that can support educators as they adapt curriculum and instruction to pandemic-induced student learning loss and related challenges during the 2021-2022 school year. The full research agenda should be solidified by late Summer 2021. With the short and long-term research agendas in hand, the RPP will develop a proposed work plan specifying research questions, project timing, and sequencing and will ask the Advisory Committee to review the work plan and provide feedback.

## Question 2

*Based on your submission in response to the notice of invitation, how will you manage your research partners? If any changes to your partners have been made, please identify those changes. Identify the steps you will take, if selected, to actualize your proposal as it pertains to research partners in the first year of the partnership?*

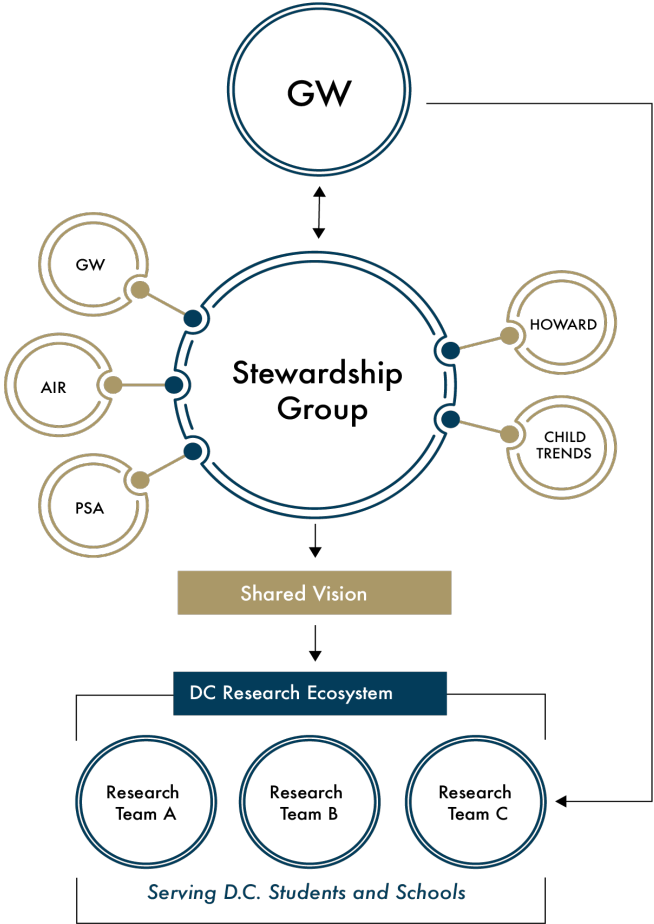
Our Consortium membership remains the same as stated in our proposal and we are ready to begin work immediately. Our plan for working together is detailed in our shared teaming agreement, which each partner has signed, and which lays out the roles and responsibilities of being part of the partnership. Each partner’s commitment to the project is amplified by not only their substantive commitment, but also their financial commitment to supporting the project.

Since the beginning of our partnership, particularly as we prepared our proposal, we have functioned as a team. We work collaboratively. The Consortium is built to be agile, responsive and adaptable to the needs and demands of research-practice partnership work. Our focus as partners is on meaningful and measurable action relevant to D.C.’s research agenda. We recognize that roles, relative strengths and capacities as partners, are differentiated and will change over time while still being coordinated through Stewardship Committee guidance. Collectively, we are positioned to rapidly respond to research priorities and to implement communication and outreach activities that support genuine community engagement.

As described in the proposal, we have a lead organization at GW, a Stewardship Group with representatives from each organization, and the ability to create multiple, flexible research teams (Figure 1). GW supports the Executive Director and other Consortium staff that are responsible for RPP operational functions and that serve as the point-of-contact for D.C. agencies and community organizations. The Stewardship Group oversees RPP activities and strategic direction while ensuring that our work remains of consistently high quality. Together, the Executive Director and Stewardship Group are responsible for coordinating efforts and resources across research projects, supporting research teams, and developing relationships with key partners.

Internally, we will formalize roles and responsibilities within the Stewardship Group based on our original teaming agreement shown in full in our proposal, Appendix H. We will select the Group chair who will be drawn from one of the partners and will rotate annually. We will also establish participation in the critical Research Review Group (RRG)—a team of researchers that oversees research quality and processes as described in detail in the proposal Appendix C, the Research Process, and briefly summarized in response to Question 9. The RRG will review and approve study designs to ensure rigor of methodology and analysis, check in regularly with individual projects, review penultimate study drafts, and evaluate the evidence, framing, clarity, organization, equity considerations and implications in the draft.

Figure 1. Consortium Structure and Coordination



### Question 3

*The research practice partnership may need to evolve over time to build capacity and to find expertise to answer questions in the research agenda. What steps will you take to identify, recruit, and retain additional researchers beyond your identified organizations? How will you engage potential researchers from other proposals solicited from the notice of invitation?*

The GW Consortium is locally grounded, yet nationally connected. We have working relationships with individual researchers and research organizations in our immediate area and around the country. Consortium members collaborate with researchers at local universities including American University, Catholic University, and Georgetown University, and are conducting research in partnership with D.C. agencies including OSSE, Office of the DME, PCSB, Department of Health and the Department of Behavioral Health. We look to collaborate with researchers in other D.C. government agencies, including the Lab @ DC, and District-focused organizations such as the DC Policy Center. Nationally oriented networks, which include distinguished organizations such as the National Academy of Education and the American Educational Research Association as well as the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP), provide rich knowledge and experience that can serve the RPP through formal and informal collaborations.

We drew on the expertise of researchers in similarly structured research partnerships around the country as we crafted our partnership approach. For example, the research process detailed in our proposal (Appendix C) is based on a process shared by researchers in the Chicago Consortium and our data management and security plan (Appendix F) was informed by researchers and data managers in the Houston Education Research Consortium. Our researchers regularly collaborate with colleagues in universities and research organizations across the country and have years long associations with top education researchers nationally. We are fortunate, also, to have some of the most highly regarded experts in research-practice partnerships eager to work with us as external advisers. These professional relationships support informal outreach and collaboration. As we partner with the Advisory Committee and other stakeholders to develop a research agenda and research questions, we are able to solicit advice from colleagues who have conducted related research and engaged in similar partnerships.

With respect to identifying, recruiting, and retaining researchers, the Consortium plans to hire full-time researchers and engage new partners over time. *Our vision is to have two full-time researchers join the RPP in the first five years.* The number of RPP-dedicated researchers will increase over the 10-year timeframe, as funding allows. We will seek out partnership-oriented researchers who have the distinct skill sets in methodology and relationship-building that are necessary for this work. GW and Howard University are looking to “grow our own” through combined efforts to train diverse new researchers in collaborative field-based research. We will seek out and hire Consortium researchers through equity-focused hiring practices.

Our staffing design calls for fluid research teams to meet the specific needs of each research project. A team may include outside experts who are not currently part of the Consortium but who can lend expertise to the study. In this way, the Consortium maintains an inclusive, or “big tent,” approach to working with a variety of research experts rather than excluding participation from non-Consortium researchers. This approach includes recruiting researchers who may have submitted proposals for the DC RPP initiative. Our goal is to serve D.C. and we recognize that there is an exceptional local research community that is similarly committed. We are eager to include their knowledge and experience in our

partnership and draw on their ideas about RPP effectiveness. If selected as the DC RPP, one of our first steps will be to open that door to collaboration.

#### Question 4

*Provide an implementation plan that outlines the steps you will take to form the partnership, convene the advisory committee, and move towards the completion of a five- year research agenda in year one. For years two and three, outline the steps that you will take to prioritize projects in the agenda and show clear progress towards the statutory objectives of the partnership.*

Following the activities described in the proposal, our implementation plan has four categories of activity: 1) research practice partnership start-up and operations, 2) data collection and access, 3) evidence generation, and 4) engagement and evidence. A workplan with Year One tasks and milestones is provided in Appendix A. We describe now the primary actions within each category.

#### **Research Practice Partnership Start-Up & Ongoing Operations**

##### *Year One*

Starting up a DC RPP begins by connecting with OSSE and other government agencies to finalize a Master Research Service Agreement, establish communication protocols and meeting schedules, and perhaps most important, to build the relationships that underlie practitioner-oriented research projects. All members of the Consortium Stewardship Committee will be involved in these start-up and relationship building activities. The first stages of the partnership are critical in establishing the norms of community outreach and engagement. We will also formalize internal Consortium operations, developing an easy-to-navigate RPP website and establishing a social-media presence. From the beginning we will dedicate time to raise funds for RPP research.

As described above, the early months will be dedicated to supporting the Advisory Committee start-up and facilitating the development of a 5-year research agenda. The virtual environment in which we now work alters our previous Committee meeting schedule and suggests that we could hold more, shorter meetings rather than fewer, longer meetings as anticipated. We propose front-loading the meeting schedule with the goal of moving quickly to the data- and information-gathering necessary to determine research priorities. Thus, we anticipate as many as two Advisory Committee meetings per month for the first six months.

##### *Years Two and Three*

During the second and third years of operation we will build on the collaboration and outreach started in the first months and look to reallocate time and resources based on feedback from partners and stakeholders. The meeting schedule will be regularized by this point, but our research activities will be new and dynamic as Consortium research teams tackle high-priority topics. Fundraising will continue. The Consortium will provide Annual Reports as required by statute and regular reports that support educators and policymakers in school improvement efforts.

#### **Data Collection and Access**

##### *Year One*

First, we will work with OSSE to identify and assemble available data. As described in Question 6 below, this collaboration will help the partnership understand the data available for more immediate projects and the data necessary to support the 5-year research agenda. Our data manager will lead the

development of the cloud-based data archive; complete protocols for researcher training, access and data security; prepare research-ready data sets along with data codebooks to facilitate research use; and help us explore potential uses of other local and national data sets to inform ongoing work.

#### *Years Two and Three*

Data collection and management is an ongoing project. In addition to archiving school-generated data, researchers and stakeholders will be interested in examining questions that require cross-sector data. For instance, the Advisory Committee or other stakeholders may identify a need to further understand issues of student safety, transportation, or behavioral health. As an example, the Chicago Consortium has conducted annual teacher surveys for many years. That data is part of a robust longitudinal data collection that creates opportunities to ask and answer a broad range of important questions. We will continue to learn from Chicago and other RPPs, as we develop D.C.-specific data needs.

### **Evidence Generation**

#### *Year One*

The pandemic has re-shaped near-term research priorities. A number of studies are showing substantial learning loss and issues of student identity, belonging, and relationships related to the lack of in-person learning. We will encourage the Advisory Committee to prioritize research and evidence-gathering that support educators as they re-open school buildings and welcome students in the fall of 2021. In the first year, we will establish and publicize our research process, invite participation in stakeholder advisory groups, complete fast-track research projects, begin longer-term studies, and produce easily accessible research products including infographics and research briefs.

#### *Years Two and Three*

While continuing research studies through subsequent years, we will solicit regular feedback on research dissemination and use so that we can effectively expand access to our findings and refine our research processes so that they serve a school improvement agenda. We will grow our research network as needed, including hiring full-time researchers and partnering with non-Consortium experts.

### **Engagement and Evidence Use**

#### *Year One*

Building capacity for evidence use starts early. Our first activities will be to gather input and ideas for practical, research-based tools and products that will inform practice. We will do this through interviews, focus groups, and topic forums and by actively attending to the issues raised in Advisory Committee meetings and other District gatherings. Listening and learning will continue throughout the life of each research project. As described in our Research Process (Appendix C of the proposal), research project-specific stakeholder advisory groups will be invited to provide feedback and guidance regarding the research questions and methods. At risk of repetition, it bears emphasizing that we view our *engagement* model as distinctive and especially relevant to the complexities of D.C.

#### *Years Two and Three*

Our model creates professional learning opportunities in which researchers and practitioners jointly make meaning of evidence, develop a shared language to discuss research, and integrate evidence with their own knowledge. *We will offer facilitated convenings, workshops, instructional coaching, data systems, and other activities* detailed in the proposal. As practitioners consider and then implement evidence-informed strategies, RPP members will work with them to test and continuously improve the approaches. We go into this project eager for *continuous improvement*, which requires a spirit of learning-by-doing and acceptance of the need for evaluation to guide refinements in process.



## Question 5

*To make this partnership work, consensus and buy-in are important.*

- *Outline the steps that you will take to build relationships and buy-in with the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE), local education agencies, school leaders, teachers, students, and parents to identify needs for data. Describe the steps that you will take to set up routines and processes with these actors to meet your statutory objectives.*
- *Outline the steps that you will take to build consensus within the advisory committee. Specifically, provide a detailed description of how the research agenda would be created in coordination with the advisory committee.*

### **Build Agency and Community Relationships**

We believe that establishing relationships of trust is an essential part of the DC RPP's work, starting on its first day and continuing throughout its life. At the launch of the partnership, we will quickly engage in outreach with a broad range of education stakeholders in D.C., including members of the Advisory Committee as well as policymakers, administrators, educators, and school communities. In many cases, we will be re-connecting with D.C. partners with whom we have collaborated before.

In these early outreach activities, our goal will be to listen closely, staying attuned to the assets and bright spots that constituents elevate as areas of promise, as well as the thorny questions that are of common concern. We will be respectful of what District stakeholders know and do every day in implementing and improving education in D.C., and of the lived experiences of community members, students and families. We will use semi-structured guides, capturing the experience and knowledge that stakeholders bring to the conversation even when it is not what we anticipated, and staying flexible to learn from this expertise. Trusting relationships and buy-in come when stakeholders feel listened to and see evidence that their concerns are heard and acted upon. We will intentionally demonstrate the value of community input by leading community-based participatory research (CBPR) studies. CBPR is a partnership approach that equitably involves community members in the research process, enables all partners to contribute expertise, and increases shared understanding.<sup>2</sup>

Specifically, in Year One we will:

- Work with OSSE and the Advisory Committee to identify key stakeholders;
- Plan for and engage in listening sessions, in consultation with OSSE and the Advisory Committee;
- Create and share summaries of the assets and priorities identified by stakeholders;
- Review these ideas in collaboration with the Advisory Committee to determine research priorities;
- Develop a research agenda that clearly articulates the connections to stakeholder feedback; and
- As research projects progress, continue to engage stakeholders through updates and co-interpretation of emerging findings.

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<sup>2</sup> The Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center. (n.d.). *What is CBPR?* University of Michigan School of Public Health. <https://detroiturc.org/about-cbpr/what-is-cbpr>. See also Holkup, P. A., Tripp-Reimer, T., Salois, E. M., & Weinert, C. (2004). Community-based participatory research: an approach to intervention research with a Native American community. *ANS. Advances in nursing science*, 27(3), 162–175. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2774214/>

Our team brings demonstrated capacity to build trust with organizational and community stakeholders and to collect and synthesize the input. This trust is central to a responsive and relevant research agenda: it ensures that the questions asked reflect community priorities and will allow our partnership to develop a research portfolio that can make a practical difference in education policies, practices and outcomes. Our engagement will be grounded in principles of respect for the expertise and knowledge that each stakeholder brings to the work.

### *Build Consensus Within the Advisory Committee*

We believe that the pursuit of consensus can be an extraordinarily effective method of building knowledge. Educational improvement hinges on careful coordination among stakeholders with different perspectives, hence shared understanding and consensus regarding the path forward are key. Consensus often requires compromise, and though we have no interest in compromising on the quality and methodological rigor of our work, we do have substantial experience working with diverse partners to identify research priorities and actions that reflect shared values.

As with building community relationships, the first step in a consensus process is establishing an atmosphere of trust. In meetings with the Advisory Committee we will facilitate open and candid discussions of preferences and priorities, and co-create ground rules for continued sharing of viewpoints and interpretations of data or other research inputs. Our goal is for fruitful *deliberation*, not for dictating “one-best-way” answers to complex problems. A key ingredient in the recipe for healthy consensus is agreement that policy and practice *options* are more valuable to decision makers than firm or definitive “recommendations” that may convey a false sense of certainty. We take seriously the notion that policy and practice can be “evidence-informed,” but not that scientific research, in itself, can be expected to “drive” decisions. In other words, a virtue of the consensus process is adhering to an ethos of judgement *with* data, not one in which data *determines* judgement.

As mentioned in Question 1, the Advisory Committee will need to spend a great deal of time upfront understanding D.C.’s educational strengths and challenges. This will involve listening to leaders and educators from OSSE, DCPS and other LEAs as well as hearing directly from families and community members. Based on this input, the Committee can begin to identify learning topics and problems of practice, build shared knowledge of D.C. education progress, and consider important research questions. As listed in Question 1, these steps include:

- Understanding D.C. education today through gathering community input;
- Understanding D.C. data and previous research through interactive sessions with experts and review of research;
- Formulating a learning agenda through formal group discussion methods to build agreement from multiple perspectives on what is known and where there are gaps in our knowledge on school improvement; and
- Formulating a 5-year research agenda and setting priorities for research.

Formal facilitation and group decision-making processes will support a diverse 21-member Advisory Committee in establishing a widely-credible research agenda and articulating ongoing research guidance for the RPP.

## Question 6

*Describe your vision for collecting, archiving, and sharing data with consortium members. If helpful, you may reference a model currently used by another RPP that has merit. What steps will you take in year 1 to move towards establishing this vision for collecting, archiving, and sharing data? Be sure to include your steps for conducting an inventory of the data, examining the strengths and weakness of the data, and rectifying any weaknesses.*

The GW Consortium will implement systematic steps for collecting data, reviewing data quality, and archiving and sharing data. Members of our consortium have extensive experience linking and managing complex data sets and designing data routines to minimize burden and increase data quality.

### Data Collection

In the first year, we will establish procedures and protocols for collecting extant data from OSSE and other agency partners, and will collect initial data using these procedures. Consortium researchers are experienced in anticipating and planning for typical challenges in data sharing and access. We have developed well-honed strategies for entering into timely agreements with agencies for research approval and data extraction, for writing clear data requests, and for coordinating closely with the agency managing the data. Year one steps include:

- Working with OSSE to catalog available data and determine procedures for data access and sharing.
- Identifying potential additional sources of educational data in D.C., such as data maintained by DCPS and other LEAs, and discuss opportunities and processes for data access.
- Identifying cross-sector data from other District agencies that intersect with or offer important context to educational experiences and outcomes (e.g., Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Housing and Community Development, Office of Human Rights, Department of Parks and Recreation).
- Identifying additional publicly available data sources relevant to the research agenda of the RPP, such as U.S. Census Data and relevant reports compiled by other institutions, such as the D.C. Master School File compiled by the D.C. Policy Center and the Urban Institute.
- Beginning to identify gaps in extant data, to determine likely opportunities and priorities for additional primary data collection (e.g., through survey research).

### Data Archiving

GW will establish a secure data platform to store and archive the data. The Consortium will also develop and implement procedures for ensuring the reliability and the validity of data and for data documentation, including:

- Creating routinized code for cleaning each data file as well as identifying and resolving data issues (e.g., noting implausible values, suggesting logical edits, and imputing missing data), when needed. (However, based on expert recommendations we do not plan to rectify all data errors. Instead, we will document errors and suggest remedies but allow researchers to determine how to respond to data challenges. Raw data, with all its faults, provides useful information to researchers.)
- Creating codes for merging and linking available data across multiple sources.
- De-identifying personally identifiable information (PII), as needed.

- Creating formal data documentation by recording all data assembly steps, data limitations, data anomalies (e.g., data elements that fail one or more data quality checks), and edits or recommendations for data cleaning (e.g., correction, suppression, editing, imputation, or notation).
- Creating data dictionaries to detail all available data elements (e.g., variables, definitions, years) and data properties (e.g., values).

For quality assurance, the creation of the data sets and the data quality review results will be verified by an independent analyst who did not work on the creation of the data set.

### Data Sharing

GW will establish a secure data archive and analytical computing environment that will provide limited-access, research-ready data for RPP and OSSE use. The Consortium is committed to ensuring data security and privacy. The Data Management and Security Plan (presented in detail in Appendix F of the proposal) describes the state-of-the-art equipment and processes that will be used to secure data, such as a “safe desktop” that limits data access to authorized and authenticated researchers. The Consortium drew on the data management expertise of Chicago, Houston, and Baltimore RPPs as well as the extensive IT expertise within GW in forming our data management plan. We will implement several steps to ensure that data shared are responsibly and transparently accessed and used, including:

- Developing standardized procedures for data requests and data access.
- Granting approved researchers access to data subsets following their completion of appropriate access protocols and training including a data governance and privacy training course, certification for research with human subjects, training on PII and FERPA, and confidentiality agreements.
- Sharing all documentation about the data with the researcher (e.g., data dictionary and other documentation created at the archive stage).
- Requiring review of data analysis plans by the independent analyst who reviewed and verified the data set creation.
- Obtaining the approval of OSSE before engaging in research projects with D.C. data.
- Informing the Advisory Committee and seeking input before the initiation of research.
- Sharing early findings and soliciting feedback with the Advisory Committee.
- Instituting a “no surprises” process so that findings are presented to select partners before publication.

Ultimately, data plan details will be finalized based on the Master Research Service Agreement.

### Question 7

*Pre-registering studies and analysis is important to ensuring transparency of projects. Describe the open science/pre-specification/pre-registration expectations for your consortium. Be sure to describe at what point in the project this step would be required and your plan for sharing this information in a transparent fashion.*

The trend toward pre-specification/pre-registration has strengthened the development of sound, cumulative knowledge bases in the sciences, including social sciences. It guards against the reporting of spurious findings of causality generated through far-fetched analytic methods, and it improves the

chances that journals will publish null results. These are good reasons for randomized control trials and well-designed quasi-experimental studies to adhere to an expectation of pre-registration. Consistent with our commitment to rigor and transparency in research, we are very much open to an expectation of pre-specifying and pre-registering such studies on an open registries network such as the [Registry of Efficacy and Effectiveness Studies](#) or [OSF Registries](#). We would publicly post this information in the early research stage after obtaining OSSE approval, IRB approval, and other necessary approvals as specified in the Research Process (Appendix C of the proposal). This would allow our work to contribute to the larger corpus of scientifically based research in education.

At the same time, we know that an RPP portfolio should include studies that do not aim to determine causality, such as studies designed to be descriptive or exploratory, quick-turnaround studies (especially in a pandemic and recovery), and studies that address pressing policy questions when they arise. We agree with economists Nora Gordon and Carrie Conaway<sup>3</sup> that in education, a bias toward definitive causal inquiry may become a bias toward studying *programs* – that is, conducting studies of “vendor-based practice” rather than studies of local problems and locally crafted solutions. These are likely some of the reasons why RPP researchers have typically not established open science/pre-specification/pre-registration expectations, according to our recent conversations with peer consortia. Research leaders from the Stanford University/San Francisco Unified School District Partnership and the Chicago Consortium confirm that they do not pre-register studies. The director of the National Network of Education Research Practice Partnerships (NNERPP) tells us that she does not know of an RPP where this is an expectation.

Nevertheless, we will be glad to discuss pre-registration for any type of study that we undertake. And, for all of our work, the Consortium is committed to research transparency and community accessibility. We will publish research methods and analysis plans at the start of each study. The public information will include a project summary, timelines, status updates, and next steps. The website will also list private and public funders of RPP research and operations.

## Question 8

*Describe the consortium’s expectations for research partners. Specifically, what mindsets, values, and beliefs are important for partners to possess? What processes, commitments, and documentation will you put in place to ensure that all research partners and their work reflect those expectations?*

Our Consortium teaming agreement is included in Appendix H of the proposal and represents our combined commitment to partnership, a community orientation, and to collaborative research in the DC RPP. The values and beliefs that guide our partnership are represented in our teaming agreement, including that:

- We work collaboratively in support of a research and learning agenda that advances school improvement.
- We listen to community members and educators to make sure that our research is relevant to real problems of practice.

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<sup>3</sup> Nora Gordon & Carrie Conaway (2020). *Common-sense evidence: The education leader’s guide to using data and research*. Cambridge MA: Harvard Education Press.

- We address questions that are of value locally and provide information relevant to the local context.
- We build trust through transparent communication and consistently meeting obligations.
- We make the time and provide the resources necessary to sustain the DC Partnership and improve its operations over time.
- We provide evidence and information that is reliable and neutral.
- We do not advocate for particular programs or policies.
- We help bring research into use by providing learning opportunities and creating tools that support the use of evidence in district program offices, schools and classrooms.
- We communicate findings in ways that are accessible, timely, and meaningful to multiple audiences including parents and community members.

In addition to these expressions of collaboration and high standards, Consortium and non-Consortium researchers will be expected to attend to the steps of the Research Process (Appendix C of the proposal), align actions with the Statement on Independence and Neutrality (Appendix D), and sign a conflict of interest statement. In order to access data in the RPP data archive, all users must complete a data governance and privacy training course, be certified for research with human subjects, complete training on PII and FERPA, and sign a confidentiality agreement. Finally, we collectively commit to working toward greater educational equity and excellence and will use an equity lens in research design and practices as described in the statement on using an equity lens (Appendix E).

## Question 9

*What procedures will be followed by all members of the consortium to ensure results are accurate (e.g. code review, independent re-analysis, auditing, etc.)? In addition, what steps will the consortium take so that the public can assess their findings transparently?*

The Consortium's Research Review Group will oversee scholarly research standards and quality assurance. The Review Group will approve the original research plan and methodology, check in regularly with the research team during the research, and review penultimate drafts to evaluate their evidence, framing, clarity, organization, and implications. The different stages of review will help ensure rigor of methodology and analysis. Importantly, the Review Group will oversee implementation of our research equity goals and ensure that the research uses an equity lens.

At key junctures in the analysis process, an independent analyst who did not initially work on the data will engage in a critical review of the analysis code, decisions, output, and interpretation. When appropriate the independent analyst will re-create the analytic procedures to ensure the same result is obtained. The Consortium's member organizations have robust procedures in place for quality assurance and quality control, and we will apply our best practices to work within the Consortium. The steps of the research and quality review process are described in Appendix C of the proposal. Here we want to underscore our significant combined experience with – and appreciation for – the standards of review in the world of scientific research that provide the best assurances that reported results have met high evidentiary standards and scrutiny.

The RPP will generate evidence through high-quality, independent research and analysis that meet rigorous professional standards. The integrity of an RPP rests on its ability to provide evidence that is trusted and reliable. Our Consortium is committed to research that is *high-quality*, in that it conforms to

rigorous scholarly standards, and *independent*, in that our methods, analysis, and findings are objective and nonpartisan. Consortium researchers will commit to our Statement of Independence (Appendix D) that confirms their neutrality and high professional standards.

The Consortium will publish research methods and analysis plans at the start of each study and will publicly post research study findings. Yet, transparency is not just about accessibility, it is related to straightforward communication and engagement regarding research findings, methodologies, intent and challenges. The RPP will deliver rigorously determined findings and, more important, create learning opportunities in which researchers and practitioners jointly make meaning of evidence, develop a shared language to discuss research, and integrate evidence with their own knowledge. As evidence emerges, ongoing engagement opens the door to learning. The RPP will establish avenues and formats for engagement around research that are accessible and useful to practitioners, leaders, and policymakers. Finally, we will share data, and data expertise, with education agencies so that they have the option to use research-ready data sets for their research purposes.

## Question 10

*Your proposal requests the following resources from the District: \$500K annually to support research efforts and \$20,430 annually to support Advisory Committee costs. The city has not budgeted these resources for FY21. How will this impact a hypothetical first year of operation and years thereafter?*

Our Consortium is committed to operating within a reasonable budget while working to meet the DC RPP statutory expectations and our commitments. The pandemic and consequent economic downturn create a different financial and operational landscape than anticipated at proposal submission. In this new setting we will seek additional funding sources and operational cost savings.

As described in our proposal, the RPP will begin with a solid financial foundation contributed by Consortium partners. Together, Consortium partners will provide monetary and in-kind support of \$310,000 annually over the initial 10 years of the Partnership. This amounts to over \$3 million across the first 10 years. Currently funded work of Consortium member organizations can potentially provide support as well. For example, as lead grantee for this region's federally funded Comprehensive Center, Policy Studies Associates (PSA) is charged with building the capacity of state and local agencies in the District to design and implement evidence-based policy and practice. With approval from OSSE and the U.S. Department of Education, portions of PSA's participation in DC RPP activities may be incorporated into the Comprehensive Center's state service plan as allowable activities under that grant. In addition, during the first months of RPP start-up we will pursue funding from local and national philanthropies as well as from government grants.

The pandemic has also created new patterns of working and communicating through virtual platforms. In some cases, this creates cost savings. For example, the first months of Advisory Committee meetings and stakeholder outreach must necessarily occur over Zoom or a similar platform, thus we can reduce in-person meetings costs in the first year of operation. We will also consider how to match the demands for research with available funding in order to reduce costs in the first year and, as necessary, in years thereafter.

# Appendix

Year 1 Tasks and Milestones	Months											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>1.0 Research Practice Partnership Start-Up</b>												
1.1 OSSE Collaboration (finalizing Master Service Agreement, establishing communication protocols and meeting schedules)	■											
1.2 Consortium Start-Up (internal operations, web site development social media presence)	■											
1.3 Advisory Committee Start-Up (Meetings 1 &2)	■											
1.4 Formulating a 5-Year Research Agenda (Additional Committee meetings)		■										
1.5 Stakeholder Outreach	■											
1.6 Fundraising	■											
<b>2.0 Data Collection and Access</b>												
2.1 Work with OSSE to identify and collect available data	■											
2.2 Establish web-based data archive	■											
2.3 Complete protocols for researcher access and data security	■											
2.4 Create research-ready data sets						■						
<b>Task 3 Evidence Generation</b>												
3.1 Prioritize post-pandemic education research needs			■									
3.2 Establish individual research project Stakeholder Advisory Committees			■									
<b>Task 4 Engagement and Evidence Use</b>												
4.1 Build capacity for evidence use					■							
4.2 Stakeholder listening and learning sessions					■			■			■	
4.3 Research dissemination					■							