PRINCIPAL PIPELINE SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

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Introduction

If your school district is working to strengthen the way it manages leadership talent in its principal pipeline, you are working for long-term benefits to students, teachers, and schools. Sustainability is the theme of this guide: how to ensure that what starts as an initiative to build an effective principal pipeline becomes a system with the staying power to function well and produce benefits for years to come. Determining how to sustain the successes of a major initiative is always important work, but it takes on special urgency now, at the time of publication of this guide in early 2023. That's because districts can tap into COVID relief funding (from the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, or ARP ESSER) to lay the groundwork for sustaining pipeline work, but they need to move quickly because the funding ends in 2025-26.

This guide is the latest addition to a suite of tools Policy Studies Associates has been developing to help districts engage in pipeline development work. These publications stem from the Principal Pipeline Initiative, an effort, funded by The Wallace Foundation from 2011 to about 2016, in which six school districts demonstrated the feasibility and effectiveness of principal pipelines that comprise seven features, known as domains. This guide complements the *Principal Pipeline Self-Study Guide for Districts*, which maps these domains in detail and guides districts in assessing their current practices and planning how to advance and refine their pipelines. It also complements *Strong Pipelines, Strong Principals*, a guide that identifies options for tapping federal funds to support specific actions that strengthen a pipeline. And it offers a longer-term perspective for district teams that are taking steps to support assistant principals' progress to principal positions. (A forthcoming publication, *Assistant Principal Advancement to the Principalship: A Guide for School Districts*, provides detailed guidance for such steps.)

This guide to pipeline sustainability is based on research and practitioners' ideas from several sources, including a study of the sustainability of the pipelines implemented by the original six pipeline districts,[1] the sustainability plans the districts submitted to Wallace during the grant period, a guidebook on implementing and sustaining institutional change,[2] and the policy expertise of the consulting firm EducationCounsel on using federal sources for program funding. In addition, the guide draws on examples from the Wallace-funded ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC),[3] a six-year, 11-state initiative that yielded valuable lessons about ways in which cross-district partnerships and districts' engagement with

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[1] Anderson, L. M & Turnbull, B. J. (2019). Sustaining a Principal Pipeline. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates. [PPI, Sustainability, 2019].

[2] Spiro, J. (2017). Leading Change Handbook: Concepts and Tools. New York City: The Wallace Foundation.

[3] The ELLC was designed to help education stakeholders at the state, district, and community level come together to find ways to use the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act, which reauthorized the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to address challenges facing schools and school leaders.

communities and state agencies can support and sustain initiatives focused on strengthening school leadership.[4]

This guide is designed to help district decision makers sustain the work they have started to connect and strengthen seven interrelated and mutually reinforcing domains of district activity to cultivate a large corps of effective school leaders. As shown in Exhibit 1, these seven domains of what has come to be called "a comprehensive, aligned pipeline" include:

- **Leader standards,** which include the competencies that define the day-to-day work of principals and which pipeline districts develop and adopt to guide and inform each pipeline domain.
- **High-quality preservice principal preparation,** which is provided externally by university and nonprofit partners and in-house by districts. Preservice preparation programs are aligned with the district's leader standards; are responsive to district input and needs; are evidence-based; and include authentic, school-based leadership training.
- **Selective hiring and placement of principals** whereby districts use standards-based, multi-stage hiring and placement practices to match principal candidates' competencies with school needs.
- **On-the-job evaluation and support** for principals, especially novice principals, that emphasizes standards-based evaluation; intensive, individualized, and ongoing feedback and support; and mentoring or coaching in induction.
- **Principal supervisors** who can support principal growth and instructional leadership if provided appropriate training and caseloads.
- **Leader Tracking Systems,** which districts systematically build using longitudinal data on aspiring and sitting principals to improve individual opportunities and pipeline management.
- **Systems and sustainability,** which includes developing a strategic vision for the pipeline; identifying key internal stakeholders engaged in pipeline planning; securing ongoing funding from diverse sources; and appointing a project director to lead the pipeline initiative.

About the Principal Pipeline Initiative

In 2011, six urban school districts began working to strengthen the depth and quality of their leadership talent to positively affect school outcomes. The districts were Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina; Denver Public Schools, Colorado; Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia; Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida; New York City Department of Education, New York; and Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland. Leaders in these districts wanted to improve on their recent experiences in hiring novice principals, some of whom had struggled to meet the demands of instructional leadership (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019).

Implementation studies showed that these districts introduced policies, processes, and infrastructures to strengthen school leadership (Turnbull, et al., 2016; Anderson & Turnbull, 2019). Research on achievement effects showed that these six districts with newly placed principals outperformed comparison schools over three years (Gates, et al. 2019).

Exhibit 1: Domains of a comprehensive, aligned principal pipeline
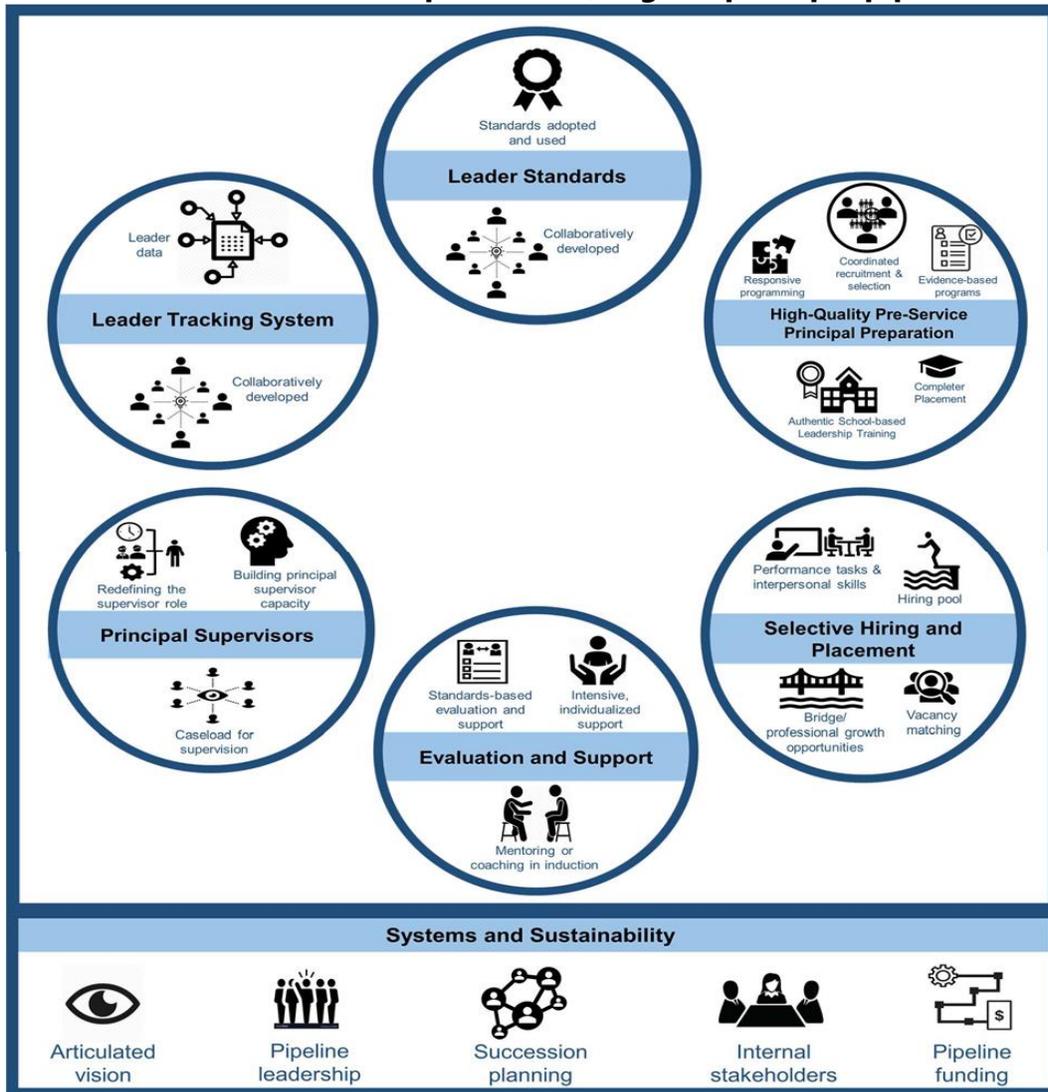
Source: Aladjem, D., Anderson, L.M., Riley, D. L., & Turnbull, B.J. (2021). *Principal Pipeline Self-Study Guide for Districts,* Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, p. 2

A central finding of the evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative was that the six participating districts were able to sustain their pipelines well after their grants from The Wallace Foundation ended.[5] The districts worked toward sustainability from the start, and although they continued to refine each pipeline domain to reflect their changing needs and circumstances, their pipelines remained intact. This guide provides examples of the actions those districts took to improve their pipelines' sustainability, starting at the outset of their work on pipelines and continuing over the years.

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[4] Turnbull, B., Aladjem, D, Fletcher, K, & Kidd, S. (2022). All the voices: Statewide collaborations for school leadership under ESSA. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.

[5] In 2018, two years after funding for the Principal Pipeline Initiative ended, all six participating districts were sustaining their pipelines, "continuing to follow the vision of intentionally managing the career progressions of their aspiring principals and principals" (Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; p. ii).

Sustaining a pipeline requires attending to the following six elements—as defined by the authors based on research and practitioners' ideas—and this guide offers a framework for addressing them through self-study and planning.

- Financial planning
- Partnerships
- Stakeholder involvement
- District policies and procedures
- Continuous improvement and evaluation
- Communications

The guide describes each element and suggests discussion questions and local evidence for district teams to consider in assessing how well their district is currently addressing the element (see "Discussion Questions" and "Local Evidence to Consider/Look At" sections in every element). We begin the guide with a discussion of financial planning because not only is such planning critical to sustaining any initiative, but it is also an especially time-sensitive matter as ARP ESSER funding comes to an end.

A template at the end of the guide (Appendix A) allows districts to identify sustainability elements they want to strengthen and to make a plan for the sustainability work they want to prioritize. The guide also includes a financial planning template (Appendix B)—also available online in a user-friendly electronic Excel file—that districts can use to account for the "soft" and "hard" funding sources available to support both the one-time and ongoing costs of the pipeline.[6] That template also guides districts in assessing their pipeline's vulnerability to financial trouble based on the district's financial plan.

This guide was reviewed for clarity and usability by two experts in school leadership who are both veteran facilitators of the pipeline self-study guide (and one of whom is also the former project director of one of the six original pipeline districts). In addition, the guide was reviewed by administrators in three districts (two urban and one rural). Two of the districts are actively working on their principal pipelines, and one wants to get serious about strengthening its pool of qualified school leaders. We revised the guide based on feedback from all of these expert reviewers.

How to use this guide

This guide supports districts in taking the following steps to determine how well they are positioned to sustain their principal pipelines and to plan for improvement:

1. *Engage the principal pipeline implementation team in sustainability planning.* Addressing each of the sustainability elements touches on the work of many and requires a collaborative approach. Like implementing a pipeline, sustaining one requires team members to collect and review evidence to identify sustainability elements they want to implement or strengthen and also

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[6] The template in Appendix A, the Pipeline Sustainability Self-Assessment/Planning Template, was developed by the authors. The template in Appendix B, the Financial Planning Template for a Principal Pipeline, was adapted from a tool developed by report author Aiesha Eleusizov, formerly of The Wallace Foundation, to support the sustainability efforts of the six original pipeline districts.

requires them to engage internal stakeholders and external partners in supporting the sustainability plan.

2. *Assess which sustainability elements the district still needs to address.* The principal pipeline team should review the *Pipeline Sustainability Self-Assessment/Planning Template* in Appendix A and discuss the evidence regarding which steps the district has taken to sustain its pipeline. Each section of this guide suggests types of evidence related to a sustainability element under the heading, "Local Evidence to Consider/Look At." For financial planning, the template in Appendix B will help in assessing the soft and hard funding sources available to support both the one-time and ongoing costs of the pipeline.

3. *Look across the results of the Self-Assessment/Planning Template and make a plan for sustainability elements to implement or strengthen.* Recognizing that attempting to implement or strengthen every element at once is unrealistic, the team should decide which elements to prioritize now and which to defer until later. Just as pipeline improvement happens over multiple years, so does strengthening the elements of pipeline sustainability.

Sustainability Element 1:

Financial Planning

Financial Planning

Sustaining a pipeline requires leveraging various "soft" or time-limited and "hard" or stable, longer-term funding sources. Districts can use "soft" or time-limited funding opportunities for more costly, one-time investments or to demonstrate to key decision makers the efficacy of a new pipeline practice to gain support for institutionalizing the new practice. The availability of ARP/ESSER funding through 2024-25 provides an unprecedented, one-time opportunity to invest in pipeline work meaningfully. With few restrictions, ARP/ESSER could fund big-ticket pipeline items such as principal residencies, mentors and coaches, principal supervisors, or Leader Tracking Systems, which provide accessible data for decisions about leader preparation, hiring, and evaluation and support.

In addition to the soft or time-limited funding opportunities, districts should identify and strategically plan for longer-term, more stable "hard" funding sources. For example, many federal funding streams have a wide range of allowable uses (see *Strong Pipelines, Strong Principals*). In addition, district initiatives can often be sustained by blending and braiding funding, or districts can re-purpose existing funds to sustain an initiative.

Exhibit 2 provides a possible structure for funding a principal pipeline by maximizing ARP/ESSER spending to cover pipeline costs in 2022-23 and 2023-24. Then, because ARP/ESSER will abruptly end in 2025-26, we see districts beginning to build a new base of pipeline funding in 2024-25 by weaving in some support from existing federal or hard funding sources such as Title I, Title II, and other federal funds (e.g., IDEA, Title III, etc.) as well as state and local funds (e.g., state formula funding) with a plan to fully replace ARP/ESSER with more stable long-term funding by 2025-26.[7]

Exhibit 2: Possible Funding Structure for a Principal Pipeline

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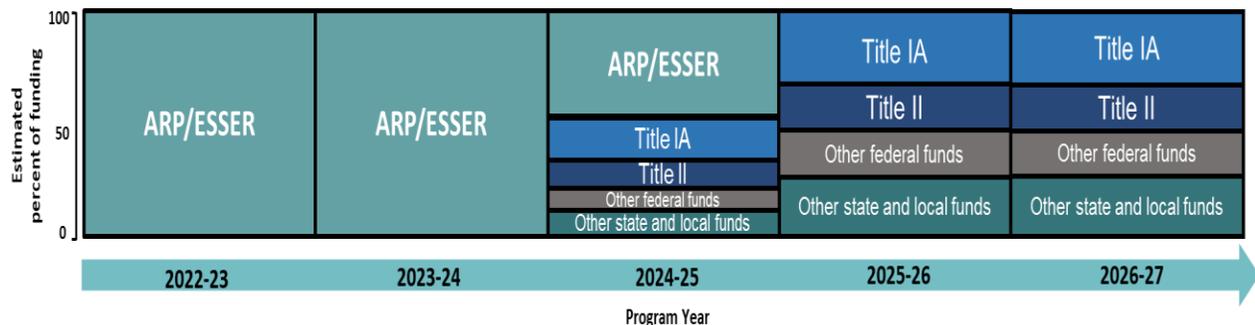
[7] The deadline for obligating ARP ESSER funds is September 30, 2024, after which districts have another 120 days, or until January 28, 2025, to spend down or liquidate their ARP ESSER funding. In a May 13, 2022, letter to AASA, The School Superintendents Association, the Department said it will consider requests for an 18-month extension on spending ARP ESSER funds beyond the September 30, 2024, obligation deadline.

Appendix B includes the print-ready version of a [financial planning template](#) for a principal pipeline. Districts can use this template to account for the soft and hard funding sources available to support the pipeline's one-time and ongoing costs across each of the seven pipeline domains. Given the potential, wide-ranging applications of ARP/ESSER funding to support pipeline implementation and sustainability, we include it as a separate category of potential soft funding. In addition, the template includes a separate spreadsheet that calculates a district's use of hard and soft funding sources, providing an analysis of a district's "vulnerability" or capacity to sustain a pipeline after soft funding ends. The template is also available here: [Financial planning template for a principal pipeline](#). To use the template, click on the link, then download the file by clicking on the purple box labeled "Download" in the upper right corner of your screen. Then, open the file and click on "Enable Editing."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the current costs of building or maintaining the pipeline?
2. What federal, state, and local funding streams are currently used to build or sustain your principal pipeline?
    a. Are there any constraints to continuing to use these funding streams?
        i. Which of these constraints could be addressed/mitigated?
    b. Are you strategically allocating soft funding streams (e.g., time/scope-limited grants, ARP/ESSER funding, etc.) to build or test the pipeline? If you are not, how might you do so? If you are, do you have a plan to replace ARP/ESSER funds—and other time-limited funding—with more stable long-term funding streams for the costs of maintaining the pipeline?
    c. Which are long-term investments (e.g., ESEA title funding, state formula funding, local funding, etc.)?
3. Is additional funding needed to improve or broaden your principal pipeline? What domains of the pipeline need additional funding?
4. Federal and state title funds are often managed by specific offices within a district (e.g., Office of Title I programs, Office of Title II programs, etc.). Have you considered blending or braiding funding streams? If so, what changes to your organizational management structure may be necessary to ensure funds are coordinated and monitored effectively and efficiently?
    a. If you consider adjusting your organizational management structures, what engagement and communication would be needed to ensure staff are invested in the new structures?

> *"Sustainable funding needs to be identified for years past the Wallace PPI grant. This funding could come from the reallocation of current tax levy funds or by fund raising private dollars or other measures."*
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> *Sustainability Plan, New York City Department of Education*
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> *"Limited funding is the challenge and we addressed it by eliminating non-essential programs, negotiated lower cost contracts, increased the amount of support from Title II, and increased the participation cost for one of the principal preparation programs. [In addition] we continue to identify other grants that may support the programs by working with the CMS grant office and the university [partner's] development office…[and] collaborate with university financial aid office to identify funding for participants and other cost efficiencies."*
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> *Sustainability Plan, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*

5. How would investing in your principal pipeline support your broader district-wide improvement strategy? Can you use this connection to garner support from stable district or federal funding streams?
6. Can funding for other, less effective programs be reallocated to support the pipeline? What steps can be taken to gain support for program and resource changes?

LOCAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER/LOOK AT

District budgets and financial reports, federal and state funding reports, grant reporting, Title I school improvement plans; local or regional philanthropy that can sustain pipeline implementation and operations.

Sustainability Element 2:

External Partnerships

Districts can strategically cultivate working relationships with different types of external partners to bolster sustainability. They can find and build common ground with university principal preparation programs, other districts, regional or county offices, state agencies, community-based organizations, and the business community, any of which may become a source of needed, long-term support to a principal pipeline. Key ingredients in this kind of partnership are planning, open communication, and attention to mutual benefit. Successful partnerships can contribute to sustaining a pipeline even in the worst case of significant leadership turnover or a financial setback for the district because pipeline-related systems and structures that remain in place outside the district can continue to serve district needs.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Partnerships with university-based preparation programs were a feature of the pipelines in all six Principal Pipeline Initiative districts. Although the districts had their own preparation programs for aspiring principals, no district shouldered the entire task of preparation by itself. The districts saw tangible benefits from these partnerships. Over time, curricula came to reflect more closely the district's standards and expectations for principals; current or recently retired district staff took on roles as adjunct faculty; and the partners strengthened the quality of clinical experience and its alignment with coursework.[8] Slowly, the nature of these partnerships changed from what universities expected from districts regarding the quality of the candidates they sent to what districts expected from universities regarding what their graduates know and are able to do. None of these improvements was easy to develop and implement, but on both sides of the partnership, a sense of mutual benefit made the effort worthwhile. Universities saw their graduates attaining and succeeding in leadership positions. Districts perceived that graduates were better prepared with the specific competencies they wanted to see. Other benefits for district pipelines could include access to scholarship funds or special-purpose grants through the university. Regular communication at all levels (e.g., between the superintendent and the university president or dean of the School of Education and

> *"In Gwinnett County, district leaders described sitting at the table, reviewing applicants for the preservice program alongside their university partners. As their partnerships have deepened and matured, district administrators have been asked to participate in other activities, including co-presenting at faculty conferences throughout the state. Ultimately, as one district leader explained, if done right, the benefits of the partnership are shared: "There is that mutual beneficial relationship that enables the university to have outstanding graduates and for us to have outstanding leaders."*
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> *PPI, Sustainability, 2019, p. 19*
>
> *"I think if you were to ask me what is the one thing that will sustain, will be a legacy, it is our work with university partners."*
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> *PPI, Sustainability, 2019, p. 19*

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[8] Anderson & Turnbull, 2019; Turnbull, et al., 2016.

between other top district staff and university program leaders) fortified the partnership, as did formal agreements as a basis for mutual accountability.

PARTNERSHIPS AMONG DISTRICTS

A partnership among districts can make it possible to offer pipeline components that a single district would be unable to launch by itself. In Wisconsin, one of 11 states that participated in the Wallace-funded ESSA Leadership Learning Community (ELLC),[9] five urban districts (known as the Big Five) worked not only with each other but also with a National Urban League affiliate and the state education agency to create the Wisconsin Urban Leadership Institute for sitting principals. The Institute grew out of the local leaders' shared desire for their principals to gain greater skills in equity-centered leadership in urban settings. Thanks to the state education agency, the Institute has been able to tap federal Title II funds, and it has been sustained through five years as of 2023. In Nebraska, three small districts in a rural part of the state banded together to create the Tri-City ASCEND Academy for principal preparation. Their school boards formally agreed that their districts would build a curriculum with help from their regional Educational Service Units, offer internships for aspiring leaders from each other's districts, and encourage program graduates to apply for principal positions in any of the three districts. This agreement allows each of the districts to enjoy the advantage of a pipeline despite having small numbers of candidates and placements available at any given time.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE STATE

A district can also forge partnerships at the state level. If state policies seem to be impeding the kind of pipeline a district wants to develop, it may be worthwhile to open the lines of communication with the state. A state education agency typically sets principal standards, regulates principal preparation, and approves local plans for the use of federal funds. The Principal Pipeline Initiative districts worked with their state agencies to make sure the standards, preparation, and evaluation systems they wanted for their principals could be accepted as consistent with state standards. Both the Wisconsin Urban Leadership Institute and Nebraska's Tri-City ASCEND Academy have benefited from state decisions about funding. It can also make sense for district leaders to work with the state at a broader level as members of state advisory councils. In Illinois, for example, a P-20 Council makes recommendations to the governor, legislature, and state agencies. Over the years, district representatives on the teacher and leader effectiveness committee of this council have had input into redesigned accreditation requirements for leadership preparation programs and have influenced legislation, policy, and funding for leadership.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Closer to home, community-based organizations are potential partners and allies in pipeline work. Grassroots organizations can participate in planning and review of the district's leadership priorities, contributing their knowledge of community needs and assets, as the National Urban League affiliate has done in the planning and oversight of the Wisconsin Urban Leadership Institute. Those with extra influence—the "grass tops" in a local business roundtable or chamber of commerce—may support pipeline work financially as well as strategically, for example by offering scholarships for aspiring leaders or executive coaching for principals and principal supervisors. All types of community-based partners—potentially including parent or student groups—may speak up for the pipeline if its sustainability is threatened by local political turbulence.

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[9] The ELLC was "intended to address problems of policy and practice by building on the opportunities to strengthen school leadership available under ESSA" [Turnbull, B., Aladjem, D, Fletcher, K, & Kidd, S. (2022). *All the voices: Statewide collaborations for school leadership under ESSA.* Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates; p. 1].

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are your district's current partners? For example, which of the following groups should be considered pipeline partners?
   a. University programs that prepare principals and APs for the district.
   b. Other districts
   c. Regional education service agencies or county offices
   d. State education agency
   e. Community-based organizations
   f. The business community
2. Do you know of other potential partners? What contributions might they make to pipeline sustainability? How could you reach out to them?
3. To what extent are current partnerships based on mutual benefit? Does the pipeline reflect the input and priorities of all partners? If not, why not? To what extent have pipeline partners expressed reservations about the pipeline? What are those reservations, and to what extent have they been addressed?
4. What have been the most significant challenges to developing pipeline partnerships?
5. To what extent has attention been paid to equity gaps and goals regarding strengthening the diversity of pipeline partners?
6. In what ways, if any, could external pipeline partners be given better opportunities to contribute to strengthening the pipeline?

LOCAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER/LOOK AT

Formal agreements in place with external partners, and memoranda summarizing concerns raised and decisions reached in meetings with partners of all types. The Quality Measures: Partnership Effectiveness Continuum tool for possible use in developing, assessing, and improving district/university partnerships.

Sustainability Element 3:

Internal Stakeholder Involvement

Internal stakeholders who know the pipeline well and actively support it are indispensable allies in sustainability. Internal stakeholders have the power to either support or weaken a pipeline. In particular, the superintendent's support for the work is critical. School board policies and resolutions aligned with the pipeline may help keep its vision, structures, and systems in place.

The six original pipeline districts regularly engaged with their internal stakeholders and, as one respondent explained, were "always thinking about what's going to get [their] leaders to where the district needs them to go next." They sustained their pipelines by having an engaged superintendent who made the principal pipeline "part of the district's regular way of working." They worked to keep key stakeholders engaged with the pipeline, cultivating support and seeking to overcome or neutralize opposition. They found that internal stakeholders include the full range of central-office administrators, principals, assistant principals, and principal supervisors. And they found that having a broad range of engaged stakeholders helped protect their pipelines in times of organizational change or a change in district leadership.

"Involve as many stakeholders as possible throughout the design and implementation of each [pipeline domain]. The more involvement people have, the more ownership they have and ownership supports sustainability."

Sustainability Plan, Hillsborough County Public Schools

"Invite cross-departmental members to the planning stages of any program design or initiative discussion; the work should be district driven, not program, office, or project driven…To maintain continued engagement of key stakeholders, establish high-level profiles of program participants' impact on their schools' success."

Sustainability Plan, Prince George's County Public Schools

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who are the key internal stakeholders for your district? For example, which of the following groups should be considered pipeline stakeholders?
    a. The superintendent and other top district decision-makers
    b. Central office staff representing federal programs, academics, human resources, and other divisions or offices
    c. Principals, principal supervisors, other school administrators—and, in some districts, the unions that represent them
    d. The school board
    e. The teachers' union/professional association
2. Do the people who make decisions about the pipeline regularly meet with stakeholders in listening sessions to hear their concerns, gather their ideas, and create the conditions for engagement? Does the vision of what the pipeline should be reflect broad-based internal

stakeholder input? Is the pipeline vision included in the district's articulated vision and/or strategies for school improvement?

3. To what extent do internal stakeholder groups support the pipeline? How do you know (e.g., surveys of school and district staff, regular meetings with internal stakeholder groups to describe pipeline progress and gather feedback, etc.)?
    a. What has been the district's strategy to persuade stakeholders that a pipeline furthers their professional interests and the district's organizational goals?
    b. If internal stakeholders have supported the pipeline, what has been the district's strategy to sustain their interest?

4. Does the pipeline reflect the input and priorities of all internal stakeholder groups? If not, why not? What have been the most significant challenges to generating internal stakeholder support? To what extent have internal stakeholder groups expressed reservations about the pipeline? What are those reservations, and to what extent have they been addressed?

5. In what ways, if any, could internal stakeholders be given better opportunities to contribute to strengthening the pipeline?

LOCAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER/LOOK AT

Memoranda summarizing concerns raised and decisions reached in meetings with stakeholders of all types, and survey data, with information about the numbers and types of respondents and how they were selected.
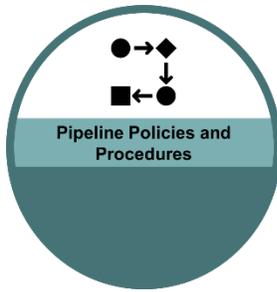
Sustainability Element 4:

Pipeline Policies and Procedures

In all domains of a pipeline, one hallmark of a high level of pipeline development is that practices associated with a strong pipeline have become routinized. Documentation and, in some cases, formal adoption of policies and practices can support sustainability of the pipeline. School board policies and resolutions aligned with the pipeline may help keep the vision of what a pipeline should be, as well as its structures and systems, in place. An example is formal school board approval for the use of leader standards.

The original pipeline districts documented their work, developing policies and guidance documents to codify, for example, hiring and placement strategies and on-the-job evaluation metrics so that new pipeline practices could not easily be discarded with changes in leadership or staffing. District staff can promote pipeline sustainability by developing and using written procedural guides for such key activities as candidate selection into a preparation program or for promotion to the position of assistant principal, principal, or principal supervisor. Written guides such as manuals and checklists help to structure these recurring activities and routinize pipeline practices.

"Continue documenting standard operating procedures and user guides for all [pipeline domains]…to sustain high-quality work."

Sustainability Plan, Denver Public Schools

■ As districts work to strengthen a pipeline, they try out new approaches in all domains and incrementally adjust these based on experience. Documentation is a way of clearly capturing the procedures they are using, supporting thoughtful improvement of these procedures based on experience.

■ In the longer run, documented procedures are less vulnerable to capricious change than informal procedures, especially those informal procedures that may live in the memory of a single staff member.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What efforts has the district made to document pipeline practices and the structures designed to support the work?
2. To what extent has the district developed procedural guides for pipeline practices, such as candidate selection, succession planning, or on-the-job evaluation? Are these guides readily available for use?
3. What pipeline practices has the district formally adopted as policies?
4. What pipeline policies has the school board formally approved?
5. To what extent are pipeline policies and practices aligned with state standards?

LOCAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER/LOOK AT
District procedural guides/policy manuals, school board meeting agendas/minutes, pipeline implementation/continuous improvement reports, research and data on pipeline impact.

Sustainability Element 5:

Continuous Improvement and Evaluation

Districts can systematically and regularly gather data to improve the design and implementation of their principal pipeline. Data systems and dashboards present decision makers with aggregate data (e.g., for feedback to preparation programs and for overall pipeline planning). These data systems could include data on principal experience and readiness to lead, principal evaluation results, and principal satisfaction surveys. Research on districts with pipelines showed:

■ The original six pipeline districts viewed their principal pipelines as works in progress and continued to fine-tune them, year after year.

■ Defining the competencies and skills of an effective leader was an ever-changing task because the contexts within which schools operate continually change and evolve.

■ Districts continued to work on strengthening principal supervisors' skills in supporting principals, and on sorting out the respective roles of principal supervisors, coaches, and mentors.

Districts can also evaluate pipeline outcomes and impact to identify successes, lessons learned, and areas in need of improvement. Districts use evaluation data as evidence of pipeline effectiveness that can help sustain and even expand stakeholder support, including through policies, hiring decisions, and additional funding. Evaluation results can also point to specific policies and practices that strengthen pipeline implementation and improve principal performance and rates of retention. The evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative implementation and impacts showed that:

■ Two years after the Principal Pipeline Initiative ended, district leaders no longer reported struggling to find highly qualified candidates to fill vacancies; over time, districts saw fewer principal vacancies, suggesting that principal turnover had declined, and new principals were better prepared.

■ Districts saw their university partners produce more candidates who were highly qualified to lead schools. In addition, higher percentages of principals who had participated in preparation programs in more recent years compared with those who had been prepared earlier reported that their preservice preparation emphasized competencies related to school improvement, including instructional leadership. Moreover, more recently prepared principals reported having started on the job with higher levels of preparedness for leadership.

■ Newly placed principals in pipeline districts were more likely to remain in their school for at least two or three years compared with newly placed principals in comparison schools.

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement data could capture changes in the quality of the match between candidates and school vacancies; improvements in the delivery of individualized, timely support to principals through coaches and mentors; progress in expanding the number of principal supervisors and/or strengthening supervisors' capacity to support principals as instructional leaders; or whether the district was succeeding in reshaping university preparation programs to align with the district's school leadership needs. The pipeline implementation team can meet regularly to review implementation data, to discuss early- and mid-stage implementation progress and ongoing or anticipated challenges, and to consider options for revising the pipeline design and/or its implementation. As a pipeline matures, new needs will emerge along with new opportunities to build on positive results of pipeline improvements.

> *"These efforts [to continue training principal mentors and provide them with professional learning opportunities] helped strengthen and sustain mentor practices to support novice principals. In addition, recommendations from internal and external reviewers led to enhancements in the application process, selection of candidates, and curriculum content for the district's aspiring principal program."*
>
> *Sustainability Plan, Gwinnett County Public Schools*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What procedures and plans does the district have to support continuous improvement of the pipeline?
   a. To what extent is the pipeline implementation team afforded opportunities to meet, learn, and share pipeline successes and challenges?
2. What data does the district and/or state already collect that would help to inform pipeline development and implementation? If a Leader Tracking System (LTS) has been implemented, what parts of the pipeline do LTS data inform (e.g., hiring, evaluation and support, succession planning, etc.)? Could the LTS inform more parts of the pipeline?
3. What metrics would help to better monitor pipeline implementation? What additional data collection would this require, if any, and where and how can these data be obtained?
4. Which internal stakeholders and external partners can be sources of data or can help obtain access to needed data?
5. How does the district use monitoring data to adjust and improve pipeline implementation?

LOCAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER/LOOK AT:

Pipeline planning documents, internal stakeholder and external partner data sources, stakeholder list, meeting agendas and minutes/summaries, and district memos/reports on pipeline implementation progress.

Evaluation

An evaluation does not have to be an elaborate undertaking. It may be best to engage an outside evaluator for the sake of credibility, but an internal research and evaluation office often has the needed capability to gather, analyze, and report data that will answer decision makers' questions about the effectiveness of their pipeline. For example, one pipeline district launched a systematic test of the criteria

it uses in hiring to determine whether the candidate selection scores correlate with principal evaluation scores. An internal research and evaluation office can also evaluate the effectiveness of other programs and initiatives, generating evidence to support the transfer or reallocation of funding from less effective to more effective programs, including the pipeline.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Has the district developed a pipeline theory of action or logic model? What are the district's short- and longer-term goals and objectives for the pipeline? Pipeline outcomes and impacts in the short and longer term may include the following:

   Sample short-term outcomes:
   a. Strengthened fit/match of candidates to schools
   b. Strengthened partnerships with one or more preparation programs
   c. Principal evaluation is based on leader standards.
   d. Principals receive intensive and ongoing feedback and support—from coaches, mentors, and/or principal supervisors—based on individual needs identified through evaluation.

   Sample longer-term outcomes:
   a. Increase in proportion of preparation program completers going directly into principal or AP positions
   b. Improved rates of principal retention
   c. Improved principal evaluation scores
   d. Improved school performance

> *"[We] document evidence of high-quality [programs] and share it across the district, state, and nation. We want to sustain only high-quality work and build awareness of it. We continue to analyze results of [pipeline domains] and present the information at district meetings…at state and national conferences, and to the new superintendent."*
>
> *Sustainability Plan, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*

2. What efforts are underway or planned to measure pipeline outcomes and impact? With what frequency (e.g., annually)? What data sources, such as a Leader Tracking System, stakeholder interviews, and/or principal surveys, will inform the evaluation? Who will be responsible for this work?
3. What plans are in place to review and apply evaluation results to pipeline design and implementation?
4. What plans are in place to communicate the evaluation results to stakeholders?
5. What efforts are underway or planned to measure the outcomes and impacts of other funded programs and initiatives and communicate the results to stakeholders to inform resource allocation decisions?

LOCAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER/LOOK AT:
Pipeline planning documents, pipeline theory of action or logic model, district and state data sources.

Sustainability Element 6:

Communications

Communication plays a part in all elements of sustainability: helping the district maintain two-way communication with stakeholders of all kinds; capturing and sharing policies and procedures in official documents; negotiating adaptations to state policies; finding and tapping sources of funds; identifying and making improvements; and gathering evaluation data and reporting evaluation findings. The original pipeline districts sustained their pipelines by constant communication—with their principals, supervisors, central office staff, and board—about pipeline goals and objectives and implementation progress and outcomes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How and to what extent does the district communicate with its internal stakeholder groups (e.g., sitting and aspiring principals and assistant principals, teachers, parents, the community, the school board, professional associations, etc.) and external partners about district policies, programs, practices, and priorities? Is there two-way communication in which the district listens to concerns rather than solely presenting or defending its decisions?
2. To what extent, if at all, has the district communicated with its internal stakeholders and external partners about the pipeline and its purposes?
   a. How does the district communicate with stakeholders about the pipeline? Is the communication limited to dissemination of information about decisions that have been made (e.g., in newsletters), or are stakeholders invited and encouraged to communicate their concerns and ideas (e.g., in forums for discussion)?
   b. How often does the district communicate with stakeholders about the pipeline?
3. Are communications clear and targeted towards specific internal stakeholders and external partners?
4. Are other internal stakeholders and external partners communicating/messaging about the pipeline in a coordinated manner?
5. To what extent is the district communicating with other districts across the state about pipeline implementation, successes, and future plans?

Communicating what is happening with the pipeline, from recruitment efforts to data about candidate pools, to hiring and succession planning practices, to successes in the field. You can never communicate too much. Stakeholders want to know what is happening… Strong communication plans are a must in this work…"

Sustainability Plan, Hillsborough County Public Schools

"Have a well thought out internal and external communication plan as a top priority in your work. Keep consistent and open communication with executive leadership."

Sustainability Plan, Prince George's County Public Schools

LOCAL EVIDENCE TO CONSIDER/LOOK AT:

District communications (memos, emails, school board testimony, press releases, emails, etc.), district media reports, data on the frequency, clarity/coherence, and breadth of district communications.

Appendix A:
Pipeline Sustainability Self-Assessment and Planning Template

Sustainability self-assessment/planning template

Elements of Sustainability	Yes	Somewhat/ could improve	No or not sure/ don't know	Plans for strengthening the element?			
				Yes, in next 6 months	Yes, in next year	Yes, in next 2 years	No plans
Sustainability Element 1: Financial Planning							
1. Have the costs of the pipeline—both one-time and ongoing—been calculated?							
2. Are hard funding streams (e.g., Title I, Title II, state formula funding, etc.) currently used to build or support your pipeline?							
• If federal and state funds are used to support your pipeline, is there a structure in place to ensure funds are managed and monitored appropriately?							
3. Are soft funding streams (e.g., ARP/ESSER) currently used to build or support your pipeline?							
• If ARP/ESSER funds are used to support your pipeline, do you have a plan to replace those funds with more stable, long-term funding streams?							
4. If additional funding is needed to improve or broaden your pipeline, have potential sources been identified?							
5. Has funding for other, less effective programs been reallocated to support the pipeline?							
Sustainability Element 2: Partnerships							
1. Has the district identified its pipeline partners?							
• Do the identified pipeline partners include universities, the state education agency, community-based organizations?							
• Are there other potential partners?							
2. Are current partnerships based on mutual benefit?							
• Does the pipeline reflect the input/priorities of partners?							
• Have reservations about the pipeline expressed by pipeline partners been listened to and addressed?							
3. Have challenges to pipeline partnerships been addressed?							
4. Do external pipeline partners have good opportunities to contribute to strengthening the pipeline?							
Sustainability Element 3: Internal Stakeholder Involvement							
1. Has the district identified its key pipeline stakeholders?							
• Do stakeholders include the superintendent/cabinet members; central office staff; principal supervisors; principals, etc.?							
2. Does the pipeline vision reflect stakeholder input?							
• Do pipeline decision-makers regularly meet with stakeholders to hear their concerns and gather ideas?							
3. Do all stakeholder groups support the pipeline?							
• Does the district have a strategy to sustain stakeholder interest?							
Sustainability Element 4: Pipeline Policies and Procedures							
1. Has the district documented pipeline practices?							
2. Has the district developed procedural guides for pipeline practices (e.g., candidate selection, succession planning)?							
3. Has the district adopted any pipeline practices as policies?							
4. Has the school board approved any pipeline policies?							

Sustainability self-assessment/planning template

Elements of Sustainability	Yes	Somewhat/ could improve	No or not sure/ don't know	Plans for strengthening the element?			
				Yes, in next 6 months	Yes, in next year	Yes, in next 2 years	No plans
Sustainability Element 5: Continuous Improvement and Evaluation							
Continuous Improvement							
1. Does the district collect data to inform pipeline development and implementation?							
2. Does the pipeline implementation team have opportunities to meet, learn, and share pipeline successes and challenges?							
3. Does the district use monitoring data to adjust and improve pipeline implementation?							
Evaluation							
1. Does the district have short-term goals for the pipeline?							
2. Does the district have long-term goals for the pipeline?							
3. Is the district measuring pipeline outcomes and impact?							
4. Is the district applying pipeline evaluation results to pipeline design and implementation?							
Sustainability Element 6: Communications							
1. Does the district communicate with its stakeholder groups about district policies, programs, practices, and priorities?							
2. Has the district communicated with its stakeholder groups about the pipeline and its purposes?							
3. Are communications clear and targeted toward specific stakeholders?							
4. Are other district stakeholders communicating/messaging about the pipeline in a coordinated manner?							
5. Does the district communicate with other districts across the state about pipeline implementation, successes, and future plans?							

Appendix B:
Financial Planning Template for a
Principal Pipeline

NOTE: The template is available online. To use the online template, click on the link below, then download the file by clicking on the purple box labeled "Download" in the upper right corner of your screen. Next, open the file and click "Enable Editing."

[Financial Planning Template for a Principal Pipeline](#).

Financial Planning Template for a Principal Pipeline (2022-23)

Year 1	ARP Funds	Non-ARP HARD MONEY [Guaranteed, annual continuous funds (e.g., Title I, II, and III; district and state funds)]	Non-ARP SOFT MONEY [A grant with a defined time limit (e.g., Race to the Top, foundation grants]	TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	Hard Money as a % of Total Program Budget	COST ANALYSIS																				
						Allocation of ARP funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP HARD MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP SOFT MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain						
						Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7
ONE-TIME COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL One-Time Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
ONGOING COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL Ongoing Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
GRAND TOTALS	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

Financial Planning Template for a Principal Pipeline (2023-24)

Year 2	ARP Funds	Non-ARP HARD MONEY [Guaranteed, annual continuous funds (e.g., Title I, II, and III; district and state funds)]	Non-ARP SOFT MONEY [A grant with a defined time limit (e.g., Race to the Top, foundation grants]	TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	Hard Money as a % of Total Program Budget	COST ANALYSIS — Allocation of ARP funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP HARD MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP SOFT MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain						
						Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7
ONE-TIME COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL One-Time Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
ONGOING COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL Ongoing Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
GRAND TOTALS	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

Financial Planning Template for a Principal Pipeline (2024-25)

Year 3	ARP Funds	Non-ARP HARD MONEY [Guaranteed, annual continuous funds (e.g., Title I, II, and III; district and state funds)]	Non-ARP SOFT MONEY [A grant with a defined time limit (e.g., Race to the Top, foundation grants)]	TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	Hard Money as a % of Total Program Budget	COST ANALYSIS — Allocation of ARP funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP HARD MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP SOFT MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain						
						Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7
ONE-TIME COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL One-Time Costs	$0	$0	$0	$0		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
ONGOING COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL Ongoing Costs	$0	$0	$0	$0		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
GRAND TOTALS	$0	$0	$0	$0		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

Financial Planning Template for a Principal Pipeline (2025-26)

Year 4	ARP Funds	HARD MONEY [Guaranteed, annual continuous funds (e.g., Title I, II, and III; district and state funds)]	SOFT MONEY [A grant with a defined time limit (e.g., Race to the Top, foundation grants)]	TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	Hard Money as a % of Total Program Budget	COST ANALYSIS — Allocation of ARP funds expended, by pipeline domain — Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Allocation of non-ARP HARD MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain — Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7	Allocation of non-ARP SOFT MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain — Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5	Domain 6	Domain 7
ONE-TIME COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL One-Time Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
ONGOING COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL Ongoing Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
GRAND TOTALS	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0

Financial Planning Template for a Principal Pipeline (2026-27)

Year 5	ARP Funds	HARD MONEY [Guaranteed, annual continuous funds (e.g., Title I, II, and III; district and state funds)]	SOFT MONEY [A grant with a defined time limit (e.g., Race to the Top, foundation grants)]	TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	Hard Money as a % of Total Program Budget	Allocation of ARP funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP HARD MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain							Allocation of non-ARP SOFT MONEY funds expended, by pipeline domain						
						D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7
ONE-TIME COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL One-Time Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
ONGOING COSTS																										
PERSONNEL																										
Staff	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Fringe Benefits	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
PROJECT COSTS																										
Stipends/tuition support	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Consultants/ subcontractors	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
Other (e.g., printing, copying, mailing, postage, supplies)	$0	$0	$0	$0																						
TOTAL Ongoing Costs	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
GRAND TOTALS	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**		$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0