

# Interim Progress Assessment: Investing COVID Relief Funds in Leadership and Human Capital Management



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In the spring of 2021, President Biden and Congress approved an unprecedented infusion of federal funds into our public education system to safely reopen schools, address pre- and post-pandemic unfinished learning, and build lasting, equitable systems of teaching and learning. While these resources were badly needed, it was clear that the new funding would test the ability of school systems to properly manage and allocate the money in ways that most effectively address student needs.

To provide guidance and support in this endeavor, the [Council of the Great City Schools](#) assembled a high-level task force of urban district leaders to develop and release a toolkit entitled [Investing American Rescue Plan Funds Strategically and Effectively](#). School districts are now one year into their federally funded relief and recovery efforts. As we reach the anniversary of the release of the Council's initial investment guidance, district leaders should take the opportunity to step back and assess their investment planning and implementation.

## Purpose and Audience

This document aims to provide a framework for this assessment process, specifically designed for investments in building leadership and staff capacity across the district. Human Resources leaders and teams can use this document in the ongoing process of investment planning, implementation, and oversight to ensure that federal relief funds are allocated strategically and effectively.

- The document first sums up the guiding principles and considerations provided last year.
- We then provide a series of questions to help districts assess their talent development work and investments to date. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Rather, these questions are designed to prompt discussions about current initiatives and to suggest potential next steps.
- The next section poses questions about how the district is tracking and measuring the effectiveness of its talent development investments and communicating successes. These will be critical considerations in the coming months and years, as districts are called on by their communities, lawmakers, and the general public to provide evidence that federal funding has led to improved student outcomes.
- The document ends by identifying a set of “warning indicators”—problematic approaches or developments based on guidance last year on what to avoid. If the district’s talent development efforts meet any of these criteria, it should signal to district leaders the need to rethink or refine their strategy.

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## Guiding Principles for Investments in Leadership and Human Capital Management

A stable, effective workforce in all departments districtwide is essential to improving student achievement. The Council’s [investment guidance](#) from June 2021 underscored the importance of districts investing their relief funds in talent development that builds district capacity and is aligned with the district’s priorities, mission, and vision. Districts were cautioned not to add scores of new positions, as the funding is temporary. Additionally, district human resources offices should plan for anticipated shortages and natural attrition. For instructional staff that are both school-based and not-school based, establishing a functional, diverse pipeline is essential. For non-instructional staff who may be weighing non-school district opportunities, districts should emphasize the benefits of district employment, as compared to the private sector. Finally, when investing in professional development for all staff, the district should focus on job-related responsibilities and ensure that training opportunities are differentiated by the role, responsibility, and need of each staff member or department.

## Interim Progress Assessment Questions for Human Resources Directors and District Leaders

### RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. How are you addressing the current and future staffing needs of the district?

- Developed plans to recruit staff for all departments—including instructional and non-instructional staff; school-based and non-school based staff; operations; IT; food services; transportation; and all other central office departments.
- Ensured that recruitment efforts across the district are contributing to ethnic and language diversity among teachers, school leaders, central office staff, and non-instructional support staff.
- Created or expanded new and innovative paths into teaching, including: ‘grow your own’ models; programs that provide teacher aides and paraprofessionals with pathways to become teachers; partnerships with colleges and universities; and district support for certification processes.
- Identified local and interstate partners for pipeline recruitment of instructional and non-instructional school staff.
- Predicted and leveraged natural attrition to help manage staffing levels across all departments, in collaboration with the Chief Financial Officer.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



#### 2. What steps are you taking to identify and prepare school and district leaders?

- Identified professional development opportunities for current managers to build leadership skills.
- Invested in pipeline programs to train and develop future teacher leaders, assistant principals, coaches, principals, and central office administrators.

- Diversified the pipeline for recruiting principals, teacher leaders, and other instructional leaders.
- Conducted a survey of current district leaders to identify staff for leadership development training and support.
- Created a plan to provide training and develop leadership skills for staff across all departments.
- Identified current district leaders to provide in-house leadership development seminars.

**3. How are you creating supportive working environments to boost retention?**

- Offered retention bonuses to staff, paid out at appropriate intervals.
- Created leadership opportunities for excelling staff to reward performance. For example, effective teachers are given opportunities to serve as peer coaches or mentors for novice teachers.
- Established processes for recognizing exemplary employees across all departments throughout the year.
- Established practices and provided resources that explicitly support emotional and mental health needs of staff.
- Emphasized the benefits of working in the district compared to for-profit corporations in job postings for non-instructional staff. For example, highlighted holidays and vacation time; standardized work hours; and retirement or pension benefits.
- Ensured that induction programs orient teachers and school leaders to the district and school community climate and culture and provide ongoing support and guidance to minimize burnout.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



**HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING**

**1. How are you identifying and addressing professional development needs across the district?**

- Conducted a needs assessment that is based on the district’s equity-focused goals to identify and provide needed supports.
- Ensured that all district departments—instructional, non-instructional, school-based, and not-school based—are included in the professional development planning process.
- Explored options for providing professional development in a variety of different modalities, including in-person, online, and hybrid configurations.
- Created and launched asynchronous programming that allows teachers and other staff to access supports on demand.
- For instructional staff, ensured that professional development programming emphasizes the skills and content knowledge teachers need to address unfinished learning with just-in-time supports so all students can access Tier I instruction.

- Ensured that professional development programming provides teachers and instructional staff with the skills needed to support English learners, students with disabilities, and other students with the most learning gaps.
- Scheduled professional development experiences that are immediately useful for lesson planning and delivery.
- Added professional development training days or hours during the week to future school calendars.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How are you ensuring the quality of implementation and sustainability of investments in professional development?**

- Ensured the staff designing and delivering the programming have extensive knowledge of the content being provided.
- Implemented a train-the-trainer model, so the district is not relying on outside expertise going forward.
- Developed a project management plan for monitoring and supporting districtwide professional development programming. This plan:
  - Tracks the budget, spending, intended outcomes, and goals of professional development.
  - Articulates the intended timing and delivery of the content for each department based on how the programming fits into their current schedules.
  - Tracks the extent to which the training reaches the intended target population (e.g., how many of the total number of 6th grade math teachers received the training).
- Included feedback systems for participants and a process for making updates to the implementation or delivery models.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT**

**1. How are you leveraging relief funds to improve human resource systems and processes?**

- Reviewed standard operating procedures and workflow processes to eliminate complex, slow, and inefficient procedures.
- Surveyed recent hires and applicants to capture feedback on their experience applying for a position with the district.
- Invested in position control and applicant tracking systems to monitor FTEs and grant personnel expenses.
- Pursued new and innovative ways to deploy teachers and other instructional staff to improve or restructure student learning time.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



**2. How are you investing in best practices in human capital management?**

- Developed an equity index that identifies schools in need of additional financial and human resources to ensure students and schools with the greatest needs are supported appropriately.
- Contracted the services of recruiters or other Human Resources (HR) staff to assist the district with time-limited human capital management efforts, rather than hiring additional FTEs for the HR department with temporary funds.
- Developed a working model for predicting future vacancies and necessary staffing levels, factoring in elements such as natural attrition.
- Articulated the temporary status for grant-funded positions in all job postings and staff contracts.
- Established a bench of full-time substitute teachers to serve as an itinerant substitute teaching pool.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## Measuring and Communicating Success

**How are you monitoring the impact of investments in human capital management and talent development?**



- Developed targeted outcome measures and goals for investments.
- Identified the data needed to measure effectiveness, including a subset of relevant Key Performance Indicators, and the process by which data will be collected, analyzed, and shared.
- Tracked the use of programs and resources to ensure the most vulnerable populations are benefitting from these investments.
- Engaged with the research department to design a plan for assessing and reporting on outcomes.

**How are you communicating the impact of investments in human capital management and talent development?**



- Collected evidence and examples of how investments are positively impacting schools, students, and families across the district.
- Identified key stakeholders and the best avenues for sharing successes with each group (e.g., blogs, newsletters, board updates, town halls, radio spots, and television appearances).



STOP

## WARNING INDICATORS

- The district has not conducted an assessment to identify staffing and professional development needs across the organization.
- The district has no way to monitor position control, predict future staffing needs, or project natural attrition.
- The district has hired many new positions, without indicating they are temporary and without a plan for sustaining them after federal relief funds expire.
- The district has offered permanent salary increases to staff using federal relief funds, with no plan to sustain these increases once the relief funds expire.
- The district's recruitment, retention, and pipeline planning focus solely on teachers.
- The district's recruitment, retention, and pipeline efforts do not include efforts to expand the racial, ethnic, and/or linguistic diversity of the instructional and non-instructional staff.
- The district does not recognize or reward exemplary employees or provide additional leadership roles for effective teachers or staff.
- The district does not support the emotional or mental health needs of staff.
- The district's professional development programming focuses solely on instructional, school-based staff, with a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Professional development for teachers and instructional staff does not cover essential, grade-level content and standards, and is not designed to help teachers identify and address unfinished learning.
- The district's professional development programming is designed and implemented solely by outside contractors.
- The district has not developed internal subject matter experts to redeploy professional learning when outside contracts sunset.
- The district has no plan to monitor the quality or impact of professional development programming.

***If any of these statements describe your district's talent development investments, you should rethink your strategy.***