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### (a) Quality of the Project Design

*(i) The people to be served:* Lowell, a densely populated urban center, is the 4th largest city in Massachusetts (MA) with a population of 106,739, and is located 30 miles northwest of Boston. The poverty rate for all Lowell residents is 17.3%, 14.8% for families, and 19.9% for families with related children under age 18.<sup>i</sup> The city is home to diverse refugee and immigrant populations. For example, in the 2010 census, 24.6% of the population was “foreign born,” and 12.3% of the total population did not have someone age 14 or older who spoke English at least very well.<sup>ii</sup> In 2010, Lowell had the highest proportion of residents of Cambodian origin of any place in the United States.<sup>iii</sup> In 2011, the median household income was \$51,236 compared with \$62,859 for MA. Twenty-two percent of people ages 25 and older do not hold a high school diploma or equivalent; 46.9% have some college or more.<sup>iv</sup> In 2008, Lowell was the 7th most violent city in MA.

**Lowell Public Schools (LPS):** LPS serve 14,031 students in 24 schools and is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest school district in MA. All but one school is a school-wide Title I site. Of LPS students, 39.6% have a first language that is not English (vs. 17.8% in MA), 75.1% are low-income (vs. 38.8% in MA), and 82.1% are high needs (vs. 48.8% in MA).<sup>v</sup> LPS is classified a “high needs” district by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE).

**Lowell High School Career Academy (LHSCA):** The LHSCA is a smaller learning environment alternative to Lowell High School, which is the 2nd largest in MA and serves 3,099 students. Previously called the Molloy School, the school had been struggling to serve students in need of an alternative setting with 45-90 day placements before returning to the large high school. Because of the transient nature of these students, causal data on placement/student outcomes was very hard to track, but students and administrators saw it as a revolving door that did little to improve student success. The school was more of a “pressure-relief valve” for the large high school (e.g., where kids would be “sent” if behavior did not meet standards) than an effective academic or behavior support strategy for students.

In August 2013, with \$70,000 in seed money for planning from the Governor’s office and a newly established district-funded Director of Alternative Education managing the school, the LHSCA was opened as a full school-year school. The first class (SY 13-14) was 78 students, voluntarily enrolled, drawn by the promise of an alternative education environment with a career readiness focus: 59 grade 9, 14 grade 10, 4 grade 11, and 1 grade 12. **The projected LHSCA enrollments are: SY14-15 100; SY 15-16: 150; SY16-17 and beyond: 200.**

The vision statement and philosophy of the school is grounded in Angela Lee Duckworth’s (University of Pennsylvania) 11 years of research on “grit,” which the Duckworth Lab defines as “the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals.” Grit goes beyond resiliency to capture people’s traits to have “consistent interests—focused passions—over a long time.”<sup>vi</sup> LHSCA’s foundation is based on supporting students to develop grit, because as Duckworth states: “People who can set long-term goals and stick to them have a leg up on success in school and life.”<sup>vii</sup> LHSCA’s philosophy statement is, “Through the shared vision of grit we provide a gateway to behavioral and academic success.” Its mission statement is, “LHSCA offers a gateway for its students to achieve goals through rigorous academics, exposure to career development, and building the social skills needed to get there. LHSCA students develop strong, healthy relationships based on respect and tolerance. They are inventive thinkers and attack all goals with tenacity and perseverance. The student’s LHSCA experience culminates as they embark on a path to reach their future goals of meaningful careers, maintain solid relationships, and being productive citizens.”

The LHSCA staff are a Director, 6 General Education teachers, 2 Special Education teachers, 1 English Language Learning Teacher, and a Clerk, Social Worker, Behavior Specialist, and School Resource Officer as well as a half-time custodian and a Guidance intern. **LHSCA Students:** All LHSCA students face multiple risk factors to academic and behavioral success. The demographics of the students are: 88.5% qualify for free lunch; 25% English Language Learners; and, 9% African American, 18% Asian, 42% Hispanic or Latino, 4% multi-

race (non-Latino), and 27% White. The average attendance rate is 79%. Between 8/27/2013 and 5/21/2014, there were a total of 1,319 disciplinary actions taken (total with 78 LHSCA students), including 312 in-school suspensions, and 228 out-of-school suspensions.

The MA DESE Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) is a tool that systematically identifies students that may need additional attention in order to reach an upcoming academic goal. It is based on national research and promising practices, feedback from a range of stakeholders, and extensive testing of possible indicators of risk and statistical modeling using longitudinal MA data. The EWIS includes risk models that aggregate a variety of student data to determine risk level; a student that is "low risk" is predicted to be likely to meet the academic goal. According to the May 22, 2014 EWIS report for LHSCA students, 96.2% are at high risk for not meeting academic goals, 2.6% are moderate risk, and only 1 student is low-risk.

The MA Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is the required state standardized test and has four outcome levels: Warning/Failing, Needs Improvement, Proficient, and Advanced. To graduate high school in MA, students must achieve a minimum score of 240 (*Proficient* level) on the Grade 10 English Language Arts (ELA) and Grade 10 Mathematics MCAS, or a minimum score of 220 (*Needs Improvement* level) on the Grade 10 ELA and Grade 10 Math MCAS *and* successfully complete an Educational Proficiency Plan. Table 1 shows the 2013 MCAS results and documents that at least 60% of students are at risk of not attaining their high school diploma. Further, in May 2014, 32% of LHSCA students were failing their math class plus 9% incomplete, 41% failing ELA class plus 1% incomplete, 32% failing science plus 8% incomplete, and 33% failing social studies plus 51% incomplete.

	Warning/Fail	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Advanced
ELA	34.2%	39.5%	26.3%	0
Math	60.0%	32.9%	5.7%	1.4%

In May 2014, Project LEARN, an independent nonprofit organization that assists LPS (see page 13), conducted an anonymous, confidential, voluntary online survey with LHSCA students to gain project input: 44% responded. The survey asked closed and open questions about what kinds of services students would use if they had access to them at LHSCA: none of these services are currently available at the school. Ratings were collected on a 5-point scale where 5 is “This is a great idea” and 1 is “This is a terrible idea.” To gather input into the proposed project, LHSCA also conducted structured interviews with nine parents of LHSCA students. Parents were asked, “On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents ‘NO’ and 5 represents ‘YES,’ how likely is it that your son/daughter would use the following services.” Results are shown in Table 2.

	Stud.	Par.		Stud.	Par.
Afterschool homework help/tutoring	2.82	4.45	Other afterschool programs like cooking classes	<b>3.47</b>	4.78
Afterschool sports	<b>3.53</b>	<b>5.00</b>	A school garden	3.40	4.12
Summer academic programs	3.05	3.57	Medical care	3.32	4.56
Summer programs like sports	3.27	4.56	Career counseling	3.28	4.89
Mentoring	3.42	<b>5.00</b>	Help getting into college	<b>3.47</b>	<b>5.00</b>

The student survey also asked, “What are some things that would make the school better?” Of 29 free responses, 38% focused on the facility, such as “planting outside,” “decorating better inside,” “if the school wasn't so old and dirty,” and “space to go outside.” In fact, the school is cosmetically run down, both inside and out. The school is surrounded by blacktop with no green space. There is no gym. The pictures on the following page of the front of school and of the school “yard” help demonstrate the need. At the end of the survey, students were again asked,

“Anything else you want to tell us as we are thinking about the school and ways to make it better?” and 44% free responses referenced the appearance. In addition, 27% referenced the need for more fitness opportunities.



**LHSCA Parents:** In the above-described survey, LHSCA students were asked, “Think about one adult that you live with. Please check all the boxes that apply to this adult.” Among the most common responses were: 16% graduated high school, 4% graduated college, and 2% have been homeless.

To gather input into the proposed project, two concerted attempts were made at parent focus groups, but no parents attended, which is symptomatic of very low parent-school engagement. Therefore, LHSCA staff conducted structured telephone interviews



with nine parents in June 2014. One question was, “If the following service was available at LHSCA, would you or another adult in your family use it?” In addition, in the student survey, students were asked to rate if an adult in their family “would use this service if it were available

at your school.” In both cases, 1 represented “No one in my family would use,” and 5 represented “Someone in my family would use this.” Results are shown in Table 3.

	Stud.	Par.		Stud.	Par.
Adult education	2.92	3.68	Job Fair	2.94	4.78
Career Counseling	2.77	3.90	Health/Wellness Fair	2.75	3.85
Community garden	2.75	4.45	Food pantry	2.98	3.46

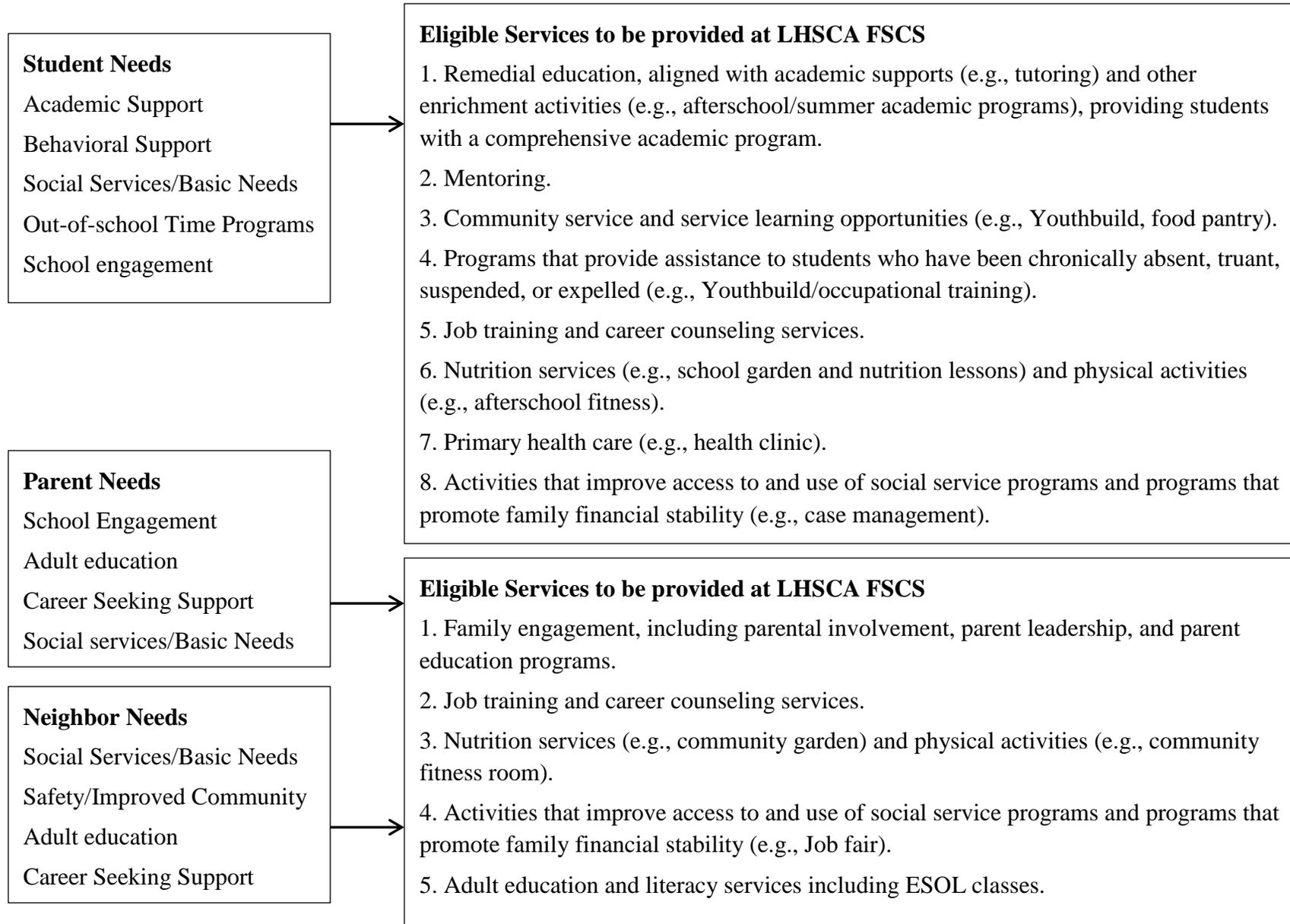
**About the Lower Highlands Neighborhood:** The name of the neighborhood surrounding the school is “Lower Highlands,” one of 11 neighborhoods in the city. According to data provided by the City of Lowell Planning Department, this is the most densely populated area and is home to 3,513 people. The neighborhood is 52% Asian, 29% White, 16.5% Hispanic/Latino, 4.5% African American, 0.6% Native American/Alaskan Native, 13.6% other multiple races. Of the 50% of neighbors who speak a primary language other than English, 32.1% speak Khmer, 14.1% Spanish, and 3.4% Portuguese. In a city where poverty is high, the poverty rate in Lower Highlands is one of the highest in the city at 22.3% (vs 17.3% in the city and 11% in the state); the poverty rate for neighborhood families is 31.1%. According to data provided by the Lowell Police Department, for this neighborhood that comprises a little more than 3% of the total population of Lowell, it is the location of 18% of the armed robberies in the city, 22% of all gang crime, 12% of vandalism offenses, 17% of firearm crimes, 16% of the drug arrests, and 11% of Juvenile Crime offenses. In 2010 Lowell’s population increased by 1.3% from year 2000, but the Lower Highlands saw a decline of 3.2%, which the Lowell Planning Department attributes to increasing crime in the area. Of Lower Highlands residents, 25.4% are unemployed (vs. 11.5% in the city and 7.2% in the state). Only 27% of residents 18 and over have graduated from high school; 24% of the age 25+ population has education attainment that is less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

In June 2014, Project LEARN (see page 13) released an anonymous, confidential survey to the Lower Highlands Neighborhood through the LPS and Lower Highlands Neighborhood Group Facebook pages. With the qualifying question, “Do you live in the Lower Highlands Neighborhood,” 86 neighbors responded. Respondents were asked about the challenges facing residents, with the response categories, “This is a challenge for ... [*none, some, many, or most*] in my neighborhood.” The highest rated challenges that face “most” or “many” neighbors according to the results are: 66% “income,” 61% “community disorganization,” 60% general safety of community,” 52% “unemployment,” 51% “youth crime,” and 39% “food insecurity.” Respondents were also asked both (1) “If the school at 125 Smith Street had these services, open and free to the community, would *you or your household members* use them?” and (2) “...do you think *your neighbors* would use them?” Results are shown in Table 4.

	% Self	% Neighbors		% Self	% Neighbors
Community garden	77	87	Career counseling	70	84
Weight room	69	82	Adult ed.	54	88
Aerobics/similar	72	82	Health fair	65	85
Job fair	66	85	Food panty	47	88

(ii) *The eligible services.* The proposed LHSCA FSCS will serve 360 unduplicated students and 3,000 unduplicated adults over the project period. Figure 1 on the following page summarizes the needs and the eligible services identified to address those needs. Table 5, which follows, provides more information on each service and its intended outcomes. None of the services in Table 5 are currently available at LHSCA. Unduplicated counts take into account the fact that a certain percentage of students and adults will engage in activities in every year. For example, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader enrolled in LHSCA FSCS afterschool programs who becomes a 10<sup>th</sup> grader in year 2 and continues to use the afterschool programs is only counted once in the unduplicated count.

**Figure 1: Needs and Eligible Services**



<b>Service</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Intensity and Target Population</b>	<b>Measurable Outcomes</b>
Mentoring	Volunteers from local employers, coordinated by FSCS Coordinator	1 hour per week, all weeks, 40 students/year: 150 unduplicated	(1) Increased work readiness skills; <sup>viii</sup> (2) Increased understanding of connections between classroom and career/work; <sup>ix</sup> (3) Decreased school-related disciplinary incidents; <sup>x</sup> (4) Increased attendance <sup>xi</sup>
Afterschool Academic and Enrichment Programs	LPS Teachers; 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center partners (21stCCLC)	12 hours per week for 33 weeks/yr (27 in yr 1); Yr1: 50 students; Yr2: 75 students; Yrs3-5: 100 students/year; 180 unduplicated	(1) Improved academic performance; <sup>xii</sup> (2) Increased school connectedness; <sup>xiii</sup> (3) Reduced school-related disciplinary incidents <sup>xiv</sup>
Summer Academic and Enrichment Programs	LPS Teachers; 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center partners (21stCCLC)	22 half-days per summer; Yr1: 50 students; Yr2: 75 students; Yrs3-5: 100 students/year; 180 unduplicated	(1) Improved academic performance; <sup>xv</sup> (2) Increased school connectedness; <sup>xvi</sup> (3) Reduce school-related disciplinary incidents <sup>xvii</sup>
Community Service Learning	Middlesex Community College (MCC); Christ Jubilee Church; CTI	20 hours/student/yr; Yr1: 50 students; Yr2: 75 students; Yrs3-5: 100 students/year; 225 unduplicated	(1) Improved academic performance; <sup>xviii</sup> (2) Increased community engagement <sup>xix</sup>

School Garden Activities	Mill City Grows (MCG)	At least 65 hrs/yr/student; Yr1: 100 students; Yr2: 150 students; Yrs3-5: 200 students/yr; 360 unduplicated	(1) Increased vegetable consumption/health; <sup>xx</sup> (2) Increased school connectedness <sup>xxi</sup>
Occupational Training: Youthbuild	Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI)	At least 80 hours per student; 60 students per year; 215 unduplicated	(1) Improved academic performance; <sup>xxii</sup> (2) OSHA Safety Certification
Intensive Case Management	Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI)	Average 10 hours/yr/student; Yr1: 75; Yr2: 110 students; Yrs 3-5: 150/yr; 300 unduplicated	(1) Reduced school-related disciplinary incidents; <sup>xxiii</sup> (2) Increased linkages to social services
Career Counseling and Advising	Career Center of Lowell (CCL)	Average 16 hours/student/yr; Yr1: 100; Yr2: 150 students; Yrs 3-5: 200 students/yr; 360 unduplicated	(1) Increased successful placement in jobs/education training post-grad <sup>xxiv</sup>
Health Clinic	Lowell Community Health Center (LCHC)	Average 2 hours/student/yr; Yr1: 80 students; Yr2: 120 students; Yrs3-5: 160 students/yr; 275 unduplicated	(1) Increased access to health care; (2) Increased use of health care; (3) Decreased drop-out rate <sup>xxv</sup>
Dual College Enrollment; Tutoring	Middlesex Community College (MCC)	55 hrs/enrolled student; Yrs3-5: 20 students/year; 45 unduplicated	(1) Improved academic performance; <sup>xxvi</sup> (2) Minimum of 70% of students will “pass” and awarded MCC credits

Career Counseling/ Advising for Adults	Career Center of Lowell (CCL)	Minimum 4 hours of counseling per adult/yr; 55 adults each year; 275 unduplicated	(1) Increased employment <sup>xxvii</sup>
Parent education	Partners, coordinated by FSCS Coordinator	4 parent ed classes/yr at 1.5 hrs each; 30 parents each year; 150 unduplicated	(1) Increased parent engagement with the school; <sup>xxviii</sup> (2) Improved student academic outcomes <sup>xxix</sup>
Adult Basic Education	Lowell Adult Education Center (LAE)	Average 6 hours/wk for 40 weeks for each adult; Yr1: 12 adults; Yrs2-5 24 adults/yr; 60 unduplicated adults	(1) Increased high school equivalency attainment; (2) Increased English as a Second Language certificate attainment
Community Garden	Mill City Grows (MCG)	Average 20 hours/yr/family; Yr1: 45 families (133 people); Yr2: 85 families (252 people); Yrs3-5: 110 families/yr (326 people/yr); 157 unduplicated families and 466 unduplicated people	(1) Increased vegetable consumption/health; <sup>xxx</sup> (2) Increased school-community connections <sup>xxxi</sup>
Vision Clinic	New England Eye Mobile Clinic (NEE)	60 students, parents, or other adults/yr.; 250 unduplicated	(1) Increased educational attainment; <sup>xxxii</sup> (2) Increased access to vision care

Job/career Fair (Annual)	Partners, Employers, coordinated by FSCS Coordinator with WIB and Chamber of Commerce	3 hrs/yr; Yr1: 100; Yr2: 150 students; Yrs 3-5: 200 students/yr; 360 unduplicated; PLUS Yr1: 100 adults; Yr2: 200 adults; Yrs3-5 300 adults/yr (unduplicated not calc.)	(1) Increased school-community connections; <sup>xxxiii</sup> (2) Increased exposure to job/career resources and information/employment
Health and Wellness Fair (Annual)	Partners, coordinated by FSCS Coordinator	3 hrs/yr; Yr1: 100; Yr2: 150 students; Yrs 3-5: 200 students/yr; 360 unduplicated; PLUS Yr1: 150 adults; Yr2: 250 adults; Yrs3-5 400 adults/yr (unduplicated not calc.)	(1) Increased school-community connections; <sup>xxxiv</sup> (2) Increased exposure to health/wellness resources and information
Food Pantry	Christ Jubilee Church, with LHSCA student community service learners	Open 2 hours 52 weeks/yr; 100 families (297 people) in each year; 185 unduplicated families (550 people)	(1) Increased access to nutrition; (2) Improved access to and use of social service programs; (3) Increased school-community connections <sup>xxxv</sup>
Community Fitness Programs	Christ Jubilee Church	Open 9 hours/wk, all weeks; Yr2: 30 students; Yrs3-5: 40 students/yr; 72 unduplicated. PLUS Yr2: 20 adults; Yr3: 35 adults; Yr4: 46 adults; Yr5: 54 adults; 80 unduplicated	(1) Increased access to physical fitness opportunities; (2) Increased school-community connections <sup>xxxvi</sup>

*(iii) Potential/planning for sustaining gains beyond the grant.* The opening of the LHSCA in August 2013 is a testament to LPS's investment in doing better by our highest-risk students. In a time of a fiscally bleak local budget, the elected School Committee's decision to create a new position to overhaul and oversee the school and to better coordinate other alternative education programs (i.e., Director of Alternative Education) is significant evidence of the commitment to develop true alternatives to success for students at the LHSCA. An infusion of resources by USED to transform the LHSCA into a FSCS is well-timed as the school continues to move through its first years. LPS's intention is for the LHSCA FSCS to become a demonstration site for other LPS schools and indeed, other schools across the country. The strong evaluation plan described in section e will provide data not only to inform continuous quality improvement at the LHSCA FSCS, but also to demonstrate effectiveness to local leaders and stakeholders. As shown in the Management Plan (Table 6, pages 26-28), there are specific intentional plans for LPS to learn from the LHSCA FSCS and to expand the model to other schools.

A unique asset to LPS is Project LEARN, an independent nonprofit organization established in 2013, with initial funding entirely from the local business community, founded by the business community in association with LPS, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and the local community foundation. Project LEARN's mission is to help LPS improve student outcomes and strengthen school and community systems through partnership development, increasing supplemental revenue, helping clarify district-wide strategic priorities through a yearlong community engagement process that will begin in August 2014, and providing additional technical assistance such as community relations. Project LEARN has been cited by independent think tank MassINC and the MA Secretary of Education<sup>xxxvii</sup> as a promising practice for "gateway cities" like Lowell. Project LEARN will coordinate and oversee a strategic planning process for the LHSCA FSCS in year 2, which will result in a 5-year action plan for sustainability and growth. As part of the sustainability plan, in year 3, Project LEARN will help project staff create a fund development plan to sustain project services by LPS and nonprofit

partners to supplement LPS's anticipated continued investment. In year 4, with data to show efficacy, Project LEARN will conduct a fundraising campaign for the school which is likely to include grant writing, special events, and gifts from individual donors like alumni. In each project year, Project LEARN will assist the school with its community relations in order to facilitate the project goal of school-community engagement, but also to develop buy-in to the school from diverse stakeholders, including local decision-makers and potential funders. By year 2, Project LEARN will work with project and school staff to rebrand LHSCA FSCS, including a new name and revised mission, values, and vision statements.

*(iv) Integrating, building on related efforts:* There are a number of programs at LHSCA that will supplement the services funded through FSCS and collectively increase their impact. (1) Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a framework for the implementation of evidence-based systems and practices that support positive academic, social, and behavioral outcomes for all students via multi-tiered supports, has been woven into LHSCA from its inception. Proven to favorably impact academic and behavioral outcomes,<sup>xxxviii</sup> and to be particularly beneficial in alternative education environments to organize student interventions (e.g., data-defined highest risk students receive the most intense interventions),<sup>xxxix</sup> PBIS is an approach to establishing positive whole-school climate and organizing interventions across tiers of support that focus on prevention and instruction.<sup>xl</sup> Under a MA DESE grant, LHSCA has been receiving on-site technical assistance from the leader in the PBIS field, Director of the USED-funded National PBIS Center, Dr. George Sugai. On June 23, 2014, LPS will submit a grant to USED under the School Climate Transformation grant for LEAs, which would advance PBIS implementation at the LHSCA FSCS by building internal capacity to implement and sustain PBIS over a 5-year period as part of a districtwide strategy to scale up implementation from 5 LPS schools that are piloting PBIS to all 24 schools. In addition to professional development for staff, funding would provide LHSCA FSCS with the School-Wide Information System (SWIS), a reliable, confidential, web-based system to collect, summarize, and use

student behavior data for decision making in real time. SWIS reports allow teams to review school-wide referral patterns and define behavior patterns at the individual, school, and district level in great detail to inform instruction and behavioral supports.<sup>xli</sup> (2) Under a grant from MA DESE, Project LEARN and the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board have been working with LHSCA to initiate employer partnerships so that students can be engaged in work-based learning (e.g., externships), develop a “soft skills” curriculum (e.g., interviewing skills) so that students are better prepared to transition to college and career, and to develop a speaker series whereby diverse professionals will visit the school weekly for career exploration activities. (3) Under the 2013 Carl D. Perkins Act allocation, LHSCA has begun implementing Naviance, a college and career readiness web-based platform. Through an online self-discovery system, in collaboration with parents, teachers, and school counselors, Naviance enables students to find college and career pathways that are right for them. Students start by using Naviance to set personalized goals, assess their strengths, explore career options based on interests, search for colleges, apply for scholarships, and track admissions status. Naviance helps students plan a course of action to reach and monitor clear academic and career goals, find resources to prepare academically, and discover their own path. (4) On June 16, 2014, LPS applied for a grant from USHHS SAMHSA that would provide the National Mental Health Council’s Youth Mental Health First Aide (YMHFA) training (i.e., an 8-hour course designed to help adults and peers recognize and intervene with adolescents experiencing a mental health crisis) to 600 Lowell professionals, including at least 5 LHSCA staff, 30 LHSCA students, and 30 parents and neighborhood adults. The YMHFA grant is a collaborative of 14 local agencies, including 4 of the partners for the proposed project. (5) In April 2014, LPS applied for a grant to the USDA under its “Farm-to-School” program. If funded, it would supplement the proposed school gardens by developing 8 math and science curriculum-aligned nutrition lesson toolkits for LHSCA students with Mill City Grows. (6) Under a grant from the MA Governor’s Office, LHSCA staff are working with a technical assistance provider to implement a competency-based

determination (CPD) system for LHSCA students. In this system, rather than traditional grades or grade levels, students earn “competency” benchmarks based on a competency rubric; the demonstration of skills is valued more than traditional assessments (e.g., tests). CPD systems allow students to have diverse learning paths, which is a core element of personalized learning.

Local resources that will further LHSCA FSCS’s goals include the following partners who have committed to the project in the attached MOU: (1) The Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce, a 700-member Chamber, will help link the school with business partners, including potential mentors. (2) The Greater Lowell Community Foundation, the leading philanthropic organization in the Greater Lowell area, will promote the LHSCA FSCS with its philanthropic networks and will provide students with information and assistance to apply for scholarships to assist with college access. (3) The Lower Highlands Neighborhood Association, an Association with more than 370 followers on Facebook and an active community action Council, will help build the school-neighborhood partnership, including promoting project activities with neighbors, welcoming the FSCS Coordinator and project staff to link with neighbors at its quarterly meetings, and providing input to shape the project. (4) The Merrimack Valley Food Bank will help support – fiscally and otherwise – the project’s food pantry. Local partners providing direct services are described in section d.

In addition, the FSCS Coordinator will become a member of four local collaboratives in order to continually look for avenues to build direct services at the LHSCA FSCS and expand partnerships. (1) The youth-focused Lowell Mental Health Coalition fosters networking, sharing observations/data, and improving mental health outcomes for Lowell youth and is attended by more than 15 nonprofit, municipal, and private organizations. (2) The Lowell Youth Development Collaborative is focused on violence reduction, and monthly meetings are attended by the City Manager, District Attorney, police chief, and the heads of more than 12 youth-serving agencies. (3) The Greater Lowell Evaluation and Advocacy Network works to address high-risk domestic violence and includes more than 30 agencies. (4) The Nonprofit Alliance of

Greater Lowell includes over 60 nonprofit organizations who meet monthly to promote collaboration among nonprofits across the city.

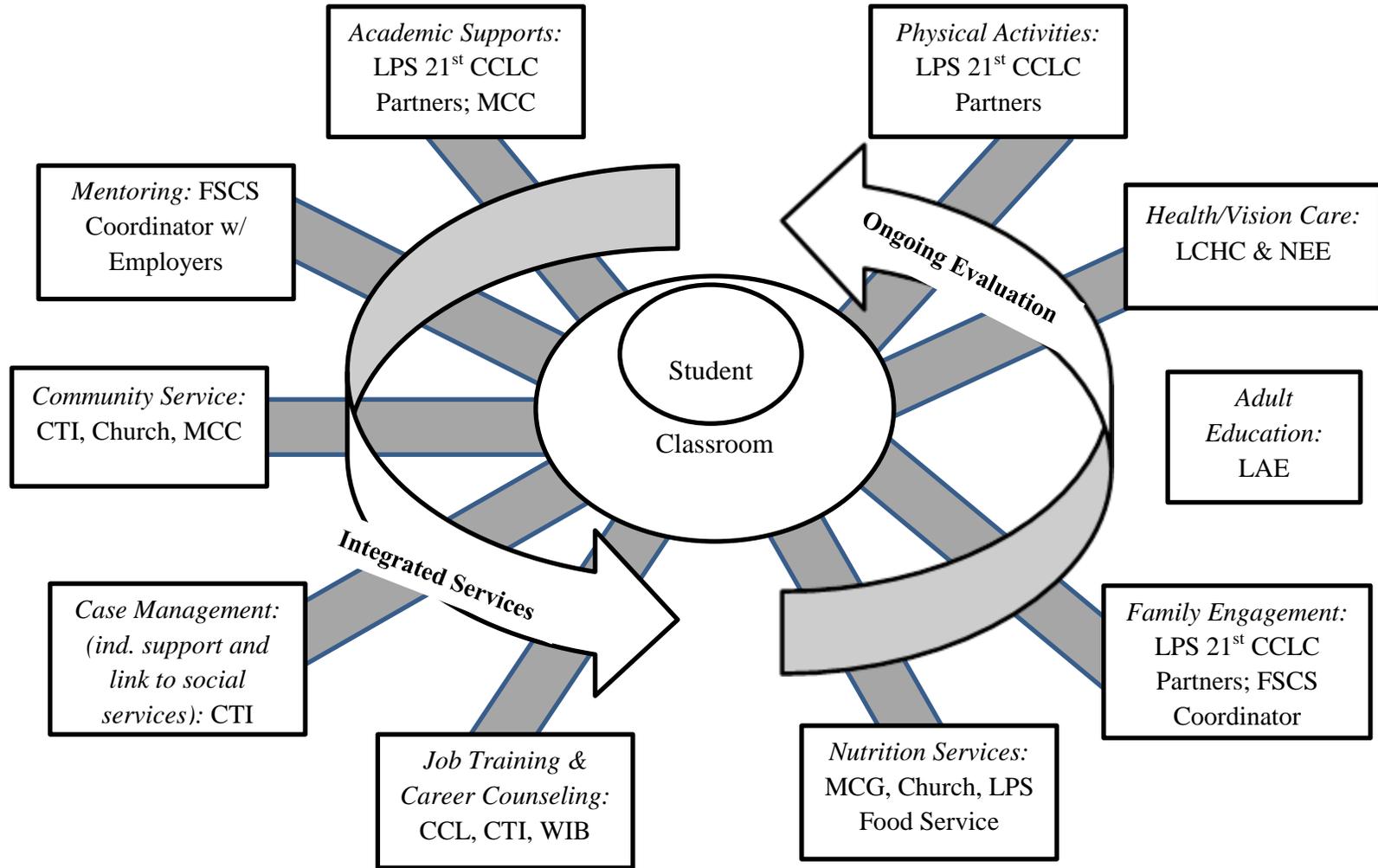
**(b) Adequacy of Resources**

*(i) Support provided by LPS and partners:* The proposed project will occur in a stand-alone school that, while run-down, has the space to accommodate all of the proposed project activities except two. Because the school does not have a gym or a suitable area for food refrigeration and storage, the Christ Jubilee Church will host a community gym, which will also be used by students afterschool, and the food pantry. The Church is immediately next door and the two organizations share a parking lot. Further, a federal investment of \$25,000 in supplies for cosmetic improvements at LHSCA will be leveraged by at least 180 volunteer man hours to conduct projects like painting. The proposed school and community gardens not only bring learning opportunities, but also convert the blighted space into one of beauty.

As described in the attached budget narrative on matching funds, the project partners will contribute at least 21% and at least \$666,000 in non-federal matching resources to the project, including more than \$230,000 from LPS, though we expect it to be much more as the project moves beyond early implementation. For example, the entire project cost of establishing site-based health services for students is \$2,350 in equipment; all service costs will be covered by insurance and other LCHC resources. The partners propose to work through Project LEARN (see page 13) to develop additional resources to supplement and sustain the LHSCA FSCS. (Note: These service are not part of the budget or match because fundraising is not an allowable expense.) In addition, the district foregoes its indirect cost rate.

*(ii) Relevance and commitment of each partner:* To develop the proposed project, LPS studied the eligible FSCS services, the USED grant program guidance, the research literature, and the model of FSCS developed by Communities In Schools<sup>xlii</sup> - matched these to local needs, and then met with project partners with known expertise in the community to develop services in a collaborative project planning process. The result is shown in Figure2.

Figure 2: LHSCA FSCS Model



All of the services will be provided by nonprofit partners except mentoring because the proposed mentoring program, which seeks to match volunteer mentors from local businesses with LHSCA FSCS students to develop student skills as much in socio-emotional development as in work readiness, does not exist locally. The FSCS Coordinator will implement a mentoring program that follows the evidence-based best practices of the National Mentoring Partnership:<sup>xliii</sup> namely weekly meetings to which project-trained mentors and willing mentees commit for one year. Each mentor will receive at least three hours of training and be paired with 1-3 students in weekly experiences at school-, and eventually, work-based sites (i.e., visits at local businesses) for work-based immersion. Mentor matching will be completed in-line with each student's career goals and interests. Only students who agree to receive a mentor and are willing to engage in this type of relationship will be "matched." The FSCS Coordinator will work with WIB to adopt a career-focused mentoring curriculum for mentors to follow with students.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center (CCLC) Partners: The LPS Coordinator of Special Programs will oversee the afterschool and summer programs, which will build on the strengths of 10 other 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC sites in LPS. A limited amount of state funding is available to LPS each year, and Centers are located in sites that are accessible to the most students with the most needs in a magnet model. However, the age and characteristics of the LHSCA students and the principles of FSCS strongly indicate that the school have its own site-based services. The goal of all CCLCs is to provide students with academic and enrichment opportunities to complement students' regular academic programs, assisting students to achieve academically and develop strong relationships with peers and adults. The LHSCA FSCS will be site-managed by the FSCS Coordinator, and academic programs, like tutoring, provided by LPS teachers. A high-quality curriculum will be well-integrated with day school programs and implemented by highly qualified teachers, paraprofessionals, and volunteer staff. As with all LPS and MA CCLC sites, additional site-based enrichment activities aligned with FSCS goals will be provided by nonprofit partners based on student interest and needs. These may include a running club,

karate, boxing, cooking, robotics, and more. The school gardens will be integrated into the CCLC program. A CCLC Parent Liaison will help strengthen parent connections with afterschool/summer programs. Finally, implementing the summer program will also provide students with access to free breakfast and lunch through federally-funded nutrition programs.

Career Center of Lowell (CCL): CCL works closely with the business community to identify and meet their employment needs and to provide job seekers with a wide range of job search and training services; it is part of the MA One-Stop Career Center system. CCL operates under the direction of the City of Lowell and is chartered by the local Workforce Investment Board. A CCL staff will be placed at LHSCA FSCS for 4 hours every other week.

Christ Jubilee Church (Church)'s mission statement is "Fellowshipping Without Borders." The Church endeavors to "encourage without perceptions, accept without discriminations, embrace without distinctions, fellowship without prejudices, and serve God without reservations." Christ Jubilee is located directly next door to the LHSCA. Three years ago, the Church attempted to work with the then "Molloy" short-term alternative school to open its unused rooms for student exercise since the school building has no gym. But lacking resources, it did not happen. FSCS represents a new partnership opportunity. With minor cosmetic improvements to two church rooms, the purchase of fitness equipment, and project-funded fitness staff, the Church will open its doors to LHSCA students and the community for 9 afterschool hours per week. In addition, the Church currently manages a food pantry, which is open twice per month. Church leaders observe a need for more, but members' gifts cannot cover the costs. The FSCS grant will allow the food pantry – which is open to all and frequented primarily by non-Church members – to fill an important void in this most basic necessity. Moreover, the food pantry provides an important community service learning opportunity for the students who will help church staff to operate it.

Community Teamwork Inc. (CTI), established in 1965, is Greater Lowell's Community Action Agency. This 501(c)3 nonprofit organization works to strengthen communities and reduce poverty by providing a wide range of vital services to create housing, education, and other

economic opportunities for more than 50,000 people per year. The 400 staff include 75 Case Managers, making the agency uniquely suited to provide this needed service to our students. A full-time Case Manager will be placed at LHSCA FSCS and his/her primary tasks will be to provide intensive Case Management services to each student in need of crisis intervention and resource/referral. Case Management services will also include pre- assessment services, personal goal development, counseling services, and monitoring of personal goal achievement.

CTI is also the local manager of the national Youthbuild program, which supports low-income youth work toward their high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their communities. Emphasis is placed on leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to each other's success. A full-time Construction Trainer will be placed at LHSCA FSCS and will work with other CTI Youthbuild staff to provide: (1) Occupational Training, including vocational classes, hands-on instruction in the LHSCA onsite workshop, which the Trainer will build with students, and practical application at community worksites; (2) A 10-hour OSHA safety course; (3) Skills curriculum utilizing the National Center for Construction, Education and Research (NCCER) and the Home Builders Institute Pre-Apprenticeship Construction Training (HBI-PACT) curricula; (4) Construction Skills Training, including an introduction to Green-Building practices, like weatherization and solar panel array, which will be supplemented with job shadowing and on-the-job training with local industry partners.

Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is one of 16 WIBs in MA, and is charged with overseeing and implementing workforce development initiatives throughout the area. WIB coordinates a wide range of workforce development activities, representing a multitude of federal and state funding streams, including career counseling for students and adults as well as job fairs and "Young Adult Summer Employment." Complementing the CCL staff, a WIB Career Advisor will be placed at LHSCA FSCS for 4 hours every other week.

Lowell Adult Education Center (LAE) provides a full array of adult basic education services and

opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults in the greater Lowell area in need of Adult Secondary Education (ASE) classes or English language instruction. LAE is one of the largest programs of basic education in MA and New England, educating more than 2,400 adults each year, graduating more than 500 adults with high school credentials and more than 700 foreign speaking adults with English competency certificates. One certified instructor will provide six hours of classes each week for 40 weeks per year.

Lowell Community Health Center (LCHC), founded in 1970, operates a large primary care practice in Lowell, providing services to low-income and uninsured residents; it provides primary care services to more than half of Lowell residents. LCHC's mission is to provide caring, quality, and culturally competent health services to the people of Greater Lowell; to reduce health disparities and enhance the health of the Greater Lowell community; and to empower each individual to maximize their overall well-being. Services include primary health care, OB/GYN, family planning, behavioral health services, care management, expanded outreach and enrollment services to access affordable health care insurance coverage, lab and pharmacy services, and innovative health promotion and education programs. Supplementing the on-site school nurse provided by the City of Lowell Health Department, LCHC will provide a Medical Assistant (also trained as a Family Planning Counselor) and a Nurse Practitioner who will provide on-site health services 1-2 times per month as indicated by student needs.

Middlesex Community College (MCC) is a public community college with campuses in suburban Bedford and the city of Lowell. MCC has a total annual enrollment of more than 10,000 credit students and several thousand noncredit students. The proposed dual enrollment project replicates a successful model between MCC and a nearby charter school that serves students ages 16+ who have previously dropped out of high school. In grade 12, all LHSCA FSCS students who meet criteria for placement in dual enrollment (2.0 GPA, guidance counselor recommendation, and placement at the college-level on the Accuplacer College Placement test) will be able to participate in dual enrollment courses, providing the opportunity to gain post-

secondary credit while still in high school. Three-credit “101” college courses will be offered at LHSCA to cohort groups of 15 students each. Students will be awarded MCC credit on completion. In addition, MCC’s Service-Learning Coordinator will create *community service learning (CSL)* opportunities that will be completed jointly by LHSCA FSCS and MCC students, thereby providing additional mentoring and college connections. MCC’s Service Learning Coordinator will supervise MCC student placements to work with student participants on meaningful CSL. Each student will be required to engage in one CSL project per year, which will typically be classroom-wide team projects that put their growing knowledge and skills in place to make a difference in the community. Using MA CSL guidelines, this project will combine service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This will be accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content (e.g., build community gardening sites). Each student will engage in a minimum of 16 CSL hours per year.

Mill City Grows (MCG), currently under the fiscal agency of the YWCA of Lowell, was founded in 2011 to coalesce a neighborhood group and the city to convert a blighted park into a community garden. Today, MCG coordinates three community gardens with a total of 80 garden plots in use by Lowell residents, each with extensive waitlists. In 2013, MCG expanded its programs through building Lowell’s first Urban Farm, an educational production farm where MCG staff and volunteers grow produce that is donated and sold through its Mobile Market, which was piloted in 2013 to make affordable produce available to limited-access Lowell residents, and which is fully implemented as of June 2014. MCG also launched its Garden Coordinator Institute, training 22 residents in urban food production and community leadership, as well as the Youth Food Justice Program, exposing 55 young people to hands-on curriculum and projects illustrating food justice concepts. MCG was awarded a full-time FoodCorps Service member this spring and was recently selected as a Social Innovator by the statewide

organization, Root Cause. MCG works with 5 LPS schools on school gardens. In all cases, the garden is used by teachers for curricular tie-ins that include life cycles, food webs, plant parts, composting, scientific method, soil habitats, weather, cultural connections, and more. MCG will design and install a 20-bed garden at LHSCA FSCS in year 1 and another 20 beds in year 2. At least five of these will be dedicated to students and school lessons. MCG will work directly with students and will work with LPS Curriculum Coordinators to refine existing science, technology, engineering, and math school garden curricular alignment and lessons. Some gardens will be specific to community gardeners, and MCG will recruit, train, and support these gardeners, including ensuring sustainability plans are in place to maintain all gardens, all year.

New England Eye (NEE) is the nonprofit patient care subsidiary of The New England College of Optometry, and is an innovative leader in patient-centered eye care by delivering the most current approaches to treatment of eye and vision disorders. In pursuit of its mission, NEE aims to deliver exceptional eye care for people throughout all stages of life. The NEE Eye “On-Site” mobile clinic aims to correct and maximize vision to enhance all qualities of life for children and adults. Services include eye exams and eyeglasses, low vision rehabilitation including occupational therapy, and case management. A fully equipped 38-foot optometry clinic with a licensed specialist pediatric optometrist on board, the mobile clinic will come curbside to LHSCA FSCS four times per year to serve students, parents, and neighbors.

**(iii) Reasonable Costs:** The most powerful predictors of whether a student will complete high school include course performance and attendance during the first year of high school,<sup>xliv</sup> both of which are designed to be impacted by the proposed project. Further, the lowest-achieving 25% of students (i.e., all students at LHSCA) are 20 times more likely to drop out of high school, compared to students in the highest-achievement quartile.<sup>xlv</sup> The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2009 was \$19,540, compared to \$27,380 for a high school graduate.<sup>xlvi</sup> Nationally, if the students who dropped out of the Class of 2011 had graduated, the nation’s economy would likely benefit from nearly \$154 billion in additional income over the course of

their lifetimes.<sup>xlvii</sup> According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for high school dropouts in August 2011—four years after the start of the recession—was 14.3% compared to 9.6% for high school graduates, 8.2% for individuals with some college credits, and 4.3% for individuals with a bachelor’s degree or higher.<sup>xlviii</sup> Among those between the ages of 18 and 24, dropouts are more than twice as likely as college graduates to live in poverty.<sup>xlix</sup> Finally, among dropouts between the ages 16-24, incarceration rates were 63 times higher than among college graduates.<sup>1</sup>

The total proposed federal investment in Lowell over 5 years is \$2.5 million, with approximately \$1,790,000 directly benefitting students and \$710,000 directly benefiting parents and community members to strengthen the systems of supports surrounding the children. With 360 unduplicated students served during the project period, this is a direct investment of \$4,972 per student over the life of the grant (or \$6,944 total), which is an investment that will be doubled on return in the first half-year of post-LHSCA FSCS employment for these students using the above-described data.

### **(c) Quality of the Management Plan**

*(i) A comprehensive plan:* Table 6 on the following pages is the project’s management plan. As stipulated in the attached MOU, the Advisory Council will be comprised of 12 representatives of all partnering agencies (exception Boston-based NEE), as well as the school Director, the FSCS Coordinator, and two LHSCA FSCS teachers, and will be expanded to include three employers and two parents during year 1. The FSCS Coordinator will recruit at least 5 parents to serve on a Parent Council, which will meet quarterly to provide project input based on evaluation data and personal experience as well as to assist in developing effective parent engagement strategies. A Youth Council is already in place, but will be strengthened by the FSCS Coordinator to include at least eight students with whom the Coordinator and the Director of LHSCA will meet weekly. In so doing, the project will collect important student input and, at the same time, provide an additional youth leadership opportunity.

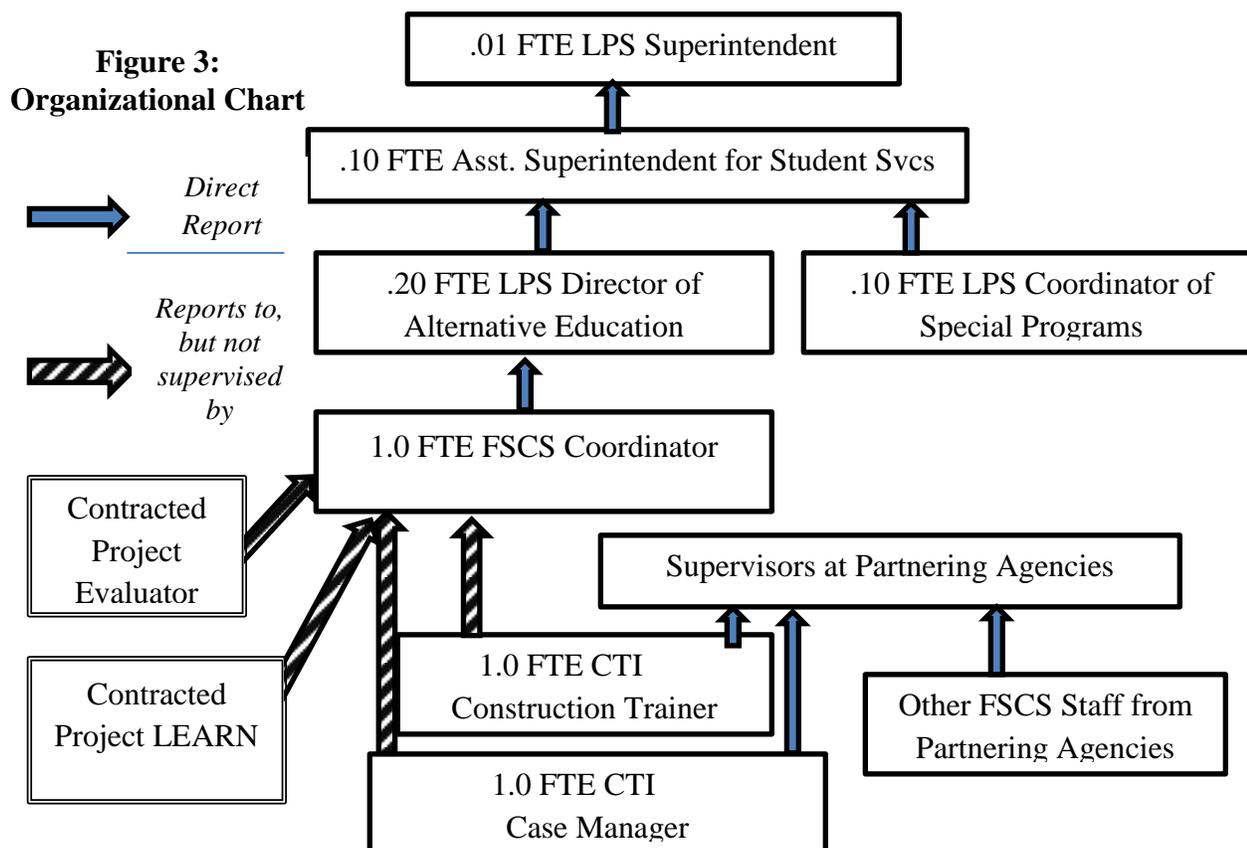
**Table 6: Management Plan**

<i>Timeline in quarters. 1=Oct-Dec; 2=Jan-Mar; 3=Apr-Jun; 4=Jul-Sep</i>		<i>Year 1</i>				<i>Year 2</i>				<i>Year 3</i>				<i>Year 4</i>				<i>Year 5</i>			
<b>ACTIVITY/Milestone</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
FSCS Coordinator Hired	LPS H.R., w Director of Alt Ed. & partner input	x																			
Weekly supervision of FSCS Coordinator	Director of Alt Ed	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
FSCS Coordinator integrated in all staff activities	Director of Alt Ed	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Complete design of afterschool program based on student interest/needs, and review annually	LPS Coordinator of Special Programs with FSCS Coordinator	x			x				x				x				x				x
Complete design of summer program based on student interest/needs				x				x				x				x				x	
Execute contracts with all providers	LPS Business Office	x			x				x				x				x				x
All services operating (except comm fitness rms)	FSCS Coordinator; partners		x																		
Advisory Council meets (4x/yr), Parent Council meets (5x/yr), Youth Council meets (weekly)	Advisory Councils, with FSCS Coord and Dir of Alt Ed	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Complete evaluation design, including selection of instruments	Evaluator w/ FSCS Coordinator & Dir of Alt Ed	x																			
Ongoing project evaluation activities	Evaluator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

<i>Timeline in quarters. 1=Oct-Dec; 2=Jan-Mar; 3=Apr-Jun; 4=Jul-Sep</i>		Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
<b>ACTIVITY/Milestone</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Present data/findings to Superintendents	Evaluator w/ FSCS Coordinator & Dir of Alt Ed				x				x				x				x				x
Present data/findings to the community (public meeting, LPS and LHSCA website, social media) and all 3 Councils				x				x	x			x	x			x	x			x	x
Reporting to grantor	FSCS Coord; Evaluator	as specified by USED																			
Develop brand for LHSCA FSCS and community engagement: promote project to all stakeholders	FSCS Coord; Project LEARN			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Unveil new identity/brand for LHSCA FSCS	FSCSC Coord with community				x																
Launch LHSCA FSCS website	Project LEARN w/ LHSCA				x																
Complete planning for community fitness rooms	Christ Jubilee with FSCS Coordinator	x																			
Ready community fitness rooms (paint, clean, buy equipment)	Christ Jubilee, with partners, volunteers	x	x																		
Community fitness room operating	Christ Jubilee; proj staff			x																	
Cosmetic improvements to LHSCA FSCS	Volunteers	x	x	x				x				x				x					x
4 x/yr LHSCA staff (e.g., teachers) professional development on topics related to FSCS	FSCS Coord with Director and staff	x		x		x	x			x	x			x	x			x	x		

<i>Timeline in quarters. 1=Oct-Dec; 2=Jan-Mar; 3=Apr-Jun; 4=Jul-Sep</i>		Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
<b>ACTIVITY/Milestone</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Quarterly professional development for All FSCS staff	FSCSC Coord with project staff, including partners		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Develop strategic plan for LHSCA FSCS, including sustainability plan	FSCS Coordinator, Adv. Council with Project LEARN					x	x	x	x												
Review/update strategic plan	FSCS Coord.; Adv. Council											x					x				x
Develop fund development plan for FSCS	Project LEARN											x									
Develop LPS resources for sustaining FSCS	LPS Superintendents													x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Develop funds for FSCS ( <i>not grant funded</i> )	Project LEARN															x	x	x	x	x	x
Develop strategic plan for replication of FSCS model to other sites	LPS Superintendents									x	x	x	x								
Review/update strategic plan	FSCS Coord.; Adv. Council																x				x
Develop LPS resources for expanding FSCS	District leaders													x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Review/update FSCS MOU	All Partner			x				x				x				x					x
Develop resources to expand FSCS	Project LEARN															x	x	x	x	x	x
Create student/comm resource map, document gaps, and create/implement action plan to close gaps	FSCS Coordinator with Evaluator, Partners			x				x				x				x					x

The Director of Alternative Education serves as the principal of the school. Figure 3 is the organizational chart. All staff delivering services via FSCS will meet quarterly for 1.5 hours of FSCS-related professional development.



*(ii) Qualifications and experience:* The to-be-hired FSCS Coordinator's job description is located in Appendix A. The Coordinator is central to the effective facilitation of the partnerships that are essential to the success of the FSCS programs as well as the coordination and integration of services, programs, supports, and available opportunities. S/he will hold a master's degree in Education, Social Work, or Public Health. The Coordinator will report to Director of Alternative Education Margaret Ferrick. Ms. Ferrick, a licensed social worker, has been employed by LPS for 17 years, the first 14 as a social worker and the past four years in administrative roles in Alternative Education environments. She oversees several smaller LPS alternative education programs, each with their own principal or coordinator, but her primary responsibility is to serve

as the principal of the LHSCA, where she is located full-time. She has been a champion and leader for innovative school climate reform efforts in LPS, such as building a direct link with the Director of the National PBIS Center and shepherding PBIS' growth district-wide. Ms. Ferrick reports to Assistant Superintendent Jeannine Durkin, who has 30 years experience in public education including 10 in administrative roles, of which five were directing the Lowell High School Freshman Academy. She holds a Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction.

The Coordinator and the LHSCA FSCS will receive substantial support from Project LEARN, primarily from Executive Director is Susan Linn. As a former federal project director for three multi-year multi-million dollar federal grants and as a Grants Coordinator that managed more than \$10 million annually in grant funds for a public school district, Ms. Linn is uniquely positioned to provide project management support. Ms. Linn's experience included five years managing a federally funded, \$1.5 million per year, 20+ member cross-sector collaboration focused on improving student outcomes via co-locating site-based services with partners, which she worked with project partners to sustain, and which is currently sustained two years post-federal funding. Previously, Ms. Linn worked with three partners to develop a unique mental health resource and referral system in one community, which was federally funded in 2005, and today is strong in 24 additional communities. Ms. Linn holds a Master's Degree in Social Work administration and has more than 13 years relevant experience. (Project LEARN may use additional staff to develop the LHSCA FSCS website and manage the school's social media presence.) The resumes for these three individuals (Ferrick, Durkin, Linn) are located in Appendix A, which also includes the job descriptions for the Case Manager and the Construction Trainer, as well as the qualifications of the evaluator and the evaluation firm.

The most similar service to FSCS is the LPS 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, which are described on page 19. LPS CCLCs have been cited as a leader by the MA DESE in effectively bringing partners to schools to serve students with academic and enrichment programs to improve academic achievement. LPS has consistently met its goals and objectives

for this grant-funded initiative. Further, LPS manages services to more than 14,000 students in 24 schools. A full time Grants Manager is supported by three full-time assistants who assist program staff to manage diverse grant funds totaling over \$22 million per year. The Grants Manager holds a BS and graduate certificate in Finance. She has held this position for four years and has an additional 20 years experience in financial management roles in the private sector.

#### **(d) Quality of Project Services**

**(i) *Project reflects research and effective practice:*** The citations in Table 5 (references in Appendix D) document that each project service is linked to current research literature that demonstrates that each is likely to result in the stated measurable intermediary outcomes (e.g., increased health) related to the overarching goal of improved student academic achievement and attainment. The exceptions to documented research literature evidence are the “obvious” outcomes, such as “a vision clinic will result in increased access to vision care services.”

**(ii) *Improved academic achievement:*** More specifically, research demonstrates that the proposed FSCS model of collocating the proposed wrap-around site-based services and engagement strategies for students, their families, and the community, by partnering with community-based organizations, will lead to improvements in the achievement of students like the LHSCA students.<sup>li lii liii</sup> USED states that, “When schools and community partners collaborate to address these issues and align their resources to achieve common results, children are more likely to succeed academically, socially, and physically.”<sup>liv</sup> Harvard Family Research Project has documented evidence that when schools partner with families and community-based organizations such as those proposed, youth development and school success is improved.<sup>lv</sup> More specifically, full-service community schools have been associated with increased family and community engagement,<sup>lvi</sup> increased family stability,<sup>lvii</sup> improved health,<sup>lviii</sup> better use of school buildings and increased security and pride in neighborhoods,<sup>lix</sup> strengthened communities,<sup>lx</sup> improved student behavior and youth development,<sup>lxi</sup> and improved attendance and student achievement.<sup>lxii</sup>

### (e) Quality of the Project Evaluation

LHSCA FSCS will partner with an outside firm, Social Science Research and Evaluation, Inc. (SSRE) to conduct the evaluation, which will be led by Dr. Robert Apsler (SSRE President, Resume in Appendix A) and Dana de Bernardo (SSRE Research Associate), with assistance from other SSRE staff as needed. Founded in 1984, SSRE is a non-profit firm specializing in the delivery of program evaluation and basic and applied social science research services to government, schools, industry, and other public and private organizations. SSRE staff possess extensive research experience in several pertinent areas, including positive youth development, student academics, social/emotional learning, school climate, and community development.

SSRE will conduct both a process and outcome evaluation of the current project. The process evaluation will be guided by five broad questions: (1) what are the goals and objectives of the project and what activities are planned to accomplish them; (2) how is the project actually carried out; (3) is the project implemented as planned; (4) if not, what changes are made in the project design and for what reasons; and (5) what problems are encountered when carrying out the project and how are they addressed? For each LHSCA FSCS activity, data on the following core process indicators will be collected or recorded by project staff: (1) a description of the activity, including its objectives, methods, and content; (2) when the activity occurs; (3) frequency of the activity; (4) the target audience; and (5) the number of people reached. Project staff will also capture information on progress, barriers, challenges, and lessons learned for each activity. SSRE will obtain and collect minutes from all project meetings. This information in conjunction with the information obtained from LHSCA FSCS staff will be used to construct a comprehensive project history and timeline, and highlight challenges and lessons learned to inform subsequent programming. In addition to narrative reports, *On-Time* and *Targets Reached* scores will be calculated for every service on a monthly basis. The *On-Time* score is the number of weeks between the planned start date for a service and the actual start date. The *Targets Reached* score is the percent of the population targeted for a service that the service succeeded in

reaching. These scores will show the status of project implementation at every month and easily identify which services are or are not meeting projections.

As specified in the USED FSCS request for proposals, SSRE will work closely with LHSCA FSCS to thoroughly document the number of individuals targeted to receive services and the number of individuals who actually receive services during each year of the project period. This information, expressed as a proportion, will be submitted as part of the annual performance report and will serve as the overarching performance measure for the project.

The outcome evaluation will be mixed-method in nature and will draw from school administrative records (collected via exiting student information management system, Aspen X2) and SWIS (see page 14), Naviance (see page 15), EWIS (see page 3), community indicator data, activity-specific questionnaires, and school/community questionnaires. For example, data from X2 and SWIS will be used to track: (1) standardized assessment scores (MCAS), (2) disciplinary incidents such as the number of expulsions and suspensions, (3) graduation rate, and (3) school attendance. School/community questionnaires will be used to track: (1) feelings of safety, (2) school climate, and (3) connections between students, families, school, and community. A complete list of project outcomes and performance targets appears in Table 5 (pages 9-12). Upon award, SSRE will work with LHSCA FSCS to identify appropriate standardized questionnaires and/or scales for the outcome measures relying on student, parent, or community self-report. Consideration will be given to factors such as whether or not the instrument/scale has well-documented psychometric properties, reading level, cultural acceptability, availability of translated versions, length, and overall appropriateness. SSRE will ensure that the evaluation methods and procedures used are sensitive to cultural factors such as language, age, and ethnic/racial background. SSRE has extensive experience working with and developing appropriate evaluation methods for diverse populations united by characteristics such as age, racial/ethnic background, disability, health status, and socioeconomic status. Any new measures that are adopted will be reviewed by a diverse group of stakeholders for evidence of their

reliability and validity with diverse populations.

Given the breadth and scope of proposed project services, a key consideration is the extent to which these services can be sustained, institutionalized, and diffused over time in other settings within and outside of Lowell. In order to make these strategic decisions, LHSCA FSCS needs to be able to identify: (a) which services are contributing the most to any observed change in project outcomes; (b) what is the level of intensity (dosage) associated with this change; and (c) what is the cost of providing these services? In other words, it is not sufficient to simply track outcomes over time without being able to attribute them to the services that were put in place and the cost of delivering these services. To this end, SSRE will work with LHSCA FSCS to: (1) determine the cost (both direct and indirect) of providing each service, (2) document the level of intensity of each service for each individual served, and (3) implement experimental and quasi-experimental designs to measure and report student impact.

The use of embedded experimental and quasi-experimental designs is feasible because not all services can be implemented for all students and their families at once. Thus, it will be possible to take advantage of practical limitations to implementing services and orchestrate who gets which services at what time. The first step in this process will consist of identifying those services that that can be implemented in a targeted manner. Mentors, for example, cannot begin working with all students at the same time. Therefore, the project can target which students initially begin working with mentors, and which receive mentoring services later, or who opt out of mentoring services. Relying heavily on research literature and school staff input, project staff will identify groups of students most likely to benefit from each service. For example, non-native English speakers might be expected to benefit even more from after-school academic support than native English speakers. Other examples include intensive case management, occupational training, after-school academic and enrichment programs, and community service learning. The determination of when and how to embed these design features into the evaluation will be a collaborative process with LHSCA FSCS staff. These decisions will be driven by

factors such as allocation of evaluation resources, number of individuals targeted, level of staff effort per service, human subject considerations, cultural competence considerations, and the wisdom of practice regarding which services are expected to have the greatest impact.

The exact statistical tests used will vary based on the metric of the measure, its distribution, the number of cases, the variability in the types of services implemented, and which services are repeated with new cohorts. At a minimum, descriptive statistics will be generated for all outcome measures and thematic coding will be used to process all qualitative data generated as part of the project. Whenever possible, covariates will be examined to determine whether or not different groups are differentially benefitting from the services to which they are exposed (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity).

Data will be reported at appropriate intervals to improve decision-making, strengthen program performance, and provide accountability. For example, reports on service activity will be generated periodically and shared with management staff, evaluation will be an agenda topic at all project management meetings, and, periodically, the evaluators will conduct oral data presentations to all staff members. In addition, the evaluators will generate data reports and white papers drawing from multiple data sources as implementation issues are identified (e.g., ways in which service delivery may be improved). SSRE will document project findings on an ongoing basis. These reports will be produced and disseminated to management staff and other stakeholders. At a minimum, reports will include a description of activities and accomplishments, implementation barriers, action steps to address barriers, lessons learned, and evaluative findings. Annual reports will include information on performance measures and on the findings of discrete evaluation activities. Sufficient detail will be provided to enable local stakeholders to determine whether or not project activities were successful and to allow for replication in other settings. Evaluation reports will be written in a style that is understandable to readers who have little or no previous training in research methods, and they will include the necessary methodological details to meet the needs of a scientific audience.