

*PTA Comunitario Development Grant (CFDA 84.411 P)  
Pre-Application PR/Award Number: U411P120126*

**Project Narrative: Table of Contents**

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITIES**

- Innovations that Support College Access and Success for Students in High Minority, Low SES Schools (CCP7)
  
- Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and LEP Students (CCP8)

	Page range
<b><u>SECTION A. QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN</u></b> .....	4-9
Section A (1). The project addresses Absolute Priority #3 (Improving School Engagement) with a clear set of goals, and an explicit strategy aligned with priorities and expected to result in achieving goals, objectives and outcomes .....	5
Section A (2) The project’s estimated cost to scale up to 100,000, 250,000 and 500,000 students .....	7
Section A (3) The project’s estimated start-up and operating costs per student per year are reasonable given the objectives, design, and potential significance.....	8
Section A (4) The project incorporates ongoing sustainable work with partners into our plan.....	8
Section A (5) Balance of Proposal and Best Evidence: Our proposed strategy and practice reflects up-to-date knowledge and best evidence from effective prior practice .....	9
<b><u>SECTION B. SIGNIFICANCE</u></b> .....	9-15
Section B (1) The proposed project is an exceptional approach for AP3, CPPP7, 8.....	9
Section B (2) The proposal has a high potential to contribute to development and advancement of theory, knowledge and practices in field of study .....	13
Section B (3) Importance, Magnitude of Effect: Our proposal is expected to substantially improve student achievement .....	15
Section B (4) The project develops solutions to specific gaps in services, infrastructure or opportunities .....	15
<b><u>SECTION C. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERSONNEL</u></b> .....	16

Section C (1) The project has a viable plan that will achieve objectives on time and within budget with clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones ..... 17

Section C (2) The team has exceptional qualifications and prior experience leading and managing similar large, rapidly-growing and complex projects ..... 19

**SECTION D. QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION** ..... 22-27

Section D (1) The project evaluation has a clear understanding of implementation and intermediate outcomes of success ..... 22

Section D (2) The project evaluation will provide sufficient information about key elements.. 24

Section D (3) The project evaluation allocates sufficient resources in the proposed budget to effectively evaluate it..... 27

***PTA Comunitario – i3 Development Grant (CFDA 84.411P) Application # U411P120126***

IDRA submits this application for a development grant (CFDA 84.411P) to address **AP3**: Improving School Engagement, School Environment, and School Safety and Improving Family and Community Engagement; **CCP7**: Innovations that Support College Access and Success for Students in High Minority, Low SES Schools; and **CPP8**: Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and LEP Students. IDRA's *PTA Comunitario* proposal is an exceptional innovation that supports college access and success (CPP7) for LEP students (CPP8) in high-minority, low SES schools by implementing a community-based PTA that improves family and community engagement (AP3).

***The PTA Comunitario approach to family engagement should be further implemented and studied.*** For the past three years, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD (PSJA), and ARISE have successfully partnered to implement the *PTA Comunitario*, a community organization-based PTA, yielding promising and meaningful results. The program started with 35 families from *colonias* (unincorporated neighborhoods in South Texas) where LEP students historically failed to complete high school, with many dropping out before completing middle school. There are now 75 *PTA Comunitario* families working with leaders in PSJA in monitoring the academic success of their children and other neighborhood children (**AP3**). The first cohort of 35 *PTA Comunitario* members report that *all* of their children, mostly LEP students, who were in high school and were scheduled to complete their studies during this period have graduated and those of college age are in higher education (**CPP7, 8**). These results are particularly impressive when compared to other children from other *colonias* who drop out of school at a rate of 50 percent, and only 10 percent of those who graduate go to college. This confirms what the literature suggests, that parent engagement in

education is critical for the academic success of LEP students.

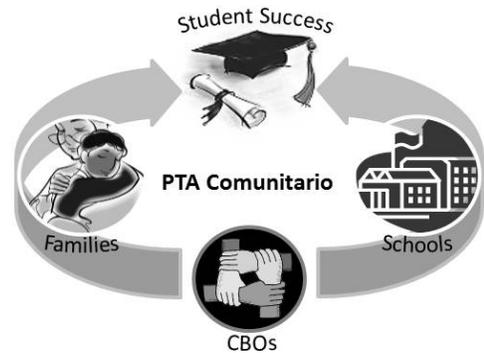
The *PTA Comunitario* model is grounded in IDRA's Family Leadership in Education process and 20 years of experience engaging parents and families in education and partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs) in South Texas working with poor families in distressed *colonias*. Through its U.S. Department of Education-funded Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC), IDRA worked with school cadres of Title I parent liaisons, school staff, informal parent groups, home visitation programs and others who facilitated parent involvement at the nexus between schools and communities – to increase student achievement. All succeeded to varying degrees in further refining promising practices of effective family engagement for student success. However, the most successful practices came from IDRA's creation of the *PTA Comunitario*, a *community-based* parent teacher organization, whose membership consists of Spanish-speaking, Hispanic, working-class families with the sole purpose of collaborating with schools to improve children's academic outcomes. This concept was developed by Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., IDRA's Texas PIRC director. Mr. Montemayor will serve as the director of this project. Mr. Montemayor served as an elected member of the National PTA board. While in that capacity, he provided PIRC services to ARISE, a CBO of Hispanic women and families whose goal is community empowerment in South Texas *colonias*. ARISE uses a *promotora* model, where women leaders from the community serve and inspire other women and families to leadership. While the PTA and ARISE had very different membership pools, traditions and processes, they share similar goals for children: improved educational opportunities that lead to student success. At this intersection, IDRA created the *PTA Comunitario*, seeing a unique opportunity to combine IDRA's experience with parent leadership and the PTA's model of school-parent collaborations with the successful family engagement strategies of a grassroots

organization. ARISE was not interested in a traditional PTA with fundraising as a central activity but rather in an organization congruent with their outreach model that would have *promotoras* informing and organizing the community with actionable data about challenges for students that lead to actions that improve their schools. IDRA saw the possibility of creating a parent organization that, although initially external to schools and based in a community organization, would be a non-threatening means for parents to connect to schools on their own terms and enable schools to be effective partners with the families in the education of their children. This innovative partnership – profiled by the PTA’s national magazine, *Our Children* (2008), and in the U.S. Department of Education’s publication, *Engaging Parents in Education: Lessons from Five Parental Information and Resource Centers* (2007) – has resulted in reduced dropout and absenteeism rates, has increased college access for the children of participating families, and is now poised for a rigorous development study. Joining this original partnership among IDRA, the PSJA school district and ARISE are five additional school districts (La Joya ISD, San Benito ISD, La Feria ISD, Donna ISD, Rio Grande ISD) and two CBOs (Proyecto Juan Diego, Brownsville Community Health Center/Mano a Mano) – all with a long history of successfully working with IDRA (Appendix G: Partner Letters) and participants in the design of this proposal. South Texas has a rich tradition of community organizations. Currently, there is a dynamic network of 11 closely-connected “Equal Voice” CBOs receiving Marguerite Casey Foundation funds. Even as their priorities represent the spectrum of needs from education to health, housing and jobs, most of them see education as a priority. These CBOs often fill the gaps between families and institutions reducing the isolation and disenfranchisement.

For the overall project view, see Appendix J3: Program Action – Logic Model.

## A. QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN

In partnership with five primarily Hispanic, poor school districts with high numbers of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students (Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, La Joya ISD, San Benito ISD, Brownsville ISD, Rio Grande ISD)



and with financial support from the Kresge Foundation, IDRA proposes to further develop and systematically study the *PTA Comunitario* as an approach for successful partnering of CBOs and schools with minority and low-income families. This model has shown promise to successfully engage parents through participation in leadership development activities and resulted in increased LEP student achievement.

Using a quasi-experimental, mixed method approach, this project will examine the following hypothesis: *A community of minority and low-income families and their students actively engaged in effective partnerships with schools through participation in a community-based PTA will contribute to their children's educational success (improved student attendance, achievement, high school completion, and college going rates).* Data collected on this project will shed light onto the following research questions: *To what degree did the partnership between families, students and school personnel have an impact on the schools' student holding power, graduation rates and college readiness? Did the empowerment and mobilization of the community provide greater impetus for an effective partnership with schools? To what degree did this approach affect the way school personnel value parent engagement? What impact did their parents' engagement with the schools have on students' self-efficacy, persistence and resiliency?* The research community has been challenged to make direct connections between family leadership in education and improved student performance. This project will document,

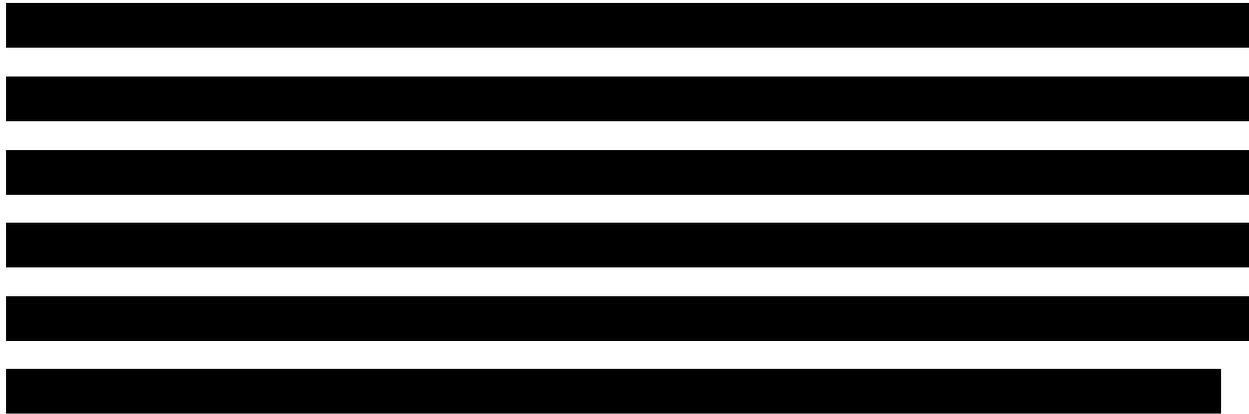
track and highlight in quantitative and qualitative terms the *PTA Comunitario* – this innovative, exceptional approach and its impact on families, schools and children. Full outcomes and impact can be seen in the Program Action – Logic Model (Appendix J3).

### **1. Clarity of Project Goals and Strategy to Achieve Them**

This project's **major goal** is to increase student engagement and achievement leading to high school graduation and college graduation of low-income, primarily Hispanic, LEP students from the *colonias* of South Texas, one of the most economically depressed areas in the country. In service of this goal, the project has three **main objectives**: (1) Establish five *PTA Comunitarios*, one each in five South Texas public school districts and each with a minimum of 20 active members; (2) Establish a partnership between *PTA Comunitarios* and schools through training and technical assistance that focuses on two campuses per year for a total of four campuses in each of the five school districts over four years; and (3) Facilitate the design and execution by partners of at least one educational leadership project informed by actionable data for each *PTA Comunitario* and partner school.

**Project Strategy/Intervention.** The proposed strategy is the creation of a *PTA Comunitario* grounded in a CBO that uses *promotora* outreach and establishes a partnership with a school. IDRA will support formation of the *PTA Comunitario*-school partnerships that maintain the integrity of the proposed model, its processes and characteristics to ensure the academic success of LEP students. This strategy proceeds in four distinct phases for the partners. It begins with organizing CBO-connected families around shared interests in the improvement of student achievement into a functioning organization: the *PTA Comunitario*. Once it is formed, the next phase consists of establishing a partnership with a school, collaborating and analyzing data to identify challenges that will form the basis of actions taken in the third phase. In this next phase,

the *PTA Comunitario* and the school will design a *leadership project*. Such leadership projects involve: (a) identifying a problem or key question from school data analysis; (b) developing objectives and steps to carry them out; and (c) assessing the final outcome: leadership in practice. Projects require input and critical analyses by the team, allow for different aspects of leadership to be experienced, and are carried out in a reasonable amount of time so that impact can be assessed and individuals can measure their growth as leaders. Projects will target improving school engagement, academic success and college access of LEP students (AP3, CCP7 & CCP8). Some of the projects might require collaboration across campuses, and some will be district-wide. The final stage will focus on evaluation of the project's impact. Appendix J3 is a logic model that describes the relationship among context, processes, outputs and outcomes-impact. The following details specific activities and interventions by phase. [REDACTED]



**Outcomes:** Preliminary data from the *PTA Comunitario*'s past and current implementation inform student, parent and school expected outcomes as follows. (1) In the participating families: (a) the number of **students** who are successfully promoted to the next grade will increase by 20 percentage points; (b) the number of students who successfully complete high school and obtain a diploma will increase by 25 percentage points; (c) the number of students who enroll and graduate from college will increase by 20 percentage points; and (d) the student attrition rate will decrease by 20 percentage points. (2) The number of **parents:** (a) involved in the *PTA Comunitario* partnership will increase by 20 percentage points; and (b) who report an increase in their feeling of self-efficacy in working with schools will increase by 20 percentage points. (3) 80 percent of **school district personnel** will report an increase in self-efficacy in successfully partnering with parents. (4) The number of **teachers** reporting success with participants' students will increase by 80 percentage points.

## **2. Cost Effectiveness of Scaling Project to Larger Population**

The total four-year budget for this application to implement the *PTA Comunitario* in five school districts with a student population of about 120,000 students is \$3,027,749 (\$2,525,705 federal, \$502,044 non-federal) in start-up and operating costs. Excluding expenses associated with development (\$756,937) and evaluation (\$302,780), the operating cost for implementing

this project is \$1,968,032, which translates to a cost of \$15 per student. In scaling up the project to impact greater numbers of students, the per student cost should diminish given that start-up costs are dramatically reduced, and certain costs remain constant or decrease as the program is brought to scale. Scaling up a *PTA Comunitario* model for 250 schools serving 250,000 students, will reduce the cost per student by \$3 for a student cost of \$12; and for 500 schools serving 500,000 students, the cost per student will be reduced by \$2 for a per student cost of \$10. A 2009 study on costs of parent engagement in education conducted by Lawrence O. Picus & Associates, reveals that the range of costs is wide and connected with the types of services provided through the parent engagement program. An estimate provided in the study ranged from \$93 to \$1,254 per student. The proposed project's cost per student estimate is below the lower end of the estimates provided in the 2009 study. When compared with what the literature suggests as the range of costs associated with parent engagement programs and the potential benefits in terms of student achievement and graduation, the costs of the proposed project are very reasonable.

### **3. Estimated Costs Including Start-Up and Operating Costs per Student per Year**

The cost per student including start-up and operating costs per project year is \$25 for the first year (total budget divided by number of students served); \$13 for the second year; \$8 for the third year; and \$8 for the fourth year.

### **4. Sustainability Designed into Project Plan**

Sustainability is integral to project plan. The participation of CBOs, Title I schools and PTA will be strong forces to sustain the project. Because a CBO is community based and is in a true partnership with the school, the effort will be sustained over time as the community continues the partnership even with school personnel turnover. Title I funds can be leveraged to sustain the project as Title I parent liaisons use the *promotora* model for outreach. It is anticipated that the

PTA regional, state and national structure will continue to collaborate with the *PTA Comunitario* model as it increases their membership and diversity. The current strategic plan of National PTA includes three major values: collaboration, commitment and diversity, which also are central to this project.

### **5. Balance of Proposal and Best Evidence**

Research by Mediratta, et al., (2008) found “strong and consistent evidence that effective community organizing [helps] increase equity within schools, build new forms of capacity... and improve student educational outcomes.” An Annenberg Foundation study (Renée & McAlister, 2011), found that community organizing as practiced by CBOs had impact on student achievement in seven organizations across the country. Still, there are limited evidence-based examples of how successful CBO-school partnerships happen with regularity. The *PTA Comunitario* draws on a highly-promising model to close a critical knowledge-practice need. The asset-based process (Warren, et al., 2009) of *PTA Comunitario* nurtures family leadership to improve education through use of actionable data that has been developed for lay person comprehension (Petrovich, 2008).

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE**

### **1. Extent Project is Exceptional Approach for Priority**

The proposed development of the *PTA Comunitario* model is an exceptional approach for **AP3** and **CPP7** and **CPP8** because it is designed to bring together CBOs, Spanish-speaking families and schools in a truly equal partnership that distinguishes it from other models in two ways: how collective leadership is developed by participation in an equal partnership, and how educational problems are identified and solved by families as using actionable knowledge and data.

**Need:** South Texas is economically distressed and severely challenged to educate its LEP

students and prepare them for college. In the targeted LEAs, passing rates on the state accountability test for LEP students, the majority of whom are poor, are in the low 70s in math and reading. The percentage of Hispanic students scoring at or above criterion in the SAT/ACT is 5.3 percent compared the state's 27 percent. (See Appendix J1.)

The Spanish-speaking families who live in the poorest neighborhoods also are the most isolated from schools, and schools tend to despair of both the families and their children. Traditional parent organizations, if they exist, are English speaking and most conducive to middle-class families. A series of tables in Appendix J1 detail the economic and educational status of the area and highlight the districts that will partner with the project. Institutions are challenged to accept that the target families care about the education of their children and that the children are educable and have college potential.

The *PTA Comunitario* assumes that parent engagement in education can and should take the form of family leadership through working with schools rather than focusing on improving parenting skills or performing traditional volunteerism. IDRA's model brings together Spanish-speaking, low-income *colonia* parents to become leaders and active participants in their community schools as partners rather than assistants or aides. This shift in the power relationship between schools and *colonia* parents is exceptional and unique when compared to traditional paradigms of parent involvement and engagement.

This model, however, has another unique dimension in that it is specific as to how leadership will identify and target specific issues. Even the most effective parent engagement and parent leadership models struggle with finding specific educational concerns that can be affected by parents or that can even be identified by parents themselves. Some models allow schools to define issues (absenteeism, discipline, low performance on state exams). Others spend time

“teaching” parents how to understand educational data, systems and reform concepts and then task families to become engaged with possible solutions. The *PTA Comunitario* does neither. This model recognizes that minority parents can and should be leaders. Central to the underpinnings and processes (Phases 1-4) of the project, families are given the opportunity to analyze actionable data and take action (leadership projects) in partnership with schools.

The project will make use of IDRA’s OurSchool Portal, which provides secondary school campus and district data organized in comprehensible formats in English and Spanish. This field-tested portal will continue to be a powerful and practical tool that the *PTA Comunitario* uses for analysis at and leadership projects. Because there is access to technology at the CBOs, the lack of technology and internet access in the home is not a problem.

This model not only changes the leadership expectations of parents and schools and balances the power dynamic between poor Hispanic families and the institutions meant to serve them, it also gives families and communities the power to identify educational issues and problems using actionable data. These shifts in expectations and power dynamics are expressed in the implementation of the leadership project resulting in educational achievement and enhanced parent engagement. Also, the model shifts campus staff views and judgments of stigmatized neighborhoods.

Three elements of the *PTA Comunitario* guide goals, processes and activities that also are directly aligned with project priorities (**AP3, CPP7, CPP8**). These elements are as follows. **(1) Collective action by empowered Spanish-speaking families and parents (AP3, CPP8)** – An empowered community is one that “must originate from a desire for shared leadership and power” because “true and meaningful change will not occur in schools if the fundamental imbalances in power and decision making remain untouched” (Hong, p.192). Community

empowerment holds the ability to leverage knowledge and community resources to make a difference in ensuring that schools provide a quality education for all students. In this model, exemplar family connections made by *promotoras* are key to the successful mobilization of parents. **(2) Sensitivity to community cultural and linguistic practices (CCP7)** – As stated by López (2003), “A home-school relationship should be a co-constructed reciprocal activity in which both the agency and sense of efficacy of parents and the involvement opportunities provided by schools and other institutions that work with children are important” (p. 8). Two basic premises undergird this element: (a) Ensure congruence with the language and culture of the participants in a way that empowers Spanish-speaking parents as critical decision makers; and (b) Engage families for their assets and expect leadership actions. For example, IDRA uses bilingual participants as bridges to a dialogue among peers instead of resolving language difference with a translator that relegates the Spanish speaker to a passive listener. Meeting processes that recognize assets in all participants are conducted bilingually with ongoing code switching so that every participant is actively engaged both as listener and speaker. Critical dialogue, sharing of experiences and group problem solving goes beyond simple transmittal of information. **(3) Partnership and collaboration for academic success and college access (CPP8)** – Families taking action are a catalyst for institutional change within the partnership of schools and CBOs. Because a key driving force for families is the academic success of their children in K-12 and post-secondary schools, all leadership projects connect to that vision. The culmination of this project is fulfillment of the vision. A project is a collaboration because the families draw on actionable school data, and therefore project activities must involve a relationship – a connection between the school and the families toward an outcome that affects students.

---

*A Documented Case Study: How a Campus Collaborates With a Parent Group Using Actionable Data*

Parents at a large Latino Title I high school viewed math achievement data. Most of the students were LEP or former LEP students. Parents agreed that they did not know algebra, but they had questions about the teaching of mathematics: (1) Do students ask questions, and are those questions answered? and (2) If students don't understand a concept, what does the teacher do? With support from IDRA, the parents developed bilingual questionnaires for families and for students. A survey was conducted, computed, analyzed and documented by a team of students and presented to the parents and all school administrators. This information influenced the professional development and pedagogical practices of the math department, and, within two years, the campus had achieved adequate yearly progress. Parent leadership focusing on math achievement *directly* influenced student success and preparation for college. **CPP7 & CPP8**

---

**2. Potential Contribution to Development and Advancement of Theory, Knowledge and Practices in Field of Study**

The literature and formal studies on the impact of parent engagement on student achievement are limited and have traditionally focused on the impact of “better parenting” rather than the effects of successful parent-school partnerships. The field of parent engagement in education has seen an increase in research concerning community engagement in education and CBOs as an untapped resource for education reform for greater student achievement. Some studies have explored confrontational community organizing for educational change and have pointed to the possibility that such efforts can yield some results in changing educational outcomes but are

limited in scope and may not be sustainable due to their adversarial nature (Shirley, 2010). While there is power in Spanish-speaking low-income communities challenging the educational status quo, groups cannot consistently see themselves as outsiders to the system that is supposed to serve them. Other research, such as the Annenberg Institute for School Reform's *Organized Communities, Stronger Schools* (Mediratta, 2008), point to the power of community organizing in the specific context of CBOs that take on educational change as a challenge. In the Annenberg study of seven organizations across the country, researchers encountered similarities in operation and processes and increased student achievement in "test scores, graduation rates and college-going aspirations" in all contexts. While organizations had different activities and methodologies, all developed community leadership and, through community organizing activities, were able to implement new strategies to improve school capacity. Activities ranged from changing campus culture to decreasing absenteeism to influencing educational policy at the local and state level. The *PTA Comunitario* model incorporates the best practices represented in current community engagement research but also contributes three key ideas: (1) Instituting partnerships between CBOs experienced in community organizing and schools fosters the possibility of creating a sustainable practice that lives beyond the life of a CBO project and more importantly beyond personnel and administrator changes in schools. Simply, the benefits of community organizing in education become an institutional regularity in schools. (2) Projects taken on by the *PTA Comunitario* arise from a nuanced "family-discovered" analysis of educational actionable data rather than from the passive transmission from schools or other "experts" in the field. Families take on the role that, in essence, should always be assumed by schools: equal partners in education. (3) The incorporation of the *PTA Comunitario* model into the current PTA presents an opportunity to study how traditional organizations can affect school

change by partnering with CBOs in Spanish-speaking economically-distressed communities.

In essence, this project can effectively inform the work of developing parent leadership in education through community engagement, specifically among poor, Spanish-speaking families. It will document effective family outreach, leadership development, strategic training and technical assistance, and the connections to student achievement. It will document stages of effective parent engagement, effective family outreach by schools and organizations, and collective action by families to improve their schools.

### **3. Substantial Expected Improvement: Importance or Magnitude of Expected Effect**

This project is intended to profoundly affect families and schools in their relationship to each other and ultimately on the students. Beyond the particular project outcomes described, these CBOs, *PTA Comunitarios* and their campuses will have strong ripple effects on neighboring communities and schools. The five school districts and their administrators and staff are committed to disseminating the model. Each of the 20 schools has the potential of modeling and passing on these effective strategies to 200 schools. Via three project CBOs that are already part of a strong network of 11 CBOs and a broader, much larger existing national network, the model has the potential of impacting CBOs and communities beyond South Texas.

### **4. Extent Project Develops Solutions to Specific Gaps**

The gaps and solutions are discussed below as binaries between identifiable problems (gaps) and the solutions presented by the *PTA Comunitario*. (1) Gap: There is remoteness between school and home, especially between Title I schools and families of LEP students who live in *colonias*. Solution: The *PTA Comunitario* model closes this distance. (2) Gap: Few Title I schools have formal parent organizations, and those that do, conduct meetings primarily in English and exclude *colonia* families from leadership for lack of skills, e.g., knowledge of Roberts Rules of

Order. Solution: The *PTA Comunitario* model is inclusive and ideal for Spanish-speaking family participation and leadership. (3) Gap: Parent development rarely focuses on leadership in education and much less on group development and collective leadership. Solution: This model develops collective leadership. (4) Gap: The PTA membership and local PTA units are decreasing, and the organization needs models that market to underrepresented groups. Solution: The *PTA Comunitario* is friendly to Spanish-speaking families in poor communities. (5) Gap: *Colonia* participation in community organizations is vibrant and ongoing, while participation in schools is sporadic and limited. Solution: This model transmits the CBO vibrant, ongoing community connections to schools. (6) Gap: Typical school-based parent outreach has limited results both in information dissemination and in parent school participation. Solution: *PTA Comunitario* delivers significant increase in numbers and in meaningful engagement of families as school partners, introducing the best of CBO outreach into schools. (7) Gap: *Colonia* families rarely are presented school data, much less in a comprehensible and actionable fashion. Solution: Bilingual actionable school data is analyzed and applied in parent leadership projects focused on student outcomes.

### **C. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERSONNEL**

**Project Management.** IDRA is the fiscal agent for this partnership and has the responsibility of project administration and coordination of project services to establish five *PTA Comunitarios*. In addition, IDRA will serve as the “backbone organization” (Kania & Kramer, 2011) that facilitates and supports the activities of partnering institutions, which include four campuses in each of five school districts and four CBOs. Central to a good management plan is a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of all partners. CBOs will collaborate by providing personnel and space for mobilizing and preparing parents to assume a leadership role in dialogue

with school administrators and teachers. School districts will collaborate with the parents to develop plans for addressing the student outcomes described earlier in the proposal. Furthermore, school districts, parents and CBOs will work collaboratively to increase the effectiveness of a plan for shared responsibility and action to obtain the proposed student outcomes. IDRA's extensive and successful experience (without a single audit exception) supporting similar efforts with the partners provides the setting for moving forward with the project immediately upon notification of award. Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO and principal investigator for this project, and Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., the proposed project director, have extensive experience managing, leading and evaluating similar projects and are ready to begin implementation of the grant. Funds have been set aside for districts and CBOs to use each year to leverage and use for costs associated with establishing a *PTA Comunitario*.

### **1. Viable Plan**

IDRA's management plan will achieve objectives on time and within budget with clear responsibilities. **IDRA's role in the first year of project implementation** will be to provide high intensity support (three to four days per month) from IDRA's director and parent specialist personnel (four to five staff members). Each IDRA staff member will be assigned two schools and a corresponding *PTA Comunitario* and will support all campuses for a total of on-site six to eight days per month per staff person. This support will consist of active collaboration with all partners to: (1) establish a community organization base in target districts; (2) coordinate communication and reporting; (3) align budgets with project activities; (4) facilitate formalization of any partnership agreements; (5) provide technical assistance for data collection activities; (6) manage support activities, i.e., leadership development training, facilitation of data analysis by parents and goal setting; and (7) facilitate the development of leadership projects.

**Partner roles in the first year of project implementation** will vary from semester to semester. During the spring semester (January-May), each participating entity will begin the process of: (1) creating partnerships, formalizing relationships (MOAs); (2) organizing planning activities; and (3) developing documentation schedules. During the summer (June-August), partners will: (1) select 10 schools from each district; (2) conduct partner orientation (*promotoras*, school personnel, etc.); and (3) formalize a plan of action. During the fall semester (September-December), implementation partners, *PTA Comunitario* parents and *promotoras* will: (1) conduct monthly meetings; (2) document activities; and (3) and carry-out a leadership project. At the end of Year 1, all project partners will hold debriefing sessions to highlight successes and challenges that will inform refining activities.

During Year 2 of the project, IDRA will support the first cohort of 10 schools and five *PTA Comunitarios* with technical assistance that enables emerging leadership to take over. The second set of 10 schools and *PTA Comunitarios* will adhere to the same semester activity schedules followed by the first group in the first year. IDRA staff will provide the same level of support to the second group as was given to the first group (three to four days per month, per school).

Third and fourth year activities will consist of IDRA and all partners replicating, documenting and fully evaluating the processes outlined and refined in Years 1 and 2. Activity schedules followed in Years 1 and 2 will be followed and modified where needed. Years 3 and 4 are critical to further development of the model as partners work to sustain the *PTA Comunitarios* with less IDRA technical assistance support. More intensive evaluation and documentation will be produced to inform how best to institute the model as a regularity in the participating schools' processes. Two activities in Years 3 and 4 will include feedback and

documentation from participants: (1) Each summer will culminate in community of practice activities and meetings; and (2) *PTA Comunitario* partners will produce a document telling the story and the results of their four years of participation in the project.

## **2. Team's Prior Experience Leading Similar Projects**

IDRA's team, led by Dr. Robledo Montecel, has decades of experience managing federally-funded projects of comparable size and scope to strengthen Title I schools and improve academic outcomes of minority and LEP students. With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the IDRA team operated the Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) for Texas (\$4 million program with three consecutive awards over 11 years), a comprehensive, multicultural and multilingual center that provided training and technical assistance to low performing and Title I schools and capacity-building assistance to CBOs and family leaders across the state. IDRA operates the South Central Collaborative for Equity funded by the U.S. Department of Education (Title IV), to serve the educational equity needs of federal Region VI (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas) in the areas of race, gender and national origin equity. With funding of over \$7.5 million over the past 10 years alone, the SCCE gives IDRA the experience to manage, train, document and evaluate a cross-district, multi-state project focusing on equity and excellence in education. The IDRA team also has managed numerous complex, large-scale private sector and foundation projects. With funding from the Coca-Cola USA and the Coca-Cola Foundation, for example, IDRA began the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (dropout prevention) as a small developmental project with a single urban school district. The program has since grown to positively impact more than 740,000 children, families and educators in the continental United States, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom and Brazil.

**Personnel:** The IDRA project team (4.25 FTE) brings to the implementation of *PTA*

*Comunitario* expertise in the fields of dropout prevention, college readiness, school reform, family leadership, model development, education data, action research and education research. The personnel for this project have pioneered strategies to link LEAs, families and communities and build capacity of each stakeholder group to take up lead roles in strengthening public schools at both the campus and district level. Vitae are provided in Appendix F.

**Principal Investigator** (in kind), María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D, will provide leadership and oversight for the project as an in-kind contribution. A nationally-recognized expert on the prevention of dropouts and cross-sector strategies to strengthen schools, Dr. Robledo Montecel pioneered research on school attrition that led to the development of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program; served as PI for a national OBEMLA study that produced *Good Schools and Classrooms for Children Learning English*, a rubric now used by schools around the country; and is an advisor to Univision’s national *Es el momento* education campaign and the Public Education Network. She also served as advisor on the steering committee for the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. **Project Director** (1.0 FTE), Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., will guide the project and be responsible for managing all day-to-day activities, as well as designing training, coordinating workshop design and implementation and all aspects of technical assistance with project partners and other staff. Mr. Montemayor has three decades of experience strengthening family, LEA and community leadership to meet the needs of all students, particularly in Title I schools. Mr. Montemayor directed the \$4 million PIRC for the state of Texas; served on the National PTA board (2007-10); and with support from the Texas state PTA president, Jan Wilkerson, created the *PTA Comunitario* model, collaborating with ARISE to implement the country’s first such model in South Texas. As the **Project Evaluation Liaison** (0.25 FTE), Felix Montes, Ph.D., will work

collaboratively with **independent evaluator** Dr. Nancy Feyl Chavkin (see below) to ensure that protocols are followed throughout the evaluation process. Dr. Montes' evaluation expertise spans more than 25 years. He has led the evaluation of the National Science Foundation-funded Engineering, Science and Mathematics Increases Job Aspirations (ES-MIJA); the San Marcos' Partnership for Access to Higher Mathematics (PATH Math); and the Texas PIRC. **Community Organizer** (1.0 FTE), Frances Guzmán, M.A., will coordinate the project's activities, ensuring communication and linkages are effectively maintained among the districts, parents and IDRA. Ms. Guzmán brings four decades of experience in parent and school leadership to the project. Formerly a public school teacher (pre-K to college levels) and an administrator for district-wide Title III programs, Ms. Guzmán has coordinated IDRA's Family Leaders Engaged in Children's Academic Success (FLEChAS) project, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. **Family-School Relation Specialist** (1.0 FTE), Rogelio López, Ed.D., will provide the training, mentoring and materials development (bilingually) needed for this project to bridge the important connections between school administrators and the families, bringing his five years of experience as principal at Eastwood Academy in Houston ISD, where he was selected Principal of the Year. He guided Eastwood Academy students, staff and parents to reach TEA *Recognized* status twice and *Exemplary* status for the last year in 2007-08. **Parent Specialist** (1.0 FTE), Hector Bojorquez, B.A., also will provide training and mentoring needed, contributing his expertise in technology integration to increase school data access to families and communities. Mr. Bojorquez currently directs two projects funded by TG Public Benefit Grant Program to develop online educational data resources that help youth, family and school leaders leverage key information to improve their public schools. **Independent Evaluator**, Nancy Feyl Chavkin, Ph.D., is Regents' Professor and co-founder of the Center for Children and Families at Texas State University. Dr. Chavkin

has managed more than \$15 million in grants and evaluation contracts and has extensive experience in federal, state and local partnerships. Dr. Chavkin is a member of the American Educational Research Association, serves on the Program Evaluation Expert Panel for the National Parental Information and Resource Center, U.S. Department of Education, and previously served on the steering committee for the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. **Additional Resource Pool.** IDRA's organizational structure enables us to draw on expertise from across the organization. The IDRA staff members who will be available for consultation and advice are listed in Appendix J4.

#### **D. QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION**

##### **1. Understanding of Implementation and Intermediate Outcomes of Success**

***PTA Comunitario Evaluation Plan and Sustainability.*** This project will implement a comprehensive evaluation plan that focuses its impact on schools. Information will be collected, analyzed and reported on the accomplishment of program objectives and project impact at the district and campus levels. Through sound strategies and techniques, the project will produce meaningful, useful and timely evaluation findings. These findings will help the project staff make informed decisions concerning the development of the project products and delivery of services, including quick corrective action when needed.

**Appropriateness of the Evaluation Plan.** IDRA will work with Dr. Nancy Chavkin, the external evaluator, to implement a comprehensive evaluation plan designed to assess all aspects of project activities. *We will cooperate with any technical assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Education or its contractor.* The evaluation will focus on three major, interconnected components: **Implementation** or the progress of the *PTA Comunitario* in putting in place the activities approved in the grant application; **Impact** or the effects of the *PTA*

*Comunitario* on persons and systems involved in or served by the *PTA Comunitario*; and **Effectiveness** or the degree to which the different components and the project as a whole is successful in achieving its goals of increased connectivity, parent involvement, professional development and, most importantly, student achievement. The national context for this is limited family engagement, particularly among low-income Latinos; a gap between the schools’ mission of achievement for all students and LEP students’ actual achievement; and linguistic disparity between these families and school staff. The table below shows a schematic logic model of these relationships and their expected impacts. Appendix J3 shows the full Program Action – Logic Model. The evaluation will monitor the implementation of these activities (Process Evaluation); assess their effects on schools, families and children, particularly their academic achievement in terms of graduation and college attendance (Outcome Evaluation); and inform project staff and partners for needed actions.

<b>Schematic Logic Model</b>		
<p><b>Inputs: Investment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing <i>PTA Comunitarios</i></li> <li>• Connecting families and schools</li> <li>• Collective leadership coaching (<i>AP3, CPP7,8</i>)</li> <li>• Networking and identifying community organization allies with schools</li> <li>• Rigorous evaluation</li> <li>• Documentation of process</li> <li>• Ongoing feedback</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evaluation Activities</b></p> <p><b>Process Evaluation</b> Monitor implementation activities through logistic system, training participant feedback, project document reviews, focus and individual in-depth interviews and others.</p> <p><b>Outcome Evaluation</b> Compare project goals with actual outcomes, including improvement of 20-percentage points in next grade promotion, 25-</p>	<p><b>Intermediate Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 educational leadership projects connecting families, schools and communities.</li> <li>• Increased student achievement, especially LEP students, and school holding power.</li> <li>• New family-friendly, culturally and linguistically appropriate parent organizations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Process: Activities</b></p>	<p>25-</p>	<p><b>Final Outcomes</b></p>

<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	<p>percentage points in graduation rate, and 20-percentage points in college enrollment, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased college preparation, high school completion, and college access and success.</li> <li>• Institutionalized family-school-community partnerships.</li> <li>• State and national PTA adopt the <i>PTA Comunitario</i> model.</li> <li>• Scale-up to large urban areas.</li> </ul>
---	---	---

## 2. Sufficient Information about Key Elements Needed for Replication, Further Development or Testing in Other Settings

**Production of Objective and Quantifiable Data.** The evaluation plan will produce objective data on project implementation, impact and effectiveness, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

**Process Evaluation** – To effectively monitor project implementation and to identify areas needing expansion and/or modification, information about the degree and effectiveness of implementation efforts will be gathered, analyzed and reported as follows: the degree to which project implementation goals are being met; the extent of utilization of planned training and technical assistance strategies; the extent of utilization of project products by the schools and the community; the appropriateness of the project training and technical assistance approaches and products to the needs and performance levels of participants both at the community and the school levels; and the extent of involvement by principals, teachers, parents and students in project activities. Qualitative and quantitative techniques will generate the data to enable these assessments. These evaluative techniques and methods will include review of student records, project evaluations of the training and technical assistance strategies, review of program documents and materials, observation of project activities and classroom applications of the new parent-teacher connections, and questionnaire and interview strategies. **Outcome Evaluation** –

Outcome evaluation will focus on assessing the extent to which the goals and objectives of the *PTA Comunitario* were met. The major goal is to increase student engagement and achievement leading to high school graduation and enrollment and graduation from college. Therefore, the outcome evaluation will examine: The extent to which this project impacted parents, teachers and students as follows: (1) The degree to which the partnership between families, students and school personnel had an impact on the schools' student holding power, graduation rates and college readiness; (2) The extent to which the empowerment and mobilization of the community provided greater impetus to an effective partnership with the schools; (3) The degree to which this approach affected the way school personnel value parent engagement; and (4) The extent to which their parents' engagement with the schools had an impact on students' self-efficacy, resiliency and achievement. Specifically the evaluation will statistically test whether there is an annual 20-percentage point improvement in participant student next grade promotion (CPP7, 8), a 25-percentage point increase in their graduation rate (CPP7, 8), a 20-percentage point improvement in their college enrollment, for both all students and subpopulations, including LEP students, and a 20 percentage point decrease in their high school attrition rate (CPP7, 8). The evaluation will test similar parameters for parents and for schools (AP5), as detailed in the Evaluation Schedule in Appendix J2. *In the final analysis, the evaluation will investigate whether there are empirical connections between PTA Comunitario operations and sustained school improvements that lead to tangible student achievement.*

**Evaluation Design and Sustainability.** The Evaluation Schedule in Appendix J2 presents the specific benchmarks, data collection techniques, instrumentation and evaluation timelines. This evaluation plan is reasonable as it addresses all project goals and objectives and will be updated on an annual basis with input from participants and project staff, both at IDRA and the school

districts. The plan addresses sustainability through specific analytical techniques. **Data Collection** – An ongoing task, data collection will occur through developed or acquired evaluation instruments to document participant perceptions of training and technical assistance activities and their own efficacy as the project progresses. Rigorously designed end-of-session evaluation forms will be developed and used. The project also will collect, analyze and report data from the state of Texas accountability system – The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). The AEIS integrates district accreditation status, campus ratings, and student data, including the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), which assesses student performance. Data from this system will be obtained via the state agency’s website and will be integrated into the project evaluation system longitudinally. The evaluation plan also will include participatory strategies to assess the quality, effect and benefit of the project components. These strategies will include focus group interviews and structured and semi-structured individual interviews bilingually (English and Spanish). At participating schools and community sites, key stakeholders will be interviewed to assess the effects of the project implementation on the children’s educational outlook and academic improvement. These interviews will allow for reflection on effective practices and how these practices can be sustained and extended to other settings. **Data Analyses** – Several analytical procedures will be used in the assessment of evaluation findings to increase the integrity and validity of the results through triangulation. Statistical analysis of variance will examine the differences between pre-test and post-test scores of students, teachers and parents. The program’s effects on student academic performance will be gauged through comparisons with equivalent non-participant groups (quasi-experiment). Qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews will afford additional insights of program effects and impact. Graphs will show these outcome results for program participants and the

comparison groups. **Reporting** – Formative evaluation feedback will be provided to project management and partners throughout the year. Program implementation and impact data will be tabulated, analyzed and summarized in an end-of-year report. This report will summarize *PTA Comunitario* activities and results over the project period and will include information about the students served, project staff, services provided and educational progress of students.

### **3. Sufficient Resources to Effectively Evaluate Project**

A minimum of 10 percent of the project budget will be allocated for evaluation and assessment of the project. The evaluation team will include two members – a staff member who will coordinate and carry out data collection and an independent evaluator who will analyze all project data and create the evaluation reports. Regular coordination meetings between the evaluation team and the implementation personnel both at IDRA and the districts will be conducted to plan, implement and monitor evaluation activities. All evaluation activities will protect the dignity, well-being and confidentiality of individuals. Applicable IRB requirements will be met.