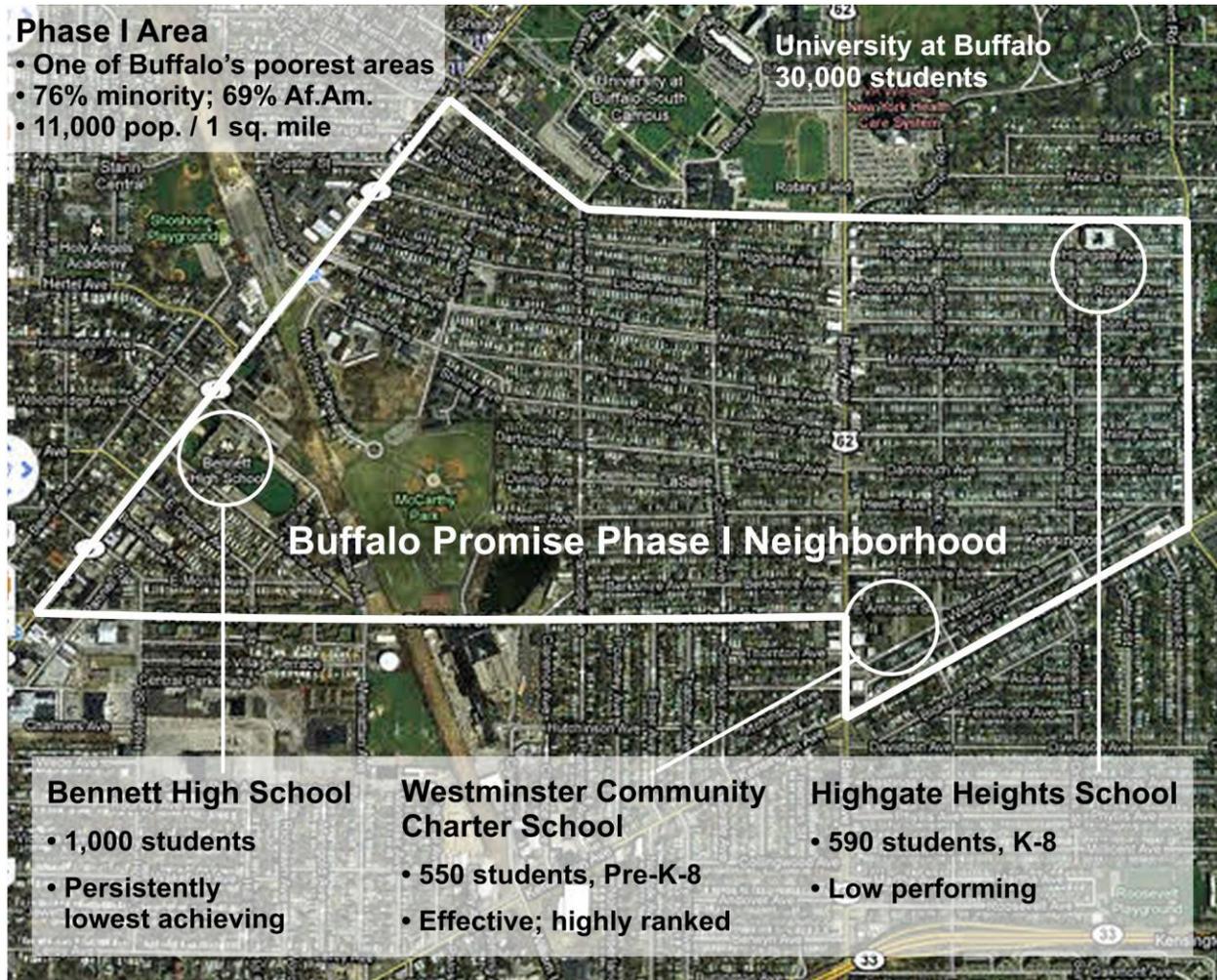


Project Narrative for Buffalo Promise

Promise Neighborhoods Program

Westminster Foundation, applicant

Submitted to the Office of Innovation and Improvement, USDOE, on 25 June 2010



CONTENTS

Need for the Project	2
Project Design	5
Project Services	22
Project Personnel	30
Management Plan	41
Significance	49
Invitational Priority	53

Buffalo Promise Section 1: Need for the Project

1.1) What is the magnitude or severity of the problems to be addressed by the proposed project as described by indicators of need and other relevant indicators?

Buffalo is the third poorest city in the nation (US Census, 2009) and the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood (Phase I) is among the city’s poorest and most needy. The area’s general description and our rationale for its selection are described in the next two sections, while the table below highlights the severity of its problems:

Indicators of Need for the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood

Academic indicators	Statistics for Bennett High School: 7 th year on NYS list of persistently lowest achieving schools ■ 48% graduation rate (NYState average=74%) ■ 81% attendance (NYS=93%) ■ 24% suspensions (NYS=5%)
Community health indicators	■ Requires 5.5 times the average rate of county health services ■ ZipCode has 2 nd highest # of developmental delays of 60 zip codes in Erie County (based on # of Early Intervention children) ■ Cocaine discharges & socially transmitted diseases 2.1 & 5.7 times NYS rates
Crime & violence indicators	■ Buffalo violent crime (as % of pop.) = 1.47% compared to 0.99% Rochester, 0.98% Syracuse, 0.55% NYC ■ 2 major & 3 minor gangs
Family stress indicators	■ Student mobility: 23% Bennett HS vs 14% District ■ Teenage birth rate for ZipCode=78.1 per 1,000 vs 25.7 NYS ■ 20.1% of children in ZipCode live in single-parent or no-parent families vs 8.1% NYS & 7.2% US
Poverty & unemployment indicators	■ Neighborhood is typically worse than these Buffalo statistics (US Census): 29.9% of individuals in poverty vs 14.2% NYS and 14.5% US; 37.5% of families w/ children <18 yrs in poverty ■ ZipCode ranks 1 or 2 of 60 zip code areas in Erie County in temporary assistance to needy families, Food Stamp recipients & Medicaid recipients ■ 39% of Buffalo youth are neither in school nor employed.

Note: Neighborhood is consistently more distressed than the ZipCode (14215), census tract, or Buffalo data cited above. (See Appendix F, Demographics for Buffalo Promise Phase I Area.)

1.2) What is the description of the geographically-defined area?

In this section, we describe the Phase I Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, the future expansion areas (Phase II and III), and our rationale for their selection.

A Buffalo economy dependent on an education turnaround: The second largest city in New York (NYS), Buffalo has endured a 44% population decline since 1970. Median household income in 2000 was \$24,536, or **\$20,000 less** than both Erie County and NYS. Over 80% of Buffalo's housing stock was built before 1950 and our owner occupancy rate has fallen to 43% in 2000 from 56% in 1970. Most importantly for our future, jobs in construction, manufacturing, and transportation have evaporated to less than 20% of total employment and the service industry jobs of the 21st century require radical changes in education. Accordingly, leaders here see Buffalo Promise as a vital investment in our future.

The Phase I, II, and III Neighborhoods: Phase I of our Buffalo Promise plan (see map on page 1) focuses on a very low-income neighborhood of 11,000 residents in a contiguous one mile area east of Buffalo's downtown. The community is 76% minority and 69% African American. Housing is primarily single-family built before 1950; only 40% are owner-occupied. The Phase I Neighborhood includes three schools described below. Phase II would expand the Neighborhood to approximately 25,000 residents by adding contiguous and similar low-income neighborhoods to the south; Phase III would launch a new zone on Buffalo's west side.

Why this Neighborhood offers the best chance for success: **First**, the Phase I area contains the Westminster Community Charter School, a high-performing, high-poverty K-8 success story (550 students) that is the product of a rare 17-year partnership between M&T Bank and the Buffalo Public School District. The Westminster team and model are crucial to our strategy for dramatic reform at other schools. **Second**, the Neighborhood contains two other schools needing dramatic reform: the low-performing PreK-8 Highgate Heights School (590 students) and the persistently lowest-achieving Bennett High School (1,000 students), a particular sore spot within a school system in critical need of a new high school model. **Third**, we want to start small, make a big impact, and then scale. Accordingly, our primary Phase I

target segment are the approximately 3,500 children from 0-18 years (full continuum of solutions) and our secondary target segment are the 2,000 young adults from 19-26 years (focus on college, career & parenting). **Fourth**, Phase II can extend naturally into similar, adjacent low-income neighborhoods. **Fifth**, the area requires the highest concentration of social and community services in Buffalo. Our Partner service organizations place priority on this area and on greater collaboration in service planning and delivery. **Sixth**, the University at Buffalo, teeming with 30,000 students plus remarkable organizational capacity, sits on the northern boundary eager to participate. **Finally**, the Neighborhood has some elements of stability with 40% owner occupancy, active block organizations, and vibrant churches as well as Westminster.

1.3) How will specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities be identified and addressed by the proposed project?

In the past months, the Buffalo Promise Partner organizations visited the Harlem Children's Zone together and made a preliminary needs assessment and inventory of assets for the Phase I Neighborhood based on their extensive activities there. Nine key gaps and weaknesses have been targeted for comprehensive analysis:

- The critical need for effective intervention at the Bennett and Highgate Heights schools and inadequate support during transition periods along the academic timeline;
- Insufficient early learning sites despite admirable examples;
- Insufficient and fragmented programs for reading and writing, financial and computer literacy, health, career, pregnancy, and parenting;
- The absence of an integrated system of civic engagement, college and career preparation, and employability supports in tune with 21st century needs (see **Invitational Priority**);
- Insufficient health and family services, including teen pregnancy & parenting programs;
- Lack of a coherent, relationship-based point of access to the services already available;
- Weak community development/reinvestment; and
- The need to prioritize, streamline, and reinvent programs given looming budget cuts.

Our approach to addressing these gaps begins in the Project Design section which follows.

Buffalo Promise Section 2: Quality of Project Design

In this **Project Design** section, we describe the overall strategies and structures of our proposal, the crucial partnership to reinvent the PreK-8 Highgate Heights School and Bennett High School, our data strategy, our focus on key indicators, our commitment to work with the national evaluator, and our outreach to other programs and agency resources. In the following **Project Services** section, we comment on the specifics of our continuum of solutions, particularly with respect to underpinning evidence, likelihood of improvement in student improvement, and outcomes for high-need children.

2.1) How does Buffalo Promise plan to build a continuum of solutions designed to significantly improve academic and family and community support indicators?

To build a place-based continuum of solutions capable of being sustained and scaled significantly throughout Buffalo, **we constructed a partnership among longstanding allies who are already delivering effective programs and services in the Neighborhood:**

■ Westminster Foundation (applicant) ■ Westminster Community Charter School ■ M&T Bank
■ John R. Oishei Foundation ■ Mayor's Office ■ Buffalo Public School District ■ United Way
■ Catholic Charities ■ Read to Succeed Buffalo ■ Buffalo Urban League ■ University at Buffalo

These partners have joined together to break the cycle of poverty through the tenets of the Promise Neighborhoods Program: a full continuum of academic and family and community supports, a college-going culture, and seamless integration of services. Furthermore, we take this step together as **a long-term campaign to build the platforms of policies, practices, systems, and resources** to address the needs of the Phase I Neighborhood, then sustain and scale up the initiative to deliver a full continuum across Phase I, II, and III areas.

STRENGTHS OF THE TEAM

Built on a rare 17-year public/private partnership: Westminster Foundation, the applicant, is the managing entity for Buffalo Promise. Part of a 17-year partnership between **M&T Bank** and the community, the Foundation teams with the Buffalo Public School District and other organizations to support and provide academic and family and community supports to

Westminster Community Charter School, a high-performing, high-poverty success story for 550 K-8 students in the Buffalo Promise neighborhood (88% of its students are eligible for free and reduced lunch and 81-90% receive public assistance, yet ELA, math, science and social studies scores are all substantially above District average, and some are at or above state average). The school's transformation began in 1993 when M&T Bank stepped forward to "adopt" Buffalo's lowest performing public school; since then, the Bank has helped guide the school's turnaround and subsequent conversion into the Westminster Community Charter School through the extensive pro bono participation of its officers, executives, and managers, as well as its philanthropic resources. One of the 20 largest banks in the U.S., M&T Bank is highly regarded for its financial stability; operates in seven states and DC; consistently earns the highest possible community reinvestment ratings from the Federal Reserve Bank of NY; and is a major civic and philanthropic leader in its home city of Buffalo.

Backed by M&T Bank and the John R. Oishei Foundation: Through the support of M&T Bank and the Oishei Foundation, the Westminster Foundation has committed to at least a 50% match in cash contributions. Combined with additional in-kind services from the Partners, Buffalo Promise will substantially surpass the 50% matching requirement. Additional financial backing of a subsequent Promise Neighborhood implementation grant is also anticipated.

Comprised of longstanding allies with deep experience in the Neighborhood: Buffalo Promise is an "A-team" of Buffalo's leading business, education, and community service organizations. They collaborate formally and informally on an ongoing basis and, because the Neighborhood requires the highest concentration of social and community services in Buffalo, the Partners share a consensus that the success of Buffalo Promise is of the highest priority.

Drawing on existing program assets: There are literally dozens of programs currently serving the Neighborhood, albeit often fragmented and lacking the coordinated clout envisioned by the Promise Neighborhoods Program. Nevertheless, the District has been working aggressively to bring community service organizations into the schools. In addition, three program assets are particularly noteworthy as building blocks for Buffalo Promise:

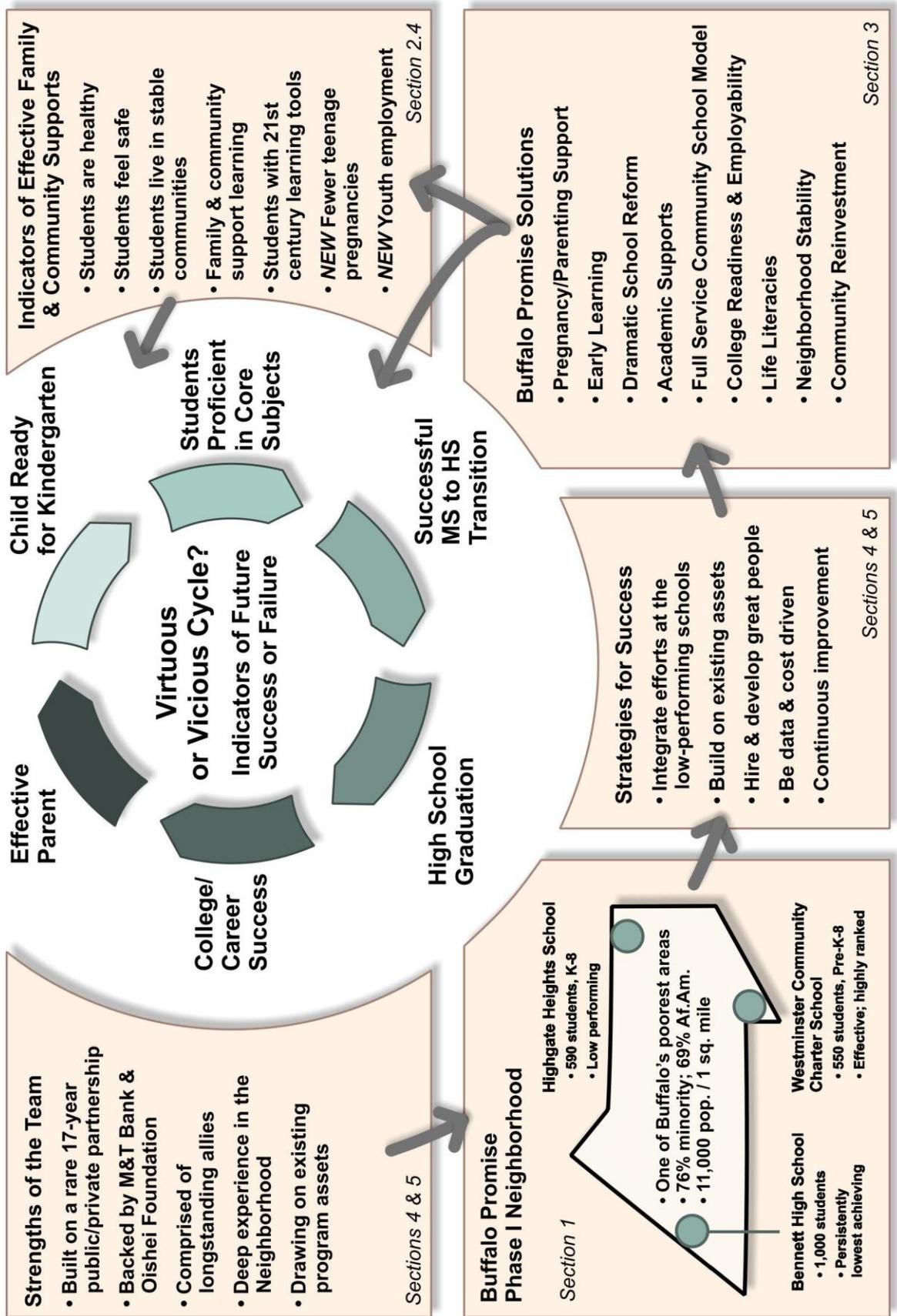
- 1) The **Westminster Community Charter School**, described briefly above, is a full service community school, operates on a disciplined business basis, and excels at partnering with parents to create a supportive home environment—a key component of our Promise Neighborhood strategy. The school’s success provides a springboard for our strategy for reforming Bennett High School and Highgate Heights School, which we discuss in Section 2.2.
- 2) The **Closing the Gap Consortium**, a Buffalo precursor to the Promise Neighborhoods model, is a 9-year, full service community school collaboration between the District and some two dozen agencies including key roles by Buffalo Promise Partners **Catholic Charities** and **United Way**. Embedded in seven of the highest poverty, PreK-8 schools and one alternative high school (but none in the Neighborhood), the program serves over 4,000 students. Closing the Gap integrates health, human, and social services to enhance conditions for learning in partnership with leaders in the school and the District.
- 3) **Read to Succeed Buffalo**, another Buffalo Promise Partner, is one of the most energetic, effective, and forward-thinking community literacy organizations in the nation. Instrumental in creating and nurturing dozens of Buffalo literacy programs over the past decade, Read to Succeed’s theory of change is personal efficacy through life skills including reading, health, financial, career, and computer literacy. Read to Succeed convened over 200 stakeholders in 2006 to develop a citywide literacy strategy; has built a network of literacy partners; and is continually improving the delivery of literacy programs, extending their reach, and enrolling financial backers. A “Literacy Zone” initiative, with a focus on early literacy, is already underway in the 14215 zip code area containing the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood.

OUR STRATEGY FOR BUILDING THE CONTINUUM OF SOLUTIONS

These team strengths, including assets like Westminster Community Charter School, the Close the Gap Consortium, and Read to Succeed, are the starting point for building our continuum of solutions as summarized in Figure A (next page) and described below.

Synopsis of the Buffalo Promise Initiative

figure A



At the center of Figure A are the mandatory academic (project) indicators for the Promise Neighborhood Program, conceptualized as a cycle with an added point of emphasis which is an Effective Parent able to provide a supportive home environment for the next generation. As the Harlem Children’s Zone’s Baby Colleges demonstrate, there are many paths to becoming an Effective Parent and we believe that a successful Program Design will engage and assist young parents—or future parents—in that goal.

At the top left corner of Figure A are the Team Strengths discussed above. At the bottom left are the characteristics of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood described in Section 1.

At the bottom center of the diagram, we summarize our strategies for success. Chief among them is **the dramatic reform of Bennett High School and Highgate Heights** (as well as the continued improvement of Westminster Community Charter School). This requires us to ensure a seamlessly integrated and sufficient mix of supports focused on these schools and their students. Second, we can get up and running most quickly by **building on existing programs** provided they have a strong evidence base and track record. Third, applying the Westminster model and M&T Bank’s human capital practice, we will conduct thorough searches to **hire great people and invest in their professional development**. Next, we will build the systems to be **data and cost driven**, and invest in ideas and programs that have scalable potential. Finally, we believe that success comes from **continuous improvement**, honest self examination, and the openness to import what has worked in other places.

At the bottom right of the diagram, we have listed nine featured continuum services which are discussed in Section 3 (following Dramatic School Reform in Section 2.2).

-
- Pregnancy/Parenting Support ■ Early Learning ■ Dramatic School Reform
 - Academic Supports ■ Full Service Community School Supports ■ College Readiness & Employability
 - Life Literacies ■ Neighborhood Stability ■ Community Reinvestment
-

At the top right of the diagram are the Indicators of Effective Family & Community Supports which we fully embrace. In addition to the 12 indicators (7 academic, 5 family &

community) listed in the application, we have added two new project indicators for Buffalo Promise: **Fewer Unplanned Pregnancies** and **Lower Youth Unemployment**. (Section 2.4)

2.2) How will the strategy or plan for the continuum of solutions lead to significant improvements in one or more schools as required by Absolute Priority 1?

School reform: the cornerstone of Buffalo Promise: A recent National Bureau of Economic Research working paper (Dobbie and Fryer, 2009) provides the first rigorous empirical test of the causal impact of the Harlem Children’s Zone on educational outcomes. While it confirms that the HCZ model is “enormously successful in improving achievement,” it presents evidence that **“high-quality schools or community investments coupled with high-quality schools drive these results, but community investments alone cannot.”** The authors also cite HCZ’s significant private financial backing and use of charter schools, concluding that **“the challenge is to find even more efficient ways to achieve similar achievement gains in regular – non charter – public schools,** so that all children, independent of their race or their parent's income, can receive a high quality education.”

This research only confirmed Westminster Foundation, M&T Bank, and Buffalo Public Schools’ strategic decision to make dramatic reform of the Neighborhood’s persistently low-achieving Bennett High School and low-performing Highgate Heights PreK-8 School the centerpiece of the Buffalo Promise initiative. The District has committed to enabling a path for turnaround or transformation of these schools within the district structure, and to bringing them all possible benefits from the District’s new Literacy Across the Curriculum framework, recognized as a statewide model for academic improvement. Westminster Foundation and M&T Bank have committed to extending their role as a catalyst for rigor, accountability, and capacity from Westminster Community Charter School to the transformation of the two additional schools (along with those targeted in Phases II and III).

Managing Reform -reasons for confidence : As educators and policy makers are all too aware, dramatic school reform in public district schools is extremely difficult to achieve. There are two key reasons for confidence that Buffalo Promise’s reform plan is more likely to work

than most. *First, possibly uniquely in the country, M&T Bank and BPS have a 17 year history of working together successfully* to create a school model that improves the educational prospects of children of poverty in the city. The mutual understanding and trust that this involves cannot be underestimated.

Second, as we intensify and scale our joint effort, we will formalize and professionalize the working relationship of these core Partners according to the most effective research-based practices for school turnaround, paying particular attention to the growing consensus around a) the securing of necessary **conditions** and b) the adding of organizational **capacity** to address dramatic reform (Public Impact, Education Resource Strategies and the Aspen Institute, FSB Social Impact Advisors, Mass Insight Education, 2007-2010).

Conditions: The conditions necessary for turnaround focus on autonomies for the designated schools around people (e.g. recruitment of committed leadership teams and teachers), time (e.g. extended school time for learning and professional development), money (e.g. control over school-level per pupil funding), and program (e.g. choice on school design and instructional programs). While BPS and M&T Bank found ways to negotiate these issues successfully in the past, for the Buffalo Promise scale-up we will incorporate best practices of other districts across the country in extending these enabling conditions within the district structure in ways specifically targeted at the highest risk neighborhoods and lowest performing schools.

Capacity: By benchmarking against the most developed management-level turnaround practices, we found that the Westminster/M&T Bank Partnership can already be classified as pioneering best practice. We share many characteristics with the Lead Partner model, characterized as a non-profit that works under a three-to-five year performance contract with a District, assumes accountability for student achievement in a small “intentional” cluster of schools, has authority for decision-making on some areas of staffing and programming, provides core academic and student support programming, and has a five-day-a-week embedded relationship with the schools they manage (Mass Insight, 20). The Lead Partner model, as embodied in Chicago’s Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), is already backed by a

significant “moderate evidence” base supporting its role in improving student achievement and school turnaround (PIPAL, 2010). The District and M&T Bank will utilize the planning year to evaluate the use of this, related, and alternative frameworks to strengthen their Partnership to the benefit of the students in the Neighborhood.

School-level turnaround model: When considering the best strategy for dramatically reforming the schools in the Neighborhood, we looked at factors in the success of our own Westminster Community Charter School’s approach, and at school-level practices central to high performing high poverty (HHP) schools nationally. We were gratified, though not surprised, to find that Westminster’s model aligns impressively with these practices. Our strategy to dramatically improve the Buffalo Promise Schools, then, is to build on successful HHP/Westminster processes and, through detailed needs and asset analysis, to adapt them to the other schools in the Neighborhood.

Alignment of Westminster practices with other high performing high poverty schools. As part of benchmarking our existing school reform practices we asked two of the co-authors of Mass Insight’s *The Turnaround Challenge (TTC)* report to assess and advise on Westminster Community Charter School practices relative to the authors' extensive review of research on high poverty high performing schools. This report, dubbed “the bible for school turnaround” by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, was used in shaping Title 1 SIG and Race to the Top formulations for addressing chronically underperforming schools.

The strategies used by these schools are summarized in the “HHP Readiness Model” – representing students’ Readiness to Learn, staff’s Readiness to Teach, and leadership’s Readiness to Act. **Readiness to Learn** focuses on student safety and engagement, direct action against poverty-driven deficits, and the importance of close student-adult relationships. **Readiness to Teach** encompasses staffs’ shared responsibility for student achievement, the personalization of instruction through diagnostic assessment and adaptive instruction, and the existence of a professional, collaborative teaching culture. **Readiness to Act** illustrates successful high poverty schools’ strategies relating to control over resources, ingenuity in

securing additional resources and partnerships, and agility in the face of the turbulence endemic in high-poverty settings. (AUSL in Chicago provides significant moderate evidence of the ability of a school model based on these Readinesses to significantly improve student achievement (Chicago Consortium on School Research, 2010).)

Westminster's Readiness to Learn. Westminster Community Charter School's educational approach is specifically designed to overcome the impacts of poverty through a full-service community model with relationship-based supports. The school provides a health clinic that includes an on-site Nurse Practitioner, Health Assistant, and Social Worker. It has a new food services program with an emphasis on nutrition and nutritional education. The school emphasizes parent engagement through home reading, in-school activities, and a strategic decision not to offer busing in order to encourage neighborhood enrollment and parental interaction at dropoff/pickup.

Westminster's Readiness to Teach. Westminster Community Charter School focuses on creating a learning environment and uses a system of diagnostic analysis to create individualized programs, targeting the areas of reading, writing, math, and student attendance. It promotes effective teaching through extensive, site-based professional development. It also includes extended time on task through free after-school, Saturday, and summer programs linked to the regular academic curriculum. A central strand in the development of the school's culture and curriculum is Westminster's Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP), the development of which has been overseen by the program's founder, Dr. Lucy Calkins. The program provides students with the skills and resources to live "richly literate lives" through individualized reading choices, in classroom libraries, and reading and writing workshops. The program supports a number of evidence-based practices for literacy, including strategy instruction, writing about reading, and engagement through student choice. (TCRWP, 2010) It also prompts teachers to embrace collaborative practice throughout the curriculum. TCRWP has worked system-wide in New York City since Chancellor Joel Klein chose balanced literacy as the city's curriculum. It is also works in some Promise Academy schools in Harlem.

Westminster's Readiness to Act. The partnership with M&T Bank was central to the school having the authority, resources and agility to improve dramatically over the years, both as a district school for 11 years, and a conversion charter for the past six years. For 17 years the bank has provided significant support and expertise, particularly focusing on top talent recruitment and development (the bank launched a national search for the Westminster principal, bringing Dr. Yvonne Ragan from Chicago to Buffalo), assistance with operational and financial functions and, above all, a focus on accountability and continuous improvement.

Strategy for significant improvement in schools: In accordance with paragraph 2 of Absolute Priority 1, Buffalo Promise will be supporting Westminster Community Charter K-8 School as an “effective” school, addressing Highgate Heights PreK-8 as a “low-performing school that is not also a persistently lowest-achieving school,” and addressing Bennett High School as a “persistently lowest-achieving school” (all as defined in the notice). The integration of academic and family supports, to students in the three schools through Buffalo Promise Support Coordinators will also contribute to reform and rapid improvement of student achievement. (For more on how our Support Coordinators will help students to succeed academically and socially, and provide necessary family support, see Section 3.1.)

Westminster Community Charter K-8 School will be supported and sustained by Buffalo Promise in its process of continuous improvement. In particular, support will focus on effective teaching, data analysis, adaptive instruction, and (with the introduction of an integrated support program to all three Neighborhood schools) attention to the middle school-high school transition, and a career- and college-ready culture. The latest practices on these fronts will be folded into the transfer of effective processes into the other two schools,

In **Highgate Heights PreK-8 School**, Buffalo Promise will work with the District during the planning year, guided by detailed analysis of Highgate Heights’ specific needs, to adapt the relevant best practices used at Westminster and in the chosen integrated support program to create a dramatic improvement plan for this neighboring PreK-8 school. Transfer of practice to another K-8 is not expected to pose significant issues, but the planning year activities will

address differences between conversion charter and “regular” district status. (See Section 5 for more on the planning year.)

For **Bennett High School**, Buffalo Promise is liaising with their District partner on the decision of whether to use the turnaround or transformation model, and will start their planning even prior to the issuing of Promise Neighborhood grant awards. The District has already brought in a new principal and other new leadership team members and begun to assess the specific needs of the school. M&T Bank and other Partners will provide advice and expertise on the critical leadership and organizational plans necessary to implement the turnaround or transformation reform models.

Taking on high school reform: We are well aware that tackling dramatic reform at Bennett will be a substantial undertaking for Buffalo Promise. We will address known challenges in the transfer of instructional programs from the elementary to the high school level, however it is important to note that the central elements of the Readiness to Learn, Teach, and Act approach used at Westminster have already been shown to be effective at the high school level (Mass Insight, 2007). In addition, the TCRWP literacy program has been used successfully in a number of 6-12 schools, as well as high schools from New York to Seattle (TCRWP, 2010). It also aligns well with the District’s Literacy Across the Curriculum Framework already being implemented in city high schools. Westminster staff are already experienced in transferring practice, having served over 200 educational professionals in 2008-10 as a demonstration center for TCRWP. The principal and key instructional leaders can provide technical assistance, support, and coaching to staff in the other schools during the implementation phase.

True high school turnaround is still an emerging field, with promising practice developing as we write, often through charter and Lead Partner work and the development of new models like NewTech schools. The academic Partners have begun, and will continue in an intensive way into the early planning year, to research and pull together the elements they feel will have the best chance of success at Bennett, including possibly reaching out to exciting new

models nationally. Indeed, we at Buffalo Promise look forward to reviewing and providing evidence for our own high school turnaround model.

2.3) What are the applicant's strategies for using data to manage program implementation, inform decision-making, engage stakeholders, and measure success?

Sharing data and developing common information tools for case-management, analysis and planning, and program evaluation are high priorities for the Buffalo Promise Partners. The current state could be described as an archipelago of isolated data islands with one significant bridge already built. Fortunately, we are equipped to move quickly even before the planning year begins to increase integration by establishing common standards and linking databases with the goal of providing high-quality data for the planning year and the implementation beyond.

Building on an initial system integration: Serving 37,000 students in 65 sites, the District has a well-established set of student information and evaluation systems. It is currently in the second year of a 3-year Technology Plan and Buffalo Promise comes at a perfect time to incorporate new information system features in its next plan. Over the past several years, data integration has already been achieved between the District systems and those of the Closing the Gap Consortium in the form of a database tool developed specifically for the Consortium called GapTrack. GapTrack is a web-based system designed by Buffalo IT Solutions that is compatible with the District's student database, eSIS. The system includes grades, attendance, ELA and Math State Assessment scores, and DIBELS (The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). Work is underway to improve integration with another District database for student interventions and discipline referral. The Consortium's information systems also integrate data from multiple providers of family and community supports who participate in its full service community school model. In addition to case management and operations management, the Consortium's information system is designed for program evaluation and research.

To aid in mapping existing data and identifying the systems needs for Buffalo Promise, M&T Bank, which has extensive IT in-house and vendor resources, will assist other Partner organizations this summer in an inventory of existing systems and needs assessment.

Finally, the Regional Institute at the University at Buffalo brings expertise in developing information tools, convening forums, and generating research. Faculty and students in the Urban Planning Department are additional resources.

Three preliminary areas of need and opportunity: First, the overall goal is an accessible, easy-to-use, real-time, web-based **case management system** that can coordinate efforts and provide a powerful early-warning system for all organizations providing services in the Neighborhood as well as support program evaluation and **longitudinal research**. Second, we will add **financial data** so we can analyze performance on a cost per student basis, seek efficiencies, and ensure affordable scale up. Third, we want to enhance analysis, decision making, and presentation by developing a Geographic Information System (**GIS**) **mapping capacity** using the U.S. Census TIGER files and leveraging access to the GIS interface to incentivize organizations to standardize and share data. (All systems must comply with HIPAA, FERPA and financial privacy laws.)

Documenting the planning year activities: This summer, before the planning year begins, we will set up collaborative tools: document sharing, Web publishing, scheduling, community participation, and project management. These tools will make it easy to monitor progress, to make mid-course corrections in process as necessary, and to collate lessons learned and best practice to share with others and inform future efforts. As further described in the Management Plan section, the planning year activities will be organized around the development and collaborations of the five platforms, lending transparency and clarity to complex system design issues.

2.4) What academic and family and community support indicators will be used for the needs assessment during the planning year?

Overall Indicators Strategy: Buffalo Promise will a) commit to the use of fourteen project indicators: the seven PN-mandated program/project Academic Indicators, the five PN-mandated program Family and Community Support Indicators, and two additional project Family and Community Support Indicators; b) evaluate during the planning year the addition of

selected additional project indicators; and c) also work at the start of the planning year to identify a set of measures we see as adding value as “leading” indicators.

Agreed Project Indicators: Buffalo Promise will use indicators for needs assessment during the planning year from three sources:

Seven Academic Indicators mandated in the Promise Neighborhood application:

■ ***Children Ready for Kindergarten*** three Indicators: # and % of young children who demonstrate age-appropriate functioning; have a medical home; and participate in early learning programs ■ ***Students Proficient in Core Subjects*** Indicator: # and % of students at or above grade level according to 3rd-8th grade and high school assessments ■ ***Successful MS to HS Transition*** Indicator: Attendance rate of students in sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grades ■ ***High School Graduation*** Indicator: Graduation rate in neighborhood high school ■ ***College/ Career Success*** Indicator: # and % of students with post secondary degrees or other credentials without need for remediation.

Five Family and Community Support Indicators named as program indicators in the Promise Neighborhood application: ■ ***Students Are Healthy*** Indicator: # and % of children participating in 60 minutes of physical activity daily and eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily ■ ***Students Feel Safe*** Indicator: # and % of students who feel safe at school and traveling to and from school as measured by a school climate survey ■ ***Students Live in Stable Communities*** Indicator: Student mobility rate (as defined in notice inviting applications) ■ ***Family/ Community Support Learning*** Indicator: # and % of students with a caring adult at home, school, and community; or # and % of families attend parent-teacher conferences ■ ***Students w/ 21st Century Learning Tools*** Indicator: # and % students with school and home access to broadband and connected computing device.

Two additional Family and Community Support Indicators, based on our initial needs analysis of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood and program plans: ■ ***Fewer Teenage Pregnancies*** Indicator: # and % of teen pregnancies in the Neighborhood ■ ***Youth Employment*** Indicator: # and % of youth neither in school nor employed

The first of these additional indicators reflects our desire to address the local reality expressed in the family needs indicators in Section 1 that the teen birth rate in Buffalo is 78.1 per 1,000 versus the New York State average of 25.7. The intended result is to ensure that more young teenage students stay on the college and career track, rather than being sidetracked by unplanned pregnancies. The second additional indicator is intended to address the reality involved in the needs indicators in Section 1 that 39% of local youth are neither in school nor employed. We intend our solution continuum to address these young people as well as those in school; both indicators pertain to our secondary target segment of parents and parents-to-be and their capability to provide a supportive home environment.

We will use all of these indicators as project indicators, as well as collecting data on the indicators in A and B as program indicators, as required.

Additional indicators to be considered during the planning year: A number of the Partners have programs with indicators specifically designed to reveal the extent of need or to measure effectiveness relevant to these programs. As we confirm the design of the Buffalo Promise solutions, we will evaluate which of these indicators to add to our measurements. For example, in early learning, we may track indicators used by Read to Succeed like children in single-parent and no-parent households, and children with mothers who have not graduated from high school, all of whom are at higher risk. We may also add indicators for exposure to lead (80% of the homes in the Neighborhood were built before 1950), and nutrition (critical to development, and an obvious issue with almost a third of the population in poverty).

To address proficiency in academic subjects, we are likely to supplement the mandatory indicators involving state assessments with indicators of reading progress from the TCRWP reading program used at Westminster and, if possible, other authentic assessment data. Additional indicators to address the successful transition to high school and high school graduation may be drawn from the Closing the Gap Consortium's six key student outcomes: improved academic performance, attendance, and parental involvement; and decreased occurrence of discipline referrals, informal and formal suspensions.

Leading versus trailing indicators: As we complete the needs assessment and refine the project design in more detail over the planning year, we have a special interest in also identifying indicators that can be installed as an early warning system to guide interventions and assistance. In recent years, there have been numerous correlations drawn in high-poverty populations: the importance of close student-adult relationships, for example, or the risk that a student failing two grades is at risk of dropping out. We are particularly interested in working with other national grantees to identify and incorporate leading indicators like these into Program Design.

2.5) To what extent is the applicant committed to working with the Department and a national evaluator to ensure that data collection and program design are consistent with plans to conduct a rigorous national evaluation of the Program during the implementation phase and of specific solutions and strategies pursued by individual grantees?

The Partners of Buffalo Promise are eager to exchange information with and learn from other grantees, DOE, and their national evaluator. We welcome discussion on a set of common indicator data, collection methods, and sharing protocols. Furthermore, we hope the national evaluator will play an active role during the planning year to facilitate the creation of a “networked improvement community” as envisioned by Tony Bryk and Louis Gomez at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Setting up a collaborative infrastructure right at the outset of the planning year would enable grantees to discuss common issues and discoveries, provide a forum for collaboration, and help align activities towards a rigorous, and advantageous, national evaluation and feedback loop. Buffalo Promise looks forward to being a leader in reaching out and collaborating with other grantees and the national evaluator.

As foundations for this effort, we a) have ensured through our Memorandum of Understanding that the national evaluator will have access to all relevant program and project data sources from all Partners, b) will design programs and data collection systems consistent with the national evaluation strategy, and c) will, with the evaluator, develop an evaluation strategy that includes the identification of a credible comparison group, and the collection of reliable and valid baseline data for both program participants and this comparison group.

2.6) How does the applicant intend to coordinate with similar or related efforts, and with other appropriate community, State, and Federal resources?

As part of our grant research efforts, our Partner organizations have already identified dozens of local and national programs, funding sources, and regulatory issues and resources to investigate and pursue as we go forward. One coordinating function of Westminster Foundation will be to assign and oversee the identifying, tracking, and pursuing of all leads and resources.

A strategy of building on existing assets: Each of our Partners is already well-connected to local and national programs and resources. We will continue to leverage those relationships. The United Way, Catholic Charities, and Buffalo Urban League all have national organizations and other local chapters with whom to collaborate. M&T Bank's community reinvestment director has provided information on potential neighborhood revitalization programs and possibilities, some of which draw on city, state and/or federal subsidy programs. The Closing the Gap Consortium provides a ready connection to the national network of full service community schools. There are strong connections as well to Erie County Health, Mental Health, and Social Services agencies. Part of our planning year work will include a coordinated and systematic survey of standout national programs along the continuum, such as HCZ's Baby College, Strengthening America's Families, CityYear, Green for All, and D.A.R.E.

State policies in support of turnaround: On the critical and complicated area of implementing school reform, because we understand the importance of having state policies, practices, systems and resources that support school transformation work, we are also tracking the activities of Mass Insight's Partnership Zone Initiative, a \$75 million effort that will tap into the \$3.5 billion in new Title I school improvement aid, as well as private philanthropy. In February 2010 New York was one of the six states to join the Initiative by committing to invest the additional resources necessary for successful turnaround, and to alignment and support of state and district leadership in support of districts undertaking this important work. (See Appendix F, NYSED Press Release). We are monitoring these developments and opportunities for potential coordination or participation.

Buffalo Promise Section 3: Quality of Services

3.1) The extent to which the applicant describes proposed solutions to be provided by the proposed project that are based on the best available evidence, including, where available, strong or moderate evidence.

In response to growing research on the underlying cognitive, health, socio-economic, and emotional barriers to student achievement, as well as our preliminary Neighborhood needs analysis, Buffalo Promise has initiated planning for a continuum of nine solutions that support the academic performance of children in the Neighborhood. We provide, below, a brief description of each solution, including local assets to build on in developing the solution, and the evidence base for their effectiveness. The matrix on the next page illustrates how each solution supports specific academic, family, and community support indicators.

Buffalo Promise Continuum Addresses Key Indicators	Academic Indicators				Family & Comm Indicators			
	Part. access to high-quality early learning	Participation in early learning	Participation in core subjects	Participation in college, career, and workforce	Participation in high-quality parenting	Participation in high-quality community	Participation in high-quality workforce	Participation in high-quality workforce
BUFFALO PROMISE SOLUTIONS								
Pregnancy/Parenting Support								
Assets to build on: Ready, Set, Parent (EPIC); Incredible Years (Catholic Charities); Parent U (District); Family Support (Urban League)	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
Early Learning								
Assets: Early Reading First (RTS); Project CARE (RTS); Next EL Center (Westminster Fdn, M&T); Dramatic School Reform	0	0	0					
Assets: Westminster CC's and new district school transformation plans (M&T/Westminster CCS Partnership and Buffalo Public Schools)								
Academic Supports								
Assets: After-school Programs and Summer School Programs (Westminster Fdn, District, U@Buffalo)								
Full Service Community School Supports								
Assets: Buffalo Promise Navigator position; Closing the Gap (Consortium); existing Community School implementation (Westminster C.C.S.); Parent U (District); Parent advocacy (EPIC)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
College Readiness and Employability								
Assets: College Counseling Internship (U@Buffalo); Peer Service Learning (Westminster C.C.S.); Developing Civic Pathways (U@Buffalo); New program focused on vocational and job experience (District, Westminster Fdn)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Life Literacies								
Assets: Teen Pregnancy Prevention (BAPPS); Planned Parenthood; Money Skill Financial Lit program (M&T, U@Buffalo); GED, ESL, Computer literacy, etc. (District Adult Ed)					0	0	0	0
Neighborhood Stability								
Assets: Job building, family violence (CTG Consortium); Community police office (District); Good for the Neighborhood (who?)					0	0	0	0
Community Reinvestment								
Assets: Homebuy or Rehab and Block Stabilization Programs (M&T, Urban League)					0	0	0	0

see next page

Pregnancy/Parenting Support: Because the earliest childhood years are key to building a strong foundation for future educational success, the Partners' first solution addresses this critically important stage, targeting the most at-risk: pregnant teens as well as young parents and their children. Identified assets: ● Every Person Influences Education (EPIC's) *Ready, Set, Parent* education program, replicated in 17 states and showing moderate evidence that participant children were positively affected in five developmental areas (EPIC, 2010). ● The District's *Parent University* workshops focus on role playing and modeling appropriate parenting skills. ● Catholic Charities' *Incredible Years*, an evidence-based program that addresses discipline and communication skills, and *Young Parents Program*, that includes prenatal and infant care ● The Urban League's *Family Support* services on child abuse and foster care.

High Quality Early Learning Provision: 42% of children entering public kindergarten in Buffalo do not meet minimum literacy benchmarks. To counter this, we have some effective

Buffalo Promise Continuum Addresses Key Indicators	Academic Indicators						Family & Comm Indicators							
	Pre-K access to healthcare	Age-appropriate functioning	Participation in early learning	Proficient in Core Subjects	MS to HS Transition	HS Graduation	College Career Success	Students are healthy	Students feel safe	Students live in stable comm	Fam&comm support learn	Students w/ 21 st C learn tools	Fewer unplanned pregnancies	Lower youth unemployment
BUFFALO PROMISE SOLUTIONS														
Pregnancy/Parenting Support Assets to build on: Ready, Set, Parent (EPIC); Incredible Years (Cath Charities); Parent U (District); Family Support (Urban League)	◇	◇	◇					◇	◇		◇		◇	
Early Learning Assets: Early Reading First (RTS); Project CARE (RTS); New EL Center (Westminster Fdn, M&T)	◇	◇	◇	◇										
Dramatic School Reform Assets: Westminster CCS and new district school transformation plans (M&T-Westminster CCS Partnership and Buffalo Public Schools)				◇	◇	◇	◇		◇			◇		
Academic Supports Assets: Afterschool Programs and Summer School Programs (Westminster Fdn, District, U@Buffalo)				◇	◇	◇	◇		◇					
Full Service Community School Supports Assets: Buffalo Promise Support Coordinators; Closing the Gap (Consortium); existing Community School implementation (Westminster CCS) ; Parent U (District); Parent advocacy (EPIC)				◇	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇		◇			
College Readiness and Employability Assets: College Counseling Internships (U Buffalo); Peer/Service Learning (Westminster CCS);); Developing Civic Pathways (U@Buffalo); New program focused on vocational ed and job experience (District, Westminster Fdn)				◇	◇	◇	◇		◇	◇	◇	◇		◇
Life Literacies Assets: Teen Pregnancy Prevention (BAPPS, Planned Parenthood), MoneySkill Financial Lit program (M&T, U@Buffalo); GED, ESL, Computer literacy, etc. (District Adult Ed)						◇	◇			◇		◇	◇	◇
Neighborhood Stability Assets: anti-bullying, family violence (CTG Consortium); Community police office (District);					◇	◇			◇	◇				
Community Reinvestment Assets: Homebuyer, Rehab, and Block Stabilization Programs (M&T; Urban League)							◇	◇	◇	◇				◇

programs to build on, but also plan a major new Early Learning initiative to expand the availability of high quality services. Identified assets: ● Read to Succeed's successful *Early Reading First* model, a \$4.1 million US ED grant for professional development and parental engagement around literacy at Bethel Head Start, District and other local childcare centers. The program has been shown to be effective in closing the chronological/developmental age gap for three and four year olds, and raising a majority of participants to District kindergarten expectations despite initial skill gap and 98% poverty. (Read to Succeed, 2010). ● Read to Succeed's *Project CARE*, an innovative initiative in the 14215 zip that provides home-based childcare sites with high quality literacy and parental engagement strategies. The percentage of participants meeting developmental standards increased from 64% at pretest to 82% at year end (Read to Succeed, 2010). ● To expand high-quality early learning services, M&T/Westminster Foundation have purchased land to build a new, state-of-the-art *Westminster Early Learning Center*. They will use the Buffalo Promise planning year to work with Read to Succeed, Dr. Lucy Calkins, and others to develop a high-quality program focused on literacy and targeted closely to the needs of the neighborhood.

Dramatic School Reform: Reform of the Neighborhood schools (Bennett High School, Highgate Heights PreK-8) sits at the core of our continuum of solutions. Identified assets: ● We will use the *M&T/Westminster Foundation - District Partnership model* to ensure dramatic reform. For full description and evidence base, see Section 2.2.

Academic Supports: Extended learning time and small group remediation provide some of the most effective support for improving student achievement. Identified assets: ● Westminster Foundation's *After-school Program* provides academic instruction and activities taught or run by teams of regularly certified teachers and college students from local colleges and universities. The instructional program is a continuation of the daily instruction with a direct relationship to the regular school curriculum. ● The Foundation's *Summer School Program* operates daily during July and August, providing educational instruction from certified teachers in the morning, day camp activities in the afternoon. ● The District and the University at Buffalo also offer

substantial After-school and Summer extended learning opportunities. • Buffalo Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services also offers a pre-teen/teenage After-school enrichment program (see Life Literacies, below).

Full Service Community School Supports: The whole impetus behind Promise Neighborhoods is to harness social, emotional, family, and other supports in the service of student learning. The Partners' experience confirms that integration and coordination is essential, and Buffalo Promise proposes that the school can provide the setting for this central role. Identified assets: • We plan to place Buffalo Promise Support Coordinators right at the heart of the initiative, within the three Neighborhood schools. The Support Coordinators will liaise with school social workers, but have a stronger role in managing and aligning external support by using both stronger connections with the Partners and access to more integrated information on a range of services to help target support for individual students and their families. Their role will be strongly relationship-based and should also lead to greater coordination and efficiencies.

In creating this Support Coordinator function, Buffalo Promise has two existing programs to draw on • First of all, we are fortunate to have an established and highly successful full service community school in our own *Westminster Community Charter School*; like other full service community schools Westminster meets the health, mental health, and other human service needs of all of its students using an even more integrated systems approach, where collaboration and prevention are key. The evidence for the success of this model in improving student achievement is presented in Section 3.2 and Appendix F, School Information and Performance Data. On the community side, *Buffalo News* called Westminster “a rallying point for the community and a center of its life.” • Buffalo Promise can also learn from the Closing the Gap (CTG) initiative, already active in 7 Buffalo schools. CTG provides a set of integrated programs focused on behavioral supports for academic transitions, remedial education, parental involvement, mentoring, parenting support, mental health counseling, truancy, and suspensions. The services are integrated by an in-school Site Facilitator, who embodies some of the

characteristics we envision for our Support Coordinators. The CTG model is based on research by the Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community Schools (2010).

Locally, the program has proven successful; four of the CTG Schools have achieved the Good Standing category determined by the New York State Education Department.

College Readiness and Employability: While many of the solutions in our continuum mitigate the effects of poverty on academic achievement, we also propose a solution that aims to help break the cycle of poverty: tackling college readiness and workforce preparation through pathways of active and service learning from elementary school through young adult apprenticeships. Identified Assets: ● *Bennett College Counseling Intern Program*, a proposal from the University at Buffalo to augment Bennett High School’s guidance counseling program with three University at Buffalo education graduate student interns, who will provide support on college access and choice. ● *Developing Civic Pathways*, an exciting model from the Center for Educational Collaboration at the University at Buffalo that fosters civic engagement while building skills relevant to employability, through peer and service learning, community outreach projects, and experiences like Kids Voting activities and Wiggle Your Power summer camps starting in upper elementary and middle school years. For more on this pathway, see the Invitational Priority section on Civic Engagement at the end of the Project Narrative. ● The Partners also plan to *develop a leading edge program focused on vocational education*, certification, internship and apprenticeship opportunities, and job creation, with the strong involvement of the District’s Career and Technical Education Department, as well as community organizations and local employers.

Life Literacies: The vision for the Life Literacies solution is to target both Neighborhood parents and the members of the student-age population who either drop out of school or could use remedial or additional supports to continue to develop skills essential to further education, careers and life. Identified assets: ● Buffalo Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services provides *case management for at-risk teens*, “*Baby Think it Over*” programs, and a pre-teen/teenage *After School Enrichment Program* that includes both tutoring and age-appropriate

pregnancy-prevention programs. • M&T Bank and the University at Buffalo developed the *MoneySkill Financial Literacy* program, a free, interactive web-based curriculum designed to educate students to make informed financial decisions on a variety of personal finance issues, including income, money management, spending, credit, saving and investing. • Buffalo Public Schools has an active *Adult Education* program that provides GED, ESL, computer literacy, employment training and other services. In recent years, these and other similar services have been accessed by over 12,000 adults per year.

Neighborhood Stability: Research suggests that neighborhood conditions are the third-largest factor in student performance, after family influence and school quality (Sonbonmatsu, 2006). This solution focuses on the services needed to ensure that students feel safe and are as insulated as possible from the turbulence that often accompanies life in high-poverty neighborhoods. Identified assets: • Closing the Gap, like other similar full service support programs, includes significant anti-bullying and family violence programs (CTG Consortium – see evidence statement in Full Service Community School section above) • United Way and Catholic Charities have a portfolio of successful programs concerning Neighborhood safety and stability • The District has offered to investigate the option of opening a District Police Satellite Office in the Neighborhood. (The District police force, a division of Buffalo Police, already has two officers in Bennett High School full-time.)

Community Reinvestment: The Partners are committed to using community reinvestment as one means of transforming the Neighborhood into a thriving community by improving housing, commercial services, jobs and safety – all the things that improve prospects for students and the adults who influence them. M&T Bank has proposed to leverage and scale up the following community reinvestment programs to the Neighborhood: • *Homebuyer Clubs*, targeting renters in the Neighborhood, and possibly parents of children attending the schools and interested in buying into the Neighborhood. Includes homebuyer financial education and M&T's First Home club matched savings program (4-1 match up to \$7,500). • Homefront's *Acquisition/Rehab/Resale Tools* to help stabilize identified blocks in the Neighborhood,

including construction financing and homeowner mortgages (modeled after successful program on the west side of Buffalo) • University Heights Community Development Association's *Owner-Occupier Rehab* – assistance to address homes' structural deficiencies, again modeled on current project in another part of Buffalo. To further reinvestment we would look to other non-profits with broad neighborhood involvement for program development like the Buffalo Urban League and United Way.

3.2) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will lead to improvements in the achievement of students as measured against rigorous academic standards.

The likelihood that the services to be provided by Buffalo Promise will lead to improvements in student achievements against rigorous academic standards can be backed by three factors:

- First and foremost, our Westminster model has already demonstrated a measurable turnaround from being one of the lowest-performing schools in Buffalo to one of the highest-performing. 71% of Westminster students met or exceeded state standards in 2008-09, compared to 43% when these state assessments were initiated in 1998-99. (For more detail on Westminster performance compared to district averages and those of the two other neighborhood schools, see Appendix F, School Information and Performance Data.)
- Second, we have given great emphasis in the Buffalo promise initiative to dramatic school reform. We have concrete experience in this area, have already developed the necessary relationships, and have prioritized the steps needed to make reform happen in the required timeframe.
- Third, we have an outstanding leadership team focused on accountability as well as a group of outstanding Partners who are committed to harnessing family and community supports in a new, integrated way to target student achievement.

3.3) The extent to which the applicant explains how the needs assessment and segmentation analysis will be used to determine that children with the highest needs receive appropriate services to meet academic and developmental outcomes.

A core goal of Buffalo Promise is to target services to the needs of each and every child – and this extends to identifying and serving those with the highest needs. During the planning year we will complete and refine needs assessments, including segmentation analysis to disaggregate the data on our students and families by race, ethnicity, gender, special needs, and English Language Learner status. We will also segment the population by a number of factors relating to family, neighborhood and community status to help us plan programs for those at risk in different ways.

In addition, several of the core Buffalo Promise solutions incorporate diagnostic assessment and individualized delivery components that will allow us to use our segmentation analysis to advantage: a) the emphasis on early intervention and diagnosis for literacy in Early Learning, b) the individualized approach of Westminster’s reading and writing program, and c) the student-centered service in both Westminster’s and the Closing the Gap full service approaches, both of which will contribute to the design of Buffalo Promise’s Support Coordinator role. While aimed at providing what each child needs, these approaches will naturally highlight those with the highest needs for delivery of appropriate services.

Buffalo Promise Section 4: Quality of the Project Personnel

4.1) What is the applicant's organizational capacity to plan and implement a Promise Neighborhood?

Fast Facts on Westminster Foundation's Organizational Capacity

	Application criteria	Westminster Foundation
✓	Working with priority schools; their LEA; Federal, State, and local government leaders; and other service providers.	Adopted Buffalo's lowest performing public school in 1993; managed its transformation and later conversion to a charter school in 2004* (working closely with District, State & Federal officials).
✓	Serving the neighborhood and its residents.	Westminster Community Charter School is a neighborhood school (no busing) & center of community life. (K-8; 550 students in a high-poverty neighborhood).
✓	Collecting, analyzing, and using data for decision-making & ongoing improvement.	Formative assessments and data-driven instruction; data fully integrated with academic supports and operations.
✓	Creating formal and informal relationships and generating community support.	Key personnel bring over 45 years of direct Neighborhood involvement, plus strong ties with community service, education, and business organizations.
✓	Securing and integrating multiple funding streams.	Applicant and School have partnered on 37 grants since 2004-05: totaling almost \$6m.
✓	Implementing efforts similar or related to the proposed Promise Neighborhood.	Westminster Foundation and the School provide a full service community school model: free early learning, after school, summer school, health clinic, nutrition program, and much more. School is now a neighborhood stabilizer with only 4% student mobility.

*M&T Bank led the effort in 1993; Westminster Foundation formed in 2004 with the charter conversion and offers continuum solutions including free early learning, after school, and summer school (Applicant Eligibility Req't).

A closer look at a rare public/private partnership: The Westminster Foundation combines access to the executive, managerial, technical, and financial capacities of a major bank (donated 100%) with a broad coalition of education and community experts in the fight to improve education and end poverty. In 1993, M&T Bank Chairman Robert Wilmers, despairing of the declining condition of Buffalo’s public schools, committed M&T to an unusual civic investment: to adopt and transform the City’s lowest performing school. Students at School 68 (now Westminster Community Charter School) had scored at the bottom of the district for over a decade; high poverty, discipline problems, and high student mobility were toxic. Yet the intervention proved successful: in 2002 the school was designated one of the most improved schools in New York State by the Department of Education and today Westminster Community Charter School is among the top schools in the District. What is behind this achievement?

The Westminster “model” has been a highly productive partnership between educators and business leaders. Educators have embraced a highly collaborative model of teaching and learning buttressed by deep parent engagement and an array of academic, family, and community supports. Business leaders have brought high-level business practices, a fierce commitment to leadership and human capital development, and the discipline of continuous improvement.

Approximately 100 M&T Bankers are affiliated with the Westminster Foundation and Westminster Community Charter School on an annual basis. The bank dedicates and donates the time of six full-time positions to the school’s business operations including the school’s CEO and his staff. This group serves the school’s administrative needs such as: finance, accounting, grant writing, purchasing, human resources, facilities management, technology services, and programmatic support. This does not include M&T Bank’s CEO, President, and a senior level executive who also work closely with the school CEO and leadership team. Bank executives regularly attend Westminster planning sessions and board meetings.

During bank time (again donated 100%), many other M&T Bank employees also get involved with the school on a regular basis or on an as needed basis; these employees come from many different departments of the bank. Employees who work regularly with the school include

those in such areas as: Technology, Facilities Management & Construction, Human Resources, Communications, Legal, Event Planning, and Travel. Employees who participate sporadically on an ad hoc basis include employees from departments such as: Finance, Accounting, Tax, Purchasing, Commercial Real Estate, Business Banking, Compliance, and Insurance.

Off bank time, about 50 employees volunteer to serve as mentors and role models in a “big brother, big sister” type program to Westminster students. M&T Bank sponsors an event each month for all mentors and their students in such activities as playing laser-tag, visiting a museum or zoo, or watching sports. Outside of sponsored activities, employees typically meet with their students on weekends, sharing activities they both enjoy or introducing students to new activities. The immense personal satisfaction to both mentors and their students cannot be measured.

Westminster is the single largest charitable activity for the bank which also makes it the most visible project within the bank. The bank has spent over \$12 million since the inception of its partnership with Westminster in 1993.

The Buffalo Promise initiative builds on the Westminster experience and capability and has enabled Westminster Foundation to formalize relationships with a broad network of neighborhood, education, public, and community service partners who have worked closely with the team to forge past achievements. Short bios of these Governing Board and Advisory Board members are provided at the end of this Section 4.

Capacity to secure and manage grants and other funding: The Westminster Foundation and the Westminster Community Charter School have partnered to successfully apply for and manage 37 grants since 2004-05 totaling almost \$6 million. These grants include almost \$2.5 million in No Child Left Behind federal funds distributed through the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Other NYS grants include almost \$1.3 million in Charter School Stimulus funds, over \$940,000 in grant funding through the NYSED Extended School Day / School Violence Prevention Program, \$400,000 in NYSED Dissemination Grant funds, and over \$200,000 in funding from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services

Special Delinquency Prevention Program. The management of these grant funds has been reviewed as part of the following audits: regular audits by an independent accounting firm in accordance with GAAP standards; No Child Left Behind and Charter School audits by NYSED; an audit by the New York State Comptroller's Office; and oversight audits by the Buffalo Board of Education. Each audit found the funds were properly managed.

In addition, the Westminster Foundation can partner with M&T Bank on major grant and financing programs including the full gamut of State, Federal, nonprofit, and private sources. M&T Bank's Community Reinvestment office is very active in Buffalo and has identified a variety of potential opportunities consistent with the Promise Neighborhood Program. Through its relationship with M&T Bank and its public and community partners, together with its own fund raising capabilities, Westminster Foundation is in a strong position from which to sustain and scale Buffalo Promise beyond the expiration of Federal Promise Neighborhood funds.

4.2) What is the quality of the project personnel who will carry out the proposed project?

NOTE TO READERS: The full Governance roster and structure for Westminster Foundation can be found in Section 5, Management Plan.

KEY PERSONNEL OF THE WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION & BUFFALO PROMISE

Dr. Yvonne Minor-Ragan, Project Director of Buffalo Promise, President of Westminster Foundation, has been a fixture in the Neighborhood since 1994 when she was chosen in a national search to transform one of Buffalo's lowest-performing schools. Step by step, she has led its reform and eventual conversion in 2004 into the Westminster Community Charter School, now one of the City's highest performing schools. As Principal, Dr. Ragan has inspired a family and community involvement model to provide students with the very best education and resources to succeed. The school is widely-known for its close relationships with students and an exceedingly high level of parent involvement in student learning and the life of the school. A recognized and accomplished leader in teacher development and supervision, she

has built a highly committed and collaborative staff on the principles of critical analysis, shared decision making, and accountability. In addition to pioneering many of the academic and family and community supports now championed by the Promise Neighborhood Program, Dr. Ragan and Westminster have become a strong center of stability in a very troubled neighborhood.

Beyond her local role, Dr. Ragan has collaborated with several urban school districts to develop leadership academies for new and experienced leaders. She has helped formulate educational policy at the district, state and national levels. As Executive Director of the Chicago Cluster Initiative, she collaborated with administrators of the Chicago Public Schools to improve the instructional program for a school cluster that included three high schools. Dr. Ragan has served many professional and civic organizations; she is currently a director of the Buffalo Urban League and WNET Public Broadcasting. Of the many honors and awards bestowed on Dr. Ragan, it is most notable that she was ranked as one of the six top administrators in the country by the Secondary School Principals Association.

Mr. John Carmichael will head business operations and serve as CEO for Buffalo Promise. He is the full-time CEO of Westminster Community Charter School and a Vice President of M&T Bank Corporation (which donates his time). In this role, Mr. Carmichael co-founded and manages the K-8 public conversion charter school, serving Buffalo's inner-city youth, with an annual budget of \$7 million. He is responsible for all operations of the school, including: accounting, grant writing, fundraising, human resources, managerial consulting, mentoring programs, procurement, event planning, and education law compliance.

Mr. Carmichael helped implement and develop M&T Bank's partnership with the Buffalo Public School District, beginning with Westminster's predecessor, School #68, in 1993. He is the management liaison between Westminster Community Charter School staff, students and parents, M&T Bank, the District, the Buffalo Teachers Federation, the Buffalo Public Schools Professional, Clerical and Technical Employee Association, the Buffalo Educational Support Team and the Buffalo Council of Supervisors and Administrators. In 2007, on behalf of M&T

Bank and Westminster Community Charter School, Mr. Carmichael accepted the Pathfinder Lifetime Achievement Award for Education. Mr. Carmichael is a Director of the Westminster Foundation and is Vice-Chair of the Westminster Community Charter School Board.

Dr. James Williams, a Director of Westminster Foundation, has served as Superintendent of the Buffalo Public School District since 2005. He acts as liaison between the District and Westminster Community Charter School and played a key role in the formulation of Buffalo Promise. Prior to his current appointment, he was Chief Academic Officer for Community Education Partners, an education company that works in partnership with public schools and the community to assist disruptive and low-performing students in getting back on track. Dr. Williams's expertise is the result of over 39 years of experience as a teacher, counselor, administrator, lecturer, and author.

Dr. Williams began his teaching career in the District of Columbia Public Schools. He served the Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland as Deputy Superintendent of Schools. Later, he joined the Dayton Public Schools in Ohio as Assistant Superintendent, then Deputy Superintendent and Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Williams has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors: the Richard R. Green Award, Urban Educator of the Year, awarded by the Council of Great City Schools; Presidential Citation, Distinguished Alumni Award, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education; Danforth Fellow; Peter F. Drucker Foundation, Frances Hesselbein Community Innovation Fellow; and, Omega Psi Phi, Citizen of the Year (named twice). He is known for his work in curriculum and instruction, and his contributions include over one hundred presentations and publications.

Mr. David Chamberlain, Vice Chairman of Westminster Foundation, will play a lead role in strategy, coalition building, and funding for Buffalo Promise. During his 15 year tenure as Senior Vice President of M&T Bank's Human Resources Division, a period characterized by tremendous growth and change for the organization, Mr. Chamberlain has helped shape the

culture and strategic focus on human capital. Recognized as a change agent, he has served as a catalyst for heightening M&T's focus on growing talent from within and developing the capacity of leaders to more effectively manage the turbulence associated with change. He is keenly aware that many of the solutions to challenges confronting organizations today do not reside in the executive management suite but instead in the collective knowledge and experience of a broader constituency of people. With this core principal in mind, he has brought together a broad coalition of talent to form the Buffalo Promise advisory board which is critical to identifying and addressing the needs of the neighborhoods that comprise the Buffalo Promise initiative. In addition to supporting M&T Bank's commitment to Westminster Community Charter School, Mr. Chamberlain is a member of the Dean's Advisory Council for the Canisius College, School of Management and held a similar position for the University of Buffalo, School of Management.

Mr. Mark J. Czarnecki, Chairman of Westminster Foundation, is President of M&T Bank Corporation (M&T Bank), headquartered in Buffalo. He is responsible for over 13,800 employees and over 750 branches in 7 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. M&T Bank has assets of over \$68 billion and is ranked among the top 20 banks in the country. Mark's breadth of business experience at M&T Bank dates back 33 years in which he has directly overseen practically every business function of the bank including, but not limited to: Retail Banking, Business Banking, Consumer Lending, Commercial & Residential Lending, Electronic Banking, and internal functions such as: Technology, Banking Operations, Human Resources, Finance, and Accounting.

Mr. Czarnecki's personal commitments to the community are vast. To encapsulate only four, he is Chairman of the Westminster Community Charter School and has played an active role since 1997 in the school's leadership functions and programmatic design; he is a Director of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership; a Vice Chairman and Trustee of the State University of New York at Buffalo; and Chairman of the Buffalo Zoological Society in which he spearheaded

raising \$40 million to enhance and breathe new life into an organization that was foundering. Under Mark's leadership, the zoo retained its national accreditation status.

ADDITIONAL GOVERNING BOARD DIRECTORS

Reverend Richard A. Stenhouse is an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and Pastor of Bethel AME Church-Buffalo. He was educated in the Buffalo Public Schools, received a BA in Mathematics from State University of New York at Buffalo and Masters of Divinity from United Theological Seminary. He is a founding member of the Jeremiah Partnership made up of seven faith-based institutions, serves on the Board of Directors of LEWAC Associates of WNY, Inc., and previously served on the Board of Directors of Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) of Buffalo. Reverend Stenhouse is the executive Director of Bethel Head Start, the oldest and largest Head Start program in Western New York. Bethel AME Church, through a \$10,000 grant, formed the Bethel Community Development Corporation (CDC) which has constructed: 14 homes in Buffalo for low and moderate-income families, a \$2.7 million day care facility, and a retail incubator for minority entrepreneurs, and thirty rental units in Buffalo.

Mr. Robert D. Gioia serves as president of The John R. Oishei Foundation, which gave over \$14 million in 2009 toward community needs. A Buffalo native and resident, Mr. Gioia began his career in 1970 as a part of the 3rd generation operating the Gioia Macaroni Company. From 1992 to 2007, he was a principal with the Food Group of Strategic Investments and Holdings, an equity acquisition firm. He pioneered the completion of the \$120 million Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. He is president of the board of trustees of The Nichols School, president of the Martin House Restoration Corporation, and chair of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. He also served as chair of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, director of Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and as a trustee of St. Lawrence University.

ADDITIONAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Will Keresztes serves as the Associate Superintendent for Educational Services for the Buffalo Public Schools. He helps oversee an annual budget of nearly \$200 million, special education, student support, adult education, health services, guidance, student records, and student conduct. Mr. Keresztes brings over 12 years of teaching experience.

Brenda McDuffie serves as President and CEO of the Buffalo Urban League. Mrs. McDuffie manages a multi-faceted human service agency overseeing programs and services in education, adoption, family services, housing, and neighborhood revitalization. She serves as a liaison to represent African Americans, other minorities, and disadvantaged groups on issues related to economic self-sufficiency. She has developed and implemented collaborative agreements and partnerships with public and private entities throughout Western New York. She brings 38 years of social advocacy experience.

Dennis Walczyk serves as CEO of Catholic Charities of Buffalo an all-inclusive service provider assisting over 160,000 people. He is responsible for all program and service operations, financial accountability (annual budget of \$30 million) and strategic direction and planning. He is chair of the New York State Council of Catholic Charities Directors, Treasurer of the Board of VOICE-Buffalo, Vice Chair of Delta Development Corporation, and is on the boards of directors of the POLARIS Fund, Prism Behavioral Health Network, Horizon Health Services, Horizon Village, Quality Behavioral Health, the Catholic Urban Outreach Network, and the Canisius College Business Advisory Council, to name a few. He was appointed to the New York State Citizen Review Panel for Child Protective Services, Western Panel. Mr. Walczyk brings a wealth of human provider services experience.

Donna Brown serves as Deputy Mayor in Mayor Byron Brown's administration. Her portfolio includes housing and community development issues, education, youth initiatives, community relations, business development/job creation, and the development of an anti-poverty strategy for the City of Buffalo. Ms. Brown acts as the Administration's liaison with the Buffalo Public Schools and the district-wide Joint Schools Construction Project.

Helene Kramer serves as Executive Director of Read to Succeed Buffalo. She has grown a literacy coalition from 14 to 70+ organizations working to achieve 100% literacy for children and adults in the City of Buffalo. She has established a strategic “Literacy Zone” in the City of Buffalo and has raised over \$6.3 million to implement innovative school readiness programs for early childhood learning programs.

Mara Huber is Special Assistant to the President of the University of Buffalo for Educational Initiatives and is founding director of UB Center for Educational Collaboration and Director of the UB / Buffalo Public Schools Partnership. She is widely published concerning PreK-16 collaboration and language perception.

Vincent D. Clark serves as the Director for the Office of Community Relations at the University of Buffalo. Mr. Clark is a parent of Westminster Community Charter School students and is a visible community leader for zip code 14215 which contains the Phase I and II Neighborhoods. He serves on the board of directors of the University Heights Community Development Association and was a staff member of Representative Jack Quinn for 7 years.

Michael Weiner serves as President of the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County. He served as Commissioner of the Erie County Department of Social Services (overseeing an annual budget of \$540 million and a workforce of 1,800 employees) and Regional Director of the Western New York field office of the State Office of Mental Health. Mr. Weiner brings 36 years of social services experience, administrative knowledge, and the proven ability to build relationships with a diverse network of corporate and community leaders.

The Honorable Bonnie Russell serves as the University District Councilmember in Buffalo. Russell is the Buffalo Common Council’s only female representative and was elected unanimously by her colleagues to serve as President Pro Tempore, and presided over the Common Council in the absence of the Council President, from 2004-2007. She is the first African-American female to serve in this capacity. She brings over 25 years of government experience at local, state and federal levels. Prior to Buffalo, she was employed by the State Auditor and Governor of Ohio, collectively for nine years.

Benjamin Willis serves as Dean of Students at the Westminster Community Charter School. He is certified in New York State in the following: NYS District Administrator, NYS Administrator Supervisor, and NYS Permanent Certification, School counseling. Mr. Willis is also a resident of the 14215 neighborhood.

Carlos Gordon is a parent of three Westminster Community Charter Students (a seventh grader, a first grader, and a kindergartener). Mr. Gordon has been employed with the New York State Thruway for sixteen years. He and his wife Verlina have resided in the 14215 zip code for thirteen years.

Buffalo Promise Section 5: Quality of the Management Plan

This section discusses 1) the Partners, their financial and programmatic commitments, 2) their governance structure; 3) the goals, timelines, and milestones for the planning year; 4) the community participation plan to ensure a diversity of perspectives, and 5) the potential for future and scale-up funding after federal funding ends.

5.1) Who are the partner organizations and what is their commitment to the project? How do they and their existing activities align with those of the proposed Promise Neighborhood?

Westminster Foundation (the applicant), **Westminster Community Charter School**, and **M&T Bank** have been previously described in Sections 2 and 4.

John R. Oishei Foundation is a major philanthropic partner on medical research, healthcare, and education in the Buffalo area. In 2007, Oishei shifted its strategic approach from “silo-based” to “issue-based” funding – a shift in full accord with the Promise Neighborhood model. Oishei is providing a portion of the matching funds for the Promise Neighborhood grant as well as being a long-time partner and funder of the organizations in the Buffalo Promise initiative.

City of Buffalo is led by Mayor Byron Brown whose administration is focused on greater accountability and efficiency in City government, improving quality of life, and economic development. The City adopted a new comprehensive plan in 2004 that included major restructuring and renovation of its schools. The plan is well-aligned with Buffalo Promise.

Buffalo Public School District serves 37,000 students in 65 facilities in the nation’s third poorest city. In 2005, a new leadership team was established under the superintendency of Dr. James A. Williams, a catalyst and innovator in urban education with a record of helping low-performing students get back on track. The District was instrumental in setting the strategy for Buffalo Promise.

United Way and **Catholic Charities** are the leading community service organizations in Buffalo, active in a broad array of academic and family and community supports. Effective collaborators, they were instrumental in establishing the Closing the Gap Consortium which integrates the health, human, and social services of over 20 agencies to improve student

achievement for over 3,000 students in seven public schools.

Read to Succeed Buffalo leads the fight against low literacy through its own highly-effective programs and by bringing together more than 50 coalition members. In 2006, with participation from over 200 community stakeholders, they completed a citywide strategic plan to transform the current, fragmented literacy system to one that is comprehensive, unified, and measurable.

Buffalo Urban League provides services in family preservation, education, employment, housing, and community development. Its Live Buffalo initiative strives to meet the housing, business, employment, and safety needs of neighborhood residents. In addition, the League plays a key role in youth development and civic engagement.

University at Buffalo sits at the edge of the Buffalo Promise Phase I area. Serving nearly 30,000 students, it is the largest and most comprehensive campus within the State University of NY. Through its UB-Buffalo Public School Partnership, it is deeply involved with the District and community. The University has committed its diverse resources as part of Buffalo Promise.

Each managing a portfolio of programs, the Partners have agreed to participate fully in developing the Promise Neighborhood Plan, in building the platforms of policies, practices, systems, and resources for collaborative delivery, and in making significant financial and/or programmatic commitment to the seamless integration of services envisioned in the Promise Neighborhoods Program. Further information on their vision, theories of change and action, and commitments are described in the attached Memorandum of Understanding.

5.2) What is the governance structure of the proposed Promise Neighborhood?

The Westminster Foundation includes a Governing Board, Advisory Board, and Management Team. The Advisory Board will serve as the entity primarily representative of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood. One half of Advisory Board is comprised of a combination of residents of the Neighborhood, residents of the city who are low-income, or public officials serving the Neighborhood (public officials represent 25%) – as noted with an asterisk in the Advisory Board chart below. The Advisory Board will have the power to inform and advise the Governing Board on all matters and programs serving the Neighborhood and the effectiveness of all services

and programs. Both boards are “working boards” with members bringing their considerable talents to the work of Buffalo Promise.

Westminster Foundation Governing Board

1	Director	Dr. James Williams	Superintendent, Buffalo Public Schools
2	Director	Rev. Richard Stenhouse	President, Jeremiah Partnership
3	Director	Robert Gioia	President, John R. Oishei Fdn
4	Chairman	Mark Czarnecki	President, M&T Bank
5	Vice Chairman	David Chamberlain	Senior VP, M&T Bank
6	Director	John Carmichael	CEO, Westminster Community CS
7	Director	Dr. Yvonne Ragan	Principal, Westminster Community CS

Buffalo Promise Advisory Board

1	Buffalo Public Schools	Will Keresztes*	Assoc. Superintendent for Education
2	Buffalo Urban League	Brenda McDuffie*	President/Resident
3	Catholic Charities of Buffalo	Dennis Walczyk	CEO
4	City of Buffalo	Donna Brown*	Deputy Mayor
5	M&T Bank	David Chamberlain	Senior Vice President
6	Read to Succeed Buffalo	Helene Kramer	Executive Director
7	State Univ. of Buffalo	Mara Huber	Spec. Asst. to the President
8	State Univ. of Buffalo	Vincent Clark	Director Community Relations
9	United Way of Buffalo/Erie	Michael Weiner	President
10	University District	Bonnie Russell*	Councilmember/Resident
11	Westminster Community CS	Benjamin Willis*	Dean of Students/Resident
12	Westminster Community CS	Carlos Gordon*	Parent/Resident

*Residents of the Neighborhood or public officials

Officers (Management Team)

1	Chairman	Mark Czarnecki	President, M&T Bank
2	Vice Chairman	David Chamberlain	Senior VP, M&T Bank
3	CEO	John Carmichael	CEO, Westminster Community CS
4	President/Project Director	Dr. Yvonne Ragan	Principal, Westminster Community CS
5	Treasurer	Patrick Mansfield	Vice President, M&T Bank

5.3) How will the applicant, through its management plan, achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks?

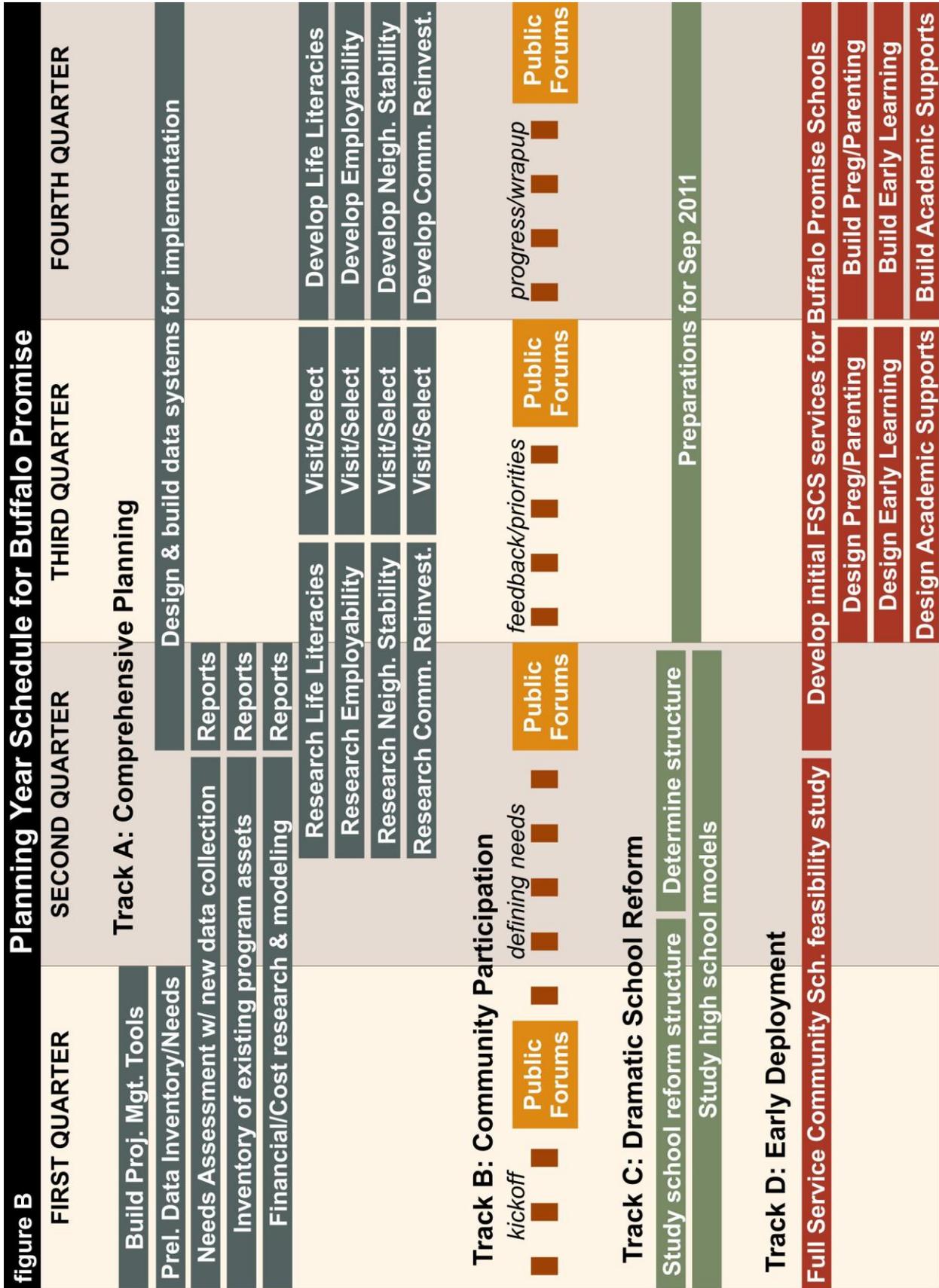
Our project schedule (Figure B, following page) is constructed to meet four key goals:

- 1) Conduct a thorough needs assessment and segmentation analysis, including a longitudinal data system, followed by system design for the nine solutions in our continuum before the end of the planning year;
- 2) Survey the neighborhood and achieve a wide diversity of perspectives in our planning process and build broad-based support for the plan;
- 3) Put the revised partnership between Westminster Foundation and the District in place by March 1, 2011 so that we can implement school reform changes for the start of the 2011-12 school year at Bennett High School and Highgate Heights School; and
- 4) Equip these schools with targeted supports by September 2011 by leveraging programs that currently exist serving other populations.

In summary, we will analyze, plan, design, and engage the community to develop the full continuum of solutions while also fast-tracking the dramatic reform needed at Bennett and Highgate Heights. In so doing, grant and matching funds will be limited to planning activities only. To meet these goals, our schedule can best be understood as having four tracks:

Track A) Comprehensive planning year analysis and design: The beginning of the planning year will commence rapidly with new and existing data collection, resident surveys, needs assessment and segmentation analysis, an inventory of existing program assets across the full continuum of solutions, and financial analysis and modeling of program costs (per unit and aggregated to the Neighborhood). The research will be shared publicly in the second quarter when we launch a month of public forums and consultations. System design will commence in the third quarter and be completed by the end of the planning year (estimated September 2011).

Track B) Community participation: As part of a strategy of broad community outreach described in Section 5.4 below, we will conduct public forums at **kickoff**, again in the second



quarter for **defining needs**, and again midway at the conclusion of our needs assessment for **feedback on research and the District agreement**. A later round will be coordinated in the third quarter for **input on system design**, and at the end of the planning year for **wrap up and the start of implementation**.

Track C) Preparations for dramatic school reform: In order to start fast out of the gate on October 1st, some unfunded pre-work will be done over the summer including research on management structures for school reform partnerships and related policy and regulatory factors. Successful high school models will be studied and evaluated along with the differences between implementation for a “regular” district school (Highgate Heights) versus a conversion charter (Westminster). By December, we will begin drafting an agreement that can be executed by March 1, 2011 to provide six months of preparations before the start of the 2011 school year.

Track D) Early deployment of interim supports to reinforce school reform: During the fall, the Partners will study the feasibility of bringing the full service community model to Bennett and Highgate Heights by September 2011 (one option being to add these schools to the cluster currently served by the Closing the Gap Consortium.)

An experienced, talented team to ensure the jobs gets done: As noted in Section 4, Dr. Ragan, as Project Director, will be the lead party responsible for orchestrating the relationships and activities resulting in an adopted plan. John Carmichael will be in charge of day-to-day operations, consultants, budgets, schedule control, and legal matters. David Chamberlain, on behalf of the Westminster Foundation, and Dr. James Williams, on behalf of the Buffalo Public School District, will spearhead the creation of a school reform agreement as well as coalition building and fund raising for Buffalo Promise.

5.4) How will the applicant ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of families, school staff, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate?

A community participation plan will be prepared spelling out preparations for broad participation, access to information, public forums and public comment, complaint resolution, and technical assistance. The plan will be implemented under the leadership of Dr. Ragan. In her capacity as Principal of the Westminster Community Charter School over the past 15 years, Dr. Ragan has forged deep and far-ranging relationships throughout the Neighborhood. Assisting her will be other Partner representatives with similarly strong ties. A participation list will be compiled of organizations, businesses, block clubs, churches, and individuals from the Neighborhood. Information will be widely accessible online and at locations in the Neighborhood. Public forums will be scheduled early and well-publicized.

5.5) What is the potential for continued support of the project after federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to sustain and “scale up” the proposed Promise Neighborhood?

Buffalo’s economy, shrinking since 1970, is dependent on an education turnaround (Section 1). The Partners share the conviction that the Promise Neighborhood model can revitalize the schools, neighborhoods, and workforce of the city, and are thus focused on scale up from the start. The partnership is comprised of major Buffalo institutions backed by a wide variety of public and private funding sources. We have the relationships to secure local contributions and the capacity and national reach to pursue State, Federal, and foundation support. In short, we are resilient—able to connect to a wide range of funding sources.

Building “cost per child” into the project design from the outset (Absolute Priority Requirement 4): In this era of looming budget cuts, we enter this venture with our eyes open to the difficult challenges that lie ahead in sustaining funding. It is our hope and cautious confidence that the “seamless integration” of services will show the way to much higher

efficiencies and to a lessening, within the Neighborhood, of the poverty conditions driving the demand for services. Accordingly, financial analysis will be a top priority from the start. We are considering a financial summit of our Partners and other experts as one of our kickoff events. Analysts from M&T Bank are at our disposal to assist Partner CFOs to build a collective cost model so that our continuum is lean as well as impactful. We will prototype only those programs that can be projected to be affordable at scale. As we see the future, only through a relentless pursuit of productivity can we successfully scale Buffalo Promise beyond the Phase I Neighborhood. A cost-based plan for Phase II and III, with dates and prospective sponsors, will be one of our deliverables in the planning year.

Buffalo Promise Section 6: Significance

6.1) What is the likelihood that the proposed project will result in long-term systems change?

Long-term system change in Phase I, II, and III of Buffalo Promise, and beyond is likely due to three core strengths of the proposal:

1) The partnership of major Buffalo education, service, and business organizations building on a 17-year track record: The District has committed to enabling a path for

turnaround or transformation of the Buffalo Promise schools within the district structure.

Westminster Foundation and M&T Bank have committed to extending their role as a catalyst for rigor, accountability, and capacity from Westminster Community Charter School to the transformation of the two additional schools (along with those targeted in Phases II and III).

United Way, Catholic Charities, Buffalo Urban League, Read to Succeed Buffalo, and the University at Buffalo—along with the Mayor’s Office and the John R. Oishei Foundation—are equally committed (Section 2, 4, and 5).

2) An integrated full service community school model for academic, social, health, and human services: Our adaptation of the model will be strongly relationship-based—a

Support Coordinator at the center of the initiative, within the three Neighborhood schools—building on the success of the model at Westminster Community Charter School and the model of the Closing the Gap Consortium that currently operates with great success at seven other Buffalo public schools (Section 3).

3) New programs to intervene at two devastating points in the poverty cycle: an integrated continuum of solutions to a) **reduce unplanned pregnancy** while b) **raising youth employment** (new Project Indicators). To address the first indicator, we will use the planning year to analyze and enhance existing teen pregnancy programs (Section 3). To address the second new indicator, we will undertake the development of **Civic Engagement as a Path to College Readiness and Employability** as described in the Invitational Priority page following this section.

6.2) How will the applicant track available sources of funding to sustain and scale the project as well as identify local, State, and Federal policies and regulations that might impede, or support the project?

As noted in Section 5.5, Buffalo Promise is comprised of major Buffalo institutions backed by a wide variety of public and private funding sources. We have the relationships to secure local contributions and the capacity and national reach to pursue State, Federal, and foundation support. **In short, we are resilient—able to connect to a wide range of funding sources.** In addition, the Westminster Foundation can partner with M&T Bank on major grant and financing programs including the full gamut of State, Federal, nonprofit, and private sources. M&T Bank’s Community Reinvestment office is very active in Buffalo and has identified a variety of potential opportunities consistent with the Promise Neighborhood Program. Accordingly, Westminster Foundation is in a strong position from which to sustain and scale Buffalo Promise beyond the expiration of Federal Promise Neighborhood funds (Section 4.1).

In many respects, the expertise, relationships, and proven track records of our Partners is also advantageous to identifying and resolving policy and regulatory impediments. As noted in Section 2.6, we are monitoring New York State’s participation in Mass Insight’s Partnership Zone Initiative, a \$75 million effort to assist New York and five other states to address policy, regulatory, and structure conditions needed to advance dramatic school reform (Section 2.6).

6.3) How is the project likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services?

Buffalo Promise is structured as a new collaborative hub for the City of Buffalo. The Partners themselves run dozens of programs in high-poverty areas like the Neighborhood. By seeking seamless integration funneled through a one-point-of-contact support navigator and investing in common data systems and cost modeling, as well as collaborative planning and program development, we will have a dramatic, positive impact throughout the education and community services community. Westminster has already had such impact: 22 Westminster teachers absorbed the Westminster model and now hold administrative positions in the District.

6.4) How will the proposed project involve the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies?

Our continuum of solutions (Section 3.1) is organized into nine re-engineered or expanded strategies that build on, or will be alternatives to, existing programs and strategies. In each case, we seek to increase impact through two dimensions of integration: tighter coordination between service providers and a more relationship-based, one-stop shopping model for students, parents, and families. Each of these nine solution initiatives is broad, comprehensive, and cross-organizational: Pregnancy/Parenting, Early Learning, Dramatic School Reform, Academic Supports, Full Service Community School Supports, College Readiness and Employability, Life Literacies, Neighborhood Stability, and Community Reinvestment.

6.5) What is the potential to sustain and apply the model or strategies, including, as appropriate, the potential for implementation of the model in a variety of settings?

In addition to programmatic innovations anticipated in the solution strategies discussed above, there are three larger structural aspects of Buffalo Promise that lend themselves to replication in other parts of Buffalo and in other cities:

1) **Business-School Partnership**: Despite the interest of many businesses and business leaders in school reform, there are very few instances of sustained success. Westminster Foundation, Westminster Community Charter School, and M&T Bank have codified a highly effective system that blends the best that educators and business leaders can offer. After a 17-year partnership, it is significant that both the District and M&T Bank are stepping up to the plate together to expand the model to Buffalo Promise and beyond. We believe the model can be adopted and adapted by other businesses and school districts and we endeavor to make Buffalo Promise a showcase for such success.

2) **Relationship-based full service community school model**: We are excited for the planning year opportunity to combine the knowledge, data systems, and program cost information held by our Partners to redesign service delivery that not only plugs gaps, but builds

a shared planning model, information system, and staff development infrastructure for effectiveness and efficiency that—once built—can be readily scaled and replicated.

3) Invitational Priority – Civic Engagement as a Path to College Readiness and

Employability: We have a vision to attack in a new way the dramatic lack of employment opportunity for inner city youth using the principles of Promise Neighborhoods. In Buffalo, 39% of youth are neither in school nor employed. The summary on the following page describes how Buffalo Promise will address this need. Our stretch goal is to create a new national model.

Invitational Priority

Civic Engagement as a Path to College Readiness & Employability

Civic engagement has many virtuous roles in the educational setting. As Buffalo Promise member Mara Huber has written, “As young students begin to read, write, study literature, art, science, and geography, they are developing an understanding of their communities and responsibilities. And as they grow and progress in their learning and experiences, their understanding becomes more sophisticated and their abilities to engage and contribute to their communities increase” (Huber, 2010). Equally important, we believe, is the value of peer and service learning, community outreach projects, and volunteerism—at all educational levels—as part of a pathway towards career and employability. **Our vision is to reframe civic engagement as a human capital pathway.**

There are three models within the Promise Neighborhood concept for which there is rapidly growing evidence: 1) the bundle of child and parent programs and supports loosely labeled **Early Learning**, 2) the fusing of social, health, and human services with academic advocacy we have referred to as the **Full Service Community School** model, and 3) the practices of learning interventions and supports associated with **High-Performing High-Poverty Schools**.

To break the cycle of poverty, we believe a fourth model is required for which no effective approach has yet emerged—a model to overcome the scarcity of jobs for inner city youth and increase their employability. While academic achievement is vital to College and Career Success, it is not the only ingredient. For the advantaged child, their path to a career is a rich journey of civic engagement, role models, team projects, internships, part time jobs, mentors, summer jobs, self-directed education, committee work, interview experience, career study and preparation, volunteerism, resume writing, and more. For the advantaged child, opportunities are plentiful. In addition to their future career value, these opportunities also give meaning to academic achievement and build self-esteem and purpose. For the child in a high

poverty neighborhood, opportunities are scant and the “map” of how all these parts fit together is far less defined.

What our preliminary needs assessment showed is that in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood—and generally in the City of Buffalo, due to the high and ingrained level of poverty and its position on the edge of the “rust belt”—the “employability continuum” is particularly fragmented and insufficient. Despite a number of youth jobs programs and services, the dismal job picture for young people remains bleak. Furthermore, in the academic and family and community support domains, there is little cross-organizational partnering, or even conversation taking place in search of new strategies.

Our Invitational Priority proposal is to reinvent college readiness and employability: rethinking and recombining existing and new program assets into a new deliberate continuum supported by community, education, and business organizations. Using human capital development practices, we will provide a logical progression of pre-employment and early employment experiences, in-school and out-of-school, by combining civic engagement, youth employment interventions, and action and service learning.

In this initiative, we are responding to the Ready by 21 campaign of the Forum for Youth Investment and the advocacy of the Urban League and National Youth Employment Coalition. Among the national programs that we will study and borrow from are CityYear, Junior Achievement, Green for All, and YouthBuild USA.

We envision broad involvement from all Partners in **Civic Engagement as a Path to College Readiness and Employability** and special leadership from the Buffalo Urban League (youth and employment services), the University at Buffalo (internships and civic engagement) and M&T Bank (human resources, coalition building, community reinvestment).