

**Meriden Family Zone Promise Neighborhood Application
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I Need for the project

Meriden is located in the center of Connecticut, the state with the largest achievement gap in the nation. Meriden is the state's 12th largest city with a population of 59,494 with 7,300 children under the age of 9. Five of our eight elementary schools (including three in the Promise Neighborhood) are low performing. Meriden's residents are increasingly young, diverse, poor and isolated. There are fewer job opportunities with the decline of Meriden as a manufacturing center.

Despite these challenges, Meriden benefits from a strong base of community assets and leadership, a long history of collaborative action that has produced successful results, and a powerful desire and commitment to make things better. Meriden Children First Initiative (CFI), the lead organization for the PN planning process, has developed partnerships with Meriden Public Schools, City Hall, the United Way and philanthropic community, numerous youth-serving agencies, and parent leaders. As a mid-size City with big-city social ills, our community is a manageable size in which a focused, coordinated Promise Neighborhood project can produce significant improvements in academic and family measures.

Inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone model and under the leadership of the deeply rooted Meriden Children First Initiative (CFI), Meriden launched a pilot Meriden Family Zone (MFZ) in a distressed, low-income neighborhood in 2010 which has been expanded to a larger area designated for the Promise Neighborhood planning grant application. The MFZ is a 40-block area in Meriden's center city and includes Census Tracts 1701-1703, 1709, 1710, and 1714 (see Figure I-1), including the Mills, the City's largest low-income federal public housing development (and subject of a recent Choice Neighborhood application).

There are 12,555 people residing in the Zone, including nearly 4,000 persons under 18 years of age. The Zone is more diverse than the City or State (Table I-1). In the PN, over half of school-aged children are Hispanic.

Table I-1: Race and Hispanic Ethnicity of MFZ Compared to City and State, 2005-2009

Race/ Hispanic Ethnicity	CT		Meriden		MFZ	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
African American, Non-Hispanic	316,900	8.9%	3,999	6.7%	1,258	10.1%
White Non-Hispanic	2,584,666	72.9%	36,330	60.5%	4,060	32.6%
Hispanic or Latino:	406,476	11.5%	16,092	26.8%	6,812	54.6%
Other Non-Hispanic	235,104	6.6%	3,670	6.1%	341	2.7%
Total	3,543,146	100.0%	60,091	100.0%	12,471	100.0%
% Other Than White Non-Hispanic	27%		40%		67%	

Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2005-2009

Families in the Zone who identify as Hispanic have increased about 22% over the past ten years, primarily coming from Puerto Rico and Mexico. Fifty-five percent of households in the Zone are single-parent-headed. The geographic area served by the MFZ was chosen based on evidence of both high need and opportunity; presence of elementary schools committed to improving academic achievement; and city and community leadership committed to making the changes needed to help children and families succeed.

Selection Criteria I-1: Severity of problems to be addressed by the project

We look first at educational need then at family and community need.

Education Need

Diversity of School-Age Children. 57.2% of children in Meriden public schools in 2009-10 are African-American or Hispanic, compared to 49.3% in 2001-02, and 82.4% in the MFZ. Hispanic student enrollment is 43.8% citywide and 65.6% in the MFZ. African American and Hispanic students in MFZ schools score significantly below their white classmates in all academic areas of the CMT.

Early Care and Education. In 2010, an estimated 66% of the City’s four year olds performance on the state’s fall Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (and a probably a higher percentage in the MFZ), indicates that they do not consistently demonstrate the skills needed for kindergarten (e.g. large and fine motor skills, concepts about print, letters and sounds, soil-emotional development), reflecting a high need for more and higher quality preschool experiences. Approximately 1,283 preschool spaces in Meriden are available to serve the estimated 1,655 three and four- year olds. Meriden only has 358 licensed infant and toddler spaces for 2,400 children age birth to two years. With 68% of young children living in families where a single parent or both parents are working, there is a significant need for more out-of-home early care and education services.

The Early Grades. In 2011, 25.5% of 3rd graders attending schools in the MFZ scored at or above goal on the Connecticut Mastery Tests in reading compared to 39.4% for all of Meriden (135th of 148 school districts) and 58.4% statewide. The gap between Meriden and the State has closed from 25 points to 19 points in the past 5 years. (27.0% among Hispanic children).

Table I-2: % At or Above State Goal, CMT, 3rd Grade, Reading, 2011

Race/Ethnicity	Zone	Other	Meriden
White	53.6%	72.4%	70.0%
Hispanic	27.0%	38.6%	34.3%
African-American	21.4%	51.9%	41.3%
All Students	28.0%	44.1%	39.3%
Achievement Gaps			
Hispanic in Zone vs. White, All			35.0%
African-American in Zone vs. White, All			23.0%

Source: CT State Department of Education

Among those eligible for free meals, 31.3% in the MFZ were at or above goal. However, a total of 97 MFZ 3rd graders scored at basic or below– a manageable number of students for targeted intensive intervention that will close this achievement gap. In Math in 2011, 48.6% of Meriden 3rd graders scored at goal or above on the Connecticut Mastery Tests, compared to 63.3% statewide. In the MFZ, 34.3% scored at or

above goal. The extreme poverty and related social and neighborhood conditions described faced by MFZ children contribute directly to their low educational achievement in relation to the rest of Meriden students and state students.

Only one in ten of Meriden students benefit from a full-day kindergarten experience, with no classes offered in the three target MFZ schools. Children participating in Meriden’s limited full-day kindergarten program scored significantly higher than their counterparts score in the half-day program and were able to catch up academically with their middle class peers.

Middle and High School. In 2011, 51.5% of Meriden 8th graders and only 31.5% in the MFZ meet state reading goal compared to 74.7% for Connecticut (Table I-3). The achievement gap was also significantly wider than among 3rd graders in 2011.

Table I-3: % At or Above State Goal, CMT, 8th Grade, Reading, 2011

Race/Ethnicity	Zone	Other	Meriden
White	53.6%	72.4%	70.0%
Hispanic	27.0%	38.6%	34.3%
African-American	21.4%	51.9%	41.3%
All Students	31.5%	58.1%	51.4%
<i>Achievement Gaps</i>			
Hispanic in Zone vs. White, All			45.3%
African-American in Zone vs. White, All			48.6%

Source: CT State Department of Education

In math, the scores were 48.2% for Meriden and 25.8% for the MFZ vs. 66.8% for the state. 8th grade reading and math scores are powerful predictors of degree of academic success and work readiness.)

On the state mandated 2011 tenth grade assessment (CAPT), only 29% of Maloney High School tenth grade students scored in the goal range in Mathematics compared to 50% at the state level, and on the Reading Across

Table I-4 Achievement Gap in CAPT Scores for Maloney High School, 2011 (% scoring at or above State Goal)

Subject	African American	Hispanic	White
Reading	13.3	11.2	38.2
Math	9.4	14.0	51.5
Science	12.5	6.5	39.4

Source: CT State Department of Education

Disciplines test, again, only 23% of Maloney tenth graders scored in the goal range compared to

45% of their counterparts across the state. This figure masks a serious achievement gap by race/ethnicity of from 25-42 points (Table I-4).

In 2010-11 school year, over 392 Zone students were reported to have more than 20 absences from school (Table I-4), a serious impediment to learning. The Planning Team will use this data to set goals for truancy reduction and to target interventions in the Zone. Zone students had significantly higher rates of absence than those living outside the Zone. The

Table I-4: Students With high # of Absences, 2010-11, by Zone Residence and Grade

Days Absent	K-3		4-8		9-12	
MFZ Students						
10+	427	51.0%	375	36.1%	216	36.3%
20+	150	17.9%	149	14.3%	93	15.6%
All	837		1040		595	
Students Outside the MFZ						
10+	719	37.0%	655	25.1%	527	29.0%
20+	193	9.9%	183	7.0%	167	9.2%
All	1943		2607		1815	
Ratio of Zone to Non-Zone, % With High Absence						
10+		1.4		1.4		1.3
20+		1.8		2.0		1.7

Source: Meriden Public School Records

correlation coefficient between 3rd grade reading scores at or above goal and number of days absent for student in the MFZ with 25 or less days absent was .66. Nearly 1 in 3 Maloney High School students had a disciplinary offense during the 2010 school year.

The Cohort on time Graduation Rate for Meriden high school students using the federal formula is estimated at 63.1% for 2007 according to EdWeek (the latest data available at this point), close to the 60% figure cited as indication of high need in the PN notice. The Meriden Public School System (MPS) is reviewing the new State-generated 2009 and 2010 Cohort rates at this time.

Target Schools Description

The targeted Zone schools are Roger Sherman, Pulaski, and Putnam Elementary schools, all Title I, lower performing schools; Washington Middle School; and Maloney High School.

Table I-5 provides key measures for each school.

Table I-5 Characteristics of Target Schools

School	Elementary			Washington Middle	Maloney High
	Sherman	Pulaski	Putnam		
# of students	526	680	544	873	1228
Free/reduced price lunch <i>District: 64.8% / State: 36.7%</i>	69.4	76%	68.4%	65.3	53.4
Disciplinary Offenses (% of students)	7.3%	5.4%	13.1%	27.3%	33.3%
First language not English	34.4%	28.4	31.1	31.6	27.9
% Hispanic	54.2%	46.6	47.2	44.4	40.5

Students residing in the MFZ, 49% (1,250 students) attend these five targeted schools due to the patterns of school attendance in Meriden. In accordance with PN guidance, however, the Implementation Plan will ensure that the MFZ Continuum of Solutions will be available over time to all students at the Targeted Schools as well as all MFZ resident students who attend other Meriden schools bringing the total students reached by the Continuum to 5,179. The ultimate goal is to bring these comprehensive, integrated services to all Meriden students at risk of school failure as well as serving as a model to many smaller, working class cities in Connecticut and across the nation.

All three targeted elementary schools have highly engaged Principals (see MOU) and active Parent Teacher Organizations that have worked with CFI for many years on education issues and are ready to join in the MFZ work, crafting deeper and more effective school-community partnerships to support the success of all students. All three schools are fully

Table I-6 MFZ Schools, Grade 3 CMT, Reading, 2011, MFZ Students

School	Tested	At or Below Basic		At or Above Goal	
Pulaski	49	20	40.8%	18	36.7%
Putnam	35	17	48.6%	8	22.9%
Sherman	43	16	37.2%	17	39.5%
Total	127	53	41.7%	43	33.9%

Source: Meriden Public Schools

engaged in the District reform efforts described in Section II and Appendix H pursuant to the District Improvement Plan, and will receive support from with the CT Center for School Change

for their implementation of the strategies.

Table I-6 presented the Grade 3 CMT in reading for 2011—quantifying (with 41.7% of students At or Below Basic) the challenge facing these schools, families and students.

Family and Community Need

Poverty. Poverty represents a significant challenge for families in the MFZ. According to Connecticut’s self-sufficiency standard, a single-head of household needs to earn at least \$23 an hour to make ends meet. In the MFZ, the middle family household income is less than \$25,000 – half of the CT self-sufficiency standard. Table I-7 shows the poverty status of families in the MFZ compared to those in all of Meriden and the State of Connecticut. While 15.8 % of Meriden families live below the federal poverty level, the rate among families in the MFZ is 41.9 %, The percent of students eligible for free and reduced price school meals (for lower income Meriden children) has increased 15% over the past decade to 64.8% citywide in 2010 and 71.6% in the MFZ.

Table I-7 Poverty Status of MFZ Population Compared to City and State, 2005-09

	CT		Meriden(includes MFZ)		MFZ		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	% of City*
Total:	3,382,564		57,723		12,255		
Under .50	134,311	4.0%	4,027	7.0%	2,503	20.4%	62.2%
.50 to .99	161,297	4.8%	5,090	8.8%	2,636	21.5%	51.8%
1.00-1.99	391,777	11.6%	8,400	14.6%	2,362	19.3%	28.1%
2.00 and over	2,695,179	79.7%	40,206	69.7%	4,754	38.8%	11.8%
< 200% of Poverty	687,385	20.3%	17,517	30.3%	7,501	61.2%	42.8%

* % of all City residents in this group that reside in the MFZ

Source: Census, American Community Survey, 2005-09

Young children bear the greatest burden of poverty with 68% of children under five living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. Among all families with children in the MFZ, 59% live with incomes below the federal poverty level (Table I-8).

Meriden has the 12th highest unemployment rate in CT, at 10.8% in July 2011, a

doubling of the 2006 rate. The number of households in Meriden receiving SNAP increased 60% from 2005 to 2010 (4,700). The Planning Team will work with the State to get this data for the MFZ and by subgroup.

Table I-8 Poverty Status of MFZ Children Compared to City and State, 2005-09

	CT	Meriden	MFZ
Total Related Children Under 18	806,787	13,952	3,948
% in Poverty	11.4%	27.3%	59.4%
% in single parent families	8.9%	23.3%	54.6%
Total 5 and under	252,227	4,345	1,479
Total 5 and under not in poverty	217,307	2,952	471
Number 5 and under in poverty	34,920	1,393	1,008
% in poverty	13.8%	32.1%	68.2%

Source: Census, American Community Survey, 2005-09

Health and Safety.

Inadequate prenatal care persists for almost 40% of all pregnant women in Meriden. An estimated 4,000 people in Meriden do not have health insurance (MFZ survey will determine number for MFZ). Only half of eligible children enrolled in HUSKY A (state Medicaid program for low income families) received one well-child visit in 2005, generally considered a marker for preventative health.

Table I-9 Child abuse and neglect, Substantiated reports, Children under 9, Rate per 1000 and 2010 Rank, 169 Towns

Town	2008	2009	2010	
			Rate	Rank
Hartford	45.3	54.2	51.4	163
Meriden	68.0	57.3	51.0	162
Norwich	56.8	53.6	50.4	161
New Haven	65.4	58.2	46.5	160
East Hartfd	29.2	33.4	44.9	159
New Britain	51.5	55.0	41.4	158
Bridgeport	37.2	40.8	37.7	154

Source: CT Dept. of Children and Families

communities (its rank among 169 towns moving from 167 in 2008 to 162 in 2010) (Table I-9).

Asthma, a leading cause of student absenteeism and disability, currently affects 1,633 (16.3%) of school age children in Meriden. Additionally, only 36.6% of students in 4th grade in Meriden schools and just 29% in the MFZ passed all four physical fitness tests. Of 929 Meriden 3rd

graders (2009-10 school year), 2 in 5 are at-risk or already overweight.

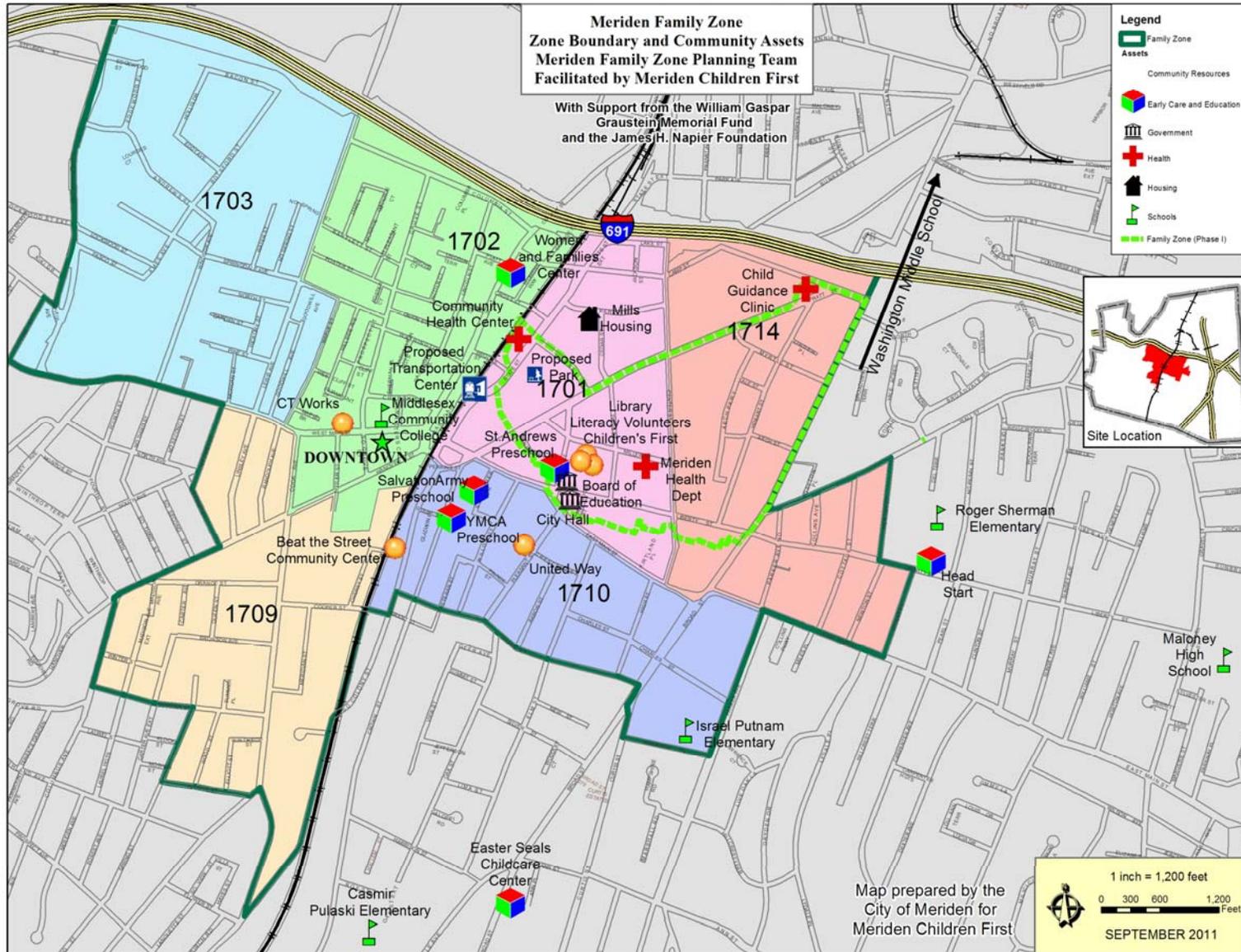
Selection Criteria I-2: Description of the geographically defined area: Meriden Family Zone (MFZ)

In the 1800s, what is now the MFZ neighborhood used to be the heart of Meriden's bustling manufacturing core. A compact downtown of mixed industrial and residential use, people lived and worked in the same neighborhoods. The captains of industry also lived in town, and would commute to their offices by way of carriage or trolley. Today, these large employers are long gone. While some of the old factory buildings remain, those who now live in these neighborhoods must travel some distance for work – if they work at all.

One legacy of this manufacturing past is that a brook that used to run through the heart of the MFZ was buried to provide more space for factories. After World War II, a low-income housing development called the Mills was added. Today, this stream flows underground beneath this development, flooding in heavy rain and once a decade causing significant damage across downtown. Current plans call for relocating the housing development, daylighting the brook, and adding green space to this prominent but long-forgotten part of town.

Most of the City's main service agencies and its Public Library are within the Zone or walking distance of the Zone residences which provides an opportunity for closer partnership to serve residents. Mostly residential, the neighborhood includes some store-front commercial and light industrial uses, professional, social service and governmental offices, a community health center, a community college branch, and strong transit connections which by 2015 will be enhanced by high-speed rail. The Zone is served by 3 elementary schools all of which are low performing under federal and state standards. Physically, structures in the MFZ are largely in average to poor repair, and the public spaces are not easily accessible for most MFZ residents. Although a park is planned (see below), there are few spaces in the MFZ for children to get exercise.

Figure I-1 Map of Meriden Promise Neighborhood Assets and Poverty Level



Housing. In 2008, Meriden’s median gross rent (including utilities) was \$837, a 35% increase since 2000. The need for low-income housing exceeds supply by more than 7,000 units according to the City’s HUD Consolidated Plan. The MFZ is largely residential with single-family homes, multi-family units and some small apartment buildings, and a 140-unit low income public housing development. Across the target MFZ, about 40% of the properties are owned by absentee landlords. Over half of the housing stock is 50 years old. Eighty percent of the City’s housing code enforcement violations involve target neighborhood properties.

The Mills, a dense 140-unit federal public housing complex on 2.5 acres, is one of only three high-rise family public housing developments remaining in Connecticut. The Mills is obsolete and distressed with outdated building systems, mold and water penetration issues. For its last official HUD inspection, Mills received a score of just 40 out of 100 points. Mills families are predominately single parent households, with only 12 two-parent households. Eighty-five percent of all residents are Hispanic. There are 210 children living in Mills. Of those, 30% are preschool age. The school-aged children all attend two of the three low performing public schools in the PN. At Mills, the three year rolling base per capita Part I crime rate is 22.9 per thousand versus 13.1 City-wide.

The MFZ builds on an array of child and family development programs – many located in the PN - and is a direct response to needs detailed above and identified in Meriden’s 2008 Early Childhood Blueprint, a comprehensive action plan to improve early-childhood indicators.

II Project Design: A Continuum of Evidence-based Solutions

Meriden Children First Initiative (CFI), a children’s advocacy organization working to improve educational, social, and health outcomes of children in Meriden, has been working over

the last 15 years with a dedicated collaborative of local parent leaders, educators and other key partners to define and build a complete Continuum of Solutions from “Cradle (preconception) to Career” designed to significantly improve educational outcomes and to support the healthy development and well-being of children and youth in the Zone. CFI will lead the effort during the proposed one year planning period to develop a comprehensive action plan that updates and refines this continuum, assigns roles to partners, and identifies stronger mechanisms for collaboration, accountability, and financing to ensure that it will achieve the results we are seeking for children in the Zone. The challenge is to make sure we have the right interventions and that all partners and their programs are aligned with each other and with the school reform strategies underway in the Meriden Public Schools. PN Planning Grant resources will assist us in developing the plan to bring the centerpiece **Family Partnership Initiative** to scale through refinement of protocols for family engagement and work, sharpening of data collection and reporting processes, building stronger connections across partners and with each of the target schools, and engagement of more local, state and federally-funded partners in the work.

After presenting our preliminary Continuum of Solutions to convey the work underway in Meriden, we detail under Criterion 2 how we will create this implementation plan.

PN funding will allow the MFZ Planning Team to more fully develop strategies, set measurable goals and objectives, and determine action plans, responsibility, and financing to significantly accelerate momentum both in and out of school by supporting a) outreach and leadership training that will engage parents and community members from a variety of backgrounds and cultures to ensure their involvement in the planning process, b) detailed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to identify gaps preventing school success for segments of the neighborhood students; and (c) the selection and expansion of successful

programs or projects; and (d) the formation of explicit structures for school, home, and community collaboration.

The MFZ Planning Team uses the Results Based Accountability (RBA) Framework in its planning and implementation process. The RBA process starts by defining, in plain language, the results we want (Section III, Table III-1) for our families, children, and community. In the next step we will refine the population level indicators we will use to measure whether we are achieving these results, examine the trends in these indicators, and use the “story behind the indicators” to guide our selection of which strategies and interventions on our Continuum of Solutions we need to add, enhance, or drop. At the core of our Continuum of Solutions (Figure II-1), are: (a) high-quality early learning programs and services coordinated through our active network and designed to improve outcomes across multiple domains of early learning for children from birth through 3rd grade; (b) ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive education reforms that are linked to improved educational outcomes for children and youth in preschool through the 12th grade; (c) programs that prepare students to be college- and career-ready; and (d) family and community supports delivered by our collaborative of all major service agencies in the City. **The evidence basis for the solutions and the indicators that each intervention will address are detailed in Section III and Appendix G.**

Selection Criteria II-1: Alignment of continuum of solutions with Meriden’s ambitions, rigorous and comprehensive strategy for improvement of schools in the neighborhood

In this section, we outline the initial scope of our Continuum of Solutions and show their alignment with MPS’s comprehensive strategy for improvement of neighborhood schools by dedicated local partners. We present the Continuum under four broad MFZ strategies that address school, family and community domains and address the challenges of each stage in a child’s life cycle (Figure II-1) in a family-centered, comprehensive way. The next section

presents the process the Planning Team will use to plan the Continuum and design the process for its full implementation.

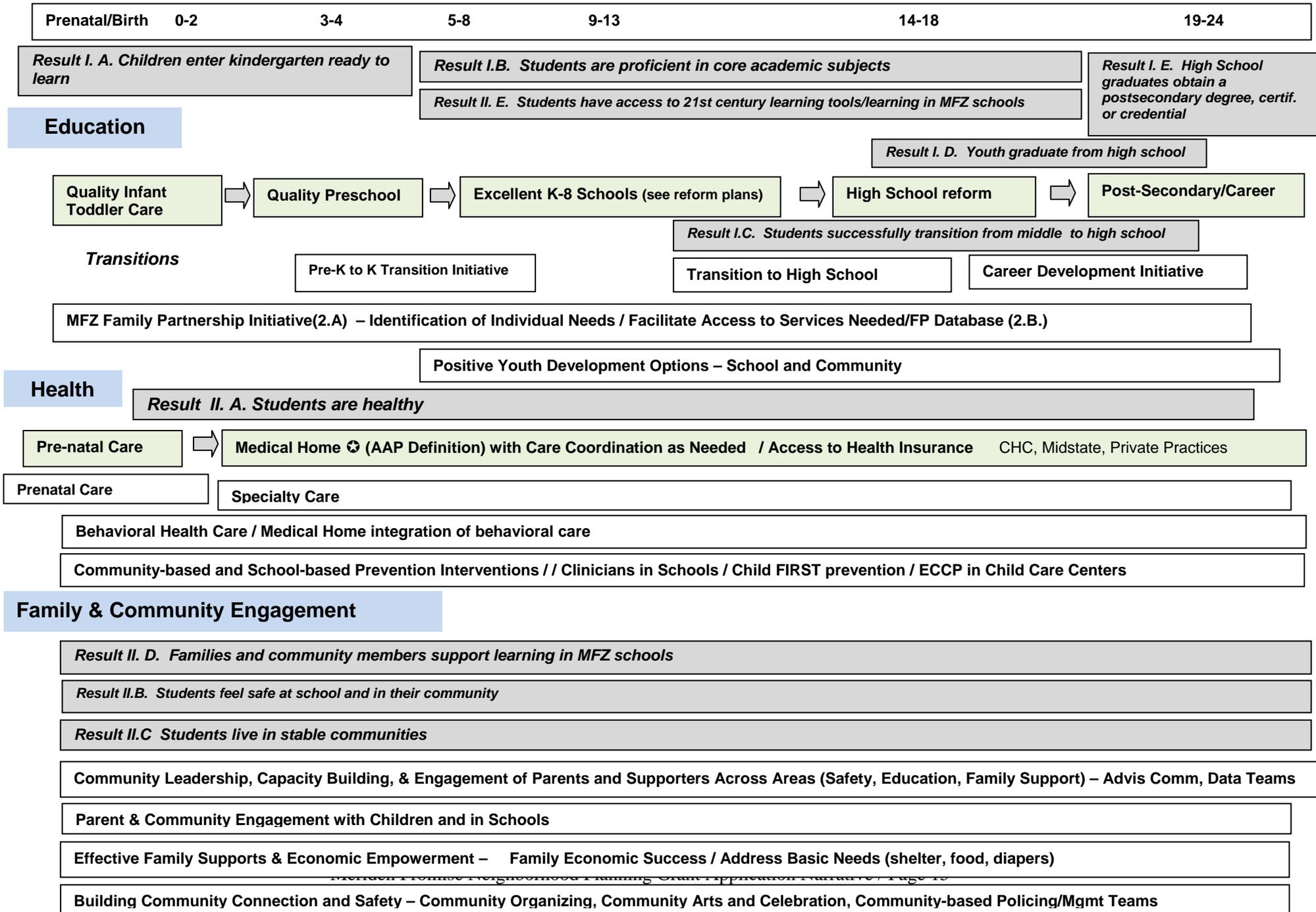
Strategy 1: Implementing rigorous, evidence-based school reform strategies

The **Meriden Public Schools (MPS)**, in coordination with the Meriden Federation of Teachers and MFZ partners, will engage the consulting expertise of both the **Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE)** and the nationally recognized **Connecticut Center for School Change (“the Center”)** to design and begin to implement, as part of its **District Improvement Plan**, dramatic change in district and school level organization and practices designed to achieve measureable improvement in neighborhood schools and student achievement.

The focus of this effort will reflect the components of the turnaround models promoted through Race To The Top, addressing educational leadership at the district and school level; teacher development, curriculum and pedagogy; increase in instructional time, and wrap-around support services. With classroom instruction as the core focus, MPS will bring research-based practices to bear in all components of its District Improvement Plan, impacting all target neighborhood schools. The specific measures, planned or in implementation, with which MFZ will be closely aligned are summarized in Table II-1 and detailed in Appendix H. See Table III-1 and Appendix G for evidence and the indicators each strategy addresses.

These local reform efforts are being advanced in the context of landmark changes adopted in 2010 by the Connecticut General Assembly as part of the state’s Race To The Top

Figure II-1: Meriden Family Zone Continuum of Solutions - Overview



initiative, including measures Meriden will be required to implement in MFZ schools (if they meet the specified criteria): (a) increase rigor and requirements for high school graduation in Connecticut; (b) expand capabilities of the State Longitudinal Data System; (c) implement a teacher evaluation system linking student and teacher performance; and (f) authorize school governance councils in persistently low-performing schools including parents, teachers and community leaders who may call for school restructuring. The Act also gave the Commissioner of Education the authority to reconstitute local or regional boards of education in persistently low-performing districts and create a fast-track route for principal development and certification.

Table II-1 Summary of Meriden’s School Improvement Strategies

<p>Improving instructional leadership at the school and district levels (1.A). The Connecticut Center for School Change will work with the central office team to build the instructional leadership skills of existing Meriden Principals and to develop aspiring school leaders. New Leadership Academy will develop a cadre of educators committed to developing their leadership skills. The Meriden Superintendent has joined the Center’s Superintendents’ Network,</p>
<p>Building a corps of excellent teachers through recruitment and data-driven professional learning communities across the district (1.B). ♦Build skills of School and District data teams through collaborative professional development designed with teachers’ union ♦Use student learning growth model to identify teachers in need of support and coaching as well as to identify highly successful teachers who can play a role in mentoring and coaching others and leading school-based teams. The Center will support MPS principals in recognizing high quality instructional practices and conferencing with teachers to improve performance</p>
<p>Conducting regular, online district wide assessments (1.C. part 1) to provide student growth model and feedback to instructional leaders, teachers, parents and students to drive more effective targeting of instructional strategies to meet specific content strands within the Connecticut Mastery Test and CAPT.</p>
<p>Instituting rigorous, evidence-based curriculum and instructional strategies across all grades (1.C, part 2). ♦Grade level and school-wide Data Teams in all K-12 schools meet weekly to assess progress and design common instructional strategies to address specific student needs. Particularly in the high school, these efforts are reducing teacher isolation and creating a professional learning community. ♦State high school redesign efforts, instituting increased graduation requirements in science, community service, and math in advance of state mandates. ♦collapsing student assignment levels in the high schools to two college preparatory levels: academic and accelerated. ♦expectations of college placement with the effect of providing access to more rigorous course work and expectations for all students. ♦Universal Full day Kindergarten ♦comprehensive reading program (Harcourt Anthology), a language arts block of uninterrupted time with trained reading specialists. ♦aligning the secondary Math and English</p>

Language Arts curricula with the state’s adoption of the Common Core State Standards and will continue with other content areas as they become available. This will establish what Connecticut’s public school students should know and be able to do as they progress through Grades K–12. ¹ ♦ Clear transition procedures for students from middle to high school, elementary to middle, and pre-k to kindergarten will facilitate students transition to new schools
Focusing on school climate and the whole student (1.D). ♦ provide a climate of nurturing and respect between and among adults and students and instill a love of learning from the earliest grades. ♦ project-based learning, school wide activities, district wide implementation of the evidence-based PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports). ♦ active engagement of parents and community in all schools, our educational vision focuses on the whole child and the building of well-rounded students with the full complement of 21 st
Addressing the non-academic needs of students (1.E.) ♦ partnering with the MFZ and through the assignment of a newly created FTE position of Family Community Liaison (part of MPS commitment to the PN) to strengthen partnerships with families, community service providers and other stakeholders.
Focusing on Transitions to College and Careers (I.F.) ♦ individualized Student Success Plans (SSP) for all students in grades 6-12. Individualized plans will provide each student with opportunities. ♦ Perkins-funded Career Technical Developers at each high school guide students in the development of SSPs. ♦ partnership/articulation with Middlesex Community College and Workforce Board to facilitate transition.

Strategy 2: Engaging Families and Agency Partners

The MFZ Planning Team believes that active engagement of parents, both as community leaders and in their parenting role, is fundamental to achieving the results we seek. The two major complementary strategies on our Continuum that cut across literally all interventions are (a) building community capacity and leadership and (b) the Family Partnership Initiative to engage each family individually and connect them to services.

Building Community Capacity and Leadership

Parent Leadership and Engagement (2.A.). Meriden Children First Initiative (CFI) has a long history of successful training and organizing parents to find their voice and collectively act on shared concerns. A core of a dozen Zone parents is already taking a leadership role in the MFZ, meeting monthly to discuss larger system issues and ways to

improve the project. In April 2011, 400 parents concerned about potential budget cuts to local schools rallied in the Zone to support school funding. Residents will be involved throughout the PN planning process with supports to strengthen their leadership skills both in their neighborhood and schools. CFI provides staffing support to each target school’s PTO to expand parent involvement, ensure diversity, provide training and guidance on the kind of activity that best supports school and community efforts in the Zone. Additionally, CFI will provide a menu of evidence-based parent leadership trainings, including one with a Spanish-language curriculum (see below). At least one-third of the PN planning team will be composed of MFZ parents and residents.

Parent Supports and Involvement.

MFZ parents will be encouraged and trained to become leading advocates for their children and community through mentoring and formal leadership programs including the CT Commission on Children’s Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), the CT Center for School Change’s Parents Seeking Educational Excellence (PSEE), and the University of Connecticut’s Spanish-language ‘People Empowering People’ program (PEP) (Table II-2).

<p>Table II-2</p> <p>Parent Leadership Development Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLTI: The lead project agency CFI delivers evidence-based PLTI curriculum designed by the Connecticut Commission on Children. Based on research and the experience in Meriden, parent leaders take a more active role in the civic life of their community and in the education of their children, which also leads to improvement in reading, school attendance, improved health and a greater ability to resist peer pressure for risky behaviors. Today, more than 150 Meriden parent leader graduates help drive CFI, a broad-based resident-run advocacy organization that has influence in the public sector and has made a measurable impact on community life. <i>RMC Research Corporation, 2004 and 2009.</i> • Parents SEE: Modeled on PLTI, PSEE includes an increased focus on educational advocacy. • PEP is a personal and family development program with a strong community focus. PEP builds on individual life experiences and strengths to encourage growth in communication and problem solving skills, parent/family relationships and community involvement.
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¹ On July 7, 2010, with a unanimous vote, the State Board of Education adopted new national academic standards, known as the

The target schools PTOs will also be supported by MFZ staff and partners to build capacity to effectively engage parents in the life of the school. A MFZ Leadership team of 10-12 parents will continue to meet monthly to discuss the MFZ/PN plans and activities.

MFZ staff and partners are working to build a sense of community and mechanisms for peer support among all MFZ families. For example, parents and their preschool children attend playgroups and story times and attend neighborhood association meetings. Families are introduced to each other through regular family social events and encouraged to participate in the revitalized neighborhood association and in school functions. Attendance at Association and school meetings has improved in the first year of the MFZ.

Family Partnership Initiative

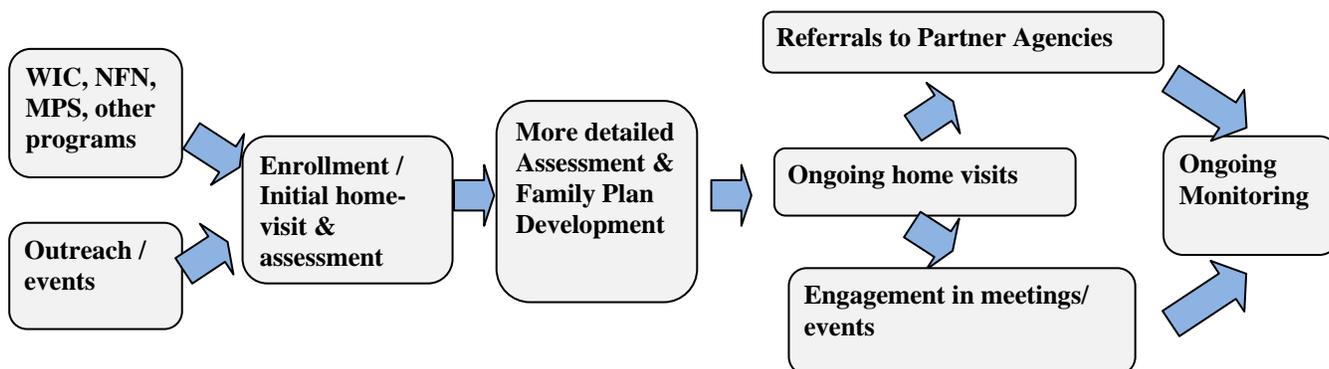
Meriden Family Zone **Family Partnership Initiative (FPI) (2.B.)** seeks to engage each MFZ family in their children's education and to help them to address any social, health and economic issues or needs which might interfere with their children's educational success. The principles guiding this initiative are that the service system should be designed around the needs of the children and families (rather than the agencies or staff) and should promote and support family economic self-sufficiency and educational success.

FPI provides the "glue" among partner agencies and families that helps tie the Continuum together and make it real for all involved. Preliminary data reveal that most MFZ adults have not finished high-school; most adults do not have health insurance (most children do); most of the families never read with their children or go to the library (located in the PN); none of the children participate in formal recreation programs; all families expressed interest in financial planning/budgeting. These early findings have guided MFZ partner recruitment and outreach staff efforts to help families develop action plans to enhance their lives.

For the Zone to reach a tipping point to success, it is estimated that at least 2/3 of the elementary school population must be engaged through the **Family Partnership Initiative (FPI)** (1,150 of the total 1,750 students from three elementary schools in an estimated 5-600 families). Complementary interventions will be developed for Middle and High School students.

The PN planning process will determine a more precise plan and timeframe to get to scale with the FPI. Families will be engaged through both home visiting (through multiple coordinated programs) and regular contacts with agency programs and staff. The FPI process will also result in stronger referral and collaborative relationships and processes among service providers, and more effective feedback loops between families and providers and schools to facilitate service improvements. Figure II-2 presents the process of engaging families in the FPI.

Figure II-2 Family Partnership initiative Flow Chart (MFZ and agency staff)



Families will be formerly enrolled in the FPI through two approaches. First, the MFZ will continue to deploy our own family engagement staff to work intensively with families and connect them with our agency partners. MFZ bilingual/bicultural outreach workers, in the field since January 2010, engage in home-visits to develop trust-based working relationships with Zone families. All have extensive family outreach and home visiting experience. Second, we work with our agency partners to enroll their client families living in the MFZ and actively

coordinate and track service provision across partners using the **MFZ Family Partnership Database** (2.C.), our online tracking and communications system. The Family Partnership Initiative will make stronger connections at the front line worker level to enable all providers to deliver more effective and efficient services. Families that join the MFZ FPI gain access to activities and experiences across our Continuum of Solutions that build their knowledge and skills in supporting their children's education as well as enhanced connection to community services available to meet identified children- and family needs, from health to employment.

Partners in this network of agencies coordinating their efforts for a family, and in the MFZ generally, will coordinate their services with other partners through regular communications. Families receive regular updates on the MFZ, invitations to school and community events and opportunities, and inclusion in efforts to build a stronger sense of "village" and mutual self-help across the MFZ.

As needs are revealed through the MFZ process, partner agencies will be recruited to provide workshops, participate in MFZ meetings and activities and provide advice on implementation. Agencies will also have an on-going source of valuable feedback on their services and will also be able to see the progress among their clients through the MFZ progress tracking system.

The Meriden Public Schools will launch a **Family School Liaison initiative (FSL)(2.G.)** in 2011. **One FTE MPS staff** will work with Zone students at the elementary, middle and high-school levels, Meriden Family Resource Centers (FRC), adult family members, school staff and community partners to a) encourage parent engagement and meaningful involvement, at home and in the target schools and to b) remove barriers that prevent students from learning. In close coordination with all partner agencies through FPI, FSL staff will monitor attendance and

behavior, improve academics with additional student supports including mentoring and tutoring, better communications between parents and teachers through use of technology that allows parents to “check in” on their child’s grades and attendance, home visits, and bilingual supports for parents at report card conferences, provide ideas and information for parents to help students at home with homework, life-skills training and other curriculum related activities, and develop community partnerships. Difficulties in communication and referral will be identified as issues by the families themselves and the MFZ outreach workers. Liaisons will help organize and promote MFZ neighborhood and school events and programs to both provide information to families and to build a sense of community.

Strategy 3: Expanding Opportunities for Families

The PN planning effort will focus on developing and refining our systems to connect families and children with the full range of programs and opportunities along our Continuum as well as working with partners to connect with other providers serving the same families, to improve the quality of programs, to ensure that they are evidence-based, and to develop new programs to fill identified gaps. Our work will emphasize health, educational and other services and supports across the age span. Areas of particular focus already in operation or under consideration include:

MFZ will coordinate a continuum of early childhood intervention and education programs designed to support healthy child development as well as to identify and address family issues, developmental delays, and special needs of children. While there are a number of high-quality programs for pre-school and school-aged children in Meriden, the delivery of these programs is largely patchwork vs. an integrated system. The MFZ will organize local providers and the school system to share and analyze data so interventions can be more precisely targeted to what the child needs to be successful.

Children of preschool age in the target neighborhood will be identified through Meriden Public School records, word-of-mouth, and direct community outreach by bilingual outreach workers. The parents/guardians of those children not enrolled in a preschool program (including Head Start (3.H.), state-funded School Readiness programs (3.I.) and the Meriden Public School ‘Apple’ preschool program (3.I.)) will be encouraged to enroll their child. Support and follow-up will be provided to ensure proper enrollment. Beyond maximizing the numbers of preschool-aged children enrolled in a quality preschool program, additional supports related to literacy, parenting skills, childhood development and social and emotional competency of children will be provided via home visits, community workshops, and referrals to child-serving agencies.

Table II-3 Components of Continuum: Early Years

Intervention	Partners	Brief Description
<i>Early Intervention</i>		
‘Centering Pregnancy Program’ (3.A.)	Community Health Center	expectant women with common due dates meet as a group with pediatricians – ten week program, with support and education
Nurturing Families Network(3.B)	Community Health Center	evidence-based home-visiting program that has been successful in identifying, engaging and assisting at-risk babies/parents
Child FIRST (3.C.)	Child Guidance Clinic	system of care that works to decrease incidence of serious emotional disturbance, developmental and learning problems, and abuse and neglect among high-risk young children and families through clinically informed home visiting and care coordination that addresses issues like parent-child attachment and maternal depression
Help Me Grow (3.D)		Referral system to connect children with developmental issues with services
Parents as Teachers (3.E.),	NFN /FRC	based home visiting curriculum used by
CT Birth-to-Three		strengthen family capacity to identify and meet the developmental and health-related needs of infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities
Real Life Parenting,(3.G)	FRC	similar to the Harlem Children’s Zone ‘Baby College’, the Meriden Family Resource Center proposes to develop this program.

Intervention	Partners	Brief Description
Early Learning and Kindergarten Readiness.		
Pre-school services (3.H, 3.I).	Meriden Early Childhood Council (MECC)	The MFZ will work closely with the closely aligned to expand the availability and quality of preschool and early care offerings for children from birth to age 5
All Our Kin (3.J)		expanding the quantity and quality of both center-based and licensed home-based providers.
Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP)(3.M.)	Child Guidance Clinic	mental health consultation to support the healthy social and emotional development of children ages birth to five
Transition to Kindergarten (3.O.)	MPS/MECC	uniform program between preschools and schools, including school visits, shared child assessments and joint professional development
Early Reading	Various	‘Raising Readers’ through Family Resource Center (3.N.i); the ‘Reach Out and Read’ program linked to Meriden Health Department’s WIC program and Community Health Center (3.N.ii);and the ‘Lee y Seras’(3.N.iii)

Table II-4 details complimentary family support, health and enrichment initiatives with which FPI will be coordinated (in addition to the early intervention initiatives detailed in Table II-3). Key health strategies for inclusion in the Continuum include a) ensuring adequate prenatal care, b) enrollment for health coverage, c) regular well-child visits, d) healthy eating and e) activity programs. Some of the prevention and wellness programs will be developed and delivered by the City of Meriden Department of Health and Human Services, a key asset located in the heart of the PN. Almost every child in the MFZ is eligible for HUSKY, CT’s Medicaid program, and is or can be enrolled in the Community Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) located in the PN and delivering a Medical Home model of care.

Table II-4 Complementary Family Support, Health, and Enrichment

Family Support
Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS)(2.D). ♦ helps families in subsidized housing with active case management and financial incentives to obtain employment that will lead to economic independence and self-sufficiency. ♦ FSS case managers connected to the FPI Database and coordinate with the FPI for Mills residents.

<p>Differential Response (2.E). ♦ CT Department of Children and Families services are moved “upstream” to engage the whole community in addressing issues of family that come to their attention in a preventive way before child abuse occurs. The provides</p>
<p>Family Enrichment Services (2.F.), Child Guidance Clinic of Central CT ♦ home based, strength based education, advocacy and case management services in Spanish and English to families in the Zone funded by DCF.</p>
<p>Health</p>
<p>Medical Home (3.P.) model articulated by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The FPI outreach staff will help ensure universal enrollment of eligible children and attendance at the recommended schedule of well child visits.</p>
<p>Advocacy. ♦ advocacy for a comprehensive legislative reform to the state’s health care system and integrate with Federal reform so that it is more affordable and accessible.</p>
<p>Healthy Lifestyle (3.Q). ♦ work with community partners including WIC, Health Department, My City Kitchen, YMCA, Boys and Girl’s Club, Girl’s Inc., school based clinics, physical education teachers, school-based nurses, families, grocery stores, churches, and media, to promote healthy lifestyles to prevent obesity and related risks of chronic disease. ♦ integrate current efforts (e.g. YMCA ‘Lean, Mean Teen’, ‘Food Smart and Fit’ (Community Health Center)). ♦ consider additional resource for school-day programs such as Community Health Center’s ‘Recess Rocks.’ ♦ consider ‘Shape Up Somerville: Eat Smart. Play Hard’ model.</p>
<p>Enrichment</p>
<p>Expanded Out-of-school opportunities (3.R.), critical to raising graduation rates. ♦ work with partners to place children in existing programs as well as create new ones to fill specific needs, like the YMCA summer enrichment program begun at Roger Sherman Elementary, a MFZ school. ♦ support existing/create new school-parent-community partnerships to improve academic and other family/community outcomes for school-aged students.</p>
<p>Bridging the Digital Divide (3.V.) (see also Competitive Priority 5 in Section VI). ♦ partnership with the Center for Adaptive Learning, MPS, and Library to offer families refurbished computer, computer training, and home Internet access.</p>

The MFZ Continuum will address two pressing issues faced by older MFZ youth and young adults —(1) keeping them engaged and advancing in school to graduation and (2) supporting the transition to and success in college and careers for both in- and out-of-school youth. Towards this end, MFZ has engaged Meriden programs designed to address these issues that serve older children, including the YMCA, Beat the Street, Youth Service Bureau, Girl’s Inc. and Boys and Girl’s Club and involved the schools older Zone students will attend – mostly Washington Middle and Maloney High School. Table II-5 details Continuum components addressing access to college and careers.

Table II-5: Other Parent Support for Economic Success

<p>Adult Literacy (3.U). Adult education offerings, English as a Second Language, programs that promote paths towards citizenship for residents who are undocumented and financial literacy programs. engage Meriden Adult Education to deliver language, basic skills and diploma programs and Literacy Volunteers of Greater New Haven to provide tutoring for adults who need to improve their reading, writing, and oral communication skills.</p>
<p>Transition to College, Career (3.V.) ♦ enhance efforts to improve these indicators based on CT Youth Council priorities, including: (a) ensure relationship with caring adult mentors to help young people mature and achieve their potential;(b) integrate academic instruction with work to re-engage disaffected youth and provide skills and experiences to improve their academic performance to succeed in the workforce; (c) assess academic and mentoring/support/networking/basic needs, job readiness skills, job placement, training and post-exit follow-up and support. ♦ foster school-business partnerships with high school based Career Technical Developers, the Meriden Chamber of Commerce and will engage Meriden’s Middlesex Community College</p>
<p>♦Workforce Alliance, the South Central CT Workforce Investment Board (WIB), the federally-designated policy and oversight organization responsible for creating a comprehensive, community-wide response to the challenges of building a highly skilled workforce. ♦provide resources and supports from the CT Works system, through the Meriden One Stop Center, that help job search skills and opportunities to youth and adults looking for employment.</p>
<p>College Access. ♦ Middlesex Community College (MxCC), an open-enrollment credit/certificate institution located in the MFZ provides a direct connection for Zone students and other unemployed or underemployed residents to complete or advance their education and prepare them for employment. ♦Effort to secure financing for college</p>

Strategy 4: Neighborhood and Housing Strategies

After school, MFZ children return to difficult neighborhoods. Neighborhood quality influences academic achievement. The MFZ includes a focus on improving neighborhood conditions so that families have a safe, attractive and well-managed environment in which to raise their children. The City of Meriden is committed to working closely with the MFZ, committing resources to rehabilitate housing, make street and sidewalk improvements, landscaping, enhanced signage, lighting and other physical elements to improve the appearance, safety, and stability of the MFZ. The City Manager and City Planner attend MFZ leadership meetings. Zone outreach staff and families already meet regularly with area community police officers and neighborhood associations. The MFZ currently is collaborating with the City on a

US Department of Environmental Protection-funded local planning process to promote a healthier community. Table II-6 details initiatives funded through federal, state and local sources that are underway or in the late planning stages that will be coordinated with the MFZ work. These initiatives collectively will transform the City center into a pedestrian-friendly, urban, diverse, residential neighborhood intermingled with new commercial buildings, mixed income housing and public open space, all within walking distance of a new intermodal transportation center.

Table II-6 Neighborhood Environment Initiatives

Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) based on a funded New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail project located just a ¼ mile from the heart of the MFZ. ²
Major Central Park. 14.4 acre park with 100,000 sq. ft footprints for future mixed-use economic development as part of the Harbor Brook flood mitigation project
Recreational Trail Extension traversing the entire City and centered in the neighborhood
Development. Acquisition of parcels for future transit and/or mixed-income residential development under the HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant
Development of Home Ownership opportunities on City-owned residential lots in the MFZ

Selection Criteria II-2: Implementation plan to create complete continuum of solutions

The MFZ Planning Team will lead the one year effort to create the Meriden Family Zone Implementation Plan. This Team brings together key Meriden parent leaders and stakeholders, including the City Manager and Superintendent of Meriden Public Schools (see Section IV, Management Plan). The core of the Planning Team has been in place since 2009 and staffed by MFZ project leader Meriden Children First. The project staff is housed in the Meriden Public Library, located in the heart of the Zone. There are no other competing place-based efforts operating or under consideration in Meriden.

² The City is a sub-recipient of a 2010 HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant, and the train station is a designated stop on a planned high speed and commuter rail project that was just awarded \$121 million in federal funds to supplement \$260 million of authorized state funds. Mills is located within 500 yards of the train station.

As depicted in the Logic Model (Figure II-2), the Planning Team will use the needs assessment and segmentation analysis (Section III) and its deep understanding of the Meriden community to create an Implementation Plan to put in place the full Continuum of Solutions described above. The project design and planning process will be build on the experiences in the MFZ in the implementation of the MFZ pilot of its signature Family Partnership Initiative begun in January 2010. We will also coordinate MFZ planning with transformation planning for the Mills lower-income housing development, including a 2012 application to **HUD’s Choice Neighborhood initiative**. The MFZ planning process, modeled on the successful process that was used to develop the 2008 Blueprint, will follow the steps and timeline in Figure II-3.

Work Groups feeding into the Planning Team are organized by age group and in some cases by functional topic as needed and will build on extensive collaborative work to date. Several have been formed while others will be formed based on the results of the early data and planning work (Table II-7). The Planning Team and its Work Groups will receive effective technical

<p>Table II-7 Initial MFZ Work Group Charges</p> <p><i>Age-based Work Groups</i></p> <p>(1) Early Childhood which will focus on developing the Early Childhood network referred to in our approach to Competitive Priority 4</p> <p>(2) Youth Development, which will address strategies to engage older youth to stay in school & provide pathways to higher education & careers.</p> <p><i>Initial Topical Work Groups</i></p> <p>(1) Data to oversee data collection and analysis, including a Community Survey and integration of MPS data (assessments, behavior, and school climate)</p> <p>(2) Family Partnership Initiative, which spans all children’s ages,</p> <p>(3) Housing and Community Development</p>

support from consultants, contractors, and City and agency staff (see Section IV and Appendix B Resumes). Each group will follow a logical process grounded in the RBA framework: (1) gather quantitative and qualitative information, including discussions with residents, to identify trends patterns and the “story behind the indicators;” (2) understand roles of all stakeholders, current

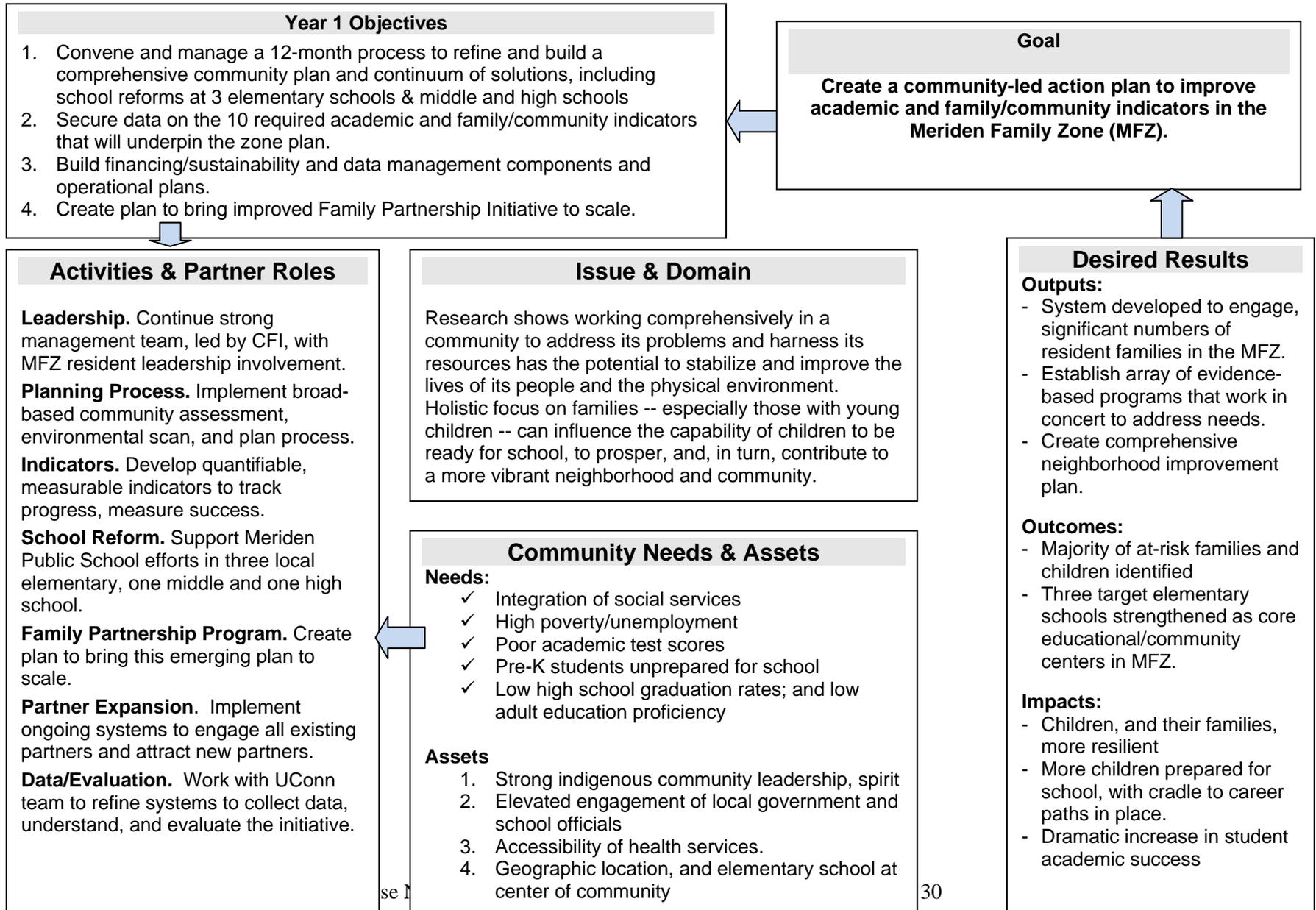
research and lessons learned by current efforts; (3) identify specific strategies to address the issues within the target neighborhood and organizations to implement these strategies; (4) produce a component of the Implementation Plan with identified performance measures for the three program level questions posed in RBA – how much did we do, how well did we do it, and is anyone better off. Figure II-3 outlines the process and timeline across the planning period.

Figure II-3: MFZ Planning Process/Timetable (by Month)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Organization & Start-up												
Formalize Planning Team/Work Group charges & sched.	■											
Finalize staffing and consultant contacts	■	■										
Refine data collection and management plan	■											
Develop detailed work plan for Planning Year	■											
Start-up Community Forum/Work Session	■											
Data Collection & Reporting												
Conduct needs assessment/segmentation analysis (Sec III)	■	■										
Conduct Community Survey & Focus Groups		■	■									
Data Initial Phase Report Issued			📄									
Indicator Development and Reporting												
Development of Web-based Data Reports (Weave)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Community Training in Data Use and Implications		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
MFZ Report Card published Online and in Print										📄		
Performance Measures developed (system & program level)				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Web-based Reporting of Measures (Weave)- accountability								■	■	■	■	➡
Implementation Plan Development												
Community Forum/Work Session- Data Analysis/Continuum			●									
Community Feedback-Blog, FPI outreach, Meetings (●)	■	■	●	■	■	●	■	■	■	●	■	●
Define/refine Continuum of Solutions	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Define Financing/Technical Assistance Plan					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Draft Implementation Plan Issued								■	■	📄		
Comment/input on Draft Impl. Plan									■	■	■	■
Final Impl Plan Issued											■	📄

LEGEND Meetings ● Report 📄

Figure II-2: Meriden Family Zone (MFZ): Promise Neighborhood, Overview of Planning Year Logic Model



Selection Criteria II-3: Extent to which solutions leverage neighborhood assets and programs supported by Federal, State, local and private funds that will be used to implement solutions

The MFZ boasts significant assets including five churches, six quality preschool programs, a community health center, public library, City Hall, Health Department, Board of Education, a child guidance clinic and Meriden Children First (CFI), the project's lead agency (see Figure I-1). The MFZ Planning Team has already built community support for and involvement in the work of creating the MFZ. In addition to substantial resident engagement in ongoing Zone organizing activities, the MFZ will continue to 'connect the dots' among the array of existing Meriden family supports so that services can be more effectively delivered in a comprehensive way (see Table IV-3 and MoU for a beginning list of MFZ partners).

These partners will coordinate and focus their combined efforts on behalf of families in the PN which are funded by a mix of local, state, federal, and private sources. Substantial funding is received from Medicaid as well as a range of targeted state-funded interventions like the Nurturing Families Network home visiting program and the school-based Family Resource Center. Committed partners are also seeking new state, federal and private funding opportunities such as the US Department of Health and Human Service home visiting initiative, HUD's Choice Neighborhoods, and US Department of Education Community Schools Initiative which. MFZ also links to 52 other CT town-level early childhood projects throughout Connecticut known as 'Discovery', funded by the William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund (GMF)(GMF has committed \$57,000 to the 2011 Meriden PN process). The three elementary schools in the Zone will align their investment of Title I and other state and federal education funding with the MFZ Plan. The City of Meriden is supporting the MFZ through its Health Department, Economic Development, Planning, Parks, and Library programing as well as by concentrating physical improvement such as sidewalk upgrades, housing code enforcement, and some CDBG

funding for MFZ outreach staff. Partners controlling all these resources are in senior leadership positions in the MFZ process. They will reach out to other resource partners to ensure maximum leverage and alignment with the Continuum. MFZ efforts will coordinate with the ROSS-grant funded family self-sufficiency and other relevant activities of the Meriden Housing Authority at Mills (see above, Table II-4, Strategy 2.D)

The State has shown confidence in the MFZ by linking Federal resources to the MFZ through the inclusion by the State of CT Department of Social Services in Connecticut's 2010 application for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Contingency Fund (ECF) for those MFZ families who are on TANF or TANF-eligible (virtually all zone residents). Also in 2010, the City of Meriden committed \$5000 from CDBG ARRA to the MFZ, this in addition to \$5000 from regular CDBG. At the community and system level, the Zone leadership is building the partnerships and infrastructure to leverage local, state, and private resources.

Funder Community Involvement. Convened by the United Way and CFI, eight area public and private Zone project funders (City of Meriden, GMF, Napier Foundation, Meriden Foundation, Cuno Foundation, Naugatuck Savings Bank Foundation, Liberty Bank Foundation and the Meriden Economic Development Corporation) have met several times to over the past 18 months to explore coordinated investment in the MFZ. This will continue through the PN planning process. These funders have committed over \$100,000 total to PN.

The Meriden Family Partnership Initiative is establishing stronger and more formal relationships and communications among partners who also engage families in this neighborhood, starting with Health Department and Child Guidance Clinic.

Integration with city revitalization efforts. MFZ is coordinating with city-led efforts in the area, which include nearby revitalization of downtown, a proposed Transportation Oriented

Development (TOD) based on a funded New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail project located in the heart of the Zone, and eventual improvements to the low-income Mills public housing development. The Children First director also has joined with the Meriden Housing Authority, City of Meriden and other key community leaders to discuss next steps with the future of this public housing development. In the area of housing, the **Local Initiative Support Corp (LISC)** is providing technical assistance to the MFZ to determine what resources should be brought to bear to engage landlords, improve appearance of properties and increase owner-occupancy. MFZ staff have initiated discussions with the City of Meriden and New Haven Habitat for Humanity to begin the process of having Habitat homes built in the Zone.

In the area of health, CFI has participated in a statewide health system reform effort which is now being integrated with federal reform efforts. This will unlock new resources to address health issues in the MFZ.

III Quality of Project Services

Selection Criteria III-1: Needs assessment and segmentation analysis, description of indicators used to determine solutions

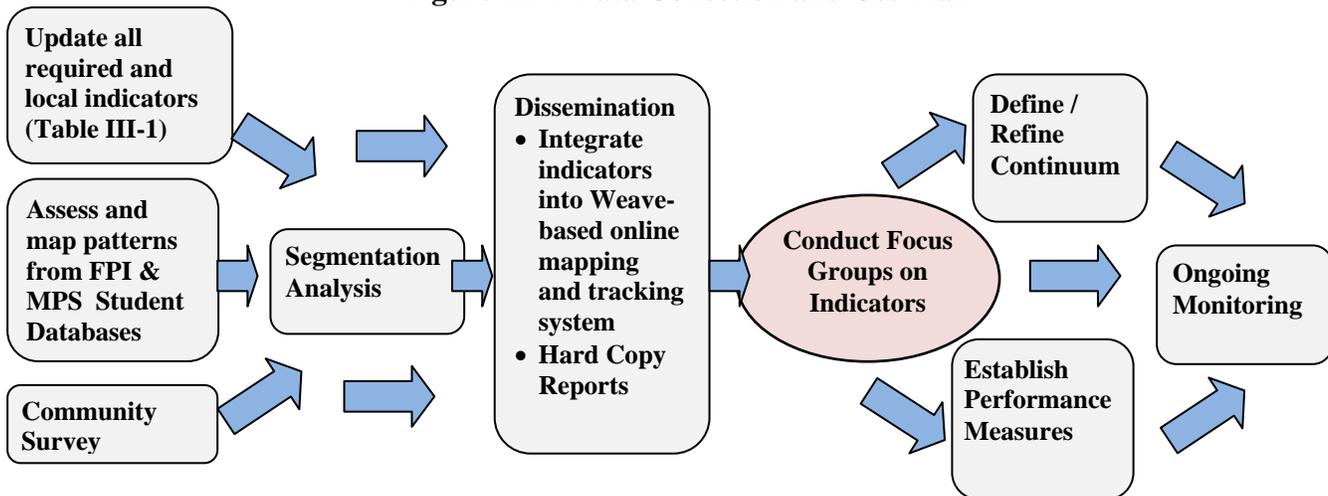
The MFZ team will conduct a detailed needs and segmentation analysis using data committed by the school system and our public and private agency partners in this project. We will work on the local level as a pilot for the state's efforts to create an integrated longitudinal child database. The Data Work Group, with support from our UConn Evaluation Team, DataHaven, and Farnam Associates, has substantial capacity for this work and access to the data sets and to the advanced Weave analysis and presentation tools offered through the CT Data Collaborative (see Section IV).

Needs Analysis. The MFZ team will build on the extensive needs assessment conducted in the community for the Early Childhood Blueprint, for the District Improvement Plan, and

other community efforts. During the planning year, the Planning Team and its consultants and evaluation team will undertake data collection, analysis, and presentation listed in Figure III-1.

The MFZ Team will work with Meriden Public Schools and other community partners to collect the required and local academic, family and community indicators listed in Table III-1. These indicators will then be combined with data from community surveys and outreach worker interactions across the Zone to provide primary information on patterns of issues and needs by area and population group. The Team will array these indicators in tables and charts to identify trends and compare areas of need for the MFZ, the city as a whole and the state.

Figure III-1 Data Collection and Use Plan



Segmentation Analysis. The MFZ team will analyze available data from our partners, especially the Board of Education, to identify the children with the most pressing needs by both population group and neighborhood location. This analysis will be integrated with survey and focus group data on the availability and utilization of specific services to identify service demands at a granular level in relation to supply to identify service gaps. This will inform our efforts to target current and new resources to the children most in need and the services most in demand. Students missing school for more than four days in a month and those who score low on District assessments will be the initial focus. We will use this segmentation analysis both to

connect individual students to services as well as to examine patterns of issues and service gaps.

The Team will present this data in hard copy and online for community access and use, then use these analyses as a basis for a series of focus groups in the Zone and with service providers to present the trends, get feedback on the data and whether it is consistent with perceived need, what other data might be useful, and on the “story behind the indicators.” These activities will help the team identify the most important concerns and barriers to services faced by families, the adequacy and quality of services, as well as residents’ level of connection to the schools and service providers in the area. This work will then support refinement of the Continuum of Solutions and the establishment of RBA Performance Measures for both systems and programs within them.

Table III-1: Results for the Meriden Family Zone

<i>Indicator and Current Level</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Result</i>
<i>Academic Data</i>		
An estimated Xx% of MFZ children arrive at school ready	MPS Entry to K Assessment	I. A. Children enter kindergarten ready to learn
xx% /xx% of MFZ 3rd graders and xx%/xx% of 8th graders meet state goal on reading /math	SDE- CMT Scores	I.B. Students are proficient in core academic subjects
High school graduation rate: The % of the MFZ 9th grade class in 2006 that graduated in 2010	SDE – Longitudinal Database Analysis	I.C. Students successfully transition from middle to high school I. D. Youth graduate from high school
% of students obtaining post-secondary credentials (by type)	CT Dept of Higher Education as part of longitudinal database	I. E. High School graduates obtain a postsecondary degree, certif. or credential
<i>Family & Community Indicators & Results</i>		
Xx% of students passed all 4 physical fitness tests	MPS Records	II. A. Students are healthy
xx% had asthma		
% of students with >30 BMI	School Health forms	
% of students reporting feeling safe at school and in community	School Climate Survey in 2012	II.B. Students feel safe at school and in their community
# and % of parents or family members who report that they read to their child three or more times a week (0-5)	School Climate Survey in 2012	II. D. Families and community members support learning in MFZ schools

<i>Indicator and Current Level</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Result</i>
# and % of parents or family members who report encouraging their child to read books outside of school (K-8)	School and Community Surveys	
# and % of parents or family members who report talking with their child about the importance of college and career (9-12)	School and Community Surveys	
Indicators to be developed from community survey and crime rates	CT Dept of public Safety; Meriden Police	II.C. Students live in stable communities
# & % of students who have school and home access to broadband and a connected computing	School and Community Surveys	II. E. Students have access to 21st century learning tools/learning in MFZ schools
% of the day students have access to broadband and a connected computing device	School and Community Surveys; MPS records	
All students have access to broadband internet in school; ratio of students to computers in schools (ranging from 3.0 to 4.1 for 2010).	MPS Records	

Selection Criteria III-2: Documents how MFZ will (a) determine that solutions are based on the best available evidence including, where available, strong or moderate evidence, and (b) ensure that solutions drive results and lead to changes on indicators.

A central task of the planning period will be to work with the MFZ partners, contractors, and funders to ensure that each of the solutions can be implemented with fidelity to the models and to bring them to a scale so that they can have the collective impact to “turn the curve” on the selected indicators.

Meriden has taken an active role in learning from the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) and will utilize the HCZ evidence base as one source to customize a Meriden approach. In April 2009, a team of Meriden parent and community leaders attended the HCZ Practitioner’s Institute; and in November 2009, a Meriden group attended the national HCZ conference. In 2011, a Meriden team attended an opening conference for the three PN communities in MA. The MFZ Planning Team has used this experience and tapped state level and national experts, including partners on our consulting and evaluation teams (**CT Center for School Change, the CT Commission on Children and the University of CT Center for Applied Research**), to define the basis for the proposed Continuum of Solutions described in Section II. The Planning Team

will continue to tap these experts as well as the agency leaders offering the evidence-based programs to refine the Continuum and strengthen its grounding in the best available evidence.

Many elements of the preliminary Continuum already exist in Meriden and Connecticut, especially those related to preschool and early childhood services. Gaps in the continuum will be identified during planning and result in the planning of additional evidence-based interventions where called for. We will also apply PolicyLink Promise Neighborhood Institute's suggestions on building an evidence-based continuum, including consideration of required staffing skills, training, and internal evaluation to support growth efforts.

The MFZ evidence-based solutions address multiple indicators. Table III-1 describes which indicator each of the proposed continuum of solutions will address. Table III-2 summarizes the evidence basis for each planned intervention. Some of the solutions will be targeted to each required academic indicator.

Ensuring that solutions result in desired outcomes / changes in the indicators identified

The MFZ Planning Team will rely on its expert advisors and local expertise of the Team to establish effective monitoring systems to help ensure, first, that the solutions are implemented with fidelity, and second, that they are having the desired collective impact on the indicators in Table III-1 as projected in Table III-2. We will work with each intervention to develop performance measures in the RBA framework to provide ongoing feedback on reach and impact. The FPI Database will also provide powerful data on the reach of each intervention as well as on family outcomes identified through the ongoing home visiting and communication with families.

These processes and system will yield a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process through which resident feedback, program staff review, and data analysis will result in adjustments to program execution. The establishment of this system and the training of local program staff in its execution will be important objectives of the planning year.

Table III-2: Meriden Family Zone Solutions Addressing Key Indicators ● = Direct Impact /◎ = Some Impact

	Evidence Base (see full citations in Appendix G: Bibliography)	Academic Indicators						Family & Community				
		Medical Home	Participation in Quality Preschool	Ready for K	Proficient on CMT/CAPT	Attendance Gr 6-9	Graduation Rate	Get postsecondary credentials	Students are Healthy	Students Feel Safe	Students in Stable Community	Family & Community Support Learning
1. School Reform Strategies												
1.A. Improving Instructional Leadership	Epstein, 2005			◎	●	●	●	●			◎	◎
1.B. Excellent Teachers	Hamilton et al., 2009			◎	●	●	●	●				
Recruitment / Support	Herman, 2008			◎	●	●	●	●				
Peer Coaching	Paschler et al., 2007			◎	●	●	●	●				
1.C. Data-driven instructional strategies	Reichardt, n.d.											
Data Teams & Regular Local Assessments	Rice, 2003			◎	●	●	●	●				
Rigorous Curriculum	State Education Resource Center, 2011				●	●	●	●				
Increased instructional Time	Wong et al., 2003				●	●	●	●				
Full Day Kindergarten	Plucker et al., 2004				●							
I.D. School Climate	Bradshaw et al., 2008; Horner et al., in press			◎	●	●	●	●				◎
I.E. Wraparound Services	Bruns et al., 2005; Burns et al., 1999; Burchard et al., 2002			◎	●	●	●	●	●	◎		◎
2. Engaging Families and Agencies as Partners												
2.A. Parent Leadership and Engagement												
Parent Leadership Training Inst-Parent SEE (2.A.i)	RMC Research Corporation, 2009			◎	◎	◎	◎	◎				●
People Empowering People (2.A.ii)	Czuba, 2002			◎	◎	◎	◎	◎				●

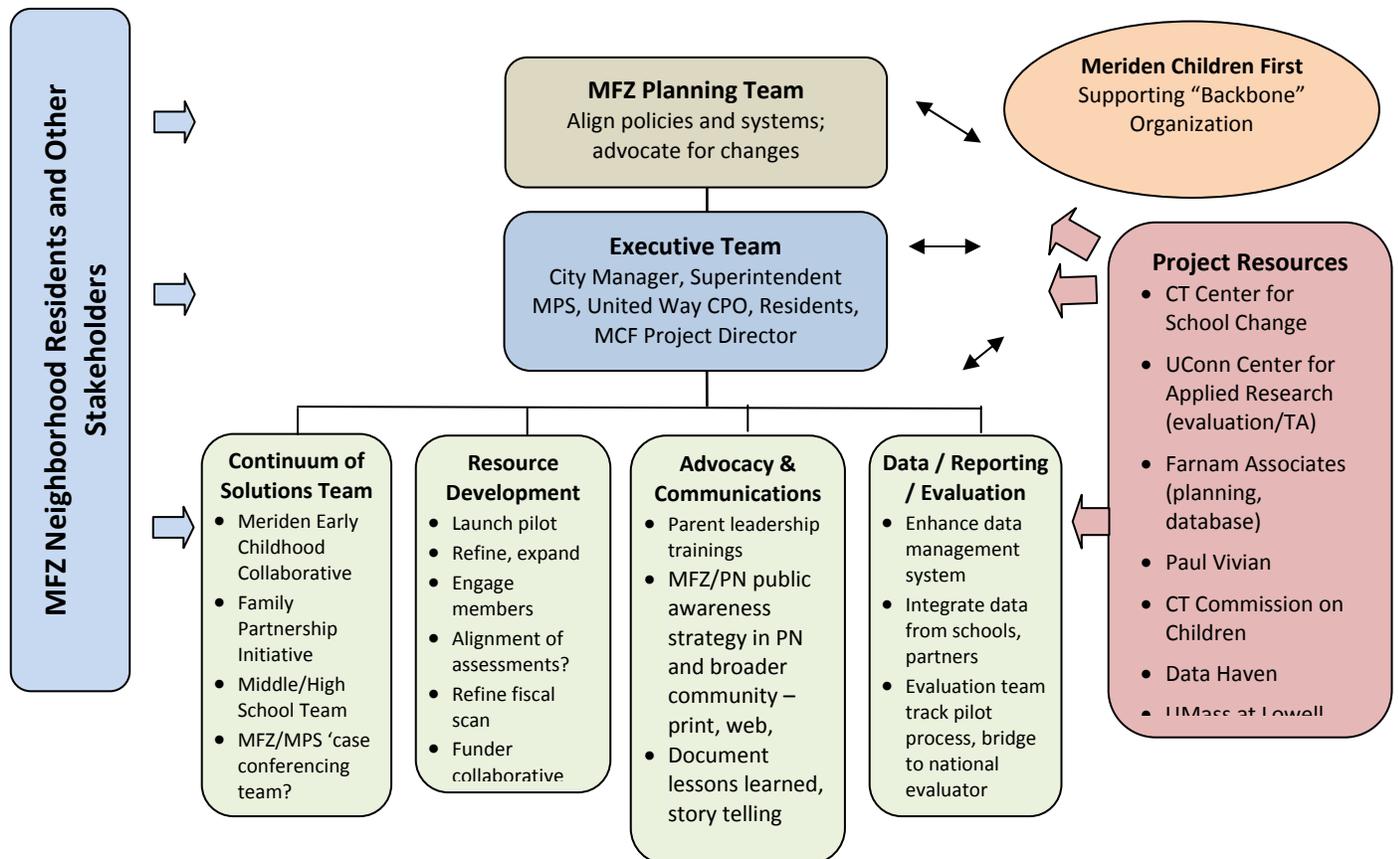
	Evidence Base (see full citations in Appendix G: Bibliography)	Academic Indicators						Family & Community					
		Medical Home	Participation in Quality Preschool	Ready for K	Proficient on CMT/CAPT	Attendance Gr 6-9	Graduation Rate	Get postsecondary credentials	Students are Healthy	Students Feel Safe	Students in Stable Community	Family & Community Support Learning	
Parent Engagement in Schools (2.A.iii)	Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; 2005a; 2005b				●	●	●	●				●	
2.B. Family Partnership Initiative													
MFZ Outreach/Home visiting	Damboise & Hughes, 2010		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
2.C. Family Partnership Database	Fitch, 2002	●	●	○	○	○	○		●				
2. D. HUD Family Self-Sufficiency	Ficke & Piesse, 2004		●	●							●	●	
2.E. Family Enrichment (DCF)	See PAT and NFN		●	●							●	●	
2.F. MPS Family School Liaison	Epstein (Harvard)		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Strategy 3: Expanding Opportunities for Families													
<i>Early Intervention</i>													
Centering Pregnancy Program (3.A.)	Baldwin, 2006	○		●									
Nurturing Families Network (3.B.)	Damboise & Hughes, 2010	●	●	●	○				●	○	○	●	
Child FIRST (3.C.)	Crusto et al, 2008	●	●	●	○								
Help Me Grow (3.D.)	Hughes, 20009	●	●	●	○				●	○	○	●	
Parents as Teachers (3.E.)	Pfannenstiel, 2007		●	●	○				●			●	
CT Birth-to-Three (3.F.)	Connecticut Birth23, 2011		●	●	○								
Real Life Parenting (3.G.)	Wagner, 2002	●	●	●	○				●	○	○	●	
Circle of Security	Marvin et al., 2002												
<i>Early Learning and Kindergarten readiness</i>													
Head Start (3.H.)	United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010	●	●	●	○				●	○	○	●	
School Readiness Program (3.I)	Gilliam, 2002	●	●	●	○				●	○	○	●	

	Evidence Base (see full citations in Appendix G: Bibliography)	Academic Indicators						Family & Community				
		Medical Home	Participation in Quality Preschool	Ready for K	Proficient on CMT/CAPT	Attendance Gr 6-9	Graduation Rate	Get postsecondary credentials	Students are Healthy	Students Feel Safe	Students in Stable Community	Family & Community Support Learning
All Our Kin Home-based Network(3.J.)	Carstensen (forthcoming)	●	●	●				●	○	○	●	
CT Infant Toddler Guidelines (3.K.)	Infant and Toddler Working Group 2008	●	●	●				●			●	
CT Preschool Framework (3.L)	CT Dpt of Social Services, 2008;		●	●								
ECCP (3.M.)	Advanced Behav. Health, 2008; Duran et al., 2009; Gilliam, 2007; Smith et al., 2011		●	●				●				
Early reading programs (3.N.)												
Raising Readers (3.N.i)	Raising Readers, 2010			●								
Reach Out and Read (3.N.ii)	Weitzman et al., 2004			●								
Lee y Seras (3.N.iii)	Goldenberg & Light, 2010			●								
Transition to Kindergarten (3.O.)	Kraft-Sayre et al., 2000			●								
Comprehensive Health Care												
3.P. Community Health Center Medical Home/ EPSDT	Cooley et al., 2009; Ferrante et al., 2010 ; Edwards et al., 2010	●		○	○			●				
3.Q. Healthy Lifestyle Interventions	Economus et al., 2007			○	○			●				
Community-based Enrichment Programs												
Out-of-school Time Programs (3.R)	Deschenes et al., 2010; Beckett, 2009											
Parent Supports and Involvement												
Adult Literacy / Adult Education (3.S.)	Epstein, various		○							○	●	
Literacy Volunteers (3.T.)	ProLiteracy, 2003									○		
Transition to Careers/ One Stop (3.U.)	Barnow & King, 2003									○		
Digital Divide Initiative (3.V.)	Brown, 2011				●	○	●					
Strategy 4: Neighborhood and Housing Strategies												
Neighborhood Development Strategies	See Appendix G Bibliography			○				●	●	○		

IV Quality of Management Plan

Project Governance. Figure IV-1 presents the governance structure for the planning period. The Meriden Family Zone Planning Team has been in place since 2009 and includes a 30-member public/private collaborative representing parents, community, early care and education experts and providers, business, and government -- all having interest and/or expertise in early childhood and school-aged youth. The MFZ planning team has three co-chairs, including a volunteer parent leader. A MFZ team of parent leaders meets monthly to give input to the work. Appendix B provides biographies and resumes of key leaders and personnel and indicated in Table IV-3 lists the primary organizational partners and their roles. The extensive experience and expertise of these organizations and individuals will bring considerable strength to the planning project.

Figure IV-1 Meriden Family Zone Organizational Chart



The lead organization for the MFZ collaborative is Meriden Children First Initiative (CFI), a successful non-profit organization operating since 1995. The mission of CFI is to help children be ready, willing and able to succeed.

The primary activities of CFI include parent leadership training, community organizing, research, and collaborative planning and action. CFI Zone staff are housed in the Meriden Public Library, physically located in heart of the Zone.

There is a strong relationship between the Children First/CFI Director, City Hall and Meriden Public Schools. Representatives from the Board of Education, the MPS superintendent and administration, the target schools, the City Council and a dozen service providers responsible for major components of the Continuum all serve on the body guiding the work of MFZ. A Board of Education member is co-chair of this project. The MFZ has also engaged the City Manager, the City Planner, the library director and the City's Economic Development director. The local United Way director, the President of the Greater Meriden Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the teacher's union and a local private foundation are active participants.

MFZ also has the strong political support from State Representative and Speaker of the House Chris Donovan and State Representative Cathy Abercrombie. Representative Abercrombie, a graduate of Meriden Children First's Parent Leadership Training Institute, also serves on the Children First Board of Directors. US Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) and US Senator Richard Blumenthal also support the project.

Selection Criteria IV-1: Experience working with neighborhood, residents, schools, Federal/State/local leaders and other service providers

The MFZ Planning Team brings together representatives of the community and every agency in Meriden involved with education, health and family strengthening, most of whom

have extensive experience with, or are in fact working within, the neighborhood, the schools, the LEA, nonprofit service agencies, or the City government. In the process they will bring to the table their experience and lessons learned through many recent collaborative initiatives, and their understanding of local capacity building needs. As the leadership “backbone organization” of the planning project, CFI brings

extensive understanding of the neighborhood gained through involvement in numerous education-focused community organizing and engagement efforts to the process (Table IV-1).³ CFI also has a long track record of engaging diverse and ‘harder to reach’ parents who are often left out of public life.

The MFZ Executive Team, comprised of eight individuals, brings together the committed leadership of the community’s major institutions and MFZ resident leaders to conduct the business of

Table IV-1: Recent Successes of Meriden Children First

- Trained a team of 200 Meriden parents as skilled public advocates on behalf of children.
- Created ‘Senior Buddy Readers’ intergenerational literacy program, linking 80 Meriden seniors with 200 first- and second-grade children in four elementary schools to improve reading skills.
- Led a community-wide campaign to expand school breakfast to all eight Meriden elementary schools. The program now enjoys broad participation and has been extended to middle and high schools.
- Led a successful campaign, in partnership with the Meriden Board of Education, to expand full-day kindergarten to all Meriden children. Previously, just 9% of Meriden students benefited from a full-day kindergarten experience – putting Meriden last in the State. By 2012, all Meriden kindergartners will be in a full day program.
- Led a multi-community, state-wide effort to create the Parent Trust Fund, the first public-private fund in America to support parent leadership training programs. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation seeded the Trust with \$250,000. The William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund followed as the first Connecticut foundation to contribute. Today, more than 1,100 parents a year are supported with Trust fund resources.
- Created Connecticut Parent Power, a state-wide, parent-led advocacy group dedicated to engaging parents in key education policy and budget discussions at the state level.

³ See Warren, M., Mapp, K., (2011). A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform. The Community Organizing and School Reform Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education. This new book stresses the critical role of organizing in achieving school reform through detailed case studies of a number of organizations with missions and activities quite similar to CFI.

the Planning Team between meetings and oversee activities in the Zone. **It includes the Superintendent of Schools, the City Manager, resident leaders who live in the Zone, and parents (at least a third parents and residents).** Table IV-2 introduces key team members. *Appendix B provides more detail on the credentials of these project leaders, staff and consultants.*

Special arrangements are made to keep parents engaged, including babysitting, transportation, stipends, meals and translation – especially important for the many Spanish-speaking families in the MFZ. The committee will have primary leadership in the coordination of cradle-to-career planning, policymaking and budget setting, and bringing together organizations delivering services on a regular basis. They will play a central role in keeping the initiative on track and will periodically review the composition of the childhood council and workgroups to ensure that key parent and community leaders needed to advance the MFZ strategies are engaged.

Table IV-2 MFZ Executive Team Leaders

James Ieronimo, Chief Professional Officer of the United Way of Meriden and Wallingford. Jim is also the Vice Chairman of the Workforce Alliance, the 30 town workforce development board for South Central Connecticut, and chairs its Youth Council. On the state level, he is an executive committee member of the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission and chairs its Youth Council. He also serves on the Board of Governors and the Community Advisory Board for MidState Medical Center.

Lawrence J. Kendzior, City Manager of the City of Meriden since 2005, knows Meriden, serving previously for twenty years as Corporation Counsel and City Attorney. The City currently has \$16.8 million in projects planned or being implemented in the central city that includes the Meriden Family Zone area (complementing \$30 million in improved rail service planned for the City by the State of Connecticut) and is about to begin a \$200 million renovation and new construction project for its two high schools.

Dr. Mark Benigni is currently the Superintendent of the Meriden Public Schools. In addition to serving for six years as Mayor of Meriden, he is a former special education teacher who spent eight years as an assistant principal and two years as a principal.

Marisol Estrada Soto is a key parent leader with the MFZ project. She is also the volunteer chair of the CFI Board of Directors and a co-chair of the Meriden Early Childhood Council (MECC). A graduate of CFI's Parent Leadership Training Institute, Marisol is a widely-respected advocate for Meriden's children. She's a graduate of the Meriden Public School system and now has two children in the school system.

For the PN planning period, MFZ will also include a **Communications Team** to record and tell the story of the process, families and results of the MFZ, both in and out of Meriden. This team will use a variety of strategies to ensure that a diverse audience is aware of and engaged in the work of the MFZ, including website and electronic newsletters, photographs, materials in Spanish and English, and use of local print and online newspapers. A **Resource Development Team** will work closely with the MFZ Executive Team to develop and coordinate a comprehensive plan to integrate existing funding streams and seek additional funding from public and private sources to advance the MFZ.

CFI staff and key leadership have a long history of successfully involving a diverse constituency. The Planning Team composition mirrors closely the population of Meriden as a whole. The MFZ enjoy the active participation of diverse parent leaders. In addition to parent leader Marisol Estrada Soto (Table IV-2), Geri Kogut, another parent leader, has been involved with Children First since the start. She continues to bring passion and creativity to advancing Blueprint efforts. Nydia Dominguez, Mari Diaz and Yvonne Jimenez are graduates of Meriden's Parent Leadership Training Institute and serve as volunteer parent leaders on the CFI Board.

Key Project Staff. CFI Director David Radcliffe will serve as the Project Director for the MFZ planning period and will have a lead role in coordinating the planning process, convening stakeholders and parent leaders, working with evaluators, and securing and integrating funding streams for the planning period and beyond.

Other Key Project Staff. A skilled MFZ Project Assistant with a minimum of a BA in a relevant field will be hired to provide the Project Director and all Teams and Committees with planning and research support, communications, web and data support, and logistical arrangements. **Zone Outreach Workers** will conduct home visits to document child and parent

interests and needs and help build family action plans; this information will be used to inform all planning work of the Teams and Committees. Currently on staff in the pilot MFZ are Marissa Cardona, Migdalia Alicea and Joanne Muniz. All are bilingual/bicultural and have significant community organizing and home visiting experience. With a PN planning grant, their hours will be extended to reach and involve more families during the planning stage. Meriden Public Schools has pledged one full-time equivalent outreach staff to the Zone starting in October 2011 as part of a system-wide family support initiative.

The following consulting team will be engaged to support the Project Director in leading the planning process and the various Teams.

Al Larson, Director of Research and Assessment, Meriden Public Schools. Dr. Larson holds a doctorate in Educational Psychology and is a highly regarded researcher. Dr. Larson represents CT on the National Forum for the Center for Education Statistics and has presented his work on the Meriden District Assessments (MDAs) at national conferences of American Educational Research Association (AERA) & Management Information Systems.

Connecticut Center for School Change. The District will be supported by the nationally renowned **Connecticut Center for School Change (“the Center”)**, a statewide, non-profit organization with a mission to improve teaching and learning. The Center supports comprehensive preK-12 educational reform through a system wide, integrated approach focused on improving instructional practice and building leadership at all levels, from parents to superintendents, informed by the concept that "system success = student success."

Farnam Associates, LLC: Jim Farnam of Farnam Associates, LLC brings over 30 years experience in planning community revitalization and social service efforts to his support of the planning process. Eudald Lerga, New Media Specialist at Farnam Associates, is a highly

experienced web and database developer assisting in implementing the online database, the Zone website and related efforts.

University of Connecticut Center for Applied Research in Human Development.

Professor JoAnn Robinson of the University of Connecticut **Department of Human Development & Family Studies** will lead a highly experienced team from UConn that will support the Planning Team in the following areas: (a) refine the Continuum of Solutions based on their deep knowledge of the fields involved; (b) advise on data collection, analysis, and presentation protocols; and (c) work with the National Evaluators to ensure provision of all data required. **Professors Preston A. Britner, Ronald Sabatelli, and Anne Farrell** will assist in this work. Professor Farrell will be particularly helpful in matters related to children with disabilities and the implementation of PBIS in Zone schools. Professor Britner brings extensive program and evaluation experience in child development and parent-child relationship theory and research to applied settings, mostly geared toward promotion of healthy interactions and the prevention of negative outcomes.

Paul Vivian, the community liaison with the Graustein Memorial Fund, has extensive experience working with communities. Paul has provided technical assistance, evaluation services and training with numerous states, school systems and others to create partnerships among schools, parents and communities including The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Zigler Center for Child Development and Social Policy at Yale, and the Family Resource Coalition. Paul will help the Project Director and team leaders develop the planning process.

Early Childhood as a Foundation. The MFZ was formed when CFI convened a team of Meriden parent and community leaders in early 2008 with support from a grant from the State of Connecticut's Governor's Early Childhood Cabinet and the Graustein Memorial Fund. Broad

collaboration of the Meriden community was important to the development of the Zone, and major institutions, parents and others who live and work in our community and who share an interest in improving the lives of children continue to be strongly represented.

The Meriden team has been building the MFZ for a year. Anticipating many of the key elements of the PN initiative, Meriden is well-positioned to plan and implement a larger-scale MFZ. In preparation for this application, since January 2011 there have been three meetings of 25 people each to discuss larger themes for planning the grant application. In between, drafts of the plan were shared for feedback with more than 40 key parent and community leaders. Comments were integrated into this final application.

Selection Criteria IV-2: Collecting, analyzing and using data for decision-making, learning, accountability

The lead partners in the MFZ, Meriden Child First and the Meriden Public Schools, all have extensive experience in collecting, analyzing and using data for decision-making, learning, and accountability. For the past seven years, Children First has led a team of parent and community leaders in developing and updating comprehensive reports on the status of Meriden and its children. Measuring health, safety, education and economic self-sufficiency indicators, this highly accessible baseline report and subsequent updates serve as a useful resource from which to target community interventions and inform policy and budget decisions. MFZ will build in this planning process on the extensive data developed in producing the 2008 Meriden Early Childhood Plan to produce a regular **MFZ Report Card** (both online and in print) tracking patterns and trends in a wide variety of child and family indicators to measure progress and hold partners collectively accountable for results.

In 2010, CFI began development of the **Family Partnership Database** (described in Section II), a web-based database to collect data on families and children in the MFZ to assess

needs and report progress in meeting them – this is the core of a longitudinal data management system (LDMS) to track data on families and children in the MFZ.

This system uses a web-based platform to link the multiple agencies/entities involved with children such as the Department of Social Services Child Care Centers, private community-based programs licensed by the Department of Public Health, Department of Children and Families therapeutic programs, and public and private school special education preschool programs. The ability to access data generated from services a child is involved with will enhance delivery as well as enable program evaluation. This system includes: (1) web based interface for data entry by staff, (2) a flexible records and reports viewer, and (3) options for batch upload or use of a live web-service integration across databases.

The LDMS will thus provide the capability to integrate child- and family-level data generated by the Board of Education, the MFZ outreach process, local and state data systems, and key partner agencies participating in the MFZ Family Partnership Initiative described above. The system also will provide for cohort-level reporting and mapping to assess progress on priority academic and family indicators. This data will inform decisions related to the direction and focus of planning and implementation efforts.

The **Meriden Public Schools** has implemented a student information system (SIS) called **PowerSchool** and a data warehouse system called **Inform** to report all student information and selected assessments. The online assessments are supported by a district intranet which reports diagnostic information for teachers to use immediately. This system is also incorporated into the Yonkers, NY, Race To The Top grant application. This is the local beginning of the **longitudinal student data management system (LDMS)** under development by the State Department of Education. A common student identifier, the “SASID,” is assigned at first entry into a public

educational program. The State has identified the need to assign a unique identifier for children earlier than the preschool year; the PN project will assist in the development of a process to accomplish this goal.

With support from PN and private foundations during the planning year, MFZ will build its analytic and program management capacity by bringing these two data systems together to integrate data at the individual child level from the Meriden Public Schools (with legal protections under FERPA and HIPPA) and partner agencies, providing the capacity for rapid-time tracking of academic performance, behavioral risk factors (e.g., truancy) and the performance and impact of the community services system working to support student success. All data will be linked across sources by a common student identifier and connected to the MFZ geography using home address.

During the planning year, MFZ will also use the advanced **Weave** open source data visualization platform developed by our partners at the University of Massachusetts Institute for Visualization and Perception Research (Appendix B and I) and now being implemented by Connecticut Data Collaborative (CTDC) through its work with the IVPR and DataHaven and its membership in the national Open Indicators Consortium for community access to aggregated data. The MFZ team will use Weave to generate regular, dynamic, custom web-based and printed reports (including preset GIS maps and data visualizations and the MFZ dynamic Report Card) detailing patterns, trends, and relationships that inform service delivery planning such as geographic distribution of service needs and populations with specific characteristics. This will be vital to gauge success over time and to adjust interventions as necessary (see description of Weave in Appendix I).

The MFZ will assess training needs and develop a plan, including the specific process

and curriculum, to train all participating agency staff in this data system. Our innovative web-based system will serve to engage our planning and governance team, stakeholders and funders so they can literally see the project unfold via online maps and charts. With the animated time series feature, we can create engaging graphics of the movement in specific program and performance measures and outcomes.

Selection Criteria IV-3: Partnerships, alignment of theories of action and change described in MOU; system for holding partners accountable for performance

Children First has a long and successful history of building community connections to advance programs, policies and budgets that improve the lives of Meriden children and their families. Our theory of change aligned across partners for our neighborhood is based on five core values in the MOU and summarized in Table IV-2.

The CFI Board is composed half of parents and half community leaders, including key elected officials and the school superintendent. CFI has learned that the power of this interagency and resident collaborative has been critical to important community victories, including the

Table IV-2 Core Values of MFZ cross-partner Theory of Action (see full text in MOU)

- Place-based and parent-focused approach, building on the strength of “grassroots organizing,” neighborhood residents lead the change process.
- Continuum of solutions and educational excellence, an integrated series of evidenced-based programs and services to support the wide range of needs of families and children at every developmental stage with schools at the center.
- Data-driven and evaluation-focused, using accurate timely data with full, open dialog about its implications drive improvement in services and outcomes.
- Collaboration and parent involvement, valuing a diverse group of voices (parents, educators, human service providers, business, and neighborhood residents) in planning and orchestrating systemic change to identify and address root causes.
- Culture of success, nurturing a culture of success within our neighborhood.

expansion of the school breakfast program and of full-day kindergarten and the agreement to renovate Meriden’s two high school facilities. This team also convened a diverse audience to

design the 2008 Early Childhood Blueprint action plan, a process sponsored jointly by the State Department of Education and the Graustien Memorial Fund. One key Blueprint strategy has been the development of the MFZ which led to the partnership reflected in the attached MOU. The CT State Department of Education and the University of Connecticut's Center of Applied Research will also work closely with the MFZ as described in their letters of commitment (Appendix F). MFZ partners and roles are summarized in Table IV-3

Table IV-3 Principal Partners in Meriden Family Zone

\$\$ = matching commitment (cash or in-kind) / ● = Executive Team / ⊙ = Planning Team

Partner	Role
Meriden Children First●⊙	Project leader, parent leadership training
Meriden Board of Education/Public Schools/Adult Education●⊙	school reforms; \$109,560 match.
Schools: 3 elementary (Sherman, Pulaski and Putnam), Washington Mid, Maloney High	data supports; parent engagement.
United Way of Meriden and Wallingford●⊙	convening of local funders for sustainability planning
James H. Napier Foundation●⊙	Sustainability planning; \$19,000 match
City of Meriden (City Manager, Health, Police, Parks, Library, School Readiness preschool programs) ●⊙	Multiple involvements; \$166,700 match
Meriden Early Childhood Council●⊙	convener of local providers; lead on Network Planning under Competitive Priority 4
YMCA Head Start⊙	data sharing; family engagement; FPI partner
Child Guidance Clinic of Central CT⊙	data sharing; family engagement; FPI partner
Community Health Center/NFN ⊙	data sharing; family engagement;FPI partner
Youth Providers - Boys and Girls Club, Girls Inc. and YMCA⊙	data sharing; family engagement
Workforce Alliance, South Central Workforce Investment Board (WIB)	Funding supports for high school and college-aged students; data supports
Meriden Housing Authority⊙	data sharing; family engagement; M: \$13,500
CT Center for School Change	Technical assistance in district/school level reform
CT Commission on Children	Parent leadership training; policy development.
Child FIRST	Early childhood therapeutic home visiting and system of care; \$5,000 in-kind
All Our Kin	home-based child care network/quality improvement effort; CT Early Lrng Guidelines

Partner	Role
DataHaven	Technical assistance with data and data and knowledge dissemination through DH web site; \$2,500 in-kind
UMass Lowell IVPR	Technical support in data reporting and visualization

During the planning process, the Executive Team representing the major system partners and the MFZ Planning Team will use the planning and deliverable schedule to hold all partners and consultants accountable for fulfilling their roles during the planning year as articulated in the MOU (attached). Team members have learned from recent successful initiatives that regular communication and reporting and a focus on specific objectives are essential parts of (1) aligning partner visions, theories of action, and theories of change and (2) building an effective accountability system. The Teams will rely on accessible web-based reporting tools and on regular meeting and Committee reports to ensure full partner alignment and accountability in accordance with the MOU. As part of the planning process, the Planning Team will use the RBA framework to design the ongoing governance structure and system for accountability appropriate to the Meriden community and driven by the monitoring of results from the system level down to the program level using the **MFZ Report Card** and data system.

Selection Criteria 4: Integrating funding streams from public and private sources to leverage and integrate high-quality programs

The Meriden CFI and the MFZ Planning Team bring to this initiative extensive experience at securing and integrating an array of public and private funding streams to accomplish specific community goals. As one example, the budget features \$375,000 in local matching funds reflects diverse support from a number of private and public funding sources. This PN budget will support a scaling-up of outreach, project coordination, expertise to help integrate data management and program delivery, efforts to build the collaborative culture required, and local evaluation. The Planning Team has ambitious plans to scale up MFZ

activities to implement the full cradle to career Continuum and eventually expand the Zone to reach more Meriden schools and neighborhoods over the next 3-5 years.

An example of creating a *new* funding stream is CFI’s statewide leadership in starting the **Parent Trust Fund**. Parent Trust is a state-funded pool of resources to underwrite the cost of parent leadership training programs. This first-in-the-country initiative has now grown to include private funders and support parent engagement in more than a dozen Connecticut towns.

Our partners from Meriden Public Schools and the Community Health Center have leveraged Medicaid reimbursement to place full time mental health clinicians in Zone schools to work with children and families facing behavioral health issues. This experience will be applied to efforts to further expand Medicaid coverage for other key initiatives on the Continuum such as Child FIRST home visiting. The City will work with MFZ to align and leverage resources within in its Library and Health Department (e.g. WIC, Immunization, Free Clinic, School Readiness preschool program) in support of MFZ goals.

Funder Community Involvement in PN. The Zone planning team will scale up its efforts to secure and integrate funding streams from multiple public and private sources. In fall 2008, CFI and the local United Way collaborated to convene – for the first time – the local philanthropic community. This has led to subsequent meetings in which funders have shared

priorities, plans and coordination to invest more effectively in local strategies that work. In 2009, the James H. Napier Foundation revised its guidelines to give priority to projects that align with the goals of CFI’s Meriden Early Childhood Blueprint. This

Graustein Mem. Fund	\$57,000
Napier Found.	\$19,000
Cuno Foundation	\$10,000
Meriden Econ. Devel. Corp	\$10,000
Meriden Foundation	\$10,000
Naugatuck Svgs Bk Found	\$10,000

funders table will continue to meet through the PN planning process.

Two private funders in particular – the James H. Napier Foundation and the Graustein Memorial Fund – have demonstrated great leadership by committing funding to the MFZ. Foundation leaders have also reached out to other funders, raising commitments of over \$115,000 (Table IV-4).

In neighborhood development, the City has been successful in moving from planning for the improvement of the downtown area (including the MFZ target neighborhoods) into several improvement projects. The City is in final design for a \$9 million project that will transform a 14.4 acre brownfield site known as the “HUB”, located adjacent to the Mills, into a public green space that will provide flood mitigation, restore Harbor Brook and reserve footprints for future economic development. The City recently was awarded a \$960,000 HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant that will be used to implement zoning changes in an area that includes most of the target neighborhood and to acquire land for future transit and housing redevelopment. Plans are now underway to develop a Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) District plan, an intermodal transit center and related roadway improvements for the City center including the Mills. Both the HUB and the TOD District are in addition to ongoing initiatives using the City’s CDBG and Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds.

Public Funds. The key to growing this project to scale will be sustained public investment. Even though times are tough, there are currently significant public resources invested in Meriden children. In 2008, Meriden -- through the Early Childhood Blueprint planning team -- completed a first-ever fiscal scan of all government levels and philanthropic community across ten youth- and family-serving program types, identifying over \$46 million in resources directed at young Meriden children (Table IV-5). The result of this analysis showed

Table IV-5: Community Fiscal Scan: Investments in Early Childhood Services in Meriden, Fiscal Year 2005-2006

Type of Program	Federal	Federal/State	State	Philanthropic	Total
Child Welfare		\$6,181,685			\$6,181,685
Early Care/ Education	\$27,038	\$3,934,505	\$2,136,984	\$100,000	\$6,198,527
Family Support	\$52,015	\$2,078,460	\$122,518		\$2,252,993
Health	\$2,842,769	\$7,223,252	\$48,910		\$10,114,932
Health - Behavioral	\$705,963				\$705,963
K-3 Education	\$2,739,654		\$18,272,462		\$21,012,116
Parent Engagement			\$10,105	\$50,000	\$60,105
Youth Development	\$100,000		\$16,758		\$116,758
Youth - After School	\$98,329				\$98,329
Advocacy				\$50,000	\$50,000
Grand Total	\$5,859,806	\$20,123,865	\$20,607,738	\$200,000	\$46,791,408

that more than two dozen funding streams support Meriden’s under-18 population. More often than not, these resources are not coordinated, leading to inefficiencies and overlaps. The planning process will refresh and expand this scan through high school, and develop specific strategies to better coordinate and target investments to maximize returns on social and academic gains. The MCF will be working closely with the CT Commission on Children and office of the CT Speaker of the House during

Table IV-6 Funding Streams Targeted for MFZ	
<u>Federal</u>	
✓	USDOE - 21st Century Community Schools / Full-Service Community Schools/ Race To The Top (CT application in preparation)
✓	US HHS - home visiting funds (applications pending) Expanded Medicare reimbursement to support school-based health services and the Child FIRST project expansion to Meriden.
✓	US DOJ – Prison Reentry / Mentoring / Youth
✓	US HUD – Choice Neighborhoods, CDBG, other
✓	Regional Workforce Invest. Bd- WIA, USDOL
<u>Other Support in Funding Quest</u>	
✓	CT Commission on Children
✓	State of CT Department of Education./ Children and Families/Public Health- diverse streams
✓	City of Meriden Community Development office- housing and neighborhood funding streams
✓	Meriden Public Schools - larger-scale investment in the Zone and its expansion to other schools.
✓	MFZ agency partners to apply for funding that grows their capacity to serve MPS families.
✓	Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance and the Meriden Board of Education will help monitor other local and state funding prospects that could advance the MFZ.
✓	Graustein Memorial Fund - introduce MFZ to other possible large-scale funders, including those in national ‘underserved community’ initiative.

the 2012 legislative session to enact in CT an effort similar to California's legislative initiative (First5) that fosters MFZ-like efforts by building local-state interagency collaborative, thereby increasing their capacity to identify and, where possible, redirect existing policies and public resources to maximize impact.

The Children First Director and MFZ Planning Team will also use PN funding to build local capacity by tapping partners for this work and pursuing the funding opportunities detailed in Table IV-6.

Long-term partner and financial sustainability of the MFZ will be built on the ability of the project to develop a thoughtful, realistic implementation plan that uses a model data management system to inform strategies that improve student academic performance. Project results will lead the City of Meriden, the local school system, the State of Connecticut and private funders to recognize the need and value of co-investing in a place-based strategy that can work in a small-sized city with big-city challenges. When we are successful in planning and implementation, a strong case can be made to families, school and elected leaders for the academic and economic benefits of being included as part of local school and municipal budget. *PN funding for Meriden is essential to reach the 'escape velocity' described by Geoffrey Canada⁴ to show that Meriden's family-school-community partnerships can and will have a substantive impact on how well our children perform in school and life.*

⁴ Tough, P. (2008) Whatever it takes : Geoffrey Canada's quest to change Harlem and America. [Boston : Houghton Mifflin Co](#)

V. Commitment to Work with National Evaluator (Absolute Priority 5)

The MFZ team is fully committed to working with the national evaluator to ensure that data collection and program designs are consistent with plans to conduct a rigorous national evaluation of the program. As evidence of Meriden's ability and willingness to work with allies at all levels of government, in 2009, CFI leaders met with key Department of Education leaders in D.C. to assess opportunities related to student achievement. Also of note, Meriden hosted a November 2009 community event featuring Dr. Jacqueline Jones, Special Advisor on Early Learning issues for the US Department of Education.

Our UConn-based evaluation team will work with the evaluator on evaluation strategy, including identifying a credible comparison group if desired. We will make all relevant program and project data available to the evaluator in aggregated form to protect participant privacy. We will identify and collect reliable and valid baseline data for both program participants and a designated comparison group of non-participants (children in other Meriden neighborhoods and schools). We are prepared to adjust this plan based on the needs of the national evaluator. We look forward to participating in this work, learning from other communities, and seeing how Meriden's effort measures up to that of other grantees.

CFI has experience working with evaluators, including two longitudinal research studies (2004 and 2009) by the RMC Research Corporation and funded by the CT Commission on Children to document the long term impact of parent leadership training programs. CFI also participated in two evaluations regarding collaborative work by the Center for Assessment and Policy Development (2009 and 2010).

VI. Competitive Preferences

Planning Grant Priority 4 (Competitive Preference) - *Comprehensive Local Early Learning Network*

The 2008 Meriden Early Childhood Council (MECC) plan addresses multiple domains of school readiness, with a strong health component as well as early literacy and social emotional development. During its planning grant year, MFZ will work with the MECC, which is also facilitated by CFI, and the Meriden School Readiness Council⁵ to develop a plan to expand and enhance its existing, already strong, network of early learning programs and services in an effort to extend coordinated, high quality services to more of the youngest children in the MFZ.

This work will build on the MFZ Family Partnership Initiative described above and integrate the many initiatives included in our Continuum of Solutions aimed at early interventions with families and young children. We will continue to break down agency silos to coordinate comprehensive, high quality services driven by the needs of families identified through a common family assessment and engagement process and a “system of care” approach a core feature of the comprehensive family home-based intervention Child FIRST which is soon to launch in Meriden. Child FIRST founder Dr. Darcy Lowell and her replication team will provide community-wide training and support for the development of this system of care.

This work will be informed by and align with the work of the State’s Early Childhood Education Cabinet which is preparing a submission for the Race To The Top Early Education Challenge. The state application will feature increased reimbursement for state-funded daycare

⁵ The School Readiness program is a state-funded initiative (jointly funded by the Connecticut Department of Education and Department of Social Services and administered by the Department of Education and encoded in the CT General Statutes C.G.S. 10-16p – 10-16u) that develops a network of school readiness programs to (1) significantly increase the number of spaces in accredited and/or approved programs for young children to provide access to high quality school readiness programs, (2) significantly increase the number of full-day, full-year spaces to meet family needs; and (3) share the cost for school readiness and child-care programs among the state and its various agencies, the communities and families.

at the more highly-ranked facilities through a quality rating system. Other programs would include financial incentives to raise their education standards and increase family involvement. The program also would encourage a more highly-trained daycare workforce through scholarships and wage supplements.

The local work will draw together the early care programs in the Zone, many already convened by the Meriden School Readiness Council -- Women and Family Center Preschool, Salvation Army Preschool, YMCA preschool, Center Congregational Preschool, Head Start, Catholic Charities preschool, St. Stanislaus preschool, St. Andrews preschool and the Meriden Public School's APPLE preschool program runs at MFZ's Sherman elementary -- for professional development, quality improvement, and implementation of strategies that transition children from preschool to kindergarten.

The City's full-time, experienced School Readiness Coordinator, Jessica Stewart, and a to-be-hired assistant (supported by PN resources) will play a role in convening the early care providers on a regular basis to align quality improvement efforts. For integrating licensed and informal home based and Kith and Kin providers, CFI will draw on the expertise of All Our Kin, a nationally renowned agency under contract with the State of Connecticut to conduct trainings in its Early Learning Guidelines and to assist in reaching out to and developing a network for local home-based providers in the way they have done so successfully in the New Haven, CT, region.

Planning Grant Priority 5 (Competitive Preference) Quality Internet Connectivity

As part of the MFZ initiative, the non-profit group, **Concepts for Adaptive Learning (CfAL)**, in partnership with the Meriden Board of Education, the Meriden Public Library, and Meriden Children First, will launch in September 2011 a program to put computers with Broadband Internet Access into the hands of MFZ parents. Initially targeting 40 parents of

students in the MFZ (starting with parents involved in the planning process to support their active engagement), CfAL **and the Planning Team will, during the MFZ planning year, determine the process and steps to bring this pilot to scale and bring a functional computer and high-speed internet access to all PN children/households.** The Team will explore engaging (a) high school, technical high school community college students from the zone as technicians supporting families receiving computers as a community service project (with the potential to secure Americorps funding to support full time volunteers) and (b) tech industry companies and employees as “computer mentors” to families to support students’ use of the technology.

Through this program, parents receive computer knowledge training; and upon completing computer training, each parent is given a refurbished computer installed in their home. Results show that parents are better equipped to help their children with learning at home. In addition to the program helping to close the “digital divide”, children will have a computer to help with their homework after school, extending learning beyond the classroom. Initial funding for this program was made possible through the generosity of The James H. Napier Foundation and People’s United Community Foundation. Northeast Utilities donated 25 computers to be given to Meriden Family Zone participants.

CfAL’s mission is to raise the academic achievement of public school children, leading them to succeed in school and beyond. CfAL has instructed nearly 90 teachers in the use of technology, and given computer training and computers to nearly 1,900 parents in three Connecticut cities. The organization uses the resources of technology to educate teachers, students and parents as its foundation for improving student’s learning outcomes.