
Part I: Cover Page – Organization Information

Organization Information	
Organization Name:	Colorado Education Initiative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New or Submission <input type="checkbox"/> Continuation
Primary Contact:	Rebecca Holmes
Email Address:	rholmes@coloradoedinitiative.org
Phone Number:	303-736-6477
Mailing Address:	600 17 th Street, Suite 1400N, Denver, CO, 80202
Organization Category (select all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Charter Network, Charter Management Organization or Charter School <input type="checkbox"/> Turnaround Leader Development Provider <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Management Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder Engagement Specialist	
Preferred Geographical Region(s) in Colorado to Work In (select all that apply)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metro Denver <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Front Range (Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural / Mountain / Western Slope	

Indicate the school district(s) or BOCES your organization is willing and able to engage with:

District name	City	County name
ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT or BOCES	ALL	ALL

Part II: Narrative Responses

Management Partner Category Submissions

a. Identify which of the following roles your organization can serve (list all that apply):

- **Partial management: Instructional transformation**

CEI has extensive experience working with district- and school-level instructional systems. Over its 12-year history, CEI has supported schools and districts to implement the Literacy Design Collaborative, an instructional system geared toward improving content literacy in English Language Arts, science, and social studies, that has proven to be effective in supporting students to demonstrate mastery of the Colorado Academic Standards. CEI has also supported schools and districts to explore and implement competency-based and personalized learning systems. In this approach, students are placed at the center of instructional design, and they are individually monitored through learning progressions of standards-based competencies.

- **Partial management: Talent development**

CEI has enacted systems to grow and retain high quality staff and leadership through large programmatic initiatives such as the Common Assignment System, which supports teacher collaboration around instruction and assessment of the Colorado Academic Standards, and Colorado Legacy Schools (CLS), which supports teachers and leaders to increase access to Advanced Placement (AP) coursework for underserved populations. Both programs have led to increased educator skills and retention as well as positive student outcomes. CEI has also worked with several districts to implement professional development systems centered around continuous improvement and short-cycle innovation. Finally, CEI led the development of the recommendations for Colorado's Educator Effectiveness System and produced several tools and resources to support local implementation. CEI is well-positioned to offer recommendations about teacher professional development and the implementation of the educator effectiveness models.

- **Partial management: Culture shift**

CEI has worked within classrooms, schools, and districts across Colorado to transform cultures. We have worked with educators and school leaders to make important shifts in how they work with students and families, as well as how they build stronger relationships among staff to create effective change. CEI supports school and district leaders to build cultures of change and innovation where a "good idea can come from anywhere" by creating structures for top-down support for bottom-up change. CEI believes these culture shifts around students, partnership, equity, and team effectiveness can create major opportunities in turnaround settings and often are the conditions that must succeed to create bigger long-term change.

- **Partial management: Turnaround leadership**

CEI works with school and district leaders from across Colorado to support targeted improvement efforts through our comprehensive change management process. CEI's approach emphasizes deep data analysis combined with broad community empathy building to attain clarity around the current state and the problem areas, to identify the root causes, and to develop aims and drivers to inform and direct improvement efforts. CEI trains and supports our partners to use a user-centered design thinking process to conceive of and design novel solutions for their local contexts, while at the same time being inspired by evidence-based best practices to guide their efforts toward high-probability positive impact. Finally, we train and coach leaders through disciplined continuous improvement processes to implement change practices.

b. Is your organization's primary interest and area of expertise in school-level management, district-level management, or both?

CEI is interested in supporting both school-level management and district-level management in the areas described above.

For over 10 years, CEI has been at the forefront of improvement, innovation, and change in Colorado's public education system. We are a statewide nonprofit organization grounded in a vision of equitable outcomes for every student that drives a strong bias for action focused on sustainable change within a system. Over the years, we've worked with educators as an inspired and supportive partner on the ground in over 150 urban, suburban, and rural school districts. We are known as a visionary organization that fuses best practices with innovation that is attuned to today's school dynamic and always mindful of what the future demands.

In the 2018-19 school year, CEI partnered with 49 school districts across all eight of the CDE regions in Colorado. Those districts serve 74 percent of Colorado's students of color and 74 percent of all students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Of these 49 district partners, nine belong to the CDE Metropolitan Region including: Adams 12 Five Star Schools; Adams Arapahoe 28-J; Boulder Valley RE-2; Cherry Creek 5; Denver County 1; Jefferson County R-1; Littleton 6; School District 27J; and Westminster Public Schools.

CEI believes in long-term partnerships that make improvement work sustainable in the face of leadership transitions. In the 2018-19 school year, 50 of Colorado's 178 school districts experienced a superintendent transition. This includes some of CEI's deepest partners as well as several large districts – and is in addition to predictable leadership turnover we see across every level – impacting teachers, principals, and district leaders. The CEI team has a strong track record partnering with and supporting school- and district-level leaders to lead and navigate these transitions in the context of complex improvement and engagement efforts.

c. How will you differentiate your services to meet the unique needs of schools and districts in Colorado, especially those with historically underserved students?

CEI believes all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, first language, culture, socioeconomic background, physical/mental abilities, or geography deserve an education that enables their success in school, work, and life. This requires an education system that serves the academic, professional, personal, entrepreneurial, and civic needs of all students.

That said, we believe systems produce the results they are designed to produce. The education system we have today was not designed with the realities of the 21st century, nor to drive the success of all students. With this context in mind, CEI differentiates our services to meet the unique needs of schools and districts in Colorado, especially those with historically underserved students, in the following ways:

- Many educators are being asked to innovate in systems that were not designed to support innovation. Too often, teachers and leaders implementing improvement and innovation are “swimming upstream” against system constraints designed for a different era. We have not seen a tipping point within or across schools where replication of successful practice naturally occurs. When CEI has experienced positive and sustained results, the work was intentionally focused not only on shifting practices, but also on building mindsets and creating conditions for scale. We believe this combination of support – building mindsets (e.g., equity, user-centered, results-oriented, student/teacher agency), implementing practices through continuous improvement (improvement science, user-centered design, short-cycles), and diffusing impact through conditions for scale (leadership, change management, systems alignment, family/community partnership, networked learning) – is critical to understanding unique needs and ensuring services are differentiated in ways that prioritize historically underserved students.
- State and district level policies are lacking important voice. Despite Colorado’s innovative policy landscape, even strong policies are at risk when disconnected from practice and practitioners. As is currently evident in Denver Public Schools, educator, student, and community voice is a powerful force in the sustainability of complex change efforts, and the lack thereof is likely to create misalignment and widening gaps between system leaders and those in classrooms implementing change. CEI works to ensure that diverse voices are included and empowered in defining the needs and gaps to be addressed through school and system improvement.
- Many communities have low readiness to tackle persistent and emerging equity gaps. As families with long-standing ties to our urban centers move to more affordable areas, schools receiving them have remarkably different student demographics than in the past. Thus, educators are often unprepared to recognize the assets inherent in a newly diverse student body, or the challenges those students face in their lives and their education. Further, the adults working in Colorado schools often do not reflect the diversity of the students in their communities, which limits their ability to have empathy for the challenges students encounter in school and too often leads to teachers who

underestimate what is possible for and from their students. CEI supports school and district leaders to develop the knowledge, mindsets, and practices to lead, engage, and support teachers differently in this context.

Finally, CEI staff have extensive experience managing districts, schools, and classrooms across the state and country that serve diverse student populations. The leadership team includes individuals who have experience serving at all levels of school and district leadership – from teacher, to principal, to superintendent. Our staff boasts decades of classroom teaching and school and system leaderships experience. The knowledge and skills acquired while in these roles informs our work every day. Our staff has experience serving in schools and districts with high populations of students eligible to free or reduced-priced lunches, high Latino and Native American populations, and in both urban and rural settings. These experiences also include the leadership of an urban CMO system that included a turnaround school and the early stage turnaround efforts of a rural district.

d. When considering partnering with a school or district that you have not partnered with before, what would be the key aspects or conditions of an agreement you would need to have in place with the district (or authorizer) to make your school successful?

CEI has experience creating a variety of agreements with schools or districts that ensure role clarity, articulate responsibilities, describe goals and activities, include expected outcomes and deliverables, and define timelines to ensure shared understanding and commitment to projects. These agreements also make clear our dedication to empowering schools and districts to design and implement change in ways that are most effective for their students, recognizing that schools and districts each have a unique context and that co-creation and co-ownership in our work is integral for sustainable change. In addition, CEI establishes data sharing agreements as appropriate to safeguard any sensitive data, including student or teacher personally identifiable information (PII) if applicable.

Other core components of our typical agreements with school and district partners outline key commitments from us – including the types of support CEI will provide related to coaching, technical assistance, facilitating shared learning opportunities, and advising on meaningful data use – as well as commitments we’re asking from our school/district partner – including attendance at events and engagement in other key project activities, team composition, and reporting needs. When partnering with a school specifically, CEI articulates specific roles for district staff to ensure alignment with district strategy and systems and to facilitate broader learning within a district from the work of our school partner(s).

Additionally, CEI deeply believes in the power of empathy-building with partners—from district and school leaders to teachers to students. We work to meet partners where they are in terms of readiness. To do this, we often leverage assessment tools or application processes that include meaningful and aligned reflection questions. For example, CEI created a self-assessment tool (adapted from *Quality and Equity by Design: Chartering the Course for the Next Phase of Competency-Based Education* by Nina Lopez, Susan Patrick, and Chris Sturgis) for the

participants of the competency-based and personalized learning breakthrough series network. This allowed CEI to learn about strengths and weaknesses of districts and schools before designing the aim and driver diagram, which was based on common themes CEI observed across participants. As a result, when teams first saw the common driver diagram, they were all able to see themselves in the aim, drivers, and change ideas, which accelerated buy-in.

e. Describe your experience working with other third-party providers to support coherent school and district improvement.

CEI has worked with many third party provides to support our work over the years including but not limited to 2Revolutions, Buck Institute for Education, Envision Learning Partners, Great Schools Partnership, IDEO, Knowledge Works, LEAP Innovations, Literacy Design Collaborative, National Equity Project, National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI), New Tech Network, School Retool, Stanford University d.school, Tegy, and YouthTruth. Examples of these partnerships are described below.

CEI leverages and learns from and with local and national technical assistance partners to ensure Colorado participants have access to leading research and practice. This approach to engaging high-quality subcontractors reinforces the use of cutting-edge materials and high applicability for participants, while leveraging CEI's unique ability to translate national and international best practice to the Colorado context.

In our Assessment for Learning Project (ALP), CEI contracted with Envision Learning Partners, the top providers in the country for performance-based assessment and capstone tied to high school graduation. The overall goal of ALP is to identify and support a core group of Colorado districts and high schools that will serve as exemplars and act as learning laboratories in using rigorous portfolios to assess learning, promote equity, and ensure that every student is post-secondary and workforce ready upon graduation from high school.

Another example is CEI's partnership with Stanford's d.school to facilitate School Retool leadership fellowships. To date, CEI has run more cohorts than any other d.school partner. The fellowship includes capacity building around equity in systems redesign, builds the "hack mindset" in fellows – bias to action, fail forward and learn, and start small – and teaches them to use a Change Framework that helps leaders backwards design around bold student-centered aspirations through deep empathy building with students, identification of observable behavior changes required of adults, inspiration from research-based big ideas that lead to deeper learning, and prototyping levers for change that are key to the school change process – elements leaders can design to influence behaviors and mindsets that make up school culture (e.g., space, events, schedule, finances, processes, roles, rituals, incentives, and communication).

From 2011 – 2019, CEI's CLS program worked with 55 Colorado high schools to implement NMSI's College Readiness Program. The program focuses on dramatically increasing the number and diversity of students who are succeeding in AP math, science, and English courses,

especially students typically underrepresented in AP courses, such as females, low-income students, and students of color. During the eight years of the project, CEI staff designed, developed, and delivered over 100 professional development trainings, facilitated Saturday study sessions for students in all CLS schools across the state, and AP administered mock reading trainings (an example of trainings provided with opportunities for practice). CEI has collected robust impact data on student outcomes that demonstrates the effectiveness of these trainings on improving student outcomes. For instance, on average, in the first year of program implementation, CLS schools increased the number of qualifying scores on AP exams by nearly 50 percent, with continued increases in subsequent years of implementation. Simultaneously, these schools increased the number of low-income students earning qualifying scores by 83 percent and the number of students of color by 77 percent. For both of these subgroups, these increases outpaced the increase in enrollment, meaning that these schools dramatically increased access while also increasing the success rate for underrepresented students.

f. Describe your experience, if any, working with Alternative Education Campuses (AECs) or alternative high schools.

CEI has worked with AECs and alternative high schools across a variety of projects, outlined below.

CEI's High School Redesign (HSR) Learning Network includes high schools that are focused on redesigning their systems to ensure every student develops academic, professional, personal, entrepreneurial, and civic outcomes needed to become happy, healthy, and successful 21st century adults. Included in this network are Career Center and R-5 High School, a Career and Technical Education program and an alternative high school in Grand Junction. As part of this work, R-5 High School is focused on developing strong relationships through regular check-ins to better support diverse student needs, and Career Center is focused on changing teaching within their least engaging pathways (horticulture, early childhood education, and computer science) so these pathways are relevant to more students.

Additionally, schools and districts participating in CEI's Competency-Based/Personalized Learning Design Network focused on using instruction and assessment to support student progress through a learning continuum and to develop agency for their own learning. Teams identified strategies for building student agency and growth and implemented short cycle (4-6 weeks) tests to understand how the strategies worked in the local context of their schools and classrooms. The CDHS Division of Youth Services (DYS) was part of this network and provides educational services to adjudicated youth committed to the Department of Human Services in six state operated secure commitment facilities. The educational programs in place meet the complex needs of a diverse student population and include both general and special education services. The programs are varied and comprehensive with a focus on leading a youth to achieve a diploma, obtain a G.E.D, or access career/technical education and training. DYS was focused on improving relevant learning for students by connecting classroom learning to postsecondary goals for students and resulted in improved relationships between teachers and students.

g. Describe your experience, if any, working with online schools.

CEI's Social Emotional Redesign Network (SERN) currently includes two cohorts of schools. Cohort 1 launched in 2018 with a total of 20 schools including two alternative education campuses (Career Center and Welte Education Center) and three online or hybrid schools (5280 High School, Pikes Peak Online School, and Colorado Preparatory Academy).

SERN is focused on implementing responsive systems that address all four components of the social emotional ecosystem (described below) to ensure student social, emotional, and academic development, including:

1. Relationship-rich, identity-safe and skill-building learning environments, particularly for students who experience the greatest barriers to connection and skill acquisition;
2. Multi-tiered system of supports for students and staff who are struggling;
3. Diverse student voice and authentic student-adult partnerships are common and visible; and
4. Diverse families are actively engaged in the design and implementation of the school's social emotional vision.

III. Capacity:

Does your organization currently have the capacity to serve additional schools and districts in Colorado? If yes, indicate how many new schools or districts your current capacity would allow for. If no, explain what additional capacity you would need to put in place, and any other constraints such as timelines or minimum participating schools or districts.

CEI has the capacity to serve additional schools and districts in Colorado. Our current bodies of work are dynamic and ever-evolving, and we adjust services and responses based on need. We have the immediate capacity to support 3-5 additional schools or 2-3 districts and could expand our capacity through hiring as needed.

IV. Evidence of Track Record of Improved Student and School Outcomes:

a. Describe your organization's track record in dramatically improving schools or districts and radically increasing outcomes for targeted groups of students. Include a description of the criteria and the data that you use to determine the impact of your work. Highlight the context and location of where this work has occurred.

Though specific areas of work have shifted to meet the needs of Colorado schools and districts over the years, CEI has consistently had an impact on improving schools and districts, often with a focus on improving outcomes for students furthest from opportunities. For instance, since 2011 our CLS project has worked with 54 high schools across Colorado to increase the number and diversity of students succeeding in AP math, science, and English courses.

Historical CLS results have shown that on average, in the first year of program implementation, CLS schools increased the number of qualifying scores on AP exams by 65 percent. Simultaneously, these schools increased the number of students of poverty earning qualifying scores by 98 percent, the number of rural students by 106 percent, and the number of Black and Latino students by 119 percent. For all three subgroups, these increases outpaced the increase in enrollment, meaning that these schools dramatically increased access while also increasing the success rate for underrepresented students.

Additionally, CEI's instructional supports work has led to substantial improvements in teacher practice and students' classroom experiences. Two components of our Integration Project – the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and Math Design Collaborative (MDC) – aimed to empower teachers to improve students' numeracy and literacy skills, and Student Perception Survey results showed that students noticed a positive difference in their classes led by teachers trained in LDC or MDC, particularly in science and math. In most subject areas and evaluation standards, a higher percentage of these teachers earned one of the top two ratings on the state's evaluation system compared to their non-trained peers in the same subject areas. Our work in LDC and MDC was a precursor to our Common Assignments System (CAS) project, which participating teachers report has a major impact on their practice and student learning. On the 2018-19 end-of-year survey, approximately 93 percent of CAS teachers reported that CAS improves their students' critical thinking skills, and three-fourths responded that it helps struggling students learn more effectively. Together, these projects have supported over 2,000 teachers across Colorado, many in districts with high proportions of low-income or non-white students such as Adams 12, Ignacio, and Montezuma-Cortez. During the period of intensive support, both Ignacio and Montezuma-Cortez school districts improved significantly enough to be moved "off the clock" of the accountability system.

Most recently, CEI has supported school and district teams to use continuous improvement and design thinking processes to design small changes for their students furthest from opportunities and regularly assess their effectiveness, and participating teams have started to see promising early indicators of success in their first few short-cycle tests. At Grand Valley Middle School in Garfield 16, with the majority of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, teachers tested the use of student learning target trackers to increase agency, and 95 percent of students in participating classrooms used the tracker, with 86 percent reporting that they were able to use the tracker to effectively discuss their education with their parents/guardians. Teachers at Hodgkins Elementary in Westminster, with over 80 percent non-white and low-income students, implemented a change idea to increase students' understanding of their four-point proficiency scale, and after one test, all four teachers saw an increase in the number of students able to articulate the difference in scores along the scale, including three classrooms with an increase over 50 percent. By design these small-scale tests do not immediately yield system-wide results, but this approach of training educators to design, implement, and evaluate their own ideas with a particular group of students equips them to more effectively respond to their students' needs in sustainable, data-driven, and strategic ways.

b. Self-assess the evidence base for the interventions your organization provides using the following Evidence-Based Intervention (EBI) tiers as outlined in ESSA. Which EBI tier best describes your work, and why?

The vast majority of CEI’s work falls into the EBI Tier 4 category, though we have utilized quasi-experimental and correlational studies for a few bodies of work, such as CLS (referenced above). Additionally, nearly all our work with schools incorporates and promotes practices in Tiers 1-3. For instance, a key focus area of many projects is strengthening the capacity of schools and districts to fosters students’ social, emotional, and mental well-being, grounded in the evidence of the impact social-emotional learning has on long-term student outcomes (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011).

We anchor all our work in an organization-wide theory of change and theory of action – both rooted in the latest research – with project-specific research questions and evaluation plans aligned to logic models. We regularly work with external research partners, including higher education institutions and research and evaluation firms, to assess and improve the supports we provide to schools and districts. Furthermore, our internal data team conducts program evaluations for each of our projects with an emphasis on collecting or utilizing existing meaningful and timely data, making that data accessible to both CEI staff and school and district partners, developing and using organization-wide data tools (e.g., school/district dashboards, after action review protocols), and facilitating data inquiry sessions to help ensure that the data are used to inform our work.

V. References:

For management partners, turnaround leader development providers and stakeholder engagement specialists, submit the name and contact information for the last three schools or districts your organization contracted with. For charter school networks, CMOs and individual charter schools, submit three references who can speak to your capacity to support successful student outcomes in a turnaround environment, including a current authorizer of one of your schools. References will be contacted by CDE staff.

1. Archuleta School District: Linda Reed, Superintendent – lreed@pagosa.k12.co.us, (970) 264-2228 x 402
2. Cañon City Schools: George Welsh, Superintendent – george.welsh@canoncityschools.org, (719) 276-5700
3. Delta High School, Delta County School District: Derek Carlson, Principal – derek.carlson@deltaschools.com, (970) 874-8031