



# National Center for Community Schools

30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## Request for Proposals: Advancing Community Schools Forward Proposals Due: Friday, June 7, 2024

### Background

#### About Community Schools Forward

There is a significant and growing interest in the community schools strategy among federal, state, and local governments seeking to advance educational and economic opportunities and address historic educational inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Building off this momentum and with support from the Ballmer Group, three national partners—the Children’s Aid National Center for Community Schools (NCCS), the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS) at IEL, and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI)—are collaborating with education practitioners, researchers, and leaders across the country to strengthen the community schools field in a joint project called Community Schools Forward.

#### Community Schools Forward comprises three core strategies:

- ◇ **Align:** Foster increased cohesion around core community school concepts and frameworks
- ◇ **Scale:** Identify investment structures that sustain community schools at scale and for the long term
- ◇ **Build:** Design infrastructure for technical assistance and professional learning that promotes high-quality implementation

#### About the Children’s Aid National Center for Community Schools

As part of Children’s Aid, one of New York City’s oldest and largest child- and family-serving organizations, the National Center for Community Schools (NCCS) brings 30 years of experience building the capacity of schools, neighborhoods, school districts, human service providers, and other community resources to work together in the comprehensive and integrated strategy known as community schools. NCCS’s consultative and training practice is grounded in Children’s Aid’s experience operating 20 community schools in partnership with the New York City Department of Education since 1992, in addition to the on-site and virtual technical assistance and capacity building provided to practitioners and policy makers across the United States and beyond.



Children’s Aid National Center for Community Schools

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## Our Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Approach

NCCS defines technical assistance as the developmental process of building the capacity of community school constituents to start, scale, and sustain transformational community schools. Informed by a comprehensive needs assessment and guided by a plan jointly developed with the client, technical assistance is “about organizing communities of action, facilitating connections to power, and providing the tools and skills for inventing effective strategies for change.”<sup>1</sup>

Typically through fee-for-service contracts, NCCS offers the following types of support to constituents, practitioners, and leaders at all stages of development in their community schools implementation at the site and system levels:

- ◇ Consultation: This includes conducting an initial assessment and developing a plan that is fluid and can shift over time in response to changes in local context. For example, consultation might involve meeting with community school stakeholders and helping them to develop an implementation plan for their initiative, which then is refined over time in response to data and community feedback.
- ◇ Training and tools: This includes opportunities for skill building and knowledge transfer, such as how to conduct an inclusive assets and needs assessment or what the role of a community school coordinator involves. This also includes providing templates to assist with implementing these strategies.
- ◇ Coaching: This includes direct support on implementation challenges, such as one-on-one meetings with initiative and school leaders to help them more effectively partner with students, families, school staff, and community members.
- ◇ Knowledge building for the field: This includes learning opportunities such as conferences, communities of practice that span different locales, publications, and study visits to school sites. These learning opportunities are often differentiated by level of experience. For example, a team that is just starting out might visit a well-established community school to see what is possible, while a team that is further along might join a community of practice to talk with colleagues who are at a similar stage of implementation.

## The Opportunity

### A Symbiotic Partnership

In its first phase of activities, the [Community Schools Forward](#) (CSF) project developed and released a suite of resources under its “Align” strategy: the [Essentials for Community Schools Transformation Framework](#), the [Theory of Action for Community School Transformation](#), an [Outcomes and Indicators](#) guide, the [Community Schools Costing Tool and User Guide](#), and a [Stages of Development](#) tool. As CSF now pivots toward the “Scale” and “Build” strategies, NCCS seeks to identify community school initiatives that are interested in receiving technical assistance and capacity building to support the adoption of the framework and lead to the development of additional tools to support its implementation. This presents selected applicants with the opportunity to receive high-quality planning and implementation support and, at the same time, provides NCCS with the opportunity to develop and refine the CSF products.

Selected applicants will be asked to provide thought partnership and critical feedback to NCCS as NCCS designs and delivers CSF-aligned tools and professional learning opportunities, and otherwise

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<sup>1</sup> Wahl, E, Cahill, M, & Fruchter, N. (1998). Building Capacity: A Review of Technical Assistance Strategies. New York: New York University

“stress test” the elements of the Essentials for Community Schools Transformation. In exchange, NCCS will provide its capacity building services to selected applicants over a period of twelve months at a significantly reduced cost.

With support from the Ballmer Group, NCCS is prepared to subsidize 75% of the total cost for fee-for-service contracts ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 (as determined by an initial technical assistance assessment). For large initiatives and/or those requiring more intensive support assessed at the highest \$100,000 level, selected applicants would receive a \$75,000 subsidy and contribute \$25,000. On the other end of the continuum, smaller initiatives assessed as needing a fee-for-service contract totaling \$25,000 would be subsidized \$18,750 and contribute \$6,250. The actual amounts for each selected applicant would be determined by a technical assistance assessment conducted by NCCS and be contingent on the availability of funding.

### Who Can Apply

This opportunity is open to all community school initiatives, and we aim to curate a cohort of initiatives that are district-led, lead partner, university assisted and other community school models. They can be new to the community school movement or initiatives that have been in existence for many years. Applicants can be small initiatives of a single school or large districts with many partners. We aim to develop a cohort that includes rural, urban and suburban settings. Key leaders, such as superintendents, CBO and principals should anticipate participating in quarterly strategy meetings as a part of this opportunity.

### How to Apply

#### Process

- A. This Request for Proposals is scheduled to be released and disseminated broadly starting May 1, 2024.
- B. To be considered, proposals must respond to all of the questions outlined in the “Application” section and sent via email with subject line “CSF Technical Assistance” to [scampo@childrensaidnyc.org](mailto:scampo@childrensaidnyc.org) **no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time on Friday, June 7, 2024**. The submission should be saved as one PDF file and attached to the email.
- C. The National Center for Community Schools selection committee will review applications as they are received and select applicants to be advanced to the interview stage of the process. All applicants will be notified by the week of July 1, 2024.

#### Application

- A. Format
  - a. The proposal narrative should provide thoughtful yet succinct responses to the questions listed below. The total proposal should not exceed **five pages in length**, with one-inch margins and numbered pages. For ease of readability and to ensure each of the topic areas are addressed, please use the specific headers in boldface below within your narrative.
- B. Elements of the Proposal Narrative
  - a. **About Your Community and Initiative**
    - i. Indicate the name of the individual(s) and organization(s) submitting the application.
    - ii. Describe your community, including its size, demographics, and key characteristics.

- iii. How many community schools are currently in your initiative, how long have they been in existence, and what is your plan for expansion, if any? (Please note that single-school initiatives may apply.)
- iv. Describe the community school model(s) you are utilizing (such as district-led, lead partner, university-assisted, etc.).
- v. How are your community schools funded?
- vi. Are you affiliated with [Blue Meridian Partners](#), [Place Matters](#), [Communities in Schools](#), [StriveTogether](#), or similar networks?

**b. Collaboration and Leadership**

- i. If selected, who would serve as the key point(s) of contact for NCCS to collaborate on planning, designing, and coordinating capacity building activities? Describe them, their role, and their leadership styles.
- ii. What collaborative decision making structures are currently in place (or in development) at the school and system levels?
- iii. Explain your initiative's organizational structure and how the community schools are supported, coached, and advised. How will the applicant ensure commitment from senior leadership?
- iv. How would you describe trust within your community school initiative, for example; between principals and coordinators, school leadership and the community, or relationships with community-based partners? Where is trust strong and what are areas that need improvement?
- v. What initiatives (if any) will your organization undertake during the grant period to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in your work? Feel free to reference efforts you have planned within your organization or school and/or externally with partner organizations.

**c. Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Needs**

- i. What type(s) of technical assistance and capacity building services would you like to receive and why?
- ii. What are the strengths of your existing community schools?
- iii. What are some areas in which your community schools need improvement?
- iv. Describe how your initiative is and is not aligned with the [Essentials for Community Schools Transformation Framework](#). If you are currently using the framework, how is it being implemented and supported?

**Questions**

All questions regarding this request or about the Children's Aid National Center for Community Schools may be emailed Stacey Campo to [scampo@childremsaidnyc.org](mailto:scampo@childremsaidnyc.org). Please reach out if you are interested in technical assistance, however, cannot apply at this time, as there may be future opportunities for collaboration. Please submit applications at your earliest convenience, we will be reviewing and interviewing on a rolling basis, as they are submitted.

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