



# Investing in Innovation With Support From AIR<sup>®</sup>

**The *Investing in Innovation Fund (i3)* program will provide \$650 million in competitive grants to develop, validate, or scale up practices that will improve student achievement.**

The *i3* funds are designed to provide the opportunity for districts and nonprofit organizations to develop and validate innovative programs in areas related to the funding priorities of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), such as implementing high-quality standards and assessments, supporting effective teachers and leaders, improving the use of data, and turning around low-performing schools. The *i3* application process requires local education agencies (LEAs) and partner organizations to submit detailed proposals that demonstrate high-quality project and implementation plans. In addition, a critical component to a successful application is the quality of the project's evaluation plan and the level of evidence presented on the efficacy of the proposed project.

**The American Institutes for Research (AIR) can assist LEAs and other interested nonprofit applicants with their *i3* efforts in a number of ways:**

#### ■ Proposal Design and Development

- AIR's expertise in *i3* priority areas can help to inform application design. AIR can help to identify relevant literature and analyze data to show the need for projects.
- AIR can review draft versions of proposals and provide feedback to improve applications.
- AIR can help to assess the available evidence on a particular program or project and make recommendations about the type of award (development, validation, or scale-up) that an applicant is most likely to win.

#### ■ Implementation

- AIR can carry out funded activities in *i3* priority areas on behalf of LEAs and their partners, such as developing interim or summative assessments to complement core standards, analyzing data and reporting on preparation programs for administrators and teachers, designing and measuring the effectiveness of professional development activities, and developing indicators for data systems to inform decisionmaking.

#### ■ Evaluation

- AIR can design evaluations to examine (a) the extent to which a program is meeting its goals and how well the program is being implemented and (b) outcomes and impact. AIR's rigorous evaluations range from randomized experiments to quasi-experimental and other designs.
- AIR can conduct evaluations using a wide variety of methods, including document review, case studies, interviews, questionnaires and surveys, focus groups, and observations. AIR's team can analyze quantitative and qualitative data and provide findings through traditional reports and user-friendly Web-based tools.

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## Proposed *Innovation Fund* Priority Areas

### Complement the Implementation of High Standards and High-Quality Assessments

#### *What We've Done and How We Can Help*

- AIR can work with you to develop the next generation of assessments that align with common standards, taking advantage of technology and pushing the boundaries of large-scale educational measurement. AIR currently develops and administers State assessments in several States and has developed the only computer adaptive test that is federally approved for State testing systems. AIR is now working to develop new item types that can be deployed in a computer adaptive testing system. AIR is also actively working to further the field of alternate assessment for students with disabilities.

- AIR is leading the way in international benchmarking through assessment. AIR has conducted studies linking national, State, and district data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to international assessments. Results have been published in two reports: *Chance Favors the Prepared Mind: Mathematics and Science Indicators for Comparing States and Nations* and *The Second Derivative: International Benchmarks in Mathematics for U.S. States and School Districts*. AIR is now actively working to help clients develop stronger links to international benchmarks by embedding items from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in local assessments and will contribute this knowledge and expertise when developing new assessments.
- AIR can help you develop aligned assessment systems that include interim and summative elements. For example, AIR worked with Chicago Public Schools to implement and manage an assessment program that includes interim and end-of-course assessments for Grades 9–11 and is linked to the ACT college entrance exam. AIR can also help LEAs develop complementary assessments that align with common standards.

## Improve the Use of Data

### *What We've Done and How We Can Help*

- AIR can help you conceptualize and design indicators needed to improve instruction and answer critical questions for policymakers and practitioners. AIR has developed a wide variety of indicators and tools to support effective decisionmaking at all levels, for example:
  - AIR created an early warning tool into which educators can enter student data and automatically calculate whether individual students are on track to graduate or are at risk of dropping out. This type of information can form part of an instructional improvement system.
  - In Chicago and Cleveland, AIR developed indicators that measure students' perceptions of safety, support, academic rigor, and peer social and emotional capacity. These indicators can provide valuable information for schools and districts to inform decisionmaking.
  - AIR produces customized test score reports for families, teachers, and administrators that reveal implications from the data for curriculum, instruction, and professional development. These can provide direct inputs for instructional improvement.
  - AIR hosts a federally funded center on Response to Intervention (RTI) and provides technical assistance and resources on the use of data as part of an RTI model.
- Developing indicators and providing reports are only small parts of effective data systems. AIR can design and deliver professional development to support the use of assessment data and management information systems. AIR has direct experience in building the capacities of districts and schools to work with data. For example, as part of the Delaware 2015 Vision project, AIR is providing stakeholders with tools to effectively assess and improve their program.

## Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

### *What We've Done and How We Can Help*

- AIR brings expertise to designing school improvement and turnaround plans and especially to evaluating turnaround efforts. AIR has conducted several national studies on approaches to school improvement, including the largest federal study ever on comprehensive school reform models. AIR also produced *Turning Around Chronically Low Performing Schools*, a guide that identifies practices that have quickly and dramatically improved student achievement in low-performing schools. AIR is now embarking on a new study to identify more evidence on successful approaches to turning around chronically low-performing schools.

## Support Effective Teachers and School Leaders

### *What We've Done and How We Can Help*

- AIR can help to design and evaluate new or innovative systems that can be used to review and select administrators and teachers. AIR has direct experience in evaluation plans for principals and teachers. For example, AIR evaluated the Toledo Peer Assistance and Peer Review Plan. The plan uses a peer review procedure to identify, assist, and if necessary, screen out of the teaching profession teachers who cannot meet school district and union standards of professionalism in the classroom.

- AIR's statistical expertise can provide fair and reliable measures of student performance and growth that can be tied to the performance of principals and teachers. AIR has already developed value-added models and other means of looking at student growth for a variety of States and districts.
- AIR can bring a wealth of knowledge on measures of teacher quality and professional development to bear on the design of teacher evaluation and training programs that may form part of your *i3* grant application. AIR has conducted numerous national studies and evaluations on issues related to teacher quality and professional development, including a current study on local policies and practices related to the equitable distribution of teachers.

## Proposed Competitive Preferences

- Address the Unique Needs of Students with Disabilities and Students With Limited English Proficiency
- Improve Early Learning Outcomes
- Support College Access and Success
- Serve Schools in Rural LEAs

### *What We've Done and How We Can Help*

- AIR can help to design innovative programs, particularly through the use of technology, that target the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and students with limited English proficiency, and rural LEAs. AIR currently provides technical assistance on improving instruction through the use of technology for students with special needs and on effective differentiation of instruction. AIR is also a leader in special education financing policies and evaluating programs designed to serve students with special needs.
- AIR can develop and deliver training and technical assistance to early childhood program staff and conduct program evaluations. AIR has worked with leading early childhood organizations, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), to improve its accreditation process and has conducted a national evaluation of the impact of Head Start.
- AIR can assist with analysis of data and evaluation of programs to improve college access and success. AIR has evaluated an early college program from the Gates Foundation and worked with Federal TRIO programs, which assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds continue their education after high school.

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#### List of Selected Clients

Anchorage School District	California Department of Education	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	Hawaii Department of Education	Hewlett Foundation
Chicago Public Schools	Illinois State Board of Education	U.S. Department of Education:
Cleveland School District	Ohio Department of Education	National Center for Education Evaluation (NCEE)
District of Columbia Public Schools	Oregon Department of Education	National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)
Miami-Dade Public Schools	South Carolina Department of Education	Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)
Sacramento County Office of Education		Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS)
San Diego Unified School District		
San Mateo County Office of Education		

#### About the American Institutes for Research®

*The mission of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) is to conduct and apply behavioral and social science research to improve people's lives and wellbeing. Our goal is to use the best science available to bring the most effective ideas and approaches to enhancing everyday life. Founded in 1946 as a not-for-profit organization, AIR is now one of the largest behavioral and social science research organizations in the world. Our work spans a wide range of substantive areas in education, health, and international development.*