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Leadership Development

Highly effective leadership is critical to school success but unfortunately it is always in the minority and never sustained. Until effective leadership is widespread, we will only see episodic and small-scale success (Fullan, 2002). Leadership development is key to ensuring that we have strong leaders in all schools. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation State Challenge Grants for Leadership Development represent one of the largest investments in school and district leadership.

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This report/article is divided into four sections. First, the Bill and Melinda Gates leadership initiative is described. Second, we propose six design criteria and use those criteria to critique the collective set of proposals for leadership development in the initial stage of this initiative. Third, we discuss early successes and challenges across the programs. Fourth, we pose questions and offer some suggestions for strengthening the individual projects and the overall initiative.

State Challenge Grants for Leadership Development

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has funded leadership development proposals in all 50 states. The goal of this initiative is to provide every superintendent and principal in public and private schools with access to quality leadership development focused on whole systems improvement and technology integration by 2003. The grant is designed as a challenge grant; all states are expected to raise matching funds to support leadership development in their respective states. The first awards were made in May 2000.

The State Challenge Grants for Leadership Development seek to assist school leaders in creating a high-achievement, technology-rich educational system that helps all students achieve. Through this initiative every state will have an opportunity to assess its needs and create a professional development program for school leaders.

Required design criteria, components, and evaluation guided the development of proposals. The Foundation provided design assistance and financial support in the planning stages. All proposals were reviewed by a team of national school reform experts. Four regional convening meetings were held during 2001, and a national meeting with representatives from all 50 states was held November 2001 to facilitate sharing across projects.

A range and variety of professional development strategies are being used to provide leadership development opportunities for principals and superintendents including summer academies, on-line learning, coaching and mentoring, cohort groups, problem-based/project-based activities, assessment tools, study groups, individual reading, university courses, planning processes, conferences, and workshops. Leadership programs range in length from four to ten days. Attendance incentives being offered to participants also vary. The range includes a laptop, travel money, vouchers to purchase technology, university course credit, training sessions, software, professional development credits, digital cameras, and palm hand-held computers.

Formative and summative evaluations are required. Each state is to track the progress, quality, and impact of their leadership development activities on an annual basis. This formative evaluation allows for adjustments and adaptations based on participant needs and results. An annual report is submitted to the Foundation. An external evaluation of using pre and post data is part of each state's proposal.

Design Criteria

We offer six design criteria (See Table One) that can guide the planning, review, and redesign of leadership development proposals.

Table One Design Criteria for Critiquing Leadership Development Proposals

■ **One**	**Leadership Competencies/ Standards**
■ **Two**	**Leaders at Many Levels or Layers of Leaders**
■ **Three**	**Learning in Context**
■ **Four**	**Large Scale Change**
■ **Five**	**Sustainability**
■ **Six**	**Intervention Potency**

■ **One Leadership Competencies/Standards**

To what extent does the proposal contribute to the development of leadership competencies or standards? What leadership framework is guiding the leadership development program? What technology framework is guiding the proposal? A leadership/technology framework articulates what leaders need to know and be able to do to effectively lead whole system improvement in a changing environment.

Several leadership frameworks are identified in the proposals including the Baldridge National Quality Program (2001) that outlines core values, concepts and a framework; the Council of Chief State School Officers that describes six ISLLC

standards (1996); the IDEALS framework which outlines six components of a change and leadership development; and state standards in some cases (ie CT, TX). The Milliken Education Technology seven dimensions of progress in technology, and TAGLIT are two technology frameworks being used to guide many programs; some states are using a state determined set of technology competencies. These frameworks appear to be guiding the curriculum development and delivery in several states. It is not clear what standards or competencies for leadership or technology are being addressed in some of the proposals.

Fullan (2001) discusses five leadership competencies (moral purpose, understanding change, relationships, building knowledge, and building coherence) necessary for leading in a culture of change. While many of the proposals indicate a program component that addresses the dynamics of change, others do not mention including knowledge and skills related to change research and process. Lack of attention to what is known about change may decrease the effectiveness of leadership development efforts. Due to the nature of the challenge grants, all states appear to be addressing relationships to some degree. All proposals are partnership propositions with alliances involving universities, state departments, business partners, state associations, and school districts. Some states have structures to encourage knowledge building among participants both through the organisation of learning sessions and in the processes for on-going support and sharing. Some states have made a concerted effort to connect the Gates leadership programs to other leadership and reform initiatives in the states. Other state proposals appear to

be operating as an independent program and make no mention of coordinating with on-going initiatives. Ensuring attention to the change process, knowledge building strategies, and coherence building strategies would strengthen many of the proposals.

■ Two Leaders at Many Levels or Layers of Leaders

To what extent is the proposal focused on developing multiple levels of leaders? This design criterion addresses the need for leadership succession planning at both the district and the state level. Many of our current leaders are veterans and due to leave the education system within the next three to five years. While investing in our current leaders is necessary, neglecting the next generation of the leaders is also unwise. How do proposals provide leadership development opportunities for leaders at many levels or layers of leaders?
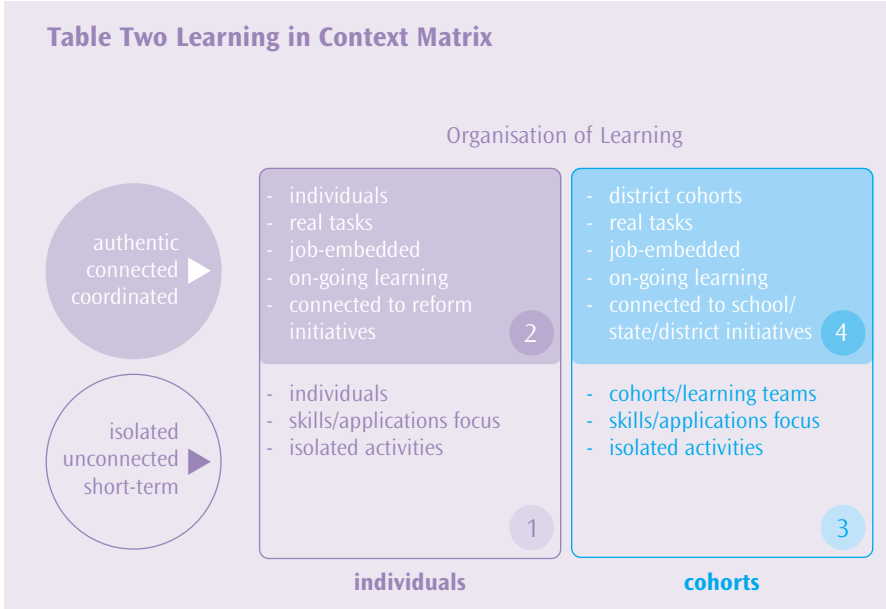
While the Gates Challenge grants provide funds for principals and superintendents, states are free to design leadership development programs in any way they choose. Most states are concentrating exclusively on principals and superintendents. Some are working with cohort teams from a district comprised of the superintendent and principals from respective schools. At least one state is including an additional leader (ie assistant principal or assistant superintendent) in part two of four days of training. Some states have set up coaching and mentoring relationships that have the potential to impact leaders at many levels. Considering how to involve leaders at many levels so that the next generation of leaders benefits from leadership development opportunities would strengthen many proposals.

■ Three Learning in Context

To what extent are strategies and activities focused on 'learning in context'? This criterion addresses both the content and processes of leadership programs. Is the content focused on real tasks and activities that address contextual problems, challenges, and issues or are learning strategies focused on learning technology skills and applications in isolation? Are leadership development programs focused on using technology for student and teacher learning, whole system reform, data-driven decision making, tracking and accountability? Are leaders in a district learning together in a way that fosters shared identity with room to be innovative at individual schools?

The fifty proposals can be placed on a matrix related to 'learning in context' (see Table 2). Some programs are organised for individuals and focus on isolated skills. Some are organised for individuals but use real tasks, local data, and a problem or inquiry approach for learning. Some states are organising learning opportunities by cohort or learning teams but the focus is on isolated skills and applications. Other states are working systematically with districts (superintendents and principals) on a system plan for developing leadership and technology capacity using real tasks, local data, and a problem or task approach to learning.

Some states offer 2 two-day sessions that are organised as a four-day package where participants learn outside the work situation away from the school and the district. Some states have organised a combination of face-to-face and on-line learning strategies. Several programs start with a two-day session that is followed by web-based or

Table Two Learning in Context Matrix

Organisation of Learning

	individuals	cohorts
authentic connected coordinated ▶	- individuals - real tasks - job-embedded - on-going learning - connected to reform initiatives **2**	- district cohorts - real tasks - job-embedded - on-going learning - connected to school/ state/district initiatives **4**
isolated unconnected short-term ▶	- individuals - skills/applications focus - isolated activities **1**	- cohorts/learning teams - skills/applications focus - isolated activities **3**

on-line learning activities that involve real tasks (learning in context), and conclude with a sharing session at the end (knowledge building). Some states group participants into cohorts or learning teams and encourage the groups to design their learning based on specific needs and tasks. It is not clear that many states are employing a coordinated district approach in the leadership programs. The proposals that are designed to provide learning over time, with plans for on-line or on-site coaching or mentoring (pressure and support), that address authentic uses of technology for student learning, with strategies to build relationships and share knowledge have greatest potential to impact the development of leadership capacity for integrating technology for student learning.

■ Four Large Scale Change

To what extent is the proposal focused on moving to 'large-scale' change? Large scale change addresses going both deeper and wider in our reform agendas. Whole school reform on a large scale is related to two issues:

■ how to go deeper to achieve substantial reform that is powerful enough to impact student learning even in the most difficult circumstances, and

■ how simultaneously to go wider to achieve reform on a large scale.

Additionally, how do we narrow the achievement gap as we systematically implement reform initiatives to ensure high-achievement for all students? What design components have been considered to focus on large-scale reform?

This criterion perhaps poses the greatest challenge for grantees. The three-year timeframe creates design complexities for project organisers. At issue here is dilemma of individual vs. collective capacity. Many of the proposals are focused on developing individual capacity of principals and superintendents. The model in some states has been to design a leadership program and move cohorts of individuals through the components. Other states have connected their Gates leadership project to ongoing reform initiatives in the state. Projects that are embedded in well-developed existing reform agendas may prove to be more successful in moving to scale. Also models that are working with cohorts or learning teams are establishing networks that reduce isolation. Moving to large scale requires a design that focuses on district leadership development and reform in concert with a focus on school leadership. States need to consider how to go 'deep' with a district cohort to ensure individual and collective capacity while at the same time going 'wide' across the state to provide opportunities for all principals and superintendents.

■ Five Sustainability

To what extent is the proposed program focused on creating an infrastructure for continuous change and leadership development over time. The current focus and attention on leadership development is crucial and timely. But, there needs to be a tremendous investment in leadership (school, teacher, and district) over time if we are to scale-up. How will states continue to support leaders who do receive initial training? In other words, what structures

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will be in place to help leaders process what they learn, to access tacit knowledge, and to pull out lessons learned? In other words, what strategies for 'pressure and support' are built into the design to continue the learning? How will states organise to continue the work that is started through this leadership initiative so this does not become a one-shot expenditure without lasting residue? What infrastructure is being established for ongoing leadership development in the state?

The majority of proposals seem to be focused on the three year timeframe and ensuring that as many leaders as possible get through a leadership program. Some states are investing in the development of products or processes that could form the core of a long term leadership development program and strategy. Some states have coordinated a regional model with team leaders, coaches, or mentors that could potentially form a infrastructure for continuing leadership development. Considering the development of an infrastructure, strategies, and funding for continuous leadership development over the long term (10+ years) would strengthen and extend all state proposals.

■ Six Intervention Potency

How strong or 'potent' is the intervention that is being proposed? Intervention potency refers to the content, context, and the process of the intervention. NSDC has developed standards for professional development that provide guidelines for developing interventions and programs that are effective and strong. To what extent have proposals used NSCD professional development standards or considered characteristics of effective staff development in designing their leadership development programs?

Some states seem to have developed strong interventions; they have both a leadership and technology framework, development activities are connected to other reform initiatives, activities are focused on student learning and whole system change, and standards of effective staff development are evident. Some states have paid close attention to some of the above components (effective staff development processes for example) but appear to have neglected other components (ie understanding change or a leadership framework) that would strengthen their proposals. Some states are at early stages and still in the program design phase of their proposal. The strongest proposals are comprehensive and have incorporated a leadership and technology framework, are focused on using technology for student and teacher learning, have included a component on understanding change, have organised effective staff development processes, and have developed a design that addresses issues of sustainability and going to scale. States in the initial design phase would be wise to incorporate these six criteria to create strong interventions. Other states could strengthen their leadership programs by using these criteria to evaluate and revise their strategies.

Early Successes and Challenges

All 50 states are in early stages of this leadership development initiative (the first awards were granted in May 2000 and the last grants were awarded in November 2001). As expected, they are experiencing both early successes as well as challenges. At the national convening two questions were posed to state representatives:

- What is working well in your grant?

- What is not working so well; or in other words, 'what do you need help with?'

Successes: What is working well

Partnerships, curriculum or program development, and quality professional development were three themes prevalent in conversations at the national convening. The nature of the Gates Challenge Grants for Leadership Development necessitated alliances and collaboration. Only one proposal was accepted from each state and governor representation was required. States had to work on relationships and partnerships in the proposal stage rather than have partnerships as a program goal. Many interesting and productive partnerships have been formed (across state legislatures, businesses and corporations, and professional organisation) to focus on leadership development as the following quotes illustrate:

"[Through this initiative] we have established a cross section of stakeholders to focus and develop common language and direction … superintendents, principals, school boards, legislature, state department of education."

"Our project is well integrated with a statewide initiative sponsored by the governor, legislature, etc."

State representatives commented frequently about the leadership development curriculums they are developing. Some are very pleased with the alignment of their programs with leadership standards and the inclusion of technology. Many commented on the quality and value of TAGLIT as a tool for helping focus leaders on technology

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assessment and planning. The following quotes are representative of comments made about curriculum and curriculum development.

"Basing the project on ISLLC standards ensures that an appropriate framework of what leaders should know and be able to do is on the right track."

"The assignments, especially TAGLIT assignments, engage each cohort in a form of assessment literacy."

Many conversations were related to the quality of professional development programs being offered in the various programs. Participants were engaged in presenting and sharing professional development ideas, activities, and strategies including mentoring, on-line learning courses, web-based learning assignments, cohort groups, and assessment tools. People were very interested in how they could learn from others and collaborate to share resources that specific states were developing. The following quote demonstrates states are using the Gates Challenge grants to leverage reform initiatives:

"[We are] providing job-embedded professional development through a program that ties into the school improvement planning process, understanding the change process, and the development on new skills and understandings of the impact of technology on the education process."

Challenges: What states need help with

Time, politics, and sustainability were the three major themes that permeated. Time is a perennial challenge in change and reform initiatives. Participants voiced the challenges associated with the many dimensions of the 'time' problem: lack of time, time out of the school and district, how to restructure time for professional growth, the three-year timeframe of the grant and the numbers of administrators, the time required for relationship building and politics.

The politics of change, of education, and of partnerships is another challenge for state representatives. Bureaucratic structures, local control, individual agendas, and garnering support from influential individuals were specific examples of the obstacles and barriers that were being experienced in many state projects. In addition, people in different positions and organisations keep changing complicating the political ground and dynamics. Negotiating the different interests of politicians, business partners, and educators is confusing and can consume overwhelming amounts of time and energy as illustrated in the following quotes:

"Within the cross section of stakeholders, participants have their own 'fix-it' program to 'whip those schools into shape', which often are at odds with best practice and moral purpose."

"It is a challenge to overcome the individual agendas of everyone involved that may be interfering with the mutual goals."

The third challenge identified at the first national convening meeting was related to the change process and sustainability. State representatives raised several issues related to being able to initiate wide-scale change and ensure sustainability in the timeframe defined by the project. Specific concerns included sustaining the direction of the initiative, lack of continuity of people, providing for the on-going learning of participants, and system capacity. Participants discussed evaluation issues and how to measure and know the deep and long-term impact of the leadership program. The following quotes capture some of the thoughts related to the change process and sustainability:

"There is a lack of system capacity statewide … there is powerful system inertia with too few people tying to battle it – or a lack of leadership commitment."

"Effective follow-up program evaluation is an obstacle for us. How will we determine its success 5-10 years from now? Will things being taught in our program make a difference in our schools? How will we measure that?"

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Strengthening the Initiative

The development of leadership across many levels represents a massive challenge. What is at stake is far more than the principal as instructional leader. In addition, principals and superintendents must be 'leaders in a culture of change', and must help create the conditions for sustainable improvement, by changing the context (Fullan, 2002). Further, this cannot be done by a handful of charismatic leaders; it can only be accomplished when the vast majority of leaders are working toward this end.

We make five broad suggestions for strengthening the initiative:

- articulate the broader vision of leadership
- work on connectedness
- focus on infrastructure and sustainability
- foster cross-state sharing and lessons learned
- go beyond individual learning to learning in context (indeed to 'changing' the context).

First, the projects individually and collectively should continually work on articulating the vision of leadership required for sustainability. The vision must focus on student performance, but must be powerful and clear enough to provide a template for deeper transformational changes of organisations and contexts (one example is presented in Fullan 2002). Do use standards-based frameworks, but make sure they are in the service of a compelling vision of leadership.

Second, the Gates program must be connected to district and state policies and programs that also focus on leadership. All systems suffer from innovation overload and fragmentation in which multiple innovations collide. Coherence-making, connectedness, alignment and integration are what is needed for systemic change. This is not a solvable problem, but each Gates program should be positioned so that it integrates with and leverages other leadership initiatives in the state.

Third, and related, the programs should focus on infrastructure and sustainability. Fund raising, endowments, linkage to existing agencies, and paring the very few continued activities beyond the three years will all have to be considered.

Fourth, the meeting in Seattle in November 2001 began the process of networking across states. Many individual contacts were established which already are being followed up. We suggest that the overall project establish a commitment to (and corresponding designs for) networking and sharing across states, especially focusing on 'lessons learned'. At a more specific level, products and programs development can be shared and used across states, although some degree of cross-site visits will be necessary to maximise learning.

Fifth, most leadership programs do not go beyond individual learning. Even cohort-based programs do not usually help change the system. Learning in context is critical (Elmore 2000). This is to say that leadership initiatives must be coupled with what is happening to change the system and its organisations (for one example applied to the principalship see Fink & Resnick 2001), although the vision of leadership articulated is too narrow in our view (Fullan 2002).

The Bill and Melinda Gates' State Challenge Grants for Leadership Development is still at its early stages. It is, however, moving quickly as the leadership crisis looms larger and larger. There is much to do and much to learn. These grants have established the opportunity for individual state development, as well as cross-state learning.

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