

**The Lead Partner:
A new partnership model**

**The School Turnaround Group
Mass Insight Education and Research Institute**

- What is a Lead Partner?
- Why become a Lead Partner?
- Who can become a Lead Partner and how?
- Where do Lead Partner opportunities exist?
- Appendix: What do successful Lead Partner schools look like?

Lead Partners (LPs) are school turnaround partners that align authority with accountability

Lead Partners are non-profit organizations or units of central offices on contract with the district central office or state to turn around schools

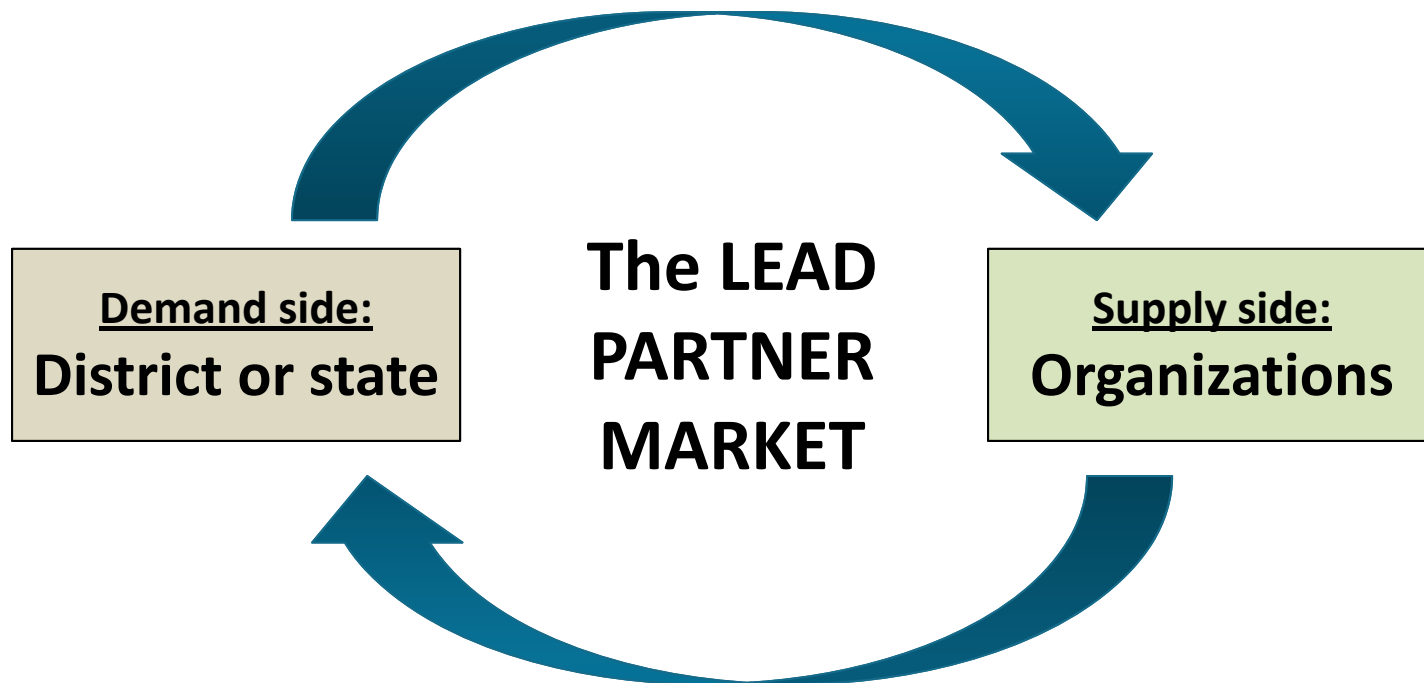
Responsibilities of a Lead Partner

- **Sign a 3-5 year performance contract for student achievement** with the district or state; the agreement:
 - Assigns the Lead Partner responsibility for a small “intentional” cluster of schools* where systems and programs will be aligned
 - Holds the Lead Partner accountable for improving student achievement
- **Assume authority for decision making on school staffing** (as well as time, money and program); in particular, the Lead Partner:
 - Hires a new principal or approves the current one
 - Supports the principal in hiring and replacing teachers and has responsibility for bringing in a meaningful cohort of new instructional staff
- **Provide core academic and student support services** directly or by aligning the services of other program and support partners, who are on sub-contracts with the Lead Partner, and build internal capacity within the schools and by extension, the district
- Has an **embedded, consistent and intense relationship with each school** during the turnaround period (5 days per week)

*Under ideal circumstances, a LP will manage a cluster of 3-5 schools within a district to achieve alignment and leverage scale, however the LP could also begin by managing a single school.

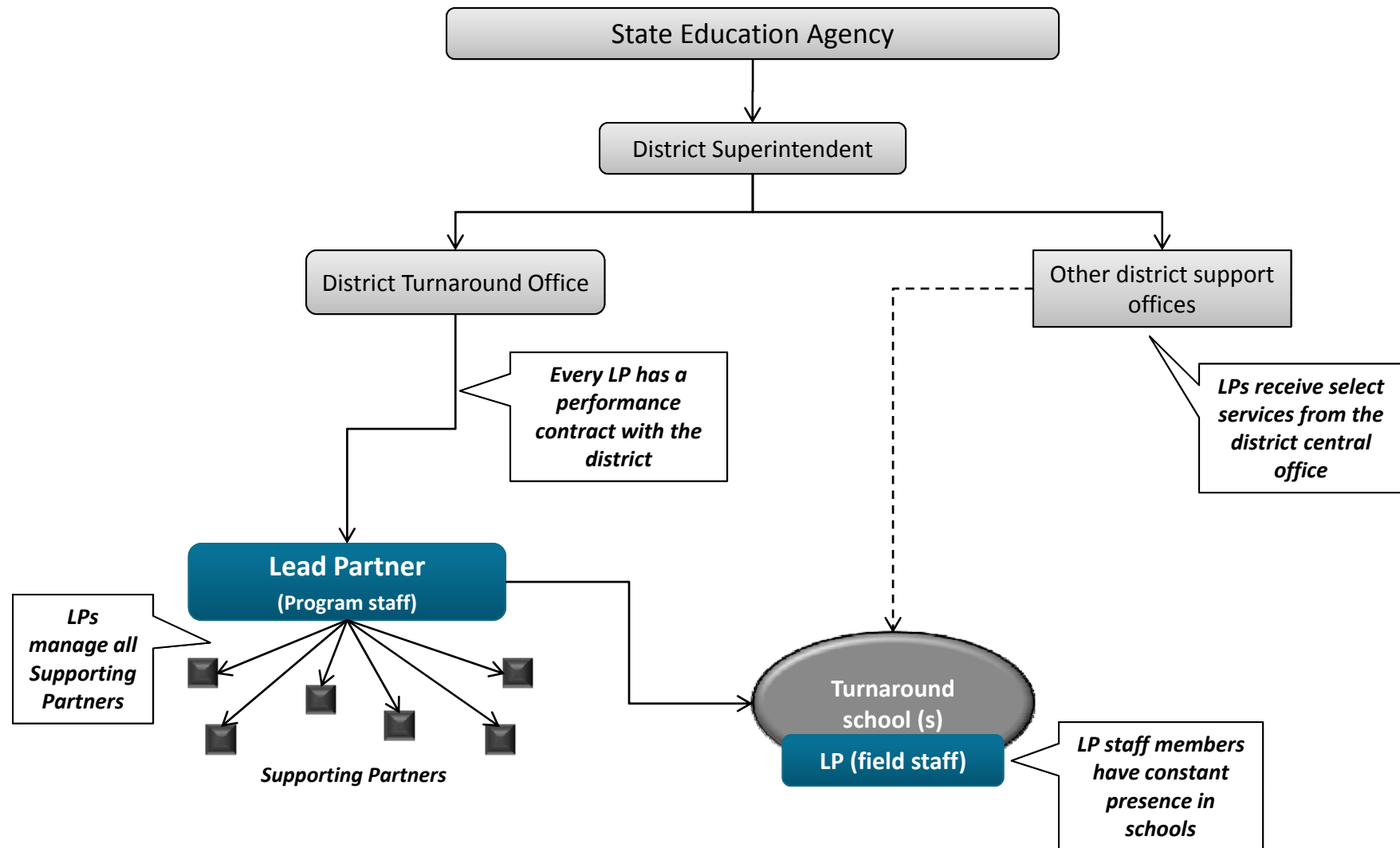
District/states must be willing to create the LP role and a market of capable organizations must be ready to fill it

District creates the Lead Partner position by identifying schools, establishing the necessary conditions, and soliciting proposals from potential organizations



The existence of a robust supply of effective Lead Partner organizations drives demand from states and districts

A Lead Partner operates within the district but under different conditions than standard district schools



To fulfill their responsibilities, Lead Partners must execute a number of key functions

Key functions of a Lead Partner

Program staff

- Set key operating and design principles for schools, and design/manage overall cluster turnaround plan
- Provide ongoing guidance to all cluster schools
- Manage key program functions across clusters:
 - Human capital
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - Policy/legal
 - Administration and finances
 - Community advocacy
 - Knowledge management
 - Socio-emotional support services and partnerships
 - Data analysis and evaluation
 - Procurement of Supporting Partners
- Liaise with District Turnaround Office to ensure cluster schools fulfill district requirements and district offices meet needs of Zone
- Create communities of practice across schools
- Capture and share best practices occurring in cluster
- Hire principals and work with principals to recruit, hire, and evaluate additional staff members
- Liaise with other district offices as necessary

Field staff

- Present in cluster schools 5 days/week
- Report directly to Lead Partner program staff
- Manage day-to-day needs of school including directly supporting principal and other staff on instructional and operational matters
- Ensure LP model is implemented to fidelity at school level
- Alleviate principal of operational responsibilities by providing direct operational support and coordinating delivery of school-level services from:
 - Supporting Partners
 - District central office
 - Lead Partner program staff
 - National Strategic Partners
- Perform additional school level functions (e.g., administer and analyze formative assessments)
- Discuss progress and barriers with principals on a regular basis

Lead Partners maximize effectiveness by splitting traditional district responsibilities with the district. One example:

	District responsibilities	Lead Partner responsibilities
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify and/or develop curricula</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify and/or develop curricula</i> • Set the instructional framework • Assure adequate instructional resources (e.g., library content) • Provide professional development to instructional staff/school leader
Non-instructional support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire key licensed professionals (e.g., speech pathologists, school nurses, guidance counselors) to work in the schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the presence of social workers to provide services to students and their families
Campus operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transportation • Provide food services • Provide security and monitoring for the campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee all campus operations • Provide back office functions (e.g. compliance around teacher certification and special education, state reporting, advocacy, inventory, year-end audits)
IT / Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Select which data to collect in district database</i> • Provide IT support for desktops and laptops • Build and maintain data systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Select which data to collect in district database</i> • Develop internal assessment exams • Analyze data
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that each school receives its per-pupil allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist principal in setting the school budget
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Design facility</i> • Secure facilities (acquisition and construction) • Maintain facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Design facility</i>
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build pool of qualified teachers and leaders in district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit, hire, and fire teachers and leaders
Co-curriculars	Could be provided by either	

Italicized items could be under district or Lead Partner



The actual division will vary according to both district policy/conditions and Lead Partner preferences; some Lead Partners may choose to provide the large majority of services in house

Only a few examples currently exist of true Lead Partner models

AUSL (Academy for Urban School Leadership) Chicago, IL

- Founded in 2001 as a nonprofit specializing in teacher preparation/school management. Since 2005 has worked closely with Chicago Public Schools on school turnarounds (Sherman in 2006, Harvard in 2007, 6 more in 2008-9)
- Close to PZI “Lead Partner” model. AUSL hires a new principal and replaces up to 50% of staff (many from AUSL’s training program). Contract ensures control over most conditions, but staff are unionized and some efficiencies of scale are realized through sharing services with the district.

RESULTS

- At Harvard, absences were reduced by 5 days/student in the first year, and the number of students achieving to or above standard jumped 25% in two years.
- At Sherman, scores on the Illinois Standard Assessment rose by 23% over three years; 98% of the 2008 graduates enrolled in college.
- AUSL’s teacher retention is over 87%, compared to national average for new teachers of 50%.

Mastery Schools Philadelphia, PA

- Mastery is a charter management organization that moved into the turnaround space in 2005 by turning three chronically low-performing Philadelphia district schools into college prep, middle-high charter schools.
- Its charter provides Mastery with full control over all conditions at their schools. All staff and students who applied to stay signed new contracts accepting Mastery's approach. Staff are not unionized.

RESULTS

- All three turnaround schools have closed the achievement gap in 8th grade math and two have closed the gap in reading. These are the same students in the same buildings, showing breakthrough results. Test scores increased an average of 52 percentage points per subject in every grade. Pickett campus’s 7-8th grade average reading and math scores improved 45% and 21 % in year one.
- Violence dropped 80%; student turnover dropped by one third. One hundred percent of 2009 graduates enrolled in college.

Green Dot Los Angeles, CA

- Green Dot is a charter network that initiated a partnership in fall 2008 with the L.A. Unified School District to turn around Locke High School by phasing in nine smaller schools; Green Dot became the first outside organization to operate a traditional public school in the district.
- Principals can be hired/fired at will; principals have more control over the staffing in their schools; Only 40 of the school's 120 teachers remained in the school. Green Dot teachers have their own union.

RESULTS

- The API score at the Locke cluster increased by 24 points in the first year.
- The Locke cluster completed its first year with 532 more students than the previous year. The attendance rate rose from 77.8% in 2007-8 to 89.3% in 2008-9. The number of graduates also increased by 43%.

- What is a Lead Partner?

- Why become a Lead Partner?

- Who can become a Lead Partner and how?

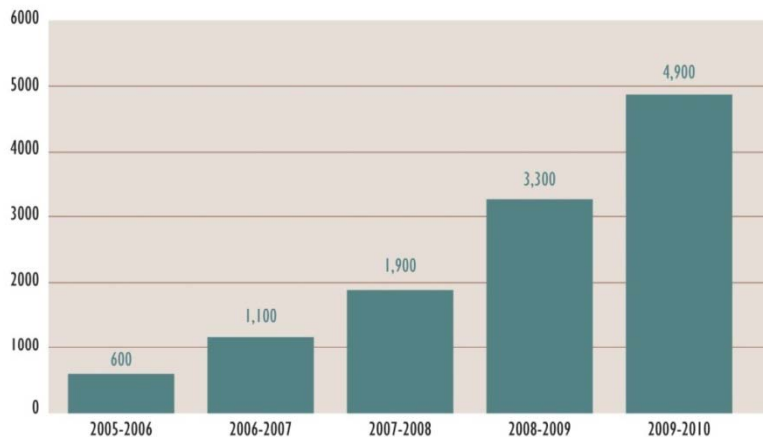
- Where do Lead Partner opportunities exist?

- Appendix: What do successful Lead Partner **schools** look like?

The need for turnaround has coincided with an unprecedented amount of federal support

The scale of the problem

FIGURE 1B Nearly 5,000 Schools Are Projected to Be in Restructuring by 2010



Projections are based on actual 2005-2006 data for schools in Restructuring Status under NCLB with the assumption that the rate of schools leaving that status will remain constant over the next four years. Source of 2005-06 data: Center on Education Policy (2006).



Federal funding for turnaround

- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the “stimulus package”) requires states to take action on low-performing schools, and specifically targets schools identified for corrective action and restructuring
- Between Title I School Improvement (1003(g)) grants and the Race to the Top fund, \$9B of federal funding is available for school improvement



A multitude of effective Lead Partner organizations are needed to support the country’s ambitious turnaround goals

Lead Partners are offered a compelling value proposition to become part of the turnaround movement

Financial resources

- Full district per pupil funding provided to each school, plus school share of central office budget*
- Additional SIG funds cover many if not all additional expenses
- Access to district facilities reduces supplemental funding needs

Autonomy

- Opportunity to implement turnaround models with fidelity as a result of conditions change
- Lead Partners have control over key elements: people, time, money, program
- States and districts agree to relinquish any right to impose interventions on the Lead Partner's turnaround schools during the turnaround period

Impact and scale

- Potential for rapid scale based on expansion of Lead Partner concept and availability of significant amounts of federal funding

Leadership support

- Both privately and publicly professed support from key political leaders in district and state on an ongoing basis affords political cover
- Buy-in of senior district officials reduces time spent managing antagonistic relationships

Ability to leverage district infrastructure

- Ability to leverage existing facilities and other district infrastructure (e.g., transportation system)
- Choice to outsource select operational services to the district

*The share of central office budget allocated to the Lead Partner may be less depending on the district, but the significant SIG funds will help compensate for any gap.

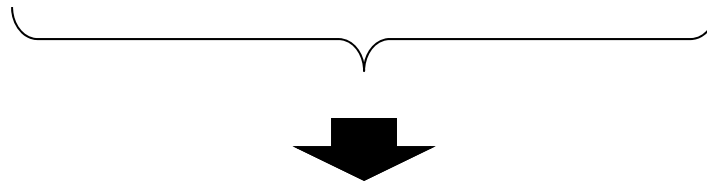
Lead Partners receive the combined benefits of district scale efficiencies and charter-like autonomies

Districts

- Economies of scale over key infrastructure (e.g. facilities, transportation)
- Mobility of students and teachers is facilitated by having common elements across the district
- Community credibility

Charter Management Organizations

- Autonomy over the core elements of a school:
 - People
 - Time
 - Money
 - Program
- School level accountability for student results



The Lead Partner offers a new model for school reform, leveraging both the operational freedoms enjoyed by CMOs and the scale benefits of a district.

The broad set of autonomies offered allows Lead Partners to implement their school model with fidelity

1

People

- Requirement to choose/confirm principal
- Ability to reassign at least 50% of staff (possibly up to 100%)
- Modified CBAs to provide for more flexible union conditions
- Ability to manage professional development processes
- Ability to offer additional compensation for extended time/hard to staff schools

2

Time

- Innovative extended school time (i.e., longer school day and/or year)
- Control over school schedule
- Sufficient time allocated for professional development/common teacher planning time
- Sufficient time to plan for launch of turnaround before school starts
- Sufficient time allocated before LP is held accountable for results

3

Money

- Control over school-level per pupil funding and school share of central office budget
- Use of streamlined procurement processes

4

Program

- Ability to control school design, including instructional framework, socio-emotional support program, etc.
- Selection and management of Supporting Partners
- Choice over use of many district central office services

*The exact autonomies afforded to each Lead Partner will vary somewhat by district but will be largely similar.

Lead Partners are in a position to help drive broader district reform

Compel immediate changes in central office operations



The district must clear out the “**bureaucratic underbrush**” - change policies, processes, systems and structures to accommodate Lead Partner schools

Foster a performance and service-based central office



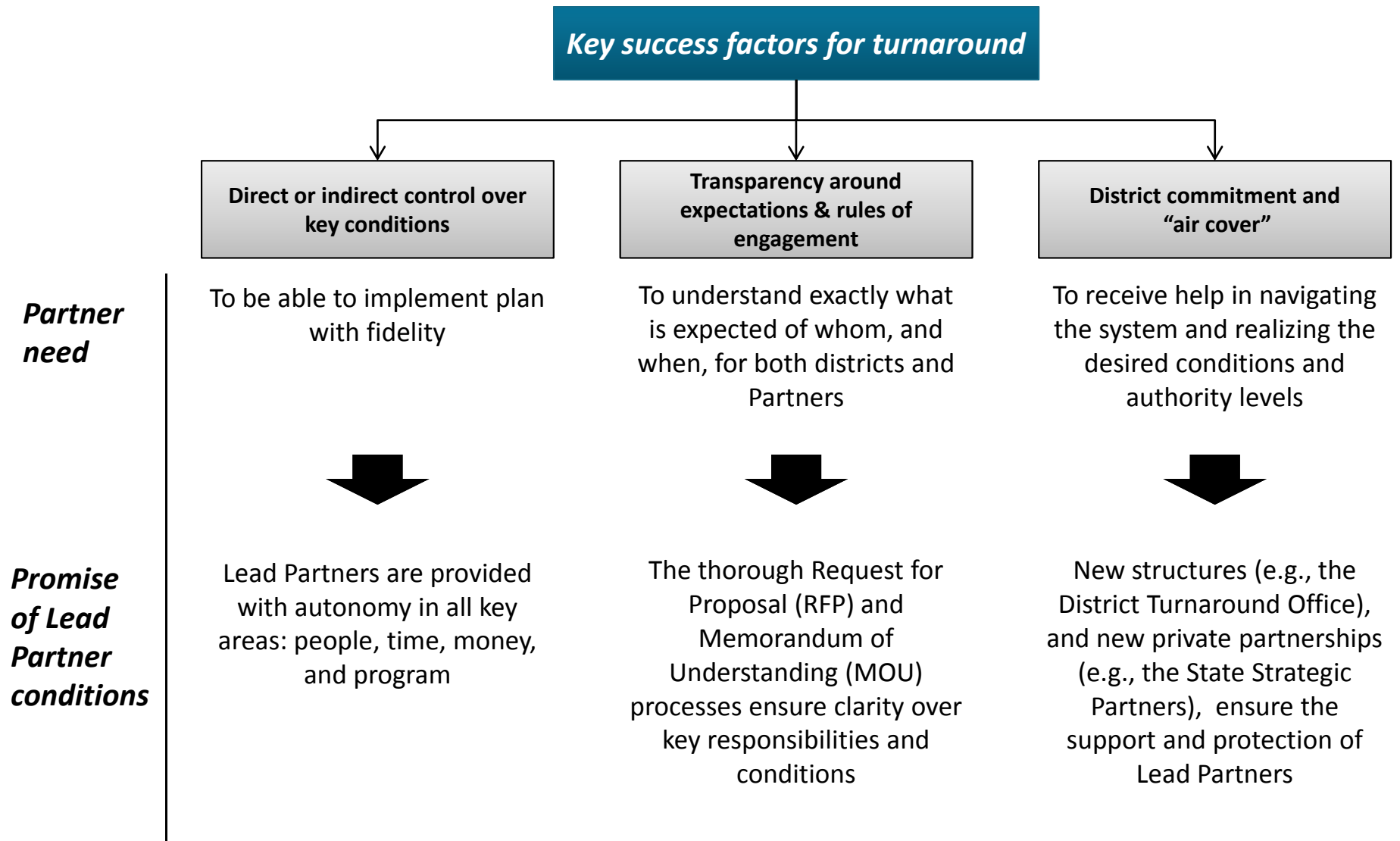
The Lead Partner will operate a new model within the district central office, bringing change **by illustrating the benefits of performance-based models** and pushing the central office to assume a service delivery role for schools

Share knowledge and test innovative practices



With their unique conditions and autonomies, Lead Partner schools are well-positioned to serve as **innovation laboratories**

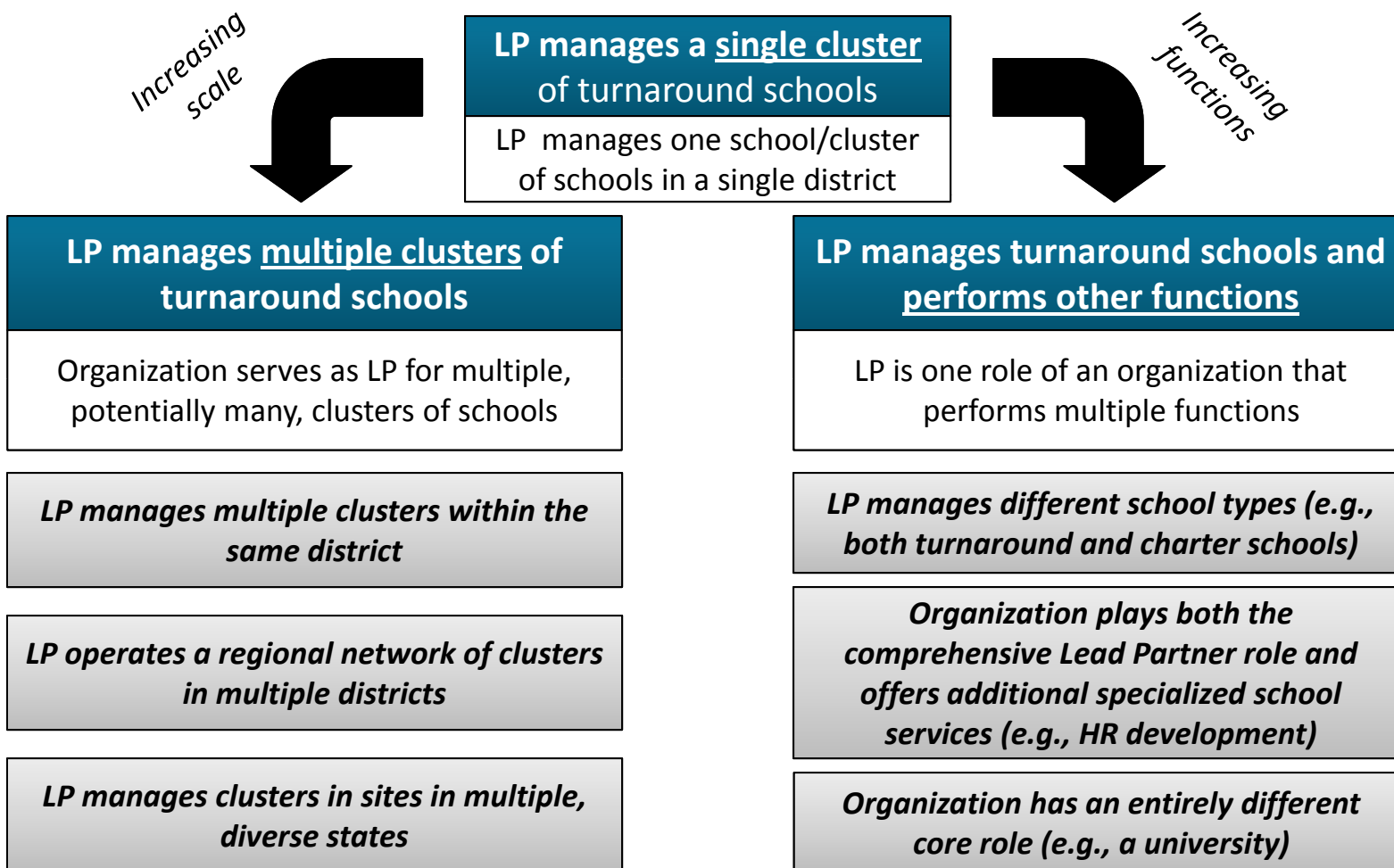
By employing the Lead Partner framework, districts and states afford organizations the conditions necessary to succeed



- What is a Lead Partner?
- Why become a Lead Partner?
- Who can become a Lead Partner and how?
- Where do Lead Partner opportunities exist?
- Appendix: What do successful Lead Partner schools look like?

Organizations that serve as Lead Partners can vary in both scale and form of operations

A Lead Partner is a role, not an organization type; many organizations may be a good fit for the Lead Partner



Any organization willing to fulfill the four major responsibilities can become a Lead Partner

Responsibilities of a Lead Partner

Accountability for student performance



LP must be capable of making measureable gains in student achievement over a relatively short period of time (~2-3 years)

Authority over school staffing



LP must be able to recruit an effective school leader and work with them collaboratively, as well as recruit and evaluate teaching staff

Integration of core academic and student support services



LP must design a comprehensive school reform plan and deliver itself or outsource the delivery of all major services

Embedded, consistent and intense relationship with each school



LP must have field staff who can work on the ground, directly with school staff

To fulfill these responsibilities, Lead Partners should ask themselves what criteria they meet

Self Audit for potential Lead Partners

Experience

Lead Partners must have experience:

- Achieving results with high poverty student populations
- Working in a school turnaround environment
- Working in high schools (*many but not all Lead Partners will be brought in to manage high schools*)

Willingness

Lead Partners must be willing to:

- Work with unionized teaching staff (under modified contracts)
- Be held accountable for student performance
- Operate under some but not most district procedures and regulations
- Use some but not all district central office services

Readiness

Lead Partners must be ready to:

- Ramp up capacity quickly
- Modify an existing school model to meet the needs of a turnaround environment
- Open new operations in or expand existing operations to a new location
- Have excess cash or ability to raise capital quickly (in some cases)

Competencies

Lead Partners must be able to:

- Design a comprehensive school model including instructional program, socio-emotional supports, co-curricular program
- Transform the existing culture to create a positive learning environment
- Execute a full community engagement plan
- Work collaboratively with district central office staff
- Identify and develop a strong school leader
- Recruit and develop effective teaching staff
- Manage multiple schools simultaneously (in many cases)
- Handle the operational aspects of the school including Supporting Partner contract management



*With the increasing demand for turnaround partners accompanied and fueled by an influx of federal funding, a number of unprepared organizations will gravitate towards turnaround; **potential Lead Partner organizations must carefully consider whether they are prepared to enter this space.***

Lead Partners lacking in existing capacity can fill gaps in a number of different ways

The Lead Partner must take on a complex role; few organizations can fulfill all of the requirements with current capacity. To fulfill all of the critical responsibilities, Lead Partners can follow a number of options:



- 1 Leverage existing staff capacity and institutional experience
- 2 Acquire new capacity through deliberate hiring of new staff
- 3 Develop capacity in existing staff through training and development opportunities
- 4 Outsource appropriate capacity to Supporting Partners

Potential LPs must recognize that school turnaround is distinctly different from other school reforms (e.g., fresh starts, charters)

Even given the improved conditions afforded under the Lead Partner framework, turnaround still differs significantly from other school improvements models

Need to work with existing populations



- Because turnaround schools maintain the original student population and some existing staff, turnarounds are necessarily more reactive than new schools; Lead Partners cannot simply replicate their existing school design
- In particular, creating a positive culture is more difficult and a critical challenge in a turnaround

Interaction with district



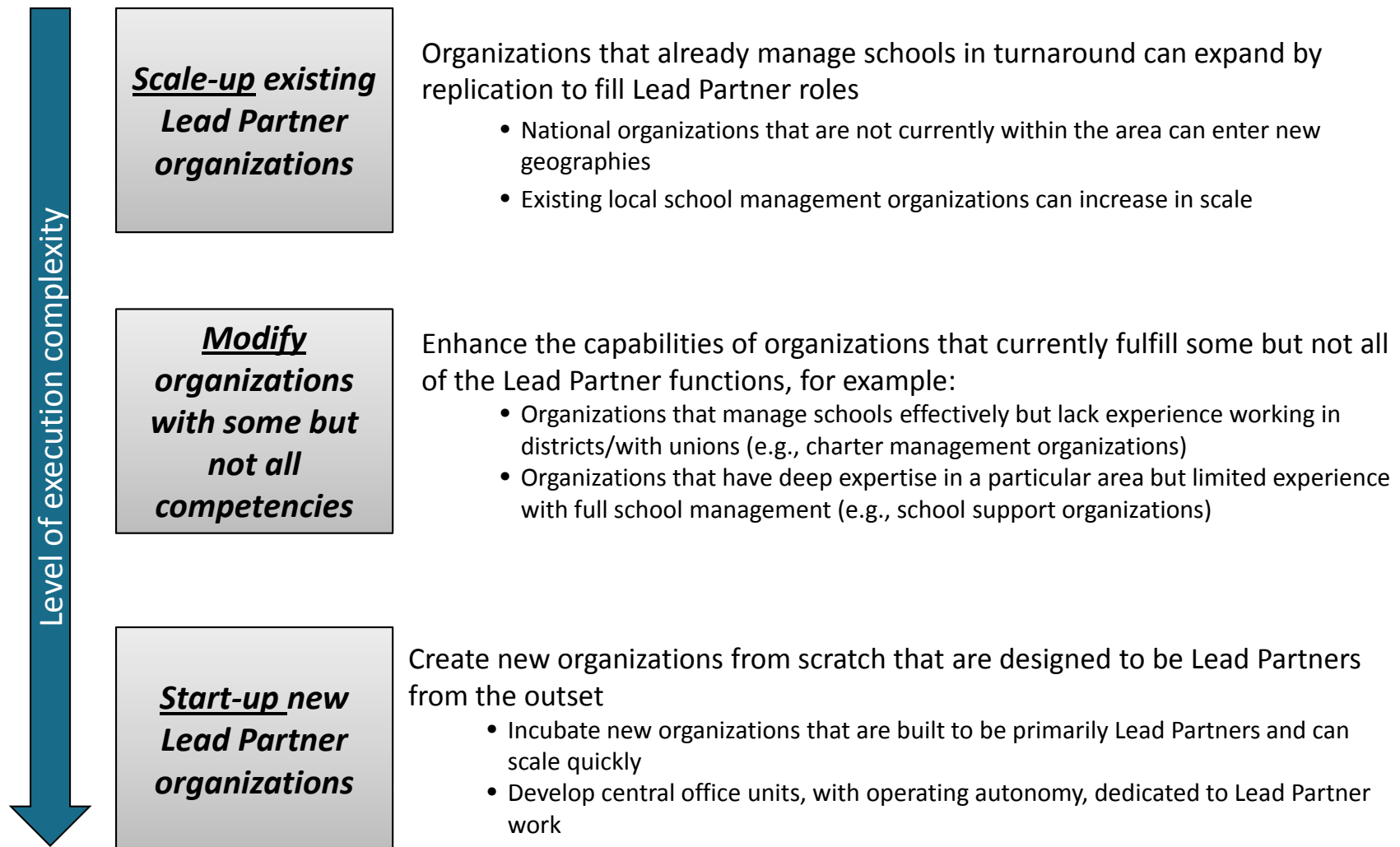
- The LP receives a greater amount of autonomy than traditional district schools, but is still a district public school and must comply with certain standards and regulations
- The LP must also work more closely with central office to ensure integrated service delivery

Urgency for results



- Turnaround, by definition, must deliver dramatic improvement within a few years, necessitating drastic and urgent reform efforts; overly deliberate change is not an option
- Furthermore, turnaround schools may be more politically controversial and under greater public scrutiny, thus adding greater public pressure to succeed

Developing Lead Partners will require different levels of capacity building work




A portfolio of Lead Partners can be created by drawing from multiple sources of existing organizations


Potential source	What they would need to do	Why they would do it
Charter/school management organizations	Adapt their model to work within a district architecture and to address turnaround issues	Access to facilities and other infrastructure, and ability to work in states without charter availability
Supporting partners (e.g. human capital, data, curriculum)	Ramp up their models to work more intensively, address a broader range of capacities, and adapt to turnarounds	Desire to see their core approaches implemented with greater fidelity and depth within schools
Local funders (e.g. local education funds)	Move into the operating role by adjusting current structure or spinning off a new organization that is focused on turnaround	Ability to leverage their expertise, resources, and local relationships to transform schools
Districts	Create a new office and bring in people with expertise in school turnarounds	Capacity to accelerate the pace of school turnarounds by helping transition district into new role and building support within the system for reform
Unions	Develop a school model relevant to turnaround and a process for assuming control	Opportunity to help shape the turnaround movement
Universities	Adjust their programs to incorporate turnaround and become more practice based	Platform to demonstrate leadership and share expertise in addressing this critical education issue

The potential Lead Partner groups have different strengths and weaknesses

Competencies and experiences required

<i>Potential sources of Lead Partners</i>	Management/operations	School design	District relations	Talent development	Community engagement	Turnaround experience	Capital to scale	
	Charter/school management organizations	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
	Supporting partners		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Local funders	✓		✓				✓
	Districts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Unions			✓	✓			✓
	Universities	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓

 *Applicable to most or all players in this category*

 *Applicable to some players in this category*

Note: Strengths and weaknesses may vary significantly within a Lead Partner source category.

- What is a Lead Partner?
- Why become a Lead Partner?
- Who can become a Lead Partner and how?
- Where do Lead Partner opportunities exist?
- Appendix: What do successful Lead Partner schools look like?

The most common method of selecting Lead Partners is through a Request for Proposal (RFP)

Role of an RFP

- RFPs provide underperforming schools with organizational partners capable of achieving dramatic, fundamental improvement in student achievement and school culture
- External organizations compete to join a preferred provider list of turnaround partners who will later be matched to schools and districts
- Ideally, the RFP clearly establishes the basic conditions under which interventions can take place:
 1. States and districts must announce selection-specific criteria and articulate the opportunity in a way that will attract high-capacity partners
 2. Partners are forced to consider how they will undertake turnaround in a specific context with a specific set of conditions
 3. The RFP process allows both parties to fully consider the appropriateness of the match

Example RFPs

- Several states and districts have released RFPs for turnaround partners
- While the partner role varies by RFP, it is clear that the demand for partners is growing and potential Lead Partners should prepare for additional opportunities
- Outstanding or recent RFPs:
 - States: Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Virginia
 - Districts: Chicago, Austin

Note: To download copies of these RFPs and to view the longer Mass Insight publication on the RFP process, visit our website:
<http://massinsight.org/turnaround/reports.aspx>

Organizations must be able to ramp up quickly to become Lead Partners

Pre-launch (6-18 months)

- Respond to Request for Proposal (RFP)*
- After RFP is selected, develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) b/t LP and district
- Finalize and implement details of school design
- Select/develop contracts w/ Supporting Partners
- Recruit and hire/rehire staff
- Launch community engagement efforts
- Work with facilities department to ensure physical improvements
- Complete summer PD for staff
- Begin building relationships with key district offices

Year 1

- Focus on culture and stabilization in building
- Monitor non-academic (leading) indicators
- Continue engagement with families and community
- Build strong connections to legal and judiciary offices (to handle potential bump in disciplinary incidents)

Year 2

- Enhance rigorous and aligned curriculum
- Continue to build out interim and formative assessments process
- Increase data-based decision making as data gathering and analysis
- Continue to monitor leading indicators

Year 3+

- LPs held accountable for student performance (according to student academic achievement and other lagging indicators)
- Settle into process of making long-term, sustainable improvements and maintaining excellent practices
- Some LPs may continue to operate schools indefinitely

Intensive turnaround period

*In certain district and states, Lead Partners may not be selected through the RFP process.

Mass Insight's Partnership Zone Initiative will provide an increasing number of opportunities for Lead Partners

Partnership Zone framework

- Partnership Zones are protected carve-out zones of school districts, characterized by flexible operating conditions around the critical dimensions of school management: people, time, money, and program
- Each Zone will be composed of an initial cluster of 3-5 schools to be managed by a single Lead Partner

Partnership Zone Initiative

- The Partnership Zone Initiative (PZI) is Mass Insight's multi-year, multi-state initiative to launch "proof point" Partnership Zones

Participating states

- Six states have signed a commitment in principle letter to open Zones in 1-2 districts each over the next two years:
 - Colorado
 - Delaware
 - Illinois
 - Louisiana
 - Massachusetts
 - New York

Timing

- The states will be divided into two cohorts based on readiness
- Cohort 1 (maximum of 3 states) is slated to open Zones/select Lead Partners in 2010, Cohort 2 in 2011
- The Partnership Zone framework is expected to be scaled rapidly both within this subset and across a larger group of states

Get involved

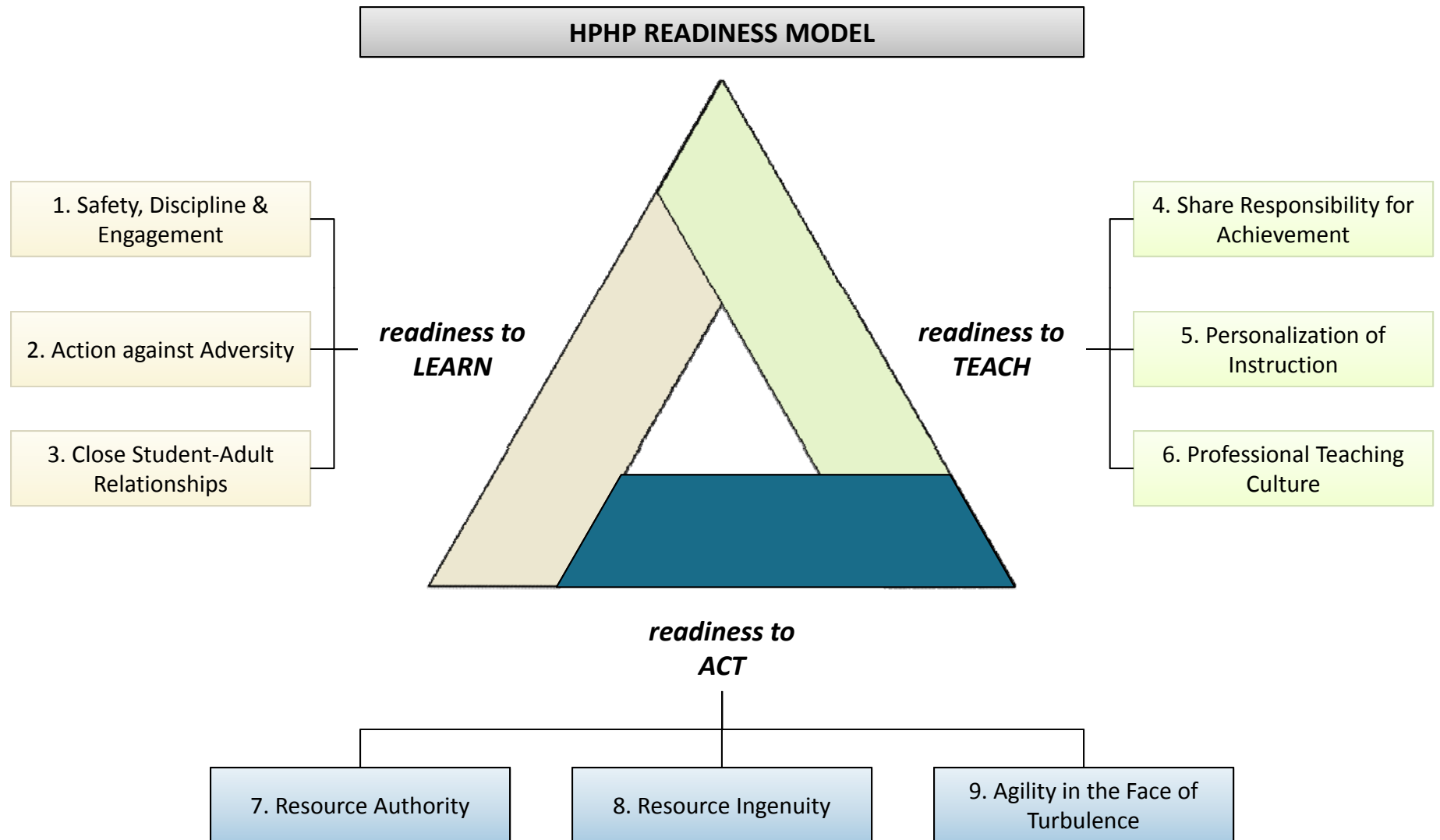
For more information on becoming a Lead Partner, consult the collection of resources on our website:

www.massinsight.org

This presentation should be read in conjunction with Mass Insight's groundbreaking 2007 report The Turnaround Challenge: Why America's best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst performing schools, and the related documents on the website. These documents are the result of a six year research and development process led by Mass Insight with the support of the Carnegie Corporation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the involvement of a range of national partner organizations.

- What is a Lead Partner?
 - Why become a Lead Partner?
 - Who can become a Lead Partner and how?
 - Where do Lead Partner opportunities exist?
- Appendix: What do successful Lead Partner schools look like?

LPs will need school models that incorporate the key characteristics of high-performing, high-poverty schools



Note: For more detail on the nine elements, see *The Turnaround Challenge* on our website: <http://www.massinsight.org/turnaround/index.aspx>

LPs can also learn from research on the effective elements of networked school management models

Supports provided by central/ program office:

1. Support for schools in recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers
2. Investments in freeing principals from school operation responsibilities
3. Building of systems and strategies that enable the use of data to differentiate instruction and guide professional development
4. Clearly defined instructional framework, with flexibility around implementation and sharing of emerging best practices across the network

Autonomies granted:

1. Flexibility given to school leadership in use of budget with Lead Partner units supported through a defined fee
2. Control over hiring and investment in development of school leadership

School level structures and systems:

1. Development of a cultural model that supports learning and sets every student on the path to college
2. Defined approaches for conducting outreach to parents and community
3. Establishment of school structures for addressing social and behavioral needs of students
4. Network-wide extension of school day and year, with guidelines for how to align classroom time to the instructional model

Note: Findings derived from previous Mass Insight sponsored research on school management networks.