ALI Task Force Brief:

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION R&D

Alliance For Learning Innovation

The need to strengthen America's competitiveness in the world, the quickly changing demands of modern society and economy, and the COVID-19 pandemic's disruption of traditional learning and exacerbation of existing educational inequities have all placed a spotlight on the importance of supporting all learners and educators across all contexts. To make real progress, we must buttress our current education improvement efforts with a larger and stronger education research and development (R&D) ecosystem that grows the evidence base of what works, for whom, and under what conditions. And we need an ecosystem capable of spurring innovations in educational practices and tools that can immediately impact learner outcomes and are accessible to practitioners working in the varied contexts of our nation's K-12 education system.

Relatively little money is spent on education R&D when compared with other sectors in the American economy[1], meaning innovative and promising practices in teaching, learning, and technology often go underdeveloped, remain untested, and, even when proven effective, lack sustainability and scale. We must increase the federal investment in education R&D; however, doing so alone is insufficient—more funds must be coupled with key changes to policy and practice at every level. An appropriately-sized, inclusive, and equity-centered education R&D infrastructure at the federal, state, and local levels would help address the longstanding challenges we too often experience today and help the education sector function more like a learning system. Such an approach would help provide all learners with educational experiences that promote economic mobility and support communities, families, educators, and learners with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of today and unlock opportunities for tomorrow.

What is ALI?

The Alliance for Learning Innovation (ALI) brings together education nonprofits, philanthropy, and the private sector, to advocate for building a better research and development (R&D) infrastructure in education. ALI advocates for increased capacity of education R&D and supports the research and development of evidence-based innovation in education that centers students and practitioners, advances equity, improves talent pathways, and expands the workforce needed in a globally competitive world.

1 For example, the Fiscal Year 2023 budget of the Institute of Education Sciences, the U.S. Department of Education's research arm, was $807 million. By comparison, the U.S. Department of Agriculture spends over $3 billion annually on research related to food and agriculture.

ALI has been advocating for increased federal investment, effectiveness, and coherence in education R&D, and is committed to advancing several other aspects of a robust education R&D ecosystem. To better understand the current state of affairs and chart a path forward, ALI convened three diverse **task forces** during 2023 to dig into three critical, urgent priorities:

- making the education R&D ecosystem more inclusive,
- strengthening state and local education R&D infrastructure, and
- expanding and strengthening the role in education R&D of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

This brief summarizes the work of the **Inclusive Education R&D Task Force**. Click here for the parallel briefs on the **State and Local Education R&D Infrastructure Task Force** and the **HBCUs, MSIs & TCUs Task Force**. The Appendix in this brief summarizes the work of this Task Force and acknowledges the contributions of its members.

Summary of Task Force Recommendations

1. Prioritize knowledge mobilization and engagement to increase the impact of education R&D.
2. Invest in high-quality collaborative education R&D efforts centered at the state and local levels.
3. Leverage fellowships to add R&D capacity.
4. Develop "state and local R&D infrastructure" and "inclusive R&D" playbooks (or one combined playbook) for higher education and help aligned institutions execute it.
5. Develop "state and local R&D infrastructure" and "inclusive R&D" playbooks (or one combined playbook) for philanthropy and help aligned philanthropies execute it.
6. Communicate the importance of state and local education R&D infrastructure and inclusive R&D.
7. Provide some R&D funding directly to practitioners and communities.
8. Evaluate R&D partnerships.
9. Design more inclusive Requests for Applications (RFAs).
10. Diversify peer reviewers.
11. Make the invisible visible.
12. Encourage the development and use of measures that will generate more accurate and useful data to inform inclusive R&D.

The Importance of Making the Education R&D Ecosystem More Inclusive

To have a greater positive impact on outcomes and better support our education system to prepare students for the future, the entire education R&D ecosystem must become much more inclusive. Traditional education R&D is largely dominated by the most privileged institutions and individuals who have outsized access to R&D capital and opportunities. These actors too often focus on their own priorities rather than the needs (and assets) of learners and those most proximate to them—especially our most marginalized learners and communities—which leaves those pressing needs unmet and erodes trust. The same disconnect exists between much of education R&D and education practitioners, including educators, school leaders, and state and local systems. Even when R&D priorities and the field's needs are aligned, the lack of ongoing and authentic engagement in the R&D process creates a "last mile" gap that often limits the impact of high-quality R&D output. Promising insights, practices, and tools just do not consistently make their way into regular use in classrooms or other educational settings.

The education R&D ecosystem is composed of myriad components and actors, yet almost every part of it needs to become more inclusive of practitioners and of communities—and would benefit from doing so. **The need for this type of change toward more inclusive education R&D encompasses, among other things, R&D priorities, the methods and processes used to pursue those priorities, the perspectives and experiences of the people involved, and the politics and policies that guide their decision making.** More inclusive approaches hold special promise in addressing the "last mile" gap mentioned above by empowering practitioners, learners,

What Are Inclusive R&D Methodologies?

There are many worthy models of inclusive R&D methodologies, and the Task Force's recommendations do not depend on the field adopting a particular model. That said, it can be helpful to keep a specific articulation in mind while reviewing the Task Force recommendations. For example, Digital Promise's core tenets of Inclusive Innovation help practitioners and communities partnering with researchers and developers "co-construct an R&D culture that enables equitable leadership and contribution."

- **Collective Ownership**:
  The work is co-led, co-researched, and co-designed by collaborators who are reflective of the diversity of communities and schools to ensure mutual benefit.
- **Student Voice and Leadership**:
  Students are collaborators and their perspectives are prioritized in the creation of solutions to educational challenges.
- **Context Expertise and Proximity**:
  Context expertise is emphasized to center the history, identities, and perspectives of those with lived experiences relevant to the educational challenge.
- **Continuity of Equity**:
  Deeply integrated research and design practices address the intersections and conditions that impact students.
- **Reimagine Progress**:
  Progress measures must be multidimensional to ensure the access, participation, and benefit of those most impacted.
- **Build Capacity**: The process resources communities to sustain capacity for equity-centered R&D into the future.

and communities to decide on and engage in R&D themselves; building knowledge about relevant R&D outputs; generating greater buy-in from learners, communities, and practitioners; and opening more effective channels for knowledge mobilization and scale.

Determining who does R&D, on what, and using what methodologies can all benefit from a more inclusive approach. The National Academies of Science, Engineering & Medicine's 2022 report, *The Future of Education Research at IES: Towards an Equity-Oriented Science*, provides a comprehensive set of recommendations for making the federal government's primary education research arm, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in the U.S. Department of Education (USED), more inclusive and equity-oriented. As discussed in depth in the National Academies report, variability in outcomes, including outcomes in response to interventions, is a central feature of education R&D. A more inclusive approach to R&D will also help us better understand that variability by identifying what is working for whom and under what circumstances. This ALI task force's work complements the National Academies' work by looking beyond IES and beyond the federal level to consider what is standing in the way of a more inclusive education R&D ecosystem at every level and to identify high-impact recommendations to help accelerate remedies.

Insights from the Task Force

The Task Force explored members' individual and shared **visions** for a more inclusive education R&D ecosystem. It identified and unpacked the **gaps** between that vision and the status quo, and then explored various **barriers** that make it hard to fill those gaps and ultimately manifest the vision. The Task Force's **recommendations** emerged from these rich discussions and expertise. **Insights** from that work are captured below to provide some context for the Task Force's recommendations.

- Applying for R&D funding—especially federal grants—requires a significant investment of resources for what can be a small (or even unknown) chance of success. For underrepresented and often under-resourced applicants, this represents a **high barrier to entry**.
- There are many aspects of navigating R&D funding opportunities that are unseen and unspoken. Repeat actors have the **social capital and inside information**—a type of coded language—that new applicants often do not. Meanwhile, missing out on even small parts of the process can be consequential in tightly-contested grant competitions.
- Practitioners and communities have often experienced prior efforts to be more inclusive or increase stakeholder engagement as mere **check-the-box endeavors** that fall short of truly authentic and ongoing inclusion, such as bringing in stakeholders only after an R&D project is fully designed without time to revise in response to feedback.
- Efforts to be more inclusive in terms of opportunities, engagement, and leadership in education R&D must be **paired with sufficient resources and support**. Otherwise, the newly included actors—especially practitioners and leaders from the most marginalized and under-resourced communities—will just be set up for failure, which then creates a vicious cycle casting doubt on their abilities.
- There is a tension between increasing inclusion of communities in the existing structures and cultures that have contributed to their marginalization versus working to address those **systemic inequities in system design and policy**. Although the best path may be "both/and," it is important to acknowledge the tension and seek to mitigate it through trust building and honest dialogue.
- More **participatory approaches to education R&D are promising** in a number of ways, including but not limited to the following:
    - When people are involved in the decision-making process, they are more likely to **feel ownership of the decision and to be committed to its implementation**. This can lead to better decisions at the start and implementation that is more likely to be successful.
    - Inclusive R&D ensures **diverse voices and perspectives are heard and represented in the creation of new technologies and solutions**. This leads to more effective and more innovative solutions that cater to a wider range of needs and abilities, reducing societal inequalities and fostering inclusion throughout educational settings.
    - By actively involving diverse teams in R&D, **unconscious biases can be challenged and mitigated**. This results in solutions less likely to perpetuate prejudice or discrimination, leading to a more just and equitable society.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION R&D TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of the Task Force was to articulate recommendations that would help make the education R&D ecosystem more inclusive. The first six recommendations below, in **purple**, are shared with the State and Local Education R&D Infrastructure Task Force's recommendations. The remaining six, in **red**, are specific to inclusive education R&D. The embedded hyperlinks throughout highlight some of the bright spots Task Force members identified in the field. See the Appendix for more information about the Task Force including its roster of members.

1. Prioritize knowledge mobilization and engagement to increase the impact of education R&D.

More robust state and local R&D infrastructure and more inclusive approaches to R&D will help better connect R&D to practice and policy, but funders and generators of R&D can do more to mobilize the knowledge that is produced, including but not limited to the following:

a. Identify and share examples of effective knowledge mobilization with funding applicants (e.g., the Comprehensive Center Network's Impact Stories and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program's Make a Difference series).

b. Require applicants for R&D funding to address in their proposals and their budgets—and meaningfully weigh their responses when awarding grants—how they will ensure the outputs of their work will make their way to the field to inform changes in practice or policy.

c. Require R&D funding recipients (and peer-reviewed journals that publish R&D output) to produce user-friendly and more actionable summaries of their work (e.g., Universal Evidence Report).

d. Create better ways for SEAs, LEAs, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to find best-fit approaches and programs that have been effective in similar contexts (e.g., programs that have "graduated" from the U.S. Department of Education's Education Innovation and Research (EIR) tiered-evidence grant program), including but not limited to expanding the role and reach of intermediary groups that support the connections between and integration of practice and R&D.

e. Modernize and simplify the inputs into the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) so that more knowledge can more easily be shared.

f. Implement the recommendations by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine for how the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) can improve knowledge mobilization.

2. Invest in high-quality collaborative education R&D efforts centered at the state and local levels.

Collaborative education R&D—including but not limited to models such as research-practice partnerships, youth participatory action research, community-based action research, inclusive innovation, design-based implementation research, and networked improvement communities—can help bridge the gap between practice and research and development. But these efforts must represent authentic and inclusive collaborations that complement the internal capacity of SEAs, LEAs, and CBOs, and focus not only on the researcher's or developer's interests but on the improvement needs of the practice or community partner. SEAs, large LEAs, consortia of smaller or rural LEAs, and a variety of CBOs and coalitions all can benefit from high-quality partnerships that are designed with the relevant context in mind, that continuously improve, and that sustain R&D capacity over time and through leadership transitions. Likewise, traditional R&D professionals and organizations benefit from these collaborations in numerous ways including building their own capacity to do this type of work well. Funders should invest more in improving the quality of and expanding the reach of collaborative education R&D models, as well as aligning policy and practice to support these approaches.

3. Leverage fellowships to add R&D capacity.

Fellowships are one strategy to help build some of the necessary human capacity to do this work well. New (or expanded) fellowship programs can (i) bring R&D capacity into SEAs, LEAs, schools, CBOs, or education solution developers—and strengthen the pipeline for other agencies and organizations—(ii) increase researchers' capacity to engage in meaningful inclusive R&D, and (iii) generate more knowledge and solutions that respond to the authentic needs of the field. Categories of fellowships to launch and/or expand include:

a. One category of fellowships would bring new R&D talent into practice and community spaces to fill high-leverage roles (e.g., Strategic Data Fellows; Expanding the Bench; Strengthening Opportunities in Assessment and Research (SOAR)), including that of knowledge brokers who can serve as intermediaries between R&D and practice.

b. Another would place practice and community leaders in R&D organizations to build those leaders' capacity, help connect R&D and the field, and develop a smoother pathway for those interested in moving into R&D careers.

c. A third category comprises learning cohorts or networks that build the capacity of existing R&D talent working in the field and in communities and help accelerate and elevate their work (e.g., Results for America State Education Fellowship; Western Pennsylvania Learning 2025 Alliance).

4. Develop "state and local R&D infrastructure" and "inclusive R&D" playbooks (or one combined playbook) for higher education and help aligned institutions execute it.

There is a wide array of steps institutions of higher education can take to dramatically increase the quantity and quality of R&D conducted in authentic partnership with CBOs, LEAs, and SEAs, including among other things:

a. Place more value on inclusive R&D during tenure reviews and other high-stakes professional processes such as journal selection and publishing opportunities to incentivize more researchers and developers to engage in it (e.g., LEEAD Program from Expanding the Bench).

b. Invest in their own infrastructure for supporting and conducting collaborative R&D (e.g., Northwestern University's Office of Community Education Partnerships model) including via research-practice partnerships and other collaborative R&D efforts.

c. Integrate training on effective collaborative R&D into doctoral programs—including but not limited to schools of education—to strengthen that portion of the pipeline of future researchers and developers.

d. Integrate training on R&D (including basic and applied research methods, data literacy, inclusive methodologies, etc.) into educator and school leader preparation programs—and incorporate this into educator and leader licensure—to strengthen the pipeline of future educators willing and able to inform and generate R&D and to make everyday use of evidence and data to improve student outcomes (e.g., Harvard Graduate School of Education's foundational evidence course).

5. Develop "state and local R&D infrastructure" and "inclusive R&D" playbooks (or one combined playbook) for philanthropy and help aligned philanthropies execute it.

Philanthropies can catalyze changes in the status quo. In the state and local context, this can be particularly important where new R&D infrastructure must be built. Likewise, philanthropy can play a key role in making inclusive approaches—including a wider array of rigorous R&D methodologies—more the norm in education R&D. Philanthropic playbooks could include steps such as:

a. Create a funder group that in part focuses on leveraging public and private capital to advance these goals.

b. Leverage philanthropic support (individually or via funding collaboratives) to incent and support LEAs to collaborate with each other to deepen collective system R&D capacity (e.g., the Metro Atlanta Policy Lab for Education (MAPLE) brings researchers together with five neighboring school districts).

c. Support targeted outreach and capacity-building, perhaps in conjunction with federal grant managers, to both prepare a broader and more diverse cadre of R&D grant applicants and help federal R&D funders better understand what state and local educators actually need from R&D and what they need to engage in R&D themselves.

d. Fund R&D in ways that alleviate procurement barriers but that still center SEAs/LEAs in the process with a specific focus on eliminating lengthy application cycles and overly onerous prerequisite requirements such as approval of IRBs prior to award.

e. Develop a set of inclusive R&D principles for philanthropies to manifest in their priority-setting, grant-making, and grant management, such as the Democratizing Evidence in Education strategies for philanthropies.

f. Build awareness and capacity within philanthropies to align their approaches to the inclusive R&D principles.

g. Develop and pursue a shared learning agenda about inclusive R&D.

h. Help implement the other recommendations included above and below (such as the fellowships), especially where start-up funding can help develop R&D infrastructure that may be harder to initiate than to sustain once established.

6. Communicate the importance of state and local education R&D infrastructure and inclusive R&D.

All recommendations—whether building upon or building new—need consistent support from a wide array of stakeholders. The following are some illustrative strategies to help strengthen the ecosystem's commitment to this work:

a. Create a recognition program (akin to Blue or Green Ribbon Schools programs) for R&D organizations and professionals, SEAs, LEAs, CBOs and others that show how they use data and evidence and/or engage in inclusive R&D to implement effective support for learners and teachers, similar to Results for America's standards of excellence for data- and evidence-use or the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Spotlight on Quality in Continuous Improvement.

b. Align the messages sent by key stakeholders, including national associations and other leading national and community-based organizations, about how important it is for R&D funders, state and local leaders, and other key decision makers to prioritize R&D infrastructure and inclusive R&D approaches in their plans and budgets (e.g., Remake Learning's The Pittsburgh Principles).

c. Support the "match-making" between SEAs, LEAs, and CBOs that might struggle to engage in new R&D work on their own with intermediary organizations and networks (e.g., Digital Promise or Leanlab Education) with which they can partner.

d. Design and execute a national messaging effort to build broad, cross-sectional support for investing in state and local R&D infrastructure and inclusive R&D, via strategies such as elevating champions, publicizing bright spots, and identifying low-burden opportunities to onboard additional interested leaders and supporters.

7. Provide some R&D funding directly to practitioners and communities.

To change the power dynamics that often prevent practice or community partners, especially those in historically and currently marginalized groups, from having their perspectives centered and their needs met in R&D partnerships, there should be more opportunities for R&D funds to flow directly to these leaders. In many cases, LEAs, CBOs, and other potential recipients of funding would need time and resources to expand their staff to include the experts who can help ensure that the R&D activities lead to sound, useful evidence, consistent with capacity-building recommendations in this brief. There is a continuum of strategies that would, to varying degrees, shift some R&D funds or authority for some funding decisions—and therefore more power—such as:

a. Design some grant programs where LEAs and CBOs are the eligible entities who then conduct their own R&D.

b. Design some grant programs where LEAs and CBOs are the eligible entities who establish the research questions and then make subawards to partners to carry out the R&D (or, in a variation, LEAs and CBOs formulate a question and float it to potential funders who then award grants that align with the proposed question).

c. Require in some grant programs that proposals include a subaward to a practice or community partner, which is sufficient to build their capacity to engage in and use the output of the R&D project.

d. Design smaller or micro-grant programs—as part of a continuum of variously-sized R&D opportunities—that will be more likely to be awarded to new entrants since established R&D institutions typically pursue larger grant awards.

e. Establish some grant-making processes whereby representative regional judging panels, including practice and community leaders, evaluate the proposals and distribute funding accordingly.

8. Evaluate R&D partnerships.

Essential to a more inclusive R&D ecosystem is ensuring that inclusion and partnership are authentic and high-quality, rather than tokenizing or merely check-the-box. One strategy to help R&D partners continuously improve—and to hold them more accountable for building toward more authentic partnerships—would be requiring R&D grants that include practice or community partners to include in the proposal not only an evaluation of the main subject of the grant (i.e., whether an intervention improved student outcomes) but also some form of evaluation of the quality of the partnership itself. For example, the National Science Foundation's Computer Science for All program requires proposals to "draw from RPP literature on assessing/evaluating the quality of the partnership to articulate plans for assessing the success of the work of the RPP."

9. Design more inclusive Requests for Applications (RFAs).

RFAs, like budgets, can express values. Funders should audit existing and new RFAs to review and, where necessary, redesign goals, timelines, requirements, and priorities to be more inclusive. Specific strategies to pursue include, among other things:

a. Prioritize (or even require) the inclusion of practice or community partners either as members of the applicant teams or as co-Principal Investigators.

b. Design a staged process that reduces the application burden on under-resourced or new applicants by requiring a brief description of the proposed R&D project at the beginning, and only later—once that initial submission is vetted and approved—requiring a full application, similar to aspects of the National Science Foundation's America's Seed Fund.

c. Include in R&D grants specific requirements and funding for activities essential to more inclusive approaches, such as both conducting outreach to and engaging with practice or community partners throughout the proposed project and mobilizing the project's output post-production to help advance actual use by practitioners and community members to improve outcomes.

d. Require that proposals include direct funding (e.g., stipends) to practice or community partners for their expertise and for their engagement in research design, data collection, and knowledge mobilization.

e. Create a match-making program that helps connect key R&D collaborators who may not otherwise find each other (e.g., an educator seeking a solution to an important challenge could match with a developer working on that topic, or a school district considering a major policy change could match with a researcher with aligned interests and expertise).

f. Allow for ways to apply for education R&D funds other than the traditional written proposals, such as video submissions or other inclusive approaches (e.g., Digital Learning Challenge and other XPRIZE-type competitions).

10. Diversify peer reviewers.

Peer reviewers are a key factor in which proposals are accepted and, thus, could be a key lever for making education R&D more inclusive. Strategies to specifically increase diversity and the representation of practitioners and their assets, needs, and contexts among peer reviewers include (in addition to complementary efforts to address reviewer bias):

a. Expand the definition of "peer" to explicitly include educators and school, district, and state leaders; update the process to incorporate their types of expertise; and consider peer review panels incomplete if they do not include them.

b. Develop pools of practitioners nationwide to serve as peer reviewers, along with any necessary preparation and support as well as mechanisms to connect them to peer review opportunities.

c. Compensate practitioners sufficiently for serving on review panels.

d. Recruit peer reviewers who have experience with inclusive R&D, especially R&D led or co-led by practice or community leaders.

e. Share peer reviewer opportunities more widely with explicit efforts to reach practitioners and a more diverse pool of potential reviewers via websites, listservs, national and local organizations, and targeted outreach.

11. Make the invisible visible.

Practice and community leaders will benefit from a systematic and dedicated effort to demystify and expand access to the R&D funding process that is often hidden or inaccessible. Suggestions include:

- **a.** Simplify and clarify the processes and remove exclusionary jargon from grant applications and requirements.
- **b.** Broaden channels for disseminating grant opportunities and strengthen recruitment practices to help expand access to R&D funding.
- **c.** Host a voluntary repository of past successful grant applications (with permission granted to publish them) and highlight hidden success factors to serve as models.
- **d.** Provide pre-submission coaching sessions open to all interested as a normal part of any public or private grant competition, and offer targeted technical assistance support designed for practice and community leaders (not just general sessions) to answer questions and clarify expectations during the application process.
- **e.** Develop a way to quantify and calculate the full cost of applying for federal R&D funding to help SEAs/LEAs/CBOs plan and weigh the potential return on investment (ROI) for pursuing new opportunities, especially federal grants. This includes accounting for the necessary R&D staff capacity (e.g., time and effort, potentially releasing faculty from some teaching duties) and infrastructure capacity (e.g., developing the proposal, managing the budget, and preparing reports). Relatedly, "success" rates should be published for prior applications (including by type of applicant), including resubmissions, to inform ROI analyses.
- **f.** Fund community accelerators to support new entrants to education R&D funding (e.g., the Community Funding Accelerator).

12. Encourage the development and use of measures that will generate more accurate and useful data to inform inclusive R&D.

High-quality, inclusive R&D requires a robust set of measures that accurately measure the constructs that are most important and relevant to the R&D being conducted. This includes measures of implementation, context, and experiences, as well as outcomes. It is especially important that measures are grounded in evidence of their validity and reliability for their intended purposes and for the populations with whom they are being used. There are existing efforts to build upon (e.g., Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation (CREE); Practical Measures, Routines, and Representations), but there is more work to do. In particular, the R&D fields should adopt inclusive approaches to measure development and use, create measures that capture a broad set of outcomes and learning conditions that are relevant to R&D, and spread these more inclusive approaches to R&D measurement throughout the education ecosystem.

Considerations About Task Force Recommendations

While considering the Task Force's recommendations, it is important to keep in mind that as a set of recommendations across the three task forces, they are…

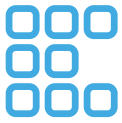
Interconnected: Although some recommendations can stand independently, they should also be considered in relation to each other. Some recommendations go together with others from within the same Task Force, while others should be considered alongside recommendations from the other two Task Forces. (For example, if we expect to effectively engage in more inclusive R&D practices, we must have a stronger state and local infrastructure to support the necessary capacity.)

- Relatedly, different Task Forces arrived at some of the same recommendations. There are six common to both the State and Local Infrastructure and Inclusive R&D Task Forces. For example, the first recommendation, *Prioritize knowledge mobilization and engagement to increase the impact of education R&D*, emerged from and applies equally to both task forces' areas of focus.
- There is also one recommendation, *Make the Invisible Visible*, common to the Inclusive R&D and HBCUs, MSIs & TCUs Task Forces.

Varied: The recommendations come in different shapes and grain sizes. Some are specific and feasible to accomplish in the near- or mid-term, while others are bigger-picture and will require sustained action over the long term. Also, some are new policies, practices, systems, and structures that we need to build *anew*, while others represent efforts to build *upon* some of the many existing bright spots. Building anew can address gaps in the ecosystem or respond to new developments such as generative artificial intelligence. Building upon can replicate and/or adapt promising approaches to support more practitioners and communities.

Broadly Applicable: The Task Force used a wide aperture to explore its topic to keep all relevant contexts in mind. Accordingly, the recommendations may address aspects of the inclusive education R&D ecosystem that may not correspond with everyone's specific definitions of "R&D" or "funders."

- Task Force members included within discussions of "**R&D**" an array of approaches to building knowledge, from basic to applied research, from rapid-cycle prototyping of new tools to continuous improvement implementation of evidence-based interventions. Different R&D methodologies best serve different questions, needs, and contexts; the Task Force envisions state and local infrastructures that embrace a continuum of approaches and regularly employ the "best fit" for any particular challenge.
- Whenever a recommendation refers to "**funders**" of education R&D or state and local capacity, the Task Force means *all* potential funders, whether private (private sector and philanthropy) or public (federal, state, and local governments).



Incomplete: The Task Force generated a much larger number of ideas than the twelve recommendations listed above. This brief prioritizes those that resonated the most with Task Force members and are most ripe for action over the next three years. But to truly realize the Task Force's shared vision, even more policy, practice, and culture change will be needed.

Conclusion

Building, strengthening, and sustaining a more inclusive education R&D ecosystem is a long-term project—as is building, strengthening, and sustaining the human capacity necessary to take advantage of more inclusive R&D opportunities. But we can make important progress in the short- and medium-terms, with bright spots to build upon, promising "build anew" efforts to fill gaps in the status quo, and a growing consensus that inclusive education R&D must be a central plank of any agenda to improve education outcomes for each student.

For the Task Force's recommendations to make a difference, we must answer the all-important "So what? Now what?" questions relevant to all collections of good ideas. ALI will organize its coalition around some recommendations, while like-minded organizations will take others up. **Regardless of who leads implementation of each piece, this work will take high levels of collaboration, commitment, and creativity, especially because many of the recommendations will require leadership from multiple actors,** including but not limited to federal, state, and local government agencies, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, researchers and developers, philanthropies, and of course educators. Readers interested in providing feedback on the ideas laid out in this brief, engaging in the work ahead, or sharing aligned work you are already engaged in, please consider the following actions:

- Share your R&D success story by visiting http://tinyurl.com/ALI-Story.
- Interested in learning more about ALI? Email sschapiro@fas.org.

Finally, ALI is so grateful to the incredible Task Force members who shared their time, expertise, wisdom, perspective, and ideas in this endeavor. So many talented and dedicated individuals and organizations are already doing incredible work in this area—we are excited to build upon and build anew together.

APPENDIX: Task Force Overview and Roster

Supported by InnovateEDU and EducationCounsel, the Inclusive Education R&D Task Force comprised a diverse cross-section of education leaders, including perspectives and expertise from across the education ecosystem, including the following:

Katie Boody Adorno	Leanlab Education
Bridget Cherry	Cherry Strategies
Laura Hamilton	American Institutes for Research (AIR)
Elan Hope	Policy Research Associates
William Jackson	Village of Wisdom
Jim Kholmoos	EDGE Consulting
Robin Lake	Center on Reinventing Public Education
Jeff Livingston	Center for Education Market Dynamics & EdSolutions, LLC
Augustus Mays	The Education Trust
Scott Menzel	Scottsdale Unified School District (AZ)
Na'ilah Nasir	Spencer Foundation
Rebeca Shackleford	All4Ed
Sara Schapiro	Federation of American Scientists
Marvin Smith	Advanced Education Research & Development Fund (AERDF)
Kathy Stack	KB Stack Consulting
Laura Wentworth	California Education Partners
Winsome Waite	Global Science of Learning Education Network (formerly with Opportunity Institute)
Viki Young	Digital Promise

Over the course of four meetings and ten hours of review, the Task Force explored our individual and shared **visions** for a more inclusive education R&D ecosystem. It identified and unpacked the **gaps** in the status quo, then explored various barriers that make it hard to fill them and ultimately manifest the vision. The Task Force then focused on sharing **existing solutions** and generating **new approaches** that could make significant progress, whether in the near- or long-term. Throughout, Task Force members shared **bright spots** that are already making progress. Task Force members' participation does not necessarily constitute an endorsement of the recommendations in this brief.

The Task Force work and engagement strongly confirmed the following two hypotheses formulated during the design phase of this project:

- **We converge more than we diverge.** Across all three Task Forces—and even the focus groups and workshops we conducted to test the recommendations—we found significant levels of consensus about the vision we are all working toward, the barriers to progress in the status quo, and the most promising steps we can collectively take to overcome those barriers and advance that shared vision. Where we found divergence, we found a mutual path forward or decided to table the question; regardless, there was widespread optimism that progress and even collective action were possible.
- **We will go further, faster if we go together.** The work of the Task Forces is one (critical) part of a larger transformation that ALI and Task Force members are all pursuing in their own ways across different corners of the education sector—the shift from a compliance orientation to a learning and improvement one. To make significant progress, we must collaborate within and across the public and private sectors; the R&D, data, and continuous improvement infrastructures; and the education system's federal, state, and local levels.

ALI, InnovateEDU, and EducationCounsel are incredibly grateful to each of the Task Force members for sharing their time, experience, wisdom, and ideas to inform this brief and recommendations.