ALI Task Force Brief:

STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATION R&D INFRASTRUCTURE

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:

- strengthening state and local education R&D infrastructure,
- making the education R&D ecosystem more inclusive, 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 **State and Local Education R&D Infrastructure Task Force**. Click here to access the parallel briefs on the **Inclusive Education R&D 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. **Develop and sustain internal state and local R&D capacity, particularly through targeted funding.**
8. **Deploy existing R&D infrastructure more toward strengthening state and local R&D capacity.**
9. **Modernize state longitudinal data systems and strengthen related policies and capacity.**
10. **Require that R&D project budgets include a more functional allocation of the funding for indirect costs with SEA or LEA partners.**
11. **Make federal waiver processes more accessible to support innovation.**

The Importance of the State and Local Education R&D Infrastructure

In education, one reason evidence of what is working, for whom, and under what circumstances fails to scale and innovation fails to take hold is that we (ironically) lack sufficiently robust *learning-oriented* systems, structures, and even mindsets at the national, federal, state, and local levels. Instead, these education systems are too often overly oriented toward *compliance* and maintaining the status quo. By contrast, consider the health care system, which not only has a much more robust federal R&D infrastructure (including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA)), but it is also supported by thousands of medical organizations across the country including hospitals, individual doctors participating in drug trials, and state and local community public health infrastructures who contribute data and insights. All of these people help build the foundation of a well-resourced, systematic innovation infrastructure. A learning system approach in education would include the structures, cultures, and capacities necessary to generate, absorb, and improve knowledge and breakthrough advances.

Because the American education system is so decentralized, there is a compelling case for investing in education R&D infrastructure at the state and local levels. Among other reasons, over 90% of education funding comes from state and local sources; innovation, decision making, and implementation happen there; and for R&D to be more effective, it must become more proximate to the educators, learners, families, and communities it seeks to support. R&D is particularly essential to moving toward the ability to continuously improve—making more effective and more efficient use of public resources to help each student thrive**.**

The Task Force adopted a broad definition of "R&D infrastructure" comprising both tangible and intangible components. The former includes, among other things, modern, interoperable, privacy-protecting, user-centered *data systems*; collaborative *partnerships* among practitioners, researchers, and developers; and dedicated *resources* such as recurring line items in budgets and dedicated professionals. The latter more intangible components include human *capacity* in the form of knowledge, skills, and mindsets; committed *leadership*; and aligned *policies* and *incentives*.

Considering the complexity and variation in our public education system, any effort to design, strengthen, and sustain state and local education R&D infrastructures must prioritize differentiation. Similar solutions may look different based on the size, location (both geographic and type of locale), governance structure (including, for example, charter networks or private schools), or other characteristics of the state or locality. In some circumstances, new approaches may be needed to meet particular needs, such as shared capacity to support R&D for rural school districts in a particular region.

Insights from the Task Force

The Task Force explored members' individual and shared **visions** for a stronger state and local education R&D infrastructure. 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.

- This work has to stay **grounded in improving outcomes** and supporting educators in doing their jobs more effectively and/or more efficiently.

- There must be a significant focus on **building human R&D capacity**—including knowledge, skills, and mindsets—in state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and schools if we want them to lead, conduct, engage in, or even make more use of R&D. Otherwise, new or strengthened infrastructure will go underutilized and ultimately be perceived as a waste of limited resources.

- There is real **demand on the school district side** for timely, responsive access to R&D outputs—whether knowledge, practices, programs, or tools—but for various reasons the way it is provided by our existing public investments in R&D infrastructure and knowledge mobilization often does not meet their needs. Instead, many spend part of their local budgets on **private R&D subscription services** to curate the evidence base in a digestible, actionable way.

- State and local R&D infrastructure must be designed with the needs, constraints, and assets of **different contexts** in mind. For example, small or rural SEAs and LEAs with small "n-sizes" of students or schools may have real challenges conducting R&D (and therefore accessing R&D funding), while large suburban or urban LEAs may be conducting research across diverse student populations requiring tailored interventions.

- State and local leaders who want to prioritize building and using R&D infrastructure need the **support of a wide array of stakeholders**. A broad coalition is essential to help these system leaders secure and sustain sufficient budgets (especially in lean times) and elevate this work among competing priorities.

- Many SEAs/LEAs and front-line practitioners may not have a concrete sense of what this vision would look and feel like in their day-to-day work. Some may even think they are already doing it; the field needs a **shared understanding of how high-quality, actionable R&D would be part of their work and help them be more successful**.

STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATION R&D INFRASTRUCTURE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of the Task Force was to articulate recommendations that would help to strengthen and sustain a robust state and local education R&D infrastructure. The first six recommendations, in **purple**, are shared with the Inclusive Education R&D Task Force's recommendations. The remaining five, in **blue**, are specific to state and local infrastructure. 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 eduction 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 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 institutional review boards (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. Develop and sustain internal state and local R&D capacity, particularly through targeted funding.

SEAs and LEAs need sustained funding for internal R&D roles—including at minimum a senior official charged with leading the learning of the organization and the engagement with external R&D partners. They also must establish the conditions necessary for those R&D leaders to succeed, such as a clear mandate, sufficient positional authority, and sufficient resources. Several promising mechanisms might be pursued and/or patched together across the nation, including:

- a new federal competitive grant program,
- greater priority for R&D within state and local budgets,
- start-up support from philanthropy, and
- collective efforts to share capacity among regional groups of smaller school districts (e.g., Western Pennsylvania Learning 2025 Alliance).

Accompanying these funding streams should be SEA/LEA *playbooks* including various models; *rubrics* that define, for example, developing, emerging, established, and advanced infrastructures; and *tools* for how to build and sustain this kind of capacity.

8. Deploy existing R&D infrastructure more toward strengthening state and local R&D capacity.

In addition to the many critical services and supports that entities such as Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs), Comprehensive Centers (CCs), and Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) provide, they should place an even greater priority on strengthening internal SEA and LEA R&D capacity and infrastructure with an explicit focus on knowledge transfer, mobilization, and engagement including how to generate and use applied research. Doing so will also set up SEAs and LEAs to be better beneficiaries of the direct services offered by these support organizations. Additional strategies to pursue include:

a. The entire ecosystem should promote greater awareness of the resources offered by these existing R&D entities.

b. All of these organizations should more regularly serve as conduits for improving the connection of state and local needs and initiatives with R&D resources and opportunities across the federal government, including USED, IES, National Science Foundation, and others.

c. It is important to provide a more transparent and engaging process by which practitioners, SEAs, and LEAs and researchers can contribute to the articulation of R&D capacity building services provided by these organizations to ensure R&D efforts are directly connected to the needs of students, educators, and communities.

9. Modernize state longitudinal data systems and strengthen related policies and capacity.

This includes modernizing not only the technical side of data systems but also all education stakeholders' understanding of and mindset toward data and data use. There must be a shift from these systems being used as compliance and reporting vehicles to ones that enable data-informed decision making (e.g., new or redesigned data systems such as in Texas or California). The state and local R&D infrastructure would benefit from improvements such as:

a. USED guidance clarifying the availability of current funding streams for modernizing, refining, and sustaining data infrastructure and building capacity including the ability to braid funds for data modernization and use.

b. USED guidance on the permissibility of appropriately combining and sharing education, workforce, and other public data sources, along with prioritizing funding for states willing to link and make accessible their P-20W data.

c. Development of new accessible, inclusive, and interoperable tools and service layers that support data access and analysis, including for academic researchers and community organizations that may be carrying out more local research.

d. Encourage voluntary use of data interoperability standards, including by prioritizing funding for systems that use such standards.

e. More funding for USED's State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) and the Department of Labor's Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) Grant Programs, along with expanding those programs' eligible grantees to include additional statewide entities and broadening their allowable uses of funds.

10. Require that R&D project budgets include a more functional allocation of the funding for indirect costs with SEA or LEA partners.

Right-sizing the allocation of the indirect costs portion of R&D project budgets better recognizes the value of what SEAs/LEAs bring to partnerships with researchers, acknowledges the actual costs incurred by SEAs/LEAs partners engaging in R&D, contributes to building critical internal SEA/LEA capacity, and potentially encourages more SEAs/LEAs to consider participating in R&D partnerships. For example, FEMA allows for 2% of the total grant amount of Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Funds to be used for local capacity building.

11. Make federal waiver processes more accessible to support innovation.

Where appropriate, federal waivers can provide the flexibility needed at times for SEAs and LEAs to test new ideas and learn from them via rapid R&D cycles. Although a more robust state and local infrastructure will not always depend on waivers to generate more cutting-edge research and development, a more transparent and accessible federal waiver system will enable greater innovation throughout the education ecosystem (e.g., Montana's recent assessment waiver).

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…

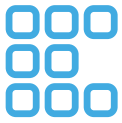
Interconnected: Although some recommendations can stand independently, they should also be considered in relation to each other. Some recommendations go together with others from within the same Task Force, while others should be considered alongside recommendations from the other two Task Forces. (For 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 state and local education R&D infrastructure that may not correspond with everyone's specific definitions of "R&D," "funders," or "infrastructure" (as defined earlier).

- 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 eleven 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 state and local education R&D infrastructure across the nation is a long-term project—as is building, strengthening, and sustaining the human capacity necessary to make regular and effective use of that infrastructure to improve outcomes. 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 state and local R&D infrastructure 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 State and Local Education R&D Infrastructure Task Force comprised a diverse cross-section of education leaders, including perspectives and expertise from across the education ecosystem. Half were current or former SEA or LEA leaders, and others play leading roles in national and regional organizations and coalitional efforts to strengthen education R&D:

Rachel Anderson	Data Quality Campaign
Gregg Behr	Grable Foundation & Remake Learning
Heather Boughton	Results for America
Melvin Brown	Montgomery Public Schools (AL)
Carrie Conaway	Harvard Graduate School of Education
Paolo DeMaria	National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)
Rachel Dinkes	Knowledge Alliance
Paul DiPerna	EdChoice
Anna Edwards	Whiteboard Advisors
Julia Fallon	State Education Technology Directors Association (SETDA)
Ajit Gopalakrishnan	Connecticut State Department of Education
Tasha Hensley	The Learning Agency
Barbara Jenkins	Chiefs for Change
Rebekah Kim	Kent School District (WA)
Noelle Ellerson Ng	AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Mary Catherine Reljac	Fox Chapel Area School District (PA)
Andrew Rice	Education Analytics
Kimberly Smith	Digital Promise
Ash Vasudeva	Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Carey Wright	Maryland State Department Education
Kim Wright	National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP)

Over the course of four meetings and ten hours of review, the Task Force explored our individual and shared **visions** for an expanded and strengthened state and local education R&D infrastructure. 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.