Pathways to Prosperity: Disseminating Effective Career Academy Models

U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Program (CSP)

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Table of Contents

Absolute Priority 1

A. Project Significance 14

B. Quality of Project Design 20

C. Quality of Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources 34

Evaluation Plan 42

References 45

Appendix 46

Absolute Priority

In this project, we will systematically document and broadly disseminate the innovative and effective practices of the Career Academy Network of Public Schools (CANOPS), a proven high-quality charter school model that directly addresses the Absolute Priority: Development and Dissemination of Information on Innovative and Effective Practices of High-Quality Charter School Models.

Description of the High-Quality Charter School Model

Specific High-Quality Charter School Model

The Career Academy Network of Public Schools (CANOPS) is a distinguished K-12 public charter school system in South Bend, Indiana. Founded in 2011 with a mission to bridge the critical skills gap between education and workforce demands, CANOPS has established itself as a regional leader in experiential, project-based learning that prepares students for college, career, and citizenship success.

CANOPS operates five unique schools, each designed to meet specific community needs:

- **Career Academy High School (CAHS)** - Our flagship secondary school achieving the county's highest graduation rate at 98.4 percent.
- **Career Academy Middle School (CAMS)** - Introducing students to dual CTE pathways through hands-on exploration.
- **Success Academy Primary School (SAPS)** - Project-based elementary education serving 610 students at capacity.
- **Success Academy at Boys & Girls Club (SABGC)** - The nation's first microschool co-located with a Boys & Girls Club.

- **The Portage School of Leaders (TPSOL)** - An innovative competency-based high school and the only Mastery Transcript Consortium member in Indiana.

Proven Track Record of Innovation and Success

CANOPS operates a comprehensive K-12 career academy model focused on STEM, robotics, and entrepreneurship. CANOPS transforms traditional career and technical education (CTE) approaches into integrated dual college and career preparation programs. CANOPS demonstrates that charter school operational autonomy enables deep integration of rigorous academics with technical curricula, creating cohesive learning communities that prepare students for both postsecondary education and immediate career entry.

The CANOPS model serves predominantly low-income students (78 percent free/reduced lunch) and diverse learners (30 percent special education) across five schools in Indiana, achieving exceptional dual-pathway outcomes: 50 percent of graduates enroll in college while 50 percent enter the workforce immediately, with both groups demonstrating success in their chosen pathways.

Our unique educational model features: **12 Career Pathways** with industry-recognized certifications; **dual credit opportunities** through university partnerships; **industry certifications; project-based learning** integrated across all grade levels; **Future Labs** with state-of-the-art STEM equipment including 3D printers, CNC machines, and waterjet technology; and **low student-to-faculty ratios** (9.8:1 at CAHS, 11.3:1 at CAMS) ensuring personalized attention.

A nine-member Board of Directors governs CANOPS with extensive expertise spanning technology, engineering, healthcare, education, and entrepreneurship. Led by Board President Larry Garatoni, whose 50 years of business experience and commitment to workforce

development anchors our mission, the board provides strategic oversight and financial stability through guaranteed funding support. With demonstrated waitlists across all schools and a planned replication of our successful elementary model opening in Fall 2027, CANOPS continues to meet overwhelming community demand for innovative, high-quality educational options that prepare students for success in an evolving economy. CANOPS represents a proven model of educational innovation, financial stewardship, and community partnership that transforms student outcomes while addressing critical workforce development needs in our region.

Evidence Meeting ESEA Section 4310(8) High-Quality Charter School Requirements

Evidence of Strong Academic Results and Student Growth. The Career Academy Network demonstrates exceptional academic performance across its five schools. Career Academy High School (CAHS) exemplifies academic excellence by exceeding state standards in English/Language Arts (54 percent vs. state 51 percent) and maintaining a 98 percent graduation rate that surpasses the state average of 95 percent. The network consistently outperforms local comparison schools, with CAHS outperforming peers 88 percent of the time and Success Academy Primary School (SAPS) exceeding comparison schools 94 percent of the time. Student growth trajectories are particularly strong, with SAPS improving from 13 percent to 47 percent reading proficiency during the 2023-24 school year. Even newly opened schools demonstrate immediate success, with The Portage School of Leaders (TPSOL) achieving a Meets Standard rating in its inaugural year through innovative mastery-based learning approaches.

No Significant Issues in Safety, Financial Management, or Compliance. All five CANOPS schools consistently maintain exemplary organizational performance, earning Meets Standard ratings across safety, operational management, and regulatory compliance. The network achieves

an 87 percent on-time submission rate for required documentation and maintains 100 percent compliance with charter terms and state/federal laws. Financial stability is ensured through strong metrics, including a current ratio of 8.0 and a debt-to-asset ratio of 0.88, supplemented by guaranteed financial backing through 2025 from the Garatoni-Smith Family Foundation. School climate data confirms safe, supportive environments with stakeholder satisfaction ratings exceeding 80 percent across all schools, including 93.7 percent at CAHS and 86.4 percent at the newly opened Success Academy at Boys & Girls Club (SABGC). CANOPS has successfully navigated over $26 million in facility acquisitions and renovations, demonstrating exceptional operational capacity. Our academic excellence is validated by significant state recognition, including the largest Explore, Engage, and Experience (3E) Grant in Indiana (2022), Quality Counts II funding, and multiple specialized grants totaling substantial investment in our students' futures.

Demonstrated Success in Increasing Academic Achievement for All Students. CANOPS schools show measurable success in elevating academic achievement across all student populations. Career Academy High School leads with 86 percent of graduates completing college/career coursework—30 points above the state average—while maintaining exceptional graduation outcomes. Success Academy Primary School demonstrates significant academic gains with 78 percent of students meeting reading proficiency or growth targets by year-end. The network's commitment to continuous improvement is evident in schools like Career Academy Middle School (CAMS), which achieved a Median Growth Percentile of 56 in English/Language Arts. Even first-year schools show promise, with SABGC exceeding its school-specific improvement goals and demonstrating substantial student progress from fall to spring assessments.

Success in Increasing Achievement for Student Subgroups. The CANOPS network demonstrates commitment to ensuring success for all students, through measurable gains in subgroup achievement. Career Academy High School exceeds standards for all major subgroups in English/Language Arts, with students with disabilities outperforming their state peers and economically disadvantaged students showing consistent growth. For Success Academy Primary School English Learners, 44 percent met growth targets compared to the state average of 24 percent. Across the network, targeted intervention systems support students, with documented improvements for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, English Learners, and students with disabilities. This comprehensive approach ensures that all student populations receive effective educational programming regardless of their background or learning needs.

Specific Strategies and Practices of the High-Quality Charter Model to be Disseminated

The first goal of this project will be to develop and disseminate comprehensive information related to the four core strategies of the CANOPS model to interested schools. Our primary aim will be to disseminate the strategies to charter schools, but we will also disseminate the strategies to traditional and private schools. These strategies represent innovative solutions to persistent CTE implementation challenges and demonstrate what makes the CANOPS approach to career and technical education high-quality, effective, and replicable.

Strategy 1: Integrated K-12 Career Pathway Development

The CANOPS model addresses CTE engagement through comprehensive K–12 career pathway development, beginning with elementary "World of Work" programming that introduces students to 36 career paths and progresses to focused high school specialization across 12 pathway opportunities. This approach achieves 92 percent pathway retention compared to the 67

percent national average by implementing age-appropriate career exploration starting in kindergarten, rather than waiting until high school (Sallie Mae, 2024). CANOPS developed this strategy in response to the Harvard Graduate School of Education's 2011 *Pathways to Prosperity* report, which identified skills gaps preventing high school graduates from qualifying for rewarding jobs. The CANOPS model is grounded in a robust research base demonstrating that early and continuous career development significantly increases student engagement, academic relevance, and long-term postsecondary and workforce outcomes. Studies by the OECD (2020), ACTE (2022), and the American Student Assistance organization emphasize the impact of early exposure to career options on students' motivation and future planning. CANOPS aligns with key elements of the Perkins V legislation, which prioritizes career exploration beginning in the early grades, as well as the National Career Development Guidelines and many state-level "Portrait of a Graduate" frameworks. By integrating academic content with real-world career pathways, CANOPS supports the development of essential skills such as self-awareness, decision-making, and future readiness—core competencies identified in national college and career readiness standards. All CANOPS pathways ensure students are prepared for family-sustaining employment.

While early exposure beginning in kindergarten is ideal, the CANOPS model is designed to be adaptable for schools serving students in later grades, ensuring developmentally appropriate entry points and scaffolding. For schools beginning at upper elementary or middle school, CANOPS provides modified frameworks to build foundational career awareness, connect academic content to real-world applications, and guide students into pathway-aligned exploration and planning. This flexibility allows for effective implementation across diverse educational

settings. **Charter Lifecycle Stages Addressed:** Design and Planning, Authorization Period, Preparing to Open, Enrollment and Operations.

Strategy 2: Experiential Learning Through Industry Partnerships

The CANOPS model builds meaningful industry connections through systematic "Experiential Learning Fridays," engaging students in authentic, work-based learning aligned with high-wage, high-demand sectors. The network has established over 60 active partnerships, including Unity Garden, Beacon Healthcare, Ivy Tech, and NASA, where students participate in real-world projects such as designing propulsion systems using 3D carbon fiber printing. This approach supports a pathway to 100 percent student participation in work-based learning experiences and provides critical exposure to emerging technologies, team-based problem-solving, and career-aligned skills. While implementation ideally begins in early grades to build career readiness progressively, the CANOPS model is fully adaptable for middle and high schools starting at later grade levels. Schools can scaffold project-based and work-based learning experiences appropriate to their students' developmental stage, allowing for deep industry engagement regardless of when programming begins.

This strategy aligns with federal and state definitions of high-quality Career and Technical Education under Perkins V, which emphasizes experiential and work-based learning as essential to college and career readiness. It is also supported by research showing that structured work-based learning opportunities increase academic engagement, postsecondary enrollment, and workforce readiness (Advance CTE, 2022; MDRC, 2021). The CANOPS approach draws on best practices from national models such as Linked Learning and the U.S. Department of Education's Employability Skills Framework, ensuring that students develop both technical and

transferable skills critical to success in the modern economy. **Charter Lifecycle Stages Addressed:** Enrollment and Operations, Achieving and Sustaining Success.

Strategy 3: Comprehensive Wraparound Support

Recognizing that 30 percent of CANOPS students have disabilities and over 75 percent come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, the model integrates comprehensive student support through strategic, school-based community partnerships. A cornerstone of this approach is the Boys & Girls Club collaboration, which reaches 92 percent of K–5 students and embeds trained Youth Development Instructors (YDIs) as school-community liaisons. These liaisons deliver academic reinforcement, social-emotional learning, and enrichment programming during and after school hours. This model has contributed to an 80 percent increase in I-READ proficiency, culminating in the development of SABGC, which is a fully co-located Boys & Girls Club facility embedded within the school building. The wraparound model is adaptable to schools serving older students by deploying age-appropriate supports such as mentoring, mental health services, academic coaching, and workforce readiness resources. For schools starting in upper elementary or secondary grades, CANOPS tailors partnerships and services to meet developmental, academic, and socio-emotional needs, ensuring access to opportunity regardless of entry point. This strategy aligns with national frameworks including the Community Schools Model promoted by the U.S. Department of Education. It integrates key practices outlined in the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework developed by the CDC and ASCD. Research indicates that wraparound support services, particularly those coordinated through trusted community partnerships, are associated with increased attendance, academic gains, improved mental health, and reduced opportunity gaps (Brookings Institution, 2021; Learning Policy Institute, 2018). CANOPS operationalizes these principles in a scalable,

community-embedded format that addresses students' full developmental needs. **Charter Lifecycle Stages Addressed:** Enrollment and Operations, Achieving and Sustaining Success.

Strategy 4: Strategic Community-Aligned Pathway Selection

To ensure that career pathways are economically relevant and lead to viable postsecondary opportunities, the CANOPS model uses a data-driven process to select and refine its offerings. This process incorporates regional labor market trends, projected wage potential, and documented student interest to determine which career pathways are prioritized. The model has expanded from 4 to 12 distinct pathways, all aligned with high-wage, high-demand industries, including advanced manufacturing, health sciences, and technology. This strategic alignment, co-developed with a Board of Directors that includes key industry leaders, ensures students graduate with skills and credentials valued in the regional economy. As a result, the CANOPS network has achieved a balanced outcome: 50 percent of graduates enter the workforce directly, while the remaining 50 percent pursue postsecondary education—demonstrating the model's dual readiness emphasis. For schools initiating career pathways in upper grades (e.g., middle or high school), CANOPS provides implementation guidance on streamlined pathway entry points, accelerated exploration, and intensive exposure to labor-aligned content. This ensures that even late-starting schools can establish economically relevant programming tailored to their community's needs and workforce dynamics. This strategy aligns with the Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) requirements, which call for programs of study to be based on rigorous analysis of labor market alignment. It reflects best practices outlined by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management initiative. It also reinforces key recommendations from the Pathways to Prosperity Network (Harvard GSE) and Jobs for the Future, which advocate for employer-driven pathway design to

bridge education and employment. Research shows that students in labor-aligned programs experience higher engagement, increased credential attainment, and stronger job placement outcomes (Advance CTE, 2020; JFF, 2022). **Charter Lifecycle Stages Addressed:** Design and Planning, Authorization Period, Preparing to Open, Enrollment and Operations.

Each CANOPS strategy—whether implemented independently or as an integrated model—offers scalable, research-informed practices that support student engagement, workforce readiness, and increased outcomes. Schools can adopt individual components based on their unique context, such as launching career exploration in upper grades, piloting work-based learning, or aligning pathways to regional labor needs. When combined, these strategies create a cohesive K–12 system that connects education to opportunity, driving gains in academic achievement, postsecondary enrollment, and career entry.

Innovative Authorizer Strategies to Enable Career Academy and CTE Charter School Success.

To ensure these school-level innovations can be effectively authorized and scaled, CANOPS has partnered with the Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA) to address a longstanding gap in the charter ecosystem: the lack of specialized guidance for authorizing high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) charter schools. While general authorizing frameworks exist, they do not adequately support the evaluation, approval, and oversight of CTE models. FACSA will develop four interlocking authorizer-facing strategies that align with and complement the CANOPS school-level practices:

Authorizer Strategy 1: Strengthening CTE Application and Evaluation Standards

Current charter authorizers often lack the capacity to evaluate essential CTE components such as industry partnerships, certification pathways, and work-based learning (National Association of

Charter School Authorizers [NACSA], 2021). The CTE Charter Authorizer Toolkit will include specialized rubrics, application prompts, and evaluation criteria to help authorizers differentiate between superficial career programming and authentic, high-quality CTE models (Advancing Equity in CTE, 2020).

Authorizer Strategy 2: Enhancing Oversight and Accountability Frameworks

Authorizers need tools to assess CTE outcomes beyond traditional academic metrics (Center for Research on Education Outcomes [CREDO], 2019). FACSA will develop case studies and monitoring guidance to support oversight of industry engagement, credential quality, and real-world learning experiences throughout the charter lifecycle, consistent with best practices outlined by the National Career Development Association (NCDA, 2015).

Authorizer Strategy 3: Building CTE-Specific Authorizer Capacity

Most authorizers have little or no exposure to CTE oversight (Advancing Equity in CTE, 2020). FACSA will launch Professional Learning Labs and a video mini-series offering ongoing, peer-to-peer learning opportunities that address real-world challenges in authorizing career academies and technical programs (NACSA, 2021).

Authorizer Strategy 4: Establishing Replication Readiness Criteria

Determining when CTE models are ready to scale requires specialized evaluation tools (Jobs for the Future, 2022). FACSA's Replication Readiness Rubric will help authorizers assess whether schools have the partnerships, systems, and outcomes needed for sustainable replication and growth, supporting evidence-based replication practices (Advance CTE, 2020).

Why This Matters for Charter Quality

Together, these four strategies will equip authorizers with the tools, insights, and confidence to effectively evaluate, support, and scale high-quality CTE charter models. In combination with

the CANOPS practitioner strategies, they represent a dual-system innovation approach, ensuring both schools and authorizers are positioned to meet the evolving demands of 21st-century education and workforce development.

Development and Dissemination of Information

Tools and Resources for Replication

We will develop four comprehensive resource packages providing lifecycle-specific implementation guidance with built-in replication facilitation mechanisms, including: (1) Career Academy Charter School Model Blueprint; (2) Career Pathway Development Guide; (3) Experiential Learning Toolkit; and (4) Authorizer Career Academy Oversight Toolkit.

Systemic Replication Facilitation Mechanisms

Each resource package includes specific replication enablers designed to facilitate widespread adoption across diverse contexts. These mechanisms are critical because research shows most educational innovations fail during implementation due to lack of specific guidance for adapting proven practices to new environments (Fixsen et al., 2005). To address this challenge, CANOPS is partnering with WestEd, a nationally recognized research and technical assistance organization, to embed evidence-based replication supports that strike a balance between fidelity and flexible adaptation. WestEd's expertise in implementation science, continuous improvement, and scaling educational innovations ensures that CANOPS strategies can be successfully replicated across charter schools, traditional public schools, and non-public schools without compromising the core elements that drive student success. Following are the implementation support tools embedded into our resources, developed in close collaboration with WestEd:

Implementation Support Tools:

- Implementation fidelity checklists for each major strategy enabling schools to track adherence to core elements while adapting to local contexts.
- Contextual adaptation frameworks providing structured guidance for modifying strategies based on different state policies, student demographics, and resource constraints.
- Troubleshooting protocols documenting common implementation barriers with proven solutions and alternative approaches.
- Measurement tools for tracking implementation progress, student outcomes, and replication success across diverse settings.
- Self-assessment resources helping schools determine readiness and identify capacity-building needs before implementation.

This systematic approach ensures widespread adoption while maintaining the quality and effectiveness that makes both CANOPS school-level strategies and specialized authorizer oversight practices successful in producing measurable workforce outcomes, including CANOPS' 50 percent college enrollment and 50 percent workforce entry rates, industry certifications, and meaningful employer partnerships.

Expected and Intended Reach

Through strategic partnerships with WestEd (research, CTE, and dissemination expertise) and FACSA (authorizer networks, career academy, and CTE experience), we will achieve broad reach: over 50 authorizers receiving specialized CTE oversight training, more than 2,000 practitioners and over 500 authorizers accessing curated materials, and over 50 schools receiving direct implementation support. Our dissemination infrastructure includes quarterly practitioner networks, annual conference presentations, and ongoing technical assistance ensuring systematic

adoption of proven career academy and CTE enhancement strategies nationwide. This comprehensive approach enables systematic replication across charter schools, traditional public schools, and non-public schools through documented pathways that maintain fidelity to core innovations while allowing contextual adaptation.

A. Project Significance

This project directly addresses one of the most pressing educational challenges in the United States: the widening gap between K–12 education and students' preparation for both college and careers. Through the systematic documentation and dissemination of the proven CANOPS career academy model, this initiative will produce a robust suite of implementation resources designed to support replication across diverse charter school contexts. While the primary dissemination focus is charter schools, all materials and findings will be openly shared to support any school system: public, charter, or non-public seeking to strengthen both academic and career readiness outcomes.

National College and Career Readiness Crisis

The U.S. faces an escalating dual crisis in postsecondary readiness. On one hand, the labor market continues to experience severe talent shortages, with 7.4 million jobs currently unfilled, and the manufacturing sector alone projecting a 2.1 million worker shortfall by 2030 (Deloitte & The Manufacturing Institute, 2021). On the other hand, the traditional college pathway is faltering for many students: the national college non-completion rate exceeds 40 percent, with student loan debt averaging $37,000 per borrower (National Student Clearinghouse, 2023; College Board, 2022). Additionally, recent NAEP assessments show declines in foundational literacy and math skills, further eroding postsecondary readiness (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

Traditional educational models often ask students to choose between "college prep" or "career prep", a binary that fails to reflect the realities of today's economy, where most well-paying jobs require both strong academic foundations and practical, transferable skills. What is needed is a dual-pathway approach that equips students with the ability to succeed in postsecondary education, the workforce, or both. Career and Technical Education (CTE) has emerged as a robust response to this challenge. Students enrolled in high-quality CTE programs are more likely to graduate (93 percent vs. 80 percent nationally) and are better prepared for both college and employment (Association for Career and Technical Education [ACTE], 2023). However, to fulfill its potential, CTE must be embedded within a broader, academically rigorous framework, rather than being treated as a secondary track.

Career Academies: A College and Career (Dual-Preparation) Program

Career academies offer a well-documented, scalable model that integrates rigorous academics, technical training, and authentic work-based learning experiences within a cohesive learning community. These academies organize instruction around career themes, foster strong student–teacher relationships through cohort structures, and maintain a strong emphasis on college readiness while building career-specific skills.

A gold-standard randomized controlled trial conducted by MDRC found that students in career academies were significantly more likely to graduate from high school, earn higher wages, and succeed in both higher education and the workforce (Kemple, 2008). These benefits were powerful for students from low-income backgrounds. Additional research has shown that career academies improve engagement, increase AP and dual-credit enrollment, and boost long-term economic outcomes (Kemple & Willner, 2008; Linked Learning Alliance, 2022).

CANOPS: A Proven, Scalable Model for College and Career Success

The Career Academy Network of Public Schools (CANOPS) exemplifies how career academies can be implemented at scale while maintaining high levels of academic and workforce outcomes. Serving five Indiana schools with predominantly low-income and high-needs populations, CANOPS has demonstrated that schools need not force students to choose between a career and college. Instead, its dual-pathway approach ensures all students graduate prepared for both options. CANOPS has achieved measurable success through four interdependent, research-aligned strategies:

- **Integrated K–12 Career Pathway Development:** Introduces career awareness as early as kindergarten and progresses toward specialization in high school while maintaining academic rigor.
- **Experiential Learning Through Industry Partnerships:** Connects students to authentic workplace experiences that reinforce classroom learning and build critical professional competencies.
- **Comprehensive Wraparound Support Systems:** Delivers personalized supports—including academic, social-emotional, and behavioral interventions—to ensure access to postsecondary success.
- **Strategic Community-Aligned Pathway Selection:** Uses real-time labor market data, wage potential, and student interest to align pathways with regional economic needs and high-opportunity sectors.

By documenting and disseminating the CANOPS model and tools, this project contributes not only a promising practice, but also a scalable, systemic solution to one of the most pressing educational challenges of our time: ensuring that every student, regardless of background, is prepared for both college and meaningful, family-sustaining careers.

Addressing Systemic Barriers to Dual College and Career Preparation

Despite growing demand for educational models that prepare students for both college and the workforce, systemic barriers persist that hinder the development, oversight, and replication of high-quality dual-pathway schools. Many charter authorizers lack specialized knowledge to evaluate programs that meaningfully integrate academic rigor with career preparation. School operators often struggle to identify and manage industry partnerships, align accountability systems, and navigate the complex balance between college-readiness standards and authentic workforce development. Additionally, the broader field lacks research-based frameworks that support the implementation and scaling of effective dual-preparation models.

Through our partnership with the Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA), we have identified key capacity gaps within both schools and authorizing bodies that obstruct the successful expansion of dual-pathway models. This project will directly address those gaps by developing field-tested, adaptable tools that support implementation, evaluation, and replication across diverse contexts. To test and refine these resources, the project will leverage two distinct state contexts, Indiana and Florida, as natural laboratories. Florida's mature charter sector and diverse regional economies provide a lens into replication in well-established ecosystems, while Indiana's emerging CTE landscape offers insight into the challenges of early-stage development. These contrasting policy environments, economic conditions, and student demographics will inform the adaptability and relevance of our tools for national dissemination.

Evidence-Based Strategies for Dual-Pathway Implementation

Implementation science consistently shows that even strong innovations fail without thoughtful, context-responsive support. Effective implementation takes 2 to 4 years to become embedded and depends less on the quality of the innovation than on the systems supporting adoption,

professional learning, and adaptation (Nordstrum et al., 2018; Bauer & Kirchner, 2020). Our project applies this evidence base through three high-leverage dissemination mechanisms: (1) Scaffolded Implementation Pathways. To support effective adoption of the CANOPS model, we will develop and distribute tools that bridge the gap between theory and practice, supporting schools to integrate "what works" with "how to do it" in real-world settings, such as, (a) *Career Academy Charter School Model Blueprint* – A comprehensive guide that includes phased implementation supports, fidelity checklists, and contextual adaptation frameworks tailored to different charter growth stages (start-up, growth, replication); and (b) *Career Pathway Development Guide* – A resource that helps schools select and structure high-opportunity pathways using labor market data, workforce alignment tools, and embedded coaching supports. These tools ensure implementation fidelity while allowing flexibility for schools operating under varied policy constraints and student populations. (2) Multi-Modal Professional Learning. We will deliver flexible, engaging professional learning through diverse formats that support school leaders, educators, and authorizers: (a) Inside Career Academies (video series) – Showcasing real-world dual-pathway implementation in diverse school contexts; (b) Authorizing the Future (podcast series) – Highlighting innovative authorizing practices that enable high-quality college and career programs; and (c) Experiential Training Sessions – Interactive learning opportunities where educators and authorizers collaboratively practice aligning academic and workforce expectations. This multi-modal approach supports adult learning preferences and ensures knowledge reaches a wide range of stakeholders at scale. (3) Community-of-Practice Infrastructure. Sustained implementation depends on shared learning and support networks. We will launch two national communities of practice (CoPs) that build collective expertise around dual-pathway school design and oversight: (a) Career Academy School Network CoP – A peer-

learning community for school leaders focused on strategy implementation, problem-solving, and data-informed improvement. Resources will be aligned to specific development stages. The CoP will begin with 10 pilot schools and expand to two additional cohorts of 20 schools each; and (b) Authorizer Professional Learning Lab CoP – A convening space for charter authorizers to exchange tools and practices related to evaluating and supporting dual-pathway schools. This group will co-develop shared accountability frameworks and explore real-world challenges in overseeing integrated academic-career models. Together, these CoPs will cultivate an ecosystem of practice, ensuring continuous learning, resource sharing, and implementation success beyond the life of the grant.

Comprehensive Impact and Dual-Pathway Enablement

This project will support widespread adoption of dual college-and-career preparation strategies across the charter school sector by equipping two key stakeholder groups, school practitioners and authorizers, with high-quality, evidence-based tools:

Practitioners (2,000+)	**Authorizers (500+)**
Career Academy Charter School Model Blueprint	Authorizer Career Academy Oversight Toolkit
Career Pathway Development Guide	Podcast Series "Authorizing the Future"
Experiential Learning Toolkit	Practice Brief and Case Studies
Video Series: "Inside a Career Academy"	

By Year 5, over *50 schools* will have adopted or adapted at least one CANOPS core strategy, ranging from early career pathway integration to experiential learning, wraparound support systems, and labor market-aligned programming. These implementations will reflect both full-model replication and strategic customization, depending on local context and capacity. In addition, more than *50 charter authorizers* will gain tools and training to more effectively

evaluate, support, and scale dual-pathway models, thereby improving sector-wide oversight for schools serving both college- and career-bound students. Partnering with WestEd and FACSA, we will ensure that schools and authorizers have access to the implementation tools, professional learning, and peer networks necessary to effectively embed these practices, while maintaining fidelity to the core elements that drive student outcomes. Building on CANOPS' demonstrated success, including 50 percent college enrollment and 50 percent workforce entry rates, we anticipate that schools implementing these strategies will achieve balanced postsecondary outcomes, ensuring that all students are prepared for success in both college and high-wage careers.

B. Quality of Project Design

Our project is grounded in a central premise: career-focused education can improve student engagement, academic achievement, and long-term economic mobility—when implemented with fidelity to research-based practices and supported by informed authorizing and enabling policies. Despite increasing national interest in Career and Technical Education (CTE), schools and authorizers alike lack access to detailed models, implementation frameworks, and oversight tools tailored to integrated college-and-career pathways.

This project directly addresses that gap by systematically documenting and disseminating the proven practices of the Career Academy Network of Public Schools (CANOPS), the Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA), and WestEd's expertise in aligning them with industry and research-based best practices. Together, these entities represent both sides of the dual-preparation equation: CANOPS as a school operator that achieves outstanding student outcomes through comprehensive CTE integration, FACSA as a partner designing tools that

support effective authorizing of these models, and WestEd as a national research and technical assistance partner.

Theory of Change and Anticipated Impact

Our theory of change is grounded in 14 years of demonstrated outcomes from CANOPS and informed by implementation science. We hypothesize that:

- ***If*** charter authorizers have access to specialized guidance and oversight tools for dual-pathway models,
- ***And if*** prospective operators receive practical, high-quality implementation resources and peer support aligned with research and policy,
- ***Then*** the number of high-performing career academy charter schools will increase,
- ***Leading to*** improved student engagement, higher graduation rates, greater credential and degree attainment, and stronger workforce alignment—especially for underserved student populations.

To validate and refine this theory, the project's strategic focus on Florida and Indiana leverages two of the nation's most advanced CTE policy environments, offering strong foundations for developing and testing replication resources and providing real-world conditions. Florida stands as a widely recognized pioneer in the career academy movement, with its Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act of 2007 spurring rapid growth in career academies and incentivizing the attainment of industry-recognized credentials aligned with high-demand occupations. Indiana offers an emerging CTE landscape shaped by Next Level Programs of Study that align secondary programs with postsecondary credentials and labor market demand, and the Graduation Pathways initiative, which redefines student success by enabling students to fulfill graduation requirements through high-quality CTE, work-based learning, and

credentialing. These policy environments provide an ideal testbed for developing and iterating replication tools that are relevant across a range of economic, demographic and governance contexts.

Comprehensive, Lifecycle-Aligned Project Design

Our project supports both school operators and authorizers across all key phases of the charter school lifecycle—ensuring high-quality dual college-and-career preparation models are developed, launched, and sustained with fidelity. Resources are aligned to each stage to address the unique implementation and oversight needs of both practitioners and authorizers.

Step 1: Design and Planning. The *Career Academy Charter School Model Blueprint* and *Career Pathway Development Guide* help operators design rigorous, workforce-aligned models from the outset. FACSA's *Authorizer Toolkit* provides rubrics and evaluation tools that allow authorizers to assess proposed career academies based on both academic and career-readiness components.

Step 2: Authorizing Period. Authorizers receive tailored resources to support informed approval decisions, including model interview protocols, work-based learning evaluators, and CTE-specific application guidance. This ensures approval processes reflect the depth and complexity of dual-pathway models.

Step 3: Preparing to Open. Schools and authorizers access early implementation checklists, employer engagement guidance, and partnership verification tools to ensure critical elements—such as pathway sequencing and wraparound supports, are in place prior to launch.

Step 4: Enrollment and Operations. During early operations, school leaders receive hands-on tools including the Experiential Learning Toolkit, student outcome dashboards, and the Inside a Career Academy video series. Simultaneously, authorizers use aligned site visit protocols and

CTE monitoring frameworks to track implementation progress across academic and workforce readiness metrics.

Step 5: Achieving and Sustaining Success. Schools and authorizers participate in ongoing Communities of Practice, sharing best practices, data insights, and troubleshooting strategies. FACSA's accountability alignment tools support authorizers in evaluating outcomes beyond test scores—including industry credentials, college matriculation, and employment.

This structure ensures that schools and authorizers receive the right support at the right time, facilitating sustainable change rather than one-off innovation.

Grounded in Evidence, Designed for Scale

The CANOPS outcomes offer compelling proof of concept: 98 percent graduation rate; 50 percent of graduates entering college and 50 percent of graduates entering the workforce in high-demand sectors, along with strong engagement and academic achievement among students with disabilities and low income backgrounds.

However, these outcomes have remained localized due to a lack of scalable documentation and guidance. Our project addresses this challenge by capturing not just what works, but how it works, why it works, and how others can adapt it to their own policy, labor, and student contexts. With support from WestEd as a national research and technical assistance partner, and FACSA as an authorization infrastructure expert, we will ensure that both school-level practices and authorizing strategies are accessible, actionable, and replicable nationwide, leading to expanded access to high-quality dual-preparation education models that serve both student aspirations and economic needs.

B.1 Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

The overarching goal of this project is to transform how schools and authorizers conceptualize, implement, and support high-quality, career-focused education, not simply through resource dissemination, but by building the conditions for sustained success.

Table 1: Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Objective	Short-Term Outcomes (Years 1-2)	Mid-Term Outcomes (Year 3)	Long-Term Outcomes (Years 4-5)
Goal 1: Develop comprehensive documentation of CANOPS's high-quality CTE charter school model and build the capacity of charter school leaders to replicate the model and improve student outcomes nationwide			
Objective 1: Document and codify CANOPS's integrated K-12 model and four core strategies	80 percent of Career Academy School Network participants will report increased capacity to access and use the resources to support their learning as measured by surveys	90 percent of all users who download materials will report user satisfaction of the resources to support their learning as measured by surveys	By the end of Y5, 50 schools implementing CANOPS strategies demonstrate improved student outcomes and attain high-quality status as defined by ESEA 4310(8)
Objective 2: Create practitioner-focused tools and guidance that	100 percent of practitioner-focused resources will be developed by the end of Y2 to support	50 Career Academy School Network participants will implement one or more of the CANOPS core	By the end of Y5, 50 schools demonstrate increased student attendance, engagement, and preparation for the

Objective	Short-Term Outcomes (Years 1-2)	Mid-Term Outcomes (Year 3)	Long-Term Outcomes (Years 4-5)
capture CANOPS's innovative instructional and support strategies for diverse learners	implementing the CANOPS model	strategies as measured by surveys	workforce as measured by school level data at participating sites.
Goal 2: Develop authorizer tools and resources and build the capacity of authorizers to effectively oversee and support high-quality CTE charter schools throughout their lifecycle			
Objective 3: Create comprehensive authorizer guidance for evaluating, approving, and monitoring CTE-focused charter schools, addressing unique challenges and	25 authorizers will participate in Authorizer Learning Labs	50 authorizers will participate in Authorizer Learning Labs	By the end of Y5, 50 authorizers will report increased capacity to evaluate and support CTE schools

Objective	Short-Term Outcomes (Years 1-2)	Mid-Term Outcomes (Year 3)	Long-Term Outcomes (Years 4-5)
opportunities in career-focused education.			
Objective 4: Develop multimedia resources that showcase and support effective CTE charter authorizing practices	Authorizer resources are distributed to 250 authorizers nation-wide as measured by downloads	Authorizer resources are distributed to 500 authorizers nation-wide as measured by downloads	Authorizers approve and support 50 high-quality CTE charter applications and/or CTE program implementations nationwide as reported by authorizer surveys
Goal 3: Build national dissemination infrastructure and networks for sustained implementation support			
Objective 5: Disseminate resources and convene practitioners to support CANOPS	10 schools participating in the Career Academy School Network will initiate career pathway programs using CANOPS's documented	25 schools participating in the Career Academy School Network will initiate career pathway programs using CANOPS's documented	By the end of Y5, 50 schools implementing CANOPS strateg(ies) demonstrate improved student outcomes and attain high-quality status

Objective	Short-Term Outcomes (Years 1-2)	Mid-Term Outcomes (Year 3)	Long-Term Outcomes (Years 4-5)
model implementation	strategies model as measured by surveys.	strategies as measured by surveys.	as defined by ESEA 4310(8).
Objective 6: Establish sustainable dissemination infrastructure, relationships and digital platforms that ensure long-term resource accessibility and continuous improvement	25 authorizers participate in Authorizer Learning Labs	50 authorizers participate in Authorizer Learning Labs	Authorizers approve and support 50 high-quality CTE charter applications and/or CTE program implementation nationwide
	CANOPS practitioner resources are distributed to 1,000 schools nation-wide as measured by downloads	CANOPS practitioner resources are distributed to 2,000 schools nation-wide as measured by downloads.	By the end of Y5, 80percent of schools participating in the CA School Network will report thriving and connected schools as measured by surveys

This project will document and share the proven strategies behind CANOPS' high-performing career academy model and FACSA's emerging authorizer practices, capturing not only what works but also how and why it works. From early career exploration to authentic industry partnerships and inclusive supports for diverse learners, resources will reflect real

implementation challenges and solutions grounded in practice. Dissemination will occur through tailored, multi-format resources, such as toolkits, case studies, videos, and policy briefs, designed to support both school and authorizer audiences. Over the course of five years, the project aims to directly support at least 50 schools in implementing or adapting CANOPS strategies, while building long-term authorizer capacity through FACSA's national dissemination efforts. All resources will emphasize adaptability, enabling local communities to maintain fidelity to core principles while tailoring models to their specific context. By embedding tools into both practice and policy infrastructure, this project moves beyond one-time innovation to support sustainable, system-level change in college and career preparation nationwide.

B.2 Quality of Logic Model and Conceptual Framework

Our logic model is grounded in CANOPS's 14-year track record of success and builds on *high-quality inputs* (proven expertise, established networks, research capacity):

- CANOPS expertise → credible resources → high adoption → sustained implementation
- FACSA networks → broad reach → capacity building → system change
- WestEd skills → robust infrastructure → sustained networks → long-term impact

This partnership enables *comprehensive documentation and dissemination activities* that produce accessible, practical resources. These resources generate *immediate engagement* and pilot implementations, leading to *increased satisfaction and knowledge among practitioners and authorizers*. *Short-term* capacity building results in mid-term program improvements and process changes, ultimately achieving *long-term outcomes* of sustained school quality, improved student outcomes, and thriving educational communities. Our logic model builds upon established theories of career development, experiential learning, and systems change.

Figure 1: CANOPS Logic Model

Pathways to Prosperity: Disseminating Effective Career Academy Models

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
CANOPS Staff: • Career academy and CTE model expertise • Proven replication success **FACSA Staff:** • Authorizer relationships • CTE policy and oversight expertise **WestEd Staff:** • Research and dissemination expertise	**Development:** • Codify CANOPS model and strategies • Develop CTE tools and resources • Produce multimedia and practitioner guidance **Dissemination:** • Launch CA School Network and Authorizer Learning Labs • Build digital	**Resources:** • Career Academy Model Blueprint • Pathway Development Guide • Experiential Learning Toolkit • "Inside a Career Academy" video series • Authorizer Oversight Toolkit • Podcast series, practice briefs, case	**Development & Distribution** • 80% of resources developed by end of Y2 and piloted • 1,000+ schools and 250 authorizers access resources **Utility & Implementation** • 80% of CA School Network participants report increased	**Development & Distribution** • 100% of resources developed by end of Y3 • 2,000+ practitioners and 500 authorizers download resources **Utility & Implementation** • 90% of users report satisfaction with resources (measured via post-download survey)	**Utility & Implementation** • By end of Y5, 50 authorizers report increased oversight capacity (via self-assessments and reporting) • 50 high-quality CTE charter applications/ programs supported • By end of Y5, 25 schools demonstrate

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
• Deep charter sector, authorizing and CTE best practice knowledge	dissemination infrastructure • Deliver presentations and toolkits	studies **Capacity Building:** • CA School Network & Authorizer Learning Labs launched • Conference presentations	capacity to implement career pathways (measured via post-session surveys) • 10 schools begin pathway programs • 25 authorizers join Learning Labs	• 25 schools implement CANOPS-aligned pathway programs (verified by implementation checklists) • 50 authorizers engaged in Learning Labs	improved student attendance, engagement, and workforce readiness (via survey and attendance data) • By end of Y5, 50 schools achieve high-quality status as defined by ESEA 4310(8) **Sustained Practice** • Sustainable online portal and communications toolkit

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Mid-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
					established to ensure ongoing access and improvement
		Measurement/ Data Sources: • Grant milestones and completion logs • Web analytics and publication records • Registration and participation • Download engagement metrics	**Measurement/ Data Sources:** • Internal project management • Participant pre/post surveys • School self-reports and implementation checklists • Attendance logs • Website analytics	**Measurement/ Data Sources:** • Satisfaction surveys • Implementation rubrics + site-level validation • Policy review and interviews • Portal and resource analytics	**Measurement/ Data Sources:** • School performance data aligned to ESEA 4310(8) • Authorizer self-assessments and reporting • Authorizer submission data

B.3 Exceptional Approach to Absolute Priority

This project offers an exceptional, practitioner-led approach to disseminating innovative, high-quality CTE charter school practices. It stands apart from typical efforts through six key differentiators:

Practitioner-Led, Research-Supported Documentation: Led by CANOPS, a proven CTE charter network, and supported by WestEd's research and dissemination expertise, our project ensures resources reflect real-world implementation while meeting high standards of rigor through expert validation by WestEd's Center for Economic Mobility staff. This insider-outsider model captures the "how" and "why" behind success, offering practical insights schools can use. By engaging both Florida and Indiana, two states with contrasting yet robust CTE policy environments, we demonstrate adaptability across diverse contexts.

Full Charter Life Cycle Support: Unlike most efforts that focus on one stage, our tools align with the entire charter school lifecycle—from early design and authorization through operations, sustainability, and replication. By documenting startup challenges, operational innovations, and scaling strategies within a single project, as well as developing resources and tools for authorizers, we provide stakeholders with comprehensive guidance for sustainable implementation.

Integrated K-12 Career Development Model: Most CTE models begin in high school. CANOPS begins in kindergarten, introducing early career awareness and scaffolding toward high school specialization. This cradle-to-career approach fills a major gap in CTE design and supports long-term engagement and planning for students across all demographics, including the 30 percent receiving special education services.

Multi-Modal, Actionable Dissemination. Our dissemination combines accessible written materials with engaging formats like video series ("Inside a Career Academy"), podcasts ("Authorizing the Future"), case studies, and professional learning communities. WestEd's experience producing multimedia tools that support both adult learners and K-12 educators ensures resources are actionable, scalable for diverse audiences and increases the likelihood of adoption and sustained use.

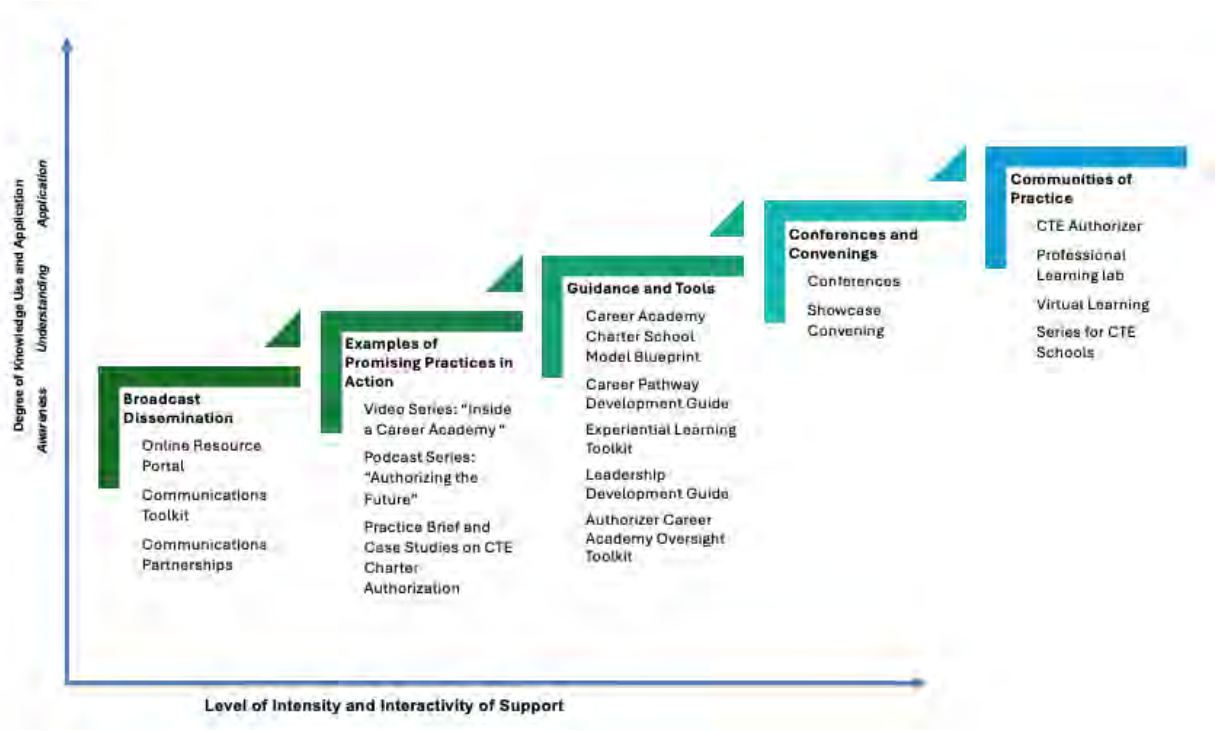
Dual Capacity Building—Schools and Authorizers. Our simultaneous focus on school practitioners, authorizer capacity, and policy environment creates synergistic conditions for systemic change. Instead of expecting schools to succeed despite system barriers, we build capacity at all levels to support and sustain high-quality CTE charter schools. Grounded in WestEd's experience supporting system-level reform, this approach ensures they address institutional barriers, workforce alignment, and effective accountability systems.

Scalable, Sustained Dissemination Networks. Through the combined networks of CANOPS, FACSA, and WestEd, this project will engage both local and national audiences. Dissemination will occur through state and national conferences (e.g., NACSA, NCSC, ACTE VISION), newsletters, webinars, and a centralized online portal. To deepen impact, we will host a national Showcase Convening and sustain engagement through two implementation communities of practice: the Career Academy School Network and the CTE Authorizer Learning Lab, providing year-round, peer-to-peer learning and collaboration.

Together, these strategies create an exceptional approach that is comprehensive, field-tested, and research-based model for dissemination that reaches stakeholders through their preferred channels, builds local capacity for ongoing improvement, and supports widespread

implementation of effective, career-focused charter models, as illustrated in the Dissemination and Knowledge Utilization framework below (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Dissemination and Knowledge Utilization Framework



By integrating leading-edge research with practitioner expertise and economic mobility strategies, this project will drive sustainable change for students, schools, and the broader educational system.

C. Quality of Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources

C.1 Feasibility of Management Plan to Achieve Objectives

Clearly Defined Responsibilities and Organizational Structure

The proposed project is grounded in a cross-organizational leadership model that leverages complementary strengths and has a proven history of successful collaboration. Each partner has a distinct, clearly defined role aligned to their expertise and capacity: **CANOPS** leads overall

project management and content development as Project Director. With over a decade of demonstrated success serving predominantly low-income and special education populations, CANOPS will produce school-based implementation resources (case profiles, guides, multimedia), and lead practitioner engagement and school-based dissemination activities. WestEd, serving as Principal Investigator, brings nationally recognized research, evaluation, and dissemination capacity. As the home of the **Center for Economic Mobility**, WestEd is uniquely positioned to integrate CTE best practices with workforce development strategies that connect education, labor market data, and economic advancement. WestEd will ensure resource rigor through a peer-reviewed development process and host the digital resource portal and national professional learning communities. Its expertise in bridging K–16 systems, dismantling structural barriers, and supporting underrepresented learners will ensure that all tools produced are informed by research, shaped by practice, and aligned with current labor market needs. **FACSA** is responsible for authorizer-facing tools, including a comprehensive CTE Oversight Toolkit and policy briefs. FACSA will leverage its national network of over 150 charter authorizers to drive policy adoption and provide capacity-building support. Their leadership of a multi-state CSP Dissemination Grant demonstrates readiness to scale proven CTE oversight practices.

The project employs a three-tiered leadership structure across organizations ensuring clear accountability and expertise alignment: (1) **Executive Leadership** (Van Buskirk, Evan, Blair): Provides strategic oversight, stakeholder engagement, and ensures compliance with federal grant requirements; (2) **Operational Leadership** (Boyd, Wynveen, Glenn): Oversees day-to-day coordination, progress monitoring, and deliverable quality; (3) **Specialist Contributors** Subject matter experts are assigned to individual deliverables based on expertise in school design,

authorizing, evaluation, and dissemination. This structure ensures accountability, timely implementation, and responsiveness to evolving project needs.

Milestones, Timelines, and Progress Monitoring

The five-year plan is sequenced to ensure thoughtful documentation, high-quality resource development, and meaningful dissemination: **Years 1–2**: Intensive documentation of practices using structured observation, interviews, and case development. **Years 2–4**: Resource development, iterative testing, and refinement using feedback loops with practitioner and authorizer networks. **Years 4–5**: National dissemination and capacity-building, with embedded sustainability planning.

Progress will be tracked using a multi-layered project management structure: (1) Weekly operational check-ins to review task completion; (2) Monthly milestone reviews led by operational leads to align deliverables with the project timeline; (3) Quarterly executive reviews for strategic adjustments and (4) Annual comprehensive evaluations to assess cumulative impact and refine future actions. This system allows for real-time course correction while maintaining long-term focus and accountability.

Detailed Project Milestones and Responsibilities

Table 2: Detailed Project Milestones and Responsibilities

Goal/Objective	Key Personnel	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5
Objective 1: Document and codify CANOPS's integrated K-12 model and four core strategies.						
Activity 1.1.a: Develop Profiles documenting	1: Thorne/ Evan	X				

Goal/Objective	Key Personnel	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5
CANOPS Strategies	2: Ebersol/ Austin	X				
	3: Timm/ Wynveen	X				
	4: Thorne/Chait	X				
Activity 1.1.b: Produce "Inside Career Academy" video series	Liew/ Diaz/Austin/ Students in Marketing Pathway	X				
Objective 2: Create practitioner-focused tools and guidance that capture CANOPS's innovative instructional and support strategies for diverse learners.						
Activity 2.1: Develop Career Academy Charter School Model Blueprint	Van Buskirk/ Thorne/ Evan	X				
Activity 2.2. Develop Career Pathway Development Guide	Thorne/ Wynveen	X				
Activity 2.3: Develop Experiential Learning Toolkit	Boyd/Van Buskirk/Austin		X			
Objective 3: Create comprehensive authorizer guidance for evaluating, approving, and monitoring CTE-focused charter schools, addressing unique challenges and opportunities in career-focused education.						

Goal/Objective	Key Personnel	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5
Activity 3.1: Develop New Application Guidance toolkit *section*	Blair/Glenn/ Chait	X				
Activity 3.2: Develop Funding Navigation Guidance toolkit *section*	Glenn/Blair/ Wynveen		X			
Activity 3.3: Develop Monitoring and Renewal guidance toolkit *section*	Blair/Evan			X		
Objective 4: Develop multimedia resources that showcase and support effective CTE charter authorizing practices.						
Activity 4.1: Develop 3 authorizer CTE oversight case studies	Blair/ Evan /Wynveen	X	X	X		
Activity 4.2: Produce "Authorizing the Future" podcast mini-series	Blair/ Diaz			X		
Activity 4.3: Develop 1 policy and practice brief on CTE charter authorization	Glenn/Wynveen				X	
Objective 5: Disseminate resources and convene practitioners to support CANOPS model implementation.						
Activity 5.1: Conduct Career Academy School	Van Buskirk/ Evan			X	X	X

Goal/Objective	Key Personnel	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5
Network virtual learning sessions for CTE Practitioners						
Activity 5.2: Present at 2-3 Career Academy Conferences	ALL		X	X	X	X
Activity 5.3: Facilitate quarterly Professional Learning Lab for Authorizers	Blair/Evan			X	X	X
Activity 5.4: Present resources at authorizer industry conferences	All		X	X	X	X
Activity 5.5: Host showcase convening in Florida	Blair/Chait/ Wynveen					X
Objective 6: Establish sustainable dissemination infrastructure, relationships and digital platforms that ensure long-term resource accessibility and continuous improvement.						
Activity 6.1: Create resource portal	Liew/Austin/ Glenn				X	
Activity 6.2: Establish dissemination partnerships with universities, CTE organizations, and charter organizations	Van Buskirk/Lugbill/ Evan/Blair			X	X	X
Activity 6.3: Develop communications toolkit	Liew/Austin					X

C.2 Budget Adequacy and Cost Reasonableness

Budget Allocation Aligned to Project Objectives

The project budget is carefully structured to align with project phases and workload intensity: (1) Years 1–2 (Documentation): Higher FTE allocation (~35%) for intensive site-based work and resource creation; (2) Years 3–4 (Dissemination): Peak staffing (~40% FTE) for resource production, multimedia content, and national engagement efforts; (3) Year 5 (Sustainability): Tapered support (~25% FTE) for evaluation, scale strategies, and transition planning. Deliverables justify cost allocations and reflect reasonable use of federal funds. Financial controls include: (1) Monthly budget reviews led by the Project Manager; (2) Quarterly financial reports and partnership organization invoicing to determine spend down rate and variance analysis (3) Internal approval thresholds for all expenses over $5,000. These systems ensure financial accountability, alignment with goals, and responsible stewardship of federal funds.

C.3 Project Director and Principal Investigator Qualifications

Project Director: Candida Van Buskirk, Ph.D., Superintendent (CANOPS)

Dr. Van Buskirk brings over 15 years of experience in innovative charter leadership, including scaling CANOPS from one school to a statewide CTE network. She has managed multiple federal grants and leads CANOPS's strategic initiatives, including experiential learning and entrepreneurship models. Her demonstrated results in serving low-income and special education students position her as an ideal leader for this initiative. She has proven expertise and experience in scaling charter networks from single site schools to multi-campus systems.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Aimee Evan, Ph.D. Senior Research Associate (WestEd)

Dr. Evan is a nationally respected charter researcher who currently leads a high-performing CSP Dissemination Grant. She has designed and led statewide CTE evaluations, developed the

Indicators of Distress framework now used across 20+ states, and brings 25 years of experience conducting applied research for school improvement.

Content and Authorizer Expert: Marianne Blair, Executive Director (FACSA)

Ms. Blair brings over 15 years of experience in CTE and charter school authorizing, including curriculum design, compliance oversight, and federal grant management. Her unique background blends hands-on experience in charter oversight with academic and policy leadership, positioning her to develop impactful authorizer resources and strategies.

Together, this leadership team combines deep content knowledge, proven CSP grant and other management capability, and alignment and demonstrated success with the project's target populations and goals.

C.4 Time Commitment Appropriateness and Adequacy

Project Leadership Time Allocation

Proposed Staff, Organization	Role	Hours on Project
Candida Van Buskirk, CANOPS	Project Director	25% FTE/10 hours/ week
Aimee Evan, WestEd	Principal Investigator	40% FTE (16 hours/ week)
Marianne Blair, FACSA	Authorizer Lead	30% FTE (12 hours/ week)
Nathan Boyd, CANOPS; Kelly Wynveen, WestEd Vanessa Glenn, FACSA	Implementation Directors	30% FTE (12 hours/ week) -

The staffing plan is intentionally structured to scale over time and is aligned with project milestones. Adequate time is allocated across all leadership and operational roles to ensure

rigorous management, timely execution, and effective communication among partners. This project is positioned for success due to its robust management plan, highly qualified leadership team, thoughtfully aligned budget, and carefully allocated personnel time. The integration of research, practitioner expertise, and authorizer capacity ensures that the project will meet its objectives and have a sustainable, national impact.

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan is designed to measure progress, effectiveness, and impact against the project's objectives using specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) performance measures. WestEd, serving as Principal Investigator, will lead the evaluation process and employ a mixed-methods approach to track implementation fidelity, stakeholder satisfaction, and evidence of improved outcomes for both students and authorizers.

Objectives & SMART Performance Measures

Performance Measure	Metric	Target Milestones (Y2–Y5)
Objective 1: Develop comprehensive documentation of the CANOPS CTE charter model to enable replication and improve student outcomes nationwide.		
1a. Complete CANOPS CTE model documentation	% complete	100% annually (Y2–Y5)
1b. Practitioner capacity to use resources	% of survey respondents	80% annually (Y2–Y5)
1c. User satisfaction with resources	% of survey	90% annually (Y2–Y5)

	respondents	
1d. Schools achieving high-quality status per ESEA 4310(8)	# of schools	Y3: 10, Y4: 20, Y5: 50
Objective 2: Develop practitioner-focused tools and guidance capturing innovative instructional and support strategies.		
2a. Practitioner tools completed	# of resources	4 by Y2; maintained through Y5
2b. Implementation of core strategies by practitioners	# of participants	Y2: 20, Y3: 40, Y4–Y5: 50
2c. Improved student attendance/ engagement	# of schools	Y3: 10, Y4: 20, Y5: 50
Objective 3: Develop comprehensive authorizer guidance to support CTE charter school oversight.		
3a. Authorizer guidance developed	% complete	100% annually (Y2–Y5)
3b. Participation in Authorizer Learning Labs	# of authorizers	Y2: 15, Y3: 25, Y4: 30, Y5: 50
3c. Increased authorizer capacity	% of survey respondents	90% annually (Y2–Y5)
Objective 4: Develop multimedia resources showcasing effective CTE authorizing and implementation practices.		
4a. Multimedia tools developed (video, podcast, briefs)	# of resources	Y2: 2, Y3–Y5: 3/year
4b. Schools supported by authorizers	# of schools	Y3: 10, Y4: 20, Y5: 50

implementing model		
Objective 5: Disseminate resources and convene practitioners to support implementation of the CANOPS model.		
5a. Schools initiating pathway programs	# of schools	Y2: 10, Y3: 25, Y4: 35, Y5: 50
5b. Practitioners implementing core strategies	# of participants	Y2: 20, Y3: 40, Y4–Y5: 50
5c. Schools reporting thriving/connected environments	% of schools	Y2: 20%, Y3: 50%, Y4: 60%, Y5: 80%
Objective 6: Establish sustainable infrastructure for long-term resource dissemination and improvement.		
6a. Downloads of practitioner resources	# of downloads	Y2: 500 → Y5: 3,000
6b. Downloads of authorizer resources	# of downloads	Y3: 250 → Y5: 500
6c. National presentations and dissemination events	# of events	Y2: 2 → Y5: 8

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Appendix

CANOPS Additional Staff

Dr. Jim Thorne, *Director of Career and Technical Education.* With over 20 years in CTE leadership across Indiana and Illinois, Dr. Thorne brings extensive experience developing industry-aligned career academies and scaling cross-state CTE models.

Dr. Nathan Boyd, *Assistant Superintendent.* A former Indiana State Principal of the Year and accomplished district leader, Dr. Boyd brings deep expertise in instructional leadership, systems

implementation, and school improvement. His experience mentoring principals and delivering professional development supports effective academy implementation.

Sara Timm, *Director of Student Services.* Sara brings a decade of experience in special education, instructional technology, and inclusive practices. She has led assistive tech and autism teams and teaches instructional technology at the university level, ensuring access and support for all learners.

Dave Ebersol, *Future Lab/Maker Space Coordinator.* Dave's background in competitive robotics, mathematics, and computer science informs his work developing K–12 Maker Spaces and engineering pathways. His experience aligns directly with hands-on STEM programming for career academies.

Valerie Moore, *Director of Grants Management.* Valerie has led successful oversight of major grants, including Indiana's 3E Grant and STEM initiatives. She brings strong compliance and financial management to support large-scale federal projects.

Vincent Liew, *Chief Marketing Officer.* Vincent leverages 15+ years of experience in digital marketing, multimedia development, and AI-powered outreach. He leads the development of digital dissemination tools, including video, podcasts, and resource portals.

WestEd Additional Staff

Dr. Kim Austin, *Senior Program Associate.* Dr. Austin specializes in educator learning, video production, and experiential learning.

Robin Chait, *Project Director.* With deep experience in education policy and charter school initiatives, Robin's leadership of NY-RISE and national technical assistance work at WestEd supports effective practitioner capacity building.

Kelly Wynveen, *Senior Project Manager.* Kelly brings a decade of experience managing complex education projects, including technical assistance to 250+ charter schools. Her operational oversight ensures smooth implementation and alignment with school needs.

Dr. Victor Diaz, *Senior Research Associate.* Victor contributes expertise in educator development and multimedia content. His dual background in HR leadership and academic research supports engaging dissemination of human capital strategies.

Rachel Antrobus, Ed.D., Senior Research Associate. Dr. Antrobus specializes in K–16 college and career pathways. With experience in guided pathways, dual enrollment, and experiential learning, she supports systems-level reform to improve student access and success.

William Berry, *Research Associate.* A doctoral student and former education data analyst, William supports evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative methods, bringing skills in R, Python, and Dedoose.

Florida Association of Charter School Authorizers (FACSA) Additional Staff

Dr. Kia Sweeney-Scott, *President.* Kia brings 25+ years in public education and charter oversight, including leadership of Florida's School Choice Services. She offers expert guidance on authorizer capacity and charter quality.

Vanessa Glenn, *Project Support Specialist.* Vanessa supports multi-state charter oversight efforts and has managed application reviews, renewals, and compliance. Her coordination ensures efficient execution of project milestones.