Barr PoG Phase II – March 2021- August 2022

A. Action plan – attached

B. Proposal narrative

1.a. Sharing PoG action plan with participant schools and community stakeholders

- April-June 2021: BCETF will share PoG action plan with participant schools and community stakeholders through BCETF open meetings, scheduled presentations to local school committees, Superintendents’ Roundtable, Berkshire Leadership Impact Council, meetings with other community-based organizations, educator organizations, and through local media outlets.

- June 2021: BCETF will share refined PoG action plan through summer convening and invite feedback.

- Ongoing: BCETF will share PoG action plan and all related documents through website and via community convenings.

b. Soliciting community and student input on PoG action plan

- Throughout grant period: BCETF will host drop-in sessions and other community engagement activities to share information and gather feedback on PoG from families, students, community members. This feedback will be used to inform work of school-based teams.

- Summer and winter convenings: BCETF will gather feedback on refined PoG action plan to inform work of school-based teams.

- Ongoing: BCETF will share PoG action plan and all related documents through website.

- Design Teams: Each participant school will have a design team comprised of both school alignment and signature experience team members (site leads, educators, staff), and students, families, community members. Design teams will allow for shared learning across districts, and across alignment and signature teams. Design teams will meet at least quarterly to gather and exchange progress and feedback with site-based teams and project leadership.

c. Securing commitments from school leadership for signature experience pilot

- March-April 2021: BCETF will conduct outreach to school superintendents and leadership teams to gauge commitment to PoG action plan and readiness to engage in signature experience pilot.

- April 2021: BCETF will produce memoranda of understanding to detail expectations for Phase II work (e.g., in terms of resources and staff time) and commitment to signature experience pilot. MOUs will incorporate outcomes and outputs for the PoG Phase II project. Project leadership will file copies of completed MOUs with Barr Foundation.

- April-May 2021: School leadership of participant schools will formalize commitment to project and project expectations by reviewing and returning signed MOUs.
• BCETF will also gauge readiness of participant schools for future PoG efforts based on the degree to which schools are working to incorporate elements of the PoG in long-term strategic planning, school reform efforts, curricular updates, collaborative projects, school-wide messaging, etc.

2.a. Role composition of PoG teams – Leadership team:

• Leadership:

  Project Director (PD) (1) – responsible for coordinating all project activities in concert with Core Facilitators and site-based teams; manage collaborations among schools; monitor progress on key project objectives; facilitate meetings of stakeholders; act as liaison between participant schools, school-based teams, BCETF, and Barr Foundation; communications with Barr; budget oversight; recruit relevant staff and subject experts; facilitate community engagement; support ongoing evaluation and data needs; and oversee production of project reports and documents. Project Director will participate in Barr-sponsored and convenings, broader PoG learning community activities, Catalyze New Models, and other learning opportunities.

  Core Facilitators (CF) (2) – will work with PD to coordinate project activities; guide and provide oversight for school-based teams; ongoing prep work including planning and oversight of all school-based project-related activities; schedule work flow, tasks, and meetings; record-keeping of meetings and communications; goal-setting and monitoring of progress; participate in project meetings, convenings, webinars, and retreats; and assist in production of project reports and required documents. Core facilitators will participate in Barr-sponsored and convenings, broader PoG learning community activities, Catalyze New Models, and other learning opportunities.

  Site Leads (2 per school, 8 total) – Site leads will have responsibility for supporting several key activities including site-based alignment, signature experience pilot, asset maps, evaluation, and ongoing engagement with broader community. Will guide and manage school-based teams; be responsible for recruiting team members; set work plans for team, in consultation with PD and CFs; assign roles and tasks; report on progress to PD/CF; act as liaison between school-based team and project leadership; assist in development of project’s action plan; serve as facilitators and discussion leaders in community convenings and meetings; participate in research and site exchanges; present to faculty in their home school; provide ongoing constructive feedback and ideas, including through monthly check-ins with PDs and CFs. Subject to availability, site leads will participate in Barr-sponsored and convenings, broader PoG learning community activities, Catalyze New Models, and other learning opportunities.

• School-based alignment teams (6 per school, 24 team members total): Teams will include educators, and at least one administrator and staff member; Project leadership will strive to incorporate family and student voices in team composition and through community engagement.

  Team members – responsible for attending school-based team meetings; participate in PoG convenings; complete research, project activities and tasks in consultation with site-lead and project leadership. Work will focus on school-based alignment of Portrait to school improvement efforts, community outreach and engagement, and asset mapping.

• School-based signature experience teams (6 per school, 24 team members total): Teams will include educators, and at least one administrator and staff member; Project leadership will strive to incorporate family and student voices in team composition and through community engagement.

  Team members – responsible for attending school-based team and cross-school signature experience group meetings; participate in PoG convenings (summer and winter). Will complete research, project
activities and tasks in consultation with site-lead and project leadership. Work will focus on the research, development, and piloting of signature experience, and considering metrics for measurement and evaluation of target Portrait competencies.

- **Design Teams:** Will be established at each school site to offer opportunities for a broader constituency of families, students, educators, staff, and community members to participate the development and refinement of school alignment efforts, asset maps, evaluation, and signature experience. Design teams also include members of the site teams (alignment and signature experience) and will participate in cross-district collaboration and shared learning. Design teams will meet at least quarterly during grant period.

b. **Interactions among teams**

- PD and CFs will meet monthly with site-leads to chart progress, learn about work to date, manage evolving conditions, conduct community outreach, hear concerns, and problem-solve challenges.

- Summer 2021 and winter 2022 convenings will provide school-based teams opportunities to refine work plans and timelines; share accomplishments, insights, and learning; exchange around common challenges and themes; reaffirm the vision and goals of the PoG project; and re-calibrate in response to new learning, community and student feedback, and developing facts on the ground.

- As feasible, PD, CFs, and site leads will facilitate school visits and learning tours among participant schools, and participate in Barr sponsored best practices experiences and webinars.

- It is expected participating schools will engage with Springpoint for site visits that will further allow reflection on current and potential practices in each school, and across the four school network.

- As appropriate to school environment and specific project activities, PD, CFs, and site leads will facilitate intersections and shared members among school-based alignment, signature experience, and design teams.

c. **Onboarding process**

- PD and CFs will onboard site leads not previously involved in PoG as they come onto the project.

- PD and site leads will onboard team members not previously involved in PoG as they are recruited and come onto the project.

- For both site leads and team members: PD will provide an overview of the goals and vision for PoG, outcomes and outputs, work to date, detail responsibilities and expectations, and address questions. Summer 2021 convening will offer additional context for new members.

d. **Soliciting broad community feedback and including marginalized stakeholders**

- School teams will solicit feedback from families, students, alumni/ae through surveys, focus groups, drop-in sessions, and the like, with support from PD and CFs. These roles will also be embedded into each schools design team.
• School teams will prioritize including and elevating voices and perspectives of the most marginalized students and community members, as informed by experiences gained through the Design at the Margins efforts, with support from PD and CFs.

• Summer convenings and design teams will provide an avenue to include the perspectives, aspirations, and experiences of families, students, alumni/ae, community members, particularly from marginalized and underrepresented groups.

3. a. Distinguishing PoG from other regional initiatives

• In spring 2020, BCETF launched the Berkshire Remote Learning Initiative (BRLI) to address an immediate critical need precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic – namely, schools’ need to pivot to remote learning. BRLI has also highlighted the standing need for robust, cross-district professional development and enhanced peer-to-peer collaboration among the region’s educators.

• Other Berkshire regional education initiatives are focused on addressing emerging needs around enrollment decline and school finance, within the context of municipal politics and DESE oversight. While these regional initiatives are distinct from the PoG, we feel they can provide important waypoints and intermediate steps towards a more comprehensive vision of high school education in the Berkshires.

b. Aligning PoG with related regional initiatives

• BCETF’s aims and specific initiatives, such as BRLI, align strongly with PoG Phase II. Through BRLI, ongoing regional professional development, and initiatives such as Brainworks, area educators have the opportunity to work together across district boundaries, to consider how student learning can best be supported using diverse methods and tools, and to rethink collectively how we meet students where they are and support student growth, preparation, and aspirations. This growth and change mindset is crucial as we move into PoG Phase II.

• BCETF believes that other regional initiatives, in partnership with the Superintendent’s Roundtable and BCETF, align strongly with PoG Phase II as stakeholders signal a readiness for change, a dissatisfaction with the status quo, and an openness to fresh thinking.

c. The Portrait of a Graduate as a “North-Star”

• The Portrait encapsulates the desires and aspirations of Berkshire communities for our students. PoG follows a grass-roots, community-driven engagement model that should inform and be replicated in other regional work. Rather than starting with a set solution, the PoG process generates solutions and reveals common aspirations through wide community participation. Thus, this model is a North Star for other regional/collaborative work and will drive BCETF’s agenda in the coming months. Ultimately, BCETF wants to see the Portrait vision fully embraced by each district, woven into curricula across the County, and used to inform change and chart future directions in Berkshire P-12 education.

4. a. Anticipating and addressing potential challenges

• Leadership and school buy-in: BCETF has reached out to schools that participated in PoG Phase I to ascertain their interest in future PoG work. Schools have responded with enthusiasm. BART, Drury, Pittsfield HS, and Taconic HS have already indicated full commitment to Phase II. The other, Lee MHS, is a small district currently managing multiple COVID-related demands. Lee’s principal and superintendent have expressed strong interest, but have requested a delayed entry into the project.
BCETF plans to work with Lee to keep their school leadership engaged and will involve Lee site lead in network meetings and activities, to provide a through-line for future involvement in PoG.

- Community buy-in is the most essential determinant for the success of PoG Phase II. BCETF sees signs that Berkshire County is at a critical moment. Due to various factors, communities and schools seem to be tilting towards change. We plan to build on and leverage this momentum through multiple community engagement activities, outlined above. While the COVID pandemic has exacerbated strains on schools and communities, it has also opened the door for renewed thinking about the what, how, and why of high school education in the Berkshires.

- Schools’ experiences this year with remote learning have created opportunities to think differently about learning possibilities, such as shared advanced, elective, and dual enrollment courses. Local and school efforts this year have provided more Berkshire students access to technological resources and high-speed broadband. Barriers such as travel time and geographical location seem less daunting than they did pre-pandemic.

- Our summative report notes logistical challenges regarding aligning different school calendars, schedules, policies, and governance structures. We feel that collaborative work and engagement through PoG Phase II will build additional capacity and resources to effectively meet these challenges. This collaborative capacity will enable schools to find creative ways to address these and other logistical challenges, for example, by motivating schools to explore different schedules to accommodate signature experiences.

5. a. Expertise, resources, supports

- The Berkshire PoG team anticipates the need for additional expertise in the areas of community engagement, marketing and communications, asset mapping, evaluation of competencies, and ongoing change management. As mentioned, we hope to learn from organizations such as Springpoint, which has extensive experience working with teams to launch and implement Portrait projects.

- We have greatly benefitted from our participation in the PoG learning community this year, and would value future opportunities for collaboration, collective thinking, and learning from exemplar and network PoG schools.

- We have appreciated presentations from exemplar schools, and would value the opportunity to participate in learning tours of exemplar schools, if conditions allow for travel this year.

b. BCETF areas of strength

- Clear mission and purpose
- Highly collaborative
- Inclusive of a variety of stakeholders, specifically, educators, school leaders, business community, regional planners, local and regional philanthropic organizations, community-based organizations
- Regarded as a trusted partner to local schools, school leaders, educators, and families
- Only Berkshire education organization utilizing a long-range, cross-district, regional approach
- Has built a broad, inclusive regionwide network of allies and partners
- Has engaged in a five-year learning journey to develop deep understanding of the regional challenges for public K-12 education and to identify potential solutions
- Work backed by comprehensive, research-based analysis of conditions, trends, and projections
Region illustrates on a manageable scale many of the challenges for K-12 education in New England – includes rural and urban, high-income and low-income, privileged and marginalized communities

Berkshire County well-positioned to act as a regional learning laboratory

Growing awareness in region of challenges for public education and increased public will for thinking differently about how Berkshire students “do” (experience) high school

6. What will Berkshire students say about their high school experience?

In five years, we hope that a representative Berkshire graduate will say that their high school experience was one where:

- They were valued, respected, and heard
- Allows them to articulate and put into practice cultural competency skills
- Had an active role to play in their own learning
- Engaged in learning that challenged them to be their best
- Their individual talents, abilities, and interests were recognized and developed
- Discovered new things about themselves and were surprised by what they could do
- Know how to get involved in their communities and how to make positive change
- Feel prepared, ready, and confident about the next phase of their lives

C. Outcomes and Outputs

Outcomes

- **Increase community capacity and public will for change:** Through community and stakeholder engagement and asset mapping, the project core and school-based teams will mobilize community voices in and endorsement for the Portrait and associated Phase II activities including school alignment efforts and signature experience pilots. Surveys, interviews, testimonials, feedback from community members and key stakeholders will indicate enthusiasm and affirmation for the vision and direction of the project.

- **Increase cross-district alignment and integration of community resources:** Through school-based alignment and asset mapping, the project will facilitate cross-district collaboration and integration of holistic community resources to support students. Evidence will include, for example, a jointly designed (by participant schools) signature experience that includes integration of community resources and partners (non-profit, business, social service) in the final pilot. Interviews, focus groups, and convenings will collect affirmation of the need for and interest in future cross-district and community collaborative and integrated approaches.

- **Illuminate elements needed to fully implement Berkshire PoG:** Through Phase II work, discover and catalyze elements needed to implement Berkshire PoG more deeply and broadly, increase educator knowledge of PoG competencies, and identify how PoG elements can be woven throughout school curricula, design, and strategic planning. Use project activities (such as the signature experience) to leverage school-level discussions about PoG competencies and set groundwork for developing rubrics to reinforce and assess PoG competencies more widely (and consistently) across the school and community.

- **Increase school and community readiness:** Increase capacity and readiness for schools to embrace and fully implement Portrait vision in curricula, school improvement, and redesign efforts. By the end of the grant period, *at least one* Berkshire high school will be ready for and commit to the next phase of high school redesign, reflecting the aims of the Berkshire PoG.
 Outputs

- **Broad Community Input and Stakeholder Engagement:** By January 2022, BCETF will host two major convenings to review PoG vision and goals, work to date, and future directions. Throughout the grant period, project leadership and school-based design teams will gather input from a broad and representative range of community stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, community forums, interviews, and the like, with a particular focus on engaging the voices and perspectives of marginalized community members.

- **Creation of Alignment and Action Plans:** By the end of school year 2021-2022, each participant school will complete an action plan that provides a comprehensive overview of alignment improvement efforts and activities, and establishes a five-year vision statement highlighting 2-3 priorities that outline how the Portrait will be used to advance school improvement, reform, and redesign.

- **Develop Asset Maps:** By June 2022, core team and school-based teams will complete asset maps of current efforts within each school and across the community (in partner organizations and agencies). These maps will identify and describe activities, cross-walked to specific Portrait competencies, to capture a full understanding of school/community resources, initiatives, and shared opportunities.

- **Signature Experience:** By the end of school year 2021-2022, a subset of exemplary signature experiences will be researched, developed, and piloted with a single cohort at each participant school. Signature experiences will be mapped against target Portrait competencies, will include community partnerships (informed by asset maps), and will incorporate early stage metrics and evaluation tools. Designing at the Margins principles will inform signature experiences in order to engage a broad range of students, beyond students who typically participate in high-impact learning opportunities.

D. Project budget – attached

E. Supporting documents

   a. Organization budget approved by the Board for the fiscal year – attached

   b. Most recent audited financial statements – attached