Section 1: Statement of National Need

Avery. Jayden. Addison. Three children in the same 3rd grade class. They have the same teacher. They ride the same bus home each day. However, by the end of the year only **one of the three** will be reading at or above grade level. The other **two** will struggle academically in coming years; their learning trajectories falling short. Third grade reading is an indicator of future academic success, and two of these students likely will not be ready for or successful in college[1] (Lesnick, 2010). Nationally, by 4th grade only 35.6% of rural public school students are meeting reading achievement levels (NCES, 2015[2]). When we examine other factors like poverty, family education, rurality, ethnicity and race we see further gaps. The **overall numbers** nationally don't change and have not changed for nearly a generation (NAEP, 2019). It is imperative that rural residents and leaders rally together to combat the 3rd grade reading deficit in their communities. Rural libraries are uniquely positioned for this 3rd grade reading challenge.

Partners for Education at Berea College (PFE) has for 20+ years worked to improve educational outcomes in Appalachian Kentucky, a 54-county area that is the most impoverished in the United States. We operate as a rural anchor. Our Rural Anchor model is embedded in the Partners for Education Rural Library Anchor Framework in Supporting Documents 1. We are deeply committed to our place and we implement programs, we build capacity of rural residents, leaders and organizations, and we align multi-sector partners and systems to accelerate outcomes for youth, cradle to career. Annually, we leverage $42 million to support **learning as a driver of success** in rural Appalachia. Research—and our own experiences—tells us young children and youth in rural communities **do not** succeed educationally at the same rates as non-rural students; they graduate high school and attend college at lower rates,[3] which impacts life-long earning potential. In today's economic environment, high school graduates with no college degree earn nearly 40% less ($37,336 vs. $61,828) than those who have a college degree.[4]

This project, Rural Library Anchors, which is aligned to the IMLS strategic goal of **building capacity,** builds on the Partners for Education Rural Anchor Framework and our 2019 IMLS planning grant. The IMLS planning grant provided an opportunity for us to engage 12 rural libraries from across the nation and work together to modify the Partners for Education Rural Anchor Framework to fit rural libraries. This project builds on that work and recognizes that rural libraries are anchors within their community. This project follows the historic lead of local libraries to come to the aid of the peoples and places they serve (Orlean, 2018). We will use a **community catalyst** process to pilot the Rural Library Anchor Framework with rural libraries across the nation with the goal of building organizational capacity of participating libraries while positively impacting 3rd grade reading in the libraries' rural communities.

Current, nationally significant challenge presented and how it was identified

This project addresses a nationally significant challenge central to economic mobility and success in rural America - 3rd grade reading proficiency. As noted by Lesnick et al.[5] (2010), *the ability to read on or above grade level by the end of 3rd grade is a critical milestone.* The 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) saw a **decline** in meeting that post-3rd-grade mark in reading; just 35% of the nation's 4th-graders were reading at proficient levels.

Children who have not mastered the mechanics of reading by the end of 3rd grade face significant barriers to higher education access and success—and the income higher education brings. The Lesnick longitudinal study stands and has stood for a decade as the most compelling call to action. Briefly,

- Less than 20% of students who were reading **below** grade level at the end of 3rd grade attended college.
- About a third of students who **met** grade level in reading at the end of 3rd grade attended college.
- Nearly 60 percent of students who were reading **above** grade level at the end of 3rd grade attended college.[6]

In rural America it is imperative that we improve our college success rate. More than 1 million students graduated high school in 2018; of that number 195,752 were rural. **Rural graduates transitioned to college at**
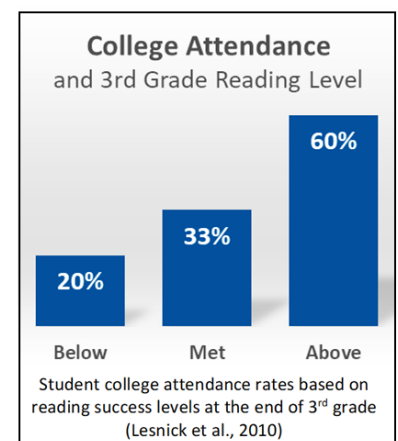
a rate 25% below high-income, non-rural groups.[7] The first step in addressing this disparity is to address the 3rd grade reading challenge. We must ensure that our rural students can read at grade level in the 3rd grade.
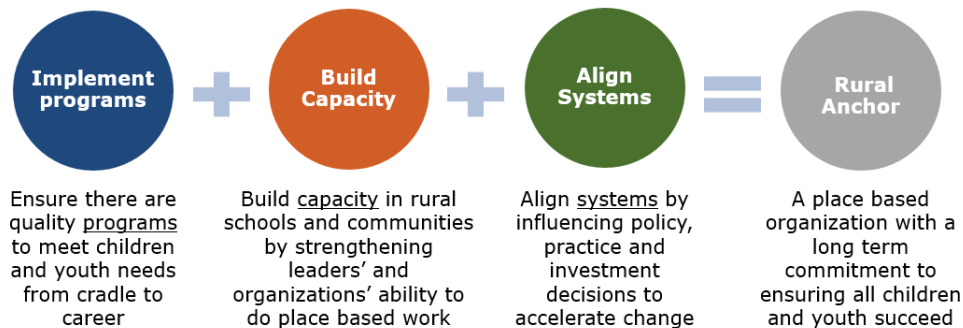
Building upon existing theory and practice

Partners for Education is a rural community anchor and we have proven approach for improving 3rd grade reading outcomes in rural America. Third grade-level reading proficiency has increased in our rural Appalachian region by eight percentage points since 2013. Notably, 3rd grade reading in our high poverty, rural region now exceeds the state by six percentage points.

The focus of our 2018-19 IMLS planning grant was to obtain feedback on the Partners for Education Rural Anchor Framework from rural librarians from around the nation. That input resulted in a *Rural Library Anchor Framework (Framework)* for catalyzing 3rd grade reading. We hypothesize that rural libraries who use the Framework will become rural anchors that support 3rd grade reading by implementing effective programs, building capacity of families and the community to support 3rd grade reading, and aligning multiple sectors around an action plan to ensure all 3rd graders in the community are reading at level.

Our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* builds upon three specific elements – our understanding of rural community anchors, our informed theory on the role of rural libraries, and our rural expertise in accelerating 3rd grade reading – as described below:

Framework for rural anchors. In rural America, rural anchors must do more than provide programs. Rural Anchors must also build capacity of residents, of leaders, and of local organizations. Rural Anchors must convene stakeholders from multiple sectors, and align these stakeholders around a shared plan of action. Our Rural Anchor Framework has developed from our 20+ years of practice and has been refined through our engagement with the Anchor Institutions Taskforce, StriveTogether's Cradle to Career Network and the Annie E. Casey Foundation Results Count™[8] Hub Network. Our practical experience and knowledge of rural places combined with the technical assistance from our partners, led us to formalize **our Rural Anchor Framework**.

Implement programs	+	**Build Capacity**	+	**Align Systems**	=	**Rural Anchor**
Ensure there are quality programs to meet children and youth needs from cradle to career		Build capacity in rural schools and communities by strengthening leaders' and organizations' ability to do place based work		Align systems by influencing policy, practice and investment decisions to accelerate change		A place based organization with a long term commitment to ensuring all children and youth succeed

Partners for Education Rural Anchor Framework

Executive Director Dreama Gentry—an AECF Children and Family Fellow and a national thought-leader on rural issues—is the architect for PFE, growing the organization from 1½ employees to nearly 500 staff, contractors, and service members working toward student success. Gentry and the Partners for Education Rural Impact team provide coaching and technical assistance to rural leaders and rural organizations seeking to accelerate their impact as rural anchors.

Informed Theory on Role of Rural Libraries. We work daily in rural Appalachian counties, where "going to town" means a 45-minute drive to a town of fewer than 15,000 people. There are few movie theaters and typically only one grocery store. The local schools are often the largest employers. In our rural spaces, the local library is a fundamental partner and key to improving 3rd grade reading. Our experience in Appalachia is not unique. In rural communities across the nation, libraries are a key resource. Half of the nation's nearly 9,000 libraries (47%) are in rural areas. And, 72 percent of the U.S. is rural. Roughly 7.6 million young children and students in our target group—aged birth to 9 years old—live in a rural community. Rural libraries are suited to champion this target group—rural, low-income children and students who are not yet on the continuum to read

above grade level by the end of 3rd grade. Supporting and elevating this **natural role for rural libraries** will lead to community-level improvements in 3rd grade reading.

      Expertise in accelerating 3rd grade reading outcomes. For 20+ years, PFE has worked in rural spaces to move educational outcomes and is recognized nationally for our knowledge and experience. PFE is the lead partner of the nation's first Rural Promise Zone and is a rural anchor for Appalachian KY. We are committed to and regularly share our data-driven approach with rural communities nationwide through projects like the Promise Zone where we have successfully moved 3rd grade reading at school, county and regional levels. We work with national partners like the Promise Neighborhoods Institute and the Department of Education's Innovative Approaches to Literacy grantees to share our school and community based literacy models and our case management models. We recognize that in rural America there is a program gap. In our part of Appalachia, we have no United Ways, one Boys and Girls Club and no formal after-school providers. Anchors like us and rural anchors like libraries, must address this program gap, and must provide high quality programs.

Phase of maturity: Pilot

In 2019, we completed a one-year IMLS planning project to refine our Rural Anchor Framework for rural libraries interested in accelerating community-level 3rd grade reading outcomes. Through face-to-face and virtual technical assistance, we engaged twelve rural libraries from four rural, high-poverty areas. The libraries learned about our Rural Anchor Framework and provided us with practical "how to" guidance on how the framework could be modified for rural libraries. The deliverable from the planning grant was our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* (see Supporting Documents 1) which outlines roles that rural libraries can assume in moving population level outcomes like 3rd grade reading, readiness factors to determine library's competencies in role, and an equitable results action plan sequence that optimizes the assets of rural libraries. In this catalyst project, we will pilot the *Rural Library Anchor Framework* with 22 Library Fellows: 20 libraries that are ready to assume the role of contributor to 3rd grade reading; 1 library that is ready to assume the role of strategy lead for 3rd grade reading, and; 1 library that is ready to assume the role of backbone to support 3rd grade reading.

Project category: Catalyst

Our project category is the community catalyst method because of the high-level of engagement and reach it provides at a local level. Our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* is community driven and, like collective impact, shows promise of creating population change in a community by improving community-level 3rd grade reading outcomes.[9]

Section 2: Project Design

PFE is a Rural Anchor. We work in numerous communities to help rural students succeed. In rural places reading proficiency at 3rd grade is vital to adult success. It is a gateway (or a gatekeeper) to college and the increased income and economic mobility it brings. Our own Rural Anchor Framework is an innovative and structured approach bringing government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organizations and citizens together to achieve significant and measurable change **around community indicators like 3rd grade reading**.[10] We implement quality programs, build capacity of stakeholders and residents around a significant community concern like 3rd grade reading; and then align efforts, create an equitable action plan and set targets. Our Rural Anchor Framework has proven effective in improving 3rd grade reading outcomes in our rural communities.

Assumptions, goals, risks, and benefits

Libraries anchor rural places. They are essential partners in improving educational outcomes in rural places. Our 2018-19 IMLS planning grant engaged libraries who had an interest in impacting 3rd grade reading. The librarians were key to the development of our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* which forms the foundation of this Pilot. Our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* is informed by our experience, by our rural librarian partners' expertise in supporting 3rd grade reading, and our national partners who are experts in literacy, collective impact and anchor organizations.

      We further hypothesize that, in rural places, **libraries are fundamental partners and essential to improving 3rd grade reading**. With a clear framework for action, libraries can implement effective programs, build capacity of residents, families and schools and align partners to improve 3rd grade reading. Our Pilot

recognizes that when addressing a community issue like 3rd grade reading, rural libraries can assume one of three roles. They can serve as a **contributor** to the community focus on 3rd grade reading. They can serve as a **strategy lead** for the community focus on 3rd grade reading. Or, they can serve as the **backbone** for the community's focus on 3rd grade reading. **The pilot will engage 22 rural libraries as Rural Library Fellows.** Our inaugural Rural Library Fellows were instrumental to the success of our planning grant, and encouraged us to use this same fellowship process for this pilot.

Twenty of the Rural Library Fellows will be focused on the library's role in serving as a contributor to 3rd grade reading. One Rural Library Fellow will be focused on the library's role as a strategy lead for 3rd grade reading. And, one Rural Library Fellow will be focused on the library's role as the backbone organization for 3rd grade reading. Each library, as a member of our Rural Library Fellowship, will complete an organizational development plan for the library and an equitable action plan for their community. Three case studies will be conducted. One case study for each role – contributor, strategy lead, backbone.

Our goal is success, which will look different at different levels. At the organizational level of the library, success will be improvement in the library's readiness to assume their role in the community-wide effort. At the community level, success will be improvement in 3rd grade reading. (***See the logic model in Supporting Documents 2)***. Effectiveness will include the creation and implementation of organizational development plans to strengthen the library in role and equitable action plans that move the community toward improved 3rd-grade reading outcomes. To simplify, we will see two pathways to success. Each library will show success by meeting project **and** individual performance benchmarks throughout the 3-year project.

The key risk for our project is capacity—organizational capacity of the library and individual capacity of the librarian —to step into working in new and different ways. Our mitigation strategies include a strong **selection process** that ensures that the library and their librarian are prepared for participation in the pilot. Recognizing that rural libraries and their librarians will enter the pilot with multiple competencies, the pilot includes individualized coaching and **capacity building supports**. These are described below. Our steps for remediation, by far, will outweigh the risks; that is, by strengthening the capacity and leadership abilities of rural libraries and librarians and arming them with the *Rural Library Anchor Framework*, they will develop organizational and individual capacity to support 3rd grade reading and other issues in their rural communities. Another risk was identified by the rural librarians that participated in our planning project—the lack of financial resources in high-poverty rural communities. This risk will be addressed through the inclusion of a fiscal mapping process. See below.

Sequence, management of activities

Our Rural Library Fellowship is the cornerstone of the pilot. As discussed above, we will engage 22 rural libraries as Fellows. We have created three paths for our Rural Library Fellows:

- 20 Rural Library Fellows will be on the Contributor path
- One Rural Library Fellow will be on the Strategy Lead path, and,
- One Rural Library Fellow will be on the Backbone path.

All Rural Library Fellows will have a shared experience. All will **use our prototype *Rural Library Anchor Framework*** to develop organizational capacity and to advance 3rd grade reading in their community. All will participate in our annual Rural Library Summit, quarterly webinars, and coaching calls. As they work through their plans and apply the *Rural Library Anchor Framework* in their home communities, all Fellows will provide ongoing feedback on the instrument itself, sharing what worked and what did not. All Fellows will receive individualized capacity-building supports.

The implementation, testing, and refinement of our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* is foundational to this pilot. The framework was constructed in 2019 and this pilot will provide the opportunity to test this framework in diverse rural settings. We anticipate improvements to framework. For example, in our 2018-19 planning project, Library Fellows encouraged a focus on leveraging existing resources. Thus, our project design now includes a **fiscal mapping component** based on the Children's Funding Project's model[11]. The fiscal mapping component is designed to help communities identify and analyze existing resources. It provides valuable data about gaps, duplication, or opportunities to leverage resources. Partners for Education has used this fiscal mapping process in multiple rural communities focused on child level indicators like 3rd grade

reading. Our Fellows will learn the fiscal mapping process and then incorporate the process into their work with local partners.

A three-year schedule of completion is attached. Briefly, our sequence follows.

- **Year 1 (Selection, Preparation).** Our 2019 national convening of library Fellows and their partners was successful. During year one of the pilot, we will replicate this in the form of a **Rural Library Summit that will bring together libraries from across rural America.** We have the capacity to conduct this Summit in person or virtually. We will engage a minimum of 50 rural libraries in the Summit. Preference will be given to rural libraries from persistent poverty places. We will ensure we have a diversity of participants (geographic and racial composition of communities served, as well as library size and type). Partners for Education has experience and expertise in hosting national rural gatherings. Our Rural College Access and Success Summit is in its third year and annually brings in 500 practitioners and educators from rural places across the nation to share best practices and build capacity in college access and success in rural America.

    The Rural Library Summit will focus on 3rd grade reading and will be organized around three strands that mirror the roles of a rural anchor: 1) implementing quality programs; 2) building capacity of families, residents and communities to support 3rd grade reading, and; 3) aligning systems and sectors within a community around 3rd grade reading.

    During the Summit we will share information about the *Rural Library Anchor Framework* and the Rural Library Fellowship. **By February**, the libraries will submit a letter of interest to join the Fellowship along with a proposal identifying the role they seek to play in their community – **contributor, strategy lead, backbone**. Over the **next 3-4 months**, we will provide professional learning about each role (virtual) and conduct a vetting process that may include site visits. We will select our 22 Rural Library Fellows **by July 2021.** The Fellowship will be a 24 month commitment. Our inaugural Library Fellows, our partners and our evaluators will be engaged through this process.

- **Years 2-3.** By August 2021, all Fellows will be fully engaged **and** will be providing us ongoing feedback **to iteratively improve the *Rural Library Anchor Framework***. They will benchmark their organizational development plans and their equitable action plan performance measures, work collegially with peers (online), and receive site visits from program staff. In spring 2023, we will begin a process of gradual release with our Fellows, building supports that will help them continue the focused work in 3rd grade reading but also continuing to solicit performance information and feedback on the *Rural Library Anchor Framework*. Beginning in **May 2023**, our evaluators will begin analysis for their summative findings by levels of organizational capacity, the type of role played, and demographic factors that might impact outcomes (e.g., poverty, geography, size, type). Rural Library Summits will be held both years to continually engage Fellows, and to bring other libraries into the conversation while disseminating findings.

    Project management will include a **full-time coordinator** (100% FTE) paid from IMLS funds, as well as three Partners for Education staff with expertise in the Rural Anchor Framework, paid from non-IMLS funds. Each month, project staff and partners will provide technical assistance, online learning, and virtual coaching with all Fellows; as well as conduct data collection and continuous improvement and refinement of the framework. PFE has successfully administered federal programs for over 20 years, and currently manages and evaluates projects at a regional and national level totaling more than $42 million annually. Financial and project management skills are entrenched within our overall processes.

Project success, national impacts, collaborators, and experts

Our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* was thoughtfully and iteratively designed with ongoing feedback from rural librarians who participated in our planning grant as well as our national partners who are experts in early literacy, collective impact and organizational development. Our pilot is designed to test the Framework, refine the Framework and disseminate our Framework and findings.

Formative evaluation of our pilot's performance and implementation measures, will begin in January 2021, and will **test, inform, and improve the design**. In addition, each library will be developing their organizational capacity and will be working with a dozen or more local partners to focus on improving 3rd grade reading, including governments, schools, businesses, and nonprofits. Our key collaborators in this pilot are our Fellows, the 22 rural libraries themselves, who will be from 22 different rural communities across the country.

Key to our success in the pilot are two of our foundational partners. StriveTogether and Save the Children are two **renowned organizations** who each bring their expertise and, importantly, their national reach for potential replication and inclusion.

- **StriveTogether** is a national nonprofit that brings communities together to find solutions for children from cradle to career and they do so in 29 states and Washington DC, reaching 13.7 million children through 10,800 organizations. StriveTogether incorporates collective impact into its model using 4 entwined approaches: engaging the community, advancing equity, developing a culture of continuous improvement, and leveraging existing assets. Their work to this point has been mostly in urban and suburban spaces. StriveTogether will commit in-kind resources to this project through staff time and access to resources.

- **Save the Children** is an international charitable service agency that reaches 130 million children annually. Since 1932 Save the Children has focused its work in the US in high-poverty, rural areas. Their focus has been and remains on helping the nation's most vulnerable children: a) become ready for kindergarten, and b) excel by 3rd grade. To do this, Save the Children works in dozens of counties in our region as well as states throughout the U.S. They work directly with parents and children, schools, governments, and more. Save the Children is our partner on accelerating 3rd grade reading. Their early literacy programs are proven effective in rural communities. Save the Children will provide both in-kind and cash funds through staff support, book donations, and other means.

Finally, we—Partners for Education at Berea College—are an expert at this rural table. Our team works every day in high-poverty, rural communities to move children toward success. Our current initiatives include tried-and-true projects like GEAR UP and Upward Bound. Early literacy is core to our work, including PreK bookmobiles, mitigation for childcare deserts, and statewide family engagement activities to bolster child outcomes. We are national conveners of rural thought leaders, schools, libraries, policymakers, and more. And we go where the thinkers are, including our frequent visits to Washington DC to work with policy specialists and rural influencers each year. Our Executive Director Dreama Gentry—a product of rural Appalachia—is a national speaker on the needs of rural communities and is a sought after expert on how **place-based anchors** use tools and processes to align programs and systems that can positively impact outcomes for children.

Target communities, perspectives, input, validation, and consensus building

Our IMLS planning project in 2018-19 included Library Fellows from rural, high-poverty communities in four nationally diverse regions: Eastern Puerto Rico, Southwest Florida, Southeastern Kentucky, and the South Carolina Low Country. This initial Fellow cohort included public libraries, school libraries and university libraries. We found that all fellows required intensive capacity building. A majority of the Library Fellows **needed extensive support and capacity building** to fully step into roles as rural anchor organizations. Our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* was **greatly improved** by observing their struggles to build capacity within their community and to align multiple systems to support 3rd grade reading.

Our model for this IMLS project includes an enhanced selection process that includes a plan to market the Library Fellow opportunity widely and that differentiates participation by the role the library seeks to play in accelerating 3rd grade reading outcomes. Our November 2020 Rural Library Summit will be pivotal in spreading the word of this opportunity. We have the networks, partners and communication infrastructure needed to engage rural libraries from across the nation in our Summit. At the Summit, libraries will be introduced to the Rural Library Fellowship opportunity and will receive a fellowship application that includes our **Readiness Assessment** (attached in Supporting Documents 1). Technical assistance will follow for those wishing to move forward with a February 2021 deadline for the applications. Once applications are submitted project staff will work with our partners, including representatives from the planning group of Library Fellows, to review the applications and select our 22 Rural Library Fellows. The final portfolio of Fellows will be intentionally selected by July 2021 and will represent the diversity of rural America and of rural libraries. These intentional selection steps that include our readiness assessment will greatly increase our pilot's success. We have significantly revamped our selection criteria since our planning grant and this continuous improvement is part of who we are.

Indicators of success, evaluation and performance measures, maturity, and adaptation

Success will be seen in the validated *Rural Library Anchor Framework* as well as organizational and project performance measures using both a formative and summative evaluation. REACH of Louisville will serve as the third-party evaluator consultant and will lead an evaluation team that includes Lead Researcher and Evaluator, Ben Birkby, Psy.D.; and our Associate Director of Analytics, Jillian Atherton, Ed.D., LPCC-S (resumés attached), and the PFE Data Analytics team. Birkby and Atherton bring decades of subject matter expertise in rural evaluation and have evaluated multiple projects in rural America that use community collaboration as a tool. The evaluation will examine how implementation of the *Rural Library Anchor Framework* by a rural library contributes to: 1) community-level 3rd grade reading outcomes, and; 2) contributes to the library's organizational capacity. The **evaluator's guiding questions** are attached. Pre and post-surveys of all Fellows will be conducted to measure project success. Key performance measure questions are:

- My organization is better prepared to provide a program or service that addresses 3rd grade reading.
- My organization is better able to engage my community in improving 3rd grade reading.
- My organization is better prepared to develop and maintain on-going relationships with community partners to increase 3rd grade reading.
- My organization is better prepared to share knowledge and other resources as an active contributor to problem solving in the community on 3rd grade reading.
- The library offers programs, services, or resources that address 3rd grade reading outcomes.

An additional performance measure the evaluation team will assess is annual changes to the readiness criteria scores for each Fellow. Annual reviews of the readiness criteria will provide formative evaluation and technical assistance opportunities to build the capacity of each library to augment the equitable results action plan and catalyze 3rd grade reading outcomes. Finally, Birkby and Atherton will work with us in the fall of 2020 to determine other performance measures to inform continuous improvement efforts and understand project success using a 5-step method (table, below). Federal and project measures will include a timeline of criterion/rubrics, percentages, number counts, ratios, rates, and ongoing audits of the evaluation process. An *Example of Objective and Performance Measure Design* also is attached.

The StriveTogether Theory of Action will provide the structure for the evaluation and performance measurements related to the library's organizational capacity and serves as a reference document to guide, review, and maintain accountability of work. Using the Strive Together Theory of Action, the evaluation team will develop criteria/rubrics to answer the guiding and arising questions. While the overall project is certainly at the piloting maturing level, each participating library will work through its own levels of maturity; evaluation methods will be appropriate and applicable to three respective maturity phases:

Developing project measures	
Step 1	How much did we do?
Step 2	How well did we do it?
Step 3	Is anyone better off?
Step 4	What are the headline measures (reliable data)
Step 5	Data dev. agenda—a priority list of measures

- **Exploring & Emerging Gateway (Yr.1):** Interviews; case studies; attendance; records collection; evidence of common vision; partnership roles and funding agreements; communication methods; community needs/strengths/assets assessment; data collection plans; data sharing; mitigating challenges and reducing barriers plans; effort-impact matrix.
- **Sustaining & Systems Change Gateways (Yr.2)**: Evidence of goal implementation across all pillars of equitable action plan; communication examples of continuous improvement; evidence of cross-sector collaboration and consistent use of continuous improvement across partners; data reviews and defining "success"; successes and barriers; data sharing between cross-sector partners, data collection plans implementation, strategies documentation; meeting minutes; interviews.
- **System Transformation Gateway (Yr. 3):** Quantitative data analyses 3rd grade reading; interviews; sustainability planning and implementation; evidence of documented strategies to increase services and engagement for underserved populations.

We will use evaluation tools to determine areas of success and opportunities for improvement, and to provide recommendations for improved performance. Based on evaluation results, adaptations to project design

and resource allocation will be made in collaboration with grant leadership and stakeholders, accordingly. Our team will operate with flexibility and responsiveness with the evaluation design; our experience tells us unanticipated results will be seen in some data, and we will adapt some of the evaluation questions/methods to fit the conceptual areas identified to ensure we understand not only the impact of the *Rural Library Anchor Framework* but modifications and refinement needed to the framework.

Sharing findings, artifacts

Partners for Education has a dedicated marketing and communications team that will create and share project results. We will share project findings with Library Fellows via email, webinars, and at the culminating Rural Library Summit. We will share our key artifact, the *Rural Library Anchor Framework,* publicly through white paper dissemination, and at national briefings, meetings and conferences including the StriveTogether national convening and our own Rural College Access and Success Summit. Most importantly, we are creating a section of our website where we will share the Framework and the supporting document created during our pilot – webinars, assessments, PowerPoint presentations and curricula. And more importantly, we are **in discussions with StriveTogether and Save the Children** and will assist them in providing the *Rural Library Anchor Framework* to the libraries they partner with across the nation. Our Dissemination Plan follows and outlines the items, mechanisms, and timelines for sharing resources across other areas.

Dissemination Plan

What	Mechanism (How)	Who	When
Registration Flyer for the Rural Library Summit	Email, Press Releases, PFE website, partners, national rural serving orgs	Rural libraries across the nation; National partners	Sept. 2020
Proceedings of the Rural Library Summit	PFE website, emails to attendees	Rural libraries and rural serving organizations; Summit Participants	Annually
Webinar and presentations on selection criteria	Webinar and presentation archived on website	Libraries interested in applying as library Fellow	Nov. to Jan. 2021
Map of Rural Library Fellows	Website, press releases	Applicants to fellowship, Summit attendees, general public	July 2021
Training and TA for Library Fellows	Webinars and presentations archived on website	Participants, IMLS	July 2021, ongoing
Rural Library Anchor Framework	Website, Email, Webinars	General Public	Nov. 2020+
	National Convening	Participants, partners	Annually
	White Paper, Website, Press Releases	Public, targeted associations	Oct. 2023
	Other National Conferences	Public, Rural audiences	Aug. 2022+
	Final Report	IMLS	Oct. 2023
Findings from our Evaluation	Email and website	Participants, partners, IMLS	Nov. 2020
	White Paper, Website	Public, National Partners	Oct. 2023
	Presenting at National Conferences w/librarians (co-presenting on the *Rural Library Anchor Framework* research)	• Assoc. for Rural & Small Libraries • Nat. Rural Ed. Assoc. • Forum to Adv. Rural Ed. (Battelle) • Rural College Access & Success Summit (PFE) • Rural School & Community Trust	2/year (2021+) attended by project staff, librarians
	Case Studies	IMLS, General Public	Oct. 2023
	Final Report	IMLS	Oct. 2023

Section 3: Diversity Plan

Our project will test and pilot our newly developed *Rural Library Anchor Framework*. This first-ever tool was designed through a yearlong engagement with rural librarians in four states (IMLS planning grant).

Underserved communities

Rural communities struggle to build a modern economy and sustain middle-class workers and salaries. Rural Americans work hard but struggle to get ahead. Rural poverty out paces the rest of the U.S., and rural communities are more likely communities of persistent poverty—that is, communities where poverty rates top 20% for 3 decades or more.[12] Today, more than 10 million rural Americans live in high poverty rural and small towns. Children in rural areas are more likely to live in a household of poverty, and minorities in rural areas tend to have lower incomes overall.[13] As noted by the University of New Hampshire's Carsey Institute, "More than one in five young rural white children are poor, as are more than two in five young rural Hispanic children; however, this affects a staggering one in two young rural black children."[14]

Rural America is our underserved community. As described earlier in this narrative, families may live 45 minutes or more from a grocery store, hospital, or movie theater. The small library in the 1,000-population town is one thing that ties people together. Selected libraries—chosen through a readiness assessment process - will all share significant issues around unemployment, poverty, limited access to services, remoteness, and under education. These communities will be connected through participants and project staff and will share similar performance goals related to 3rd grade reading.

Community needs, opportunities, involvement

In communities of high-poverty, education is key. Residents in rural communities achieve 4-year degrees at a much lower rate than those that live in suburban and urban areas (14 percentage points less).[15] Rural youth enroll and complete at lesser rates. The reasons are many, including additional socio-economic barriers, undereducated parents, and less-resourced schools.[16] We know that **the key to improving our rural communities begin with ensuring all rural young people read at grade level by 3rd grade.**

While research points to the gap between urban and rural degree attainment we understand the **opportunities** that can be leveraged in rural places where residents often know one another and often share a deep commitment to place. In our rural places, identifying and leveraging existing resources and aligning contributions is a strategy that will resonate with rural residents and leaders. The *Framework* will support rural libraries as they convene, align and activate their communities around 3rd-grade reading.

Section 4: National Impact

Our project is national in focus and will have national impact. Our one-year planning grant engaged rural libraries from four states in 2018-19 and our pilot will engage 22 rural libraries that represent the diversity of rural America. The annual Rural Library Summit that is core to this project will engage libraries and thought leaders from throughout the nation.

Pilot leading to systemic change

Our exploratory work in four targeted communities was completed in November 2019 and resulted in the *Rural Library Anchor Framework*. We will now reinforce and refine the initial framework in this national pilot. This will give us the evidence of feasibility required for confidence in the *Framework* and its ability to mitigate and solve targeted, local issues related to 3rd grade reading. Existing tools will be refined over the three years as indicated by our evaluation team, and additional tools will be created as needed. Our website will archive all the resources – webinars, presentations, videos, curricula – that support the implementation of the Framework.

The national impact of our project will be accelerated by our deep connections with national partners. Not only will be able to pilot the framework in 22 rural communities nationwide, we are able to shift this model **to even more national communities** via partnerships with Save the Children and StriveTogether. Save the Children has a strong presence nationally in rural and small town communities where the *Framework* can and will be employed. In addition, StriveTogether is working with us to analyze specific elements of our model. In

our planning project, we regularly discussed our progress and sought their input on the specifics of framework development. StriveTogether stands ready to support this model as it exits this pilot phase and moves to scaling at a broader level.

To be clear, our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* is a **new type** of framework that understands that each rural library will enter into the 3rd grade reading space differently. Our framework will support the rural library regardless as to whether the rural library is a contributor to 3rd grade reading in their community, or the strategy lead that is driving progress toward third grade reading, or the organization that is the backbone support to the community's 3rd grade reading campaign. The Framework recognizes that the rural library is a key player in rural communities and key to 3rd grade reading success. The Framework and the supporting materials are flexibly designed to **integrate with the habits and resources** in each rural high-poverty community. Operationalization of the Framework will look a little different in Newton, KS (pop. 18,869) than in Newton, MS (pop. 3,373), or Newton, NH (pop. 4,603). Rural libraries will now have a method and process to work with that recognizes the variety of the resource groups in their own, home places. After all, the historic role of rural libraries has been one of response. Librarians respond to the questions of patrons. And they try to anticipate coming needs and questions. This new model recognizes that **libraries are core** to a targeted set of work on 3rd grade reading.

Adaptable

Our deliverables are designed to be adaptable to a diverse set of rural communities and to rural libraries of all shapes and sizes. The *Framework* is just that, a framework to guide rural libraries as they work to address the 3rd grade reading challenge in their communities. This pilot will test the adaptability of the Framework in rural communities across the country through 22 libraries working in different roles (contributor, strategy lead, backbone). We anticipate that during the pilot our evaluators will unearth aspects of the Framework that need to be modified to ensure adaptability. Our project team will be responsive and continually modify the framework while documenting our findings. Our framework will be customizable to other rural areas regardless of the state, county, or small town.

Sustaining the results

Rural libraries are our **best way** to address the 3rd grade reading challenge in rural America. As the tested and improved ***Rural Library Anchor Framework* is launched,** results will be seen and sustained at three levels: in the rural communities of our 22 Library Fellows; in the rural communities served by our partners Save the Children and StriveTogether, and in rural communities nationally.

The *Framework* will be a tool for us all—PFE, IMLS, Save the Children, and StriveTogether—to address the third grade reading challenge nationally. It is important to note that our *Rural Library Anchor Framework* will not stand alone. During pilot, a collection of resources – videos, presentations, curricula, and webinars – will be developed to serve as a roadmap to operationalizing the Framework. Just as we are testing and refining the Framework, we will be testing and refining these supporting materials. We recognize that rural libraries are desperately in need of resources and materials that are easy to use, informative and simplified. Our staff, partners and, most importantly, our Rural Library Fellows will assure that our Framework and the supporting materials are accessible, efficient and effective.

Rural America sounds small, but the U.S. Department of Agriculture says otherwise; collectively, "rural" is significant and includes **72% of the nation's land and 46 million people**.[17] It is critical that rural children and youth have the opportunity to achieve educational success. Research tells us that the first step on the journey to success is reading at grade level in 3rd grade. Rural libraries are particularly situated to build connections among people, organizations, and government and to bring the attention of all these players to the 3rd grade reading challenge. The *Rural Library Anchor Framework* and the supporting tools we are developing alongside provide a structure that augments how a rural library can approach moving the dial on third grade reading at the community level.

Completion Schedule	Year 1 Aug 2020 to July 2021												Year 2 Aug 2021 to July 2022												Year 3 Aug 2022 to July 2023											
	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J
Hiring and placement of staff, evaluation contract set	■	■	■	■																																
Summit / Library Fellow Recruitment													■	■											■	■										
Evaluation Team sets additional performance measures	■	■																																		
Readiness Criteria For Libraries Refined	■	■																																		
50 Libraries attend initial convening; serve as selection pool				■	■																															
Library Framework updated; Website / information sharing						■	■											■										■	■							
Libraries submit initial applications to participate in Pilot							■																													
TA, coaching, online learning, peer-to-peer work / Onsite visits									■	■	■																									
Libraries selected: 22 Fellows/Contributors: 1 Backbone/1 Strategy Lead										■	■																									
Evaluation Team baseline data collection of libraries, communities									■	■	■																									
Library Fellows develop Action Plans													■	■																						
Fiscal Mapping training conducted, rolled out in rural communities													■																							
Prof. learning continues (coaching, peer-to-peer)															■	■																		■		
Site visits w/ Pilot libraries (Strategy Lead, Backbone)															■	■																				
StriveTogether National Convening (Staff)																■																				
National Conferences; presents with Libraries in Yr. 2 and 3																	■																	■		
Monitoring of implementation by Evaluation Team																	■											■								
Evaluation Team conducts final Framework and project analysis																																■	■			
Ongoing feedback, adjustments, and finalization of the *Framework*														■		■		■										■								
Dissemination tools developed, used, updated w/final results																									■	■	■	■	■	■						

DIGITAL PRODUCT FORM

INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is committed to expanding public access to digital products that are created using federal funds. This includes (1) digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; (2) software; and (3) research data (see below for more specific examples). Excluded are preliminary analyses, drafts of papers, plans for future research, peer-review assessments, and communications with colleagues.

The digital products you create with IMLS funding require effective stewardship to protect and enhance their value, and they should be freely and readily available for use and reuse by libraries, archives, museums, and the public. Because technology is dynamic and because we do not want to inhibit innovation, we do not want to prescribe set standards and practices that could become quickly outdated. Instead, we ask that you answer questions that address specific aspects of creating and managing digital products. Like all components of your IMLS application, your answers will be used by IMLS staff and by expert peer reviewers to evaluate your application, and they will be important in determining whether your project will be funded.

INSTRUCTIONS

If you propose to create digital products in the course of your IMLS-funded project, you must first provide answers to the questions in **SECTION I: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS.** Then consider which of the following types of digital products you will create in your project, and complete each section of the form that is applicable.

> ### SECTION II: DIGITAL CONTENT, RESOURCES, OR ASSETS
> Complete this section if your project will create digital content, resources, or assets. These include both digitized and born-digital products created by individuals, project teams, or through community gatherings during your project. Examples include, but are not limited to, still images, audio files, moving images, microfilm, object inventories, object catalogs, artworks, books, posters, curricula, field books, maps, notebooks, scientific labels, metadata schema, charts, tables, drawings, workflows, and teacher toolkits. Your project may involve making these materials available through public or access-controlled websites, kiosks, or live or recorded programs.
>
> ### SECTION III: SOFTWARE
> Complete this section if your project will create software, including any source code, algorithms, applications, and digital tools plus the accompanying documentation created by you during your project.
>
> ### SECTION IV: RESEARCH DATA
> Complete this section if your project will create research data, including recorded factual information and supporting documentation, commonly accepted as relevant to validating research findings and to supporting scholarly publications.

SECTION I: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS

A.1 We expect applicants seeking federal funds for developing or creating digital products to release these files under open-source licenses to maximize access and promote reuse. What will be the intellectual property status of the digital products (i.e., digital content, resources, or assets; software; research data) you intend to create? What ownership rights will your organization assert over the files you intend to create, and what conditions will you impose on their access and use? Who will hold the copyright(s)? Explain and justify your licensing selections. Identify and explain the license under which you will release the files (e.g., a non-restrictive license such as BSD, GNU, MIT, Creative Commons licenses; RightsStatements.org statements). Explain and justify any prohibitive terms or conditions of use or access, and detail how you will notify potential users about relevant terms and conditions.

All materials posted on our website (Framework, videos, supporting tools, etc) are publically available and may be reproduced with Partners for Education at Berea College retaining ownership of intellectual property. Materials may be used with Partners for Education being acknowledged as the owner.

Both the website and materials for download will include prominently displayed information about the terms and conditions of use.

A.2 What ownership rights will your organization assert over the new digital products and what conditions will you impose on access and use? Explain and justify any terms of access and conditions of use and detail how you will notify potential users about relevant terms or conditions.

We expect to retain ownership of all intellectual property in the text, graphics, videos and any content posted on our website. All materials will indicate that Partners for Education at Berea College and IMLS should be acknowledged as the source, and referenced as appropriate.

A.3 If you will create any products that may involve privacy concerns, require obtaining permissions or rights, or raise any cultural sensitivities, describe the issues and how you plan to address them.

We do not anticipated any of our digital products to involve privacy concerns, require permissions or raise cultural sensitivities.

SECTION II: DIGITAL CONTENT, RESOURCES, OR ASSETS

A.1 Describe the digital content, resources, or assets you will create or collect, the quantities of each type, and the format(s) you will use.

We will create videos, handouts, pdfs of tools libraries can use to implement their action plan. The quantity is unknown as of submission of the application and will be determined as the Framework is refined.

A.2 List the equipment, software, and supplies that you will use to create the digital content, resources, or assets, or the name of the service provider that will perform the work.

We will use Adobe Creative to create digital content. We have an existing website that is managed in-house by our communications team. This team will work in collaboration with the IMLS Coordinator to load content on the website.

A.3 List all the digital file formats (e.g., XML, TIFF, MPEG, OBJ, DOC, PDF) you plan to use. If digitizing content, describe the quality standards (e.g., resolution, sampling rate, pixel dimensions) you will use for the files you will create.

All files will be loaded to our website as downloadable pdfs.

Workflow and Asset Maintenance/Preservation

B.1 Describe your quality control plan. How will you monitor and evaluate your workflow and products?

The project coordinator in collaboration with the communication team and organizational leadership will meet quarterly to review projects / digital content to be posted.
All postings are tested and reviewed prior to " going live" by department staff. Once uploaded, links are tested immediately by staff to ensure all are working. Prior to uploads our standard quality plan includes a multi-step approach that aligns on: content, functionality, contacts, and call to actions for users.

B.2 Describe your plan for preserving and maintaining digital assets during and after the award period. Your plan should address storage systems, shared repositories, technical documentation, migration planning, and commitment of organizational funding for these purposes. Please note: You may charge the federal award before closeout for the costs of publication or sharing of research results if the costs are not incurred during the period of performance of the federal award (see 2 C.F.R. § 200.461).

PFE is a well-established department at Berea College with capacity to maintain our website after the project ends. We expect to maintain resources created and related to this project after funding ends and until such time as the information is not relevant. Website costs and associated expenses are part of our annual budget. There will not be added costs to update and maintain the website information.

Metadata

C.1 Describe how you will produce any and all technical, descriptive, administrative, or preservation metadata or linked data. Specify which standards or data models you will use for the metadata structure (e.g., RDF, BIBFRAME, Dublin Core, Encoded Archival Description, PBCore, PREMIS) and metadata content (e.g., thesauri).

Metadata is not applicable to resources / digital content shared as part of this project.

C.2 Explain your strategy for preserving and maintaining metadata created or collected during and after the award period of performance.

Not Applicable

C.3 Explain what metadata sharing and/or other strategies you will use to facilitate widespread discovery and use of the digital content, resources, or assets created during your project (e.g., an API [Application Programming Interface], contributions to a digital platform, or other ways you might enable batch queries and retrieval of metadata).

Not Applicable

Access and Use

D.1 Describe how you will make the digital content, resources, or assets available to the public. Include details such as the delivery strategy (e.g., openly available online, available to specified audiences) and underlying hardware/software platforms and infrastructure (e.g., specific digital repository software or leased services, accessibility via standard web browsers, requirements for special software tools in order to use the content, delivery enabled by IIIF specifications).

Our website is available via public searches, and the non-proprietary elements of the Framework and any tools or resources created specifically for this project will be made available.

D.2. Provide the name(s) and URL(s) (Universal Resource Locator), DOI (Digital Object Identifier), or other persistent identifier for any examples of previous digital content, resources, or assets your organization has created.

An example is: https://partnersforappalachianfamilies.org/

SECTION III: SOFTWARE

General Information

A.1 Describe the software you intend to create, including a summary of the major functions it will perform and the intended primary audience(s) it will serve.

Not Applicable

A.2 List other existing software that wholly or partially performs the same or similar functions, and explain how the software you intend to create is different, and justify why those differences are significant and necessary.

Not Applicable

Technical Information

B.1 List the programming languages, platforms, frameworks, software, or other applications you will use to create your software and explain why you chose them.

Not Applicable

B.2 Describe how the software you intend to create will extend or interoperate with relevant existing software.

Not Applicable

B.3 Describe any underlying additional software or system dependencies necessary to run the software you intend to create.

Not Applicable

B.4 Describe the processes you will use for development, documentation, and for maintaining and updating documentation for users of the software.

Not Applicable

B.5 Provide the name(s), URL(s), and/or code repository locations for examples of any previous software your organization has created.

Not Applicable

Access and Use

C.1 Describe how you will make the software and source code available to the public and/or its intended users.

Not Applicable

C.2 Identify where you will deposit the source code for the software you intend to develop:

Name of publicly accessible source code repository:

Not Applicable

URL:

Not Applicable

SECTION IV: RESEARCH DATA

As part of the federal government's commitment to increase access to federally funded research data, Section IV represents the Data Management Plan (DMP) for research proposals and should reflect data management, dissemination, and preservation best practices in the applicant's area of research appropriate to the data that the project will generate.

A.1 Identify the type(s) of data you plan to collect or generate, and the purpose or intended use(s) to which you expect them to be put. Describe the method(s) you will use, the proposed scope and scale, and the approximate dates or intervals at which you will collect or generate data.

Not Applicable

A.2 Does the proposed data collection or research activity require approval by any internal review panel or institutional review board (IRB)? If so, has the proposed research activity been approved? If not, what is your plan for securing approval?

Not Applicable

A.3 Will you collect any sensitive information? This may include personally identifiable information (PII), confidential information (e.g., trade secrets), or proprietary information. If so, detail the specific steps you will take to protect the information while you prepare it for public release (e.g., anonymizing individual identifiers, data aggregation). If the data will not be released publicly, explain why the data cannot be shared due to the protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, and other rights or requirements.

Not Applicable

A.4 What technical (hardware and/or software) requirements or dependencies would be necessary for understanding retrieving, displaying, processing, or otherwise reusing the data?

Not Applicable

A.5 What documentation (e.g., consent agreements, data documentation, codebooks, metadata, and analytical and procedural information) will you capture or create along with the data? Where will the documentation be stored and in what format(s)? How will you permanently associate and manage the documentation with the data it describes to enable future reuse?

Not Applicable

A.6 What is your plan for managing, disseminating, and preserving data after the completion of the award-funded project?

Not Applicable

A.7 Identify where you will deposit the data:

Name of repository:

Not Applicable

URL:

Not Applicable

A.8 When and how frequently will you review this data management plan? How will the implementation be monitored?

Not Applicable