



Organizational Overview & Strategic Start-Up Plan

I. Context

Education is important to every community across New Mexico. Our ability to support learning, for children as well as adults, is vital for economic development, environmental sustainability, and the health and prosperity of families. Learning is an essential ingredient for navigating our changing world. As described in [Positioning for the Possible](#), a report from the New Mexico Association of Grantmakers, it is imperative that New Mexico strengthens its ability to improve our K-12 schools and the education of our children. Too often, we are left trying to adapt national models to the unique dynamics of our state and history, with little to show for our efforts. This has left our state lagging behind, hampering the well-being of our children and communities.

It is time for us to design strategies for improving education that build on our assets. We need to make sure that we are considering our cultural and linguistic diversity; our internationalism with 22 sovereign nations and a shared border with Mexico; our industry base shaped by science and technology, oil and gas, and tourism; and the geography that shapes population density across the state. We need to ensure that the adults in our schools, districts, state government, and across our communities have the information they need to make informed decisions and the support they need to excel in their roles. Most importantly, we need to be able to design for our own future.

The founding members of the *Learning Alliance of New Mexico* convened for the purpose of strategic planning from November 2011 – March 2012. The following strategic plan outlines our vision for the organization and the steps needed for the formation of a new organization. The Learning Alliance is designed to provide a place where we can have thoughtful discussions on education issues that are not dominated by the political context. It is a place where we can build upon each other's knowledge and coordinate our work to use resources as effectively as we can. It is a place where local communities and their school boards can become more informed about options for driving towards improved student achievement and school performance. The *Learning Alliance* is a place where we can draw on our multiculturalism in designing innovations and initiatives.

The *Learning Alliance* is a unique model designed to support dialogue on educational issues at both the local and state level. To that end, the *Learning Alliance* will work in partnership with local community organizations and networks of education reformers. It will build teams of leaders that draw across many cultures, using processes that are respectful of different ways of learning and knowing. It will seek out educational strategies that best take advantage of the state's assets and address the unique history and needs of our communities. At every step it will seek out ways to raise expectations and efficacy for providing our children the best education the world has to offer.

The *Learning Alliance* welcomes your thoughts, ideas and feedback. We know that we will need to make mid-course adjustments as we build the organization. It is our hope that we can create an organization that has room for all the extraordinary leaders across our state to share their ideas and work together towards providing our children with the best education the world has to offer.

Our Vision: The *Learning Alliance* believes that the children of New Mexico should have access to the best education the world can offer. We will work together to ensure that all students in New Mexico, regardless of race, cultural heritage, location, or economic class, have choices upon high school graduation that allow them to fully participate in their communities, the workplace, and across the multicultural state of New Mexico.

Our Mission: The *Learning Alliance* will create a vibrant, well-organized, effective education reform sector in New Mexico by providing:

Trustworthy Information: Credible, trustworthy resources, and data analysis to increase the effectiveness of reform efforts and leaders.

Learning Opportunities: Webinars, learning circles, and leadership development on critical education issues so that we can make informed decisions in schools, school districts, and state agencies.

Dynamic Networks: Networks of reformers mobilized around shared agendas to build public will for education reform.

Collective Leadership and Collective Impact: Coordinated and collaborative strategies to improve education and address issues important to local communities

II. A Values Driven Organization

The *Learning Alliance* has adopted the following values framework to assess the value of educational reforms:

- **Achievement & Equity:** Our most vulnerable students are at the core of our work. Educational reforms should be intentionally designed to improve educational opportunities for all students. We must design around the needs of the students with the greatest challenges to ensure reforms improve achievement for everyone.
- **World View:** New Mexico is inherently international with 22 sovereign nations and a shared border with Mexico. Our education system must be designed around a commitment to global education and multilingualism.
- **Urgency:** We value high leverage reforms that drive toward excellence. We seek to increase the capacity of districts and schools to innovate around the needs of their students. Effective use of data in decision-making, including understanding the broader context, is vital in driving for improvements.
- **Holistic:** We are student-centered recognizing that schools play a critical role in the development of our children, including academic and lifelong learning skills. We believe that social-emotional development must be taken into consideration in supporting students' academic achievement. Educational opportunities should be designed around the context of students' lives.
- **Respectful:** Education reform must take into consideration the roles and values of the many stakeholders that are central to the success of our students including:
 - o Tribal sovereignty – self-determination must be considered in shaping reforms;
 - o Children and families – their aspirations, values and resources are integral to creating dynamic school culture;

- o Teachers and educational leadership – they need supports, feedback and enabling work environments to offer excellence in teaching our children; and,
 - o Employers – they offer invaluable expertise and opportunities in ensuring our children are prepared for careers and college.
- **Asset-Based Approach to Innovation:** We believe that we must draw on the strengths of New Mexico in education reforms. We must draw from the innovators and educational leaders in our state, while effectively adapting the most promising national reforms to the New Mexico context.

III. Our Core Work

Learning Opportunities: In order for our children to achieve at high levels, adults will be expected to become active learners about educational issues. The education system depends on participation of students, parents, educators, providers, businesses and faith-based entities as well as the state legislature and Public Education Department. The *Learning Alliance* will develop multiple opportunities for people across the state to learn about educational issues. We believe that educational leadership and collaborative opportunities are developed by participation in communities of learning.

Trustworthy Information: The Alliance and key partners will offer a place to strengthen our understanding of the dynamics shaping our schools and to consider the strengths and weaknesses of national reforms. We will integrate evidence-based and data-informed models where possible, while fostering innovative efforts that yield new “best practices.” We will advance data, research, analyses, knowledge, best practices, innovation, and policies that support educational success based upon our core values.

Dynamic Networks: The Alliance will build political will by supporting the development of and mobilizing networks around shared agendas. The Alliance will design multiple opportunities for building strong, cross-cultural networks across New Mexico. We will build on pre-existing networks as well as create forums for leaders to come together around specific educational issues. We will do this through a dynamic information infrastructure, brokering new relationships, and regional and statewide forums for leadership development on educational issues.

Collective Leadership and Collective Impact: The Alliance is a strong and provocative voice for educational success. We conduct our work in collaboration and partnership by sharing opportunities to contribute with others and celebrating collective successes. Our efforts are designed to build connectivity, trust, and respect among educators. We will create opportunities for thoughtful policy analysis and development as well as coordinating initiatives.

IV. Organizational Development and Design Parameters

This section provides an overview of the values that guide our decision-making and inform our behaviors as members of the Learning Alliance. It is distinct from the values articulated in Section II above, which are the values that we use to assess educational reform ideas and proposals.

The *Learning Alliance* values transparency. Its organizational values and infrastructure will be designed to maximize nimbleness, inclusiveness, and cost-effectiveness. We anticipate that our organizational strategies and capacities will be revised over time and in response to our stage of organizational development.

A. Organizational Values

The Learning Alliance is a values-based organization that is designed to operate according to the following values:

- **Holistic:** Schooling takes place within the context of communities. Thus, we are asset-based seeking to build upon the strengths of families and communities across New Mexico. Understanding the implications of current policy silos, we will explore ways to increase access and quality of services.
- **Integrity:** We value transparency and accountability. We use data to help us understand the issues and to drive our own effectiveness. We keep the well-being of our children and improving education as the primary objectives in all that we do.
- **Inclusive:** We seek high levels of diversity in our work. We are intentional about equity and engaging of diverse ideas in our work.
- **Collaborative:** We believe that a collaborative spirit of supporting each other in our endeavors will yield improved reform ideas, expand leadership, and accelerate the pace of improvement.
- **Urgency:** We push ourselves to be as strategic as possible in working towards improved educational reforms. We seek high leverage strategies that will produce substantial improvements in learning and the performance of schools.
- **Excellence:** We strive for excellence in all that we do. We are opened minded to ideas. We are informed by, but not constrained by history.
- **Courage:** We seek bold ideas, maintain independence, and work together to ensure that our educational leaders are not hindered by retribution from political and institutional leaders.

B. Organizational Structure and Decision-Making

The *Learning Alliance* is currently a sponsored project of the **Partnership for Community Action**, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. The *Learning Alliance* structure is comprised of the following elements:

- a. The *Learning Alliance* shall take the form of a NETWORK of stakeholders interested in forwarding education reform in New Mexico.
- b. A BOARD OF DIRECTORS shall govern the Learning Alliance. The Board shall maintain an EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE that is responsible for recruiting and proposing Board membership so that it reflects the diversity of New Mexico and overseeing financial/human resource issues. The Board is responsible for hiring an EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.
- c. The Board shall establish/maintain the following COMMITTEES, which may include Board members, network members, or people with valued expertise. These committees shall include:
 - i. Network: Strategizing and proposing guidelines for ensuring that the network is reaching and effectively meeting the needs of diverse communities across New Mexico.
 - ii. Learning Opportunities: Strategizing and designing a variety of mechanisms to support adults getting the information and analysis they need to make informed decisions and shape strategies.

- iii. Research and Analysis: Identifying available and needed research and analysis that can be helpful to better understand the current educational dynamics and possible benefits of reforms.
- d. The Learning Alliance shall convene an ADVISORY COUNCIL (annually or semi-annually) of key partners and experts to inform, guide and support strategic and operational goals.
- e. The Learning Alliance Board of Directors will use CONSENSUS for decisions regarding organizational structure, mission, vision, and strategy. If consensus can't be attained, the decision will be made by a SUPERMAJORITY vote of 75% of the Directors participating in the meeting.

v. Strategic Intentions and Key Actions for Start-Up 2012-2014

The *Learning Alliance* has identified six foundational strategies for the 2012-2014 period. These are outlined below, and in subsequent tables in the following pages, in order of importance from: 1) the key drivers of our strategy; 2) intermediate strategies that shape our programmatic capacities; and, 3) elements upon which our ability to have impact and influence are strongly dependent.

Key Drivers	Intermediate Strategies	Strongly Dependent
<i>Establish a Comprehensive Vision</i>	<i>Deliver Learning Services</i>	<i>Build Local Knowledge, Skills, and Leaders</i>
<i>Develop the Organization</i>	<i>Develop the NMLA Network</i>	<i>Build Collective Leadership and Facilitate Collective Impact</i>

vi. Founding Members And Funding for the Learning Alliance of New Mexico

Please note: Organizations are included solely for the purpose of identification

- Kara Bobroff, Native American Community Academy
- Angelo Gonzales, University of New Mexico
- Everette Hill, New Mexico Forum Foundation
- Landon Mascareñaz, Teach for America
- Tony Monfiletto, ACE Leadership Charter School
- Adrian Pedroza, Partnership for Community Action
- Katarina Sandoval, South Valley Academy
- Chris Sturgis, MetisNet

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