



E³ Alliance Request for Information

**Mapping the Central Texas Education Landscape: Analysis and
Performance Modeling**

August 31, 2007

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

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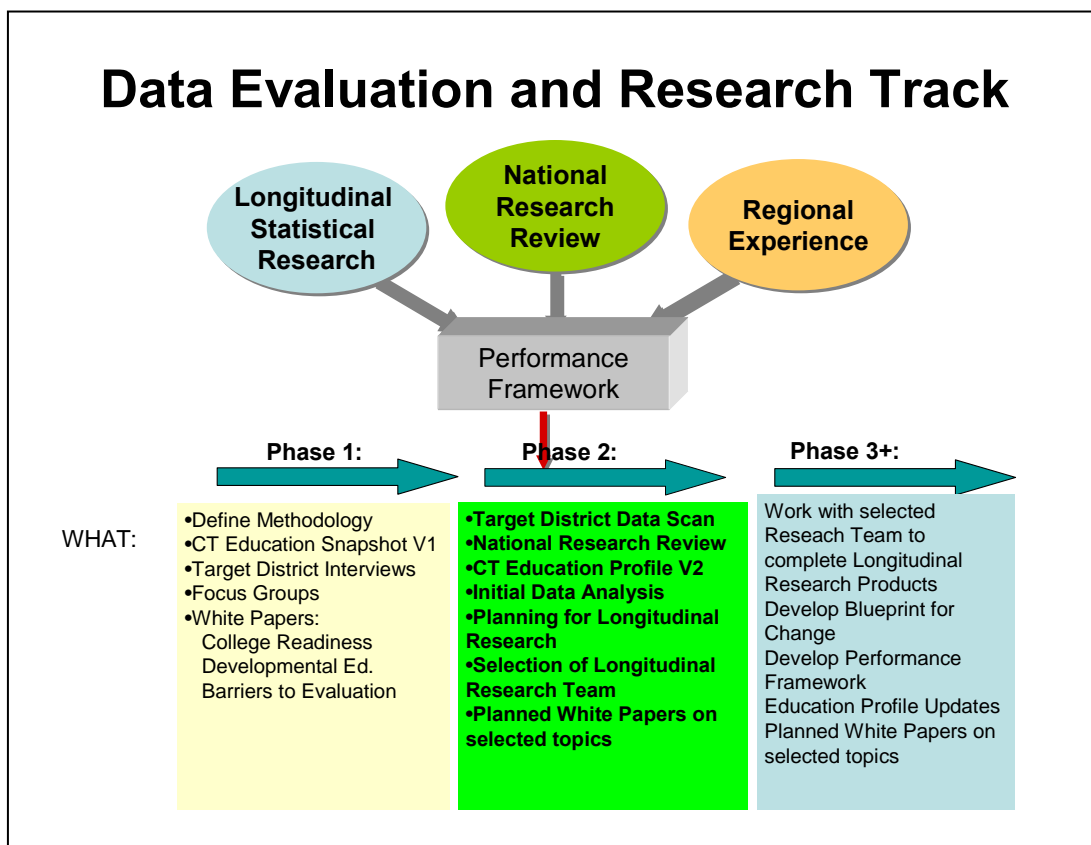
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INTRODUCTION

The Texas education system has not been keeping pace with changing economic needs for higher skill workers. According to the U.S. Census, ninety percent of the fastest growing jobs require some post-secondary education and two-thirds of the new jobs created in the next decade will require a college degree. To keep its economy viable, Texas must prepare its students to enter a competitive, global workforce. As 'low-touch' and low-skill jobs are exported to other countries and highly-educated workers join the U.S. workforce, our students face increasing competition for positions in the local economy. The Texas State Data Center expects the percentage of Texans without a high school diploma to rise from 18.8% in 2000 to 30.1% in 2040 unless we succeed in educating those populations who traditionally have not performed well in our school system.

The E³ Alliance is a regional collaborative dedicated to increasing the economic vitality of Central Texas by aligning our education systems to better fulfill the potential of every citizen. The E³ Alliance was formed in May 2006 through founding partners Austin Area Research Organization, Austin Community College, and the University of Texas. (For more information about the organization see Appendix B and visit our website at www.e3alliance.org)

The goal of the E³ Alliance is to use a **data and community-driven process** to identify high-leverage alignment opportunities throughout the Central Texas education system and be the catalyst for systemic change in the region. Below is an illustration of the E³ Alliance approach to the analysis process and to the development of critical tools to help drive successful systemic change in education.



In this Research and Data Evaluation Track, Phase 1 has been completed and Phase 2 is currently underway. The E³ Alliance plans to contract with an experienced research team for Phase 3, composed of a single or multiple research organizations to conduct a comprehensive, longitudinal study focusing on Central Texas students, to identify and prioritize the factors that have the greatest impact on student achievement and the opportunities to affect broad-scale improvements to student performance based on those factors. (Note that some deliverables in the graphic above and appearing in the glossary – such as the Performance Framework – may be sequenced beyond Phase 3. Specific sequencing of Phase 3 and beyond will be defined based on RFP responses and timing of funding streams.) A list of Central Texas districts, charter schools, and institutions of higher learning included in the research appears in Appendix A.

E³ Alliance is currently working with partnering organizations to secure the funding for this research project and estimates that the 2008 budget for this research portion of the overall project will range from \$400,000 and \$700,000.

Drawing – in part - from a “superset” of variables developed in Phases 1 and 2 that includes both indicators and outcomes, this study will answer the following research questions.

Research Questions

The research questions refer to an education continuum, depicted in the exhibit below. The exhibit depicts, on the horizontal axis, the stages comprising the education continuum ranging from Early Childhood to Workforce Entry and the transition points associated with each stage. The vertical axis lists the types of educational, community-based and economic organizations affecting this continuum.

Early Childhood	Δ	Elem	Δ	MS	Δ	HS	Δ	Post secondary	Δ	Workforce/ Prosperity
School Districts and Charters										
Higher Education Institutions										
Community-Based Organizations										
Employers (Business and Industry)										

*** Δ = transition**

1. Profile the Central Texas education continuum ranging from Early Childhood to Workforce Entry, across the categories of student demographics, student performance, district and campus characteristics, and instruction.
 - Identify the primary factors contributing to or inhibiting student outcomes.

- Identify the primary factors affecting transition along the Early Childhood to Workforce Entry education continuum.
 - Define appropriate outcomes at each stage of the continuum.
2. What are the critical problem areas (relating to performance and transition) in the Central Texas education continuum? Are the problem areas affecting student performance or transitions:
- Policy-related;
 - Resource related;
 - Due to a lack of standardization;
 - Quality-related;
 - Due to systemic breakdowns; or
 - Due to other factors?
3. What are the most effective ways to address these problem areas in the Central Texas Early Childhood to Workforce Entry education continuum?

What are regional and national examples of programs, models, or systems that effectively address these problem areas (through increase in student performance, increase in successful rates of transition, systemic fiscal efficiency)?

What are the critical characteristics of such models, programs or systems that could be used to compare to other similar programs, models or systems?

4. What types of systemic alignment in the education continuum will ensure that Central Texas remains a competitive economy?

What impact would changes, corrections and modifications in these specified problem areas have on the Central Texas economy? The analyses and prediction models should address but not be limited to:

- Rates at which regional higher education degrees awarded correspond to industry occupational needs.
- Percentage of students graduating from regional high schools or higher education institutions obtaining career-track jobs.
- Whether an increase in high school graduation rates correlate to a decline in use of regional social services.

RFP Timeline & Anticipated Project Deliverables

The E³ Alliance plans to issue an RFP in October 2007 for a comprehensive longitudinal study of Central Texas education system from early childhood through workforce entry. This research project will have the following deliverables:

- A comprehensive report detailing the findings from the research questions listed above.
- A Central Texas Education Systems Map describing the indicators and outcomes specific to and most influential in this region.

- A comprehensive Central Texas database designed for interactive, analytical use across the Early Childhood to Workforce Entry continuum. This database will be maintained and updated (funding pending) by the contractor and used to develop the Central Texas Performance Framework. The Performance Framework is an interactive, predictive modeling tool used in conjunction with the student database to specify outcomes, monitor progress, and track impact on the Central Texas economy. (For further clarification of terms, please see Appendix C for the Glossary.)

To be eligible to bid on the RFP, applicants must submit all information required in Section II by 12:00 pm CST on September 24, 2007 and participate in a RFI Briefing on September 26, 2007.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Purpose of Request for Information (RFI)

The purpose of this RFI is to provide information about the E³ Alliance and the forthcoming Central Texas research project, and gauge the level of interest on the part of education and economic research organizations in conducting the project and developing the products listed above.

Responses to the RFI may be submitted by an individual, a company/organization or a group of companies/organizations (public or private) working together.

E³ Alliance strongly encourages developing creative partnerships as a means of meeting all the research and product development requirements for this project.

1.2 Authority

This RFI is issued under the auspices of the E³ Alliance.

1.3 E³ Alliance Obligations

1.3.1. E³ Alliance shall not pay any costs or other amounts incurred by any applicant in responding to this RFI.

1.3.2. E³ Alliance shall notify all RFI respondents of funding updates as appropriate. Phase 3 of this project will be funded through a combination of private sector, foundation, and possible public funding streams that are in the process of being finalized.

1.3.3. The E³ Alliance reserves the right to accept or reject any or all information received in response to this RFI, to cancel this RFI in part or in its entirety, or to reissue it.

1.4 Applicant Obligations

Individuals and companies/organizations are invited to submit an application in response to RFI. Applications must address all specifications and be received at the E³ Alliance offices **no later than September 24, 2007 by 12:00 pm CST.**

1.5 Anticipated Timeline of RFP Issuance & Candidate Selection Process

The E³ Alliance anticipates that the release of an RFP and its award will proceed according to the following schedule:

Activity	Date
RFI Announcement	August 30, 2007
Applications in Response to RFI Due	September 24, 2007; 12:00 pm CST
Pre-RFP Briefing	September 26, 2007 in Austin, TX
RFP Release	October 12, 2007
Proposals Due	November 14, 2007
Review & Evaluation of Proposals	November 15-December 12, 2007
Finalist Interviews	December 5, 2007
Award Announcement	December 21, 2007
Contract Award	January 25, 2008

The above dates are subject to change as determined by E³ Alliance and its funding partners. Notices of changes will be posted on the E³ Alliance website located at www.e3alliance.org and emailed directly to RFI respondents.

1.6 Issuing Office and E³ Alliance Contact Information

E³ Alliance is the Issuing Office and the sole point of contact for this RFI. The physical address for mailing, overnight express and personal delivery of applications in response to this RFI is:

E³ Alliance
5930 Middle Fiskville Rd.
Suite 507
Austin, TX 78752

Please address the application to:

Hannah Gourgey, Director of Analysis and Alignment

hgourgey@austincc.edu
512-223-7243

1.7 Submission in Response to this RFI

Applicants must submit one (1) electronic copy of the application, one original signed hard copy (1), and two (2) copies of their applications.

Applications must be printed in a font size of no less than 11 points. Faxed responses are not acceptable.

1.8 Right to Amend, Modify, or Withdraw RFI

E³ Alliance reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to alter, amend, clarify, modify, or withdraw any provision of this RFI at any time if it is in the best interest of the organization to do so. The decision of E³ Alliance shall be final.

1.9 Confidential Information; Nondisclosure; Open Records

All materials and information submitted to the E³ Alliance in response to the RFI will be held as confidential in accordance with Texas law.

1.10 Written Questions and Official Responses

Inquiries concerning this RFI must be in writing and received by the Issuing Office specified in Section 1.6. E³ Alliance will post its response to questions received by the deadline electronically on its website (www.e3alliance.org) as soon as practical upon receipt.

Questions must be received **no later than 12:00 p.m. Wednesday, September 19, 2007**. Final answers will be posted no later than Thursday, September 20, 2007 at 4:00 pm.

Telephone inquiries will not be accepted. Questions may be submitted electronically to E3RFI@austincc.edu or by fax (512-223-7242).

2. APPLICATION FORMAT AND CONTENT

2.1 Introduction

Applications must contain all requested information.

Vague and general applications will be considered non-responsive and disqualified. Applications must be complete; failure to include all required information may result in disqualification. Application pages must be numbered and contain an organized, paginated table of contents corresponding to the sections and pages of the application.

2.2 General Organization of Application Contents (in Response to this RFI)

- Cover Letter
- Description of Relevant Experience
- Description of Approach to Student Level Data Access & Storage

2.3 Cover Letter

The applicant organization must submit with its application a signed transmittal letter that identifies:

- a. Name, address of primary entity submitting the application, business telephone number, fax number, and email address of applicant's principal contact person regarding this RFI;
- b. Names and academic background of all principal investigators/researchers;
- c. Type of business entity (i.e., educational institution, corporation, partnership);
- d. State of incorporation or organization and principal place of business;
- e. Name and location of major offices, and other facilities that relate to applicant's performance under this RFI;
- f. Names and business addresses for all planned primary partners and/or subcontractors or subcontractor organizations
- g. Statement regarding the financial stability of applicant.

2.4 Description of Relevant Experience

Applicant and its partner or subcontractor organization(s) must provide a brief history of the organization, identify its areas of expertise, and describe relevant work conducted within the past five (5) years, including work performed for the E³ Alliance. References must contain a contact name, title, address, and telephone number.

The description of experience must cover similar and/or relevant projects conducted by the applicant. Each experience statement also must include the name and types of services directly provided by the applicant, and whether the applicant was the prime contractor or subcontractor.

2.5 Description of Approach to Student-Level Data Access & Storage

The applicant must describe its organization's ability and experience to access and securely store individual student records in compliance with FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act - (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99).

The applicant must describe its proposed approach to gaining access to student records appropriate to the research outlined in this RFI.

2.6 Application Evaluation & Criteria for Invitation to RFP Process

Applicants who meet the following criteria will be invited to respond to the RFP to be issued in October 2007:

1. Written response to RFI received by 12:00 p.m. (CST) September 24, 2007.
2. Participation in the RFI Briefing held from 9:00-1:00 pm on Wednesday, September 26, 2007 at:

Austin Community College Highland Business Center
5930 Middle Fiskville Road
Room 502
Austin, Texas

3. The application in response to the RFI demonstrates the following qualifications:
 - a. Methodology to access to student-level data as described in section 2.5 for Central Texas school districts and specified higher education institutions.
 - b. Expertise in educational research from early childhood to post-secondary and workforce entry.
 - c. Experience with analyzing student data using uni- and multi-variate statistics and statistical modeling and advanced modeling techniques appropriate to this study.
 - d. Expertise in conducting econometric modeling, predictive modeling and economic forecasting on the Central Texas economy.
 - e. Experience in protecting and warehousing student-level data and in developing an interactive database and design suitable to support interactive decision making.
 - f. Experience in conducting quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Failure to participate in the September 26 RFI Briefing will disqualify applicants from being eligible to respond to the RFP.

3. RFI BRIEFING DESCRIPTION

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the RFI Briefing is to inform applicants about related research the E³ Alliance has conducted on the Central Texas education system, to give more details of the proposed study, answer applicant questions and to gain feedback regarding the RFP and the process the E³ Alliance plans to follow. This feedback will help refine the planning of the study and the development of the RFP for Phase 3 and beyond.

3.2. RFI Briefing General Outline and Logistics

The RFI Briefing will be conducted in Austin, TX from 9:00 am-1:00 pm on Wednesday, September 26, 2007 at Austin Community College's Highland Business Center, room 502.

Applicants from out of state or distant locations in Texas may request at least one week in advance of the scheduled time of the meeting to be conferenced into the meeting.

The Briefing will begin with a presentation from E³ Alliance leadership about the organization's history, mission, and strategic approach to education reform. E³ Alliance staff will then describe the research efforts underway and specifically this project in more detail.

Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions about E³'s efforts and provide feedback about this specific proposed study.

Appendix A

E³ Alliance Central Texas Scope

E³ Alliance defines Central Texas as the five-county Austin MSA and the additional school districts outside the MSA that are part of the ACC service area.

Bastrop	Austin Discovery
Elgin	School
Smithville	Austin ISD
Johnson City	Pflugerville
Blanco	Manor
Lockhart	Eanes
Luling	Del Valle
Prairie Lea	Lago Vista
Doss Cons.	Lake Travis
Fredericksburg	Florence
Harper	Georgetown
Nixon-Smilely	Granger
Katherine Anne	Hutto
Texas Prep School	Jarrell
San Marcos	Liberty Hill
Dripping Springs	Round Rock
Wimberley	Taylor
Hays CISD	Thrall
American Youthworks	Leander
Eden Park Academy	Coupland
NYOS Charter	McDade
Texas Empowerment	
University Charter	
McCullough Academy	
Fruit of Excellence	
Star Charter	
Harmony Science	
Ceders Int'l Academy	
Austin Can Academy	
UT Elem. Charter	
KIPP Austin College	
Prep	

Higher Education Institutions

Austin Community College
Concordia University
Huston-Tillotson University
St. Edwards University
Southwestern University
Texas State University
University of Texas at Austin

Other institutions of higher education within and near the region that have maintained at least 3% of Central Texas students enrolled over 3 years may also be included in the project scope.

Appendix B

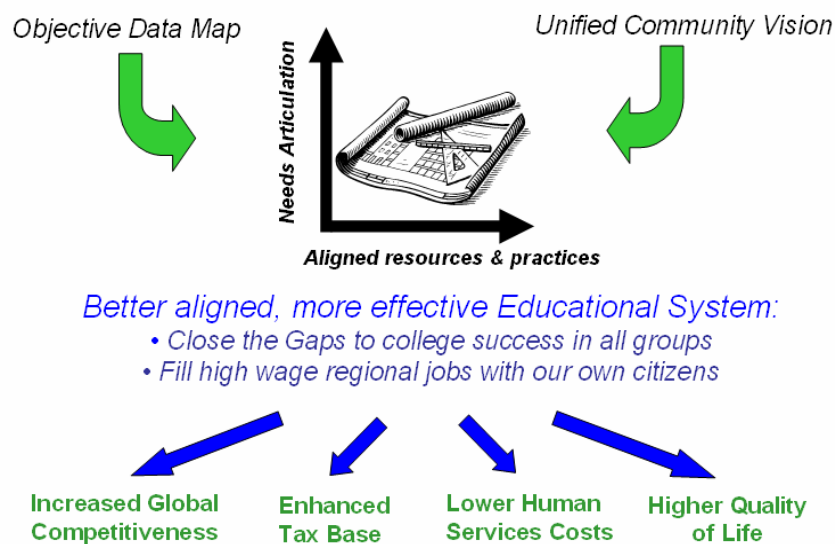
E³ ALLIANCE

What is the E³ Alliance?

A regional collaborative to create a research-based “blueprint” to align our education systems to better fulfill the potential of every citizen and in turn, increase economic outcomes and build a stronger economic future for our region.

What will the E³ Alliance do?

The goal of the E³ Alliance is to improve educational outcomes across the board to create a home-grown, highly qualified regional workforce and citizenry.



The E³ Alliance will formulate a cohesive regional vision for education, provide objective longitudinal data on real leverage points and outcomes, and better align resources and practices in our education systems. We will provide the tools to make *actionable* the systemic change that needs to happen to support an innovation economy for the future, in a model that can be *replicated around the state*.

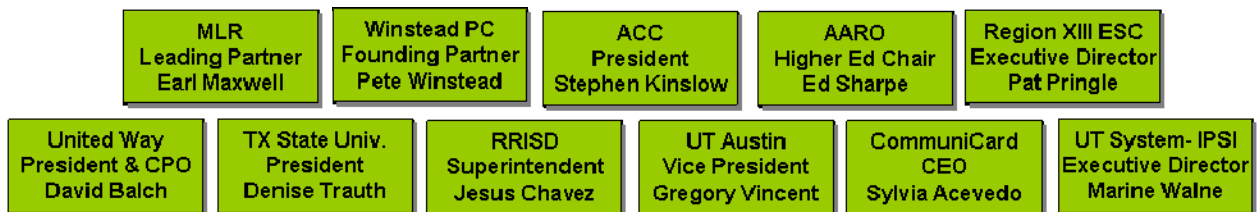
The E³ Alliance acts as the P-16 Council for Central Texas. As such, it works to break down barriers and build better alignment across the education continuum to strengthen access and student success—and ultimately, the competitiveness of the region. Formed in May of 2006, the E³ Alliance has already created the most comprehensive view of education trends, outcomes, and comparative analysis for Central Texas than has ever been available for any region in the state. Other early deliverables include a Trustee Qualifications Profile developed for school board trustee candidates and improved

articulation models for nursing students from high school to the workforce. Going forward, the E³ Alliance will:

- Develop an Education Systems Map and longitudinal Performance Framework to define key leverage points for the application of resources and practices
- Share lessons and best practices across education providers at all levels
- Lead a regional visioning process to create shared understanding and common, quantified goals for measuring outcomes in educational improvements
- Align regional resources and investments in education and education-related services to use our dollars more efficiently
- Support efforts to improve early childhood and P-12 programs, instruction, and intervention to increase the number of “college-ready” high school graduates
- Promote the alignment of curriculum objectives and workforce needs from P-12 into higher education to increase college enrollment and *Close the Gaps* to college success and rewarding careers; and
- Change policy and practice to increase meaningful regional collaboration.

Who is Driving this Initiative?

Founding partners of the E³ Alliance include the Austin Community College District, The University of Texas at Austin and the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO). Key supporters include all seven regional college presidents, K-12 superintendents, business CEO’s, non-profit and community leaders, teachers, and parents. Susan Dawson, Austin business entrepreneur and civic leader, is executive director of the collaborative. The E³ Alliance Board of Directors is:



Why does Central Texas need the E³ Alliance?

Despite limited resources and a rapidly changing student population, our public schools and area colleges are doing better than they ever have been. Still, Texas is losing many billions of dollars because global economic needs are changing much faster than education is. We live in an innovation economy, yet our education “system” is not scaled, aligned or focused on delivering citizens and workers who can drive a strong economy in a time of innovation.

Much of the problem stems from systemic misalignment and sub-optimization: Colleges are disincented from working with each other, best practices are hard to objectively identify and share, curriculum and assessments are not aligned to meet the needs of workforce and community, and silo’d resources aren’t applied efficiently. The E³ Alliance works collaboratively across the region to bridge disconnects, better align capacity and need, and change policy to address root causes.

Appendix C

Glossary of E³ Alliance Terms

Alignment – Refers to coordination of operations, practices, content development, administrative processes that allows students to move seamlessly and resources to be applied effectively across the range of education systems.

- Vertical alignment specifies the systemic P-16 process starting from early childhood and moving through the workforce. This alignment focuses primarily on eliminating barriers to student success.
- Horizontal alignment refers to systemic operational processes across districts, institutions or community organizations. This alignment focuses on creating efficiency, sustainability and scalability in district and educational institution operations and practices.

Blueprint for Change: Refers to the combined product of the Education Systems Map and the community deliberative dialogues process from which emerges the critical leverage points that will enable systemic alignment of education systems in a feedback process. Specific to this Blueprint will be a series of actions that capitalize on these leverage points that will include education content, fiscal, and infrastructure management and opportunity. Most important, this Blueprint offers a cascading definition for how each constituency can participate in education reform.

Example Q&A: If we want to achieve our Closing the Gaps to college goal by 2015, how many additional students from my school do we need to get into college in the next 2 years?

Deliberative Dialogues: Refers to the primary method by which E³ Alliance will engage the community in defining a set of values and overall goals for Education Reform in Central Texas. These Dialogues currently focus on Achievement Gaps and are in partnership with Austin Voices, Kettering Foundation, Participating School Districts, Texas Forums and United Way.

E³ Alliance Central Texas Education Snapshot: Refers to the series of reports that E³ generates that describe the state of education (and labor) systems within a geographical map of Central Texas that includes the 5-county Austin MSA and the additional ACC service area districts in Gillespie, Blanco, Burnet and Gonzales. The Snapshot provides a comprehensive, aggregate view of education trend and outcomes data across the region.

Example Q&A: What are the differences in high school and college graduation rate by Central Texas school district, and are they trending up or down?

Education Systems Map: Refers to the interdependent information model of indicators and outcomes based on the longitudinal analysis of student and system education data. The Education Systems Map will be considered by stakeholders to represent the objective set of findings

1. Specific to Central Texas demographics and student experiences and
2. Critical to regional economic success
3. Critical to regional quality of life success
4. Delineated as the set of variables for students, education institutions, and the region.

This model serves as the basis for developing the interactive Performance Framework that can be used to optimize allocation of resources and identify effective interventions.

Example Q&A: What are the key indicators that predict a successful student transition from middle to high school, and what are the success characteristics of programs that most contribute to a successful outcome in that transition point?

Essential Student Influences: Refers to the universe of variables that affect student achievement in school either positively or negatively, that may serve as predictors of student success or failure, or that may serve as desired outcomes for students based on a general consensus on what defines success. Some of these variables are accessibly through existing agency databases. Others may be new or captured inefficiently in those databases.

Indicators: Refers to the subset of variables of essential student influences that may serve as predictors for future student success. For example, poor attendance in 8th grade may be a strong predictor of failing to meet TAKS standards or increased risk for drop out rates, whereas passing Algebra I by 8th grade serves as a strong predictor of successful transition to higher education.

Outcomes: Refers to the set of variables that serve as standards of student success. These outcomes would include

- intermediate successes, such as an LEP student successfully transitioning out LEP programs,
- ultimate goals for students that evolve from research and from public discussions of values and
- goals in education reform, such as successful graduation from higher education in target industry field.

These outcomes include not only individual student success but school, district, and regional goals as well.

Performance Framework: Refers to the “interactive predictive modeling tool” created out of the longitudinal research on Central Texas districts that specify the regional outcomes and operational strategies to reach those. The Framework will be interactive (although it may be accessed through an intermediary analyst), updated on an ongoing basis, and should support both predictive analysis and progress monitoring. The Performance Framework is meant be used by funders, political leaders, community organizations, education leaders and other community stakeholders as a means of tracking success on specified variables or student populations and supporting “what if” analysis on potential resource or practice changes.

Example Q&A: If I adopted X practice at a middle school level for Y school district, what will be the predicted change in outcomes for these student populations in my district?