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Task Order 28

Implementation Study of the Turnaround School Leaders Program

Appendix G: Aspiring Leaders Focus Group Protocol

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Prepared for:

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Protocol 1: For Aspiring Leaders

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group.

My name is _____, and I work for _____, one of the partner organizations the U.S. Department of Education has contracted with to conduct the study.

This study is about how the Turnaround School Leaders Program is being implemented by <insert Project Name>. We are using these focus groups to hear from people like you being trained as turnaround leaders through the project.

We will be asking about how you were recruited and selected for the program, the training and support you received, and what aspects of the program you think should be continued or changed.

The focus group will take no more than 60 minutes.

[Read the focus group consent form and obtain verbal consent from every participant, including consent for audio recording]

To make sure everyone has a chance to be heard, and to maintain confidentiality, we ask that you follow these ground rules:

- Everyone should speak, balance their air time, and take turns.
- Discuss the questions as a group, responding to each other and not just to the facilitators.
- Don't be afraid to raise contrasting viewpoints, even if most participants appear to agree with a statement.
- The facilitators may ask for examples, as well as a show of hands to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements made by others.
- Please do not discuss or repeat the comments made by your fellow focus group members outside of the focus group.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

[Start two audio recorders]

Respondent Information

1. We would like a quick snapshot of who you all are. Please tell us your first name, current position, and the previous positions you have held.

[Note whether participants were previously school leaders and note years of experience]

Identification of Leaders

Topics for this section:

- Recruitment and selection (criteria, process)
- Hiring/placement (criteria, process)

2. Why did you choose this program to become a turnaround leader?
3. Think about the process you went through to be recruited and selected for this program. What is your opinion about that process? Was it a good or bad way to recruit and select turnaround school leaders? Why?
 - How could the process be improved?

Training of Leaders

Topics for this section:

- Training (design, content, assessment)
- Mentoring/coaching (design, content)

4. Thinking about the training you received, what skills and aspects of turnaround school leadership does your program focus on the most (for example, using data or building school culture)?
5. [If program uses a cohort approach, ask:] Did you find working in a cohort of aspiring turnaround leaders useful or not useful? Why or why not?
 - How did the cohort work together?
6. How was your progress assessed during the course of your training?
7. Have you received feedback with suggestions for how you could improve?
 - What types of suggestions did you receive? What types of support did you receive in those areas?
 - How has this support helped?

8. Thinking about all the support and training you have received since beginning training to become a turnaround leader. What has been the most useful? Please explain.

- What has been the least useful to you?

9. In what areas of your work would you like to receive *more* support?

10. In what areas could the *quality* of support be improved?

11. What incentives have you received for participating in the program or do you expect to receive for taking on or staying in a leadership role in a turnaround school?

- Have these incentives influenced your decision to participate in the program?

Lessons Learned

12. If you were asked to redesign the process, what would you change? What would you keep the same?

13. Would you recommend this path to another aspiring turnaround leader?

- Why or why not?

This concludes the session. Thank you for your participation!