NEW LEADERS’ 2025 STRATEGIC DIRECTION

2025 Strategic Goal
By 2025, we will improve the practices of 4,000 leaders annually, create equitable schools that improve outcomes for 1 million students, and codify effective practices to share with the field.

The future of American democracy depends upon the excellent education of our schoolchildren. In communities across America, both urban and rural, large and small, we have failed to create school systems that nurture our children's capacity as readers, writers, mathematicians, and scientists. Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), more than 22,000 schools—approximately 25 percent of schools across the country—are designated by states as underperforming, failing to provide nearly 15 million students with quality public education. For students of color and students in poverty, the situation is even more dire, as schools exacerbate societal inequities and leave millions of students unprepared to successfully pursue and achieve their postsecondary aspirations. This has a profound impact on the lives of these students, their families, and their communities.

Fortunately, evidence shows that school improvement is possible, but requires effective teachers, strong leadership, and rigorous and engaging curriculum. The presence of only one or two of these elements is insufficient. In line with evidence on school improvement, New Leaders views schools as the unit of change and effective school leaders as the best leverage point to transform underperforming schools at scale. Since our founding in 2001, New Leaders has executed against its mission of ensuring high academic achievement for all children, especially students in poverty and students of color, by developing transformational school leaders (at all levels—from teacher leaders to sitting principals to principal managers and superintendents) and advancing the policies and practices that allow great leaders to succeed.

Recognizing the leading role we have played to develop dedicated, skilled leaders at every level by preparing 4,000 outstanding school leaders in more than 30 cities nationwide, and reaching 500,000 students to date, we also acknowledge that we only develop a fraction of school leaders across the country each year. We can do better.

New Leaders cannot accomplish the ambitious vision that K-12 education advocates have been chipping away at for decades by maintaining the status quo. To have many more great public schools, we must dramatically increase the number of well-prepared school leaders. Building on our success to date, New Leaders is ready to embark on an ambitious mission to drastically scale the number of school leaders prepared, from 4,000 in total over the past 18 years, to 4,000 leaders annually by 2025.

Pursuing this catalytic goal that will improve outcomes for 1 million students each year is not merely aspirational. New Leaders has been building toward this goal since the inception of the Aspiring Principals Program. Research studies have shown the positive - and statistically significant - impact of our Aspiring Principals program on student achievement, most recently through a 2019 RAND Corporation report that studied Emerging Leaders through Aspiring Principals training. At the same time, we found that taking our work to the next level of scale and impact - providing meaningful, effective leadership development that reaches increasing numbers of educators and students at a cost that districts can afford - required significant shifts in not only who we serve, but also in how we design and execute programming.
By innovating on the Aspiring Principals Program, and creating Emerging Leaders and flexible programs, we have expanded our reach beyond the principalship to the entire spectrum of school leadership: teacher leaders to superintendents. The rapid expansion of our flexible models showed us the pent-up demand for expanded leadership offerings. Over the next several years, we will work to define a suite of programs under the umbrella of Leadership Pathways: 1) our signature programs (Emerging Leaders & Aspiring Principals), where districts seek them; 2) streamlining our flexible models into more consistent Program Pathways; and 3) deeper dives into a small number of districts through Leadership Networks. In addition, we anticipate continued piloting of innovative program structures, such as Leadership Networks, that will allow us to build new opportunities and continue to innovate. Our recently announced opportunity to influence principal preparation across the country through partnerships with institutes of higher education is poised to support a dramatic expansion of the number of leaders we reach, while drawing on the content and lessons learned from across our Leadership Pathways.

Accomplishing our ambitious goal requires us to simultaneously continue to improve our current programs while we also consider new offerings and delivery models. The emerging work with institutions of higher education is an example of a new approach. Innovation is in our DNA and we will continue to seek out opportunities that fit with our mission and enable us to work with ever more leaders.

As an organization that prides itself on continuous improvement, today, New Leaders is ready to embark on the next stage of our evolution and launch a five-year strategic plan. By 2025, we will improve the practices of 4,000 leaders annually who create equitable schools serving 1,000,000 students, and codify effective practices to share with the field. Just as school leaders collaborate on all levels to improve the educational outcomes of students, New Leaders staff, with our years of collective experience and deep expertise, have collaborated across the organization and through workgroups to set a clear path toward our strategic goal. With amassed knowledge on content, operations, contexts in which we operate, and policy and research findings, New Leaders has identified four priority strategies, or primary drivers, that will drive the organization forward for the next five years, as well as the secondary drivers and SMART goals that will define how we achieve the primary drivers.

To achieve this significant and very necessary strategic goal, we take shared accountability with our partners to improve school leadership across the nation, and in turn, prepare 1 million students each year with the skills and knowledge necessary for postsecondary success.
Primary Driver 1: Improve leadership practices that lead to improved outcomes for ALL students.

GOAL: By 2025, across all full engagements (e.g. Signature, Pathways), our programs will deliver consistent results in improving leader practice and student outcomes as confirmed by both internal and external evaluations.

As we look toward 2025, we have an audacious goal of reaching 4,000 leaders annually who reach 1 million students. But reach is just the starting point—our goal is to significantly improve the practices of these leaders so that they can transform the lives of the students they serve, and transform the systems within which they work. By providing best-in-class programming, implemented with a consistently high level of excellence across all of our partnerships—and learning in real-time about what is working and where we can go next—we seek to generate breakthrough results for both the adults and students we serve, particularly students of color and students in poverty who are most impacted by the structural and historical inequities within our school systems.

By 2025, New Leaders will be the premier leadership development organization in the country, with unparalleled impact on American schools and students. Our programming, both in terms of design and delivery, will be best-in-class, and will serve as a model of excellence for high-quality development and support of education leaders across the education sector. Furthermore, our offerings will put us on the cutting edge, as we constantly adapt and innovate to provide programming that truly transforms lives and systems—with educational excellence and equity at the heart of everything we do. To accomplish driver 1, New Leaders will focus on three strategies.

Secondary Driver 1.1: Design, expand, and align innovative, equity-focused, and best-in-class content.

SMART Goal
By 2025, 90 percent of New Leaders program content will meet internal standards for BIC design, and will consistently meet the unique needs of our partners across school systems and leadership levels.

First, we will design, expand, and align innovative, equity-focused, and best-in-class content. To do this, New Leaders will continue to refine and improve the core content embedded within the signature programs that have demonstrated a consistent track record of success through internal and external studies. Simultaneously, we will improve and grow our program offerings—both by creating new content and designing new programming that ensures we are continually on the cutting edge of effective instructional leadership practices, and also by expanding our repertoire by building out new in-depth modules on core strands of the TLF (i.e. talent management, operations, etc.). Deeply embedded throughout this content design, will be a consistent and effective approach to equity (that will be explicitly defined by June 2020), such that the leaders we serve will continually approach their work with an equity lens, ensuring all of their students receive an excellent education, and working to disrupt inequitable practices that impede their students’ success.
Secondary Driver 1.2: Ensure high-quality program implementation, such that programs are delivered with a consistent level of excellence across engagements.

SMART Goal
By 2025, at least 90 percent of all full-year engagements meet the defined benchmark for high-quality implementation as measured by the implementation rubric.

Related, we will ensure high-quality program implementation, such that programs are delivered with a consistent level of excellence across engagements. All members of the Program Implementation team—from the national implementation team to the executive directors of program to program directors facilitating and coaching in schools—will have a shared vision of high-quality programming, and will have the tools to consistently assess the quality of implementation to execute against that vision. The Leadership Academy will provide the support necessary to ensure this consistent level of quality across all engagements, and members of the national and local implementation teams program will be prepared to manage against this ideal. Success here will mean that regardless of the engagement—whether a signature program in one of our legacy sites, or delivering new programming in a district with whom we have never before worked—we will be able to guarantee a level of excellence and will be able to recognize, address, and make changes in real time if implementation does not meet that shared bar.

Secondary Driver 1.3: Collect, analyze, and make meaning from data to facilitate rapid learning and innovation to ensure that program content design and delivery are executed at the highest level.

SMART Goal
By 2025, learnings generated from the execution of rigorous, short term continuous improvement cycles (supported by accurate, timely and useful data) will result in insights and recommendations for action so that program content design and delivery will be executed at the highest level (per 1.1 and 1.2 SMART goals).

We will collect, analyze, and make meaning from data to facilitate rapid learning and innovation, ensuring that program design and delivery are executed at the highest level. These internal mechanisms for feedback and learning will allow us to ensure that we can realize the promise of our work—transforming leaders to deliver for their students. This drive for continuous improvement and the urgency to get it right underpins our ability to become the leading leadership development organization in the country, and have unparalleled impact for our leaders, schools, and students.

Primary Driver 2: Increase the number of leaders trained.

GOAL: By 2025, we will train 4,000 leaders annually through increasing new partnerships, serving more partners in existing sites, and securing site-base revenue (FFS + local $) that covers at least 80% of the total cost.

Reaching 4,000 leaders each year impacting one million students requires us to continue to expand our presence to reach students that have been historically underserved. From 2015 to 2019, we increased the number of leaders we work with from 500 to 1,500 annually by doubling our number partners and renewing 75 percent of our partnerships. At the same time, we have grown earned revenue from 5 percent to 30 percent of our annual operating budget, increasing the sustainability of our work.

Our ambitious goal of training 4,000 leaders annually represents a substantial increase from the 1,500 leaders we are working with during the 2019-20 school year. To reach this goal, we will continue to grow
our footprint by increasing the number of new partnerships, serving more partners in existing sites, and securing program revenue (fee-for-service and local funding) that covers at least 80 percent of the total cost of a program. To grow the number of partners, we will concentrate our new site efforts in a select number of states and regions, leverage our alumni network, as well as pursuing innovative partnership structures that are different than our current model. We will also smartly renew and expand current partnerships by responding to partner needs and developing services and content to meet those needs. Accelerating growth also requires us to rethink our current cost structure and delivery methods in order to strengthen our value proposition.

Toward our strategic goal of training 4,000 leaders annually—that directly aligns with driver #2—we will focus on three strategies.

**Secondary Driver 2.1: Secure more mission-aligned, strategic SEA and LEA partnerships, as well as other innovative partnerships.**

**SMART Goal** Secure 100 new SEA and LEA partnerships by 2025 and create five new innovative structures for leaders to be trained.

First, we will maintain our urgency to launch partnerships with new school systems. In the past five years, we have picked off “low hanging fruit” by leveraging our strongest relationships. Moving forward we will increase our investments in new site cultivation to launch 100 new LEA/SEA/CMO partnerships by 2025. We will do this by selecting and prioritizing a set of states and regions to pursue in order to concentrate our efforts. We will also tap into other networks, such as our alumni base and referrals from current partners, to cultivate new partnerships. Additionally, we will create innovative pathways that allow alumni and other leaders to take advantage of our professional development offerings. We will continue to innovate on our programs and delivery methods to meet the evolving needs of our partners such that more than 1,000 leaders will have engaged in new, innovative pathways by 2025.

**Secondary Driver 2.2: Strategically retain partners while expanding services to influence leadership practice at scale.**

**SMART Goal** By 2025, New Leaders will strategically retain 90 percent of partners annually.

Related, we will focus on partner retention, growth of existing partnerships in a strategic fashion, and intentionally building the capacity of our partners to sustain the work moving forward. Focusing on partner retention will allow us to take a more strategic, cost-effective approach to scale. This approach will require diversifying our services, including expanding the types of programming and content we offer, within existing partnerships to influence leadership practice at scale. We recognize that most partnerships will start with support for a targeted set of leaders (e.g. sitting principals), and over time, allow us to work with additional leaders while aligning practice across stakeholders. Considering that our partner retention rate in FY20 was 75 percent and that we anticipate 10-20 percent attrition rates year-over-year due to the natural maturation of partnerships, we expect some partnerships to end each year as we build the capacity of districts and CMOs to this work.
themselves. New Leaders will strategically retain 90 percent of partners annually by 2025.

**Secondary Driver 2.3: Decrease cost per participant to minimize cost as a barrier to entry for our partners, and to minimize the gap between cost and price.**

**SMART Goal** By 2025, we will drive down costs so that 80 percent of our engagements pay for 80 percent or greater of the total cost. Finally, our costs—and price points—can be a limiting factor in our ability to secure new partnerships and continuing work with existing partners. To overcome this barrier, we will focus on decreasing our cost per participant while minimizing the gap between our cost and price. Minimizing our cost/price gap makes us more financially sustainable by reducing our need to raise private funds to cover cost. To reduce costs, we will evaluate, adjust, and streamline our program delivery models to maximize efficiency, without compromising quality. We will determine our optimal “unit of delivery” (program delivery structure) and quantify the relationship between direct program costs (tier 1) and shared support costs (tier 2 & 3). By 2023, the cost per participant will be within the following ranges: tier 1 at 60-70 percent, tier 2 at 10-20 percent, and tier 3 at 15-25 percent.

**Secondary Driver 2.4: Launch and grow partnerships to help colleges and universities transform their leader preparation programs.**

**SMART Goal** By 2025, secure 13 new partnerships with colleges and universities in 6 states, with 150 school leaders completing redesigned programs. We will work with colleges and universities in two ways: 1) direct consulting to colleges that are interested in transforming their principal preparation programs and 2) partnering with one or more colleges to co-create a version of Aspiring Principals that can be delivered online. The first approach will include facilitating groups of local stakeholders (i.e., faculty, district representatives and community partners) to examine program standards, admissions processes, content, instructional practice, opportunities to practice leadership, and assessments. In all areas, we will make New Leaders content available for review, adaptation, and licensed use. The second approach takes advantage of the increasing use of and comfort with online delivery in higher education and allows us to explore shared revenue models for ongoing sustainability through rapid growth. Early efforts will take advantage of favorable policy conditions, including increased attention to the rigor of principal preparation in Texas and Tennessee. Further, we will grow our presence in the higher education market through strategic partnerships (e.g., University Council for Educational Administration) and mission-aligned networks (e.g., minority-serving institutions).
Primary Driver 3: Codify and strategically disseminate effective leadership practices to engage New Leaders staff, practitioners (including New Leaders alumni), and policymakers.

GOAL: see SMART goal below

When we attain our ambitious goal of reaching one million students per year by 2025, the New Leaders community will have made a significant impact on the lives of children and communities across the country. At that scale, New Leaders will be equivalent to the largest school district in the country. At the same time, we know that figure represents a small fraction—just 2 percent—of students nationwide. Through our work to engage and influence the broader field, we can make a difference for the other 51 million students attending our nation’s public schools, truly transforming the American education system. Students currently in school cannot wait for the slow trickle down of effective practices to reach their schools a generation from now; we want to do everything that we can to get those learnings into the hands of leaders right now—those leading schools as well as policymakers who have the power to change the context in which school leaders operate.

New Leaders’ impact goes beyond our programmatic partnerships, working with the broader field to show what is possible for students and schools when we invest in research-based leadership development and push for more supportive local, state, and national policies. In recent years, our organization has deepened our investment in this work by honing our internal evaluation priorities, refining our understanding of effective school leadership practices, building relationships among and with our alumni, and strategically sharing our learnings with policymakers.

Primary Driver 3: Codify and strategically disseminate effective leadership practices to engage New Leaders staff, practitioners (Including New Leaders alumni), and policymakers.

SMART Goal

By 2025, New Leaders’ resources on effective leadership policies and practices will have the following results:

- 50% of New Leaders alumni holding roles within K-12 education per year will use programmatic offerings via the Alumni Hub that are focused on alumni improving school leadership practices;

- 100% of staff can successfully communicate New Leaders value proposition and, as appropriate given role, understand effective leadership policies and practices; and

As a learning organization always working to improve, we are excited to take the lessons learned to date and distribute them in a strategic, timely, and relevant way to our key stakeholders, including alumni, internal stakeholders, and policymakers. We aim to maximize the effectiveness of school leaders everywhere—especially those that comprise the New Leaders community—to drive improved outcomes for kids. This work allows us to expand the impact of our programmatic work, taking those lessons and sharing them with:

- Potential states and districts who want to pursue a partnership with us;
- Alumni who want to deepen the connection with other New Leaders or further strengthen the skills that they learned with New Leaders;
- Policymakers who are looking to improve the effectiveness of school leaders across districts or states, and
- Others in the sector who play a role in school leader preparation and support.

To meet this goal, we will focus on strategies that reflect the breadth of our work to expand our impact. We will grow New Leaders Alumni...
- New Leaders will have supported 10-15 district/CMO, state, and federal policymakers to change policies and practices to reflect New Leaders’ theory of change.

Hub—our recently launched online platform—into a robust distribution and engagement mechanism, potentially expanding it to all school leaders.

We will share findings from the Learning Agenda externally with the field through timely, high-impact strategies targeting key audiences and stakeholders such as conferences and media. We will also share Learning Agenda findings internally to drive improvements in our work. We will support policymakers to adopt and successfully implement policies that reflect effective leadership practice, creating more supportive contexts in which school leaders can do their very best work for the students, teachers, and the communities they serve.

Primary Driver 4: Attract, develop, and retain quality talent

2025 Smart Goal: By 2025, we will retain 90% of staff rated 3, 4, and 5 based on New Leaders’ performance management process.

The most important levers to reaching our 2025 goals are our staff members. As we work with our partners to train educators on the effective practices that impact our children’s student achievement outcomes, we must also place just as much focus on our staff members. We are, therefore, committed to attracting, developing, and retaining quality talent and building a culture that reflects our Core Values.

By 2025, New Leaders will be considered an ideal place to work and grow.

- Only the most qualified and highest performing candidates will be invited to join our team, based on a redefined and normed hiring model.
- Leveraging staff member feedback, we will know that our professional development initiatives not only equip staff members with the knowledge and skill sets to perform at the highest levels in their current roles, but also prepare them for future leadership opportunities; and
- Through our collective efforts, we will build a culture focused on our Core Values -- student focused, learn and innovate, collaborate, results driven, leaders, and diverse and inclusive. As a part of our work, we will create a strategy to ensure that New Leaders’ focus on equity is understood and integrated into our day-to-day work.

Without prioritizing our staff, we will not be in a position to reach any of our other primary drivers.


SMART Goal
By 2025, 95% of New Hires are meeting or exceeding expectations in their roles within 12 months based on New Leaders’ redefined and normed hiring model.

As our impact continues to grow, our need for quality talent will also increase. We will meet this need by:

- Building our Talent Acquisition team, streamlining our processes, and strengthening our collaboration with hiring managers to respond to the volume and pace of open roles and reduce our time to fill positions.
- Collaborating with a cross-functional group, we will create and
implement a redefined and normed hiring model.

**Secondary Driver 4.2: Invest in professional development initiatives to meet the needs of staff members and our organizational goals.**

**SMART Goal**
By 2025, 85% of all staff members report an increase in their knowledge, skill sets, and ability to perform in their current roles and/or preparation for new roles as a result of New Leaders’ professional development initiatives.

As a learning organization, we are committed to providing professional development opportunities (internal/external) to grow our staff members’ skills and abilities, increasing overall effectiveness, performance, well-being, engagement, and development. We will do this by:

- Designing and implementing org-wide staff training, tools, and resources aligned to equity initiatives for staff to integrate equity practices into their day-to-day work.
- Launching a Lunch & Learn series focused on topics that will inform org-wide staff learning.
- Aligning professional development and learning opportunities to career paths in support of staff members meeting their professional development goals and next steps at New Leaders.

**Secondary Driver 4.3: Build a culture that reflects our Core Values and results in staff engagement and satisfaction.**

**SMART Goal**
By 2025, New Leaders’ Net Promoter Score is TBD as an indicator of a strong culture.

Our ability to build a culture that reflects our Core Values and is aligned to Ideal Place to Work and Grow practices, will enable us to attract and retain quality talent. Over the next five years, we will:

- Continue to seek input from staff members regarding what matters most to staff in ensuring we build a strong culture at New Leaders.
- Measure the impact of existing culture initiatives and continue, modify, or discontinue these approaches based on staff feedback.
- Implement initiatives already identified by staff, including modifying our compensation structure, increasing transparency around job level responsibilities, creating career paths, enhancing our professional development initiatives, etc.
# Appendix I: Driver Diagram

## 2025 Goal

### Primary Drivers

1. **Improve leadership practices that lead to improved outcomes for all students**

   **Primary Driver 2025 Smart Goal:** By 2025, we will improve the practices of 40,000 leaders annually, creating schools that improve outcomes for 1 million students, and codifying effective practices to share with the field.

   **2025 SMART Goals (for Secondary Drivers)**

   - **1.1** Design, expand, and align innovative, equity-focused, and best-in-class content.
   - **1.2** Ensure high-quality program implementation, such that full programs (e.g., Signature, Pathways) are delivered with a consistent level of quality across engagements.
   - **1.3** Collect, analyze, and make meaning from data to facilitate rapid learning and innovation to ensure that program content design and delivery are executed at the highest level.

   By 2025, 10% of New Leaders program content will meet internal standards for BIC design, and will consistently meet the unique needs of our partners across school systems and leadership levels.

   By 2025, at least 90% of all full-year engagements meet the defined benchmark for high-quality implementation as measured by the implementation rubric.

   By 2025, learnings generated from the execution of rigorous, short-term continuous improvement cycles (supported by accurate, timely and useful data) will result in insights and recommendations for action so that program content design and delivery will be executed at the highest level (per 1.1 and 1.2 SMART goals).

2. **Increase the number of leaders trained**

   **Primary Driver 2025 Smart Goal:** By 2025, we will train 40,000 leaders annually through increasing the new partnerships; paying more partners in existing cities, and securing site-based revenue from 40 U.S. local or state growth model driven for major state.

   **2025 SMART Goals (for Secondary Drivers)**

   - **2.1** Secure more mission-aligned, strategic SEA and LEA partnerships as well as other innovative partnerships.
   - **2.2** Strategically retain partners while expanding services to influence leadership practice at scale.
   - **2.3** Decrease cost per participant to minimize cost as a barrier to entry for our partners, and to minimize gap between cost and price.
   - **2.4** Launch and grow partnerships to help colleges and universities transform their leadership preparation programs.

   Secure 100 new SEA and LEA partnerships by 2025. Create 5 new innovative structures for leaders to be trained.

   By 2025, New Leaders will strategically retain 90% of partners annually.

   By 2025, we will drive down costs so that 80% of our engagements pay for 80% or greater of the total cost.

   By 2025, secure 13 new partnerships with colleges and universities in 6 states, with 350 school leaders completing redesigned programs.

3. **Codify and strategically disseminate effective leadership practices to engage New Leaders staff, practitioners (including New Leaders alumni), and policymakers**

   **Primary Driver 2025 Smart Goal:** By 2025, New Leaders’ resources on effective leadership policies and practices will have the following results: 50% of New Leaders alumni holding roles within K-12 education per year will use programmatic offerings via the Alumni Hub that are focused on improving school leadership practices. 100% of staff can successfully communicate New Leaders’ value proposition and, as appropriate given role, understand effective leadership policies and practices; and New Leaders will have supported 10-15 district CMO, state, and federal policymakers to change policies and practices to reflect New Leaders’ theory of change.

   **2025 SMART Goals (for Secondary Drivers)**

   - **3.1** Hire quality talent in alignment with New Leaders’ mission and culture.
   - **3.2** Invest in professional development initiatives to meet the needs of staff members and our organizational goals.
   - **3.3** Build a culture that reflects our core values and results in staff engagement and satisfaction.

   By 2025, 95% of New hires are meeting or exceeding expectations in their roles within 12 months based on New Leaders’ redefined and normed hiring model.

   By 2025, 85% of all staff members report an increase in their knowledge, skill sets, and ability to perform in their current roles and/or preparation for new roles as a result of New Leaders’ professional development initiatives.

   By 2025, New Leaders’ Net Promoter Score is TBD as an indicator of a strong culture.