

WORKING AS A CONSORTIUM

★ BENEFITS OF FORMING A CONSORTIA

- Economies of scale provide greater opportunities to small districts who can form collaborative working partnerships
 - * Serves higher numbers of students and larger purchases can often translate to lower prices; especially true when buying a single service or product to be shared across districts
 - * Allows taking on projects that may not otherwise be possible due to low staff capacity or eligibility requirements
 - * Ability to attract funders and partners who would otherwise not work with single, small district
- Allows greater specialization—May be able to share tasks, or even employees, across districts and initiate projects that could otherwise not be supported
 - * Especially useful where strengths of partners are complementary
- Allows for greater opportunities provided to students, often using technology such as access to specialized courses, excellent teachers, or extracurricular activities
- Allows members to learn from one another, and to provide inspiration and support network
- Allows for stronger voice in advocacy efforts and increases visibility in the field

★ CONSIDERATIONS

- ⇒ Sustainability requires a shared goal that every participant is fully bought into, and/or clear advantages of participation for every potential partner
- ⇒ Sign a Memorandum of Understanding that details the activities each member of the consortium plans to perform in advance of undertaking major activities
 - * Many grant opportunities will require one district to be a fiscal agent
 - * Consider both resource capacity and physical location
 - * Decision-making power in all areas should be clearly outlined
- ⇒ Consider starting with smaller projects at first to build trust and to develop working relationships and effective processes
- ⇒ Carefully consider where consistency is most useful across the consortium versus where flexibility for local implementation is possible, as each district still needs to answer to their own communities concerns
- ⇒ Carefully consider how systems differ between districts (e.g. different calendars/schedules, relationships with teacher associations, data systems, etc.)
 - * Determine both how this may hinder efforts, as well as how differences can be exploited and turned into group strengths
- ⇒ Plan for extra strategic planning time to allow for consensus at multiple major decision points
 - * Bigger consortia with a truly shared goal may (counter-intuitively) come to consensus more easily as compared to smaller groups, as the need to compromise is more clear to all partnering organizations
- ⇒ Data collection and analysis across districts can be challenging; where possible, create systems early on which make roll-ups less time consuming