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A) APPLICANT INFORMATION - General Information, Experience and Capacity

1. Project Title: Designing for Middle School Students

2. Executive summary: Provide an executive summary of your project proposal and which goal(s) in question 9 you seek to achieve. Please limit your responses to no more than three sentences.

   This project seeks to enroll middle school students in a STEM focused based careers and expose them to the design process necessary to pursue those careers. Middle level students are targeted to engage them in their educational futures and to raise their achievement by improving their academic choices at this level.

3. Total Students Impacted:

4. Lead applicant primary contact: - Provide the following information:
   First Name, Last Name of contact for lead applicant: Melissa K. Mlakar
   Organizational name of lead applicant: Riverside Local School District
   Unique Identifier (RN/Fed Tax ID): 047894
   Address of lead applicant: 585 Riverside Dr., Painesville, OH 44077
   Phone Number of lead applicant: 440-358-8221
   Email Address of lead applicant: melissa.mlakar@riversideschools.net

5. Secondary applicant contact: - Provide the following information, if applicable:
   First Name, last Name of contact for secondary applicant: Domenic Paolo
   Organizational name of secondary applicant: Fairport Harbor Exempted Village School District
   Unique Identifier (RN/Fed Tax ID): 045369
   Address of secondary applicant: 329 Vine St., Fairport Harbor, OH 44077
   Phone number of secondary applicant: 440-354-5400
   Email address of secondary applicant: domenic.paolo@fairportharborschools.org

6. List all other participating entities by name: Provide the following information for each additional participating entity, if applicable: Mention First Name, Last Name, Organizational Name, Unique Identifier (RN/Fed Tax ID), Address, Phone Number, Email Address of Contact for All Secondary Applicants in the box below.

   Julie Michael Smith Applied Systems & Technology Transfer, LLC 241 West Federal Street, Suite 508 Youngstown, OH 44503 330-599-4591 jmsmith@viastaat.com

7. Partnership and consortia agreements and letters of support: - (Click on the link below to upload necessary documents).

   * Letters of support are for districts in academic or fiscal distress only. If school or district is in academic or fiscal distress and has a commission assigned, please include a resolution from the commission in support of the project.

8. Provide a brief description of the team or individuals responsible for the implementation of this project including relevant experience in other innovative projects. You should also include descriptions and experiences of partnering entities.

   Melissa Mlakar of Riverside Local School District will be the lead for the implementation of the project. She is in the third year of the position of Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the district and has managed thousands of dollars in grant monies, including the Ohio Performance Assessment Pilot Project grant and the Third Grade Guarantee grant. In addition, Domenic Paolo of Fairport Harbor has been the superintendent of that district for eight years. He has led his district in the allotment and implementation of projects associated with the Race to the Top grant. He has worked with teachers, staff, and outside entities to ensure the maximum return on the money his district has been awarded. Both Melissa and Domenic have experience in large scale implementation of projects in their districts, requiring impeccable organizational and communication skills. In addition, both districts have extensive experience in partnerships throughout the county, including the Lake County Educational Service Center, other area school districts, area colleges, and interested community and business partners. The relationships that have developed over the course of the years in the area will allow for swift and efficient movement forward to implement the proposed plan. Finally, the two lead participants have worked together as teachers and administrators for more than 15 years. This long standing professional relationship will allow them to maximize their strengths as the project moves forward. Finally, Applied Systems & Technology Transfer (AST2) will contract with the schools to provide assistance in the design and procurement of equipment for the labs, the installation and technical requirements, support and maintenance of the equipment, software and hardware (including AST2's proprietary virtual collaboration and operation technology) and professional development required for the Discovery Learning Program courses. In 2013-2014 school year, INVENTORcloud, the high school series of courses, is offered at 19 sites including high schools and five post-secondary institutions. It is piloting elementary and middle school programs at two schools. In Fall 2014, the prerequisite course will be required engineering course at YSU. These schools virtually access the INVENTORcloud Lab located at Youngstown City School District's Choffin Career & Technical Center. AST2 has much experience in the implementation of projects such as the one proposed here.

E) PROJECT DESCRIPTION - Overall description of project and alignment with Outcomes

9. Which of the stated Straight A Fund goals does the proposal aim to achieve? - (Check all that apply)
   - Student achievement
   - Spending reductions in the five year fiscal forecast
   - Utilization of a greater share of resources in the classroom

10. Which of the following best describes the proposed project? - (Select one)
   - New - never before implemented
   - Existing and research-based - never implemented in your district or community school but proven successful in other educational environments
   - Mixed Concept - incorporates new and existing elements
   - Enhancing/Scale Up - elevating or expanding an effective program that is already implemented in your district, school, or consortia partnership

11. Describe the innovative project.

   This project will engage the districts’ middle school students in a STEM focused series of classes. These classes will provide a curriculum not currently being taught at the middle level. Students will be required to take the series of courses as part of their core curriculum during their sixth, seventh, and eighth grade years. At this time, students in both districts do not have the opportunity to participate in these types of courses. Both districts have a concern with the achievement of their middle school students and seek to increase the students' achievement by offering this new series of courses. The partnership will benefit both districts. Fairport Harbor has the space to house the fabrication lab; Riverside does not possess the large, unused area in which to house the equipment needed. Riverside students will utilize the equipment remotely on a regular basis, visiting the lab lab two or three times per year to gain an understanding of the equipment. Fairport students will be on-site to utilize the equipment and assist in daily maintenance. The two districts are close enough to each other that the pick-up and drop off of project materials and completed projects can occur on the regular delivery route. The project is modeled after INVENTORcloud’s successful secondary school program. INVENTORcloud advanced manufacturing labs will be built at the host middle school, with 3D printers, a laser cutter, a vinyl cutter, scanners, and other manufacturing technologies. The labs will be remotely accessed, with AST2's proprietary software that provides virtual presence to students and teachers. Easy to use, the cloud-based technology allows students to interact with equipment and professional staff as if they were physically at the lab. Students will learn, experience and apply these imperative 21st century and technical skills prior to entering high school and postsecondary environments, positively influencing college and career readiness. By providing access to curriculum in a collaborative online environment each student has a chance to get a familiarity with blended online learning. Also, each student receives hands-on and virtual experience using tools used in industry to innovate. The curriculum for the courses will be designed by Applied Systems & Technology Transfer (AST2); a company that has experience in designing this type of curriculum for high school and middle school courses. This company
Describe how it will meet the goal(s) selected above. - If school/district receives school improvement funds/support, include a brief explanation of how this project will advance the improvement plan.

This project is a mixed concept project and will blend new and existing practices. The concept and practice of school age students utilizing a fabrication laboratory is not new. There are several schools across Ohio (Akron and Cleveland) that have implemented this learning structure within their buildings. The practice of utilizing a fab lab has been implemented with great success with high school students. This consortium is interested in taking this current, proven practice and utilizing it with middle level students. Both districts seek to engage student at a younger age in STEM related courses. Although STEM careers may not be the path for everyone, exposing all students to this curriculum will allow for multiple outcomes to occur. Students will gain exposure to and an awareness of available careers in STEM related fields. All students will have the opportunity to use and understand the technology involved in STEM projects are active. Finally, all students will have the opportunity to experience and work through the design process which is so crucial for success in multiple career paths. This partnership is beneficial for both districts and communities. There are many small manufacturing businesses located in and around Fairport and Painesville Township. These business owners and managers have expressed the need for greater work force ready graduates. Riverside lacks the large space to house both students and the machinery that is being requested. Fairport has the space, but as a small district, would not utilize the available technology enough to make the investment viable. The shared services between these two districts would allow both Fairport and Riverside to target a student population that needs expanded course selection and an initiative that encourages their academic growth.

Describe the ongoing communication plan with the stakeholders as the project is implemented. (Stakeholders can include parents, community leaders, foundation support and businesses, as well as educational personnel in the affected entities.)

Planning for ongoing funding of the project, cost breakdown

13. Financial Documentation - All applicants must enter or upload the following supporting information. Responses should refer to specific information in the financial documents when applicable:
   a. Enter a project budget
   b. Upload the Straight A Financial Impact Template forecasting the expected changes to the five-year forecast resulting from implementation of this project. If applying as a consortia or partnership, please include the five-year forecast for the consortia or partnership. ISD or district budget will be used.
   c. If subsection (b) is not applicable, please explain why, in addition to how the project will demonstrate sustainability and impact.

Subsection (b) is not applicable because once the initial start-up costs are accounted for, monies already in the budget will be able to sustain the project. The intent of both districts is to work within their current budgets to maintain this program. Since the proposed courses will replace existing courses, staff members are already in place. The training for these staff members is part of the purchase price of the new curriculum. Once up and running, the project will require maintenance and technology oversight. The technology budget will be impacted, as it would be expected that the computers in the labs utilized for these classes will need to be replaced every 3-4 years. Although these funds will be encumbered in the permanent improvement budget, the computers that are removed from the labs (approximately 30 per lab) can be used to replace other computers throughout the districts, thus ultimately saving the districts money in replacement costs for other computers. This will not impact the general fund budget for the district, as the fabric lab will accept the responsibility of overseeing the technology side of the program. Fairport will handle the maintenance and custodial upkeep of the lab. These duties will be part of the duties assumed by staff members already in place. Raw materials for production are included in the budget for the first 5 years of the equipment.

14. What is the total cost for implementing the innovative project?
   631,290.00 * Total project cost

* Provide a brief narrative explanation of the overall budget. The narrative should include the source and amount of other funds that may be used to support this concept (e.g., Title I funding, RTF money, local funding, foundation support) as well as details on the items included in the budget (i.e., staff counts and salary/benefits, equipment to be purchased and cost, etc.).

The budget is broken down into four major categories: remodeling of the existing space, fabrication lab equipment purchase and installation, student workstations and instructional equipment purchase and installation, and the curriculum component (Discovery Learning Program). Currently the existing space is an unused gymnasium. The costs associated with remodeling this space include necessary changes to utilize the space as classroom space. This space is located in Fairport Harding High School in Fairport Harbor Exempted Village School District. The space will have to be divided in order to create a classroom workstation space and the space that will house the fabrication lab. The intent is to build a Plexiglas wall to separate the spaces within the existing gymnasium so that the instructor on site will have visual access to all parts of the room. The equipment purchase and installation includes costs associated with all machinery that will be located in the fabrication lab. AST2 has implemented this process in other districts, so the cost estimate has been utilized and is expected to be on target. Next, the budget includes cost estimates for the purchase and installation of student workstations in the classrooms that will be utilized by students in these courses. This line item also includes instructional and presentation equipment that will be utilized by the teacher in the classroom setting. Finally, the budget includes the programming cost for the Discovery Learning Program, the middle school curriculum, which will be supplied by AST2.

15. What are the new/recurrent costs of your innovative project that will occur once the grant has expired? If there are no new/recurrent costs, please explain why.

- 0.00 * Specific amount of new/recurrent cost (annual cost after project is implemented)

* Narrative explanation/rationale: Provide details on the cost of items included in the budget (i.e. staff counts and salary/benefits, equipment to be purchased and cost, etc.).

There are no new or recurring costs for this project. The intent of both districts is to work with their current budgets to maintain this program. The project proposal sustains the program through five years. At this time, the districts will be able to review the data to determine the success of the program and the impact on student achievement. When looking at the components of the budget, the remodeling cost is strictly an upfront cost and will be incurred at any point past the implementation of the project. The fab lab equipment will have to be maintained, but that maintenance will be provided by the personnel involved. Although the plans for structural changes to the room that will house the equipment will be drafted. During this time, the plans for structural changes to the room that will house the equipment will be finalized. The technology support needed will be provided by the Riverside Local School District IT department for student work stations and instructional equipment. Riverside Local School District has the network capacity and expertise to complete this project with no additional staff. The final component of the budget is the cost of the curriculum. This is an annual cost and a five year contract with the company has been built into the project proposal. At the conclusion of the 5 year proposal, the districts will be required to pay this money out of the instructional materials portion of their budgets.

16. Are there expected savings that may result from the implementation of the innovative project?

- 0.00 * Specific amount of expected savings (annual)

* Narrative explanation/rationale: Provide details on the anticipated savings (i.e. staff counts and salary/benefits, equipment to be purchased and cost, etc.).

Once the upfront costs associated with this project have been allocated, the savings to each district come from the shared services that will occur. Neither district will be required to solely shoulder the burden of maintenance or technology upkeep. Teachers will have the ability to collaborate across districts, and in house training can be provided to both districts. This will save the districts money on professional development and training expenses. Because the districts will be utilizing the same curriculum, the purchasing power of the consortium will be greater than if each district was an entity on its own. When the time comes to purchase raw materials for the projects, the districts will realize a savings because of their partnership.

17. Provide a brief explanation of how the project is self-sustaining. If there are ongoing costs associated with the project after the term of the grant, this explanation should provide details on the cost reductions that will be made that are at least equal to the amount of new/recurrent costs detailed above. If there are no new/recurrent costs, explain in detail how this project will sustain itself beyond the life of the grant.

This project is self-sustaining in that, once it is implemented, the major costs of the project are paid. Once the grant expires, the districts will continue to pay the annual curriculum fee. This fee, $6,000 per year, will be a portion of the instructional materials that is already part of the existing school budget. The purchase of this curriculum will replace the purchase of other instructional materials that are not relative to 21st century skills or project-based learning at the middle school level. Existing staff will be implementing the curriculum. No new hires are necessary to support this program.

D) IMPLEMENTATION - Timeline, communication and contingency planning

18. Fill in the appropriate dates and an explanation of the timeline for the successful implementation of this project. In each explanation, be sure to briefly describe the largest barriers that could derail your concept or timeline for implementation and your plan to proactively mitigate such barriers. In addition, the narrative should list the stakeholders that will be engaged during that stage of the project and describe the communication that occurred as the application was developed.

Describe the ongoing communication plan with the stakeholders as the project is implemented. (Stakeholders can include parents, community leaders, foundation support and businesses, as well as educational personnel in the affected entities.)

* Proposal Timeline Dates

Plan (MM/DD/YYYY): 01/01/2014 - 02/28/2014

* Narrative explanation

During this phase of the project, we will pull together all the necessary stakeholders and contractors to begin work. We will lay out our plan to AST2, so they can begin drafting the curriculum for the courses. In addition, Fairport and Riverside will each convene a team of stakeholders to help guide this process. Each individual team will consist of administration, parents, teachers, and business partners. These 2 teams will come together to form one Designing for Middle School Students planning and implementation team. Building principals will begin work on creating schedules in their respective buildings to support the inclusion of the new courses. A communication plan will be developed during this time to promote the new courses and curriculum to students, parents, and community members. During this time, the plans for structural changes to the room that will house the equipment will be finalized. A timeline for work will be established. A list of equipment to be purchased will be drafted. Final list to be determined based, in part, on the requirements of the curriculum that will be implemented.
Implement (MM/DD/YYYY): 03/01/2014 - 06/15/2015

* Narrative explanation

This phase of the project will incur the bulk of the time frame, as it includes the completion of the fabrication lab, the finalization of the curriculum, communication with parents and teachers, training of teachers and staff, and implementation of the new courses. Each step and time frame is outlined below: Construction and completion of fabrication lab (March 2014 - June 2014): The final plans and specs for the fab lab will be completed during this time. Construction and remodeling of the existing space will occur, as well as the purchasing and installation of the equipment. Curriculum development and approval (March 2014 - June 2014): AST2 will complete the curriculum for the determined courses. Also during this time, each building principal will create a building schedule that allows for the new courses. By June 2014, a comprehensive curriculum plan (March 2014 - August 2014): The communication to parents, students, and community members will be guided by the Designing for Middle School Students team. It will include informing parents, students, and community members about the new courses. In addition, an open house will be scheduled in the fabrication lab in August for all interested parties to tour the facility. Training of teachers and staff (April 2014 - August 2014): The training of staff will be based on the requirements of the new curriculum. The staff will be provided on-site training during the summer months. This training is part of the curriculum package that AST2 will provide. Implementation of new courses (August 2015 - June 2015): Students will begin and continue through the new courses in each building.

Summative evaluation (MM/DD/YYYY): 05/02/2015 - 06/30/2015

* Narrative explanation

Surveys will be administered to teachers, students, and parents regarding the effectiveness of the courses. In addition, student achievement scores will be reviewed to determine if any of the STEM courses may have had. Finally, students will self-evaluate their level of executive skills after having participated in these courses.

19. Describe the expected changes to the instructional and/or organizational practices in your institution.

There are a number of changes that will occur as a result of the implementation of this project. These changes will occur at the organizational level, as well as the instructional level. The changes at the organizational level will be the sharing of instructional resources between the two districts. Currently, Riverside shares transportation and food service administrative services with other districts. They do not, however, have a true sharing of instructional resources and staff. This partnership will allow for that sharing to occur. In addition, the implementation of this project will change the instructional practices in the classroom. The implementation of the fab lab and the described courses will require a focus on project based learning. Staff in both districts has been trained in this instructional approach, with Fairport having trained an in-house expert, and implementation of this project will force change in classroom practice. It will also encourage and require collaboration between the districts as the teachers work through the implementation of the new curriculum.

E) SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT AND LASTING VALUE - Impact, evaluation and replication

20. Describe the rationale, research or past success that supports the innovative project and its impact on student achievement, spending reduction in the five-year fiscal forecast or utilization of a greater share of resources in the classroom.

This project has substantial value for our students and our communities. The project seeks to increase the quality of the courses offered to our middle school students. These 21st century courses will help produce students who will be capable of entering careers in technology to which they may have previously been exposed. These courses will provide students with a viable skill set as they enter high school and knowledge base on which to choose their high school path. Students in both our districts have the option of a traditional high school path, a vocational school path, or a PSEO path. Enrollment in these courses at the middle school level will give students a better idea of what path they might choose to take. Ultimately, we will see an increase in the number of students who pursue STEM related careers and the paths to those careers. The impact on our students and communities has potential to be long and lasting. The project will also encourage and require collaboration between the districts as the teachers work through the implementation of the new curriculum. As it turns out, the majority of their workforce is average or below average. Communication skills (62%), creativity (61%), collaboration (52%), and critical thinking (49%) (AMA Critical Skills Survey 2012). In addition, the Association of American Colleges and Universities conducted a study over 300 for-profit and non-profit leaders on their priorities for college learning and student success. In that survey, more than 90% stated, communication and critical thinking skills were more important than a student's major. These leaders also stated that "innovation is essential to their organizations' success" (Hart Association 2013). This information supports the contention of area business owners and managers that we are not producing workforce ready employees. The Discovery Learning Program will provide the students the framework and curriculum to develop these much needed skills that are crucial for success in the workforce.

21. Is this project able to be replicated in other districts in Ohio?

Yes

22. Is this process realistically replicable in other districts across the state. For a variety of reasons, this project will be a beneficial venture for other districts. First, this project encourages and requires sharing of resources across districts. Districts with space issues or financial issues can benefit from implementation of the project. Because the fab lab is used remotely by one district, the space and money for start-up is significantly reduced. The project also requires collaboration across districts. It encourages teachers to work together in subject areas where there might not be other teachers in a single district. The curriculum for the courses is available, and the AST2 is willing to work with individual districts to tailor the curriculum to meet their needs. The districts would potentially have to purchase the curriculum, but a significant cost savings should be realized, as the curriculum will already exist.

23. Describe the substantial value and lasting impact that the project hopes to achieve.

This project has substantial value for our students and our communities. The project seeks to increase the quality of the courses offered to our middle school students. These 21st century courses will help produce students who will be capable of entering careers in technology to which they may have previously been exposed. These courses will provide students with a viable skill set as they enter high school and knowledge base on which to choose their high school path. Students in both our districts have the option of a traditional high school path, a vocational school path, or a PSEO path. Enrollment in these courses at the middle school level will give students a better idea of what path they might choose to take. Ultimately, we will see an increase in the number of students who pursue STEM related careers and the paths to those careers. The impact on our students and communities has potential to be long and lasting. The project will also encourage and require collaboration between the districts as the teachers work through the implementation of the new curriculum. The project seeks to increase the quality of the courses offered to our middle school students. These 21st century courses will help produce students who will be capable of entering careers in technology to which they may have previously been exposed. These courses will provide students with a viable skill set as they enter high school and knowledge base on which to choose their high school path. Students in both our districts have the option of a traditional high school path, a vocational school path, or a PSEO path. Enrollment in these courses at the middle school level will give students a better idea of what path they might choose to take. Ultimately, we will see an increase in the number of students who pursue STEM related careers and the paths to those careers. The impact on our students and communities has potential to be long and lasting. The project will also encourage and require collaboration between the districts as the teachers work through the implementation of the new curriculum.

24. What are the specific benchmarks related to the fund goals identified in question 9 that the project aims to achieve in five years? Include any other anticipated outcomes of the project that you hope to achieve that may not be easily benchmarked.

Student Achievement: There are many ways the choices the districts will track student achievement. The first will be with standardized test scores. Riverside has historically struggled with student achievement scores in grades 6 and 8. These are transition years in the district, and student achievement falters in these years. The implementation of this curriculum will help to raise student achievement by engaging students in 21st century skill based classes that focus on project-based learning. Fairport students, although not necessarily transitioning, also seem to struggle at the middle school level. With a district focus on based learning already, these courses will create a pathway for Fairport students that does not currently exist. Again, the courses will engage students at a younger age in their education. This will not only increase student achievement, but will also impact the graduation rates of both districts. Students who are more engaged in their education, and clearly see their pathway, are more likely to complete high school and continue on with their education or be prepared for their career. Another way that the districts will assess student achievement will be to gather data on student choices about high school classes and post-graduation career choices. A baseline of students who attend vocational training and who choose to pursue STEM related careers after high school can be obtained, as well as the percentage of students who have taken their required vocational training and PSEO. At this time, the districts can start collecting data on whether or not the number of students pursuing these types of careers or vocational training has increased. Finally, once these students begin to enter the workforce, the districts will be able to ascertain whether or not they are meeting the needs of area manufacturing businesses. This information can be obtained through any one of the many partnership groups that have been formed. Data will be collected on these students and will be used to measure the project's success.

25. Describe the plan to evaluate the impact of the concept, strategy or approaches used.

* Include the method by which progress toward short- and long-term objectives is measured. (This section should include the types of data to be collected, the formative outputs and outcomes and the systems in place to track the program's progress).

* Include the method, process and/or procedure by which the program will modify or change the program plan if measured progress is insufficient to meet program objectives.

The Designing for Middle School Students planning and implementation team will be the guiding force in monitoring progress on the short and long term goals of the project. As set forth in the proposed timeline, the planning and implementation team will meet at least monthly to assess the progress of the various factors of the project. This team will be concerned with the conversion of the physical space, the writing and finalizing of the curriculum and implementation plan. It will ensure that the curriculum adheres to the proposed timeline. The districts themselves will be responsible for tracking student achievement. Initially, this will be done with standardized test scores. In addition, students will complete a survey at the end of each course to provide feedback on the curriculum and course structure. Graduation rates can also be a standard by which success of the program can be measured. It will take several years for this data to be available, however, as the students participating in the program will not begin graduating until 2019. Baseline data can be collected in the interim years. In addition, within 2 years of implementation, the districts will begin collecting student high school course selections and career choices as influenced by participating in these new courses. Finally, five years from
how, the districts should receive feedback from area businesses about the change in employability of the workforce. This can be ascertained through conversations with area business owners and managers, as well as through surveys directed towards affected companies. The success of this program can be shared in a variety of ways with other districts in the state. Whether it be through conference presentations, meetings with other districts, or the business owners and managers sharing the information amongst themselves, this project will provide a road map for success for districts with limited resources and finances who choose to partner together to increase student achievement.

By virtue of applying for the Straight A Fund, all applicants agree to participate in the overall evaluation of the Straight A Fund for the duration of the evaluation timeframe. The Governing Board of the Straight A Fund reserves the right to conduct evaluation of the plan and request additional information in the form of data, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and any other related data to the legislature, governor, and other interested parties for an overall evaluation of the Straight A Fund.

PROGRAM ASSURANCES: I agree, on behalf of this applicant agency and/or all identified partners to abide by all assurances outlined in the Assurance section of the CCIP. In the box below, enter "I Accept" and indicate your name, title, agency/organization and today's date.

I Accept

Melissa K. Mlakar
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Riverside Local School District
October 25, 2013