



MEMORANDUM

TO: Talia Lomax-O'dneal, Director of Finance
Dennise Meyers, Assistant to Director of Finance, Office of the Finance Director
Vaughn Wilson, Administrative Service Manager, Division of Grants Coordination

FROM: Katie Cour, President & CEO
Nashville Public Education Foundation

DATE: February 8, 2019

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2020 Direct Appropriations

Thank for the opportunity to request funding to continue Metro's direct appropriation support of the Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF). Below, are answers to the five questions posted on your website and taken from our proposal. We are happy to provide additional detail for continuation of our partnership with Metropolitan Nashville Government at any time.

1. What services does your organization provide to the residents of Davidson County?

The Nashville Public Education Foundation plays a critical role in the public education landscape of Nashville. Our role is to support schools by:

- providing data-driven research to inform MNPS central office decision-making
- mobilizing stakeholders from the city government, private philanthropy, local business, and non-profit communities to solve complex issues around education
- utilizing private funds to support innovative solutions to raising student achievement
- advocating for systems change that levels the playing field for all students

Our work is grounded in the aspiration that the purpose of public education is to build the skills and competencies of students so that they can lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. But school districts cannot do this work alone; great cities need great community partners and city-wide investment to ensure all students reach their potential.

2. How many residents are you currently serving and how do they benefit?

NPEF serves the 85,000+ students (and their families) who attend Metro Nashville Public Schools. We serve these students directly by funding initiatives and focusing on strategies that:

- resulted in the creation of a citywide literacy strategy focused on doubling the number of students reading on grade level by 2025
- improve our ability to attract, retain, and reward excellent teaching in MNPS
- give parents and teachers the opportunity to provide recommendations to central office senior management on policies and practices that directly impact student achievement
- identified opportunities and barriers our students face in accessing and completing post-secondary education and provided specific recommendations that will increase the number of students who are able to obtain a degree in the next five years
- leverage a vast advocacy network to influence state-level decision-making

3. How much funding are you requesting from Metro?

We are asking Metro Government, at minimum, to sustain its investment in NPEF at \$275,000. For every dollar the city invests, NPEF is able to catalyze approximately \$5 in private investment. Private sector investment in public education is a critical piece in addressing the many challenges our schools face. If Metro Government were to cut funding to NPEF the result will be that fewer private dollars will be raised and utilized to support our schools.

4. If funding is awarded, how many additional residents will be served and how will they benefit?

This grant request will allow us to continue to serve all 85,000 MNPS students through strategic initiatives in addition to deeply impacting our support for the district's 6,000+ educators. With Metro Government funding, we will be able to focus on district capacity-building around teacher talent and school leadership through a suite of efforts designed to address the full spectrum of talent initiatives, from effective recruitment practices to retention incentives to addressing issues of affordability for educators in our city. We believe that a great teacher can change the trajectory of a child's life, and, with the city's support, we seek to ensure each child is inspired and engaged by great teachers every day. Teachers deserve access to the necessary resources and opportunities for growth that are required to impact student outcomes; NPEF is one of only a handful of community partners intently focused on providing those supports.

5. In addition to serving more residents, are there other community benefits Metro funding would help you achieve?

One community benefit that comes from funding NPEF is the role that the foundation plays in garnering and sustaining community support for public schools. NPEF serves as the external catalyst for change while still



acknowledging and championing the great work that takes place every day in our schools. The foundation is in the unique position of being both accountable partner to and capacity-builder for the district. In these roles, we serve as the critical friend the district needs to advance innovative solutions and move further, faster.

Another community benefit that comes from funding NPEF is the ability for the foundation to serve as a platform for innovation. Once districts have funded essential operations – salaries, transportation, food service, etc. – often few dollars are left to fund innovative strategies. NPEF utilizes private dollars to test and scale innovative solutions in partnership with the district to increase outcomes for kids and, ultimately, help us identify more effective and efficient uses of public dollars. For example, if we identified a competitive compensation structure that we tested with a specific group, we might find that we could keep more higher performing educators in our classrooms longer by restructuring pay but not actually increasing pay overall. By utilizing private funds to do this, we are not putting any financial risk on the district and we are able to present a recommendation to them that addresses a need directly tied to student performance. In everything we do, our goal is to identify solutions to systemic problems and create a plan that enables the district to adopt new and sustainable practices and policies.

6. How would you use this funding to create a more equitable Nashville, where all residents have the opportunity to participate in the city's success?

Since its inception in 1963, Metro Nashville Public Schools has tried hundreds of initiatives to eliminate disparities in education quality among students. Some of these strategies have had modest results over time, some are abandoned before we know their impact, and some have had no effect at all on closing achievement gaps. What has been missing from the conversation all along, however, is starting with the question of why such disparity exists in the first place, assess current practice, and begin to unravel systemic aspects of our city and schooling that continue to perpetuate inequity today. The Nashville Public Education Foundation proposes to elevate the story of MNPS, identify root causes behind inequities, and reflect on current practice to help correct policies that support and proliferate inequity. This work ties into existing equity initiatives both in the district (reflecting on current and previous practices around equitable access to effective teachers and resources) and the city (complementing city initiatives around college access and success and focusing on priority schools). We see this is the first step to build out a more equitable, city-wide plan for addressing the needs of all of Metro students.

Thank you for the opportunity to request a continuation of our support. We value greatly our partnership with Metro Government to strengthen and improve Nashville's public schools. If you have questions, please contact Margaret Di Giulio in my office at 615-727-1515 or by email at margaret.digiulio@nashvillepef.org.