

## **ABSTRACT**

*Rural Schools Leadership Academy: Developing the Next Generation of Principals Across the Rural Landscape* directly addresses the Education, Innovation and Research Early-phase Grant Absolute Priorities 1 and 5.

Building on promising results, this grant will allow Teach For America (TFA) to strengthen, expand, and evaluate its Rural School Leadership Academy (RSLA) program. RSLA aims to increase the number of effective principals in high-need, rural schools through a unique approach to professional development (PD). Between 2017 and 2022, TFA will partner with Edgewood County Public Schools, Homedale Joint District, South Texas ISD, and Concordia Parish to deliver robust PD to 260 rural school leaders, collectively serving more than 200,000 K-12 students in 260 rural, high need schools. Participants will partake in: in-person PD retreats which include visits to excellent rural schools; a virtual professional learning community; constant self-assessment and subsequent actions plans; and a capstone project at their school. TFA will bring the experts in the field directly to participants and expose them to effective school leadership in various rural contexts so that, by the end of the program, participants will have a complete understanding of what it means to be a strong rural principal.

Through this project, TFA will:

- Meet the critical need for high-quality leadership training that is not otherwise available in rural LEAs.
- Accelerate talented people with an aptitude for leadership into rural principalships.

Expected outcomes:

- Place 260 TFA alumni on a path towards a rural principalship over five years.
- Develop in participants the knowledge, skills and mindsets of an effective rural principal.
- Foster professional learning communities among rural school leaders.
- Increase educator retention in rural communities.
- Publish an evaluation report, contributing to the evidence base of what works.

TFA will contribute to research, policy, and practice in the field by: (1) generating research on the impact of a novel approach to rural principal PD; (2) sharing insights with and developing strategies, tools, and best practices to support other organizations, schools, school districts, and universities.