

100  
YEARS



# The Feasibility Study Process

Rowan School Regionalization Institute

Walkkill Valley Regional Feasibility Study  
October 28, 2024



## Institute Team Members

Mark Magyar - Director, Sweeney Center for Public Policy; Policy Director, NJ Senate Majority Office\*

David Lindenmuth - Director, Rowan Institute for Educational Leadership; Superintendent of Schools\*

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Lucille Davy - Attorney at Law; NJ Commissioner of Education\*; K-12 Mathematics Teacher\*

Brian Diamante - CEO, The Diamante Group; Senior Director of Data and Research, NJPCSA

Brian Falkowski - CEO, SBO Management; School Business Administrator

Ken Greene - Adjunct Professor, Columbia University; Past President, NJASA; Superintendent of Schools\*

Kathleen Helewa - Senior Manager of Field Services, NJSBA\*; BOE Member, Warren Township\*

Ari Lazaro - Graduate Assistant, Rowan University

Scott Oswald - Adjunct Professor, Rowan & Stockton Universities; Policy Fellow, JerseyCAN; Superintendent of Schools\*

Donna Snyder-DeVita - School Business Administrator\*; County Representative, NJASBO\*

George Sundell - CEO, Sundance Associates; Demographer

Tony Trongone - Past President, NJASA, Superintendent of Schools\*

*\* former roles*



## Objectives

1. Identify the legal requirements for a feasibility study.
2. Outline a scope of work and our study model.
3. Address some FAQs as well as your questions.



# Legal Requirements



## School District Regionalization Law (P.L. 2021, c.402; also known as S3488)

- The Division of Local Government Services shall establish a grant program the purpose of which shall be to provide for the reimbursement of eligible costs associated with conducting feasibility studies that support the creation of meaningful and implementable plans to form or expand regional school districts.
- Funds under the grant program shall be made available to ... the boards of education of two or more school districts that are in the process of conducting a feasibility study.
- Boards of education receiving application approval shall be reimbursed with 50 percent of the grant award to be distributed upon final approval of the grant application and the remaining 50 percent upon the Division's acceptance of the completed feasibility study.
- The NJDOE shall reimburse participating districts for any costs incurred to hold an election to establish or enlarge a limited purpose or all purpose regional district.



## School District Regionalization Law (P.L. 2021, c.402; also known as S3488)

The grant application:

- Shall include copies of the resolutions adopted by all participating boards of education ... certifying a commitment to participate in a feasibility study.
- Shall include a description of the intended use of grant funding, a demonstration of the boards' capacities to oversee the proposed study, a list of personnel or outside consultants who would be conducting the study, and a plan to incorporate stakeholder participation and ideas in the process.
- May propose a feasibility study that would include an analysis of the inclusion of non-participating districts in a proposed regional district.



## School District Regionalization Law (P.L. 2021, c.402; also known as S3488)

Boards of education shall demonstrate that the proposed regionalization:

- Does not, and is not foreseeably likely to, increase or exacerbate the segregation of students by racial, socioeconomic, disability, or ELL status;
- Will lead to the establishment of a limited purpose or all purpose regional district to the maximum extent practicable;
- Consolidates school districts that are in close geographic proximity of each other;
- Possesses the potential to advance an enhanced learning environment for participating districts and for improved efficiency and cost savings;
- Coordinates curriculum across schools and grades; and
- Reflects a documented commitment from the participating districts to make good faith efforts to implement the recommendations of the feasibility study.



## School District Regionalization Law (P.L. 2021, c.402; also known as S3488)

The feasibility study shall include, but need not be limited to, options to address issues related to:

- Potential enrichment of educational programs for students;
- Kindergarten through 12 curriculum coordination improvement;
- Current and projected staffing needs and costs, analysis of the differences in the salaries and terms and conditions of employment in contracts among the various districts;
- Projected enrollment trends, including the impact on the demographic breakdown of the student population, including race, ethnicity, and national origin, and projected changes in class size;
- Student seat time, distance traveled, and potential increased or reduced transportation costs;
- State aid and tax revenue projections, cost sharing and methods of apportionment, potential cost savings or increases, allocation of existing school debt, facility utilization; and
- Calculation and methods of apportionment for determining membership on the regional district board of education.



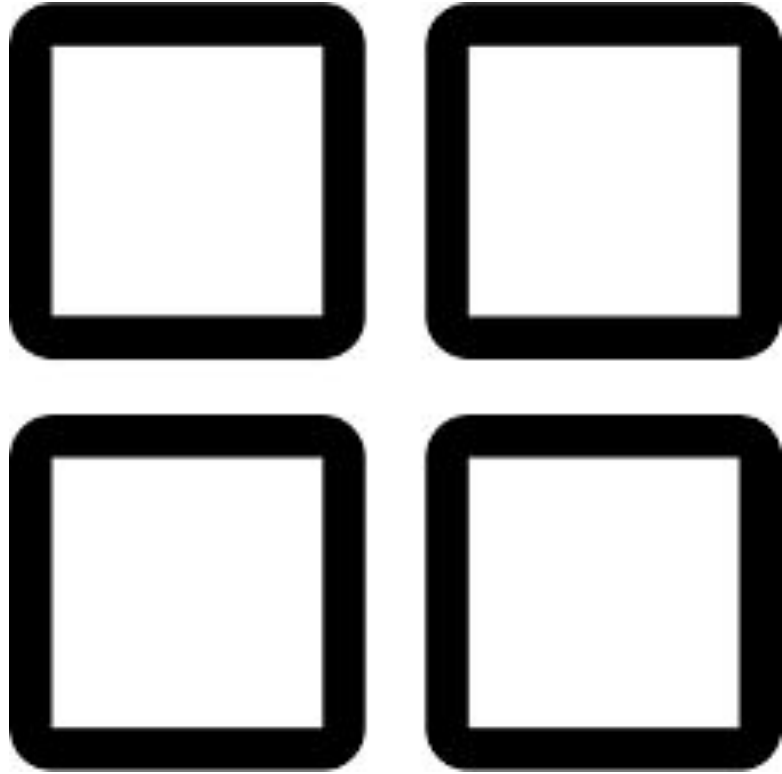


# Scope of Work



## Scope of Work and Deliverables

- P. Provide information and assistance leading to BOE approval to conduct the study.
  - 1. Develop an outline of the proposed study with key stakeholders from each participating district.
  - 2. Gather data relevant to the study from public sources, district records, and stakeholder meetings as needed.
  - 3. Produce governance/legal and demographic analyses.
  - 4. Produce education/program and finance/operations analyses.
  - 5. Make recommendations based on the analyses, review a draft with the steering committee, and produce a final document.
  - 6. Present findings publicly and assist in planning next steps.



# Study Model



## Framework of the Study Report

- ❖ Table of Contents
- ❖ Executive Summary
- ❖ Introduction
  - Study Purpose
  - Consolidation Options
  - Consultant Backgrounds
- ❖ Four Domains
  - Governance & Law
  - Demography
  - Education & Program
  - Finance & Operations
- ❖ Findings & Recommendations



## Domain 1: Governance & Law

- Constitutional, Statutory, and Case Law Review
- **Election Process and Board Composition\*** - number of board members, current apportionment, **projected apportionment**
- State Monitoring Status
- Transition Features
- **Stakeholder Input** - student and parent survey data, interviews, focus groups
- Potential Political Issues
- Governance and Legal Impact



## Domain 2: Demographics

- Community Profiles - overview of community populations, distinguishing characteristics, general context, birth data
- Housing Starts - current and approved developments
- Enrollment History - trends over time, student retention data, impact of choice and charter enrollments
- **Enrollment Projections** - cohort-survival, grade progression ratio, etc.
- **Racial Impact and Other Disaggregated Enrollment Impacts**



## Domain 3: Education & Program

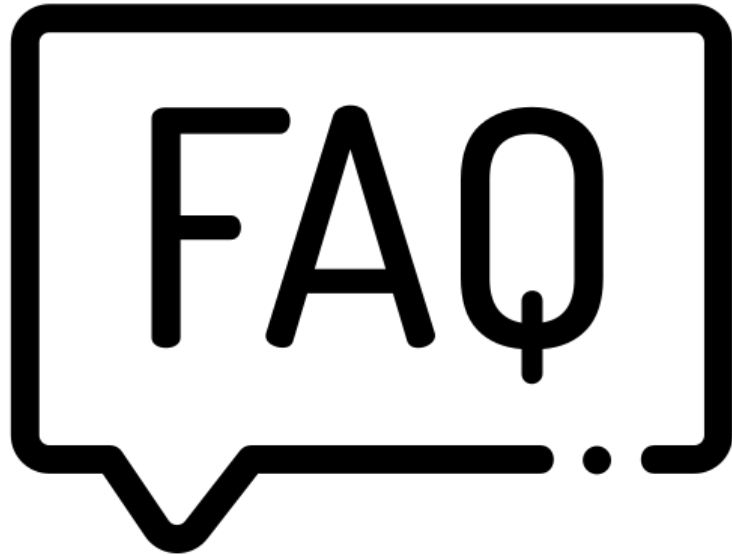
- School District Profiles - district configurations, schools, locations, **existing send-receive/regional relationships**
- Curriculum & Instruction - **subject and course offerings by grade, class sizes, potential improvements in curriculum coordination, potential enrichment of educational programs**, structure/schedules for each subject, professional development
- Other Instructional Resources - class sizes, school time, technology access
- Performance Measures - standardized assessment data, internal assessments, student growth data, graduation- dropout-postsecondary rates, school climate data (i.e., chronic absenteeism, discipline rates)
- Special Programs - special education, I&RS and RTI structure, other alternative programs
- Extracurricular Programs - athletics and student activities
- Staffing - **school staff information, projected needs, administrative structure**, district staff information, unique staff assignments
- Educational and Programmatic Impact



## Domain 4: Finance & Operations

- **State Aid & Local Tax Levies** - state aid projections & trends, local tax projections & trends, cost sharing & apportionment methods, equalized valuations & enrollments, choice impact
- **Operating Expenses** - potential cost savings/increases, budgetary costs per pupil & peer ranks
- **Debt Allocation & Borrowing Margin** - debt service schedules, asset & liability allocation
- **Collective Bargaining Agreements** - analysis of current main CBA, non-aligned staff by title
- **Shared Services** - among the proposed regional districts, outside the proposed regional districts
- **Contracted Services** - student seat time and distance traveled, potential cost savings, contracted food service, other contracted services (custodial, maintenance, etc.)
- **Tuition** - tuition worksheet(s) send/receive tuition (if applicable), tuition rates, total tuition cost, etc.
- **Reserves** - tuition, maintenance, capital, etc.
- **Facility Utilization** - long range facilities plan, unique facility resources
- **Financial & Operational Impact**





# Frequently Asked Questions



## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Study Process

**Q: How long does a feasibility study take?**

*A: While it depends on its complexity, most can be accomplished within 10-12 months of grant approval.*

**Q: What is the cost to the participating school districts?**

*A: There are no financial costs to the districts: they are all reimbursed through the state grant. The lead district will pay invoices to Rowan University for work accomplished, and file for reimbursement through the NJ Division of Local Government Services. Otherwise, the commitment from the districts is the time from stakeholders to gather data and provide input to the process.*

**Q: What is the value of being a lead district or a partner to the study?**

*A: The lead district and its partners are involved in gathering community input, making decisions about what the study investigates, and reviewing and commenting on the draft product.*

**Q: How are board members and community members involved?**

*A: We encourage participating districts to create a steering committee including the superintendents, business administrators, and representatives from the boards of education. The committee can plan informational open houses, focus groups, surveys, and/or other means of sharing information and gathering public input.*



## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Study Process

**Q: How does the study consider unique aspects of the participating districts?**

*A: We work with the steering committee to identify the range of options to be studied as well as lines of inquiry that go beyond our standard study model.*

**Q: What happens after the study is finished?**

*A: We come back to the districts and present the findings at a public meeting. The districts would then consider which recommendations to pursue, potentially through a referendum vote. We will remain available to assist with planning these next steps.*

**Q: Is regionalization required after a study is completed?**

*A: No, the requirement is for the participants to make “a good faith effort” to implement the study recommendations, which may include new collaborations and/or expanding current shared services.*

**Q: How many studies are being conducted?**

*A: We have a dozen team members engaged in six current studies with two other groups submitting applications.*



## Resources

Presentation Slides

Finalized Study Outline

Delsea Regional Feasibility Study

Henry Hudson Regional Feasibility Study



# Questions? Discussion?

Rowan School Regionalization Institute