

Scaling Curriculum-Based Professional Learning

Intermediary and Research Report - Fall 2025



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Executive Summary

The Gates Foundation's K-12 Education strategy works to ensure every young person graduates high school skilled in the math they need to succeed in higher education, the workforce, and life. In partnership with others, the work aims to make math instruction more relevant, engaging, and motivating as a way to accelerate student learning, support teachers, and improve the quality, reach, and use of instructional materials. The strategy focuses on four states—California, Florida, New York, and Texas—which collectively serve roughly a third of the nation's students and play an outsized role in expanding access to high-quality materials and curriculum-based professional learning. By fostering partnerships between publishers and professional learning (PL) providers, the Foundation is seeking to increase the availability of bundled product/service offerings pairing high-quality curriculum and skilled instruction to support student success in gateway mathematical achievement courses. This report covers the first year of a 4-year project, providing early evidence of the factors and processes that facilitate the development and health of partnerships, as well as baseline data characterizing the reach of curriculum-based professional learning service in the focal states.

This report offers details on

- 1** The four-phase partnership development process that emerged to allow publishers and PL providers to increasingly explore conceptual and economic fit.
- 2** The bundled offerings that 16 of 17 partnerships are developing (one is cross-marketing); one publisher is exploring three additional partnerships.
- 3** Go-to-Market (GTM) plans that (a) recognized demand for bundled high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and PL, (b) offered targeted supports for leadership and instructional staff, (c) outlined coordinated/co-branded sales strategies, and (d) maintained separate invoicing for partner services at this time. GTM plans' focus areas of improvement include key performance indicators and strengthening of service integration for scaling.
- 4** Feedback and data from partners, including
 - positive sentiments (80%+ agreement) about collaborator engagement and communication, with generally more positive sentiments expressed by publishers about the partnerships.
 - satisfaction (56% of partners) with the bundled offerings their partnerships were developing or had recently developed for piloting—PL providers had higher levels of satisfaction with the current status of the bundled offerings than publishers.

- the importance of value propositions and the navigation of power dynamics to fostering mutually beneficial partnerships.
- concerns that streamline sales/procurement for bundled offerings could be hindered by district procurement structures.
- publisher reach data for current customers with equal or higher concentrations of high-priority subgroups relative to state averages, with target customers exhibiting more equal or lower concentrations in these subgroups. PL provider reach data generally show organization within states, by provider.
- broad approval of the RTI intermediary team support, tools, and templates.

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Introduction

A Need for Coherent Instructional Systems

The Foundation's investment in scaling curriculum-based professional learning (CPBL) is part of its broader effort to improve the quality, reach, and scale of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and the aligned professional learning (PL) teachers receive to improve instruction. This initiative is based on the premise that when students experience a coherent, high-quality curriculum paired with skilled instruction, they develop the mathematical confidence and competence needed to reach critical academic milestones like successfully completing Algebra 1 by ninth grade—a gateway achievement that opens doors to advanced coursework and expanded postsecondary opportunities.

School districts often operate within fragmented instructional systems where strong curricula and PL services exist but do not function together in a coherent way. This misalignment leaves leaders without the systems expertise needed to create the enabling conditions for effective mathematics instruction and leaves teachers without the deep, job-embedded support required to translate HQIM into meaningful classroom practice. Although research demonstrates that CBPL is essential for effective math instruction, the current ecosystem makes it challenging for districts to access coherent, aligned solutions that support both teachers and students.

This fragmented ecosystem is hampered by critical barriers to cohesion, including districts' allocation of funding and time; limited availability of expertise in instructional coaching and pedagogical content knowledge, especially in mathematics; lack of incentives for for-profit curriculum publishers to support job-embedded coaching and teacher collaboration because these elements have historically been human-intensive, high-cost, and low-margin; nonprofit PL organizations, driven principally by impact, that are less likely than their publishing counterparts to attract the investment capital required to build the sales and marketing strength required for substantial growth; and a lack of HQIM-PL quality indicators. The Scaling Curriculum-Based Professional Learning Project (hereafter referred to as Scaling CBPL) seeks to address these systemic barriers through innovative partnerships that leverage the complementary strengths of both publishers and PL providers.

The Scaling Curriculum-Based Professional Learning Project

Facilitated by RTI International, the Scaling CBPL project aims to develop and evaluate strategic partnership models between curriculum publishers and PL providers to increase the availability of bundled product/service offerings. The partnership approaches fall within three general typologies:



Lead generation:

Publishers and PL providers share information on potential new customers (i.e., school districts) with each other.



Cross-marketing/selling:

The partners identify that they possess complementary products and services, have an understanding of what each offers, have mutual trust to represent those offerings accurately, and agree to promote each other's offerings.



Bundled offerings:

The partners collaboratively develop and co-brand a new bundle of HQIM products and PL services as a single point of access for education entities, where each entity of the partnership can market/sell the bundle.

The project defines bundled offerings as a co-branded package or solution of PL services and products offered in a single combined unit for the district to purchase from the partnership.

The Foundation considers the bundled offering partnership ideal because theory suggests it is more likely to address the identified market failures and fragmentation plaguing educational systems. Through the combination of resources, expertise, customer relationships, and technology, publishers and PL providers will be better-positioned to scale aligned curricula products and services across regions or educational systems, transcending traditional barriers to cohesive instructional systems and reaching a larger audience of educators and students.

Two separate teams at RTI International support the Scaling CBPL project. These teams ensure all research activities are coordinated with the programmatic work of partnership-building and bringing coherent (i.e., HQIM paired with CBPL) solutions to market at scale, while also being free from bias related to that work.

The RTI intermediary team leads the operationalization of the investment vision, supports the development of publisher-PL provider partnerships, analyzes data for actionable insights, identifies and addresses intellectual property (IP) and data-sharing concerns, and conducts strategic reporting and dissemination.

The RTI research and learning (R&L) team leads the execution of the learning agenda, including collecting needed data from the partner organizations and districts, analyzing those data, and producing reports and learning products.

Learning Agenda

In the first quarter of the project, the R&L team developed a research and learning plan that outlined learning questions, data sourcing, timelines, and key research and learning deliverables. The plan presents an exploratory study design that will yield descriptive findings and illustrative case studies suggesting promising areas of potential impact about a range of factors among partnerships without allowing for causal conclusions. The data collection and measurement activities are aligned with the underlying theory of change (shown in **Table 1**) and are designed to examine two hypotheses:

- Mutually beneficial partnerships between for-profit curriculum publishers and nonprofit PL providers can help transcend barriers to Scaling CBPL services.
- Partnerships that develop, market, and deliver bundled offerings will yield the most impact, as they enhance coherence of implementation supports, product, and enactment and reduce procurement friction through a single point of entry for the customer.

Table 1. Theory of Change

If...	Then...	Yielding
Publishers and PL providers forge partnerships to efficiently meet market demands for CBPL.	Partnerships can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scale access to HQIM and job-embedded CBPL for districts, schools, and teachers • increase local PL staff capacity • improve the quality of HQIM and aligned PL services • streamline procurement processes and increase fiscal efficiencies (only in bundled offering partnerships) 	Overall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased reach of HQIM and CBPL For the partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased customer base and Improved offerings For LEAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • district coordination of curriculum, instruction, and PL aligned with vision For teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased and improved teacher use of HQIM For students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased access to high-quality math instruction • enhanced student education mindsets and academic abilities

LEA = local education agency

Throughout the project, the R&L team will gather and analyze information through multiple methods and from multiple sources to address six overarching learning questions:

1. What factors and processes facilitate the development of partnerships between publishers and PL providers?
2. What factors and processes facilitate the health of the partnerships?
3. How do publisher-PL provider partnerships contribute to increased reach of HQIM-based PL?
4. What drives purchasing decisions in the PL market?
5. What are educators' experiences with and perceptions of bundled offerings?
6. How do feedback loops within bundled offering partnerships contribute to improved quality of the bundled offerings?

This report provides a comprehensive update as of August 2025, covering the partnership development process, current status of these partnerships, early findings from partner focus groups and surveys addressing the first two learning questions,¹ and baseline CBPL reach data for participating publishers and PL providers. The report concludes with recommendations for forming effective publisher-provider partnerships. Upcoming data collection and analyses are described in [Appendix A](#). **To maintain objectivity and transparency**, [Appendix B](#) clearly identifies which sections were authored by the intermediary and R&L teams.

Partnership Development Process

RTI and project collaborators (Scaleup Partners, Redstone Strategy Group, and the Foundation) designed and instituted a phased approach to partnership development. This structured approach ensured partnerships were strategically aligned, operationally ready, and positioned for sustainable impact. As of the writing of this report, partnerships were entering Phase 4. Details about each phase of this approach can be found in the [Power in Partnership: Scaling Curriculum-Based Professional Learning to Strengthen Math Outcomes](#) brief.



¹ The research team will begin to address learning questions 3-6 in fall 2025, as the project moves into the pilot testing phase. The team will continue to examine learning questions 1 and 2 as more partnerships form (one curriculum publisher is joining the project) and partnerships move from development to implementation, where partnership health is critical.

Partnership Status and Type



Bundled Offering Partnership Summaries

Bundled offerings developed by partnerships represented an array of approaches and strategies. Some took advantage of content and leadership coaching expertise across the partnership to incorporate system and school leader capacity-building for implementation supports, while others focused on helping teachers implement student self-paced learning and utilizing mastery-based grading approaches. Still others paired existing delivery platforms with PL expertise to provide district-level implementation planning and continuous improvement support, with cascading support for school leaders on how to use the platform and collected data and for teachers on how to incorporate an evidence-informed math course. Collectively, partnerships attempted to craft bundled offerings that capitalized on their complementary strengths to generate a product that would provide districts and schools with a more robust solution for curriculum-aligned PL opportunities.

Go-to-Market Planning Analysis

In Phase 3, partners engaged in a series of structured conversations, facilitated by their partnership liaisons from the RTI intermediary team, focused on developing a Go-to-Market (GTM) plan for the partnership. The GTM plan process was designed to frame partnership discussions around the key business aspects needed to shape and scale a viable partnership offering. The RTI intermediary team, in collaboration with Robert Sheffield (the team's key advisor), developed templates for the GTM plans based on partnership type. Additionally, partnerships were provided an example of a GTM plan to guide the development of their plans. The RTI intermediary team and Robert Sheffield reviewed draft partnership GTM

plans, providing targeted feedback on areas that could be strengthened before finalizing the GTM plans. The information documented in the GTM plans served as a foundation for the binding collaboration agreements drafted to formalize each partnership.

In July 2025, the RTI R&L and intermediary teams, Robert Sheffield, and Foundation program officers came together to conduct an analysis of the current GTM plans. At that point, there were 10 completed GTM plans included in the analysis, which yielded the following common themes:



Partnership type: All 10 partnerships operated under a bundled offering model (i.e., type 3).



Market analysis: GTM plans consistently recognized strong demand for bundled HQIM and PL, driven by post-pandemic learning recovery, equity imperatives, and pressure to improve math outcomes. State adoption cycles and policies were frequently cited as shaping the timing and entry strategies. Implementation support was positioned as a key differentiator from competitors.



Bundling approach: Bundles most often combine each partner's existing products or services, aligned through sequencing, shared messaging, and coordinated planning, rather than co-developing fully integrated or newly created joint offerings. Partners noted that the goal is to continue to refine and co-develop through the piloting phase.



Leadership focus: Nearly all bundles featured leadership-targeted supports such as principal coaching, strategic planning, or change management, reflecting a shared belief that building leadership capacity is critical for sustaining HQIM implementation.



Ideal customer profile: Across partnerships, the preferred customer was a midsize-to-large district with motivated leadership, prior HQIM adoption experience, and the organizational capacity to engage in a multiyear implementation effort.



Pilot site selection: Initial pilot sites were frequently drawn from existing partner relationships, enabling faster startup but limiting early exposure to new geographies or district profiles.



Pricing structures: Pricing models generally maintained separate invoicing for each partner's services, with tiered bundles (e.g., full vs. slim), per-district or -school pricing, and subsidies for Year 1 participating districts within states like California that require pilots to be provided at no cost. A few GTM plans included procurement-friendly options such as single invoices or pre-filled purchase carts, but integrated revenue-sharing models were rare at this point in time. Partnerships frequently noted that they would revisit revenue sharing after the initial pilot testing year.



Sales coordination: GTM plans often included joint sales pitches, co-branded collateral, and coordinated sales cycles, with the publisher partner typically leading the outreach and the PL partner providing aligned service narratives.

Although these patterns point to clear areas of alignment across partnerships, the GTM analysis also surfaced consistent challenges and areas for further development. The list below outlines some of the most common gaps identified across the plans:



Goal specificity: Many GTM plans outlined broad, aspirational goals but lacked measurable key performance indicators (KPIs), baseline data, or clear milestones to measure progress and partnership success.



Integration of offerings: Although bundles aligned existing products and services, few demonstrated true integration or co-creation of new, joint offerings that function as a single, cohesive solution to an identified market pain point.



Market expansion: Scaling strategies often lacked specificity on how partnerships would move beyond pilot districts, particularly into unfamiliar geographies or contexts outside of existing networks.



Differentiation from competitors: Some GTM plans relied on general claims of coherence and alignment without providing clear, evidence-backed distinctions that set their bundle apart in the market.



Pricing and revenue-sharing models: Most GTM plans maintained separate invoicing and revenue retention, with limited exploration of integrated pricing structures, shared financial models, or joint procurement mechanisms that could streamline district purchasing.



Measurement alignment: Although sales, implementation, and outcome measures were sometimes broadly identified, several GTM plans showed weak alignment between these KPIs and the stated value proposition, limiting the ability to assess whether bundles deliver promised benefits.



Governance and decision-making structures: Not all GTM plans clearly defined roles, communication protocols, escalation processes, or risk mitigation strategies, which could hinder coordination as partnerships move into larger-scale implementation.

Taken together, these common themes and gaps illustrate both the promise and the current developmental stage of the partnerships. The GTM plans capture a shared vision for how bundled offerings can improve instructional quality and district coherence, but they also highlight where further definition, integration, and strategic alignment are needed. These early insights reflect an ongoing process of refinement as partnerships continue to develop and test their offerings and approaches in the market.

Partnership Learnings

In June and July 2025, the research team surveyed and conducted focus groups with each partner organization that had at least one active partnership (three publishers and nine PL providers). The purpose was to gather information directly from partners about partnerships they were forming, including factors that supported and hindered development, and feedback on the tools and other supports provided by the intermediary team (see [Appendix C](#) for a description of survey and focus group methods and number of participants and [Appendix D](#) for detailed survey results tables).

Given that partnerships were moving into Phase 4 of partnership development at the time of these data collections, most of the information relates to Learning Question 1: “What factors and processes facilitate the development of partnerships between publishers and PL providers?” Nevertheless, the survey and focus groups provided an opportunity for initial exploration of two subquestions to Learning Question 2 (health of partnerships): “How do publishers and PL providers perceive the value of their partnerships (e.g., through lead generation, cross-marketing/selling, and bundled offerings)?” and “What strategies do publishers and PL providers use that improve or develop internal organizational structures and operations, including sales and marketing strategies, financial and technical operations, etc.?”

Factors That Facilitate Partnership Development

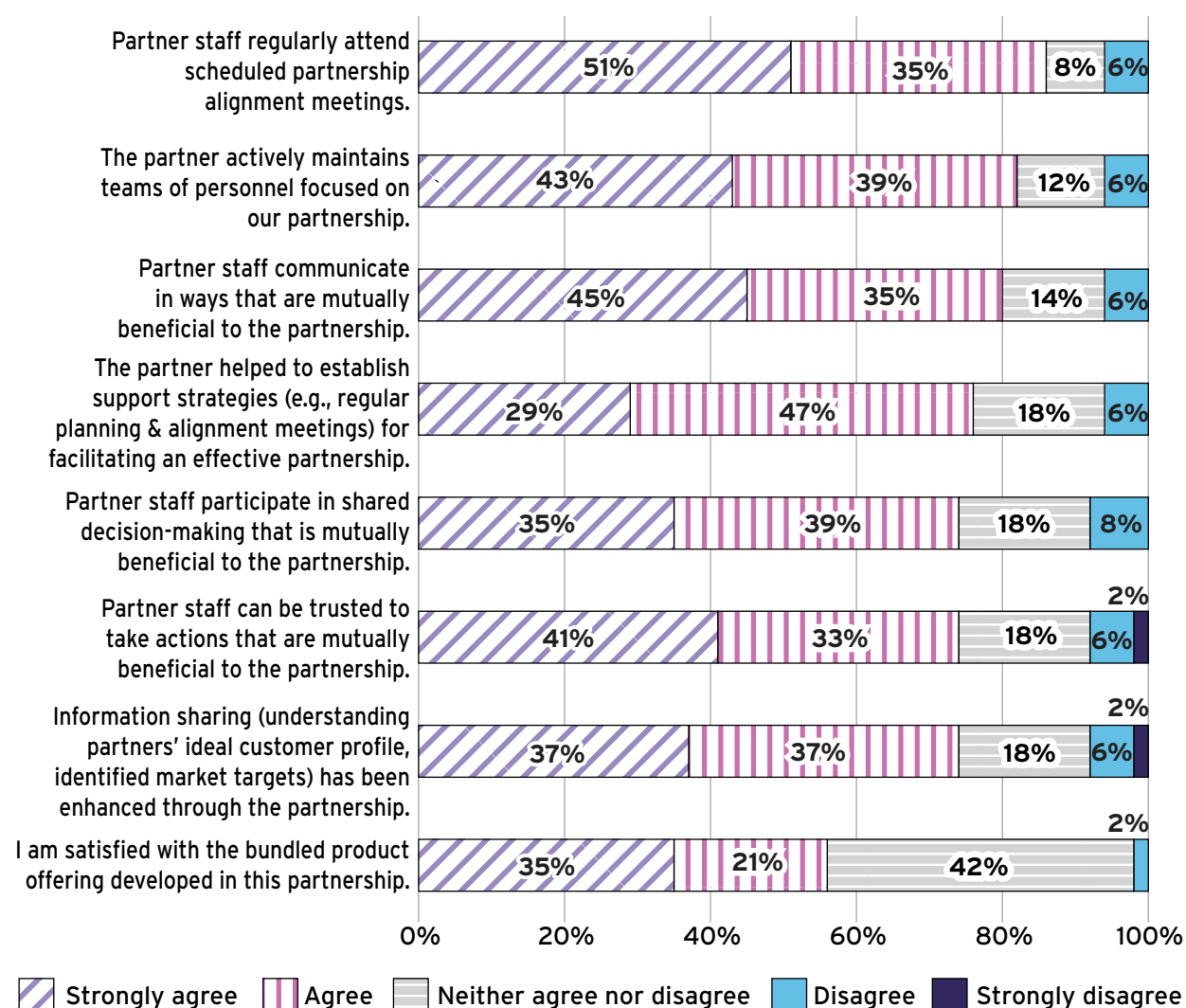
The survey asked respondents to identify the partnerships they were directly involved in and—for each of those partnerships—to rate their agreement with eight statements reflecting key aspects of partnership development that will also be critical for ongoing partnership health. Respondents collectively reported about 17 partnerships.

Respondents were most likely to agree or strongly agree that their partners regularly attended joint meetings, actively maintained a team focused on the partnership, and communicated effectively (80% and above, **Figure 1**).

They were slightly less likely to agree or strongly agree that their partners helped establish strategies for facilitating an effective partnership, shared decision-making, could be trusted to take actions that were mutually beneficial to the partnership, and that information sharing had been enhanced through the partnership (ranging from 73% to 76%).

Respondents were the least likely to report that they were satisfied with the bundled offering (56%)—an item presented only for bundled offering partnerships. Note: At the time of the survey, some partnerships were still in the process of defining their bundles and none had begun piloting their bundles.

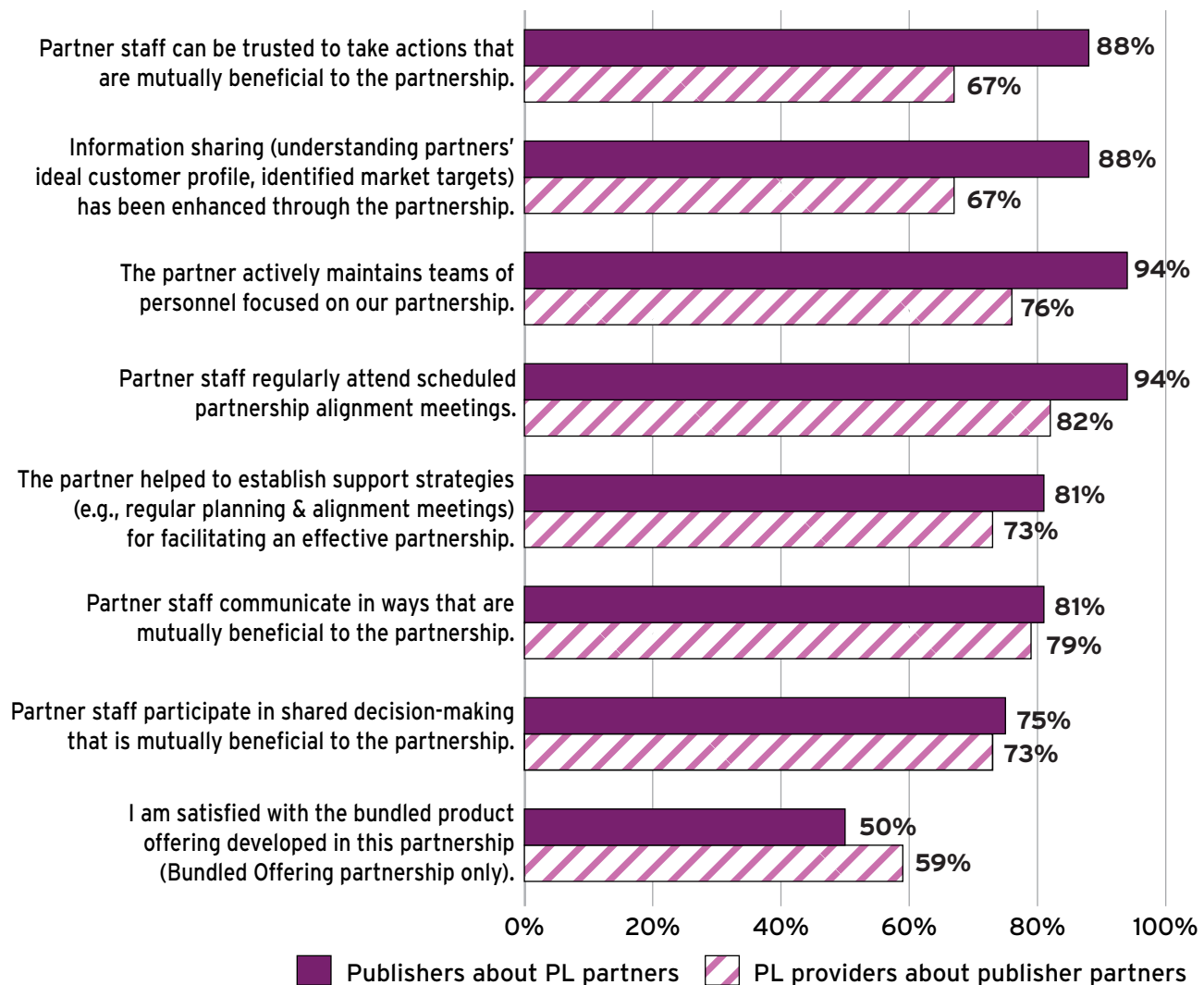
Figure 1. Partner Experiences with and Sentiments About Their Partners



Note: Respondents were provided a “Don’t know” response option. Those responses are combined with “Neither agree nor disagree” in this graph. See [Appendix D](#) for disaggregated results.

Figure 2 highlights a trend: publisher representatives generally rated their partnerships with PL providers more positively than PL representatives rated theirs with publishers. For example, 88% of publishers agreed their PL partner staff could be trusted to act in the partnership's best interest, compared to 67% of PL respondents. The one area where PL providers expressed greater satisfaction than publishers was with the bundled offering (59% vs. 50%).

Figure 2. Percentage of Partners Who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with Positive Statements About Their Partners, by Partner Type



Value Propositions and Aligned Incentives

Across focus groups, participants consistently emphasized that developing mutually beneficial partnerships depends on early and explicit value propositions. **When a partner clearly articulated their value proposition and differentiated themselves from other organizations**—especially in contexts with overlapping services—collaboration was smoother and decision-making was faster. A PL provider explained, *“We went in with a pretty clear arc of our services that we presented to publishers. Having them share their arc of services [enabled us to] create the lasagna or play Tetris with the different services.”*



To develop a strategic partnership...

“Try to be as clear and tangible early on about where the curriculum folks’ services and ambitions stop and where the PL folks start—whether that’s with audience or content.”

Conversely, ambiguity in service overlap and lack of shared vision for the partnership led to delays and confusion: *“Identifying differentiators between all these PL providers has been pretty difficult.... I don’t even know if they know what, how they’re different.”* Another partner expressed frustration, saying, *“There was an overall lack of clarity across the team.... We kept restarting the same conversation.”* Mutual understanding, strategic coordination, and having the right stakeholders in the room were repeatedly cited as essential for thriving partnerships.

Trust and Navigating Power Dynamics

Trust and navigating power dynamics between publishers and PL providers are critical to successful collaboration. Partners described factors that build trust and alignment, **including being transparent and self-aware about each partners’ strengths and limitations and being open to learning together**. One publisher appreciated that their PL partner was *“very honest and upfront about what [our organization] does well.... So that’s been a really great partnership.”*



Trust

“There’s no framework arm wrestling going on. We’re willing to learn from them. They’re willing to learn from us.”

Territorial perspectives and lack of transparency were commonly cited as barriers to trust and mutually beneficial partnerships. A PL provider described publishers as having the *“perception that we really reap the benefits financially, and they don’t necessarily.”* Another PL provider perceived that a curriculum provider was concerned they might create their own competition through a partnership, a worry echoed by a publisher: *“We don’t want to undermine or cannibalize our own business.”*

Existing Relationships

Publishers and PL providers who had a history of collaboration reported being able to **facilitate faster alignment, trust-building, and logistical coordination**. As one PL provider stated, *“Certainly the existing knowledge of each other’s organization probably gave us a bit of a head start.”* Partners identified several ways in which existing relationships took hold—from formal contracts, shared projects, or even just personal connections. These relationships allowed partners to bypass initial hurdles and move more quickly toward implementation and deeper collaboration.

Furthermore, preexisting relationships had a trickle-down effect across other partnerships.

A PL provider explained,

“We take one or two steps ahead with [a publisher], and then we just try and do the same thing with [another publisher]. We have a better shared execution partnership with [the publisher with prior relationship] and a factor of success with [our other publisher] is to just apply that progress to the relationship.”

That said, there were some instances where prior relationships among partners were a cause for trepidation: some partners had had negative experiences or worked on efforts that did not materialize. These sorts of experiences did slow down the progression of partnerships for this particular effort.

Organizational Capacity and Maturity

Both PL providers and publishers identified several barriers to engaging in partnerships that centered around organizational capacity and maturity. Smaller organizations often faced challenges related to limited staffing, unclear internal processes, and lack of dedicated roles. Larger organizations also cited lack of coordination across decentralized teams as delaying their ability to efficiently move forward in their partnerships. One PL provider described their experience:

“We would get into a meeting, and [the publisher] would say, ‘Oh, we really wish our marketing people were here.’ And then we would schedule another meeting with their marketing people and repeat ourselves. So we’d have the same meeting two or three times in a row until they got the right group in the meeting.”

Some participating organizations have **invested in additional dedicated personnel**. *“We brought on a project manager for the partnership side.... She’s been here almost two weeks and [her efforts] have made it very easy to get the approvals that we needed.”* Others have identified strategies to help navigate the partnerships and participate in a meaningful manner: *“We also did increase our standing check-in time to be weekly in the past few weeks, which has been really helpful to move us forward as opposed to in the beginning.”*

Aligned Timelines

Partners consistently described how **misaligned timelines between the project, publishers and PL providers, and school districts created significant barriers to partnerships.**

For instance, the accelerated timeline of the project conflicts with that of sales cycles and district purchasing schedules as well as state/district schedules for selecting providers (e.g., the NYC Solves initiative). As one publisher explained,

“The project timing was pretty difficult, because by the time we had a Go-to-Market plan, and we had a co-bundle, we were out of our selling season. Typically, if we have new services that we’re offering, we will share that with our sales team in December/early January, so they can hit the ground running in mid-January and sell. Having a Go-to-Market plan and a co-bundle not ready till we do has been a real challenge, because now schools are out of session. So that makes it difficult to get into contact with them. But even the times before they were out of school getting on a sales rep calendar is very difficult, because they’re in the field. So if a district was identified, you’d have to work around the sales person’s schedule to try to get time with them, which is super difficult.”

The Intermediary Team

The intermediary team’s **facilitation, tools, and communication were consistently cited as critical enablers** in advancing partnerships and maintaining momentum. The liaisons’ project management and mediation enabled partners to stay organized, feel supported, and move forward effectively. As one respondent stated,

“I think if RTI wasn’t there to project manage and keep moving things along, then we just would have stopped meeting even though we really want to partner with [publisher].... It’s really nice to have RTI around like creating the agendas and making sure we’re on task and making sure we followed up on things we would do.”

Providers frequently praised intermediary team members for their **ability to navigate complex dynamics**. A partner described, “[Liasion] has had to navigate hard for us...pushing back in her conversations, separate aside from us with [other partner], like [other partner] you’ve got to stop pushing, or you’re just going to lose them altogether.”



The Impact of RTI Liaisons

“[The liaison] really understands our position and she’s a neutral party, and she’s helped us navigate some really difficult things. There have been hard conversations and having that middle entity was really helpful.”

Partners offered recommendations for ways the intermediary team could improve and expand their support:

- **Enhance** onboarding and early communication with standardized onboarding materials.
- **Provide** tailored materials instead of generic versions for documents such as business agreements.
- **Formalize** and strengthen structures to facilitate shared learning, reflection, and adaptation across partnerships.

A few respondents also recommended the intermediary team provide materials earlier in the process instead of as needed, while others recommended the opposite.

Results from the partner survey also showed broad approval of intermediary team support and room for growth in learning opportunities and tools and templates.

Perceived Value of Partnership Models

That no lead generation and only one co-marketing/selling partnership has developed is evidence that publishers and PL providers generally did not see value in these partnership models. Some organizations considered them during early phases of partnership development but determined the effort to establish and maintain such partnerships was unlikely to pay off financially and would not meaningfully improve the coherence of publishers' curriculum and PL providers' services.

Bundled Offerings

Bundled offerings were seen as a **promising model, offering greater value to districts** by integrating curriculum and PL. As a respondent noted, *"Being able to do it side by side is a greater, better value proposition to the school districts than [PL provider] just rolling in on its own."* However, partners noted **tension between the need for standardized offerings to streamline selling and procurement and PL providers' commitment to customization** to meet specific district needs. Some PL providers are struggling to reconcile their consultative, district-specific approaches with the demands for scalable, predefined packages. One publisher commented, *"All these [PL] providers they really customize. They've never had to think about a standard session or a standard offering. Everything they do is customized."*

Partners reported that pricing disparities, sales structures, and procurement processes that differ between curriculum publishers and PL providers further complicate these tensions. Publishers seek streamlined, fixed-price models to simplify sales and procurement, while many PL providers prefer to tailor offerings to district needs. Some partners were addressing these differences by establishing pricing tiers (e.g., slim vs. full bundles) and working to create standardized and customizable bundle options to meet diverse district needs while maintaining procurement efficiency.

Concern About Streamlining Procurement

Partners were concerned that **fragmented district structures, differing procurement timelines and funding sources for curriculum and PL, and a lack of unified requests for proposals (RFPs) would hinder** streamlined sales and procurement for bundled offerings. Respondents consistently emphasized that meaningful streamlining would require systemic changes at the district and state levels, including centralized procurement processes and model RFPs integrating both curriculum and implementation.



Publisher Sales Cycle

"Publisher sales cycles are slightly earlier than PL sales cycles. And we generally procure out of two different funding buckets, and we generally procure through different people in the system.... The procurement for materials happens from a different person than the procurement for PL services."

Organizational Changes to Support Partnerships

Some organizations made **internal structural and operational changes** to support partnership development. Changes included hiring new roles, refining team responsibilities, and expanding strategic focus. One PL provider noted, *"We are paying attention to states that we wouldn't necessarily pay attention to."* Another PL provider has been *"strategically pulling in our consulting partners...building their knowledge...so they can be the primary person interfacing with the district."* Other organizations have not made organizational changes, leveraging existing structures or deferring changes due to early-stage engagement. One stated, *"I don't think we've changed anything.... I think it's too early."*

Effectively onboarding new staff to the partnership has been key to maintaining momentum. Progress halted or slowed considerably when this did not occur, as collaboration time was spent orienting the new member.

Baseline CBPL Reach Data

A core goal of the Scaling CBPL project is to increase adoption of HQIM and CBPL in the four focus states of New York, California, Texas, and California, measured by the number of local education agencies (LEAs) purchasing the materials and associated PL, also referred to as "reach." Examining reach data provides the R&L team, the intermediary team, and the Foundation with an early opportunity to understand how publisher participation in the Scaling CBPL project will lead to an expanded customer base. Reach data include information on current customers as well as those LEAs being targeted for expansion within states or into additional states. Reach data for PL providers are also being collected and monitored to determine whether PL partners are experiencing similar increases in scale and scope as their publisher partners. Overall, at baseline, publishers reported having as current clients LEAs that aligned with priority targets and state profiles but in some instances reported targeting LEAs with profiles somewhat dissimilar to respective state student subgroup distributions. PL providers tended to provide baseline reach data verifying heavier presence in some states relative to others. Monitoring future data will be paramount to ensuring that PL providers are expanding their service areas as a result of the Scaling CBPL project.

Recommendations

The GTM analysis and partner feedback from the first year of the Scaling CBPL project reveal significant progress in building partnerships between publishers and PL providers, while also highlighting areas requiring further development to sustain and scale bundled offerings. Based on the findings, the intermediary and research teams offer the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen goal clarity and alignment with product strategy theory of action.

Partnerships should establish measurable goals with aligned baseline KPIs, baseline data, and milestones. Clear performance metrics will enable partners to assess progress, refine offerings, and demonstrate value to districts and funders.

- To address this recommendation, the intermediary team has developed and is currently supporting partners in co-creating a client experience map to connect the inputs and outputs of the bundled offering at different points (marketing/sales to delivery of services) to intended outcomes and metrics of the partnership. Furthermore, the intermediary team is supporting refinement of “no-go” criteria with partners to support decision-making for a mutually beneficial partnership.

2. Advance integration of bundled offerings.

To support continued iterative development of cohesive bundled offerings, the intermediary team should provide ongoing technical assistance and connect to other capacity-building opportunities. This includes balancing the need for standardization to support procurement with customization to meet district-specific needs.

- To address this recommendation, the intermediary team is collaborating with Robert Sheffield to develop a session on tailoring standardized offerings versus customized solutions within a learning arc for PL providers. Other actions include using learnings and insights to provide a prioritized list of PL providers for inclusion in the Deliver Ed investment’s learning series on productization—the process of transforming services into standardized, repeatable, and scalable offerings—led by Robert Sheffield and connecting at least quarterly with Deliver Ed to exchange learnings and key insights.

3. Expand market reach strategically and align timelines with state/district cycles.

Partnerships should develop clear strategies for scaling beyond initial pilot districts, including plans for engaging new geographies and district profiles. Leveraging early pilot successes and creating adaptable models will be essential for broader market entry.

- To address this recommendation, the intermediary team is creating a timeline visualization that maps state-specific approval cycles alongside partner sales and procurement timelines. The intermediary team is developing a learning series

focused on addressing trends/gaps in GTM plans, refining sales tactics for bundled offerings in alignment with funding streams and state-specific sales contexts. Other activities include supporting development of practice sales pitches, telling their data stories, clearly articulating their differentiators, and leveraging resources from the Deliver Ed capacity-building investment in this area.

4. Develop pricing and procurement innovations.

In future iterations of GTM plans, partnerships should explore streamlined pricing and revenue-sharing models that reduce procurement barriers for districts. Piloting single-invoice structures, integrated purchasing mechanisms, and shared revenue agreements could increase district uptake and sustainability.

- To address this recommendation, the intermediary team is supporting partners to conduct focus groups with current customers and sales/marketing teams to test and solicit feedback on pricing structures as well as providing examples of revenue-sharing mechanisms. Both the intermediary and research teams will also be providing support to explore these procurement mechanisms for use, collecting feedback from districts and data on the effectiveness of these mechanisms in the upcoming sales cycle, and working with the Foundation on leveraging resources and learnings from other relevant investments in this area.

5. Formalize partnership governance.

Partnerships should clearly define decision-making structures, communication protocols, and risk mitigation strategies to support effective coordination as they scale. Formal governance will help navigate power dynamics and ensure accountability.

- To address this recommendation, the intermediary team is sharing trends/gaps in GTM plans, providing support to define these strategies as part of the client experience mapping exercise, and engaging partners in facilitated risk/mitigation exercises with provision of examples.

6. Enhance intermediary support and shared learning.

The intermediary team should continue providing tailored facilitation, tools, and onboarding supports while expanding opportunities for cross-partnership reflection and knowledge exchange. This includes strengthening standardized onboarding, offering more contextualized business tools, and formalizing peer learning communities.

- As noted above, the intermediary team is currently taking these actions for this upcoming year and will continue to iterate on supports to ensure the team is meeting partner needs.
- In addition, the RTI teams will analyze redline edits to business agreements currently in process to identify trends and potential risks to support implications for shared learning and mitigation tactics for partnerships.

7. Build organizational capacity for partnership work.

Both publishers and PL providers should invest in dedicated personnel, refined internal processes, and staff onboarding to improve efficiency and responsiveness. Strengthening organizational capacity will reduce delays and enhance partnership health.

- To address this recommendation, the intermediary team is engaging in actions to support planning for onboarding as additional staff from within partner organizations are engaged. The intermediary team is actively supporting assigned partnership staff to utilize the partnership to identify shifts and/or changes needed internally within the organization to better support current and future partnerships as well as ongoing product and PL services development. This includes engaging executive leadership (i.e., C-Suite) to problem-solve barriers to effective collaboration that meets both shared and individual organizational goals.

8. Continue development and testing of the partnership health rubric.

The partnership health rubric shows promise as a monitoring tool. We recommend continued refinement, validation of artificial intelligence-supported scoring methods, and integration of rubric data into ongoing partnership management to proactively identify risks and opportunities.

Together, these recommendations aim to build on early successes, address structural and operational gaps, and position partnerships to deliver on the promise of coherent, scalable solutions that strengthen instructional quality, capacity, and student achievement.

Appendix A: Upcoming Data Collection and Analyses

As partnerships move into Phase 4 of Operationalizing, Testing, and Monitoring, the research and learning (R&L) team will collect and analyze data from multiple sources, including via 12 case studies with local education agencies (LEAs) piloting the bundles.

Annual Review of Go-to-Market Plans–All Partnerships

Capturing Go-to-Market (GTM) plans from partnerships allows the Scaling CBPL intermediary and R&L teams to understand how publishers and professional learning (PL) providers have organized their collaborative efforts, how they have capitalized on each other's strengths (and acknowledged weaknesses), and how they plan to scale their efforts to expand into different markets. Capturing documentation around these efforts, across time, will allow each of the respective teams to better understand how the partnership evolves and responds to changes in personnel, market conditions, and the education landscape.

Annual Partner Interview/Focus Groups–All Partnerships

Partner interviews/focus groups provide an opportunity for publishers and PL providers to provide open-ended feedback to the Scaling CBPL R&L team about their experiences with their respective partner(s), the intermediary team, their clients, and the Scaling CBPL project as a whole. This data collection exercise provides much-needed context around how the partnerships develop over time, how they overcome roadblocks, and how their scale-up strategizing evolves.

Annual Partner Report and Reach Data Submission–All Partnerships

The Annual Partner Report (APR) is a tool designed to capture, from each participating partner, an array of data elements representing key metrics for the Scaling CBPL project. Elements include the number of leads generated, deals closed and revenue generated in each priority state, metrics related to customer satisfaction (e.g., net promoter scores), partnership collaboration indicators (e.g., cross-training sessions provided), and elements related to interactions with LEAs (e.g., procurement experiences). A component of the APR includes updated reach data submitted by publishers and PL providers.

Teacher Surveys/Focus Groups–Case Study LEAs

Teacher surveys and focus groups are designed to gather information about how frequently teachers engage in vision setting/implementation planning in their schools, whether or not they participate in collaborative instructional planning, how much they are accepting HQIM, and how their self-efficacy may be impacted as a result of HQIM and aligned PL support. Baseline and post-test measures will be taken to assess change.

Walk-Through/Observations–Pilot and Case Study LEAs

Walk-through/observations of teachers functioning in their classrooms will be used to gather information about teacher use of HQIM and instructional practices and will also serve as an assessment of integrity and/or frequency of use of strategies and practices. Walk-throughs will be conducted by either PL providers as part of their observational support activities or by LEA staff as part of annual teacher evaluation practices.

Student Surveys–Case Study LEAs

Student surveys are designed to capture their mathematical mindsets and engagement. Baseline and post-test measures will be taken to assess change.

Student Academic Outcomes–Case Study LEAs

Student performance on state-level standardized math assessments will be reported by the high-priority subgroups of interest (i.e., African American, Hispanic/Latina/x populations and students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch/are economically disadvantaged) and student grade levels. The grade-level and subgroup summaries will be presented as part of the case study design, with an intent to describe results associated with students experiencing HQIM with teachers engaging in aligned PL. Note: The case study design does not allow for causal attribution (i.e., statements about CBPL causing positive growth/change in academic achievement).

Appendix B: Report Authorship

Section	RTI Team
Introduction	Joint
Partnership Development Process	Intermediary
Partnership Status and Type	Intermediary
Go-to-Market Planning Analysis	Intermediary
Partnership Learnings	Research and learning
Baseline CPBL Reach Data	Research and learning
Recommendations	Intermediary
Appendices A, B, and C	Research and learning

Appendix C: Partner Focus Groups and Survey Methods

Survey

The partner survey gathered information about the partnerships being formed and experience with the intermediary team (i.e., the liaisons). The research and learning (R&L) team invited one to three representatives from each of three publishers and nine professional learning (PL) organizations to participate based on information provided by the intermediary team of partner staff who had substantial interaction with their liaison and who, collectively, could answer questions about each of their organization's partnerships.

Administered from June 23 to July 11, 2025, the survey was distributed via unique email links with up to four reminders. Liaisons also encouraged participation. As shown in Table C-1, all partner organizations responded (100%), with 76% of invited representatives completing the survey. Some partners chose to have one representative complete the survey on behalf of their organization and notified RTI International of that decision. Others may have made the same decision without notifying RTI.

Table C-1. Partner Survey Respondents

Organization type	Partner organizations			Partner representatives		
	N invited to participate	N responded	Response rate %	N invited to participate	N responded	Response rate %
Publishers	3	3	100	6	4	67
PL providers	9	9	100	23	18	78
Total	12	12	100	29	22	76

Focus Groups

Administered from June 26 to August 7, 2025, the partner focus groups gathered in-depth information about the partnership formation process and experience with the intermediary team, as well as challenges, facilitators, and suggestions for improving the partnering process. The R&L team invited the same publisher and PL organization representatives to participate in the partner focus group as those invited to participate in the partner survey. All partner organizations participated in a focus group (100%). Of the 12 interview sessions, 11 were group sessions and one involved a single respondent. In total, the R&L team collected data from 28 respondents, including 14 organization executives, nine partnership managers, and five other partnership team members.

Analysis proceeded in two phases:

- 1. Preliminary analysis and development of the codebook:** After each focus group, the lead interviewer and secondary interviewer completed a debriefing form summarizing the main takeaways and highlighting challenges, successes, trends observed across focus groups up until that point, and unique responses heard during the interview. To gain a preliminary understanding of the emerging themes from the focus groups, the R&L team used RTI's enterprise data-protected version of Microsoft Copilot. This artificial intelligence tool identified the top themes across the 10 focus groups conducted up until that point, supporting comments for each theme, and challenges and solutions mentioned in the debriefing forms. To check validity, the R&L team manually reviewed the debriefing forms for consistency and then discussed the preliminary findings with the intermediary team. Member-checking by the intermediary team increased our confidence in the validity of the preliminary findings. The R&L team repeated this process after the remaining two focus groups were completed in order to inform the codebook for use.
- 2. Main analysis:** The R&L team first prepared the transcriptions for manual coding by using Microsoft Copilot to clean up verbal pauses (e.g., minimize filler words like "um" and "ah") while still retaining verbatim quotes as much as possible. Next, Copilot looked within the prepared transcripts for the debriefing form preliminary themes, answers to the research questions, and relevant Scaling CBPL partnership health metrics. Copilot also identified key quotes within the transcripts for supporting evidence. The R&L team manually coded each of the 12 focus group transcripts using the qualitative analysis software program ATLAS.ti. Copilot then analyzed the ATLAS.ti coding reports to provide comprehensive summaries that highlighted the most strongly supported quotes across transcripts.

Appendix D: Partner Survey Summary Tables

Table D-1. Partner Experiences with and Sentiments About Their Partnerships

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Don't know		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The partner actively maintains teams of personnel focused on our partnership.														
Total	0	0.0	3	6.1	6	12.2	19	38.8	21	42.9	0	0.0	49	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	6.3	5	31.3	10	62.5	0	0.0	16	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	0	0.0	3	9.1	5	15.2	14	42.4	11	33.3	0	0.0	33	100.0
The partner helped to establish support strategies (e.g., regular planning and alignment meetings) for facilitating an effective partnership.														
Total	0	0.0	3	6.1	9	18.4	23	46.9	14	28.6	0	0.0	49	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	18.8	6	37.5	7	43.8	0	0.0	16	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	0	0.0	3	9.1	6	18.2	17	51.5	7	21.2	0	0.0	33	100.0
Information sharing (understanding partners' ideal customer profile, identified market targets) has been enhanced through the partnership.														
Total	1	2.0	3	6.1	7	14.3	18	36.7	18	36.7	2	4.1%	49	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	1	6.3	0	0.0	6	37.5	8	50.0	1	6.3%	16	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	1	3.0	2	6.1	7	21.2	12	36.4	10	30.3	1	3.0%	33	100.0
Partner staff can be trusted to take actions that are mutually beneficial to the partnership.														
Total	1	2.0	3	6.1	8	16.3	16	32.7	20	40.8	1	2.0	49	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	1	6.3	1	6.3	7	43.8	7	43.8	0	0.0	16	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	1	3.0	2	6.1	7	21.2	9	27.3	13	39.4	1	3.0	33	100.0

Table D-1. Partner Experiences with and Sentiments About Their Partnerships (continued)

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Don't know		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Partner staff communicate in ways that are mutually beneficial to the partnership.														
Total	0	0.0	3	6.1	7	14.3	17	34.7	22	44.9	0	0.0	49	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	18.8	6	37.5	7	43.8	0	0.0	16	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	0	0.0	3	9.1	4	12.1	11	33.3	15	45.5	0	0.0	33	100.0
Partner staff participate in shared decision-making that is mutually beneficial to the partnership.														
Total	0	0.0	4	8.2	7	14.3	19	38.8	17	34.7	2	4.1	49	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	1	6.3	2	12.5	6	37.5	6	37.5	1	6.3	16	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	0	0.0	3	9.1	5	15.2	13	39.4	11	33.3	1	3.0	33	100.0
Partner staff regularly attend scheduled partnership alignment meetings.														
Total	0	0.0	3	6.1	4	8.2	17	34.7	25	51.0	0	0.0	49	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	6.3	6	37.5	9	56.3	0	0.0	16	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	0	0.0	3	9.1	3	9.1	11	33.3	16	48.5	0	0.0	33	100.0
I am satisfied with the bundled product offering developed in this partnership.														
Total	0	0.0	1	2.3	9	20.9	9	20.9	15	34.9	9	20.9	43	100.0
Publishers about PL partners	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	14.3	2	14.3	5	35.7	5	35.7	14	100.0
PLs about publisher partners	0	0.0	1	3.4	7	24.1	7	24.1	10	34.5	4	13.8	29	100.0

Note: Total n may vary because a professional learning partner may have not answered a question and because only bundled offering partners were presented with the statement in the last row.

Table D-2. Partner Experiences with and Sentiments About the Intermediary Team

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree nor agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Don't know		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The intermediary team is responsive to our concerns.	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	9.1	7	31.8	13	59.1	0	0.0	22	100.0
The intermediary team assists in understanding and addressing challenges encountered.	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.5	8	36.4	13	59.1	0	0.0	22	100.0
The intermediary team develops opportunities for learning and skill development.	0	0.0	2	9.1	6	27.3	6	27.3	8	36.4	0	0.0	22	100.0
The intermediary team helps us to develop trusting relationships with our partners.	0	0.0	1	4.5	5	22.7	8	36.4	8	36.4	0	0.0	22	100.0
The intermediary team takes reasonable action to mitigate power dynamics within partnerships.	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	22.7	8	36.4	8	36.4	1	4.5	22	100.0

Table D-3. Partner Reports of Helpfulness of Intermediary Team-Developed Tools and Templates

Item	Not at all helpful		Somewhat unhelpful		Neither helpful nor unhelpful		Somewhat helpful		Very helpful		Don't know		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Go-to-Market plans	0	0.0	3	13.6	3	13.6	4	18.2	11	50.0	1	4.5	22	100.0
Intellectual property agreements	1	4.5	0	0.0	3	13.6	6	27.3	8	36.4	4	18.2	22	100.0
Business agreements	1	4.5	0	0.0	2	9.1	7	31.8	8	36.4	4	18.2	22	100.0

Table D-4. Overall Partner Satisfaction with Intermediary Team Support

Item	n	%
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	4.5
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1	4.5
Somewhat satisfied	5	22.7
Very satisfied	15	68.2
Total	22	100.0