



NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NSNO AND RSD ANNOUNCE EVALUATOR SELECTION AS CRITICAL FIRST STEP IN INVESTING IN INNOVATION (I3) GRANT IMPLEMENTATION**

*New Orleans* – New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) and the Recovery School District (RSD) have selected Stanford University’s Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) to evaluate school reforms implemented with funding from a \$28 million federal grant and \$5.6 million in matching funds. CREDO will be retained for five years to measure and certify school and student performance under the Investing in Innovation (i3) grant awarded to NSNO and the RSD in October 2010.

CREDO’s immediate role will be to collect state-provided, student achievement data and assess the performance of i3-eligible charter school operators. The evaluator’s data and recommendations will make up more than 50% of what NSNO and RSD will use, in conjunction with other factors, to select charter operators capable of transforming academically unacceptable schools, the intent of the i3 grant. The evaluator also will design the methodology to ensure the successful implementation of The New Orleans i3 Project citywide, including assessment of student and charter operator performance, government effectiveness and effectiveness of the project’s expansion.

“Parents, educators and community leaders have a right to feel confident that the i3 funding process is fair, trustworthy and transparent,” said Sarah Newell Usdin, CEO and Founder, NSNO. “That’s why the selection of the evaluator is so important. The evaluator will provide independent evidence to support the selection of charter operators, and the ongoing reporting needed to ensure New Orleans children are prepared to succeed.”

“Receiving the i3 program award from the U.S. Department of Education is the most important validation we, as a city, could receive that New Orleans leads the nation in education innovation,” said Kevin Gutierrez, Deputy Superintendent of the Louisiana Recovery School District. CREDO’s demonstrated experience enables us, to accurately maintain that pioneering effort, the effort that ensures that a high-quality public school education is available to every child in the city.”

The request for proposals to serve as Federal Grant Evaluator provided qualified organizations with an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the Investing in Innovation (i3) program requirements. Responders presented their experience designing and implementing similar studies for comparable project administrators. Specifically, the RFP asked each organization to demonstrate research design and implementation capabilities, and the ability to make innovative recommendations on the appropriate methodology required to monitor The New Orleans i3 Project.

CREDO at Stanford University was established to improve empirical evidence about education reform and student performance at the primary and secondary levels. Over the past 10 years, CREDO has supported education organizations and policymakers in using reliable research and program evaluation to assess the performance of education initiatives. The CREDO team published the first, detailed national assessment of charter school impact “Multiple Choice: Charter Performance in 16 States” in June 2009 as well as a separate in-depth examination of student performance at Louisiana charter schools. <http://credo.stanford.edu>

“CREDO is excited to have the opportunity to follow New Schools for New Orleans and RSD’s work to create high quality education options for children in New Orleans,” said Ken Surratt, Assistant Director of CREDO. “Our commitment to Louisiana has been evident through our prior in-depth analysis of the charter sector in which we found positive results for charter school students. Our team is dedicated to being on the front lines for the duration of this project to ensure that i3 grant plan that created is implemented with a steadfast commitment to improving student achievement and CREDO will monitor and measure the impact made.”

### **Investing in Innovation (i3) Award**

In October 2010, New Schools for New Orleans and the Recovery School District were awarded a \$28 million validation grant by the U.S. Department of Education through the Investing in Innovation (i3) competition and secured the required \$5.6 million in matching funds. The award will fund a five-year project called “Scaling the New Orleans Charter Restart Model”. The goal is to expand New Orleans’ innovative charter model to citywide scale, then apply the model to other struggling urban school districts. The heart of the New Orleans i3 Project entails creation of a permanent administrative infrastructure with the capacity to replace persistently low-performing schools with charter restarts executed by high-performing charter management organizations. Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the annual goal is to turn around the bottom five percent of failing schools in New Orleans and then replicate the model in Memphis and Nashville, TN.

### **New Schools for New Orleans**

New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and developing the people, resources and environment necessary to achieve excellent public schools for every child in New Orleans. Founded in April 2006, NSNO is committed to building and maintaining a system of schools, not a school system, by encouraging schools to determine their individual and collective needs and by supporting them in their growth. Specifically, NSNO has driven dramatic student achievement gains in New Orleans in three key ways: recruiting and placing quality teachers and principals by partnering with proven providers; maintaining a strategic charter development strategy that has evolved from launching and supporting new open enrollment charter schools, to working in partnership with operators and service providers to build critical infrastructure and expand successful operators; and, informing and collaborating with the community to support a performance-driven system of schools.

### **Recovery School District**

The Recovery School District is a special school district administered by the Louisiana Department of Education. Created by legislation passed in 2003, the RSD is designed to take underperforming schools and transform them into successful places for children to learn.

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