



**Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center: Region III EAC**

*Civil Rights Training and Advisory Services-*

*Equity Assistance Centers Program*

*CFDA: 84.004D*

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## **Roots and Wings: MAP Center's Contributions to the Equity Assistance Center Program Legacy**

The injustices of the past two years at the intersection of systemic racism and the deadly COVID-19 pandemic accentuate the urgency of equity-focused transformation in our schools and communities. As we collectively work toward this vision, students, families, and educators grapple with recovery from the most widespread disruption of public education in history. Yet, many injustices are deeply woven into the fabric of US history as threads of exclusion, marginalization, and segregation. Moreover, our nation remains deeply divided on the necessity and nature of work to address systemic racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, homophobia, and religious discrimination. This division impacts public schools, as education stakeholders contend with widespread misinformation and backlash against advancements in educational equity and strive to stay the course by ensuring academic progress and well-being of our youth.

In these complex times, we appreciate Secretary of Education Cardona's commitment to monitor state legislation that may pose threats to students' civil rights, as well as President Biden and the Secretary's pursuit of a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all. The Equity Assistance Center (EAC) program is an exemplar of this pursuit: a stalwart federal resource for public education agencies navigating and responding to inequities since it was authorized under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act as the first federally funded educational technical assistance (TA) program. For six years, the Midwest and Plains EAC (MAP Center) has successfully served Region III by responding to **878** requests for TA: **414** during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have responded to **every** request, stimulating tangible improvements in policy and practice with 186 local education agencies (LEAs), all 13 State Education Agencies (SEAs), and in collaboration with the Office for Civil Rights. Prior to that, for five years we effectively served six states as the Region V EAC. If refunded, we will continue to serve with deep respect for EAC legacy.

The outstanding capacity of our broadly diverse executive leadership team (*Appendix A: Key Personnel CVs*) is shaped by 135+ years combined experience as leadership personnel for three EACs across geographic regions since 2009. We are former public educators, LEA and SEA leaders, and school psychologists, and current university faculty who research and create professional development and policy approaches to address all four desegregation areas identified by the EAC program--race, sex, national origin, and religion—along with socioeconomic status and disability. We have expertise in state and federal laws, rules, and guidance under past and present federal administrations, including changes to civil rights guidance under the USDOE, its Office for Civil Rights (OCR), and at times, in coordination with the Department of Justice (DOJ). We have a long, positive history advancing equity with those across identity and political spectra. These factors, and cooperative relationships with the USDOE, OCR, and DOJ, position us well to support responsible government agencies in ensuring desegregation and students' civil rights.

Our staff's expertise and diversity are showcased by our research-based, theoretically grounded TA delivery model. Moreover, the vast resources afforded by our situation in an equity-oriented School of Education (SOE) at research-intensive Indiana University (IU) are bolstered by the excellence of MAP Center doctoral students earning PhDs related to educational equity policy and practice. Further, a brilliant and diverse group of Equity Fellows (i.e., research experts on all desegregation areas) and Advisors (*Appendix B: Equity Fellow/ Advisor CVs/Bios*) inform our understandings of Region III's unique desegregation needs and galvanize our efforts to meet them. Throughout our narrative and references (*Appendix C: References*), we note past and present MAP Center advisor, fellow, and staff research contributions in **bold**.

These factors made it possible for us to pivot 100% of services to virtual format in March 2020, due to COVID-19. Since then, TA availability and quality has remained uninterrupted. Since school closures began, we have collaborated with partners to address COVID challenges,

leading 260+ sessions with 200+ LEA/SEAs, and six sessions for parents/caregivers, with 2,500+ participants, while maintaining all other TA and engagement in regional and national TA network meetings. Moreover, we have developed 11 COVID-19 multi-media equity resources, posted on our website, circulated to thousands of subscribers and social media followers (*Appendix D: MAP Center Multi-Media Resources*), and featured in the USDOE's *Program and Grant Support Services Weekly Digest*. We continue to be the right team for this work, demonstrated by our agility and excellence during these difficult times. Continued funding will leverage our leadership across three regional EACs and ensure the stability of relationships and persistence toward progress we have sustained in the midst of a devastating pandemic, racial injustice, and coordinated backlash to advancements in educational equity.

## **QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN**

### **MAP Center Services Appropriate to Needs of Past, Present, and Future Beneficiaries**

The MAP Center's mission is to ensure equitable educational access, participation, and outcomes by expanding state and local education agencies' capacities to provide robust, effective opportunities to learn for all students, regardless of and responsive to race, sex, national origin, religion, as well as language, disability, and income, and to eliminate inequities among and between groups. Our TA services are of outstanding appropriateness and quality to meet the needs of Region III's 13 SEAs, 6,953 LEAs, and 10,794,876 PK-12 public school students. For six years as Region III EAC, we have provided high-quality TA that has addressed SEA/LEA needs with significant impact on students' equal access and treatment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, income, and/or disability. We will continue to provide TA upon request of and in relation to the needs of school boards, SEAs, LEAs, and other government agencies for the preparation, adoption, and implementation of plans for

equity, including desegregation based on race, national origin, sex, and religion, and development of effective methods of coping with special educational problems occasioned by desegregation.

On the basis of the project features we detail in subsequent sections, and considering the notice inviting applications, the goals of MAP Center services appropriate to the needs of project beneficiaries will include, but not be limited to: (1) Promoting and ensuring students' civil rights and integration in relation to race, sex, national origin, and religion (**Coomer et al.**, 2017; **Venzant Chambers**, 2020), income (**Diem**, 2017), and disability (**Skelton**, 2019) (2) Mitigating adverse educational effects of COVID-19 by increasing school systems' capacities to support all students and facilitate continuity of learning, including distance/remote learning (**Price**, 2020); (3) Building and sustaining supports for students' and educators' mental and social well-being, especially given social unrest and widespread illness and loss, and in underserved communities including tribal and rural communities (Vigil-Hayes et al., 2020) (4) Improving school culture and climate through prevention of and response to instances of sexual, racial, and other forms of bullying and harassment, including in online learning environments that proliferated during COVID-19 (**Lazzell et al.**, 2020; **Thorius et al.**, 2013) and in the context of state bills targeting LGBTQIA+ students with the potential to violate students' civil rights (Cardona, 2022); (5) Improving recruitment, retention, and distribution of effective and diverse educators (**Jackson et al.**, 2017), including addressing teacher shortages exacerbated by COVID-19 (Giffin et al., 2021); (6) Improving education leaders' capacity to develop and implement evidence-based systemic innovations (**Chen et al.**, 2019); (7) Building and facilitating agency, family, and community partnerships and networks (**Morton**, 2017), including those that create safe and welcoming environments for refugee students and English learners; (8) Ensuring appropriate placement and integration of students with disabilities at race, sex, national origin, and religion

identity intersections (Cavendish et al., 2014; Shealey, Lue, Books, & **McCray**, 2005); (9)

Supporting data-based decision making on research-based, culturally responsive, and universally designed policies and practices (**Waitoller & Thorius**, 2016; Weeks & **Sullivan**, 2019); (10)

Addressing disproportionate discipline and exclusionary policies, practices, and programmatic segregation (**Khalifa & Briscoe**, 2015); (11) Developing and facilitating effective approaches to

dropout prevention and reentry (**Mackey**, 2018); and (12) Supporting LEAs transitioning to unitary status in desegregation cases and restructuring for racial and socio-economic diversity

(**Diem et.al.**, 2019). We detail five project features that ensure our services will be appropriate, and then discuss their impact as further evidence our TA has been relevant to Region III needs.

***Open Doors, Open Tables: Our Innovative, Groundbreaking Multi-tiered TA Service Delivery Framework Ensures Sufficiency of Project Intensity and Duration***

Transformative equity assistance services require coordinated efforts that build human and system capacities for policy and practice improvements through collaborative consultation, targeted professional learning, and contextual analysis supported by cutting-edge, research-based resources. Foremost, we ensure our services are appropriate because our doors are always open and there are always spaces at our table; we have provided and will continue to provide free and equal access to TA for 100% of eligible program participants who submit requests for assistance (Performance Measure/PM4): over 878 individuals or agencies so far, this cycle. We can do this because of the agility of our multitiered framework, which consists of universal (Tier 1), targeted (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3) TA and allows for flexible intensity and duration aligned with the desegregation needs of the requesting agency. Every organization that contacts us may choose a phone or video interview, during which we ascertain desegregation issues to be addressed and provide initial consultation. Then, right away, we send related Tier 1 Center-developed, research-based resources; we begin to sense and respond to partners' expressed needs upon first contact.

Next, our internal management structures ensure project participants receive the intensity of TA services that matches documented need. Center leadership hold weekly management meetings to determine appropriate tiers of TA services for each requesting agency and make prompt email contact to offer a plan for service delivery. If no further services are desired by the requesting agency beyond those Tier 1 resources we have already provided, we add the agency to our contact list and continue to provide them with relevant Tier 1 universal resources. Whether or not they were one of the 186 agencies with which the MAP Center entered a Tier 2 or 3 targeted or intensive partnership during this grant cycle, all 878 individuals or agencies requesting our supports were served under Tier 1 in ways that responded directly to their needs.

Our multitiered TA framework was the first of its kind engaged by an EAC when we served Region V from 2011-2016; we will continue to refine and expand TA as we respond to exponential increases in assistance requests occasioned by COVID and mounting public tensions around educational equity. *Tier 1 Equity Research and Resources* are of lower intensity and available to all Region III (and beyond) public school personnel, students, families, communities, and organization partners, and are research-based, data-driven, and results-focused. Tier 1 includes equity resources in many formats, such as cross-stakeholder vodcasts and policy development rubrics, disseminated through our social media, website, and list serve. Of medium intensity, shorter-term and fixed or cyclical duration, *Tier 2 Equity Learning Networks* are diverse professional and community development opportunities. Our *Tier 3 Systemic Equity Partnerships* are intensive, sustained relationships with SEAs, LEAs, and other government agencies characterized by collaborative consultation, policy review and revision, professional learning, and systemic analysis and planning processes, documented in customized Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Technical Assistance Scope and Sequence plans (TASS) (*Appendix E:*



*MOU/TASS Example*). Our TA reflects application of implementation science toward developing generalizable knowledge to be applied beyond individual systems of concern (Bauer et al., 2015).

Our multitiered TA framework is based on a preventative public health model. A past project officer complimented the quality, intensity, and duration of our services: “The Center’s tiered approach...provides the most appropriate level of assistance for the client.” The framework allows fluidity in TA intensity and duration; as partners’ capacity increases during an intensive Tier 3 partnership, we can revise MOUs to decrease service intensity. If more urgent equity issues emerge for partners who have accessed Tier 1 and 2 TA, we can respond by increasing service intensity. Our model allows for just the right fit at just the right time.

Further, although a tiered model has become commonplace for organizing USDOE TA Center services, such frameworks have at times neglected, or even perpetuated concerns with equity. Our executive director has published extensively on equity considerations in and absent from multitiered systems of support (Artiles, Bal, & Thorius, 2012; Thorius & Maxcy, 2014), as well as TA, generally (Kozleski & Artiles, 2012; Thorius, 2019); thus, we strategically engage diverse stakeholders (e.g., advisors and equity fellows, media, partners) and forms of data (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, systemic, process, outcome) to inform service tiers.

### ***Rigorous Research and Development Processes***

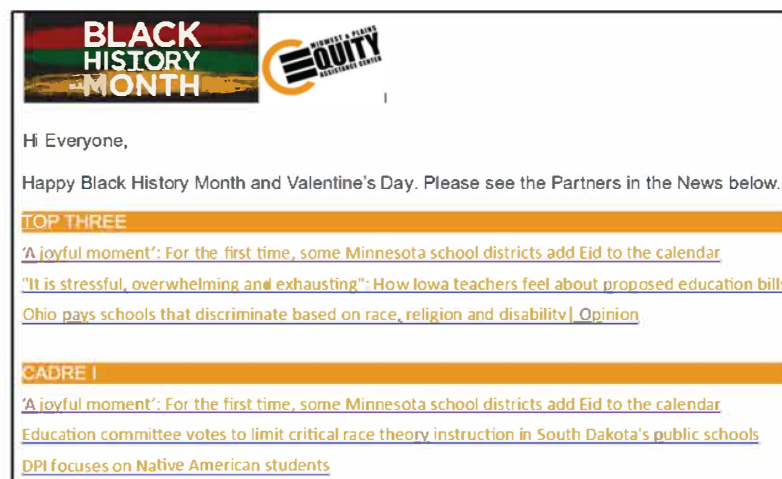
The second project feature that ensures our services are appropriate to the needs of project beneficiaries and recipients is the rigorous research and development processes that guide the MAP Center’s service design. Members of our executive leadership team, our equity fellows, and select advisors are internationally renowned education scholars who conduct research and review the extant literature to develop research-based, relevant, applicable services in many forms that are disseminated widely through multiple platforms.

Due to these experiences and knowledges, the MAP Center draws from *and* contributes to the evidence base of practices that mitigate impacts of segregation based on sex, race, religion, and national origin in public schools (e.g., **Diem**, 2017). Moreover, our leadership team (e.g., **Skelton**, 2019) and equity fellows and advisors (e.g., **Ward** et al., 2021) contribute to research on methods that build individual and systemic capacity to design and enact policies and practices that increase racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic inclusivity in education settings.

In addition, continuous improvement is a critical aspect of our development process for Tier 1 and 2 products and learning experiences. The cyclical process goes from an “inception” stage wherein ideas are conceptualized based on client requests and need-sensing, to the “next generation” stage where products and learning experiences are re-invented and improved in light of new information, technological advances, and practitioner needs.

### ***Comprehensive Needs-Sensing Procedures***

The third project feature ensuring service appropriateness is our deep knowledge of Region III’s desegregation needs based on a comprehensive, timely approach to data collection activities built into project design, such as monthly environmental scanning activities comprised of public media content review, surveys, initial and annual partner and advisor interviews. For example,



this image depicts an excerpt from monthly *Partners in the News* emails compiled and sent to all staff by doctoral students who monitor Region III for issues impacting existing partners. Plus, we consistently engage in face-to-

face and synchronous online sessions where diverse cross-stakeholder groups inform future TA

topics and formats, and questionnaires completed by partners following participation in all of our professional learning sessions ask them to share future TA topics of interest. Stakeholders include LEA/SEA leaders, teachers, and service providers, students and families, EAC-network and regional/national TA center leaders, and employees of government agencies from regional and national OCR offices and the DOJ. If re-funded, we will increase frequency and types of needs-sensing through collaborative TA with other centers, detailed in our [implementation plan](#).

### ***Customized Data Analysis Systems***

Our custom-built database, discussed in more detail in our implementation and management plans, is the fourth project feature that ensures the appropriateness of our services to Region III needs. Our database allows us to review individual partners' responses to our comprehensive intake process across time and across partners, leading to in-depth consideration of partners' needs and the ability to aggregate, track and understand themes and trends across Region III, all of which contribute to our development of adequate, effective TA services.

### ***Physical and Technologically Accessible TA Content and Service Delivery***

The fifth project feature that ensures appropriateness of our TA to the needs of beneficiaries are those related to physical and technological accessibility. We engage in design processes and quality assurance checks such that TA content is accurate and physically accessible via dynamic text, image descriptions, transcription, and webpage translation. Our current leadership team includes two members with physical disabilities who have led local and national disability-related advocacy efforts and who, together with all staff, ensure MAP Center services are accessible from the start, rather than retrofitted upon request. We contract with language interpreters and all online TA sessions feature auto transcription. In addition, our location within IU enables us to leverage University Information Technology Services (UITS) and Adaptive Educational Services consultation to ensure the MAP Center's asynchronous

online professional development courses meet ADA requirements. We will continue to expand accessibility features beyond ADA compliance toward universal design in the next cycle (e.g., shifting large print and live captioning from “upon request” to “standard practice”) (*Appendix F: Accessibility Plan, Style Guide, Quality Assurance Checklist*).

Next, we understand that our services can only be relevant to project beneficiaries when there is widespread awareness they exist. Multiple outreach and engagement methods leverage cutting edge technologies afforded by IU, including communications with LEAs and SEAs after news stories on potential civil rights violations, outreach emails regarding future Tier 2 events, and social media campaigns; we are always vigilant for potential partners across Region III’s rural, suburban, and urban settings (*Appendix G: Communications and Dissemination Plan*).

The project features--these rigorous, research-based, accurate, accessible features that ensure appropriate TA services in relation to beneficiaries’ and recipients’ needs and assets--are incorporated into our rigorous logic model (*Appendix H: Logic Model*) and evaluation plan (*Appendix L*) that includes methods to identify and assess the effectiveness of our evidence-based practices. We elaborate on how our logic model reflects project rationale in a later [section](#).

### ***Impact on Policies, Practices, and Knowledge as Defined in Performance Measures***

Finally, we are confident our services are appropriate because they have had tremendous impact on project participants across Region III, which will carry on under continued and new approaches planned for the next grant cycle. MAP Center Tier 1 Equity Research and Resources include over 700 digital, print, video, and audio resources that are universally available via our website’s Equity Resource Library, 156 of which are Center authored and produced. This far exceeds the number of resources available from comparable service centers and university-based research centers in Region III states past and present. Tier 1 resources have been accessed from the MAP Center’s equity resource library nearly over 50,000 times over the current cycle.

Evaluation data show the impact of Tier 1 services on policies, practices, and knowledge (PM2). Based on Annual Partner Survey data, sent to 1,000+ subscribers, 90% of respondents reported that products are of high quality and useful for building knowledge (PM1); 30% reported Tier 1 resources contributed to tangible policy and practice changes (PM2). This is significant; even our least intensive services lead to tangible improvements. A partner comment speaks to the impact of Tier 1 TA on policy and practice improvements: “We were able to use the tools from MAP to create protocols around adoption of content area standards...we've incorporated several resources into our trainings...and use your one-pager ‘Reframing the Achievement Gap’ often.”

Our Tier 2 Equity Learning Networks have been valuable change levers for LEA/SEA stakeholders, reaching over 10,000 individual project participants over the past six years. Over 92% of participants reported increases in knowledge (PM1) and capacity (PM3) as a result of Tier 2 services. A participant comment on a Tier 2 post-event questionnaire illustrates how the knowledge was applied in the local context, a key feature of implementation science: “*The information from this session was shared with our district equity council. We developed goals and specific actions steps to be taken as a result of the conversations and guidance from this session.*” During another Tier 2 learning event, administrators from Community Unit School District 308 (IL) discussed their LEA’s *Climate for Learning Framework* and praised MAP Center services and leadership for facilitating district culture and climate improvements.

Tier 3 Systemic Equity Partnerships have resulted in the most in-depth and far-reaching impacts for partnering agencies. The MAP Center has served 100 LEAs and SEAs at this tier. The aggregate results of our post-event questionnaire across 44 Tier 3 events for the 2020-2021 year revealed that 96.69% of respondents rated the quality of Tier 3 events as either “Excellent” or “Above Average,” 92.2% of these 723 respondents agreed that the learning experience increased their awareness of equity issues, and 94% of respondents agreed that the experience

increased their knowledge of topics covered (PM1). Most respondents agreed that the intensive learning experience showed them how to guide others in equity work (92.5%). An example of a Tier 3 partnership demonstrating significant impact is our long-term collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) wherein our Center facilitated implementation of Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.861 and the School Desegregation/ Integration rules through the MDE Achievement and Integration (AI) program (PM2).

The impact of our Tier 3 services also is evident in our partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), wherein department staff increased their capacity to refine and implement a Statewide Equity Plan (PM2/3). Our TA included customized professional development and collaborative consultation sessions with NDE administrators, and resources related to review and revision of NDE's Social Studies Standards to eliminate bias affecting 22,988 teachers and 315,542 students. The impact of this partnership was featured in [\*Time\*](#) magazine, and the NE State Superintendent details the impact of our partnership in a letter of support (*Appendix I: Letters of Support from LEAs and SEAs*).

### **Collaboration of Appropriate Partners to Maximize MAP Center Services**

Our project design features implementation and management approaches that adhere to a simple, yet important principle: success can only be achieved by effectively and efficiently working with others. Whether we are working with each other, supporters, partners, key constituencies or other TA centers or universities, we foster cooperation and collaboration in pursuit of superior results. Our staff regularly attend face-to-face professional meetings to build awareness of the MAP Center and our services by disseminating products and increasing subscribers and partnerships through keynotes and presentations, information tables, and participation on advisory boards. Since 2016, staff members have attended 80 such meetings reaching thousands of people. This opportunity to map our collaborative networks, and the

diversity of expertise, identity, and experience among them, showcases our connections with students, families, scholars, community leaders, local and state agency educators and leaders, mental health professionals, TA center personnel, and government agencies situated across state and federal settings. We highlight six types of collaborations with appropriate partners to demonstrate the extent to which our networks maximize effectiveness of project services.

***Collaborative Relationships with Agencies Legally Responsible for Operating Public Schools***

In addition to our nearly 200 Tier 2 and 3 collaborative partnerships with LEAs and SEAs legally responsible for the operation of public schools, we have provided TA to federal agencies that have requested our support to build their capacities to do the same. We entered relationships with the OCR and DOJ during several federal investigations and resolutions early in our previous grant cycle. Since then, we have partnered closely with OCR and DOJ to shape the content of resolutions *and* have built the agencies' capacities to incorporate research-based approaches for remediation and ensure equal educational opportunity under the Civil Rights Act. On several occasions since 2019, OCR employees requested and received MAP Center training to build their own capacity to ensure students' civil rights; Chicago OCR requested and engaged in a webinar on inequitable outcomes and treatment related to discipline and student race, sex, national origin, and disability. Cleveland OCR requested and participated in a three-part series for attorneys and investigators entitled *Situating Cultural Competence & Critical Reflexivity in Everyday Practice*. DC Metro OCR requested and received the same. We also responded to a DOJ Education Section trial attorney's invitation to a panel for DOJ attorneys about evidence-based civil rights remedies and fulfilled an IES and OSEP invitation to moderate a plenary panel on COVID-19 school re-opening for USDOE grantees. Through these efforts and more, we have effectively collaborated with government agencies legally responsible for operating public schools.

### ***Joint EAC TA Products and Services Collaborations***

The MAP Center also collaborates on joint projects *within* the EAC network. In 2017, equity fellow Sarah Diem led creation of a joint-EAC research-to-practice [brief](#) on socio-economic integration; our center led the publication process. Also, responding to a National Association of Title IX Administrators request to contribute to their 2018 national meeting, the MAP Center collaborated with other EACs on a session for LEA/SEA Title IX Directors.

### ***Cross-Network TA Collaboratives***

For six years, our staff have served on 20 boards or committees for other TA centers including six comprehensive centers, five national centers, four state organizations, two regional centers, two parent centers, and one regional educational laboratory, responding to 22 requests for joint TA provision to education agencies responsible for public school operations. We have many letters of support from such organizations in Appendix I. We detail ideas for expansion of this type of collaboration in our [implementation plan](#).

### ***Partners in Practice TA Collaboratives***

Next cycle, we will continue the momentum of a new collaboration with past and present PK-12 partners to plan and deliver TA responsive to urgent equity practice issues: *Partners in Practice TA Collaboratives*. This cycle, in due to an influx in requests for assistance for addressing backlash about centering equity in district and state policies, standards, and curriculum, we invited three Region III superintendents and one district leader to plan a January 2022 Tier 2 session open to education administrators. These leaders contributed to five key actions for responding to opposition to district equity work, threats, and intimidation: (1) Defining and communicating rationale; (2) Ensuring safety; (3) Leveraging state and federal legislation; (4) Building knowledge about and responding to coordinated tactics to disrupt equity-driven



education; and (5) Increasing awareness of organizations providing supports and resources to strengthen collaboration. An event with 100+ attendees and four national experts included discussions wherein superintendents received research-based guidance and shared experiences and stories of success. The session led to the development of a new Tier 1 [resource](#).

### ***Community Alliances for Equity***

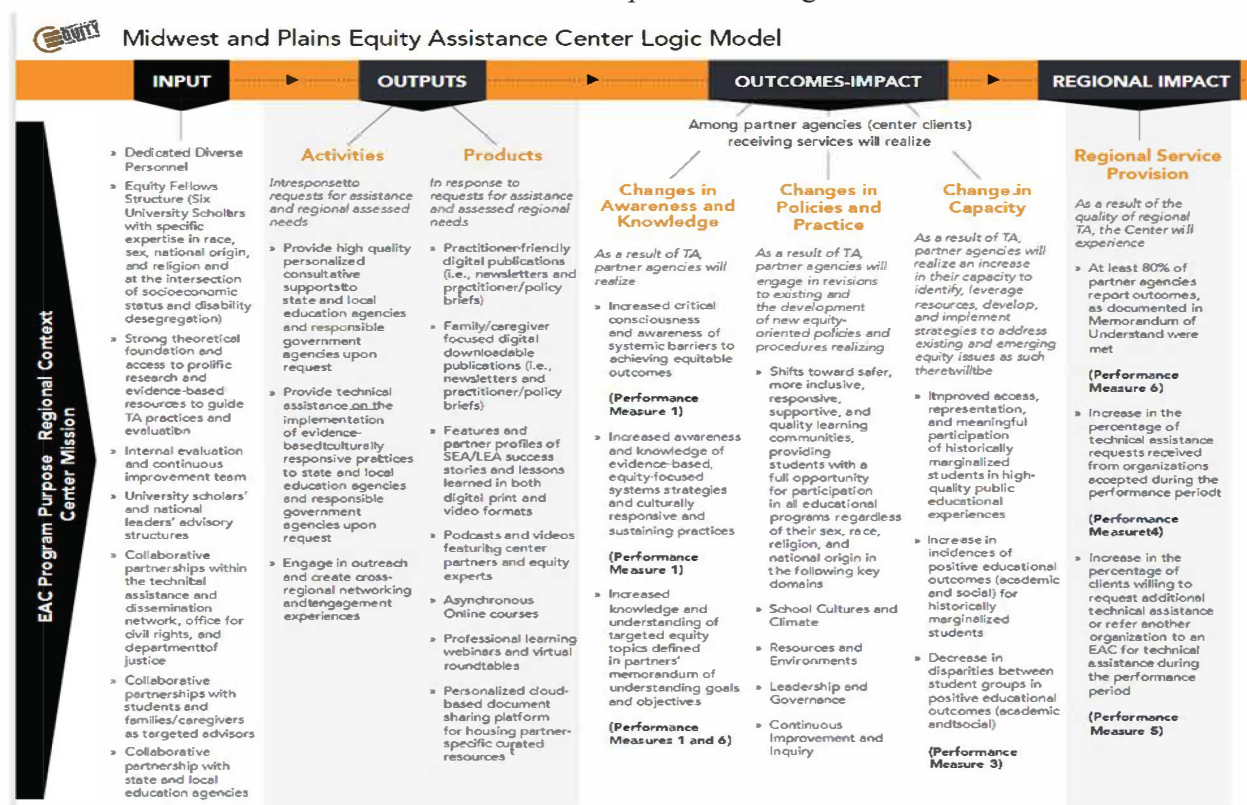
The next type of collaborative networks we will continue to build in the next cycle are *Community Alliances for Equity*, which keep us informed of Region III needs while leveraging the knowledge of the communities we serve. Online and face-to-face, these serial events feature broad stakeholder diversity on educational equity issues that impact communities and address all desegregation areas. This cycle, our community alliances took the form of [Virtual World Cafés](#), [Communities of Care COVID-Recovery Coffeehouses](#), and [Families Learning from Families Virtual Roundtables](#). Therein, stakeholders across agencies, identities, and communities (e.g., local, regional national; education, community, non-profit, business) shared challenges and resources related to supporting students, families, and educators during COVID-19.

### **MAP Center Rationale as Defined in Notice Inviting Applications**

The MAP Center's rationale is demonstrated by our logic model's (*Appendix H*) reliance on research and evaluation methods as inputs for our selection of strategies (i.e., outputs: activities, products) that demonstrate positive impact and with potential to improve relevant outcomes for project participants. Our rationale has been recognized as a model for the EACs; a project officer requested our logic model (screenshot of page 1 of 2, below) to inform 2016 EAC

program planning and remarked during a monitoring visit: "You mentioned creating the next generation of equity leaders, but this Center *is* the next generation of Equity Assistance Centers."

Several research-based methods serve as *inputs* in our logic model to inform TA



approaches most likely to result in improvement of partners' relevant outcomes. In addition to those generated through the robust approaches to collaboration detailed in the previous section, the input of our diverse executive leaders and the expertise they bring are foundational to our rationale's strength. All hold PhDs in educational fields and have extensive experience contributing to the research on approaches for ensuring educational equity in educational leadership, special and gifted education, federal, state, district, and school policy, teacher beliefs, family and community engagement, universal design for learning, multitiered systems of support, STEM education, TA, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies, and teacher evaluation systems. In addition to the seven TA advisors who will join our cross-center TA networks, our six equity fellows and nine advisory board members were selected specifically

because of their research and practice across desegregation domains, and their roles in Region III LEA/SEAs. Of those who are education faculty, 30% work at Minority Serving Institutions, showing our capacity to meet Secretary Cardona’s invitational priority.

Next, research- and evidence-based logic model inputs are generated through our unique organizational structure that includes a continuous improvement and evaluation (CIE) team to inform selection of TA strategies based on those that work from partners’ perspectives, and data collected through multiple means (e.g., annual partner survey and interviews, post-session questionnaires, content assessments). The CIE team conducts quality assurance checks, TA observations, database and TA log audits, and more. Thus, we know that over six years, 93% of respondents on annual partner surveys reported that the MAP Center had a significant impact on the agency achieving MOU goals (n=158; PM6); over 75% said MOU goals were either met or on track to be met by the close of the partnership. We are pleased with these results, as at times goals may not be met due to factors outside our control, such as partner personnel changes. Also, in our latest annual partner survey, 92% of respondents reported they were “likely” or “very likely” to request additional TA services and/or recommend MAP Center TA (n =31; PM5).

Next, research on TA, as well as our ongoing research and synthesis on national and regional desegregation, provide inputs toward a strong project rationale. We know the research well because we *use* **and** *contribute* to it; we design research-based TA with the highest chance of partners’ success. We elaborate on research inputs as they are central to project rationale and showcase our aptitude for connecting regional desegregation needs to customized TA strategies.

Sixty-eight years after the U.S. Supreme Court decided that de jure racially segregated schools violated the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS* (1954), public schools continue to be highly segregated, and opportunity and

outcome inequities continue to separate children by race, sex, national origin, religion, income, language, and disability. Across Region III, there are 946 open OCR investigations, with over half in Michigan (337), Ohio (149), and Missouri (92), and 76 LEAs remain under desegregation order. Concurrently, 25 current DOJ or OCR voluntary or court-ordered agreements indicate there is still much work to be done to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students.

We have a history of success with LEAs under such agreements. This cycle we concluded a five-year Tier 3 partnership with the Northeastern Local District (OH), impacting tangible policy and practice improvements regarding bullying and harassment investigations, professional development, and building inclusive processes and representation into governance. A Tier 3 partnership with Ferndale Public Schools (FPS, MI) also demonstrates our success; in 1975 FPS garnered national attention as the first Northern school to lose federal funding and was under a desegregation order until 1995. As recently as 2015, FPS elementary schools were deliberately racially segregated as defined in a 1978 suit by the federal government under the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. Our partnership with FPS began in 2017 and focused on building board and district leaders' capacity to address systemic barriers left intact after school reorganization (PM3). Recipients and beneficiaries of MAP Center TA reported an increase in capacity to effectively address systemic barriers and reported the impact of TA extended beyond the focus of the MOU goals (PM6), as illustrated by a comment by the superintendent during an annual partner interview. "This [partnership] has trickled down from the board all the way down to the community level, meaning beyond the board -- there's teachers, students, families... everybody understands the work that we're doing. They understand that it involves difficult conversations, but we're having more of those throughout this partnership and equity is now at the forefront of those discussions. We changed our job posting to reflect a commitment to social

justice so we could recruit people that had a commitment to social justice.” Historically significant, we have a Tier 3 partnership with Topeka Public Schools (TPS) to address long-lasting effects of racial segregation decades after *Brown v. Board*. A support letter from TPS’s superintendent demonstrates their persistence and commitment to continued partnership, having already renewed their MOU with us twice after meeting previous MOU goals.

The Supreme Court in *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* provided more specific goals and benchmarks for desegregation, fourteen years after *Brown*. *Green* required that dual (i.e., Black and White) public education systems be dismantled to create unitary systems in six areas: students, faculty, staff, facilities, transportation, and extracurricular activities. Yet, the Court later softened its requirement that all six areas be made unitary in *Board of Ed. of OK City v. Dowell* (1991), requiring only that the school board demonstrate it had complied in good faith with the desegregation decree and eliminated de jure desegregation to the extent practicable. Many Region III LEAs, including OK City in *Dowell*, have been involved in desegregation cases. Most have achieved unitary status: a court-determined designation that the LEA has eliminated the effects of past segregation to the extent practicable. Yet, in the only study to date of all 483 desegregation-involved US LEAs with 2,000+ students, Reardon et. al found that LEAs released from court order were like those not released, in terms of race and segregation levels, suggesting “release is not tightly linked to the success of the court order in producing integration,” (2011, p. 2). Many Region III LEAs released from federal oversight in the mid-90s (Columbus, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Minneapolis) experienced rapid re-segregation because residential segregation continued despite court-ordered school desegregation (Logan, 2002).

As a result, several Region III LEAs have implemented post-unitary status plans, now more challenging after the 2007 Supreme Court decision in *Parents Involved v. Community Schools*

which held that race-conscious admissions policies or student assignment plans could not be implemented in a mechanized fashion (Tefera et al., 2010). However, a trend in student assignment strategies for racially and income diverse post-unitary districts still segregated by school, is to replace racial criteria with SES. Focus on income *and* racial integration in the 2016 EAC priorities stressed that race should not be eliminated as a student assignment factor. Our research in this area serves as an input for MAP Center TA with LEAs developing broader definitions of diversity in student assignment plans to include SES, sex, gender, race/ethnicity, language, and disability; definitions akin to what was approved by the Supreme Court in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (Holley-Walker, 2010). Equity fellow Dr. Sarah Diem will continue with us next cycle and has developed many MAP Center tools for integrating Region III schools racially and economically (e.g., **Diem**, 2017; 2018; 2019a; 2019b; **Diem** et al., 2022).

In addition to our research on US and Region III desegregation history, we detail research-based themes that cut across desegregation areas and contribute to our project rationale: (1) De facto segregation and related inequitable access to resources; (2) School and community climate for underserved student populations; and (3) System response to newcomers due to demographic shifts. Following descriptions of each, we describe TA strategies that have or have potential to impact our partners' systemic improvements across desegregation areas, aligned with PMs.

The first theme is that Region III segregation patterns have worsened over time (NCES, 2018). This informs our rationale for TA next cycle related to school choice programs such as charter schools and voucher programs that provide access to private and non-traditional public schools. Surges in Region III school choice policies indicate dwindling focus on desegregation, despite research showing that school choice can *contribute to* racial and income segregation (Booker et al., 2005) and inequities in access to resources, educational outcomes, and discipline practices for low-income students and students of color (Gulosino & d'Etremont, 2011). Equity

fellow Federico Waitoller (e.g., **Waitoller & Maggin**, 2018; **Waitoller & Super**, 2017) researches school choice in the Midwest, including the experiences of Black and Latinx students with/out disabilities whose families choose charter schools due to inadequacies of traditional public schools. School choice is a complex issue we are prepared to navigate with partners across traditional, charter, and other educational settings, such as LEAs with online programs.

Our project rationale accounts also for this Region III desegregation need through Tier 1 outputs determined through our evaluation methods to have increased awareness and knowledge, and impacted policies and practices (PM1/2) by providing participants with research-based considerations for redressing (re)segregation of students within and between school systems. *Equity by Design* briefs like *Can Charter Schools Erase Racial Inequities Evidenced in Access to General Education Classrooms?* and *What You Need to Know About School Desegregation and Integration and Why It Still Matters* translate research and build stakeholders' knowledge about equitable policy and practice on racial and SES integration. In the recent MAP Center research brief *Guidance on Reopening Schools: Equity Considerations during COVID-19*, we explained that students of color not only must navigate challenges associated with poor infrastructure in and around schools, they also are likely to be disproportionately impacted by remote learning. Also, students from disinvested communities are more likely to live in households without a stable internet connection or operate on limited data plans, which significantly affected synchronous learning and made internet utilization difficult. Moreover, many families in these communities share devices, limiting students' time in the digital classroom. Even online, students of color continue to be suspended and expelled at higher rates than White students (**Coomer et al.**, 2020). A recent research report (*Black Education in the Wake of COVID-19 & Systemic Racism: Toward a Theory of Change and Action*; Horsford et al., 2021) gave concrete recommendations for building trust between educational systems and Black families to support

student safety, learning, and success. Our staff have the capacity to work with partners to develop and enact these recommendations.

The second theme related to Region III desegregation needs informing our research-based project inputs accounts for culture and climate of educational environments, including significant increases in bullying and harassment indicated by the most recent 2017-2018 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). Our CRDC analysis shows that Region III Black and Asian American students, those who identify or are perceived as LGBTQIA+, and those belonging to under-represented religious groups have experienced increased school bullying and harassment, including online, which is confirmed by research literature (Le et al., 2021; Kowalski et al., 2020; rez Huber, 2021; Olweus & Limber, 2018). Our understandings of Region III school climate issues are of utmost relevance as inputs shaping project design and implementation.

Several Tier 1 TA outputs focus on school culture and climate for students across race, sex, national origin, and religion identities, including our podcast series *Centering Equity in Supporting Muslim Students*. A robust Tier 1 resource for increasing knowledge of anti-bullying and harassment strategies that cultivate safe and inclusive school cultures is our *Centering Equity in Safe and Inclusive Schooling Environments* online course series. A Tier 2 output that responds to this desegregation need is our webinar *Fortifying the Work: Towards Safe & Inclusive Practices in Response to the Disparate Educational Impacts of COVID-19*, which includes practices that effectively, equitably support educators, students, and families dealing with grief.

Among many equity fellows and advisors who ensure our selection of appropriate strategies to address school culture and climate, we highlight three continuing advisors whose inputs will support our work with SEAs and LEAs to build cultures that prevent bullying and harassment in the first place. Mr. Mark Dann, senior trial attorney for the DOJ's Civil Rights Division, will inform us on what LEAs need to know to respond to allegations of bullying and



harassment on the basis of race, sex, religion, or other protected classes. Dr. Lara Trubowitz, Education Program Director of the Midwest Anti-Defamation League will inform our work with LEAs on policies and practices that prevent and respond to anti-Semitism; the ADL led efforts to include bullying and harassment data in the most recent CRDC. Dr. Muhammad Khalifa, acclaimed scholar of culturally responsive school leadership with expertise in Islamophobia, will inform our strategies to combat religious oppression in schools, as he has for six years. For example, Dr. Khalifa joined our personnel to create action-oriented research-based outputs such as *Islamophobia and Christian Privilege: What Educators Must Know*.

A third theme in our research on Region III needs informing the MAP Center's rationale is the importance of creating safe, welcoming, affirming, and non-discriminatory settings for newcomers, especially refugees and English learners. Non-white and transnational students continue to increasingly enroll in US schools (Okhremtchouk & **González**, 2014), where established communities often react negatively to demographic shifts (**Nguyễn**, 2010). Of the 11 million+ Region III PK-12 public students, 63.7% are White; down from 66% in 2014 (NCES, 2014; 2018). At the time of 2014 NCES data collection 14% percent of Region III students were Black; this decreased to 10.5% in 2018. Also, 12.4% of Region III students are Latina/o, constituting the largest underrepresented ethnic group; 3.2% are American Indian, including 13.2% of Oklahoma's student population. Illinois continues to have the most students of color (53.4%), but there was a shift in balance of Black and Latino/a students. In 2014, the ratio was nearly equal; in 2018, Latino/a students comprised 26.4%, while Black students comprised 16.7% of students. Percentages of Black, Indigenous, Latino/a, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and American Indian students vary throughout other states, from 23.7(ND)-51.5(OK).

Particularly in rural communities, demographic shifts and community responses to non-white, immigrant, English learners, and refugee newcomers will continue to be relevant issues to

address through TA, particularly related to accompanying increases in xenophobia (Roche et al., 2021). Several Tier 1 TA resource outputs support this work such as *Equity By Design* Research Briefs (e.g., *Educational Practices to Support the Academic and Social- Emotional Needs of Somali Immigrant and Refugee Students* by continuing equity fellow Dr. Amanda L. Sullivan) which have been linked to impacts on PMs 1-3 through project evaluation methodologies.

### **Review of Literature Relevant to Project Design, Implementation Plan, Project Management Methods to Meet Objectives**

The President's FY 2023 Budget Request for the USDOE includes \$222.6 million for TA&D programs and centers, including \$6.6 EACs. This investment of time, funding, and personnel to facilitate implementation of policy-driven reform from macro to local contexts necessitates enhancements to the TA evidence-base to shape project design, implementation, and methods. Evidence-validated, research-based constructs and theory showcase the sophistication of our project design, which is necessary given a dearth of theory and research on TA, and particularly on equity-driven TA (**Thorius** et al., 2015; **Thorius**, 2016).

### ***Research on Theory and Practice of Equity-Expansive TA Contributing to Project Design***

Our project design is shaped by a research-based theory of action for equity-driven TA developed by MAP Center personnel over 30 years leading TA centers and as prominent research faculty known for leading such work. Relatedly, executive director Dr. Thorius is writing an invited book on TA theory and practice developed by the MAP Center and its predecessors, due out early 2023 with Teachers College Press. Among Dr. Thorius's many publications, she has authored one book and twelve peer-reviewed articles and chapters on TA. Project director Dr. Skelton has authored three publications, including *Situating my Positionality as a Black Woman with a Dis/ability in the Provision of Equity-Focused TA* (2019).

Kozleski and Artiles (scholars who led the national TA center focused on eliminating racial disproportionality in special education where Dr. Thorius apprenticed as a doctoral student) have asserted that TA must stimulate complex solutions to historical issues manifested as systemic oppressions, since TA has largely failed to redress inequities across and between student groups (Katz & Wandersman, 2016). If TA does not account for research on teacher and adult learning, and focuses on technical improvements over equity, efforts may only enhance operations without altering systems (McInerney & Hamilton, 2007). This “deflects attention from equity as a core value of a public education system within a democracy,” and TA recipients “learn to view their work in terms of operational tasks while outcomes that benefit the most oppressed groups of students can become tangential to technical improvements,” (**Kozleski & Artiles**, 2012, p. 435).

Building on work of our leadership and equity fellows, we have developed and refined our project design to reflect a socio-cultural theoretical framework (**Thorius & Kyser**, 2021) in which TA relationships with SEAs/LEAs and other government agencies are contextual, dynamic, collaboratively developed, and characterized by: (1) Shifts from primary concerns with technical improvements in isolated policies and practices, to systemic transformation of policy, practices, and belief systems; and (2) Process-based conceptualization of systemic transformation informed by a theory of expansive learning (Engeström, 2001): a concept from cultural-historical activity theory (Cole, 1996). Approaches to fostering adult learning informed by expansive learning theory have a powerful research base in the learning sciences (Sannino et al., 2016).

These two features shape a theory of action for what Thorius calls “equity-expansive TA” (**Thorius**, 2019; **Thorius & Kyser**, 2021). Informed by Vygotsky’s principle of double stimulation (1978), equity-expansive TA facilitates adult learners’ examination of historical and current contexts for inequities as a mediator for learning. Once patterns are identified, we work

alongside partners, introducing resources that develop their agency and capacity to generate ideas to be enacted as “locally appropriate new solutions,” (Engeström, 2011, p. 606).

### ***Research on Features of In/Equitable Education Systems Contributing to Project Design***

Our research-based review of the features of in/equitable education systems also contributes to our project design and related foci with partners. Thus, our design is informed by research that shapes partners’ knowledge and capacities to develop and engage in policies and practices related to educational equity, along with features of equitable education systems and the systemic nature of desegregation TA.

**Equity and Desegregation Efforts.** To build partners’ understanding of equitable education systems, we designate between the often-conflated concepts of equality and equity. Equality is sameness of access to resources and opportunities: a goal of socially-just systems in which all students, regardless of race, sex, national origin, religion, socioeconomic status, primary language, or disability, access the same resources and outcomes. Terms like “gaps” or “disparities” do not explain systemic equity issues; neither implies injustice related to the difference of note. Rather, “inequities” conveys that the “differences to which the term refers are presumptively unjust,” (Goldberg, 2014, p. 61). Major policy and research reports continue to show educational inequities throughout Region III; equality does not exist in structural factors or student achievement and outcomes (**Whiteman et al.**, 2014); a system of *equity* is necessitated.

Over time, we have found that the notion of fairness, a basic tenet of equity, often creates more tensions in educational systems than do notions of equality (**Brayboy et al.**, 2007). This is especially true when fairness is constructed as all students being treated the same, regardless of differences and oppression in relation to group memberships, as Amos (2011) found in a study of Somali refugee high school students’ experiences; Somali students are among the highest Region

III refugee populations. The MAP Center defines educational equity as a context where policies, practices, interactions, and resources are representative of, constructed by, and responsive to all people so everyone accesses, meaningfully participates in, and experiences positive outcomes from high-quality learning and working opportunities, regardless of characteristics and group memberships. Our definition applies Fraser's (2008) dimensions of justice to a broader agenda that acknowledges historical justice claims of educational equity movements and expands them with notions of race, sex, national origin, religion, income, language, and disability intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990; **Tan & Thorius**, 2015). Because systemic centers and margins constantly shift, equity efforts always create new benefits and disadvantages, demanding continuous examination of how margins and centers are constructed (**Kozleski & Artiles**, 2007).

**The Systemic Nature of Equity-Expansive TA.** The MAP Center acknowledges that all educational equity efforts must address complex contexts created by past and present politics, policy, and practices. Equity-expansive TA moves beyond popular ahistorical diversity awareness, cultural proficiency, or implicit bias trainings (Gorski, 2011; **Thorius**, 2019), and attends to long-standing inequities in opportunities to learn related to students' race, sex, national origin, religion, income and other identities (**Waitoller & Thorius**, 2016). TA must foster knowledge of local *contexts* that contribute to equitable learning opportunities, and creation of *systems* that dismantle deficit-thinking about students, families, and communities: a focus on *systemic* equity in our project design propels reform and renewal. The Systemic Change Framework (SCF; **Kozleski et al.**, 2014) includes six policy and practice arenas that cut across educational systems. A co-edited book by Dr. Thorius (**Kozleski & Thorius**, 2014) on partnerships between a national TA center and cross-system stakeholders, details how TA can stimulate systemic transformations that impact opportunities, learning, and achievement. The

SCF has been applied to educational equity work across the US (e.g., Hart-Tervalon & Garcia, 2014). For more on how the SCF has been applied to our research-based project design, see **Thorius** and **Tan** (2015), and **Thorius** (2016). We describe each research based SCF arena below, along with an example of our TA that shows each arena's relationship to project design.

**Table 1**

*Systemic Change Framework (Kozleski, Thorius, & Smith, 2014) and MAP Center TA*

<b>Equitable resource development &amp; distribution</b>	Our TA supports partners' equitable development and distribution of financial, material, and human resources, so professionals have what they need to ensure high quality services result in equitable education for all children across groups. Our Tier 1 resource <i>Equitable Distribution of Effective Educators: Systems Analysis Tool</i> , supports leaders to ensure all students have effective teachers.
<b>Shared governance &amp; decision-making</b>	Our TA demonstrates that how decisions are made impacts systemic culture. We facilitate inclusive processes to engage diverse stakeholders, while accounting for communication, trust, and time. Our Tier 2 Equity Leaders Institute focused on <i>Moving Beyond Critical Reflection to Critical Action: Policy and School Governance</i> .
<b>Culture of renewal &amp; improvement</b>	Our TA supports reform and learning initiatives informed by local context of educational inequities, driven by the vision of all children having an equitable education. Our Tier 3 <i>Critical Collaborative Inquiry</i> and <i>Equity-Oriented Strategic Planning</i> processes engage stakeholders in policy and practice examination and strategic planning to improve learning and working conditions.
	Our TA provides guidance on forming mutually beneficial relationships with community and family members and organizations. Many Tier 1 resources

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**Family/ community connections & partnerships** amplify perspectives of historically marginalized families, including *Supporting Student Success through Authentic Partnerships: Reflection from Parents and Caregivers*, and live online events like our *Communities of Care Virtual Coffeehouse Series*, focused on COVID-19 equity challenges.

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Our TA supports systemic priorities toward effective use of technology, **Infrastructure & org support** buildings and grounds, décor, layout, time and structures for planning and communication, and how these create open, safe, accessible student spaces. Tier 1, 2 and 3 environmental audit tools such as *Classroom Observation and Building Walkthrough Protocols* enable LEA leaders to assess the sufficiency of resources and organizational supports to serve all students.

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Our TA supports inquiry on equity, using multiple forms/sources of data, and connecting data to policy and services. Our Equity Context Analysis Process **Inquiry on equity in education** (ECAP) enables LEAs to inclusively, comprehensively assess equitable practices at classroom (F2F/ online), school, and district levels. ECAP differs from traditional equity audits in that it involves the whole school community in data collection, analysis, and setting equity priorities (*Appendix J: ECAP*).

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### **MAP Center Plan for Ensuring High-Quality, Efficient, Effective Project Implementation**

The goal of our implementation plan is excellence, with emphases on quality, efficiency, and effectiveness (*Appendix K: Implementation Plan Table*). Next cycle, implementation science experta<sup>(b) (4)</sup> has committed to advise us on our implementation plan. Dr. Ward is associate director of education and measurement for the *National Implementation Research Network* and director of the *State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence Based Practices*

Center (National TA Center funded by the Office of Special Education Programs). Below, we align our project implementation plan with our TA service delivery model.

### ***Implementation of Tier 1 TA Services: Educational Equity Research and Resources***

This least intensive form of TA services, universally available to Region III stakeholders, is disseminated through our website, targeted communications, and social media outlets. To ensure responsive, accessible resources—key equity concerns—the quality of Tier 1 TA services is determined in relation to four implementation outcomes tracked via our evaluation efforts (See [Evaluation Methods](#); *Appendix K & L, Implementation and Evaluation Tables*, respectively).

**Implementation Outcome 1.1. Develop and Harvest Relevant, Accessible, and Useful Multi-Media Resources Monthly.** Tier 1 resources draw from staff and equity fellow expertise, adhere to rigorously developed design principles to maximize user interest, accessibility, and interactivity, and apply implementation tools and procedures from inception to production. Tier 1 resources are produced in myriad formats, illustrative of Universal Design for Learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002; **Thorius & Waitoller**, 2017); multiple means of representation, action/engagement, and expression maximize dissemination and impact. Next cycle, our executive director, resource development and dissemination coordinator, staff, and equity fellows will continue to develop at least 32 additional Tier 1 resources annually in the following forms: four quarterly *Equity Dispatch* newsletters (e.g., *Virtual Realities: Equity Considerations for Online & Distance Learning*, and *Centering Equity Together in Critical Collaborative Partnership: School Boards and District Leaders*, four *Equity Express* interactive newsletter companion tools, two *Equity by Design research-to-practice* briefs geared toward practitioners in pre- and in-service education programs, as well as SEA/LEA and educators (e.g., *Understanding the Housing-School Relationship: Achieving Integration in Racially Changing Cities and Suburbs*),



four *Equity Spotlight Pod and Vodcasts* (available on our YouTube channels and website, Apple podcasts and Spotify) that feature topic discussion by diverse panels of regional stakeholders (e.g., *The 20-Minute Talk Anti-Racism Vodcast Series*, photo below), four *EquiLearn Webinars*

#### Featured Guests The 20-Minute Talk Anti-Racism Vodcast Series



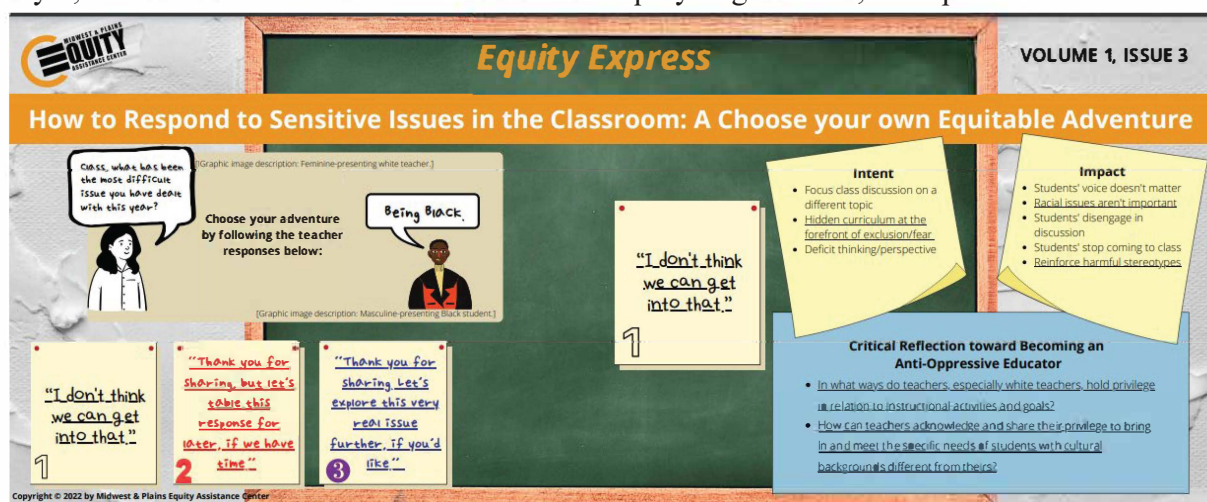
and Roundtables featuring Q&A, breakout groups, and panelist “chat” (e.g., *Implementing the Oceti Sakowin Standards in K-12 South Dakota Schools*), four *Equity Tools* (e.g., rubrics, policy review guides, *Assessing Bias in Standards and*

*Curriculum*), three interactive *Equity Spotlight Mini Modules* (bundled resource sets), four research publications, two Equity Mini-Lectures, and one online course, annually. We detail some of these below, highlighting those that will be new and improved next cycle.

Currently, we have one online learning series entitled *Centering Safe and Inclusive Schools*. The first in the three-course series was released this spring and the others will be released this summer. Next cycle, we will develop five new course series: (1) *Promoting Diversity, Inclusion and Equity: Creating Supportive Working Environments for Diverse Educators*; (2) *Centering Equity in Instructional Planning*; (3) *Equitably Supporting the Social-Emotional Wellbeing of Students and Educators*; (4) *Engaging Parents, Caregivers, and Community Members in Creating and Sustaining Supportive School Cultures*; and (5) *Involving Students in Equity-Focused School Improvement*.

We have two exciting, relevant, and accessible Tier 1 resource types geared up for next cycle. The first are Equity Mini-Lectures: recorded 10-minute talks by educators, students, and

families providing desegregation solutions and that will include a downloadable content assessment. We will produce two annually for LEAs and SEAs looking to ground or supplement their own PD opportunities, also useful for higher education programs preparing future educators and administrators. *Equity Mini-Lectures* will respond to this latter audience due to conversations engaged during a MAP Center invitated presentation on the role of EACs to the Deans for Education Justice and Equity (EDJE): a national alliance of current and former education deans. EDJE Steering Committee Member and Associate Dean of Diversity and Student Experience at Region III's Miami University, (b) (4) has pledged support in the next cycle as a new MAP Center advisor. The next new Tier 1 product line is about to be released going into this last quarter of our current grant cycle: *Equity Express*. It is a “choose your own adventure” style, interactive media resource based on our Equity Digest news, excerpted here:



Rounding out implementation goals for Tier 1 TA resources, the MAP Center will continue to research educational equity reforms and equity-driven TA, not just synthesize what is already known. Our services are unique because we have *contributed to* research-based TA and educational equity strategies emphasized by the USDOE. Our research includes a *Teachers College Press* book, another under contract, 21 peer-reviewed articles, one journal special issue, five chapters, a dissertation on a TA partnership, and 12 papers at national and international

research meetings. We will continue to contribute to knowledge bases as part of Tier 1 implementation: possible because of a unique design that includes scholars who maintain roles as university faculty, and whose university roles require research. We will produce at least one *book*, five *journal articles*, five *chapters*, and six *research presentations* next cycle (four/year).

**Implementation outcome 1.2. Provide on-demand, distance consultative supports and referrals to Tier 1 resources to every Region III stakeholder submitting an inquiry or request for assistance to the MAP Center each month.** Our Tier 1 services will continue to include on-demand consultations with 100% of stakeholders who call, email, or submit a request for assistance via our website. For every request, we will curate a custom set of existing online resources and initiate Tier 2 or 3 TA based on need intensity. Since 2016, we have provided 3,170 curated resources in response to 878 requests for assistance.

***Implementation of Tier 2 TA Services: Equity Learning Networks***

Tier 2 services create, sustain, and leverage the diverse expertise of Region III stakeholders to foster shifts in knowledge and practice towards educational equity. Tier 2 TA implementation plan activities relate to creation of targeted professional and community learning and networking opportunities, including coalitions of and events for regional partners and other TA organizations, and learning networks such as universities, PK-12 school systems, and community organizations. Tier 2 services demonstrate our leveraging of resources *and* the collective and collaborative impact of networks engaged in equity work and collaborative needs-sensing.

**Implementation Outcome 2.1. Establish and sustain networks of scholars, professionals, families, and community members engaged in educational equity work quarterly.** A unique strength of our TA is our reliance on the distributed expertise of stakeholder networks across Region III, as well as overlapping and unique experiences of those in or yet to

be included in such networks. We will implement this outcome through several distinct, yet interconnected networks.

***Region III State Cadre and Equity Fellows Networks.*** As part of our implementation plan, we will create two smaller cadres: MAP *Midwest* and MAP *Plains* state networks that allow for role-diverse learning and networking opportunities and closer geographic proximity for face-to-face convening, as well as account for similarities in educational equity landscapes. Also, we have invited three MAP Center equity fellows to join staff and three continuing fellows in Tier 2 partnerships with local and regional PK-12 communities. These networks will contribute to strong research and resource synergies to serve Region III educators, youth, and families.

***Learning Network Cohorts.*** Learning Network Cohorts (LNCs) are learning communities of LEAs and SEAs with mutual interests and needs (for example, our *Safe and Inclusive Schools LNC*). We have over 255 LNC members, currently, and 400 targeted for next cycle. Members join in live online learning events and access a password protected e-forum: a dynamic document sharing platform populated with new resources bi-monthly by our staff, and with an interactive notice board for questions and resources on promoting safe, inclusive, culturally responsive school environments. Next cycle, we intend to provide LNC members with asynchronous learning opportunities via the Canvas learning management system, as well as continue live virtual learning events, offering multiple and diverse methods of engagement.

***Advisory Board Network.*** We will add to our advisors' vast networks and extensive expertise with several new members who will contribute to our implementation of Outcome 2.1. Center advisors hold roles and honors as a member of the National Academy of Education, editor of the Journal of American Indian Education, Vice Chancellor of Global Initiatives, and President's Professor and Borderlands Professor of Indigenous Education and Justice; education

director of the Anti-Defamation League's Greater Chicago/Upper Midwest Office; associate dean of the IU School of Education-IUPUI and vice president in the American Educational Research Association; professor of educational administration and executive director for Urban Education Initiatives at Ohio State University; professor of special education with expertise on equity and inclusion for dual language learners with/out disabilities; superintendent of Kansas City, KS Public Schools; senior trial attorney from the DOJ Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section; Michigan State Superintendent of Education; and (b) (4) (p. 36) and (b) (4) (p. 33).

***TA Center Equity Advisory and Service Networks.*** In addition, as introduced in the section on maximizing collaboration to ensure effective services, next cycle we propose two new Tier 2 Collaborative Networks. This implementation outcome reflects President Biden and Secretary Cardona's educational equity priorities *and* responds to 222 fulfilled requests for equity-focused consultation and thought-partnership over the past cycle with project officers, and USDOE Offices and TA centers outside the EAC network. The first of these new *TA Center Equity Advisory and Service Networks* will focus efforts on *Inclusion and Integration for Students with Disabilities at the Intersection of Race, Sex, National Origin, and Religion*. We have letters of support from these proposed advisors who are leaders from four national USDOE/Office for Special Education Program-funded TA centers focused on equitable education for students with disabilities: the CEEDAR Center, SWIFT, and the National Center for Systemic Improvement. These leaders will join us in a series of three planning meetings, one online two-hour roundtable on promising practices for ensuring students with disabilities experience full integration related to *all* their identities and/or group memberships, and which will inform the production of at least one additional Tier 1 resource annually on this new focus for the EAC program as reflected in

the notice inviting applications. The second network entitled *Collaboration to Support Public Education Agencies' Equity-Driven COVID-19 Recovery* will include new advisor leaders from the National Center to Improve Social & Emotional Learning and School Safety, Wisconsin's Parent Education and Resource Center, and the National State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center. We will leverage this network to provide TA on equitably supporting students' mental and social-emotional health and addressing teacher shortages, and on equitable remote learning environments, resulting in two Tier 2 events annually.

***Center Alumni Equity Pipeline.*** We will continue to build a network of next generation TA providers who “graduate” from our Center once they’ve completed their IU degrees and moved elsewhere to champion educational equity work; 35 such alumni serve across university and community settings, TA networks, and in practitioner and educational leadership roles. Further, many of our personnel, equity fellows, and advisors are alumni of EACs, Regional Equity Laboratories, and Comprehensive Centers. We anticipate at least four new MAP Center alumni will enter the workforce after obtaining their doctoral degrees, next cycle.

***Existing TA and other Equity Networks.*** Our executive leadership team and key personnel will continue to serve as advisors in TA networks and community organizations working for civil rights as we have this cycle; we have served on boards of Comprehensive Centers, the Region IV Parent TA Center, the Center for Parent Information and Resources, the SWIFT Advisory Group for a Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant, and the Midwest Regional Education Laboratory's Midwest Achievement Gap Research Alliance. We are slated to serve Early Childhood TA Center board at Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, noted in an OSEP grant submission by a (b) (4) and (b) (4) Participation in TA



networks will continue to build awareness and relationships, with potential agency partners. We will increase service and engagement in similar boards and networks by 20% in the next cycle.

***Professional Organization Research Networks.*** Personnel will continue to actively participate in national and regional professional organizations, including but not limited to the American Educational Research Association, the National Association for Multicultural Education, and Council for Exceptional Children. We will add two new networks, next cycle.

**Implementation Outcome 2.2. Develop and Offer Real-Time Educational Equity Learning and Networking Opportunities at Least Once Quarterly.** We will continue to convene and host several types of stakeholder meetings to influence established education systems to access, use, share, and expand equity policy and practice knowledge-bases through quality professional development for educators and community members. We emphasize several opportunities as evidence of our plan for implementing activities that will lead to this outcome.

***Advisory Meetings.*** We will hold annual online meetings with the staff, advisors, and equity fellows. Meetings will foster idea exchange on current equity issues and TA services.

***Equity Leaders' Institutes.*** The most intensive types of Tier 2 services we will continue to offer are annual *Equity Leaders' Institutes* (ELIs): residential experiences attended by a capped number of participants to support in-depth learning and action planning for those with more advanced understanding of equity-focused school improvement and positioned to lead systemic equity efforts. We have welcomed 296 ELI participants, including 74 to our 2020 ELI: *Creating Caring School Communities: Disrupting Push Out, Decolonizing Harmful Practices, Advancing Liberation*, and 53 to our 2021 ELI: *(Re)claim, (Re)vitalize, (Re)imagine & (Re)commit: Centering Classroom Teachers in Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy*. Importantly, LEA and SEA participants have been joined by students, parents, business community members, and grass-

roots advocacy groups, all of whom have provided input and guidance on regional desegregation needs. We facilitated the past two ELIs online due to COVID-19. We will continue to offer one ELI annually, staggering online and face-to-face formats to maximize participation opportunities.

***Collegial and Networking and Support Cohorts.*** As a new Tier 2 structure to respond to increases in requests for TA, *Collegial and Networking Support (CaNS)* cohorts will bring together educator teams across LEAs/SEAs to develop capacity for equity work in local contexts. CaNS members participate in three monthly 90-minute virtual learning and networking sessions designed to empower them to connect across Region III and leverage the cohort to address problems of practice. Currently, we have one CaNS; we will increase this to three, annually.

### ***Implementation of Tier 3 TA Services: Systemic Equity Partnerships***

Tier 3 activities involve sustained, systemic partnerships with SEAs, LEAs, schools, and/or other government agencies. For five years as Region V EAC, we engaged 40 Tier 3 Systemic Equity Partnerships. This number has grown to 100+ LEAs and SEAs and counting as the Region III EAC. We are on-pace to meet or exceed 110 Tier 3 partnerships this current grant cycle. Next cycle, we aim to increase total active Tier 3 partnerships by 20% over five years.

**Implementation Outcome 3.1. Conduct Comprehensive, Context Analyses at Partnership Inception, and Engage in Ongoing Consultations with Partnering Agencies to Identify Areas of Strength and Need Related to MOU Goals.** Highly customized Tier 3 services focus on systemic improvements and are characterized by memoranda of understanding (MOU) with context specific partnership goals and objectives, and a comprehensive TA Scope and Sequence Plan (TASS). We will engage in this process with 100% of new Tier 3 partners.

**Implementation Outcome 3.2. Collaboratively design and provide customized, context-driven and evidence-based services to Tier 3 partners monthly aligned with goals and**




**objectives in MOU/TASS.** We will continue to provide Tier 3 TA via diverse implementation structures including monthly consultation calls focused on MOU goals. In the past, these have been with one partner at a time; due to increased demand and continuing into the next cycle, we will group together two or three Tier 3 partner agencies to build networks and opportunities for collaboration. We also will continue to support Tier 3 partners through development and facilitation of at least eight days of dynamic professional learning spread over several months and aligned with MOU goals and objectives, called *Systemic Partnership Academies (SPAs)*. SPAs deepen understandings of equity constructs and increase capacities to dislodge deficit ideologies, policies, and practices and to promote asset-based practices. We will continue these SPAs next cycle: *Centering Equity in Evaluation and Continuous Improvement* (2 days); *Leading Equity-Focused Initiatives (LEFI, 4 days)*; *Equity-Oriented Strategic Planning* (4 days); *Equity-Oriented Educators* (3 days); *Centering Equity in Teaching* (2 days); and *Increasing and Sustaining Culturally Responsive and Diverse Educators* (2 days). We will add at least four new SPAs starting with *Educators Meeting the Moment: Equity-Focused COVID-19 Recovery* and update LEFI with content on COVID and social and legislative contexts impacting desegregation.

Among Tier 3 services, our most intensive is our *Equity Context Analysis Process (ECAP)*; we currently have nine ECAP partners. To illustrate, Community Unit School District 308 (CUSD 308; IL) requested support to develop their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan. Guided by our staff and *ECAP* protocols, staff administrators, and community members surveyed 40 administrators, 424 staff, and 661 parents/caregivers (reporting data for 791 students). Also, school leaders conducted 29 teacher interviews and 45 classroom observations across grades, content areas, and eight schools. After an analysis session with the CUSD's 40-member review team, CUSD 308 utilized a decision rubric and determined priorities to include in their DEI plan.

One priority was student involvement in policymaking, spurring an MOU addendum and Center and district leaders co-facilitating a related session with students and educators. The next year, leaders designed and led their own session: *Students and Adults: Partners in Creating Systemic Equitable Practices*. This partnership, and the ECAP, demonstrate our TA theory in action and exemplify how our TA meets PMs. We will engage the ECAP with three LEAs, annually. Yet, even if we meet that threshold, we have another robust option for LEAs engaging in systemic analysis and planning; our Tier 2 *Systemic Assessment of Equity and Justice in Education* toolkit and accompanying canvas module (p. 545 in combined appendices) provide a strong alternative.

### Appropriateness of Management Methods to Meet Objectives

Over the years, we have learned several important lessons about how to successfully manage interdisciplinary, multi-institution centers and large-scale TA&D Centers to ensure project outcomes are met: (1) Our leaders have the dispositions to engage and inspire as well as manage the project to carry out tasks within budget and timelines. (2) Our project management tools, including our custom-built customer-relations and project management database designed

Work Domain : Goal 2 (Learning Networks)															
	Title	Status	Start	End	Project Manager	Project Type	# Activities	Est Duration	Actual Duration	Purpose	Technical Approach	Expected Outcomes	Updated By	Update Date	Federal Project ID
	Culturally Responsive/Asset-based Learning Network Cohort	Closed	JAN-03-2017	MAY-31-2019	Rose	MAP EAC	5	11050	53.00	Support partner's equity efforts towards implementing culturally responsive/asset-based instructional practices	The provision of online shared learning and networking opportunities and customized equity tools for school districts working towards similar goals related to utilizing culturally responsive and sustaining instructional practices, and access to a Center consultant to provide support for acute emergent equity issues as needed basis	Participants reporting an increase in awareness and understanding of culturally responsive instructional and curricular practices (GPRA 1); Participants reporting an increase in capacity to develop and use culturally responsive instructional and curricular design practices (GPRA 3); Participants reporting a willingness to request additional technical assistance and/or refer another organization to an EAC for technical assistance during the performance period (Project Measure 8)	TAGIBSON	30-MAY-2019 04:51	2017-R3-T-0051
	Racial Affinity Groups	Not Started	OCT-02-2021	SEP-30-2022	Amy	MAPEAC	0	-	-	Retrieving data. Wait a few seconds and try to retrieve copy again	Retrieving data. Wait a few seconds and try to retrieve copy again	Retrieving data. Wait a few seconds and try to retrieve copy again	FOXAA	29-SEP-2021 04:55	2021-R3-T-0077

by leadership with in-kind support from IU's Research Technologies division pictured above, allow for maintenance of partner records, schedules, adjustment for urgencies, and dynamic progress to produce quality work that meets budgetary and time requirements; (3) Official points

of contact and clearly specified roles and accountability structures are designated; (4) Development of and adherence to standard operating procedures support establishment, maintenance, and assessment of TA; (5) Our collective knowledge and skills produce the strongest services and products; (6) Our lines of communication are clear and frequent leveraging several in-person and virtual communication structures; (7) State-of-the-art technologies and a school and university budget office enhance our monitoring and tracking of project finances; and (8) Assurances of diverse stakeholder perspectives and collaboration in project operations. We discuss elements of our plan that illustrate these lessons, and emphasize methods in relation to #8, as it is emphasized as a separate selection criterion for the application.

All aspects of our implementation, including enactment of an annual strategic plan, partnership MOUs and TASSs, project- and staff-level work plans, and tracking estimated and actual costs and timelines for service development and completion, are managed through this database. Data analysis during weekly operational meetings, applied to planning of all-staff quarterly CIE meetings, allow us to flexibly and responsively adjust project implementation and management to ensure efficiency, reach, and impact of our services.

In addition, the executive director will continue to oversee finance, budgets, and research efforts, liaison with networks, lead the leadership team, and integrate state cadres and external advisory groups. The director of operations will continue to direct TA services and monitor outcomes with the associate directors, specialists, and coordinators. Our executive team will continue to meet weekly to develop and monitor events and services and meet annually to develop a detailed annual strategic plan with SMART goals. In the new cycle, we will continue to collaborate with advisors and equity fellows to plan strategies and build new alliances with these diverse interest groups. Advisors will receive bi-annual progress reports to review all project aspects.

### **Assurances of Diverse Stakeholder Perspectives and Collaboration in Project Operations**

The MAP Center will continue to engage diverse stakeholders in design, implementation, and dissemination of evidence-based TA that considers unique and diverse local and communities within Region III. We consider student racial, ethnic, and religions diversity, communication with newcomer families, concentrations of languages other than English spoken at home, and location of tribal communities. Accordingly, we have planned an appropriate staffing and network structure of advisors and fellows who will collaborate with us to meet our diverse regional needs.

### **Evaluation Methods that Provide Performance Feedback and Permit Periodic Assessment Toward Achieving Intended Outcomes**

We extend process, outcome, and quality measures for all implementation outcomes and management activities in our Evaluation Plan (*Appendix L*). In addition to a full CIE coordinator, our executive team will continue to ensure evaluation activities occur and inform improvements.

#### ***Purpose and Audiences***

The purposes of the MAP Center's evaluation are to: (1) Continually monitor and document accomplishments, progress toward goals, and anticipated vs. actual trends; (2) Guide and support continuous improvements to enhance service delivery and internal operations; (3) Examine and assess overall quality, efficiency, efficacy, and impact of work; and (4) Develop performance and progress reports to communicate findings and demonstrate accountability, transparency, and efficacy. The primary audiences for evaluation data and findings include staff members, USDOE project officers, advisors, and project participants.

#### ***Evaluation Methodology***

Our evaluation plan relies on several participatory evaluation principles. First, people who engage in our TA should participate in evaluations of services. Second, data must be conceived

broadly and come from internal, external, numerical, and non-numerical sources. Third, assessment must be formative and serve to improve strategies to achieve desired outcomes. Finally, summative judgments must acknowledge multiple inputs that influence action and stasis in intended and unintended ways; attributing causal relationships to actions must be done with caution. The EAC program does not have an external evaluation requirement in recognition of the importance of embedding evaluation activities within organizational processes and practices, however, we have included funds for an annual external evaluation partner who will join us in our evaluation activities. (b) (4) an internationally recognized expert in equity-related program evaluation and who has joined us in this way in a previous cycle, is slated to serve in this way. Our evaluation approaches are formative and summative, carried out by key personnel and participants, led by the CIE coordinator, and interpreted across time and people. In addition, we learn from assessment of our work afforded by program officers' monitoring visits and monthly calls. Our evaluation approach is guided by five questions (EQs) that focus concurrently on process and outcome measures: (EQ1) To what extent are targeted tasks, benchmarks, outputs, and timelines accomplished; what factors hinder and facilitate progress?; (EQ2) How accessible and useful are MAP Center's products and services to clients?; (EQ3) To what extent is there alignment between identified Region III desegregation needs and MAP Center services (i.e., appropriateness and relevance)? (EQ4) What is the quality of the products and services provided by the MAP Center according to quality assurance reviews and client perception? (EQ5) What impacts does the MAP Center have on practitioner knowledge, skill, and capacity; policies and practices; and systemic transformation toward educational equity in Region III?

Appendix L depicts our evaluation plan in table format, and includes data collection and analysis methods, and quality and outcome measures as aligned to the objectives of our implementation plan. We have aligned quality and outcome measures with Performance

Measures: Percentage of clients reporting an increase in awareness or knowledge resulting from TA provided (PM1); Percentage of clients who report changed policies or practices related to providing students with a full opportunity for participation in all educational programs regardless of their sex, race, religion, and national origin (PM2); Percentage of clients reporting increase in capacity resulting from TA provided (PM3); Percentage of technical assistance requests received from organizations that were accepted during the performance period (PM4); Percentage of clients willing to request additional TA or refer another organization to an EAC for TA during the performance period (PM5); Percentage of clients who report outcomes, as documented in memoranda of understanding with EACs, were met as a result of the TA provided (PM6).

**Data collection activities.** A range of qualitative and quantitative data from key stakeholders, and gathered, analyzed, and summarized monthly, quarterly, and annually, will address evaluation questions. Data will be gathered via interviews, questionnaires, assessments, observations, artifact and product reviews, production logs, and automated analytics.

**Client and staff interviews.** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with partners and staff members, annually. Sampling may include probability (e.g., simple/stratified/ systematic random) or non-probability (e.g., purposive) methods. Interviews will be conducted in person, by phone or video conference, and recorded with interviewee consent. Our CIE team will conduct interviews following partners' participation in professional learning experiences, and as part of other needs assessment processes described in our project design. Our CIE team will continue to conduct annual interviews with staff members and key partners.

**Client questionnaires.** Standard questionnaires will be administered to captive and noncaptive audiences, online and in print. Multiple methods will bolster response rates, including follow-up emails. Two types of questionnaires include a post-session questionnaire and annual partner survey (four stakeholder-specific versions).

**Content assessments.** Customized assessments will be further developed to measure constructs associated with structured learning experiences facilitated by MAP Center staff members. Assessments will be developed in collaboration with service providers and may be administered as pre/post, post-only, or retrospective pre/post assessments.

**Event and field observations.** Members of the CIE team will continue to engage in observations of selected Center-hosted and facilitated professional development sessions and site visits. Observers will take detailed field notes and complete post-observation analytic protocols (e.g., Center-developed *Culturally Responsive Professional Learning Observation Protocol*).

**Artifact/product reviews.** Naturally occurring artifacts from operations and service provision will continue to serve as primary data sources for examining systemic improvements, using rubrics that examine system domains aligned with the SCF described in our project design.

**Production logs and analytics.** In addition to data collected via instruments, standard metrics will continue to be gathered via automated analytics and standardized logs. Completion of standard logs is embedded in operational routines and rhythms, and include TA Activity Logs, Center Partnerships Log, Contact Log, Monthly Metrics, and Project Management Database.

**Using and reporting data.** Data will continue to be analyzed iteratively in formative summaries and reports to inform and guide our work. Formative reports will correspond with quarterly CIE meetings to ensure data-informed decisions. Data also will inform summative evaluation reports. Routine summaries and reports (*Appendix M: Continuous Improvement Data Reports*) will include 12 monthly metric reports; 12 monthly financial reports; four quarterly formative reports; one annual progress report (i.e., ED524b); and one annual evaluation report.

## QUALITY OF PROJECT PERSONNEL

### Project Personnel Membership in Traditionally Underrepresented Groups based on Race, Color, National Origin, Gender, Age, and Disability

The MAP Center is committed to ensuring that individuals from underrepresented groups based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, or disability will continue to serve in or be recruited for all positions. Of the 14 total staff positions proposed for the next cycle (including four half-time doctoral students), at least seven will continue from the current cycle, six of whom are people of color, one is a person with a physical disability, and others have non-physical disabilities. Our staff diversity is broad in terms of religion and age, which ranges from the mid-twenties to fifties, and is reflected at all levels of our organization, with women of color making up 60 % of our executive leadership team; our project director has a physical disability, two leaders are bi-lingual, and one identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Our operational staff (including projected hires) will be at least 80 % people of color and include multi-lingual members. Among our six equity fellows, four are people of color, and all are members in underrepresented groups related to national origin, disability, sex, gender and sexual identity, age, and religion. Our advisors add to the diversity of our project, and identify as African American, Black, Latinx/a, American Indian, Asian, White, LGBTQIA+, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, disabled, multilingual, and multinational.

Finally, we will vigorously recruit employees for new and/or open positions from traditionally underrepresented groups. We have identified two potential candidates for five open positions, including a Black state department administrator with decades of experience as a teacher and LEA/SEA leader in equity-focused reforms and a Black former superintendent who is a university education instructor. We will consider our current doctoral students and post-doctoral fellow for open positions as they complete their current roles. All our networks are activated to ensure strong, diverse candidates. National searches will follow equal opportunity/affirmative action guidelines at the federal, state, and university levels.



## Relevant Training and Experience of Key Project Personnel

Just as much as the diversity of our personnel ensures that our project services and design are informed by diverse perspectives, experiences, and values, the training and professional experience of key project personnel is extraordinary. The quality, impact, and adequacy of our services and project design will be ensured by the outstanding capacity of our vastly diverse, five-member leadership team, developed over 135 years of combined experience as (1) Leaders of federally funded national and regional TA centers including three EACs across three US regions; (2) SEA and LEA leaders within and beyond Region III (3) Faculty and faculty affiliates of equity-minded university colleges and schools of education; (4) Researchers on equity-driven TA theory, knowledge, and practices; 5) Advisors to educational equity organizations in and outside the USDOE TA network. These experiences are evidence of personnel capacity to create synergies and demonstrate collective impact. We are education practitioner/scholars with expertise in culturally responsive consultation, and who research and create educator professional development and policy approaches to address issues of racism and desegregation at the intersection of all four desegregation areas addressed by the program--race, sex, national origin, and religion—along with language, disability, and socioeconomic status. Further, our TA requires a broad range of expertise, including highly skilled approaches to teacher development and continuous learning, data mining and display, leadership development, policy analysis, and systems change. Project personnel have authored *scores* of publications on race, sex, national origin, religion, income, language, and disability equity in some of the field's most prestigious outlets, as well as presentations at leading research and professional conferences addressing a range of equity topics; we have a deep repertoire of practice, policy, and research backgrounds that brings intellectual, social, and political capital to the project.

Moreover, we have researched and have deep understandings of consistencies and amendments to federal and state education laws, rules, and guidance under the previous three federal administrations, including changes to civil rights guidance and rules under the USDOE. Our breadth of knowledge and experience position us well to support responsible government agencies in ensuring the civil rights of our students, and continued desegregation of Region III.

Next cycle, we propose an executive leadership team consisting of an executive director/principal investigator, project director, associate director of networking and engagement, assistant/associate director of TA partnerships, and co-principal investigator. We also propose an assistant director of professional learning, and CIE and resource development and dissemination coordinators. Other key personnel include two TA specialists. We also will employ one undergraduate federal work study student, and four education doctoral research assistants who will support and analyze the impact of TA services (one of whom will be covered in-kind by the IU School of Education-IUPUI). Further, six equity fellows from Region III universities and who are nationally-prominent scholars in race, sex, national origin, religion, income, and other forms of educational equity—will develop research-based resources as project consultants, and one web and graphic designer, and one instructional designer will consult in resource development processes. Finally, we will consult with an external evaluator and nine advisors who are nationally and regionally active in equity reform. The MAP Center is deeply-experienced, richly-networked, and heartily-resourced to serve Region III.

### **Executive Team and Key Personnel (Leadership Team)**

***Executive Director/Principal Investigator: Dr. Kathleen King Thorius (55% FTE academic, 100% FTE summer)***

Dr. Thorius is an associate professor of Special Education and Urban Educational Studies in IU's School of Education at IUPUI and founding executive director of the Great Lakes Equity

Center: the IU School of Education center that houses the MAP Center. Dr. Thorius is primarily responsible for designing the MAP Center’s vision, mission, organizational design, and infrastructure, and will continue in this capacity for the next cycle. Dr. Thorius is an internationally recognized expert in culturally responsive and sustaining education, special and inclusive education, critical policy analysis, equity considerations in multitiered systems of support, and equity-oriented professional development. Her work explicitly addresses all four desegregation areas. Published extensively in practitioner and research outlets, including *Harvard Educational Review*, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, and *Race, Gender, & Class*, Dr. Thorius was a school psychologist before earning her Ph.D. as an USDOE-funded doctoral fellow in an interdisciplinary program to prepare culturally responsive special education professors. During this time, she was professional learning coordinator for two OSEP TA centers—the *National Center for Culturally Responsive Education Systems* and *National Center for Urban School Improvement*—and co-directed the Region IX EAC, the *Equity Alliance at ASU*. Dr. Thorius presents internationally on race, income, sex, religion, language, and dis/ability equity, MTSS, and equity-driven TA. Her expertise undergirds past and current work with the *American Educational Research Association*, myriad US LEAs and SEAs, OSEP’s *IDEA Partnership*, as a consultant to the *National Center on Systemic Improvement*, and a project to improve education provided by the *Bureau of Indian Education*. Dr. Thorius was recognized as the 2013 IUPUI Chancellor’s Diversity Scholar and Indiana University Trustees’ Teaching Awardee in 2015. She is editor of *Multiple Voices: Disability, Race, and Language Intersections in Special Education*. Her forthcoming book, *Equity-Focused Technical Assistance for Systemic Transformation of Educational Inequities*, is under contract with *Teachers College Press*. She is also co-editor of *Sustaining Disabled Youth: Centering Disability in Asset Pedagogies* (due out

Fall 2022), and *Sustaining Inclusive Education Reform* (2014), which detailed the TA theory, practices, and partnerships of a national TA center with which Dr. Thorius was affiliated.

***Project Director: Dr. Seena Skelton (100% FTE)***

Dr. Seena Skelton will continue to serve as the MAP Center's full time project director. She has 26 years' experience working in inclusive education, school improvement, and educational equity and holds a Ph.D. in School Psychology. Dr. Skelton began her career as a school psychologist in Head Start as well as in K-12 school systems. As an educational consultant for the *Southwest Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center*, Dr. Skelton provided TA to educators, families, and TA providers and was state project lead for three statewide education reform initiatives funded by the Ohio Department of Education including the *Ohio Improvement Process*, and *Ohio Integrated Systems Model*. Dr. Skelton has held leadership roles in three EACs including as project director of the MAP Center Region III EAC, co-director of the Equity Alliance Region IX EAC, and assistant director and then, project director for the Region V EAC. She has served on the *Center for Parent Information and Resources* and *Great Lakes Comprehensive Center* boards and is currently a member of the *SWIFT Schools Advisory Group for Supporting Effective Educator Development*, and a *National Center for Systemic Improvement Intersection of Race and Disability Thought Leader*. Dr. Skelton has been an undergraduate and graduate instructor at the University of Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky University and IU, and has published related to improving outcomes for marginalized youth including co-authoring the book chapter *Addressing equity and providing transition education to a diverse student population*, and authored the article *Situating my positionality as a Black woman with a dis/ability in the provision of equity-focused technical assistance* in the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. Dr. Skelton received the *Leadership in*

*Special Education Field Award* from the University of Kansas in 2020, regularly presents at national conferences on equity-related topics and is an editor of *Multiple Voices: Disability, Race, and Language Intersections in Special Education*, with Dr. Thorius.

***Associate Director of Networking and Engagement (ADNE): Dr. Tiffany S. Kyser (100%FTE)***

Dr. Kyser will continue to serve as associate director, in a slightly modified role next cycle in which she will be primarily responsible for increasing awareness and engagement with our TA services, strengthening the diversity and depth of professional networks, including with other USDOE-funded TA Centers, our Tier 2 services and equity learning networks, and overseeing communications and dissemination of center-produced research and resources, as well as reports on the quality and effectiveness of TA. Dr. Kyser has 18 years' experience working in education, is a published author, presents regularly on systems of oppression and leadership for equity, and has received executive training at Harvard and Stanford Universities. She has a B.S. in Education, M.A. in English, and Ph.D. in Urban Education Studies. Dr. Kyser was an outreach educator, classroom teacher, district administrator, authorizer, and across positions, worked collaboratively with school communities toward realizing quality and equitable education for all students. Dr. Kyser has received numerous awards including the *Center for Leadership Development's Distinguished Achievement Award*, *EBONY Magazine's Power 100*, *Indiana Business Journal's Top 40 Under 40*, and was named a finalist for 2021 and 2022 United Way of Central Indiana's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advocate of the Year award.

***Asst/Assoc Director for TA Partnerships: Dr. Ruthie Payno-Simmons (proposed) (100% FTE)***

Given increasing demands for services, we are adding a new assistant/associate director position at the MAP Center. The new AD of TA Partnerships (ADTAP, title pending HR classification and compensation review) will be primarily responsible for Tier 3 partnerships,

including MOU/TASS development for each partner, and associated TA content and format. We have identified Dr. Ruthie Payno-Simmons as our top choice for this position, and she is eager to be considered. Dr. Payno-Simmons has been a public educator for 22 years and has consulted with the MAP Center for the past six years as a TA Specialist; we look forward to hiring her in a full-time role as TA specialist. Currently, Dr. Payno-Simmons co-leads Michigan's MTSS TA Center's piloting of a multicomponent approach to centering equity in school discipline and reducing disproportionality in schools employing Positive Behavioral Supports. Her LEA and SEA leadership includes policy analysis, strategic planning, coordinating PK-12 programs and curriculum, professional development, school improvement, accreditation, and systems evaluation. Dr. Payno-Simmons served as a teacher, principal, curriculum director, teacher educator, and executive director of curriculum & staff development for Holt Public Schools (MI), and teacher, principal, and district administrator for East Lansing Public Schools (MI),

***Continuous Improvement and Evaluation Coordinator: To Be Determined (100% FTE)***

The individual in this role will work with the executive team to co-develop and then, manage evaluation design, methodology, and execution including development and validation of research instruments, data collection and analysis, and reporting on the quality and efficacy of TA. The successful candidate will have research and evaluation experience across non-profits and/or government agencies, and expertise in dimensions and implications of unequal education access and large-scale education data sets. We currently have a post-doctoral fellow in this role who will be eligible to apply for this position as part of a national search.

***Professional Learning Coordinator (100% FTE)***

The professional learning coordinator will develop professional learning content for Tier 1 and 2 TA services and facilitate Tier 1 and 2 events with the executive team.

***Resource Development and Dissemination Coordinator (100% FTE)***

The RDD Coordinator will work with the ED and ADNE to develop and disseminate research-based Tier 1 resources, and coordinate resource development tasks with website, graphic design, and instructional design consultants.

***State Cadre TA Specialists (100% FTE)***

Two TA specialists will provide localized TA in one of two state cadres. They have three primary responsibilities within their respective cadres: (1) Conduct outreach to and convene virtual and face-to-face meetings of cadre stakeholders to build equity learning and action networks and to assess needs and assets; (2) Provide on-site and virtual TA to school boards, state departments, school districts, schools, and other responsible government agencies; and (3) Engage in face-to-face and virtual collaboration with the MAP Center executive team to coordinate Region III TA. We have identified one candidate as a frontrunner for this position who currently serves in this role, but as a consultant rather than an employee of the center.

**Potential Candidate, Dr. Karen Hall.** Dr. Hall is an accomplished consultant and leader with extensive experience providing equity-focused leadership and directing academic program administration, including as a MAP Center TA Specialist beginning February 2022. She started her career as an educator and academic program administrator evaluating curriculum and employing innovative methods in several school districts. Dr. Hall has numerous achievements, including the 2013 Outstanding Administrator Award from the Missouri Thespians Association and the 2014 Inspiring St. Louisan Award from the St. Louis County NAACP. Dr. Hall's leadership as Maplewood Richmond Heights (MO) superintendent, a former MAP Center Tier 3 partner, culminated in achieving nationwide attention for strategic sustainability practices.

**Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Crystal Morton (7.5% FTE summer)**

Dr. Crystal Morton will shift from her current role as equity fellow to co-pi next grant cycle, leveraging her expertise as associate director of research for the Great Lakes Equity Center: the IU School of Education center within which the MAP Center is housed. Dr. Morton will join in researching and publishing on processes of equity-expansive TA, particularly related to STEM education for underserved student groups. Dr. Morton is associate professor of mathematics education at IU-IUPUI, founder and executive director of Girls STEM Institute, and recent past president of the Benjamin Banneker Association: a national organization and partner with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics dedicated to advocacy toward leveling the playing field for mathematics learning of the highest quality for African American students.

### ***Equity Fellows***

Six nationally prominent education faculty from Region III universities will work with the executive team to develop research-based resources for the provision of project services, particularly those in Tier 1 and 2. Equity fellows are teacher- or administrator-preparation faculty who have engaged deeply and published widely on one or more desegregation areas. They have strong collaborations with LEAs, SEAs, families, and community organizations and their collective and distributed expertise is informed by unique experiences. They will: (1) Lead development of one Tier 1 resource annually in their area(s) of desegregation expertise, (2) Coordinate with staff to identify desegregation needs in their respective cadres, and (3) Engage in consultation and participation as needed for Tier 2 and 3 TA.

## **ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES**

### **Leveraging Technology, as Appropriate, as well as Non-Project Resources**

A key aspect of our TA is our use of innovative technology to provide services and connect networks. The most robust tool in our repertoire is our dynamic, high-quality, user- and mobile-



friendly, accessible, [website](#) to disseminate information, products, and tools to regional and (inter)national stakeholders. Since 2016, it has welcomed a total of 200,000+ visitors, over half of whom are unique, 494,590+ page views (362,609 unique), 50,081 resource clicks, and 27,887 downloads. Our website is a powerful resource and highly engaged in Region III and beyond; it stands out amongst the most robust across the TA Center network, and as compared to research and service centers at universities and organizations that have hosted EACs, past and present.

Our technologies also include communications hardware, software, and e-marketing tools. IU's in-kind offerings include four computers, color printer/copiers, and three video meeting rooms with large screens and surround audio, leveraging non-project resources to maximize TA development and reach. The MAP Center will continue to use IU's wide array of meeting platforms including Zoom and Microsoft Teams, so each staff member has personal video, audio, and mobile meeting capabilities. Staff routinely use video- and audio-conferencing to provide Tier 1 services including website and resource tours or connections to other TA organizations, as well as capabilities for remote consultation with partners. Provided by IU, Canvas is our web-based learning management system for online courses and LibGuides is our content management and information sharing platform, both enable asynchronous professional learning experiences for partners to access TA at a time, space, and pace most conducive for them.

We disseminate Tier 1 resources hot off the e-presses, through *Equity Digest* email blasts via Outlook, and use the Benchmark email marketing platform to announce new resources, recognitions of Center partnerships, and promote professional learning events to our growing contact log of 4,036 individuals and/or organizations. We utilize Adobe Creative Cloud, Photoshop, Acrobat DC Pro for PDF creation and editing, Premiere Pro for video editing, Kaltura for media storage, lecture capture, and caption editing, Adobe Stock and Shutterstock for photos, and Microsoft Publisher for desktop publishing, and Canva for web-based graphic design

to create social media graphics, posters, and other visual content; most of these are accessible free, mostly through IU, as are Qualtrics and Microsoft Forms, which we use for survey data collection. We have access to IU's Library Systems and Data bases, as well as research tools Reference Manager and Endnote, Zotero, NVIVO, SPSS, and SAS. We pay for very minimal technologies out of our center budget, only doing so to access premium versions of some of the aforementioned software, as services require.

Our robust social media rounds out our technology infrastructure. A regularly updated Facebook page with 4,500+ followers provides resources to a broad audience. Our posts often reach thousands (22,000+ people have engaged with our posts in the past two years). Our *YouTube* channel hosts topical videos on our mission that have been viewed over 7,000 times. Our active Twitter feed has over 1,700 followers, and Academia and Research Gate profiles allow additional access to our scholarship. Our social media followers far exceed those of any other center in the TA network or any other university-based research or service center in Region III states, including those that have previously housed EACs that served Region III states.

As needed, we use IU's resources to connect, and convene meetings in our rent-free office, meeting rooms, and community settings. These resources, along with printing, mailing, interpreting, and translation are provided in-kind by IU. Indiana University and the School of Education apply a portion of their share of indirect costs generated by the project to provide the MAP Center with a 50% of the salary for our 100% FTE office manager and 30% FTE of the executive director's 55% FTE academic time dedicated to the project, several of our computers, two laser printers, all phones, offices, online learning and communication platforms. In addition, IU resources include a travel management system, large meeting spaces, video conference rooms, communications and marketing support, database maintenance support, site-licensed data

analysis software, library access, financial and budget management, human resources, and a vast network of those who work with IU, leveraging significant non-project resources.

### **Budget Adequacy to Support the Proposed Project**

The budget is adequate to support project activities and reasonable in relation to project goals and number of current and new partners to be served across Region III's 6,953 LEAs and 13 SEAs. Major costs include salary and fringe (67%), equity fellow, advisor, and graphic, website, instructional design, and evaluation consultants (6%), tuition remission (1.5%), and travel (1%). Supplies such as hardware and software account for 0.5% of funds (*Appendix N: Budget Narrative*). IU charges 32% modified indirect costs. We have drawn down about 93% percent of funds so far this cycle. Modest carryover in previous years was due to staff vacancies; we have demonstrated financial stewardship and efficient, maximal use of finances to fulfill all project obligations. Also, our multitiered TA framework provides the operational flexibility necessary within a fixed budget to maximize impact: a key factor in implementation science (Berwick et al., 2008). We are confident our budget is adequate because we track all aspects of project implementation in our database, including estimated and actual costs distributed across current and targeted TA increases related to total potential Region III LEAs/SEAs to be served: evidence of a sophisticated, multifaceted system for determining budget adequacy.

### **ADDRESSING THE SECRETARY'S INVITATIONAL PRIORITY**

Partnerships with advisors, equity fellows, and administrators at several Minority Serving Institutions demonstrate our capacity to address the Secretary's Invitational Priority to leverage such partnerships to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved PK-12 students. In addition, we will work with IU HR to engage in targeted promotion of MAP Center position openings at HBCUs, TCUs, AANIPISIs, and HSIs.