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## **Quality of Project Design**

In the heart of Oklahoma, a critical transformation is about to unfold with three early-stage Tribal Education Agencies (TEAs). Those TEAs, the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, the Kiowa Tribe, and the Sac and Fox Nation, in this proposal, seek to embark on a journey to strengthen education within their communities. Our proposed endeavor is the tried and tested model that informs the Oklahoma STEP Project of the Virginia STEP program (VTEC, 2019; Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), 2019: 2022). A product of a well-orchestrated partnership between the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), this initiative promises to drive progress and promote self-determination over the meticulously planned five-year cycle.

Building on the successes of its Virginia predecessor (OESE, 2019; 2020), the Oklahoma STEP Project is committed to achieving Tribal self-determination in education, identifying ways to boost academic performance among Indian children and youth, and cultivating an unprecedented degree of coordination and collaboration among TEAs, State Educational Agencies (SEA), and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). The OK STEP Project, however, is more than just a project; it is a beacon of hope, a potent catalyst empowering tribal communities to evolve their educational framework through the might of efficient collaboration and capacity building.

The OK STEP Project has four delineated goals accompanied by specific objectives. The first goal aims to champion Tribal self-determination among the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, and Sac and Fox Nation, empowering the participating TEAs to shape their educational systems harmoniously with their cultural values and community aspirations. The second goal targets improving academic performance among Native students across the three TEAs, calling for identifying evidence-based practices and culturally responsive approaches that cater to the

unique needs of Native students enrolled in the participating LEAs. The third goal strives to cultivate efficient coordination and collaboration among the three TEAs, the OK State Department of Education, and nine LEAs. The fourth and final goal sets its sights on augmenting community engagement within the participating TEAs. Our approach starts in year one and ends in year five with a community-based needs assessment that serves as a map for the partners in capacity-building and strategic planning and that involves Tribal parents and stakeholders and cultivates a sense of shared responsibility for achieving the desired outcomes.

The Tribal Education Agency (TEA) Capacity Building Program scheduled for each year consists of a four-day, immersive event that provides a robust foundation for achieving our goals. Each of the seven carefully curated program sessions, strategically spread across the year, is designed to promote Tribal self-determination in education by endowing stakeholders with the necessary expertise to create culturally resonant education systems. As a result, guided by the community-needs assessments and session programs, the TEAs will intimately align the needs and aspirations of the tribal communities they serve. The OK STEP Project's TEA Capacity Building Program meets Competitive Preference Priorities and extends its reach, instigating systemic change and exceeding set goals. The TEA Capacity Building Program is a strategic tool designed to empower leaders, foster collaboration, and champion tribal self-determination. It is an impactful and far-reaching mechanism that promises to leave an indelible mark on the future of Tribal Education in Oklahoma (See Attachments for PowerPoints and Descriptive Lessons).

As shown in the following, the TEA Capacity Building Program is a carefully curated initiative led by the TEDNA and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF). Its goals, objectives, and outcomes are meticulously defined and directly correspond to the unique needs of TEAs, the Oklahoma State Educational Agency (SEA), and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs).

As Table 1 illustrates, during Year 1 and Year 5, the program includes a community needs and asset mapping exercise to identify and prioritize the top four needs (addressing the 13 Preference Priority #3 areas at a minimum), which are action-planned for the following years. The specifics of the years 2-5 will vary based on the assessment results. Year 5 community needs and asset mapping allow for reassessment and planning after the federal grant tailoring the program to meet the evolving needs.

Table 1: TEA Capacity Building Program By Year, Day, Session, Focus, and Outcomes.

Year	Day	Session	Focus	Outcomes
Year 1	Day 1	Session 1: Tribal Education Agency Growth Perspective & Vision	Participants explore the unique growth perspective within Tribal Education Agencies with a focus on the <u>Identification of Native students</u> eligible for the Title VI Indian Education Formula Grant Program	Development of a shared vision for educational growth that aligns with tribal sovereignty and self-determination.
Year 1	Day 1	Session 2: Engage & Organize: Stakeholder Engagement and Benefits Management	Participants learn about stakeholder engagement strategies and benefits management practices within Tribal Education Agencies.	Enhance stakeholder engagement and effective management of resources for tribal student and community benefits.

Year	Day	Session	Focus	Outcomes
Year 1	Day 2	Session 3: Learn & Validate: Tribal Education Code	Participants learn about the importance of a Tribal Education Code, researching and analyzing codes, drafting and revising, legal and policy, and community consensus building.	Creating a robust legal framework through the Tribal Education Code that reflects the tribal community's values supports educational excellence and ensures the success of future generations.
		Year 2 Session 3 will address ranked community needs assessment results, including a review of the 13 focus areas.	(1) Energy. (2) Homelessness. (3) Transportation. (4) Health, physical, mental, behavioral, and trauma. (5) School diversity (6) College readiness. (7) Workforce development. (8) Civic engagement. (9) Technology. (10) Public safety. (11) Community violence prevention and intervention. (12) Social services. (13) Adult education and literacy.	Varied outcomes based on the focus the TEAs decide from the ranking of the community-based assessment, and needs could include identifying, improving, increasing, preparing, establishing, promoting, enhancing, strengthening, developing, or offer

Year	Day	Session	Focus	Outcomes
Year 1	Day 3	Session 4: Learn & Validate: Communicate and Growth Impact Assessment	Participants focus on communication strategies and growth impact assessment within tribal educational contexts.	Culturally sensitive communication strategies and effective growth impact assessments.
Year 1	Day 3	Session 5: Equity & Readiness: Equity Considerations and Building Readiness	Participants explore strategies for promoting equity within Tribal Education Agencies and building readiness among individuals and organizations to embrace and support growth initiatives.	Promotion of equity and readiness for growth in Tribal Education Agencies.
Year 1	Day 4	Session 6: Education and Learning Support: Culturally Responsive Pedagogies and Learning Support	Participants delve into education and learning support within tribal educational settings.	Identification & training of culturally responsive pedagogies and learning support in tribal educational settings.

Year	Day	Session	Focus	Outcomes
Year 1	Day 4	Session 7: Project Management: Implementation	Participants learn about project management practices tailored to tribal contexts.	Improved project management skills and practices in tribal contexts.
<b>Community Needs &amp; Asset Mapping</b>			Community needs and asset mapping to identify existing programs and initiatives to be leveraged. Identifying the top four communities needs to be addressed in the following years.	Identification of key areas of focus based on community needs and existing resources. Establishing a roadmap for the following years based on identified needs and assets.
<b>Years 2-5</b>	Varies based on TEA Needs Assessment Ranking		Focusing on TEA choices based on community-needs assessment.	Advancement in areas identified by the community needs assessment.
<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Community Needs &amp; Asset Mapping</b>		Reassessment of community needs and assets. Coordinating efforts with Federal, State, or local agencies or community-based organizations to support students.	Understanding changes in community needs and assets over the program's duration. Coordinated efforts to support students using insights from the reassessment.

The decision-making process in the TEA Capacity Building Program follows a collaborative, inclusive, and culturally responsive approach. This process begins with a community-based needs assessment for each participating TEA to understand better the unique educational landscape and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The collected data is subsequently analyzed to identify the most pressing education needs in each tribe, ranging from academic performance to social and cultural needs or an assessment of the current educational infrastructure. Upon interpreting the data, the TEAs and TEDNA, NARF, and other stakeholders outline specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals for the TEA Capacity Building Program. This involves determining which areas of focus will have the most significant impact on the community, ensuring a balance between immediate needs and long-term objectives. A strategic plan is then developed and implemented, with regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure effectiveness and adaptability to evolving community needs. Regular stakeholder meetings facilitate constant review and feedback, fostering a program that remains adaptable and responsive to the changing needs of the tribal communities.

*(1) The goals, objectives, and outcomes are specified and measurable.*

The TEA Capacity Building Program aims to achieve our goals and objectives by implementing a range of measures to assess progress, effectiveness, and the impact of the OK STEP Project on Tribal self-determination, academic achievement, coordination, and collaboration among TEAs, SEA, and LEAs, and community engagement. These measures provide a comprehensive framework for evaluation and improvement, ensuring that the OK STEP Project is responsive to the needs and aspirations of Native American students and their communities. Following are the specified and measurable Goals and Objectives of the TEA Capacity Building Program (See Attached Powerpoint & Lesson Plan Narrative):

## **Goal #1: Promote Tribal Self-Determination**

### Objectives

- (1) Empower TEA to shape their educational systems & Identification of Native students
- (2) Align educational programs with cultural values and aspirations

### Measure:

- Conduct regular surveys or assessments to gauge Tribal community involvement and satisfaction in educational decision-making processes.
- Enhance the engagement and satisfaction of Tribal communities in shaping educational policies and programs.

Outcome: Empower TEA stakeholder communities to shape and lead their educational systems, fostering self-determination and cultural preservation.

## **Goal #2: Improve Academic Achievement (A Systems Focus)**

### Objectives:

- (1) Identify evidence-based practices and culturally responsive approaches
- (2) Address specific needs of Native American students in Oklahoma

### Measure:

- Track and analyze student academic data to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement in academic achievement among Native American students.
- Evaluate the evidence of culturally responsive teaching practices and gather feedback from educators and students regarding their effectiveness.

Outcome: Improve educational outcomes and opportunities for Native American students, ensuring academic success and college readiness. Enhance academic outcomes and provide culturally responsive education that meets the needs of Native American students.

### **Goal #3: Foster Coordination and Collaboration among TEAs, SEA, and LEAs**

#### Objectives:

- (1) Establish effective partnerships and communication channels
- (2) Create a coordinated and collaborative educational environment

#### Measure:

- Establish formal agreements and protocols for ongoing collaboration between TEAs, SEA, and LEAs, ensuring regular communication and coordinated efforts.
- Increase the number of joint initiatives and programs implemented by TEAs, SEA, and LEAs to address the unique educational and cultural needs of Native American students.
- Monitor the number and quality of collaborative initiatives and projects implemented by TEAs, SEA, and LEAs, assessing their impact on educational outcomes for Native American students.

Outcome: Create a coordinated and collaborative educational environment that leverages resources, expertise, and support to meet the needs of Native American students. Strengthen collaboration and coordination between TEAs, SEA, and LEAs to provide comprehensive support and resources for Native American students.

### **Goal #4: Strengthen Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change**

#### Objectives:

- (1) Involve Tribal communities, parents, educators, and other stakeholders
- (2) Foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for change

#### Measure:

- Conduct surveys or focus groups to assess the level of community engagement and perception of its impact on educational policies, programs, and services.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of Tribal consultation processes, including feedback from Tribal leaders and community members on their satisfaction with the engagement and decision-making processes.

Outcome: Foster community ownership and shared responsibility for educational transformation, driving sustainable change in Native American Education that enhances community engagement and ensures meaningful involvement of Tribal communities in shaping educational initiatives.

To continuously improve and gather data to support the impact of the TEA Capacity Building Program, the OK STEP Project will invest in systems to implement initiatives. Drawing on experience from our project partner's TEDNA ACE Project (TEDNA, 2020), we will create a custom integrated communication and data analysis/reporting system that connects to a central, highly secure, cloud-based database. Project staff can access the database securely via any web-enabled device. The database will also be linked to online forms, surveys, and broadcast email systems, facilitating the efficient implementation of campaigns and other initiatives related to Competitive Preference Priority 1. The system will also be crucial in operationalizing data-sharing efforts to evaluate and achieve each other Project goals objectively. It will do so by allowing the import and export of approved data from multiple legacy data systems used at the Tribal Partners, LEAs, and SEA, subject to applicable privacy regulations and data-sharing agreements that will emerge and be addressed as part of the OK STEP project. By monitoring progress and remaining responsive to the changing needs of Native American students and their communities, the program is poised to make a meaningful and lasting impact on tribal education systems and support without providing direct student services.

## *(2) Our Project builds capacity and yields results*

The TEA Capacity Building Program provides a comprehensive four-day training program each year, equipping participants with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to drive educational growth, promote Tribal self-determination, improve academic achievement, and foster collaboration among TEAs, SEA, and LEAs each year. The training sessions build capacity and yield results beyond the period of Federal financial assistance, ensuring long-term benefits for Indigenous Education.

During the first year, the year sessions will support the cross-collaboration engagement, learning, development, and action planning to improve the identification of Native students in public education data and to enhance the Tribal consultation capacity of TEAs to directly administer education programs, including formula grant programs under the ESEA, consistent with State law and under a written agreement among the parties. Also, during the first and fifth years, community needs and asset mapping will be used to identify existing programs and initiatives to be leveraged, supporting new programs and initiatives needed to advance the systemic evidence-based approach to improving outcomes for underserved students relative to the thirteen noted in the federal register. Based on the community needs assessment, a ranking of the top four will be identified for the TEAs each year in the capacity-building to address coordinating efforts with Federal, State, or local agencies or community-based organizations to support students. The approach means that Training Day 2, the first year, will be about Tribal Education Codes, but then in Years 2-5, the sessions will support the TEA choices based on community-needs assessment. Our design will shape outcomes, targeting a five-year horizon to effect real changes.

During Training Day 1, participants engage in Session 1, which combines the Tribal Education Agency Growth Perspective and Vision elements. They explore the unique growth

perspective within TEAs and define a shared vision for educational growth aligned with tribal sovereignty and self-determination. In Session 2, participants delve into stakeholder engagement and benefits management strategies, learning to effectively engage stakeholders and organize resources to maximize positive outcomes for tribal students and communities.

Training Day 2 focuses on the development of a Tribal Education Code. In Session 3, participants learn about the importance of a Tribal Education Code in preserving tribal sovereignty, promoting cultural values, and ensuring quality education. They explore the essential components to address in a Tribal Education Code, research and analyze existing codes, draft and revise code sections, and consider legal and policy considerations. The session also emphasizes community engagement and consensus-building in the code development process, with case studies and best practices guiding participants.

On Training Day 3, Session 4 focuses on communication strategies and growth impact assessment within tribal educational contexts. Participants validate the effectiveness of communication strategies and assess the impact of growth initiatives on tribal students and communities. In Session 5, participants address equity considerations and readiness for educational growth, exploring strategies for promoting equity within TEAs and building readiness among individuals and organizations to embrace and support growth initiatives.

Training Day 4 covers education and learning support within tribal educational settings (Session 6) and project management practices tailored to tribal contexts (Session 7). Participants learn about culturally responsive pedagogies, incorporating tribal traditions and knowledge systems into learning and ensuring equitable access to quality education and targeted learning support. The final session focuses on project management, teaching participants how to effectively

plan, execute, and monitor growth initiatives within TEAs, emphasizing organizing resources, engaging stakeholders, and maintaining equity throughout the project lifecycle.

### Training Day 1:

#### **Session 1: Tribal Education Agency Growth Perspective & Vision**

This session combines the Tribal Education Agency Growth Perspective and Vision elements. Participants explore the unique growth perspective within TEAs and define a shared vision for educational growth aligned with tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

#### **Session 2: Engage & Organize: Stakeholder Engagement and Benefits Management**

Participants delve into stakeholder engagement strategies and benefits management practices within TEAs in this session. They learn how to effectively engage stakeholders and organize resources to maximize positive outcomes for tribal students and communities.

### Training Day 2: Tribal Education Code (Year 1) and then Community-Based Needs Assessment (Years 2 to 5)

#### **Session 3: Learn & Validate: Tribal Education Code**

The TEA Capacity Building Program empowers participants to drive educational growth and develop a robust legal framework through the Tribal Education Code that reflects their tribal community's values, supports educational excellence, and ensures the success of future generations. Participants attending will learn and validate the following topics led by the Native American Rights Fund (NARF).

- Understanding the Importance of a Tribal Education Code: Participants learn about the significance of a Tribal Education Code in preserving tribal sovereignty, promoting cultural values, and ensuring quality education for tribal students.

- Elements of a Tribal Education Code: This session explores the essential components that must be included in a Tribal Education Code, such as governance structures, curriculum development, student rights and protections, language preservation, and community engagement.
- Researching and Analyzing Existing Codes: Participants are guided through researching and analyzing existing Tribal Education Codes to gain insights into best practices and adapt them to their tribal community's specific needs.
- Drafting and Revising the Tribal Education Code: Participants engage in hands-on activities to draft and revise sections of the Tribal Education Code, incorporating culturally relevant practices and ensuring alignment with tribal values, language, and traditions.
- Legal and Policy Considerations: This session provides an overview of the legal and policy considerations involved in developing a Tribal Education Code, including federal laws, tribal sovereignty, and collaboration with state education systems where applicable.
- Implementing and Enforcing the Tribal Education Code: Participants explore strategies for effectively implementing and enforcing the Tribal Education Code, including establishing accountability mechanisms, creating partnerships with stakeholders, and monitoring compliance.
- Building Community Consensus: This session focuses on the importance of community engagement and consensus-building in developing and adopting the Tribal Education Code. Participants learn effective strategies for involving community members, parents, and tribal leaders in decision-making.

- Case Studies and Best Practices: Participants examine case studies of successful Tribal Education Codes from other tribal communities and learn from best practices to inform their code development process.
- Continuous Improvement and Revision: Participants explore strategies for ongoing evaluation, revision, and continuous improvement of the Tribal Education Code to adapt to evolving community needs and changing educational landscapes.

### **Training Day 3:**

#### **Session 4: Learn & Validate: Communication and Growth Impact Assessment**

Participants focus on communication strategies and growth impact assessment within tribal educational contexts. They explore culturally sensitive communication techniques, validate the effectiveness of communication strategies, and assess the impact of growth initiatives on tribal students and communities.

#### **Session 5: Equity & Readiness: Equity Considerations and Building Readiness**

This session addresses equity considerations and readiness for educational growth. Participants explore strategies for promoting equity within TEAs and building readiness among individuals and organizations to embrace and support growth initiatives.

### **Training Day 4:**

#### **Session 6: Education and Learning Support: Culturally Responsive Pedagogies and Learning Support**

Participants delve into education and learning support within tribal educational settings. They explore culturally responsive pedagogies, incorporating tribal traditions and knowledge systems into learning. The session emphasizes equitable access to quality education and targeted learning support.

## **Session 7: Project Management: Implementing Growth Initiatives**

The final session focuses on project management practices tailored to tribal educational contexts. Participants learn how to effectively plan, execute, and monitor growth initiatives within TEAs. The session emphasizes organizing resources, engaging stakeholders, and focusing on equity throughout the project lifecycle.

The TEA Capacity Building Program will ensure its impact long after the financial support period ends, just as it has done in prior work (VTEC, 2015; OESE. 2019; 2020). The participants, now equipped with crucial skills and knowledge, will continue to drive growth in their respective education agencies, contributing to the advancement of Native Education and realizing educational excellence for Indian children and youth. In essence, the TEA Capacity Building Program doesn't just provide financial support; it plants the seeds for sustainable change and ongoing development within Native American educational systems.

### *(3) Integrates and builds on similar or related efforts.*

The TEA Capacity Building Program offers a comprehensive four-day training program to integrate with, build upon, and support similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes in Native Education (TEDNA, 2020; VTEC, 2015; OESE. 2019; 2020). The capacity-building efforts and training provided through the TEA Capacity Building Program will yield results beyond the Federal financial assistance period. Participants in the program gain the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to drive educational growth, improve academic achievement, and foster collaboration among TEAs, SEA, and LEAs (OESE. 2019; 2020). These acquired capabilities empower participants to continue their efforts and make lasting changes within their respective educational systems even after the conclusion of the funding period.

The TEA Capacity Building Program within the OK STEP project also melds well with a current TEDNA Accessing Choices in Education (ACE) Project (TEDNA, 2020) grant to improve educational outcomes for Native youth. Each of the projects can enhance their collective impact by sharing resources, knowledge, and best practices. For example, the capacity-building will incorporate the ACE findings and objectives to ensure that the capacity-building efforts within the three participating TEAs (Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, and Sac and Fox Nation) closely align with the educational opportunities and supports developed for the four Tribes/Nations in the ACE project. The Capacity Building Program will also benefit from the ACE project's outcomes, using these as benchmarks and indicators for their performance and impact. The ACE project's emphasis on expanding access to high-quality, evidence-based educational choices for Native high school youth can directly inform the development of culturally responsive practices in the Capacity Building Program. The ACE specialists, trained in various educational opportunities, will also contribute to the training modules in the Capacity Building Program, sharing their expertise and learnings. But one of the most beneficial ways we will connect these projects is through the commitment to parent engagement and family involvement in the ACE project mirrors the OK STEP program's goal of increasing community engagement within the participating TEAs. Collaborative efforts between these two projects could result in a more robust, comprehensive approach to parental involvement across all participating tribes and schools, boosting the shared mission of advancing self-determination through education.

### **Quality of Project Services**

#### *(1) Quality and sufficiency of strategies.*

The TEA Capacity Building Program, a strategic alliance between the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF),

represents a robust commitment to uplift traditionally underrepresented Native American students. Through its suite of resources and expert-led sessions, the program will work with TEAs to ensure students have equitable access to culturally responsive education that respects their unique heritage and promotes their academic success. Key to this approach is the empowerment of Tribal Educational Agencies (TEAs) to shape educational systems that reflect their communities' cultural values and aspirations.

The Capacity Building Program's design includes an intensive four-day event covering topics crucial to enhancing the quality of tribal education. These sessions encompass stakeholder engagement, benefits management, communication, equity considerations, culturally responsive pedagogies, and project management. This training equips TEAs with essential skills to spearhead education initiatives and helps eliminate disparities in access and achievement for Native American students. Collaboration forms the cornerstone of this program, encouraging coordination among Tribal, State, and Local Educational Agencies (TEAs, SEA, and LEAs). This collaborative ethos fosters systemic change and cross-agency coordination, ultimately benefiting the Education of Native American students. The program also caters to the unique needs of early-stage TEAs by providing targeted support and training in areas tied to tribal history, language, and culture. In essence, the Capacity Building Program, through its various mechanisms, is a beacon of educational equity, assuring quality and equal access to underrepresented Native American students.

The TEA Capacity Building Program is an ambitious initiative under the U.S. Education STEP Grant umbrella. The main aim is to enhance the capability of three partnering tribes in Oklahoma. Under the dynamic leadership of the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) and with the support of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), this initiative strives

to amplify and build the capacity of the TEAs (TEAs) of three distinct tribes: the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, the Kiowa Tribe, and the Sac & Fox Nation.

The Absentee Shawnee Tribe's TEA will actively participate in this initiative by collaborating with the Little Axe and Tecumseh Public Schools. Together, they will service approximately 423 Native American students. The Project directly reflects Absolute Priority 2's aim to expand the capacity of early-stage TEAs in Oklahoma. The Absentee Shawnee Tribe's TEA will leverage its unique cultural and academic expertise to meet its students' educational needs while improving the academic achievement of these Native American children and youth. By fostering a symbiotic relationship with LEAs and SEA, the TEA will work towards facilitating coordination and collaboration amongst these agencies. Kiowa Tribe's TEA will cooperate with the Carnegie and Elgin Public Schools and the Kiowa Tribal School. This partnership will cater to an estimated total of 355 Kiowa students. The Kiowa Tribe's TEA aims to mirror the success of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe's TEA by working closely with local and state educational agencies. Their shared goal is to promote tribal self-determination in education, significantly impacting the community by fostering an education system grounded in the tribe's rich cultural heritage. In addition to serving as the fiscal lead to contract for the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) to provide capacity-building, Sac & Fox Nation's TEA will collaborate with the Cushing, Prague, and Stroud Public Schools, which collectively serve about 361 Native American students. This tribal education agency aims to advance tribal self-determination in education. The Sac & Fox Nation's TEA, following the path of its peers, will concentrate its efforts on administering and enhancing education programs, capacity building, and providing training and support to SEA and LEAs.

TEDNA will play a critical role in all three instances by leading the initiative and lending its expertise and resources to achieve these objectives. The agencies will also address their programs' three Competitive Preference Priorities. The shared vision among these three TEAs and TEDNA is to promote tribal self-determination in education, enhance the academic achievement of Native American children and youth, and facilitate coordination and collaboration among the educational agencies.

The TEA Capacity Building Program represents a promising opportunity to revolutionize Education for Native American students within these three tribes. By tailoring the education system to reflect the students' unique cultural and academic needs, these TEAs aim to expand the capacity of early-stage TEAs and enhance the overall academic success and cultural preservation of their tribes.

## *(2) Involvement and collaboration of partners*

The TEA Capacity Building Program embodies an exceptional model of collaboration and cooperation, uniting the expertise and resources of the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) with the unique insight of TEAs (TEAs). This collaboration underpins the program's potential to maximize the project services' effectiveness, as it blends expert knowledge and grassroots familiarity with the cultural and educational needs of the Native American communities.

Integrating State and Local Education Agencies (SEA and LEAs) in the program multiplies the impact of the project services. This cooperation allows for cross-fertilization of ideas and sharing of resources, fostering a holistic approach to meeting the educational needs of Native American students. By bridging gaps between different educational systems, the collaboration

helps tailor educational services to be culturally responsive and relevant, amplifying the effectiveness of the initiatives for the benefit of Native American students.

Furthermore, the Capacity Building Program ensures adequate service provision by focusing on empowering early-stage TEAs through specific training and support. Recognizing that these TEAs hold unique cultural knowledge and community-specific insight, their involvement increases the appropriateness and effectiveness of services. By uniting all these partners, the program can provide impactful, tailored services that are sensitive to the cultural heritage of Native American students while fostering their academic achievement and personal development. Therefore, the collaboration embodied in this program significantly enhances the effectiveness and impact of project services.

### **Adequacy of Resources**

#### *(1) Adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources.*

The TEDNA office located at 309 NW 13th St., Oklahoma City, OK, is a spacious and modern facility that can accommodate the needs of the OK STEP project. The office has a large conference room with a projector, a screen, a speakerphone, and a videoconferencing system that can connect with TEAs across the state. The office also has several workstations with high-speed internet access, printers, scanners, and copiers that can support the project staff and consultants. The equipped office has adequate supplies such as paper, pens, folders, binders, and other essential materials for the project activities. The office is in a central and accessible city area, close to public transportation, restaurants, and hotels. An alarm system and a surveillance camera also secure the office. The TEDNA office is, therefore, an ideal place to support the meetings and online connections with TEAs in the OK STEP project.

TEDNA, as the lead applicant, operates out of the Oklahoma Public School Resource Center (OPSRC), which has extensive resources accessible to complete the STEP Project. OPSRC envisions a quality public education for every child, and its mission is to drive transformation and increased academic achievement, mainly focused on meeting the needs of smaller schools and districts. OPSRC offers finance, technology, teaching & learning, communications, and legal counsel expertise. Supports include professional development in person and online, cutting-edge website design and training in managing websites, access to assessment tools, benefits administration, employee benefit costs, and personalized learning models.

OPSRC provides TEDNA centrally located office space with professional quality furnishings; unlimited use of multiple-purpose conference and meeting rooms with modern telecommunication equipment and lighting; office security and monitoring; high speed and dependable internet access including network securities; and unlimited use of office equipment (i.e., copier, scanner, fax) and any supplies to support office management. TEDNA also has full access to all consultants available on the OPSRC staff.

## *(2) Budget adequacy.*

The OK STEP Project, with Sac & Fox Nation providing fiscal leadership, aims to enhance the capabilities of early tribal education agencies amongst three qualifying tribes - Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, and Sac and Fox Nation. Sac & Fox Nation will contract the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) to help build capacity and leadership and promote self-determination amongst the tribes, strongly focusing on improving education program administration. It also involves partnerships with various educational agencies enrolling 1,139 Native American students.

The OK STEP Project outlines four goals with corresponding objectives: promoting tribal self-determination, improving Native students' academic achievement, fostering coordination and collaboration among various agencies, and strengthening community engagement. The detailed five-year budget is prepared to ensure adequate financial support. Over this period, the total grant costs amount to \$2,512,891. Personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and contractor costs have been included, with the largest portion of the budget allocated to contractors, which accounts for the budget with indirect costs. This thorough budget planning showcases the unwavering commitment of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, and Sac and Fox Nation to support culturally relevant educational opportunities. It demonstrates the essential experience of TEDNA, in association with NARF, to achieve the desired outcomes of the STEP Grant, providing equitable access to high-quality education and fostering tribal community advancement.

### *(3) Project continuation.*

Our OK STEP project provides TEAs training through the TEA Capacity Building Program. Our approach is more than a temporary boost; it will catalyze sustained self-determination, empowering them to continue championing tribal education even after the grant funding ends. Once trained in the TEA Capacity Building Program, TEAs (TEAs) will be well-positioned to sustain and expand the program even after the grant funding ends. They will possess the comprehensive understanding and operational expertise to continue implementing the program. They will be familiar with the program's framework, goals, and mechanisms, enabling them to carry on its operation with minimal external support. The knowledge gained from the training will act as an enduring resource, driving the program's continuous execution. They will also have learned the art of strategic planning and the importance of community engagement. They will use these skills to keep the program aligned with their communities' evolving needs and

aspirations. By regularly reassessing community needs and adjusting the program accordingly, they can ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

The TEAs will carry forward the practice of partnership building. The relationships they forge during the Project and participation in the program - with other TEAs, local and state education agencies, local businesses, and community stakeholders – will be nurtured and leveraged to sustain the program. These partnerships will provide various forms of support, from resource sharing and collaboration to advocacy and sponsorship. Additionally, the Capacity Building Program will have instilled in the TEAs a culture of evaluation and continuous improvement. They will have the tools to monitor the program's progress, assess its outcomes, and make improvements based on feedback and results. This practice will enable them to maximize the program's impact and ensure its long-term viability.

### **Quality of Management Plan**

The TEA Capacity Building Program, Directed/Coordinated by the Sac and Fox Nation in partnership with the Kiowa and Absentee Shawnee Tribes of Oklahoma, will contract with the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA), Native American Rights Fund (NARF), Houchin Consulting, Tuwaduq Cultural & Research Institute, and the Center for Research and Data Analysis. The partnerships feature a comprehensive management plan that ensures the highest execution and outcome for its beneficiaries. The program's management plan offers a roadmap for implementing the program, outlining roles, responsibilities, and processes to ensure the smooth operation and practical realization of the project objectives. Project personnel leading the capacity-building are a list of knowledgeable native leaders.

The OK STEP Project Director/Coordinator time will be over 51% for commitment efforts. Edwina Butler-Wolfe, the Sac and Fox Nation Education Department Director, with extensive

experience and leadership in tribal governance and education. She is a Shawnee politician who served as the governor of the Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma for three consecutive terms, from 2013 to 2019. She made history as the first and only woman to hold this position and the first and only governor re-elected twice. As the governor, she oversaw the development and implementation of various tribal programs and services, including the OK STEP Project, which aims to enhance educational outcomes and opportunities for Native American students. She is well-qualified to serve as the Project Director/Coordinator of the OK STEP Project, as she has a deep understanding of the needs and challenges of the tribal community and a strong commitment to improving their quality of life. As the Director/Coordinator, Edwina will oversee the program, coordinating resources and ensuring it stays on track and within budget. The Project Director/Coordinator leads the team with experts from diverse backgrounds, including capacity-building, tribal education laws, and stakeholder engagement. They also maintain constant communication with the TEDNA, NARF, and the tribal communities involved, updating them on progress and addressing any issues that may arise. Each team member has a defined role, contributing their unique expertise to the program's success.

Quinton Roman Nose will be the Tribal Education Agency Capacity Building Program Lead (20% time commitment). Quinton Roman Nose's qualifications are the backbone of the program's success. As the Executive Director of the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA), he brings in-depth knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of the unique needs and opportunities within Tribal Education Agencies. Mr. Roman Nose's credentials are steeped in his long-standing commitment to empowering Native American education and fostering sustainable growth within Tribal communities. More specifically, Mr. Roman Nose has

led and partnered on two other Education STEP Grants leading to the formation and expansion of Tribal Education Agencies in partnership with LEAs and SEAs (OESE, 2019; 2020).

Significant contributions to the field of Indigenous education have marked Mr. Roman Nose's career. His formal education and professional training in educational leadership and policy-making have given him a robust foundation. Moreover, his vast experience working closely with TEAs, SEAs, and LEAs has equipped him with a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between these agencies, making him an adept facilitator of collaboration and coordination. He has continually advocated for the rights and representation of Native American students in educational policies and programs, signifying his strong commitment to educational equity and cultural preservation.

Under his leadership, TEDNA has initiated and overseen multiple impactful projects, improving academic achievement among Native American students, promoting cultural responsiveness in education, and enhancing community engagement. These achievements reflect Mr. Roman Nose's capability to drive transformative change in Native American education. As the Project Director, his substantial experience and leadership qualities will be instrumental in achieving the goals of the Tribal Education Agency Capacity Building Program. His deep-rooted commitment to Native American education makes him an exemplary leader for the OK STEP Project, promising a future where Tribal self-determination in education becomes a reality.

Dwight M. Pickering, at 95% time commitment, will serve as Project Engagement Director and is a highly experienced professional in the field of education, with a particular focus on American Indian communities; as Project Engagement Director, he is responsible for designing and refining the training sessions. He will work closely with tribal communities to understand their unique needs and ensure the program aligns with them. He will also oversee the community needs

assessments of the program, using feedback from participants to improve the content and delivery of the training sessions continuously. His academic background includes a B.A. in Education from Tarkio College, and he is recognized with numerous awards for his exceptional contributions to education and community service (See Resume in Attachments).

Pickering has held key positions such as Director of Education for the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, Director of American Indian Education at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, and Director of the 477 Programs at the Kaw Nation of Oklahoma. He has overseen various programs in these roles, including Child Care Development, Employment and Training, Job Placement and Training, Johnson O'Malley, General Education, and Higher Education. In his capacity as the Director of American Indian Education, he played a critical role in the creation of a Cultural Resource Site for Oklahoma teachers in the 39 tribes of Oklahoma and also founded the Oklahoma Indian Education Conference. He holds an Oklahoma Teacher's Certificate, a further testament to his commitment to education.

The Tribal Education Law Expert (NARF) advises on developing the Tribal Education Code, ensuring its compliance with relevant federal and tribal laws with a 5% time commitment to contribute to the training sessions, and sharing their knowledge and expertise with the participants. Melody McCoy is a senior staff attorney at the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), where she has worked since 1992. She has extensive experience representing tribal clients on education, jurisdiction, sovereignty, and civil rights issues. She is also a co-author of the Tribal Education Code Handbook, a comprehensive guide for developing and implementing tribal education laws. As the Tribal Education Law Expert, she provides guidance and advice on drafting and revising the Tribal Education Code, ensuring that it reflects the tribe's values, goals, and needs and complying with applicable federal and tribal laws. She also participates in the training

sessions, sharing her insights and expertise with the tribal leaders, educators, and community members involved in the education reform process.

The Stakeholder and Community Engagement Specialist builds relationships with all stakeholders, including tribal communities, federal and state educational agencies, and other relevant entities. They also manage community engagement efforts, ensuring that the voices of the tribal communities are heard and incorporated into the program. Dr. Pavel will manage community engagement and assessment efforts, ensuring that the voices of the Tribal communities are heard and incorporated into the project. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan shall set forth the actions to engage with all stakeholders and include the following: descriptions of how stakeholders will be identified, methods of engaging stakeholders, mechanisms for continued and ongoing engagement, plans for access to data on project impacts, strategies for incorporating feedback from stakeholders to improve engagement continually. To ensure transparency and accountability, the project management team regularly updates and reports to the stakeholders and the tribal communities. Participants are encouraged to provide feedback after each training session, which will improve the program continuously. Additionally, surveys and interviews with participants and tribal community members are conducted regularly to gauge the program's impact on the ground. These reports detail the program's progress, the use of resources, and the outcomes achieved. Our management plan for the TEA Capacity Building Program ensures a well-coordinated, effective, and dynamic approach to improving the capacity of TEAs.

Applied Workforce Logistics with Houchin Consulting will provide a Performance Management System for data collection and reporting under the leadership of Kevin E. Houchin, Esq., who possesses the qualifications and expertise to support data collection and management for the OK STEP Project. Kevin's entrepreneurial executive leadership, interdisciplinary skills,

and extensive experience in business consulting and workforce development make him a valuable asset in ensuring the success of data-related endeavors. Kevin's educational background, including a Juris Doctorate from The University of Iowa College of Law and a Bachelor of Fine Art in Graphic Design from Iowa State University, provides a strong foundation for understanding data collection and management's legal and creative aspects.

### **Quality of Project Personnel**

#### *(1) Recruiting and encouraging applications for all.*

The TEA Capacity Building Program, managed by the Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma in partnership with the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), embodies a deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The program strongly advocates for employment applications from those representing traditionally underrepresented groups and empowerment for historically marginalized communities, the underrepresented groups based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. Through targeted outreach efforts, job postings across multiple channels, including minority-focused job boards, diverse professional organizations, and community-based groups designed to reach diverse communities.

The hiring process of the program underlines the inclusive ethos, with job descriptions valuing experiences and skills gained from diverse life experiences. Accessibility and fairness are guaranteed throughout the application process, providing a platform for every aspirant, regardless of their background. Additionally, the selection committee, representative of diversity, is trained to recognize and counteract implicit biases, ensuring a fair assessment of all applicants. Selection criteria prioritize skills, experiences, and potential, transcending traditional indicators and fostering a truly inclusive recruitment process.

Beyond the recruitment phase, the program focuses on fostering an inclusive work environment and supporting the professional growth of its diverse team members. Regular diversity, equity, and inclusion training sessions help create a respectful workspace. Moreover, policies ensuring equal opportunities for career advancement, mentorship, and ongoing professional development are firmly in place. By doing so, the program contributes to societal equity. It enriches its work with a multitude of perspectives and experiences, making it more responsive to the needs of the diverse communities it serves.

*(2) The qualifications of the project director.*

Beverly Edwina Butler-Wolfe is a highly qualified candidate for the OK STEP Project Director/Coordinator role, bringing a wealth of experience and qualifications. With a proven track record of high performance in the federal government, Beverly is dedicated to achieving results and advancing organizational success. Her ability to operate at all levels of an organization, coupled with her expertise in confidential and technical environments, make her an ideal fit for this position. Beverly's extensive experience in implementing education programs locally and internationally equips her with a broad range of knowledge in leadership, policy management, federal codes and laws, budgeting, and collaboration. Her strong skills in community outreach, event planning, and communication further enhance her ability to coordinate and lead the OK STEP Project effectively. With her significant experience in program development, grant oversight, personnel management, and budget implementation, Beverly is well-prepared to successfully manage the various aspects of the project. Her qualifications make her a competent candidate for the OK STEP Project Director/Coordinator role.