Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant

Facilitation Guide

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Connecting Partners | Cultivating Resources

Circles of Reflection

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About This Guide

Circles of Reflection is a framework designed to engage state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and Tribes or Tribal education departments/agencies (TEDs/TEAs) in reflective discussions and strategic planning. The facilitator should serve as a guide throughout the process, someone who responds to the ideas and aspirations of the Tribe, helping to coordinate a safe and culturally responsive environment that helps to advance the education and well-being of Native students.

This guide provides the facilitator with recommended step-by-step instructions, templates, and tips for preparing the Circles and conducting each Circle. Note that this process should be reflective of the needs of the local context and those of participants. A review of the Circles process and example materials should take place in advance of any meetings to ensure adjustments or refinements are made that make the overall process as relevant as possible.

The Circles process is built around the topical question prompts, found in the *Reflection Questions Worksheet*, that are focused on the STEP grant priority areas and activities. In addition, the *Reflection Questions Worksheet* provides supplemental topics for discussion regarding a more comprehensive list of Native education topics. These items, or a selection of them, can also be explored during the Circles if the Tribe decides that would be useful.

Circle Participants' Roles and Responsibilities

- Tribal lead/facilitator – Usually, the Tribal Education Director, or the person with the greatest responsibility for Native education decides when meetings will occur, who to invite to each of the Circles and communicates with Circle participants. The Tribal lead helps the group maintain a balance of perspectives and navigate a reflective and productive process. After the Third Circle, they ensure the work continues by leading grant completion and submission activities and providing updates to all participants. In many cases the Tribal Lead may act as the facilitator although Tribes may want to consider bringing in an external facilitator or other Tribe member to work with and support the Tribal lead. Throughout this Facilitation Guide, we refer to both roles simultaneously. If using a facilitator, Tribes can divide up responsibilities as needed.

> If an external facilitator is brought in, this person should have an understanding of the Tribe(s) operations and programs or services, particularly those that are related to education; as well as an understanding of district and state education programs. They will need to work closely with the Tribal lead to schedule, plan, and conduct the Circles, including the selection of final materials to be used in the process.

- Additional TEA staff or other Tribal government officials or program staff.
- Notetaker – Responsible for capturing participants' comments throughout each Circle by using *Reflection Questions Worksheet* and *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet*.
- LEA or school staff members (1-2) – Administrator and/or selected staff members.

- SEA staff members (1-2) – Representative of the state education department, possibly an, and provide a tech overview at the beginnings. They also handle any technical problems participants may have with the online platform.

First Circle

Preparing for the First Circle

The Tribal lead/facilitator will need to complete the following tasks to prepare for the First Circle.

Timeframe	Task – First Circle
2–3 weeks to complete all tasks before First Circle	☐ Determine who will lead the STEP grant effort for the Tribe, most likely the Director of the TEA or another designee from the Tribe (referred to here as the Tribal lead). ☐ Decide whether or not to bring in an outside facilitator. Note: If there is an outside facilitator, that individual will support the Tribal lead in all activities. ☐ Tribal lead determines if any questions need to be modified or any questions should be added from the list of *Supplemental Reflection Questions* and makes those changes in the *Reflection Questions Worksheet*. ☐ Tribal lead selects and invites 3–4 participants to join the Circles team to help set the stage and provide input that may include: • Other TEA staff • An elected official of the Tribal government • Staff from language and culture programming • Tribal college faculty or staff (if the Tribe has a Tribal college) • Parent or caregiver • Other community organizations that support youth ☐ Tribal lead determines if the Circles will be virtual or in-person as well as the dates and times for the Circles and other logistics (e.g., online platform). ☐ Tribal lead identifies and invites SEA and LEA participants for the Second and Third Circles to provide input for the STEP grant. Include *Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* with invitations or inquiries. *Note, it is important for both LEA and SEA members to attend and commit to attending all subsequent meetings.* If possible, give 2-3 weeks notice in advance of meetings. ☐ Optional: request Native education data from state to provide context (see suggested template for making data request in Appendix).
1 week before First Circle	☐ Build the Participant Agenda (Table 1 below) and Facilitator Agenda (Table 2 below) for the First Circle. The Facilitator Agenda is the Tribal lead/facilitator's map to the Circle. It is a detailed item-by-item sequence of the activities, timing, and materials. ☐ Send the Participant Agenda and a reminder of the time and date of the First Circle to participants. If conducting in person: Ensure there is a space for the gathering and that technical equipment will be available and operable (e.g., computer, projector, projection screen).

Conducting the First Circle

These are the materials the Tribal lead/facilitator needs to prepare in advance as well as how they will be using the materials and when they will be using them during the First Circle.

Material	How and when you use it
Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant	A description of the *Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* process. The Tribal lead/facilitator will review this document with participants at the beginning of the meeting.
Reflection Questions Worksheet **(Word document)**	A Word document with the questions that the Tribal lead/facilitator will be posing to the participants. The document is projected on a screen for participants to view while the notetaker takes notes (potentially also on screen) to capture what the participants are describing.
Participant Agenda (Table 1 below)	A high-level agenda that may be shared with participants prior to the Circle.
Facilitator Agenda (Table 2 below)	A detailed step-by-step process agenda for the Tribal lead/facilitator to guide the Circle. The Tribal lead/facilitator uses this as the road map for the meeting.
Resource Bank	A collection of materials providing more information on topics covered in *Circles of Reflection* and relevant to the STEP grant application.

Table 1. Participant Agenda

The Tribal lead/facilitator should develop an overview or flow of the Circle with expected timeframes that the Tribal lead can share with participants. Here is an example:

Agenda Item
Welcome, agenda, and outcomes (10 minutes)
Review the purpose and structure in the *Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* (10 minutes)
Discuss *Reflection Questions Worksheet* (2 hours)
Conclusion and next meeting reminder (15 minutes)

Table 2. Facilitator Agenda

The Facilitator Agenda is the Tribal lead/facilitator's map to conducting the First Circle. It includes all the materials you will need and exactly how and when you need to use them. It also details the timing and who is responsible for leading each portion of the First Circle.

First Circle of Reflection
Facilitator Agenda

Time	Content
Planning team logs in about 30 minutes before official start time	**Meeting Set Up (if virtual)** Tribal lead/facilitator and any others on the planning team log in to set up: ☐ Waiting Room – For the participants until official start time ☐ Sound check for audio quality and background noise ☐ Turn on transcription and recording
Estimated Time: 5 minutes Who: Virtual host (or Tribal lead if there isn't a virtual host)	**Tech Check (if virtual)** • Provide standard online platform (e.g., Zoom) overview and ground rules for participants. • Transition to Tribal lead for introductions.
Estimated Time: 10 minutes Who: Tribal lead	**Welcome and Introductions** • Welcome everyone to the First Circle and review the agenda • Request brief introductions of participants (name and title) and establish meeting norms and/or follow any Tribal protocols for meetings or gatherings, as appropriate • Provide an overview of the STEP grant opportunity, its purpose, and what the Tribe hopes to accomplish with the grant • Transition to facilitator (if there is an external facilitator) for overview
Estimated Time: 10 minutes Who: Tribal lead/Facilitator	***Overview of Circles of Reflection*** • Provide copies (hard copies if in person or electronically if virtual) of the *Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* to all participants. • Review purpose and structure of *Circles of Reflection* and how and why the Tribe is using it for the STEP grant. • Briefly review the Title programs described in the Appendix of the *Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* and how they are related to the STEP grant and the *Circles of Reflection* process. Introduce National Comprehensive Center's Resource Bank Native Education Collaborative | Comprehensive Center Network (compcenternetwork.org) as a reference for additional information on the topics included in *Circles of Reflection*.

Time	Content
Estimated Time: 2 hours Who: Tribal lead/Facilitator and Notetaker	**Review and Discuss Reflection Questions Worksheet** • Notetaker shares the *Reflection Questions Worksheet* Word document on screen. • Tribal lead/facilitator poses each question to the participants, encouraging participants to describe any past or present activities related to the question, or future ideas that might be included in their STEP grant application. • After discussing all the questions, Tribal lead/facilitator summarizes the main points/topics for the group. • Transition to Tribal lead (if different than the facilitator) for concluding comments and farewell. **Facilitation Tips** • Clearly state the purpose, expectations, and anticipated outcomes at the beginning to introduce and orient participants • Make sure to explain to the participants why the Tribe is engaging in *Circles of Reflection* • Allow for ample wait time for participants to consider their responses. If the group is quiet, try to pose one or two considerations or thoughts to get conversation going • In some cases, there may be no responses to certain topics brought up through the questions as there may not be any efforts or work done by those in attendance • If virtual, remind participants to also utilize the chat box for comments and discussion

Estimated Time: 15 min
 	
Who: Tribal lead
	Concluding Comments
	• Allow 1 minute each for participants' closing thoughts.
	• Thank the participants and let them know about next steps:
	  ▪ Date for Second Circle
	  ▪ Tribal lead will be sending out the notes from the First Circle

Second Circle

The Tribal lead (and facilitator if applicable) will need to complete the following tasks to prepare for the Second Circle.

Preparing for the Second Circle

Timeframe	Task – Second Circle
1 to 2 weeks prior to the Second Circle	☐ Review the Second and Third Circle participant list and follow up with those who have not responded ☐ Review the notes from the First Circle and prepare a summary/highlights to share during the Second Circle ☐ If the SEA provided Native education data, share any handouts or slides for the group to discuss and review ☐ Build the Participant Agenda (Table 3 below) and Facilitator Agenda (Table 4 below) for the Second Circle ☐ Confirm the Second Circle date and time
1 week prior to the First Circle	☐ Conduct a practice run of the Second Circle. The Tribal lead/facilitator can practice going through all the elements of the Circle to make sure it will run smoothly during the meeting itself. Use the time during the practice run to make adjustments, if needed. ☐ Send the Participant Agenda and a reminder of the time and date of the Second Circle to participants.
If conducting the Circle in person:	☐ Ensure there is a space for the gathering and that technical equipment will be available and operable (e.g., computer, projector, projection screen).

Conducting the Second Circle

These are the materials the Tribal lead/facilitator needs to prepare in advance as well as how they will be using the materials and when they will be using them during the Second Circle.

Material	How and when you use it
Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant	A description of the *Circles of Reflection* for the STEP grant process. The Tribal lead/facilitator will review this document with participants at the beginning of the meeting.
Reflection Questions Worksheet **(Word document started in the First Circle)**	A Word document with the descriptions shared during the First Circle and questions that the Tribal lead/facilitator will be posing to the participants during the Second Circle. The document is shared on screen and the notetaker takes notes (potentially also on screen) to capture what the participants are describing.
Participant Agenda (Table 3 below)	A high-level agenda that may be shared with participants prior to the Circle.

Material	How and when you use it
Facilitator Agenda (Table 4 below)	A detailed step-by-step process agenda for the Tribal lead/facilitator to guide the Circle. The Tribal lead/facilitator uses this as the road map for the meeting.
Resource Bank	A collection of materials providing more information on topics covered in *Circles of Reflection* and relevant to the STEP grant application.

Table 3. Participant Agenda

The Tribal lead/facilitator should develop an overview or flow of the Circle with expected timeframes that the Tribal lead can share with participants. Here is an example:

Agenda Item
Welcome, agenda, and outcomes (10 minutes)
Review the purpose and structure in the *Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* and Native education data (if provided by the SEA) (15 minutes)
Discuss *Reflection Questions Worksheet* and then prioritize items for the group (2 hours)
Conclusion and next meeting reminder (15 minutes)

Table 4. Facilitator Agenda

The Facilitator Agenda is the Tribal Lead/facilitator's map to conducting the Second Circle. It includes all the materials you will need and exactly how and when you need to use them. It also details the timing and who is responsible for leading each portion of the Second Circle.

Second Circle of Reflection
Facilitator Agenda

Time	Content
Planning team logs in about 30 minutes before official start time	**Meeting Set Up (if virtual)** Tribal lead/facilitator and any others on the planning team log in to set up: • Waiting Room – For the participants until official start time • Sound check for audio quality and background noise • Turn on transcription and recording
Estimated Time: 5 minutes Who: Virtual host (or Tribal lead if there isn't a virtual host)	**Tech Check (if virtual)** • Provide standard online platform (e.g., Zoom) overview and ground rules for participants. • Transition to Tribal lead for introductions

Time	Content
Estimated Time: 10 minutes Who: Tribal lead	**Welcome and Introductions** • Welcome everyone to the Circle and review the agenda • Explain why the Tribe, SEA, and LEAs are engaging in *Circles of Reflection*. • Request brief introductions of participants (name, organization, and title) and establish meeting norms and/or follow any Tribal protocols for meetings or gatherings, as appropriate. • Transition to facilitator (if there is an external facilitator) for overview.
Estimated Time: 10 minutes Who: Tribal lead/ Facilitator	***Overview of Circles of Reflection*** • Provide copies (hard copies if in person or electronically if virtual) of the *Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* to all participants. • Review: ▪ The purpose and structure of *Circles of Reflection* and how the Tribe is using it for the STEP grant ▪ The First Circle work and output ▪ The Second Circle expectations, process, and tasks • Introduce National Comprehensive Center's *Resource Bank* Native Education Collaborative | Comprehensive Center Network (compcenternetwork.org) as a reference for additional information on the topics included in *Circles of Reflection.* • Briefly review the Title programs found in the Appendix of the *Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant* and how they are related to the STEP grant and the *Circles of Reflection* process. • Transition to SEA staff to present the SEA Native education data (if the SEA provided data).
Estimated Time: 5 minutes Who: SEA staff familiar with the data	• Native Education Data (optional, if SEA provided data) • Present data on Native students in the state using the presentation slides or handout provided by the SEA. • Transition to the Tribal lead/facilitator for structured discussion.

<table>
<tr><th>Time</th><th>Content</th></tr>
<tr><td>Estimated Time: 2 hours

Who: Tribal lead/ Facilitator</td><td>Review and Discuss Reflection Questions Worksheet

Notetaker shares the Reflection Questions Worksheet Word document started in the First Circle on screen.
Summarize for the SEA and LEA representatives the information generated by the Tribe in the First Circle for the first question.
Invite SEA and LEA representatives to add their perspectives by responding to each of the questions in order, allowing time for responses before moving on to the next:

“Please share your thoughts on the Tribe(s)’ response and provide any additional insights on other efforts or supports that your SEA or LEA provide.”
“Is there other relevant information to consider?”
“Are there further efforts or supports that could be implemented or collaborated on?”

Repeat the two bullets above for the rest of the questions.
After discussing all the questions, ask participants to rank the priority level for each question in the three categories—high, medium, or low—which will influence the most important areas/topics to focus on for the STEP grant.

Facilitation Tips

Allow for ample wait time for participants to consider their responses. If the group is quiet, try to pose one or two considerations or thoughts to get conversation going.
If in person, ask participants to raise their hand to indicate the level of priority they select for each of the categories.
If virtual, remind participants to use the chat box for comments, discussion, and to indicate the priority level selected in each category.
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Estimated Time: 15 min
Who: Tribal lead</td><td>Concluding Comments

Allow 1 minute each for participants’ closing thoughts.
Thank the participants and let them know about next steps:

Reminder of date for the Third Circle, which is a review of all the information gathered in the First and Second Circles and discussion to formalize the activities to include in the STEP grant application.
Tribal lead will send out the notes from the Second Circle and request that participants share the notes with others from their respective agencies or organizations to gather any additional input to bring to the Third Circle.

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</table>

Third Circle

The Tribal lead (and facilitator if applicable) will need to complete the following tasks to prepare for the Third Circle.

Preparing for the Third Circle

Timeframe	Task – Third Circle
1 to 2 weeks prior to the Third Circle	☐ Review the Third Circles participant list and follow up with those who have not responded. ☐ Send out the notes from the Second Circle to participants and request that they share the notes with others from their respective agencies or organizations to gather any additional input to bring to the Third Circle. ☐ Review the notes from the First and Second Circles and prepare a summary/highlights to share during the Third Circle, focusing on areas of importance based on the discussions and priority ratings. ☐ Build the Participant Agenda (Table 5 below) and Facilitator Agenda (Table 6 below) for the Third Circle. ☐ Confirm the Third Circle date and time.
1 week prior to the First Circle	☐ Conduct a practice run of the Third Circle. The Tribal lead/facilitator can practice going through all the elements of the Circle to make sure it will run smoothly during the meeting itself. Use the time during the practice run to make adjustments, if needed. ☐ Send the Participant Agenda and a reminder of the time and date of the Third Circle to participants.
If conducting the Circle in person:	☐ Ensure there is a space for the gathering and that technical equipment will be available and operable (e.g., computer, projector, projection screen).

Conducting the Third Circle

These are the materials the Tribal lead/facilitator needs to prepare in advance as well as how they will be using the materials and when they will be using them during the Third Circle.

Material	How and when you use it
Summary of highlights/priority areas from Second Circle	A handout or slides of highlights from the Second Circle to present on screen and review with participants. The group will use this information to complete the *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet*.
Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet	A Word document containing questions for the group to consider related to the STEP grant priorities and activities to include in the STEP grant application.
Participant Agenda (Table 5 below)	A high-level agenda that may be shared with participants prior to the Circle.
Facilitator Agenda (Table 6 below)	A detailed step-by-step process agenda for the Tribal lead/facilitator to guide the Circle. The Tribal lead/facilitator uses this as the road map for the meeting.

Table 5. Participant Agenda

The Tribal lead/facilitator should develop an overview or flow of the Circle with expected timeframes that the Tribal lead can share with participants. An example is provided below.

Agenda Item
Welcome, agenda, and outcomes (5 minutes)
Discuss summary of highlights from Second Circle (1 hour)
Complete *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet* (90 minutes)
Conclusion and next steps (15 minutes)

Table 6. Facilitator Agenda

The Facilitator Agenda is the Tribal Lead/facilitator's map to conducting the Third Circle. It includes all the materials you will need and exactly how and when you need to use them. It also details the timing and who is responsible for leading each portion of the Third Circle.

Third Circle of Reflection
Facilitator Agenda

Time	Content
Planning team logs in about 30 minutes before official start time	**Meeting Set Up (if virtual)** Tribal lead/facilitator and any others on the planning team log in to set up: • Waiting Room – For the participants until official start time • Sound check for audio quality and background noise • Turn on transcription and recording
Estimated Time: 5 minutes Who: Virtual host (or Tribal lead if there isn't a virtual host)	**Tech Check (if virtual)** • Provide standard online platform (e.g., Zoom) overview and ground rules for participants. • Transition to Tribal lead for introductions.
Estimated Time: 5 minutes Who: Tribal lead	**Welcome and Introductions** • Welcome everyone to the Circle and review the agenda. • Remind participants why the Tribe, SEA, and LEAs are engaging in *Circles of Reflection.* • Request brief introductions of participants (name, organization, and title) and establish meeting norms and/or follow any tribal protocols for meetings or gatherings, as appropriate. • Transition to facilitator (if there is an external facilitator) for overview.

Time	Content
Estimated Time: 1 hour Who: Tribal lead/ Facilitator	**Discuss summary of data and information from 2nd circle** • Notetaker shares the summary of highlights from the First and Second Circles handout or slides on screen. • Summarize the information generated by the participants during the First Circle and Second Circles, noting questions that emerged as higher priority areas. • Ask participants if they agree with the summary and higher priority areas and if they can contribute any additional input that they gathered from others with their organization/agency. • Considering all of the conversations and information, identity a few (3-4) questions (high-priority topics) to focus on for the STEP grant application. The group should make determinations on which ideas can be fully implemented under the grant requirements and limitations. Possibly consider staffing needs, activity timelines, buy in, and roles and responsibilities. **Facilitation Tips** • Allow for ample wait time for participants to consider their responses. If the group is quiet, try to pose one or two considerations or thoughts to get conversation going. • If virtual, remind participants to use the chat box for comments and discussion.
Estimated Time: 90 minutes Who: Tribal lead/ Facilitator	**Complete the *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet*** • Notetaker shares the *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet* Word document on screen. • Based on the previous determinations, use the Worksheet to align priority topics to the STEP grant program requirements.
Estimated Time: 15 minutes Who: Tribal lead	**Concluding Comments** • Based on time remaining, allow a few minutes for any participants to provide their comments or thoughts on the process. • Thank the participants and let them know that a final draft of the STEP grant application, based on the groups' work, will be shared for review. In addition, a final draft written agreement between the groups will be shared for signature.

Appendix: Native Education Data

The state education agency (SEA) may provide data on Native students in the state to provide context and a factual underpinning for the topics discussed in the three Circles. The SEA can draw from available sources of demographic, academic achievement, and well-being data related to Native students, teachers, communities, and schools to share at the beginning of the Second Circle. The SEA may include data that are readily available in user-friendly, public reports or on the state's website or have been shared with stakeholders. Below is a list of data elements to consider including:

- Enrollment
- Assessment results
- Graduation and dropout rates
- Absenteeism
- Special education enrollment
- Suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary actions
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey data
- Title VI districts
- Teacher and school data for local education agencies (LEAs), such as turnover rates, percentage beginning teachers, and percentage highly qualified/effective teachers

Considerations:

- Present the data in ways that are visually appealing and easy to understand—use maps, charts, and graphs
- Share SEA-level and/or LEA-level data (if sharing LEA-level data, keep in mind who is participating in *Circles of Reflection* and carefully consider whether or not to share data and what data to share for an LEA that is participating)[1]
- Present trends over time and/or data for Native students compared to the SEA/LEA overall
- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of students' data following state policies

Here are some example reports that SEAs have produced about the Native students in their states that may be useful for ideas:

- Montana American Indian Student Achievement Data Reports
- The State of Native Education in Washington
- The State of Education of American Indian Students in North Carolina Reports

[1] Ensure you are adhering to all of the SEA's data sharing and privacy requirements.