



Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant

Overview

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Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant

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Overview of Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant

As sovereign nations, Tribes have the potential to exercise great influence over the education of their citizens, including partnering with local schools through formal consultation and collaborating on opportunities—such as the Office of Indian Education (OIE) State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) grants. These grants seek to empower Tribes (TEAs or TEDs) to build greater influence and decisionmaking authority over services and programs for Native students.

STEP grants are designed to bring Tribal nations, SEAs, and LEAs together to maximize success by eliminating overlap; identifying new or untapped ways to share effort; and building a cohesive plan that aligns to other Tribal, district, and state-wide efforts. OIE has identified a tool that can be used to gather input and perspectives from all three groups when developing an application for a STEP grant, and that is Circles of Reflection for the STEP Grant.

There are two Absolute Priorities in the STEP grant application.

1. Absolute Priority 1 – To create a Tribal Education Agency
 - Requires partnership with a local education agency
2. Absolute Priority 2 – To expand the capacity of early Tribal Education Agencies
 - Requires partnership with a local education agency **and** the state education agency

Throughout this overview and accompanying materials, both state education agency and local education agencies are included as Tribal partners, but those applying under Absolute Priority 1 should keep in mind that the state education agency is not a required partner.

Circles of Reflection

The Native Education Collaborative, supported by National Comprehensive Center (NCC) and funded by the U.S. Department of Education, developed [Circles of Reflection](#) to engage participants in rich, reflective discussions and strategic planning. It is a culturally responsive, interactive, and easy-to-use process.

In this modified version of *Circles of Reflection*, participants will use the *Reflection Questions Worksheet* and the *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet* to gain authentic understanding of various perspectives prioritized in the STEP grant as well as a plan for completing the STEP grant application.

The Three Circles

- In the **First Circle**, Tribal participants review the *Reflection Questions Worksheet* and provide their perspectives on current efforts. Participants can also discuss past efforts and what they might hope or envision for future work and support (at least a 2-hour gathering).
- In the **Second Circle**, the First Circle participants reunite and invite SEA and LEA representatives that are partners with the Tribe on the STEP grant to discuss the Tribe's reflections from the First Circle. The group engages in conversation and provides additional insights and perspectives on the activities they may propose for the STEP grant using the *Reflection Questions Worksheet* (2–3 hour gathering). After the Second Circle, participants will take the priority topics back to their school, Tribe, or agency to discuss and gather input from additional key staff members and leaders.
- In the **Third Circle**, participants from the prior Circles review all the information gathered in the *Reflection Question Worksheet* and begin to formalize the activities to include in the STEP grant application, using the *STEP Grant Planning Worksheet* (at least a 2–3 hour gathering).

Toolkit Materials and Resources

Below are the resources for conducting *Circles of Reflection*:

- *Facilitation Guide* with detailed step-by-step instructions of how to implement each Circle and other customizable templates
- *Reflection Questions Worksheet*, a series of prompts for discussing past or present activities or future ideas that might be included in their STEP grant application
- *Resource Bank*, featuring research-based tools and materials
- *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet*, containing questions for the group to consider related to the STEP grant priorities and activities to include in your STEP grant application

What to Know to Get Started

This section provides what you need to know to get started, including roles, responsibilities, and a timeline.

Primary Roles and Responsibilities

Each Circle is coordinated by a designated TEA/TED director or other Tribal government designee with the option to include a facilitator to help guide participants through the process.

Below are the Tribal lead and facilitator responsibilities.

Tribal Lead

The Tribal lead (the TEA Director or another designee from the Tribe) serves as the primary contact from the Tribe for the *Circles of Reflection* process. The Tribal lead's responsibilities include:

- Scheduling the gatherings

- Inviting participants and securing their commitment to attend
- Distributing materials to the participants
- Providing a notetaker to record the work of each Circle in the templates provided

Facilitator

The three Circles should be guided by a skilled facilitator with knowledge about Tribes and the work of LEAs and SEAs. The facilitator role can be taken on by the Tribal lead or someone within the Tribe, including an individual who oversees education or language/culture efforts, or could be brought in from outside of the Tribe itself. The facilitator's responsibilities include:

- Orienting the Tribal lead and participants in each Circle to the self-reflection process
- Creating an open environment for effective discussions
- Guiding each Circle through its agenda and discussion
- Leading participants toward plans for the STEP grant application

Recommended Timeline

The facilitator and the Tribal lead should meet for preplanning work two to three weeks prior to the First Circle. In addition to personalizing the content for *Circles of Reflection*, the facilitator and the Tribal lead will need to set the meeting logistics, invite the participants, and assign a notetaker. For a full and detailed to-do list with the timeline, see the *Facilitation Guide*.

Timing for Each Circle

The *Circles of Reflection* gatherings require 6 to 8 hours total. This does not include the preparation, prework, and follow up performed by the Tribal lead and the facilitator.

- **First Circle** requires 2 hours
- **Second Circle** requires 2–3 hours
- **Third Circle** requires 2–3 hours

First Circle of Reflection: Seeing from the Inside Out

Who Should be Included?

A selection of about 3 to 4 participants, who may be part of the following groups:

- Director of the TEA/TED (or another designee from the Tribe to lead the effort)
- Other TEA/TED staff
- At least one elected official of the Tribal government
- Staff from language and culture programming
- Tribal college faculty members (if the Tribe has a Tribal college)
- Parent members

- Other community organizations that support youth

The purpose of the First Circle is for the participants to have an open conversation about Native education topics that are prioritized in the STEP grant. The facilitator guides the participants through the *Reflection Questions Worksheet* as they answer questions and describe any past or present activities or future ideas that might be included in their STEP grant application.

Note: See the appendix for a summary of certain sections from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that are most relevant to Tribal consultation. This summary may serve as a reference for participants who are not familiar with ESEA.

Second Circle of Reflection: Widening the Circle

Who Should be Included?

- 1–2 representatives from the SEA, designated by SEA officials (e.g., Native education staff, Title program staff)
- 1–2 representatives from LEAs with significant populations of Native students (school administrators)
- Participants from the First Circle

Numbers in this group may vary depending on the number of LEAs partnering with the Tribe on the grant.

In the Second Circle, the group will review the Tribe's responses in the *Reflection Questions Worksheet* from the First Circle. The LEA and SEA participants can discuss the programs, practices, and initiatives they're familiar with and potentially learn about other existing resources provided by the Tribe and each other that were less widely known. Participants can start discussing possibilities for improvement and prioritizing items to include in the STEP grant application.

After the Second Circle but before the Third Circle, the SEA, LEAs, and Tribe should take the completed *Reflection Questions Worksheet* to their respective groups/agencies for additional input and buy-in towards finalizing the goals and activities for the STEP grant.

Third Circle of Reflection: Mapping a Path Forward

Who Should be Included?

- Participants from the First Circle
- Select members of the Second Circle (LEAs and SEA) whose knowledge will be critical to the planning process

In the Third Circle, the Tribe and other critical SEA and LEA representatives from the Second Circle will review all the information, feedback, and data generated in the first two Circles and use those insights to create a plan for the STEP grant application, using the *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet*.

The facilitator will guide the group through a review and discussion of the data collected from the prior Circles to identify areas of priority for the STEP grant, including:

- A summary of themes from the First and Second Circles on past or present activities or future ideas for the STEP grant
- Additional input gathered after the Second Circle from stakeholders (others within the Tribe, LEAs, and SEA)

After discussing each question from the *Reflection Questions Worksheet*, the facilitator will lead the group through the *Third Circle STEP Grant Planning Worksheet*, which will set the foundation for completing the STEP grant application.

Appendix: Summary of Federal Legislation Relevant to Tribal Consultation with School Districts

Reproduced from Northwest Comprehensive Center at Education Northwest (n.d.). *Every Student Succeeds Act Tribal Consultation Pre-Planning Tool for Tribes*. Region 17 Comprehensive Center. <http://reg17cc.educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/essa-tribal-consultation-preplanning-toolkit.pdf>

This document provides a summary of certain sections of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). We have attempted to provide the parts of the legislation that are most relevant to tribal members who will be consulting with public school districts. In most cases, the following language is not the actual legislation but rather a description of what is found in it. A reference list with links to the actual legislation is provided at the end of this document.

TITLE I, PART A Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)

Purpose

Provide financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are currently allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on U.S. Census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state.

LEAs target the Title I funds they receive to public schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. Unless a participating school is operating a schoolwide program, the school must focus Title I services on children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet state academic standards. Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of children from low-income families are eligible to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs designed to upgrade their entire educational programs to improve achievement for all students, particularly the lowest achieving students.

Title I schools with less than the 40 percent schoolwide threshold—or that choose not to operate a schoolwide program—must offer a “targeted assistance program” in which the school identifies students who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the state’s challenging academic achievement standards. Targeted assistance schools design, in consultation with parents, school staff, and district staff, an instructional program to meet the needs of those students. Both schoolwide and targeted assistance programs must use instructional strategies based on scientifically based research and must implement parental involvement activities.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2015)

TITLE I, PART A Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)

Purpose

1. Support high-quality and comprehensive educational programs for migratory children to reduce the educational disruptions and other problems that result from repeated moves.
2. Ensure that migratory children who move among the states are not penalized in any manner by disparities among the states in curriculum, graduation requirements, and state academic content and student academic achievement standards.
3. Ensure that migratory children are provided with appropriate educational services (including supportive services) that address their special needs in a coordinated and efficient manner.
4. Ensure that migratory children receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to meet.
5. Design programs to help migratory children overcome educational disruption, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, various health-related problems, and other factors that inhibit the ability of such children to do well in school, and to prepare such children to make a successful transition to postsecondary education or employment.
6. Ensure that migratory children benefit from state and local systemic reforms.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004a)

TITLE I, PART D Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk

Purpose

1. Improve educational services for children and youth in local and state institutions for neglected or delinquent children and youth so that such children and youth have the opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic content standards and challenging state student academic achievement standards that all children in the state are expected to meet.
2. Provide such children and youth with the services needed to make a successful transition from institutionalization to further schooling or employment.
3. Prevent at-risk youth from dropping out of school and provide dropouts and children and youth returning from correctional facilities or institutions for neglected or delinquent children and youth with a support system to ensure their continued education.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004b)

TITLE II, PART A Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers and Principals

Purpose

Title II, Part A aims to ensure that English learners (ELs) and immigrant students attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English, by:

1. Increasing student academic achievement through strategies such as improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools.
2. Holding local educational agencies and schools accountable for improvements in student academic achievement.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004c)

TITLE III Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students

Purpose

1. Ensure that children who are English learners, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet.
2. Assist all English learner children, including immigrant children and youth, to achieve at high levels in the core academic subjects so that those children can meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet.
3. Develop high-quality language instruction educational programs designed to assist state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in teaching English learner children and serving immigrant children and youth.
4. Assist state educational agencies and local educational agencies to develop and enhance their capacity to provide high-quality instructional programs designed to prepare English learner children, including immigrant children and youth, to enter all-English instructional settings
5. Assist state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools to build their capacity to establish, implement, and sustain language instruction educational programs and programs of English language development for English learner children.
6. Promote parental and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents and communities of English learner children.

7. Streamline language instruction educational programs into a program carried out through formula grants to state educational agencies and local educational agencies to help English learner children, including immigrant children and youth, develop proficiency in English, while meeting challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.
8. Hold state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools accountable for increases in English proficiency and core academic content knowledge of English learner children by requiring demonstrated improvements in the English proficiency of English learner children each fiscal year and adequate yearly progress for English learner children, including immigrant children and youth.
9. Provide state educational agencies and local educational agencies with the flexibility to implement language instruction educational programs, based on scientifically based research on teaching English learner children, that the agencies believe to be the most effective for teaching English.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004d)

TITLE IV, PART A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants

Purpose

This legislation supports programs that prevent violence in and around schools; prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; involve parents and communities; and are coordinated with related federal, state, school, and community efforts and resources to foster a safe and drug-free learning environment that supports student academic achievement. This is carried out through the provision of federal assistance to:

1. States for grants to local educational agencies and consortia of such agencies to establish, operate, and improve local programs of school drug and violence prevention and early intervention.
2. States for grants to, and contracts with, community-based organizations and public and private entities for programs of drug and violence prevention and early intervention, including communitywide drug and violence prevention planning and organizing activities.
3. States for development, training, technical assistance, and coordination activities.
4. Public and private entities to provide technical assistance; conduct training, demonstrations, and evaluation; and to provide supplementary services and communitywide drug and violence prevention planning and organizing activities for the prevention of drug use and violence among students and youth.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004e)

TITLE IV, PART B 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Purpose

The purpose of this legislation is to provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that:

1. Provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet state and local student academic achievement standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and mathematics.
2. Offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities—such as youth development activities; drug and violence prevention programs; counseling programs; art, music, and recreation programs; technology education programs; and character education programs—that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.
3. Offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004f)

TITLE IV, PART C Expanding Opportunities Through Quality Charter Schools

Purpose

1. Improve the United States education system and education opportunities for all by supporting innovation in public school settings that prepare students to compete in the global economy and contribute to a stronger nation.
2. Provide financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools.
3. Increase the number of high-quality charter schools available to students across the United States.
4. Evaluate the impact of charter schools on student achievement, families, and communities, and share best practices between charter schools and other public schools.
5. Encourage states to provide support to charter schools for facilities financing in an amount commensurate to that which states typically provide for traditional public schools.
6. Expand opportunities for children with disabilities, English learners, and other traditionally under-served students to attend charter schools and meet the challenging state academic standards.

7. Support efforts to strengthen the charter school authorizing process to improve performance management, including transparency, oversight and monitoring (including financial audits), and evaluation of such schools.
8. Support quality, accountability, and transparency in the operational performance of all authorized public chartering agencies, including state educational agencies, local educational agencies, and other authorizing entities.

(U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2017)

TITLE IV, PART D Magnet School Assistance

TITLE IV, PART E Family Engagement in Education Programs

TITLE IV, PART F National Activities

TITLE V, PART B Subpart 2 – Rural and Low-Income School Program

Purpose

This legislation addresses the unique needs of rural school districts that frequently:

1. Lack the personnel and resources needed to compete effectively for Federal competitive grants.
2. Receive formula grant allocations in amounts too small to be effective in meeting their intended purposes.

(U.S. Dept of Education, 2004g)

In addition, the purpose of Title V is to allow states and districts the flexibility to target federal funds to the programs and activities that most effectively address the unique needs of states and localities. In particular, Title V, Part B—the Rural Education Initiative—is designed to help states and districts meet the unique needs of rural school districts that frequently lack the personnel and resources needed to compete effectively for federal competitive grants and receive formula funds in amounts too small to be effective in meeting their intended purposes. Title V matters because it can ensure that principals and school leaders working in states and districts with rural populations have funding flexibility so teachers, school personnel, and students get the extra support they need.

(NASSP, n.d.)

TITLE VI, PART A American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education Statement of Policy

It is the policy of the United States to fulfill the federal government's unique and continuing trust relationship with and responsibility to the Indian people for the education of Indian children. The federal government will continue to work with local educational agencies, Indian tribes and organizations, post-secondary institutions, and other entities toward the goal of ensuring that programs that serve Indian children are of the highest quality and provide for not only the basic elementary and secondary educational needs, but also the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of these children.

Purpose

The purpose of this legislation is to provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that:

- a.** Support the efforts of local educational agencies, Indian tribes and organizations, postsecondary institutions, and other entities to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students, so that such students can meet state student academic achievement standards.
- b.** Authorizing programs of direct assistance for:
 - Meeting the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students.
 - The education of Indian children and adults.
 - The training of Indian persons as educators and counselors and in other professions serving Indian people.
 - Research, evaluation, data collection, and technical assistance.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004h)

TITLE VII Impact Aid

Many local school districts across the United States include within their boundaries parcels of land that are owned by the federal government or that have been removed from the local tax rolls by the federal government, including Indian lands. These school districts face special challenges — they must provide a quality education to the children living on the Indian and other federal lands and meet the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act, while sometimes operating with less local revenue than is available to other school districts, because the federal property is exempt from local property taxes.

Impact Aid was designed to assist local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt federal property, or that have experienced increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children, including children living on Indian lands.

Purpose

Most Impact Aid funds, except for the additional payments for children with disabilities and construction payments, are considered general aid to the recipient school districts; these districts may use the funds in whatever manner they choose in accordance with their local and state requirements. Most recipients use these funds for current expenditures, but recipients may use the funds for other purposes such as capital expenditures. Some Impact Aid funds must be used for specific purposes.

School districts use Impact Aid for a wide variety of expenses, including the salaries of teachers and teacher aides; purchasing textbooks, computers, and other equipment; afterschool programs and remedial tutoring; advanced placement classes; and special enrichment programs. Payments for children with disabilities must be used for the extra costs of educating these children.

Impact Aid Program Components

Payments for Federal Property (Section 7002)

These payments assist local school districts that have lost a portion of their local tax base because of federal ownership of property.

Basic Support Payments (Section 7003(b))

These payments help local school districts that educate federally connected children. These may be the children of members of the uniformed services, children who reside on Indian lands, children who reside on federal property or in federally subsidized low-rent housing, and children whose parents work on federal property. In general, to be eligible for assistance a local school district must educate at least 400 such children in average daily attendance, or the federally connected children must make up at least 3 percent of the school district's total average daily attendance. Heavily impacted districts that enroll certain percentages of federally connected children and meet other specific statutory criteria, receive increased formula payments under Section 7003(b)(2).

Children With Disabilities Payments (Section 7003(d))

Payments for children with disabilities provide additional assistance to school districts that educate federally connected children who are eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). These payments are in addition to basic support payments and IDEA funds provided on behalf of these children. A school district that receives these funds must use them for the increased costs of educating federally connected children with disabilities.

Construction Grants (Section 7007)

These grants go to local school districts that educate high percentages of certain federally connected children—both children living on Indian lands and children of members of the uniformed services. These grants help pay for the construction and repair of school buildings.

(U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017)

TITLE VIII General provisions

Part A–Definitions

Part B–Flexibility in the Use of Administrative and Other Funds

Part C–Coordination of Programs; Consolidated State and Local Plans and Applications Part D–Waivers

Part E–Uniform Provisions Part F–Evaluations

(U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

TITLE IX Education for the Homeless and Other Laws

Purpose

1. Each state educational agency must ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each home- less youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.
2. In any state that has a compulsory residency requirement as a component of the state’s compulsory school attendance laws or other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youths, the state will review and undertake steps to revise such laws, regulations, practices, or policies to ensure that homeless children and youths are afforded the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths.
3. Homelessness alone is not a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.
4. Homeless children and youth should have access to education and other services that will give them the best opportunity to meet state student academic achievement standards.

(U.S. Dept of Education, 2004i)

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. (2017). Title IV, Part C—Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools.

<https://oese.ed.gov/files/2019/11/Statute-for-website.pdf>