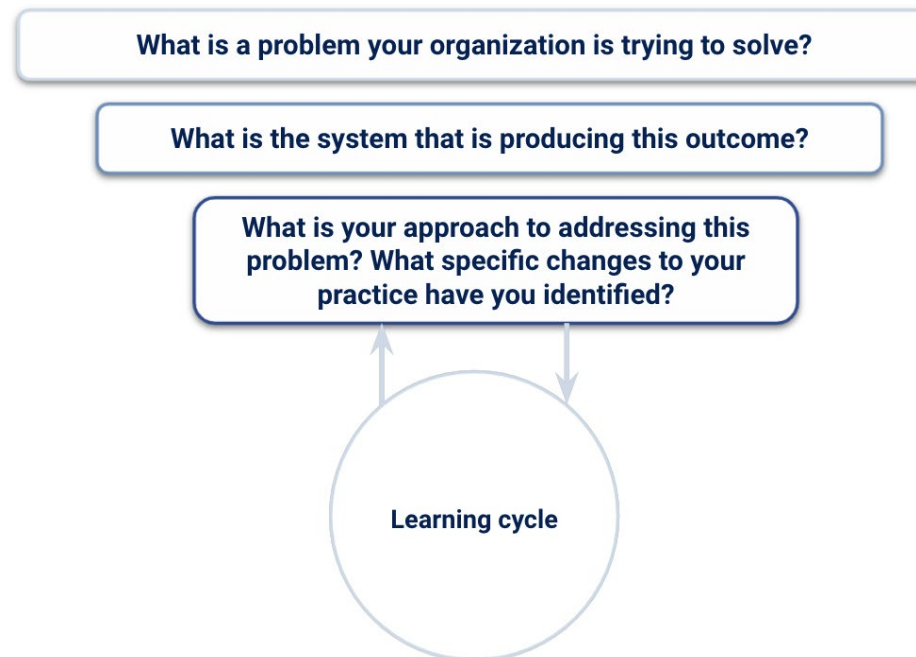# Your equity-focused continuous improvement journey

This document is meant to serve as a tool for crafting a narrative of your continuous improvement journey, which can be used to formulate your organization's continuous improvement approach. We have organized this document around key questions to help you articulate the throughline between a **specific problem** that your organization has identified as being necessary to address in order to effectively support student success, **your approach to investigating the system** that is producing the current outcome, **how you identify potential changes that address that problem,** and the **learning cycle** that your organization employs to confirm whether a change has led to measurable improvement. We have also linked tools and resources to support you in the process of reflecting upon and telling your improvement journey story.

What is a problem your organization is trying to solve?

What is the system that is producing this outcome?

What is your approach to addressing this problem? What specific changes to your practice have you identified?

Learning cycle

Our recommendation is to craft a single, coherent narrative that describes the ways in which your organization has learned (or will continue to learn) about a specific problem of practice and how you have or plan to apply your learning to improve your support in this area. Our hope is that crafting this narrative will help you to identify connections between the different levels of your work that have informed your understanding of the problem and the design of your support strategy.

What is a problem your organization is trying to solve?
A central tenet of improvement is that "all improvement starts with dissatisfaction with the status quo". Describe this "dissatisfaction of the status quo" in the context of your organization and/or of the institutions you support. How did this dissatisfaction lead to prioritizing this problem over others?
Relevant Tools & Resources

Strategy kernel: This tool helps to highlight the connection between problems of practice, your organization's guiding approach to addressing these problems, and the necessary internal capabilities needed to enact this approach.	**Equity Meets Design 7 Problems with Problems framework:** This framework helps to challenge and uncover the ways in which problems of practice are defined in ways that can perpetuate oppression, marginalization, and the misattribution of responsibility or cause.	**Frameworks' Power of How exercise:** This tool helps reframe the ways we talk about problems in ways that make explicit the root cause.

![TIDES - A Force for Social Good]

What is the system that is producing this outcome? In what ways is this system holding the problem in place?

Consider the idea that "every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets." Reflect on your approach to learning about your system and how it produces the problem you described above.

Relevant Tools & Resources		
Equity Meets Design White Paper, "*Racism and inequity are products of design; they can be redesigned*": This paper articulates a design framework that reframes how we think about problems and offers a reframing for understanding and recentering the root causes of many of the problems that education organizations face today.	**Process mapping exercise:** This tool is designed to make explicit the steps of a process and the intended outcomes. This tool also provides the basis for identification of improvements that can better lead to desired outcomes or minimize unintended outcomes.	**Fishbone diagram:** A fishbone diagram is a visual depiction of the potential causes of a problem. The head of the fish is the problem that you've identified, and the large bones of the fish represent the major categories of causes of the problem. Each smaller bone is a suspected cause of the problem that falls into that category. This Fishbone Diagram was created in the IFS Equity Working Group.

EQUITY MEETS DESIGN

FRAME WORKS

WestEd
WestEd.org

| **What was your approach to addressing this problem or what changes to your practice did you make? How do you know whether this approach or these changes have led to improved outcomes?**

 Consider the idea that "all improvement requires change, but not every change is an improvement." Reflect on your strategy for learning how to get better at getting better through disciplined inquiry. How has your strategy helped you address the problem? |
|---|
| Relevant Tools & Resources |

The Six Circles and Change (video): This video explores the importance of understanding the connections and relationships between the people in an organization as a way to identify solutions. In particular, this framework offers a way to consider how people form their identity within an organization and how information is shared and made accessible.	**Process Failure Analysis Template**: This template helps to narrow in on specific change ideas as they relate to process-level improvements.	**PDSA Template**: This template helps to prompt the articulation of the underlying hypothesis of a test of change and of the measures used to define the test as an improvement.
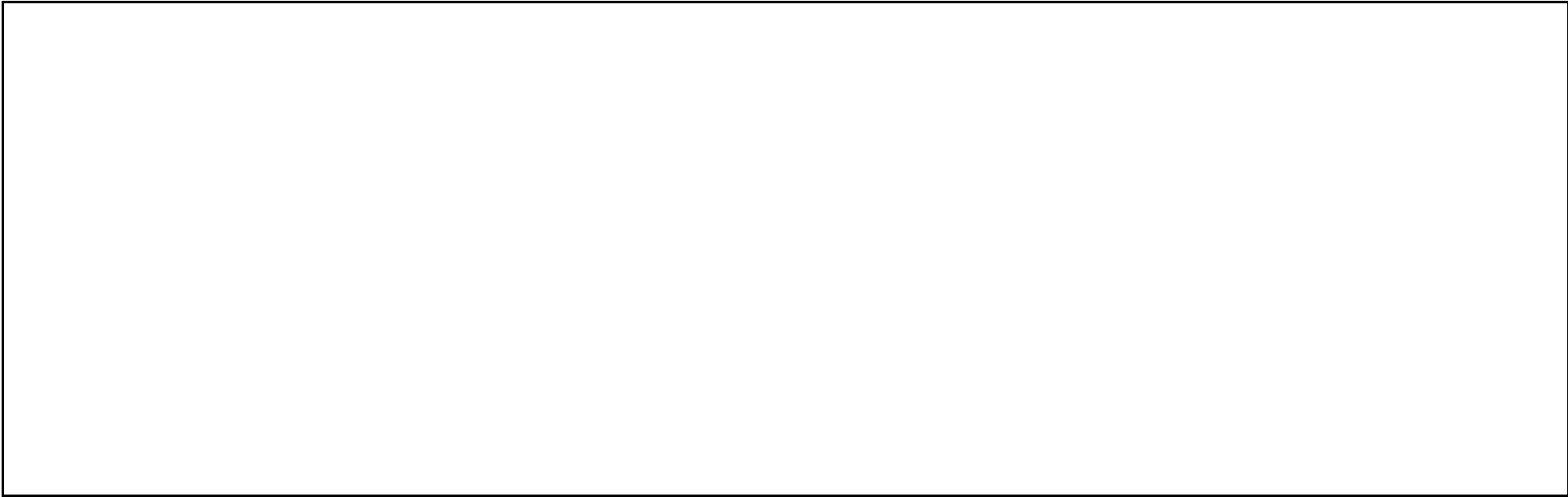
What are your learning priorities moving forward?

How will your organization use improvement principles to identify problems of practice, investigate your system, and improve? This section is an opportunity for you to think about how your organization can communicate your improvement strategy to various audiences.