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**Date:** September 16, 2024  
**To:** Redding Consortium for Educational Equity  
**From:** Trent Sharp, Ph.D.  
American Institutes for Research (AIR)  
**Re:** REVISED: Redding Consortium for Educational Equity Landscape Analysis

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The Redding Consortium for Educational Equity (“Consortium” hereafter) is working to create the conditions for educational equity and achievement for PreK to grade 12 students in the City of Wilmington and northern New Castle County. The Consortium’s recommendation to conduct a social drivers of health and education landscape analysis signals that they recognize that educational equity is not merely about improving access and opportunities within school buildings – we must also confront the systemic advantages and disadvantages students experience outside of school, in their neighborhoods, from birth through graduation.

The American Institutes for Research<sup>®</sup> (AIR<sup>®</sup>) shares the belief that our pursuit of a more just and equitable world requires a deeper understanding of how inequalities manifest for different populations at the intersection of multiple systems (e.g. education, economics, housing, health, environment). We also believe that a deeper understanding of how inequalities manifest can only be achieved if our work is customized for specific contexts, and those who are most acutely impacted by systemic inequalities (“individuals with lived experience” hereafter) have an active role in describing the current reality.

With these beliefs as our North Stars, AIR proposes to collaborate with the Consortium, its community partners, and individuals with lived experience to co-design and implement a social drivers of health and education landscape analysis that will allow the Consortium to make recommendations for redistricting that are grounded in the lived conditions of students and families.

Based on our cross-disciplinary research and technical assistance expertise (education, workforce, public health) and experience conducting similar education equity audits in school districts and landscape analyses in adjacent fields (e.g. adult education), we suggest an approach with the following phases, which are color coded to correspond to Exhibit 1 on the following page.

- **Phase One: Discovery and Customization** (November 2024 – February 2025)
  - **Phase Two: Data Collection and Analysis** (March 2025 – June 2025)
  - **Phase Three: Reporting and Co-Interpretation** (July 2025 – October 2025)
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**Exhibit 1.** Flow Chart of Key Activities in Three Phases of Landscape Analysis



The following sections describe each phase and concludes with a timeline for how we plan to sequence the activities. AIR will refine the approach and sequencing of activities in consultation with the Consortium and its partners during Phase One.

### Phase One: Discovery and Customization (Nov 2024 – Feb 2025)

Our proposed approach begins with a discovery and customization phase that is designed to: (1) begin developing trusting relationships with the Consortium, its community partners (e.g. CBOs) and AIR staff; (2) gather insights through interviews, focus groups, and extant data analysis that will help AIR revise the landscape analysis plan to be customized to the Wilmington and northern New Castle context; and (3) identify community partners who work with individuals with lived experience who will be willing and able to support data collection and interpretation. The following sections describe the proposed discovery and customization activities in more depth.

#### How will AIR assemble a team that reflects the community?

All of AIR’s research and technical assistance projects are governed by our [Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards for Projects, Research, and Operations \(CLAS-PRO\)](#). These standards provide specific guidelines and expectations for how our work is conceived, staffed, and executed. Our adherence to CLAS-PRO is one of the key measures of project success during our bi-monthly internal project reviews. Specific to staffing, all proposal and project directors at AIR must respond to, “*Does the staffing configuration represent an understanding of population and community served?*”

At AIR, convening a team with diverse lived experiences is an organizational expectation. Given the focus of this critical work with the coalition, our staffing configuration is especially important. Our proposed staff bring a combination of both lived and practitioner experience. However, we also recognize that contextual experience is critical and are eager to work with the Consortium to ensure that local individuals and organizations with an intimate understanding of the lived experiences of children and families in the region are robustly included and involved in the project.

### **Internal Project Kickoff Meeting**

Within 2 weeks of the award, AIR will coordinate with the Consortium to organize and hold an internal kickoff meeting. We will work with leads from the Consortium to develop the agenda for the kickoff meeting, address meeting logistics, and prepare meeting materials. We anticipate that the meeting will take place virtually, using the Consortia's preferred virtual platform.

During this meeting, AIR proposes to: (a) introduce its key project members; (b) discuss the project's proposed scope of work, goals, and priorities; (c) review the preliminary project work plan; and (d) initiate brainstorming about potential collaborations with individuals or organizations whose voices may not be represented on the Consortia.

### **Desk Research ON Relevant Consortia Materials**

AIR believes it is critical that we situate our work in the context of the Consortium's prior and current work as well as the work our AIR colleagues have conducted in Delaware and Wilmington and northern New Castle County (also referred to as "the region" hereafter). We will begin by reviewing all of the Consortium's publicly available resources ([www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com](http://www.solutionsfordelawareschools.com)) along with any other resources Consortia members feel provide an important glimpse into educational equity issues in the region. Additionally, we will confer with our AIR colleagues who have conducted recent research and projects in the region (e.g. the evaluation of the Delaware Public School Funding System, the Delaware Early Literacy Initiative and Delaware Multitiered Systems of Support) to gather additional insights. The knowledge gleaned from this process will inform our initial extant data scan and the protocols for our initial round of interviews and focus groups.

### **Initial Extant Data Review**

AIR will gather educational outcome data that are publicly available on the state or school district's website to get a clearer sense of educational outcomes and how they vary across the region. During the internal kick-off meeting we will also confer with Consortia members about whether there are reports they recommend from adjacent agencies (e.g. Health and Human Services; Wilmington Housing Authority) that may describe additional social factors impacting learning and educational outcomes.

Concurrently, we will utilize publicly available data from the American Communities Survey to develop preliminary spatial visualizations using geographic information systems (GIS) to get a sense of general demographic trends and the current landscape of key social determinants of health and wellbeing. These data and the information gathered from initial interviews and focus groups will inform revisions to our sampling and outreach strategies.

### **Initial Interviews and Focus Groups**

To dig deeper into trends emerging from the previous discovery activities, AIR proposes to conduct approximately 10 interviews with a mix of consortium members, school and district staff from the surrounding school districts, and key community partners. We will coordinate with our points of contact at the Consortium to identify their recommended participants for these initial

discovery conversations. In addition to providing important insights into the local context, these interviews will allow AIR’s qualitative team to refine the language in the protocols and gather initial themes to guide Phase Two research activities.

## **Refine Landscape Analysis Plan**

The culminating deliverables for Phase One are a revised landscape analysis plan and the first of the Phased Reports (described in Reporting and Interpretation section below). AIR assumes that a smaller subset of Consortium members will be available to review and provide feedback on both documents as they are being developed. We also recognize that Consortium members play other critical roles in the community and may have limited bandwidth, so we will take steps to ensure we are minimizing burden. These revised documents will serve as the centerpiece to the second kick-off meeting to be held with a broader spectrum of constituents.

## **Constituent Kick-Off Meeting**

To this point, AIR assumes that engagement will have been limited to Consortium members and select community and school leaders and staff. To conclude the discovery phase of the landscape analysis, AIR recommends that the Consortium host a second kick-off meeting with a broader range of constituents (individuals who are directly or adjacently connected to this work and the potential of this work, with a specific emphasis on potential beneficiaries) who need to be informed and involved in the process. This meeting will provide an overview of the landscape analysis plan and key findings, hypotheses, and questions from the discovery phase. Ideally, this meeting would be held in person, which would potentially allow for additional data collection and planning for logistics of Phase Two. AIR will work with the Consortium to determine if this approach is feasible.

## **Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis (March 2025 – June 2025)**

AIR proposes a mixed-methods, place-based research design to address the guiding questions identified in Phase 1. Key objectives for this research will be to (1) describe place-specific trends for children ages 0 to 18 in and out of school, (2) highlight neighborhood-specific assets and barriers, and (3) incorporate local knowledge and storytelling to provide a more intimate understanding of the journeys of youth and families. The following sections provide a high-level description of our proposed approach; however, we expect that we will need to adjust based on insights from Phase One.

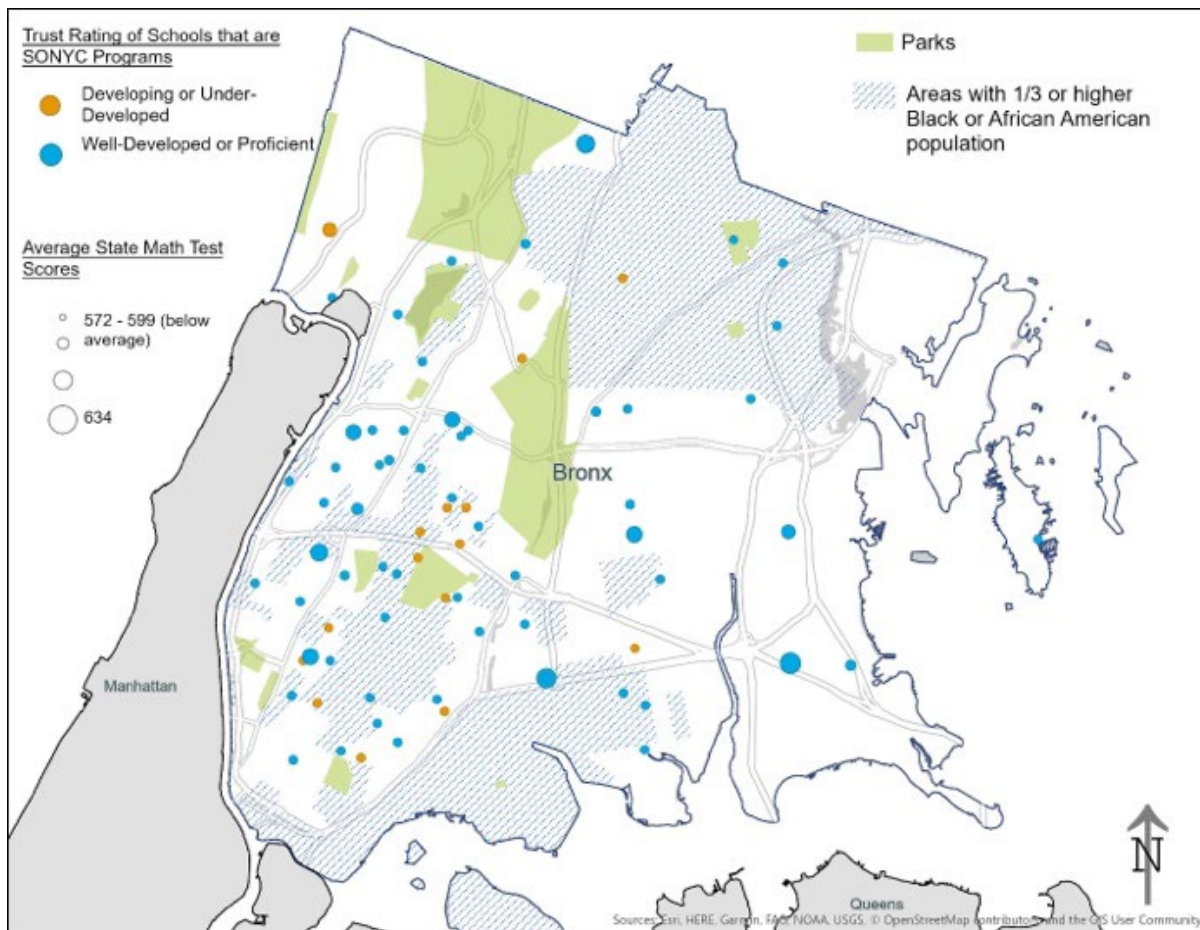
## **Quantitative Research: Neighborhood and School-Level Analysis**

Guided by the findings and feedback from Phase One, AIR will conduct a quantitative analysis designed to describe spatial trends both in and out of school, across the region, for children ages 0 to 18.

*Neighborhood-level analysis.* The neighborhood-level analysis will utilize publicly available data (e.g. U.S. Census, Opportunity Atlas, Social Determinants of Health Atlas) to understand varying social stressors and resources for community residents, such as broadband access,

housing insecurity and homelessness, social and economic mobility, job access and rates of unemployment, access to childcare and afterschool programming, and health outcomes/access to healthcare. These analyses will highlight community assets but will bias towards a focus on spatial inequality (the unfair distribution of resources in space), and spatial injustice (inequitable access to institutions, policies, and practices that shape physical space and human interaction). Exhibit 2 is a screenshot from a similar analysis conducted in New York City during the pandemic to examine middle school students’ access to high-quality after school programming.

**Exhibit 2.** Snapshot of map from School’s Out New York City (2020)



**School-level analysis.** To inform the Consortium’s future dialogues regarding redistricting, AIR proposes to blend the neighborhood-level analysis with a school-level analysis. The school-level analysis will utilize available programmatic (e.g., academic, extracurricular, and before/after school) data to understand the geographic distribution of opportunities for students and their families across the region. Additionally, school-level data about student experience (e.g., achievement, behavior, attendance, health/wellbeing) will be used to understand common trajectories for students in schools and school clusters across the surrounding school districts and charter organizations. These analyses will be situated within the neighborhood-level analysis to



inform an overall picture of the strengths and areas for growth across communities in Wilmington and northern New Castle County.

### **Qualitative Research: Constituent Focus Groups**

The quantitative research described above will provide a view of spatial patterns across the region. However, it lacks the detail of first-person experiences, and due to the nature of most publicly available data, tends to bias the challenges in the community. To center lived experiences and elevate community assets, AIR proposes to engage up to 150 individuals in constituent focus groups. We assume that the sample for these focus groups will include students, parents, teachers, school administrators, community members, and other individuals or organizations that surface as needed or missing voices during Phase One.

AIR will work with the Consortium in the discovery phase to determine the best approach to recruiting samples that align with the composition and key constituents of Wilmington and northern New Castle County. Focus groups will be conducted in a mix of virtual and in-person formats. AIR will conduct in-person focus groups during two, three-day site visits during Phase Two. AIR will work with the Consortium to ensure that focus groups are accessible and inclusive (e.g., provide language translation services, offer multiple times and modalities for participation). The focus groups will be led by experienced facilitators and designed to provide a neutral and supportive space for constituents to share their experiences. All adult participants will provide informed consent to participate in focus groups and interviews. With parental consent, student focus group participants will provide assent for participation in focus groups. All participants will be offered a \$50 gift card for their time.

We will support and expand quantitative analyses using key-theme and spatial analyses (e.g. coding transcripts with a zip code if specific assets or barriers are mentioned) of focus groups and interview data to gain a more nuanced understanding of diverse constituents' experiences within neighborhoods and across the region. Focus group participants will also be invited to attend the community co-interpretation event at the conclusion of the landscape analysis and will be cited (if they choose) as contributors in the final report.

#### **How might we integrate participatory research?**

The quantitative and qualitative methods above center equity and lived experience. However, they are each designed and enacted by AIR staff and Consortium members who all occupy privileged positions. AIR sees an exciting opportunity to integrate participatory research methods as an additional component of the landscape analysis. By doing so, we could potentially open our process to new lines of inquiry and insights we might not have gathered otherwise.

If the Consortium is interested in exploring this possibility, AIR would be eager to brainstorm ideas and provide an addendum to this scope of work.

### **Phase 3: Reporting and Interpretation (July 2025 – Oct 2025)**

The reporting and data interpretation activities described in this section occur across the entire timeline for the project (see timeline below). In addition to regular progress updates with Consortium leads, AIR will report progress in our data collection and analysis via (1) three phased, formative reports, (2) a simplified slide deck/report document to be used in the proposed community co-interpretation, and (3) the final report and recommendations.

#### **Phased Report One**

The initial phased report will include preliminary results from discovery activities described in Phase One. AIR will also provide the updated landscape analysis plan and a brief update on interview and focus group sampling and recruitment.

#### **Phased Report Two**

This second phased report will include preliminary results from the neighborhood- and school-level analyses as well as early themes from the focus groups. AIR would recommend using this report as a centerpiece for a Consortium meeting in April to discuss findings and plan for mid-course revisions.

#### **Phased Report Three and Community Co-Interpretation**

***Phased Report Three.*** The third phased report will contain the finalized analyses from the neighborhood- and school-level analyses along with the final themes from stakeholder interviews and focus groups. It will also include a preliminary progress update on any participatory data collection efforts.

***Community Co-Interpretation.*** AIR believes that the third phased report presents an opportunity to reengage constituents (especially those who have participated in the landscape analysis) in co-interpreting the findings and identifying shared priorities and opportunities for action. Community co-interpretations are typically four- to six-hour experiences that are ideally held in person at a location that is accessible for community members. During the event, mixed constituent table groups get to know one another, review summary findings from the landscape analysis, offer additional insights from their experience, and priorities opportunities for meaningful action.

AIR has found that these co-interpretation experiences are hands-on, inclusive ways of building awareness and buy-in and that the relationships and collaborations often continue after the event. The Consortium could consider repeating the community co-interpretation experience as it moves into the next phases of its redistricting recommendations.

#### **Final Report and Recommendations**

The final report will include final analyses of all the above data sources as well as community feedback and insights from the co-interpretation event. The final report will (1) situate the needs

of Wilmington students within the neighborhoods in which they live, (2) focus on key findings from the landscape analysis related to co-developed guiding questions, and (3) present a holistic view of Wilmington that dispels myths, identifies challenges, and highlights bright spots and opportunities to be addressed by governance and educational planning going forward. The final report will be shared in writing with a summary slide deck and final project meeting with the Consortium. While the final report will not include specific recommendations for redistricting, AIR staff and subject matter will attend the final meeting to discuss recommendations and options for a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape.

AIR applauds the coalition for taking on this ambitious and critical work. We are honored to have the opportunity to work alongside the Consortium and its partners and we wish you the very best in the next stage of your journey.

## Draft Timeline

Project Milestones	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	Aug 2025	Sept 2025	Oct 2025
<b>Phase One: Discovery and Customization</b>												
Internal kick-off meeting	█											
Desk Review		█	█									
Initial Extant Data review		█	█									
Initial interviews		█	█									
Revised analysis plan and stakeholder kick-off				█	█							
<b>Phase Two: Data Collection and Analysis</b>												
Neighborhood- and school-level analysis					█	█	█					
Stakeholder interviews and focus groups					█	█	█	█				
Participatory research					█	█	█	█	█			
<b>Phase Three: Reporting and Co-Interpretation</b>												
Formative Report 1				█								
Formative Report 2							█					
Formative Report 3										█		
Community Co-Interpretation										█		
Final Report and Recommendations											█	█



## Proposed Staff



**Orrin Murray, Ph.D.** will serve as senior advisor and overall quality assurance (QA) reviewer for the landscape analysis. Dr. Murray is a Principal Researcher and co-leads the Equity node and leads work to investigate and address issues of inequities in school systems across the country. He currently is leading work to evaluate a critical reasoning curriculum for middle school students and is also working with The New York Hall of Science as the co-principal investigator to study the co-development and implementation of a middle school science curriculum. He is also working with The Urban Assembly to develop a digital platform to support teacher improvement utilizing AI tools. Dr. Murray also leads work at AIR in the areas of equity and culturally responsive practices, data visualization, design thinking, learning technologies and the use of machine learning to support improvements in practice.



**Trent Sharp, Ph.D.** will serve as the project director for the landscape analysis. Dr. Sharp is a Principal Consultant at AIR, where he supports cross-disciplinary systems change efforts in the Education Systems and Workforce program areas and co-leads the Workforce Innovation and Learning Hub. Dr. Sharp founded AIR's geographic information systems (GIS) team and specializes in guiding cross-sectoral collective impact initiatives, leading mixed-methods action research studies, designing place-based interventions, facilitating behavioral insights and human-centered design sprints, and infusing participatory research methods into large-scale strategic planning efforts. Prior to joining AIR, Sharp served for 14 years as a teacher, founding turnaround principal, and district reform director.



**Visha Patel** will serve as quantitative lead and deputy project lead for the landscape analysis. Ms. Patel is a Researcher at AIR where primary responsibilities include developing analytical plans for quantitative analysis, conducting and analyzing interviews and focus groups, and developing reports for both qualitative and quantitative research. Patel recently served as quantitative lead for a landscape analysis of ESL program availability in Greater Houston and currently provides technical assistance to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) around data infrastructure and data quality and conducts social network analysis for network of colleges and networked improvement communities. She has extensive experience in postsecondary outcomes, career and technical education, and equity analysis in student success outcomes.



**Nastaran Pourebrahim, Ph.D.** will lead the spatial analytics portion of the landscape analysis. Dr. Pourebrahim is a Researcher in the Health division at AIR where she specializes in geospatial science and social determinants of health (SDoH) and uses a multidisciplinary research approach and collaborative research planning process to inform decision-making to advance health equity. Pourebrahim currently leads data analytics and visualization tasks and provides geospatial subject matter expertise for different state and federal contracts, including Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) and Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ) in the areas of health equity and healthcare access.



**Nora Gannon-Slater, Ph.D.** will serve as a senior advisor for the quantitative and data visualization portions of the landscape analysis and recently served Qualitative Lead for an evaluation of the Delaware Public School Funding System. Dr. Gannon Slater is a Senior Researcher at AIR where she develops and directs research studies and technical assistant projects on teacher development, district improvement and use of research evidence. She has extensive experience in the translation of research evidence for use by stakeholders and practitioners, program evaluation, data literacy in educators and non-profits, teacher preparation and development, and issues of equity in access to educational outcomes in K12 settings.



**Jasmine Davis-Randolph** will be co-leading the qualitative tasks in the landscape analysis and will co-facilitate the community co-interpretation. Davis is a Researcher in AIR's Workforce Innovation and Learning hub where she specializes in equity-centered research methodologies. Ms. Davis-Randolph brings a nuanced understanding of policymaking and its impact on marginalized communities. She has experience conducting document and literature reviews, quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis, and design research. Her expertise extends to applying behavioral insights principles to study the effects of policies and programs, particularly how they influence behaviors and decision-making processes.



**Lillianna Franco-Carrera, Ph.D.** will be co-leading the qualitative tasks in the landscape analysis and will co-facilitate the community co-interpretation. Dr. Franco-Carrera is a Technical Assistance Consultant at AIR where her primary responsibilities include consulting, facilitating, coaching and supporting the implementation of projects that focus on education in non-cognitive ways, such as equity and sense of belonging, and those that intend to support post-secondary pathways and college access. Carrera also contributes to evaluative projects via her extensive experience in qualitative research experience. Previously, Carrera was Post-doctoral Scholar at Texas State University, college advisor and a high school guidance counselor. Carrera holds a doctorate degree from Loyola University Chicago.

## Budget

The firm fixed price budget for the scope of work described in this memo with a period of performance from October 1, 2024, to October 31, 2025, is **\$334,936**. This memo is predicated upon current information about the project requirements and AIR's technical approach and assumptions to fulfill these requirements. The proposed price will remain valid for 30 days from the date of submittal of this memo, September 6, 2024. AIR reserves the right to negotiate the final scope of work, period of performance, and price, and to review its pricing to determine additional period(s) necessary for extension of the offered pricing or to revise its price quote after expiration of 30 days or any subsequent offered validity period(s). Any resulting contract award is subject to negotiations of the final price and will be based upon mutually agreed-to terms and conditions between the parties, including a payment schedule.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a thought partner as the Consortium pursues the next chapter of its critical work. For any questions about any of the content described above, or to schedule a meeting to discuss potential next steps, please don't hesitate to contact Trent Sharp via email at [tsharp@air.org](mailto:tsharp@air.org).