C4 Innovations Proposal
Presented to Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC
for Equity Training and Consultation
Introduction and Background

Building on more than a decade of experience leading research, training, and consultation efforts to advance best practices and social change in homeless services and behavioral health settings, C4 supports agencies, systems, and communities across the U.S. to understand and document disparities and identify and implement equitable strategies. In 2016, C4 launched the SPARC Initiative (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities), an effort in eight jurisdictions to conduct research and build community capacity specific to race and homelessness. In early 2018, SPARC released its Phase One Findings,¹ which documented the overrepresentation of Black and Native Americans among people experiencing homelessness and offered a set of recommendations to address racial inequity through research, policy, and practice. Like many other communities across the U.S., Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Continuum of Care (CoC) reflects the inequity in housing stability for people of color.

A focus on equity is critical to serving communities of color and the broader community most effectively. C4 is a leader in identifying and transforming the practices, programs, and policies that systematically discriminate against people with diverse racial, ethnic, and gender identities. When people experience homelessness, trauma, substance use, and health challenges, their stability is further undermined by racism, discrimination, and stigma. At C4, we lead with racial equity because racism permeates every institution and system, denying millions the right to a fair and just society where they can thrive and prosper.

This multi-phase scope of work offers strategic options for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC to consider as you aim to increase knowledge and capacity around racial equity and homelessness and transform systems to promote equitable outcomes. We welcome discussion about the proposed scope to ensure that we are able to meet the needs of Mecklenburg CoC, its staff and stakeholders, and ultimately, the people and communities served.

The Racial Equity Design and Implementation (REDI) Initiative represents the third phase of C4 Innovations’ work in addressing racial inequities and promoting equitable practices and outcomes in the housing and homelessness systems in communities and CoCs across the country. The REDI Initiative’s goal is to support communities in moving from awareness of racial inequities in their Homeless Crisis Response Systems to designing and implementing more equitable systems.

Our Team

C4 Innovations promotes recovery, wellness, and housing stability for people who are marginalized. We are committed to reducing inequities and achieving equitable outcomes by promoting best practices for individuals, communities, and systems affected by substance use, mental health challenges, trauma, and housing instability. Using state-of-the-art research, training, and implementation strategies, C4 strengthens health and human service organizations at multiple levels. C4 is known by our partners as a trusted teacher and as an organization that is mission-focused and grounded in both research and real-world experience.

Central to C4’s core values is incorporating people with lived experience in all of our work. Over one-third of C4 staff identify as having lived experience related to mental health challenges, substance use, trauma, and/or homelessness. A mix of professional expertise and personal lived experience is essential for creating solutions that acknowledge and incorporate the varied contexts and challenges of working in community-based settings.
Our team is located across the country and our organization has developed strong remote collaboration and learning capabilities including online interactive meeting platforms, video-conferencing, and self-paced learning tools – all of which allow seamless communication with our partners and clients. In addition, as a small business our clients enjoy being able to easily reach and communicate with our team, including senior team members, on every project.

C4’s Equity Initiatives team is led by Regina Cannon, C4’s Chief Equity and Impact Officer. On the following pages are a brief bio for key team members available to support the Partnership.

**Regina Cannon, M.S.** Chief Equity and Impact Officer at C4 Innovations, has dedicated her career to being a vocal, active leader fighting for equitable policies, systems, and institutions and addressing marginalization of people of color. She has more than 18 years of experience leading anti-poverty initiatives addressing homelessness, supportive housing, criminal justice reform, community capacity building, and youth leadership development. Previously, Regina was Southeast Director for Corporation for Supportive Housing where she worked with communities to transform systems of care into data and performance driven systems that provide sustainable, permanent housing to those experiencing homelessness. She managed a large portfolio of initiatives across multiple sectors addressing Frequent User Service Enhancement (FUSE) with health care and criminal justice partners, Moving On with public housing authorities, and Supportive Housing Development with non-profit organizations and local developers. Regina has managed mental health and drug court programs as well as restorative board programs for young adults engaged with the criminal justice system. She was also an Assistant Professor at Bennett College.

**Caty Wilkey, MSW, MPH,** conducts research for C4 Innovations’ Racial Equity Initiative. As part of this effort she partners with communities and CoCs across the country to explore racial inequities in homeless and housing systems and to leverage findings for strategic and sustainable change. She recently published a study examining the role of Coordinated Entry System assessment processes in perpetuating racial inequities in the homeless system. Ms. Wilkey brings nine years of experience in research and evaluation in the public sectors on the topics of child welfare, health equity, substance use prevention and treatment, and public health. She employs principles of equitable evaluation, community based participatory research, and youth-led research in her work and is passionate about empowering communities to use data for positive social change. She is currently co-Principal Investigator on a Conrad N. Hilton Foundation establishing effectiveness of an innovative, peer-based substance use prevention model for adolescents and is Principal Investigator of C4’s racial equity research initiatives.

**Nastacia’ Moore** is a Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator supporting eight Continuums of Care and other communities across the country in developing systems-level responses to historical racial inequity. Prior to joining C4, Nastacia’ was the lead HMIS trainer for the Indiana Balance of State where she trained providers on HUD’s new data standards, policies and procedures, lead the Point in Time (PIT) count, and monitored system performance measures across 92 counties. She also monitored federal awards for HOPWA grantees and HOME TBRA re-entry grantees and acted as Indiana’s SOAR state lead for SAMHSA. Nastacia’ was also the former Program Manager of a Permanent Supportive Housing program site based and scattered site for families in Dayton, OH.
where she oversaw five case managers, facilitated leases and landlord contracts, and conducted HQS inspections.

**Genesis Garcia** is a Project Coordinator supporting communities and projects working on racial inequity. Ms. Garcia provides administrative and logistical assistance including event planning (virtual and on-site), technical assistance, and technology support at C4 Innovations. Additionally, she assists with the collection and analysis of data for projects that focus on alleviating the effects of homelessness, behavioral health, and social determinants of health on members of underrepresented demographic groups. Ms. Garcia is also a native bilingual Spanish speaker who has assisted in the development and facilitation of products and points of contacts internationally at C4 Innovations.

**Approach**

C4’s REDI approach is anchored by two key frameworks. The first is the Annie E. Casey **Equitable Results Framework**, which grounds systems change in targeted equity outcomes. The Equitable Results Framework promotes accountability and aims to achieve better outcomes for all while addressing factors that contribute to racial inequities and block access to opportunity. The framework intentionally:

- Examines and attends to systemic factors that perpetuate uneven results, factoring in historic and structural inequity and bias that situate populations differently;
- Uses targeted universalism (i.e., being inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginal groups, but paying particular attention to the situation of the marginal group) to develop strategies designed to achieve equitable results; and
- Distinguishes between equality (treating everyone the same) and equity (giving everyone what they need to be successful).

The second framework is the **Adaptive Leadership Framework** and tends to the cultural and change management challenges inherent in systems change work. Adaptive leadership is defined as “the activity of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.” The concept of adaptive leadership is distinct from the skills required to diagnose and implement solutions to technical challenges. In the context of adaptive leadership, even the initial task of defining a problem in order to move towards solutions is often unclear, requires learning, and relies heavily on input and cooperation from diverse stakeholders. Adaptive leadership recognizes that before the real work of implementing and sustaining technical change can begin, that we must first prepare hearts and minds, and allow space for exploration and processing in order to move past various potential forms of resistance. Adaptive leaders value the time that it takes to assess resistance and other problems, and the time needed to create a pathway for sustainable change. This framework also demands that leadership is not a job reserved for those in leadership roles, but an ethic that can be cultivated among many individuals who are involved in driving and sustaining change. Adaptive leadership is relational and relevant when working with staff within a specific organization, as well as when working with stakeholders within and across systems and communities to pursue shared commitments.

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Both the *Equitable Results Framework* and the *Adaptive Leadership Framework* are crucial to effectively manage a systems change initiative, and the concepts and practices from both will be infused throughout the engagement period. The C4 REDI team are skilled in principles and practices of both frameworks and will embed and model knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools throughout each step of engagement.

**Proposed Scope of Work**

In partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC, C4 proposes to conduct an in-depth equity assessment of the CoC, to support the CoC to identify and deepen its understanding of barriers to equity, and to design and implement strategies that will drive sustained, upstream, and cross-system changes to ensure racial equity in housing stability. The proposed phases and activities described below will build on the CoC’s work to date, leveraging current existing momentum to address racial inequities and engage in systems transformation.

**Phase 1: Assessment and Planning**

**REDIness Assessment:** C4 will assess both progress to-date toward building an equity infrastructure and implementing change objectives as well as the current needs of the CoC to build sustainable equity strategies going forward. The assessment will determine the extent to which the CoC and its membership understands, prioritizes, and centers racial equity in its provision of services. Questions to guide this brief assessment will include:

- How has racial equity been incorporated and prioritized throughout the CoC?
- What is the level of racial equity knowledge and buy-in among leadership? Among staff and other stakeholders?
- What adaptive leadership challenges are present/known?
- What types of introductory and/or follow-on training and/or facilitation might be needed?
- What do staff and leadership identify as critical next steps to further the equity work?

The REDIness Assessment will rely on data sources such as a CoC Collaborative Applicant staff survey, a CoC provider network survey, review of recent HMIS data, a policy and procedure review, on-site interviews and/or focus groups with selected stakeholders, and current tools, criteria, and processes being used for assessment and prioritization.

**Planning Engagement Strategy:** Using data and findings from the REDIness Assessment, C4 will outline a comprehensive Engagement Strategy for the engagement period, including key activities, inputs, deliverables, and results to be completed. C4 will summarize the results from the REDIness Assessment and Engagement Strategy details in a *Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going?* brief report, to be shared with Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC.

**Phase 2: Stakeholder Engagement and Systems Mapping**

**Establish and Support a REDI Steering Committee.** The REDI Steering Committee will be comprised of 8-10 housing stability stakeholders representing housing, homeless services, and adjacent systems (e.g., criminal justice, health care, foster care, labor and employment, behavioral health/health care centers, schools), as well as individuals with lived expertise. C4 will work with Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC to advise on and identify Committee members as well as other key stakeholders that will inform and/or implement the REDI efforts, including those who are in decision-making positions. This committee may...
share members with the CoC Governance Equity Committee to ensure alignment of all racial equity efforts. C4 will share results of the equity assessment with the REDI Steering Committee.

**REDI Steering Committee Kick-Off:** In a 1½-day, in-person convening, C4 will provide training and facilitation support to the REDI team to strengthen foundational knowledge, address cultural and adaptive challenges within the group, and begin the technical work of identifying and addressing barriers to racial equity in housing stability among those experiencing homelessness. C4 is also capable of providing full virtual training if necessary. The convening agenda might include:

- Overview of racism and homelessness, historical and present-day drivers of bias and discrimination at individual and systemic levels
- Level-setting on key terms and concepts related to race equity
- Introduction to the Equitable Results Framework and key principles and concepts
- Building consensus on baseline data trends in racial and ethnic inequities, and shared commitments toward equitable results across members and systems
- Establishing group process and communications to guide continued work together

**Community Kickoff:** C4 will also conduct an additional ½-day REDI training for service providers and contributing systems representatives. This will allow C4 to provide the wider group with an overview of both racial equity 101 concepts and of the REDI model.

**Equity Systems Mapping:** Following the initial convening, C4 will facilitate up to four remote (videoconference) sessions with the REDI Steering Committee to guide and support team members to map four domains (Prevention & Diversion, Outreach & Inreach, Assessment & Response, and Sustaining Housing) through a racial equity lens. Information gathered through the equity systems mapping inquiry process will shed light on the opportunities for racial equity transformation that exist within the CoC CES as well as which strategies might have the deepest impact.

**Racial Equity Data Gap Analysis:** Part of the Equity Systems Mapping effort will be a rapid racial equity data gap analysis. This effort serves to identify and highlight strengths and weaknesses within the CoC’s data infrastructures that may or may not serve racially equitable processes and outcomes, and to make recommendations for continued and future data-related initiatives that can support the CoC’s equitable results planning and tracking and overall racial equity strategies. Findings from this analysis should be considered in the Equitable Results Strategic Planning process as a way to better understand which strategies may be better suited to short- or long-term evaluation.

**REDI Equitable Results Strategic Planning:** With data from the Equity Systems Mapping inquiry, C4 will bring the REDI Steering Committee together to identify the priority areas and develop strategies to further racial equity across the CoC. This process will be heavily guided by the Equitable Results Framework and will focus on:

- **A factor analysis** of structures, behaviors, and mental models that shape the underlying reasons behind inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes for people of color.

### Results Count Framework: Guiding Questions

- Are all racial and ethnic groups who are affected by the policy, practice, strategy or decision at the table, and what are their roles?
- How will the proposed strategy affect each group positively and negatively? What are potential unintended consequences for each group?
- How will the proposed strategy be perceived by each group?
- Does the strategy worsen or ignore existing disparities, and how do you know?
- Based on the above responses, what revisions are needed to the strategy?
- If the strategy is wildly successful, what access and opportunity gaps will it address?
• Identification and prioritization of the contributing factors that, if shifted, would **constructively disrupt** the current system and contribute to a more equitable system.

• Development of both **universal and targeted (specifically designed to address inequities) strategies**. Strategy development will be guided by questions drawn from the Results Count framework (see box).

• Identification of **performance measures** that will be used to monitor progress during implementation activities. In the equitable results framework, a performance system answers four questions: *Who is better off? What difference did we make? How much did we do? How well did we do it?*

• Defining the CoC’s **equitable results target** and specific outcomes of interest.

As part of this process, C4 will provide consultative support on the development of evaluation and sustainability plans. Employing principles of equitable evaluation, we will support the development of objectives, inputs, and activities to short- and long-term outcomes that are SMARTIE – that is, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-oriented, Inclusive and Equitable. C4 will also provide consultation on identifying data sources and building tracking infrastructure within the organizations. At the end of this phase, C4 will collaborate with the REDI Steering Committee on the creation of a formal Design and Implementation Plan, to be presented at a committee meeting.

### Phase 3: Implementation Support and Coaching

As implementation begins, Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC will need support to maintain focus and accountability, and to overcome barriers at various points in the process. Through **monthly coaching calls, and two additional onsite visits (if possible)** C4 will deliver support related to these and other implementation challenges. Using the PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Adjust) cycle framework, C4 will support the REDI Team to move rapidly toward early implementation, and continuously apply learning and data to improve implementation strategies towards the desired results.

C4 will also provide **bi-monthly leadership coaching calls** to CoC leadership, to address barriers and resistance that are related to adaptive leadership challenges. Building leadership skills and awareness to overcome these cultural barriers is essential to achieving the technical change that is needed to integrate and move systems toward equity.

### Future Phases

As the Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC engages in this work, there will be a need for follow-up training, implementation, and evaluation support. C4 will work with the CoC to identify and clarify these needs, and if requested, develop additional proposals to carry out the future activities. Examples of follow-on activities might include:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC may identify the Coordinated Entry System as a priority area and may want to **improve assessment and prioritization tools to** ensure equity. In the absence of a single, comprehensive, racially equitable, validated tool, the CoC may require support to design, test, and implement questions that enhance current assessment procedures, and ensure racial equity. C4 can provide targeted research and implementation support as needed, as we also seek to engage the CoC and other communities in a related effort to begin developing and testing an inclusive, equitable housing stability screening and assessment tool.

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Together with Charlotte-Mecklenburg CoC, C4 is available to support the delivery of priority training for staff that are working within and across systems that contribute to driving race equity across the CoC. Training priorities will be those most critical to the successful implementation of the CoC equity strategies. Training might target outreach workers, assessors, housing providers, CoC decision makers/stakeholders, and others and could range from overview of the new model, structures, processes, eligibility criteria, tools, data targets and monitoring strategies, to skills-based training for individuals implementing different components, including adaptive leadership training and coaching to overcome obstacles.

**Timeline**

**Months 1-3**
- Conduct REDIness assessment activities
- Refine objectives and desired results for the engagement period
- Develop summary report

**Months 4-6**
- Establish REDI Steering Committee
- Conduct REDI one-day kick-off convening
- Support up to four sessions with REDI team to conduct Equity Systems Mapping
- Conduct racial equity data gap analysis

**Months 7-12**
- Conduct REDI Equitable Results Strategic Planning Session
- Provide monthly REDI team coaching calls to support implementation
- Provide additional onsite coaching
- Provide bi-monthly leadership coaching calls to address adaptive leadership challenges

**Cost Estimate**

**Optimal Budget Option**

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