



2025–2027

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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# ABOUT MSAN

## Our Network

MSAN is a national, multi-state coalition of school districts that learn, grow, and work together to realize the vision that all students experience an inclusive and excellent education.

## Our History

Since 1999, MSAN has worked to build the capacity of school leaders and students through its communities of practice, youth development and leadership focus, and research activities, all aimed at ensuring all students have what they need to thrive and succeed.

## Our Work

MSAN expands leadership capacity and is dedicated to elevating youth voices through partnership and research.

## Our Home

MSAN lives at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the School of Education and is a project of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

## Our Communities of Practice

MSAN's two Communities of Practice (CoPs) are the MSAN Governing Board of Superintendents and the MSAN Research-Practitioner Council (RPC) (composed of senior district leaders, directors, managers, and others). MSAN's CoP's provide virtual and in-person convenings for learning, discussion of emerging issues and solutions, job-specific groupings for tailored inquiry and dialogue, and dissemination of promising and research-based practices. Members also have opportunities for participation in site visits, asynchronous networking and communication, and can access supportive and knowledgeable colleagues, experts, and researchers to learn and grow in ways that develop both their leadership capacity and practice.

## Our Youth Leadership and Research Focus

MSAN's core values include beliefs that students' voices must be centered and research and collaboration drive innovation. MSAN member districts have access to a variety of opportunities to elevate student voices, build student leadership capacity, and partner with students for impactful change including a 3-day in-person high school student conference where students learn, network and develop an action plan for change; a web-series for middle-schoolers that



develops and strengthens their capacity for leadership; and participation in MSAN's new youth voice research practice partnership which has the goals of improving policy and practice in schools while also preparing youth leaders for education research and scholarship, transforming both the policy-making structure in school districts and challenging the traditional structures and processes of education research.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2024, four (4) members of MSAN's governing board (including the executive committee president and vice president) and three (3) members of MSAN's research practitioner council, along with MSAN's executive director and project manager, met on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus for a 2-day strategic planning retreat. The retreat and activities were designed and led by a professional facilitator experienced in leading and engaging in strategic planning processes.

Day One of the retreat involved community building; a detailed examination of MSAN's current status including trends, activities, evaluations, and other relevant data; a discussion of MSAN's future outlook; and identification and discussion of MSAN's strengths, challenges, threats, and opportunities.

Day Two of the strategic planning retreat involved reaffirming and updating MSAN's vision, mission, and core values to provide a more succinct and focused description of the priority work of MSAN. The core of the final day of planning was spent synthesizing and developing the priorities and strategies that frame this plan.

The first section of the plan briefly describes the history and purpose of this strategic work, including highlights from the environmental scan and an analysis of strengths, challenges, threats, and opportunities that was completed. This planning context is important for understanding MSAN's vision for the future and drivers of success. While MSAN has maintained steady membership over the past 15 years, membership trends do not reveal network growth or expected expansion, given the network's 25-year existence. Evaluations of MSAN activities and programs reveal members' general satisfaction with network activities but also reflect the need to explore new ideas and ways of engaging and learning that continue to strengthen the leadership and work of network members. A review of the network's current and past finances also crystallized the urgent need to prioritize financial sustainability through membership expansion and the

development of alternative and diverse streams of revenue for the network.

The planning context also highlights an important and critical component of this plan and the future of MSAN – the development of one or more research–practice partnerships, including why this model and its focus on collaboration, long-term partnership, and bridging the gap between research and schools aligns well with the mission and core values of MSAN.

The newly reaffirmed and modified mission, vision, and core values are included and represent intensive focused work to distill the varied and multi-faceted work of MSAN into statements and values that capture both the spirit and promise of MSAN's collective work.

The information collected through the various activities undertaken at the retreat was distilled and categorized. From this categorization, four drivers of success were identified. These drivers anchor the goals that frame this three-year plan. MSAN's four drivers of success are: (1) financial sustainability; (2) enhanced member engagement; (3) research–practice partnerships; and (4) leadership and operations. The goals identified in this three-year plan are aligned with these drivers and specific strategies and actions are identified to meet three overall goals in these areas:

- By 2027, double the number of school districts participating in MSAN and expand the network's geographic profile.
- By 2027, develop a compelling package of transformational experiences that deeply engages and meets network member needs.
- By 2027, develop and implement a sustainable research–practice partnership model.

The final section of the plan provides the three-year timeline for accomplishing the identified goals as well as metrics and processes for monitoring and assessing progress.

# PLANNING CONTEXT

In 2024, MSAN celebrated 25 years in existence as a network. In 2022 MSAN's long-time executive director transitioned to another role and MSAN embraced the opportunity to begin the process of reimagining and re-envisioning what the network can be and the role it can serve for member districts and the broader educational landscape. During the 2022–2023 school year, MSAN partnered with Revolutionary ED, LLC on several projects, including engaging members in focus groups, surveys, committee work, etc., that led to the network's renaming (from Minority Student Achievement Network to Multicultural Student Achievement Network) as well as decision making and recommendations for ongoing network activities and focus.

A full-time executive director was hired in Fall 2023. Since then, the executive director has worked with the MSAN project manager, executive committee, other network leaders, and external consultants and coaches to chart a course forward that refreshes network commitments; prioritizes network growth and expansion; embeds research as a foundational network component; and provides focus and alignment to the work and activities of MSAN. This three-year strategic plan is the culmination of this work, weaving together the mission and values of MSAN with the imperative to grow the network while improving leadership practice and the school experiences of students of color through inquiry, research, collaboration, and the elevation of student voice.







## Environmental Scan

To understand the current state of MSAN, retreat participants engaged in an environmental scan of the network, including an analysis and examination of network finances, membership trends, participation trends, program and activity evaluations, and other relevant information. The analysis and discussion revealed members' overall satisfaction with network activities to date. However, participation and engagement have been declining and are less than ideal across the network, signaling the need to reassess network programs and activities. Members enjoy the scholars and presenters that have partnered with MSAN; appreciate the new learning they can take back to their local school districts and schools; enjoy hearing from student participants through panels and action planning presentations; and find value in the resources made available through MSAN. Members, including students, enjoy connecting, collaborating, and learning from and with each other and appreciate opportunities to build relationships and advance the collective work of MSAN.

Research has been a core component and foundational to the work of MSAN since its inception. During its first decade of existence and early years, MSAN was fortunate to have an expert research advisory board comprised of leading educational scholars and researchers including Gloria Ladson-Billings, John Diamond, and others. One of the main tenets of MSAN has always been to elevate the use of research as a key strategy for improving schools and outcomes for students of color. MSAN was founded on the idea that inquiry and study are imperative for understanding the challenges we face in schools and developing sustainable and transformational solutions to meet the needs of all students.

Over time, MSAN has transitioned from a network that engages in research and evaluation across the network to one that only engages with scholars to learn about the research and work they are doing – and on an opt-in level, participate in research studies that are tangential to MSAN and not embedded within the network. Due to this shift in the focus of how MSAN engages in and with research, during the visioning work undertaken with Revolutionary ED, LLC in 2022–2023, members discussed the network's future, including whether desire remained across the network to continue as part of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER). Benefits and drawbacks were discussed, and it was decided that MSAN would remain at WCER with the caveat that the network must deliberately and intentionally reorganize its work and centralize again its direct engagement in research and/or evaluation.

To make this commitment actionable, MSAN chose to investigate the development of one or more research–practice partnerships (RPP) to prioritize collaboration and long-term partnership and bridge the gap between research and schools. During January–June 2024, MSAN staff participated in a six-month coaching pilot through the National Network of Education Research Practice Partnerships. The coaching pilot program matched MSAN staff with two veteran RPP participants who coached MSAN staff through intensive learning about RPPs. These coaches supported MSAN staff in the development of draft plans and ideas to be utilized and applied during RPP development and implementation – a goal identified in this three-year plan.

# Assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses/Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats

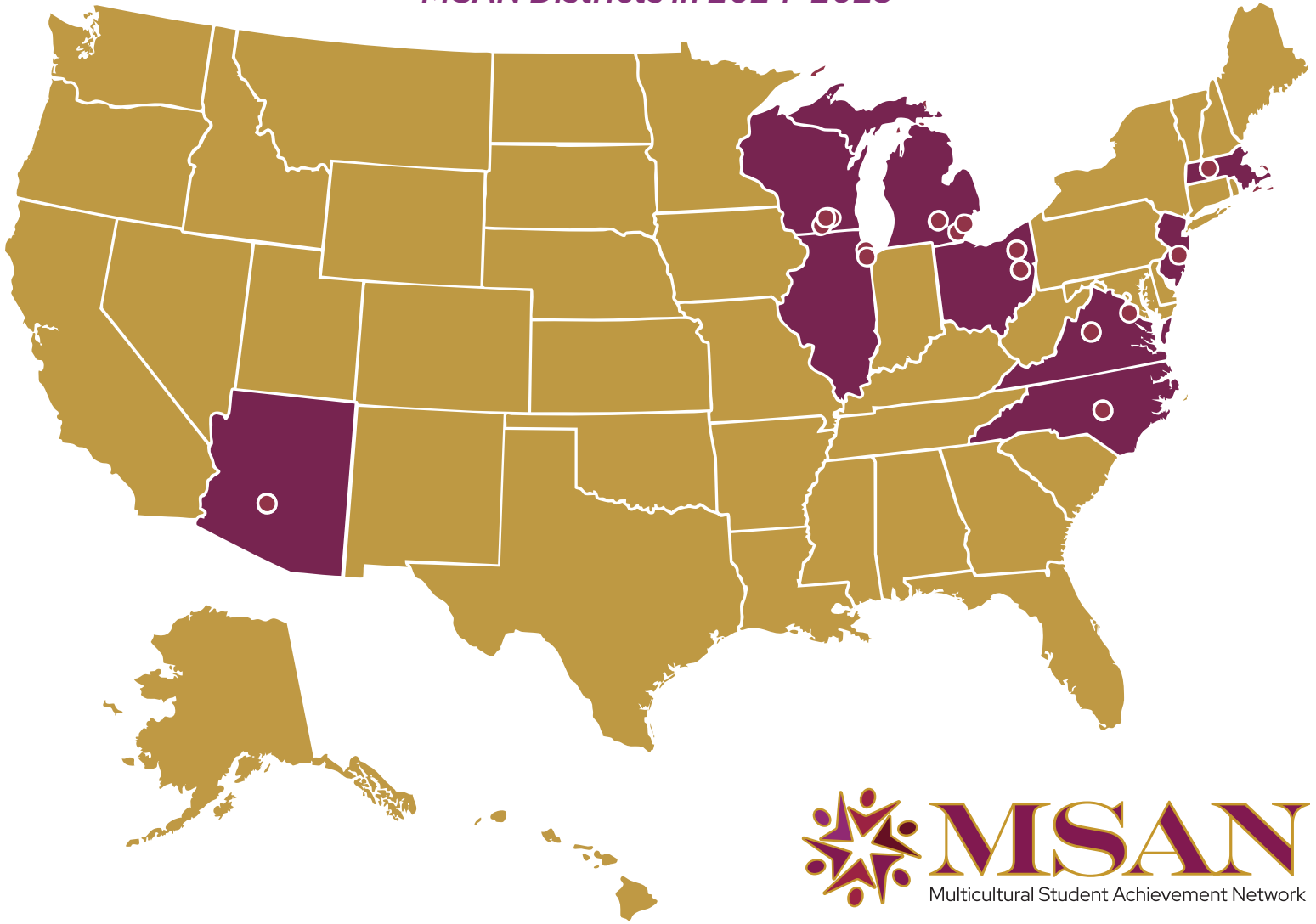
During the planning retreat, participants engaged in a focused exercise to identify key strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats to MSAN. Participants also reviewed data from a similar exercise conducted with a broader group of network members facilitated by Revolutionary ED, LLC in 2023. Data from both groups revealed that members view MSAN's main strengths as its focus on student voice and partnership; its facilitation of collaboration among a diverse network of professionals; its mission and focus on research, evidence, and sharing; and its longevity and connection to WCER. Network members felt MSAN's current opportunities are to further elevate student voice and leadership across the network; integrate school board members into the work of MSAN; recommit and clarify strategy; market, increase revenue, and engage non-member districts, especially those in new states; strengthen engagement with member districts; and diversify revenue streams including grants, sponsors, etc.

Several challenges, vulnerabilities, and threats were identified by both the broader network members in 2023 and by the strategic planning team. These challenges and threats included clarity of the MSAN identity and brand, including marketing what the organization is and what it does; lack of connectedness with school boards; follow through and consistent engagement with MSAN students; funding and member engagement.

The compilation and analysis of the environmental scan data along with the assessment of MSAN's strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats led to the identification of the drivers of success and goals outlined in this plan.



## MSAN Districts in 2024–2025



### **Alexandria City Public Schools**

*Alexandria, VA*

### **Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools**

*Amherst, MA*

### **Ann Arbor Public Schools**

*Ann Arbor, MI*

### **Arlington Public Schools**

*Arlington, VA*

### **Canton City School District**

*Canton, OH*

### **Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools**

*Chapel Hill, NC*

### **Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District**

*University Heights, OH*

### **East Lansing Public Schools**

*East Lansing, MI*

### **Evanston Township High School**

**District 202**

*Evanston, IL*

### **Farmington Public Schools**

*Farmington, MI*

### **Harrisonburg City Public Schools**

*Harrisonburg, VA*

### **Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School District 233**

*Flossmoor, IL*

### **Isaac Elementary School District #5**

*Phoenix, AZ*

### **Madison Metropolitan School District**

*Madison, WI*

### **Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District**

*Middleton, WI*

### **Niles Township High School District 219**

*Skokie, IL*

### **Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200**

*Oak Park, IL*

### **Oak Park Elementary School District 97**

*Oak Park, IL*

### **Princeton Public Schools**

*Princeton, NJ*

### **Shaker Heights City School District**

*Shaker Heights, OH*

### **Sun Prairie Area School District**

*Sun Prairie, WI*

### **Waunakee Community School District**

*Waunakee, WI*

\*These are a list of MSAN member districts for the 2024–2025. MSAN membership is annual; this list may change on an annual basis.



## VISION STATEMENT

MSAN's vision is that all students will experience an inclusive and excellent education.

## MISSION STATEMENT

MSAN's mission is to build the capacity of students and educators to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of students of color by learning and leading together.

## CORE VALUES

MSAN believes that:

- Students' voices must be centered.
- Together we have the power to change disparate outcomes.
- Research and collaboration drive innovation.
- Intersectionality has a powerful impact on students of color.
- We have a responsibility to dismantle oppressive systems to advance inclusion and excellence for all students.



# DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

To effectively deliver its mission, vision, and core values, MSAN identified the following four drivers of success:

## 1. Financial Sustainability

A key component of success will be ensuring MSAN's financial position is strong and the organization has the resources necessary to deliver its mission and achieve its vision. MSAN will strive to build a diverse portfolio of revenue streams while maintaining a moderate

level of spending to improve its current financial position. Membership fees are central to MSAN's financial success. It will also be important to build new revenue streams through research-practice partnerships and leveraging sponsorships and grants.



## 2. Enhanced Member Engagement

An engaged membership will enhance the experience for all members and contribute to both retaining current members and growing membership. It is critical to assess member needs and enhance and modify activities and

programming to suit those needs while being thoughtful about the optimal financial structures that will support enhanced programming and membership expansion.



## 3. Research-Practice Partnerships

The development of one or more research-practice partnerships (RPP) will cement research as a pivotal and core component of the network's activities. The foundational principles upon which RPPs are built and sustained align with the mission and core values of MSAN. Attributes of trust, equity, inclusion, collaboration, long-term partnership, and mutual learning (among others) all serve

as the key components of successful education RPPs that produce research and evidence that address critical challenges in education. For MSAN, RPPs will serve as anchors for the network's continued study and examination of current practices and the discovery of new ways to better serve students of color.



## 4. Strong Leadership and Operations

An effective operational structure, including strong leadership, support the mission, vision, and activities of MSAN. Sufficient resources, including staff

capacity, are available and dedicated to achieving the goals and priorities of the organization.







# GOALS

The following section details the goals, strategies, and action items identified for implementation during the timeframe for this strategic plan. The goals, strategies, and actions were developed following a review and analysis of environmental scan information, the results of the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) exercises and brainstorming sessions during the strategic planning retreat, and engagement with experts in the research-practice partnership field. The identified goals will help to guide and prioritize MSAN's work over the next three years.

# **GOAL 1: By 2027, double the number of school districts participating in MSAN and expand the network's geographic profile.**

***STRATEGY: Develop a membership growth action plan and resources.***

## **ACTIONS:**

- Analyze the current membership profile, identify and prioritize districts to target.
- Create a timeline and plan for outreach including specific recruitment strategies to address identified priorities and targets.
- Create resources, materials, and templates to be utilized during plan implementation.
- Implement recruitment strategies to meet annual targets for new membership.

***STRATEGY: Enhance membership outreach efforts.***

## **ACTIONS:**

- Create a team of membership ambassadors by identifying connections between current member district superintendents and the districts targeted for new membership.
- Utilize membership ambassadors to engage with district targets and communicate the value of membership.
- Identify and prioritize in-person opportunities to recruit new members.

***STRATEGY: Enhance membership revenue to ensure financial sustainability.***

## **ACTIONS:**

- Investigate several different fee structures for membership and determine if a new fee structure should be implemented.
- If necessary, implement a new fee structure.





## **GOAL 2: By 2027, develop a compelling package of transformational experiences that deeply engages and meets network member needs.**

**STRATEGY:** *Gain an understanding of the type of transformational experiences districts want, what they value, and identify gaps.*

### **ACTIONS:**

- Thoroughly review data from 2022–2024, including visioning focus groups, survey data, evaluations, meeting minutes, etc., to identify what network members value about MSAN and identify gaps in services or support. Determine whether additional interviews or focus groups are needed to capture more data and information.
- Conduct exit interviews.
- Summarize information collected through data review and exit interviews.
- Utilize information to gain an understanding of identified programming needs, develop new membership services/activities, enhance or modify current services and activities, and/or discontinue services/activities.
- Develop and implement pilot program offerings, test alternative timing of activities, and utilize a variety of delivery methods.
- Enhance and/or adjust programming based on the results of the pilots.

**STRATEGY:** *Develop a new programmatic fee structure that prioritizes financial sustainability through diverse revenue streams.*

### **ACTIONS:**

- Investigate potential pricing structures for new or enhanced programming.
- Implement any new pricing structures identified.
- Build the sponsor/partner portfolio to enhance revenue.



## GOAL 3: By 2027, develop and implement a sustainable research–practice partnership model.

**STRATEGY:** *Formalize research partnership(s) with one or more partners committed to long-term collaboration with MSAN.*

### ACTIONS:

- Identify and connect with potential partners to gauge fit and interest.
- Conduct introductory interviews and discussions with potential research partners and network representatives.
- Draft appropriate memorandums of understanding and other foundational documents to establish and organize RPP(s).
- Organize and engage MSAN’s research practitioner council in the development of the research agenda.
- Seek and secure planning funding for RPP development in collaboration with research partners.
- Establish goals and objectives for RPP(s) and research activities.

**STRATEGY:** *Secure multi-year funding for network RPP activities and research.*

### ACTIONS:

- Conduct grant searches and make external connections to identify potential grants to apply for that align with RPP focus and activities.
- Work with research partners, WCER staff, and/or others to draft and submit applications.
- Research and develop a plan for sustainable RPP funding.

**STRATEGY:** *Reorganize network activities and structures to facilitate the successful development and operation of RPP(s).*

### ACTIONS:

- Determine RPP needs and necessary network structures for planning year and Years 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan.
- Create a plan for RPP activities and regular network communications about RPP.
- Work collaboratively with network members and research partners to determine the best structures to accomplish ongoing RPP goals and objectives.





# IMPLEMENTATION

To deliver on the goals, strategies, and actions identified in this plan, the following section highlights how the plan will be implemented. Each year, MSAN will identify priority action items to complete and will assess progress on the plan through a set of performance measures. Annual priority actions are identified below but should be reviewed and adjusted annually based on progress and to account for any changes in the environment that would necessitate altering this plan. Performance measures are also presented below to help assess progress toward the goals identified in this plan. Performance measures should be reviewed annually and adjusted as necessary to ensure they remain helpful in evaluating plan progress.



# Timeline and Priority Actions

## Year 1 (2024–2025)

### GOAL 1: Increased Membership

- Analyze the current membership profile, identify and prioritize districts to target.
- Create a timeline and plan for outreach including specific recruitment strategies to address identified priorities and targets.
- Create resources, materials, and templates to be utilized during plan implementation.
- Begin implementing recruitment strategies to meet annual targets for new membership.

### GOAL 2: Transformational Experiences

- Thoroughly review data from 2022–2024, including visioning focus groups, survey data, evaluations, meeting minutes, etc., to identify what network members value about MSAN and where gaps in services or support exist. Determine whether additional interviews or focus groups are needed to capture more data and information.
- Conduct exit interviews.
- Summarize information collected through data review and exit interviews.
- Utilize the information to gain an understanding of identified programming needs, develop a plan for new membership services/activities, enhance or modify current services/activities, and/or discontinue services/activities.
- Begin building the sponsor/partner portfolio to enhance revenue.
- Investigate potential pricing structures for new or enhanced programming; consider services marketed to members and non-members.

### GOAL 3: Research–Practice Partnership

- Identify and connect with potential partners to gauge fit and interest.
- Hold discussions with potential research partners and network representatives to begin brainstorming ideas for RPP focus and structure.
- Seek and secure planning funding for RPP development in collaboration with research partners.
- Establish goals and objectives for RPP(s) and research activities.
- Determine RPP needs and necessary network structures for planning year and Years 1 and 2.





## GOAL 1: Increased Membership

- Create a team of membership ambassadors by identifying connections between current member district superintendents and the districts targeted for new membership.
- Utilize membership ambassadors to engage with district targets and communicate the value of membership.
- Identify and prioritize in-person opportunities to recruit new members.
- Refine resources, materials, and templates as needed.
- Implement a new fee structure, if applicable.
- Implement recruitment strategies to meet annual targets for new membership.

## GOAL 2: Transformational Experiences

- Implement pilot program offerings, test alternative timing of activities, and utilize a variety of delivery methods.
- Evaluate new/modified programming.
- Implement any new pricing structures identified.
- Continue building the sponsor/partner portfolio to enhance revenue.
- Conduct exit interviews, if applicable.

## GOAL 3: Research–Practice Partnership

- Draft appropriate memorandums of understanding and other foundational documents including data agreements, etc. to establish and organize RPP(s).
- Organize and engage network members in the development of the research agenda.
- Conduct grant searches and make external connections to identify potential grants to apply for that align with RPP focus and activities.
- Work with research partners, WCER staff, and/or others to draft and submit grant funding applications.
- Research and develop a plan for sustainable RPP funding.
- Create a plan for RPP activities and regular network communications about RPP.



### GOAL 1: Increased Membership

- Implement recruitment strategies to meet annual targets for new membership.
- Identify and prioritize in-person opportunities to recruit new members.

### GOAL 2: Transformational Experiences

- Enhance and/or adjust programming based on the results of the pilots.
- Continue building the sponsor/partner portfolio to enhance revenue.

### GOAL 3: Research–Practice Partnership

- Work collaboratively with network members and research partners to determine the best structures to accomplish ongoing RPP goals and objectives.





# Performance Measures

Progress on the strategic plan will be measured in two ways:

- An evaluation of whether the action items listed in the plan were completed and/or whether the actions were completed in the timeline presented in the section above. An annual review of progress will be completed and adjustments made to the timeline and priority actions based on the results.
- An annual review of performance metrics is identified in the table below.

## GOAL 1: By 2027, double the number of school districts participating in MSAN and expand the network's geographic profile.

Measure	Baseline	Target
Number of participating school districts	22	44
Number of states with participating school districts	9	12
Average number of districts represented in each state	3	5
Annual membership revenue	\$330,000	*\$660,000
Creation of a membership outreach plan		Met/Not Met
Identify and engage membership ambassadors and provide clear roles and expectations		Met/Not Met
Identify and attend in-person recruitment opportunities	0	2/year

## GOAL 2: By 2027, develop a compelling package of transformational experiences that deeply engages and meets network member needs.

Measure	Baseline	Target
Results of program/activity evaluations		positive feedback from majority of participants
Overall membership satisfaction		positive feedback and satisfaction reported for majority of members
Annual revenue from new sources and expanded/modified services	\$0	\$70,000
New sponsors/partners	10	12 (4/year)
Annual revenue from sponsors/partners	\$20,000	\$35,000

## GOAL 3: By 2027, develop and implement a sustainable research–practice partnership model.

Measure	Baseline	Target
Number of research partnerships	0	1+
Number of grant applications submitted	0	3+
Annual revenue received from grants	\$0	\$75,000
Plan for RPP activities (Years 1, 2, 3)		Plan developed, implemented, and revised as needed

\*based on \$15,000 annual dues; membership fee structure may be adjusted





# MISAN

Multicultural Student Achievement Network

