Report Prepared for Tides Advocacy (Sept. 30th, 2022)

The STEM en route to Change (SeRCH) Foundation, Inc. is a registered, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that exists to use science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as a tool for social justice. SeRCH's signature program, #VanguardSTEM, is a "born digital" community and platform that center Black, Indigenous, women of color and non-binary people of color in STEM fields. SeRCH creates and uses non-traditional knowledge creation pathways to provide opportunities for these communities to demonstrate their scientific expertise in ways that affirm their cultural identities. SeRCH cultivates and preserves these stories, providing pathways to amplify the voices of Black, Indigenous, women of color and non-binary people of color in STEM.

The funding from the Wikimedia Foundation Knowledge Equity Fund has enabled our organization over the past year to expand and improve our digital storytelling efforts and continue to develop and share our theory of change. We have laid the groundwork to further expand these projects in new and exciting ways over the coming year.

All activities conducted by The STEM en Route to Change Foundation Inc. were and are consistent with its status under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) which remains unchanged since the proposal and related materials were submitted to Tides Advocacy. The STEM en Route to Change Foundation Inc. warrants that it is in full compliance with its grant letter dated 08/25/2021 and that, if the grant was subject to any restrictions, all such restrictions were observed.

Part I. Impact and Assessment

One of the major areas of activity supported by the Wikimedia grant has been our digital storytelling initiatives. Led by our fantastic team at #VanguardSTEM, these efforts have focused on two key areas. First, the team has revamped and expanded our features programming that highlights established and emerging Black, Indigenous, women of color and non-binary people of color in STEM. These features are a part of our remarkable repository of changemakers across a variety of fields whose profiles help to normalize culturally relevant STEM stories. The team worked to develop all-new graphics and formatting for these features and collaborated with these individuals to facilitate sharing narratives about their professional trajectories, the challenges they encountered, and the work that they were most proud of. We also provided a forum for them to share and amplify their recent research and work to our large

audience of social media followers. This refreshed design will carry forward as part of our ongoing effort to tell stories that are impactful, affirming, and that help to create and claim new spaces in STEM.

A second area of growth supported by the grant is in our multimedia storytelling efforts. As part of making more visible and accessible our unique content and archive of materials, the #VS team has piloted a podcast program set for a Spring 2023 release. Drawing upon our extensive catalogue of interviews and conversations with women of color and non-binary people of color in STEM, the podcasts will provide us with a new format to share our stories. The team is particularly excited to have this opportunity to reach new, broader audiences and spark new engagement with our work.

Another key area of activity has been #VanguardSTEM's continued leadership in developing and sharing interventions and theories of change for STEM spaces. Growing from the vision of an Intersectional Scientific Method (ISM) laid out in our [2020 open-access article](), the #VS team has worked to articulate a reimagined theory of mentorship in STEM spaces that speaks to the deeper levels of systemic and ideological change that are needed in these fields. The resulting "Decolonized Mentorship" framework reflects a new set of practices and priorities for what the future of STEM mentorship can and should look like. This effort builds on our existing and ongoing "Guerilla Mentorship" platform that provides on-the-ground, community-based mentorship for emerging STEM practitioners. The team is poised to share and disseminate the Decolonized Mentorship framework at the upcoming Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) annual conference in 2022. This opportunity to reach the more than 8,000 members of that organization is an important step in spreading our broader theory of change. By sharing and facilitating the implementation of this mentorship framework, #VanguardSTEM is preparing to build a long-term cohort program and training modules that we anticipate will play a key role in shaping mentorship practices within STEM fields in the years to come.

One final area of activity in the past year has continued our collaborative storytelling work by hosting a virtual symposium in Summer 2022 for a diverse group of researchers. These individuals had previously received microgrants through #VanguardSTEM in Summer 2021 to support culturally relevant scientific experiments. The team re-engaged these individuals and collaborated with them and with the nonprofit organization The Story Collider to provide training, coaching, and a platform to tell their stories and amplify their scientific research.

Looking ahead to the coming year, we believe that we are well positioned to make an even bigger impact

through the strategic deployment of this funding. We are currently in negotiations with a web designer to facilitate the transfer, updating, and expansion of our archived web content. We are also prepared to launch our campaign to push across the 10,000 Twitter follower threshold and leverage that event as a unique opportunity to engage our broader community, center highlights from our past and current features, and build interest and momentum for our next wave of storytelling and interventions.

Part II. Challenges

Particularly amidst the headwinds of the pandemic, we've been proud of the incredible commitment and ingenuity of our team of volunteers who run the #VanguardSTEM initiative. We have been able to have an outsized impact over the years given our status as a small, volunteer-run organization with no permanent staff.

This has, however, been a challenge as we scale up our operations to maximize the resources and opportunities that this grant has provided for us. Part of the challenge over the past year has grown out of a happy occasion: every single member of the #VanguardSTEM team has successfully defended their dissertation during that time. While this further affirms for us the tremendous value that the SeRCH Foundation's community-building, storytelling, and support provides for women of color and non-binary people of color to succeed in their scientific endeavors, it has also meant that we have at times struggled to staff and move swiftly on our various overlapping initiatives. Some of this, particularly as we have moved forward with our grant-funded activities, has been a process of "learning-while-doing." The past year has helped us to identify some of the areas that we need to target to provide additional logistical support for our team.

Part III. Evaluation and Lessons Learned

The funding from the Knowledge Equity Fund has already had a powerful transformative impact for our organization and it is one that will continue to expand. These resources have helped us launch new storytelling initiatives, redesign our outreach efforts to help engage a larger audience, amplify the voices of women of color and non-binary people of color in our community, and reimagine the distribution of knowledge through STEM mentorship practices that can be responsive to many different cultural traditions.

We believe in addition to the progress that we have made over the past ten months, that we have also laid the groundwork for accelerated progress in the year ahead. There is more work to do and we are excited

to do it!

In terms of "lessons learned," we have seen clearly that we need to allocate resources in ways that can expand the capacities of our team and provide key support to facilitate our team's continued success. Some of these changes are already underway. We will be hiring a web designer to help us update and further expand our digital presence. Our team has identified the ongoing need to engage with a creative director/production manager to assist with the development and execution of our various simultaneous projects. We also believe that putting additional resources toward building a team of freelance feature editors can allow us to maintain a high quality of production while improving the frequency of our feature releases on our website and on social media.

Part IV. Finances and Funding

At present we have deployed just under 15 (fifteen) percent of the original wave of grant funding, reflecting some of the staffing shortage and resulting delays in our roll-out. We remain committed to our long-term financial sustainability by maintaining low overhead costs and relying upon volunteer support.

Below, we have included an overarching sense of how those expenditures have been allocated in the two main programmatic efforts. We are happy to provide additional detail or information upon request.

Our first category of grant-related expenditures has been directed toward our digital and multimedia storytelling initiatives through #VanguardSTEM. This includes our current web development and hosting costs, audience analysis, and our collaborative storytelling digital symposium. These expenditures have totaled $10,454.50 since the grant funds were received on 11/1/21.

Our second category of grant-related expenditures has been directed toward our theory-of-change work, including our Guerilla Mentoring and #DecolonizedMentoring programming. These expenditures have totaled $6,550.00 since the grant funds were received on 11/1/21.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Gonda, Ph.D.
Treasurer, STEM en Route to Change Foundation