U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202-5335

APPLICATION FOR GRANTS UNDER THE

84-283B-1 FY24 Comprehensive Centers Program

CFDA # 84.283B

PR/Award # S283B240083

Gramts.gov Tracking#: GRANT14194873

OMB No. , Expiration Date:

Closing Date: Jun 24, 2024

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This application was generated using the PDF functionality. The PDF functionality automatically numbers the pages in this application. Some pages/sections of this application may contain 2 sets of page numbers, one set created by the applicant and the other set created by e-Application's PDF functionality. Page numbers created by the e-Application PDF functionality will be preceded by the letter e (for example, e1, e2, e3, etc.).

OMB Number: 4040-0004
Expiration Date: 11/30/2025

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

* 1. Type of Submission:
- [ ] Preapplication
- [x] Application
- [ ] Changed/Corrected Application

* 2. Type of Application:
- [x] New
- [ ] Continuation
- [ ] Revision

* If Revision, select appropriate letter(s):

* Other (Specify):

* 3. Date Received: 06/24/2024

4. Applicant Identifier:

5a. Federal Entity Identifier:

5b. Federal Award Identifier:

State Use Only:

6. Date Received by State:

7. State Application Identifier:

8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

* a. Legal Name: AZ Board of Regents on behalf of Arizona State University

* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): 86-01-96696

* c. UEI: NTLHJXM55KZ6

d. Address:

* Street1: [redacted]

Street2:

* City: Tempe

County/Parish:

* State: AZ: Arizona

Province:

* Country: USA: UNITED STATES

* Zip / Postal Code: 852876011

e. Organizational Unit:

Department Name: ORSPA

Division Name: KE

f. Name and contact information of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:

Prefix: Ms.

* First Name: Heather

Middle Name: C.

* Last Name: Clark

Suffix:

Title: Assistant Vice President, Research Operations

Organizational Affiliation:

* Telephone Number: [redacted]

Fax Number:

* Email: [redacted]

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

*** 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type:**

H: Public/State Controlled Institution of Higher Education

Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:

Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:

* Other (specify):

*** 10. Name of Federal Agency:**

Department of Education

11. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:

84.283

CFDA Title:

Comprehensive Centers

*** 12. Funding Opportunity Number:**

ED-GRANTS-051324-001

* Title:

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE): Program and Grantee Support Services: Comprehensive Centers Program, Assistance Listing Number 84.283B

13. Competition Identification Number:

84-283B2024-1

Title:

Priority 3: Content Centers, Early School Success

14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):

Add Attachment | Delete Attachment | View Attachment

*** 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:**

Early School Success Content Center

Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions.

Add Attachments | Delete Attachments | View Attachments

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

16. Congressional Districts Of:

* a. Applicant: AZ-004 * b. Program/Project: AZ-004

Attach an additional list of Program/Project Congressional Districts if needed.

Add Attachment | Delete Attachment | View Attachment

17. Proposed Project:

* a. Start Date: 10/01/2024 * b. End Date: 09/30/2029

18. Estimated Funding ($):

* a. Federal	5,749,999.00
* b. Applicant	0.00
* c. State	0.00
* d. Local	0.00
* e. Other	0.00
* f. Program Income	0.00
* g. TOTAL	5,749,999.00

*** 19. Is Application Subject to Review By State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?**

☐ a. This application was made available to the State under the Executive Order 12372 Process for review on .

☒ b. Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review.

☐ c. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372.

*** 20. Is the Applicant Delinquent On Any Federal Debt? (If "Yes," provide explanation in attachment.)**

☐ Yes ☒ No

If "Yes", provide explanation and attach

Add Attachment | Delete Attachment | View Attachment

21. *By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances** and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)**

☒ ** I AGREE

** The list of certifications and assurances, or an internet site where you may obtain this list, is contained in the announcement or agency specific instructions.

Authorized Representative:

Prefix: * First Name: Jody

Middle Name:

* Last Name: Silentman

Suffix:

* Title: Grants & Contract Specialist

* Telephone Number: [redacted] Fax Number:

* Email: [redacted]

* Signature of Authorized Representative: [redacted] * Date Signed: 06/24/2024

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, ''Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,'' in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

* APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	AZ Board of Regents on behalf of Arizona State University
* PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	
Prefix:	
* First Name:	Jody
Middle Name:	
* Last Name:	Silentman
Suffix:	
* Title:	Grants & Contract Specialist
* SIGNATURE:	Jody.Silentman
* DATE:	06/24/2024

Abstract

An abstract is to be submitted in accordance with the following:

1. Abstract Requirements

- Abstracts must not exceed one page and should use language that will be understood by a range of audiences.
- Abstracts must include the project title, goals, and expected outcomes and contributions related to research, policy, and practice.
- Abstracts must include the population(s) to be served.
- Abstracts must include primary activities to be performed by the recipient.
- Abstracts must include subrecipient activities that are known or specified at the time of application submission.

For research applications, abstracts also include the following:

- Theoretical and conceptual background of the study (i.e., prior research that the investigation builds upon and that provides a compelling rationale for this study).
- Research issues, hypotheses and questions being addressed.
- Study design including a brief description of the sample including sample size, methods, principals, and dependent, independent, and control variables, as well as the approach to data analysis.

[Note: For a non-electronic submission, include the name and address of your organization and the name, phone number and e-mail address of the contact person for this project.]

You may now Close the Form

You have attached 1 file to this page, no more files may be added. To add a different file, you must first delete the existing file.

* Attachment: Abstract.pdf | Add Attachment | Delete Attachment | View Attachment

Tracking Number:GRANT14194873 Funding Opportunity Number:ED-GRANTS-051324-001 Received Date:Jun 24, 2024 05:23:55 PM EDT

Early School Success Content Center

Abstract

An interdisciplinary team of researchers, practitioners, and policy advisors from the Children's Equity Project (CEP) at Arizona State University (ASU), the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at University of Nebraska (NU), the Center X Mathematics Project at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the California Reading & Literature Project (CRLP), and the Department of Special Education at the University of Oregon (UO) propose to establish and operate the Early School Success Content Center (ESS Center). This collaboration leverages the strengths of these organizations, which operate at the intersections of research, policy, and practice to address inequities in early learning and K-12 education systems with the goal of ensuring equitable access, experiences and outcomes for children, families, and communities. Our collective work has impacted education policy and practice for early learning and K-12 students, leaders, practitioners and families, and policy at the local, state, and federal levels, improving the quality of early learning and K-12 service delivery.

Project Narrative File(s)

*** Mandatory Project Narrative File Filename:** Narrative__Final.pdf

Add Mandatory Project Narrative File | Delete Mandatory Project Narrative File | View Mandatory Project Narrative File

To add more Project Narrative File attachments, please use the attachment buttons below.

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CHILDREN'S EQUITY PROJECT
Buffett Early Childhood Institute
at the University of Nebraska
UCLA
MATHEMATICS
PROJECT
CRLP
CALIFORNIA
reading & literature
PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON
Early School
Success Content
Center Application

Introduction

Research confirms that the first eight years of a child's life are critical to healthy development, and quality early learning experiences across the preschool to third-grade (PK–3) continuum help children build a strong foundation for success in school and beyond. Data also indicate that children from historically and contemporarily marginalized communities have less access to high quality early learning opportunities (NASEM, 2023; Education Trust, 2019) and have poorer experiences within early learning settings (NASEM, 2023; Meek et al., 2020; Meek et al., 2024), resulting in disproportionate outcomes. To reduce such opportunity gaps and increase the number of children who experience success in early learning and achievement, an interdisciplinary team of researchers, practitioners, and policy advisors from the Children's Equity Project (CEP) at Arizona State University (ASU); the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at University of Nebraska (NU); the Center X Mathematics Project at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); the California Reading & Literature Project (CRLP); and the Department of Special Education at the University of Oregon (UO) propose to establish and operate the Early School Success Content Center (ESS Center). The proposed ESS Center is conceptually grounded in the Children's Equity Project's Access, Experiences, and Outcomes (AEO) Framework (Meek et al., 2020), reflecting our team's collective commitment to advance equity by providing capacity-building resources and services that improve the quality of PK–3 service delivery for all students, including those furthest from opportunity.

Experienced team. Our team's collective training and technical assistance (T/TA) efforts have impacted education policy and practice for early learning and K–12 students, leaders, practitioners and families at the local, state, and federal levels, improving the quality of early-learning service delivery and making our team well positioned to build a comprehensive

ESS Center. Although the CEP has never applied for or received a grant under the Comprehensive Center Program, we have a deeply experienced team. Drawing on our deep content expertise and extensive T/TA experience—including across several federally funded, national T/TA centers—the ESS Center will provide high-quality, universal and targeted capacity-building services to State educational agencies (SEAs), Tribal education agencies (TEAs), regional educational agencies (REAs), and local educational agencies (LEAs) with the intent of improving educational opportunities, educator practice, and outcomes for all students across the PK–3 continuum.

Long-term goal. Our long-term goal is for all children to have access to developmentally grounded, research informed, culturally sustaining, early grade experiences. Of particular importance, a central goal is to close opportunity gaps for young children by building the capacity of SEAs, TEAs, REAs, and LEAs to provide equitable PK–3 learning environments, ensuring 1) equitable *access* to resources and opportunities; 2) positive, enriching *experiences*; and 3) *outcomes* that are not associated with children's demographic characteristics.

ESS Center priorities. Our capacity-building resources and services will be designed to strengthen the quality, selection, implementation, and scale-up of programs, policies, and practices that can improve PK–3 learning experiences and support children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. We will focus especially on the six priorities identified by the U.S. Department of Education (Department).

Early School Success Center Priority Areas

1. Developmentally informed, culturally sustaining pedagogy that nurtures social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.
2. Evidence informed, culturally sustaining early literacy instruction;
3. Evidence informed, culturally sustaining, multidisciplinary math instruction;
4. Equitable, positive, developmentally grounded school climate that prioritizes social and emotional development and wellbeing;
5. Child-centered effective transitions to kindergarten and each grade thereafter;
6. Equitable, family-centric relationships and partnerships with families.

Specific Objectives. In establishing the ESS Center, we seek to:

- **Increase the knowledge and capacity of key decision makers at the state and local levels** by providing training and technical assistance (T/TA) resources and services that are informed by the latest research and highlight community-led innovations and best practices related to ESS Center priorities.
- **Increase the number of universally accessible, high-quality T/TA resources specifically focused on ESS Center priorities** by developing an accessible, user-friendly website; implementing a strategic communication plan inclusive of social media; and leveraging strategic partnerships to share the center's work (e.g., T/TA tools and resources, webinars, and event information) with LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs, including those not directly engaging with the Comprehensive Center system.
- **Increase intentional and coordinated collaboration between LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs** via communities of practice and professional learning communities focused on ESS Center priorities and emerging needs identified with the Regional Centers.
- **Increase the implementation of child-centered pedagogy and instruction** by developing research- and community-informed, practice-based tools and resources in targeted subject areas, including math and literacy, and supporting the use of such resources through targeted T/TA services (e.g., micro learning suites, office hours).

Approach to Capacity Building

The Early School Success Logic Model presents an overview of how we plan to achieve expected outcomes and provides a framework for formative and summative evaluations of the project (also see Performance Management and Evaluation Plan). Key concepts, assumptions, theories, and research that inform our proposed approach are described throughout the narrative.

Early School Success Content Center Logic Model

Inputs	Universal Capacity Building Activities	Targeted Capacity Building Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Experienced Team • Subject matter expertise in equity-focused research, policy, and practice related to child development, and early school success • Training and technical assistance (T/TA) experience at national, state, and local levels **Established partnerships** • National, state, and local organizations • Leaders in early education research, policy, and practice **Equity-focused, research-informed T/TA approach** **Experienced equity-focused advisory team** **Equity-focused, experienced staff**	**Create accessible ESS Hub website** to share T/TA resources, events, tools, etc. **Develop research, policy, and practice briefs** addressing priority issues and conduct national survey to understand current practices, needs, bright spots **Develop implementation tools** for leaders **Provide accessible T/TA opportunities** including webinars and fireside chats **Implement strategic communication and dissemination plans** including quarterly newsletter, social media, presentations at national conferences, etc. **Implement management and evaluation plans** including coordinating with the National and Regional Centers to assess and address high-leverage client needs and streamline T/TA services	**Coordinate professional learning communities** highlighting Bright Spots in specific priority areas **Coordinate community of practice** bringing together leaders and practitioners to drive systems-level change in priority areas **Develop micro-learning suites** providing short, self-guided, online professional development activities for education practitioners **Coordinate early grade support office hours** led by Center leaders and subject matter experts, rotating monthly across the six priority areas	**Universal T/TA tools and resources** • Publicly accessible website • Implementation tools responsive to needs identified with National/Regional Centers • Continuously updated **Annual research and policy briefs** (yrs 1-5) **National survey** (yrs 2 and 4) **State of the field briefs** (yrs 3-5) **Responsive and accessible T/TA services** • Quarterly webinars and monthly fireside chats (yrs 1-5) • Annual PLCs (yrs 2-5) and COPs (yrs 3-5) connecting LEAs, SEAs, TEAs, and REAs **Adaptive, sustainable ESS Center infrastructure**	**Short-term Outcomes** • Increased knowledge and capacity of key decision makers • Increased number of universally accessible T/TA resources focused on ESS Center priorities **Mid-term Outcomes** • Increased intentional and coordinated collaboration between LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs • Increased implementation of child-centered pedagogy and instruction **Long-term Outcomes** • Increased knowledge, leadership, and capacity related to providing equitable PK–3 learning environments • Improved educational opportunities, educator practice, and student outcomes

Assumptions: All efforts of the Early School Success Center will be:
• Equity-focused, child-centered and grounded in the *Access, Experiences, and Outcomes Framework*.
• Subject to ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement.

Our Training and Technical Assistance Approach

The proposed ESS Center team employs a T/TA approach that is equity-focused, systemic, data-driven, bi-directional, collaborative, research-informed, child-centered, and policy and practice-focused.

Equity-focused conceptual framework. Our team is experienced in applying and tailoring the CEP's *Access, Experiences, and Outcomes (AEO) Framework* (Meek et al., 2020) across child serving systems—including early learning, K-12 education, child welfare, health, and mental health systems—always centering the work around children and families further from opportunity who have faced historical and contemporary marginalization. For early grade systems, we tailor AEO as such:

- **Access**: Ensuring all children have equitable ***access*** to high quality child-centered learning environments; qualified, supported, and effective educators and support staff; and educational opportunities in their schools and communities, including and especially children from historically and contemporarily marginalized communities.
- **Experiences**: Ensuring all children have positive, enriching, and just learning ***experiences*** that begin with seamless transitions to elementary school, are grounded in the science of child development and learning, are culturally sustaining, and are individualized to address needs and lift up strengths across all the domains of development, social and emotional learning, early literacy, and early math.
- **Outcomes**: Improving outcomes and closing disparities by supporting holistic child development across domains, establishing strong partnerships with families to increase regular attendance, and increasing positive student outcomes—including making learning gains across math and literacy, meeting rigorous state education standards, and ensuring a

strong social and emotional foundation—across all children such that outcomes are not associated with social demographic characteristics, including race, ethnicity, language, disability, or income.

This framework will guide our collaborative approach to examining barriers and identifying solutions, explicitly embedding equity into the center's policy and practice recommendations, resources, and T/TA services. The framework will also inform our approach to coordinating and collaborating with Regional Centers and LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs. It fosters democratic discourse on issues of opportunity and equity, including the impact of historical and institutional racism on children and families from historically marginalized communities—including Black, Latine, Native American and Alaska Native, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children; children with disabilities; children living in low income communities; and multilingual learners.

Systemic and data-driven approach to identifying and closing opportunity gaps. A key dimension of this work involves identifying and closing opportunity gaps in learning systems through critically examining systemic factors that create and perpetuate inequities and identifying concrete, actionable steps to support change across individuals, schools (including early education programs), communities, states, and the federal government. This requires a data-driven and intersectional approach, where we consider the ways systems disproportionately advantage or disadvantage children with multiple, intersecting identities. For example, we do deep work on emergent bilingual children with disabilities—including early, accurate identification, full inclusion in learning settings alongside their peers, high-quality special education services in the home language, and more. We have also implemented extensive T/TA

on the issue of Black boys in Head Start, focusing on strength-based teacher-child interactions, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, and promoting social and emotional development.

Our approach emphasizes professional learning that results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students. Indeed, research shows that equity is sorely missing in education technical assistance and professional development systems at all levels, including system leaders, frontline staff, teachers, and coaches (Meek et al. 2020). This results in a perpetuation and expansion of existing opportunity gaps. A focus on the groups who have been furthest from opportunity is paramount, and in particular on the systems that have crafted differential access to opportunity. As such, a comprehensive and sustained T/TA strategy is needed for professionals working across education systems centered on student growth, with attention to the historical foundations of opportunity gaps, inequitable policies and practices that perpetuate them, and individual implicit biases that permeate teacher-child, parent-teacher, and peer to peer relationships and interactions.

Bi-Directional T/TA to reach those who do not proactively request assistance. Our emphasis on children who are the farthest from opportunity led to the development of the CEP's "bidirectional T/TA" approach. Most federally funded T/TA systems offer support to various parties who seek support. These parties are necessarily those who know these resources exist and have the bandwidth and knowledge to access and use the freely available T/TA. While this approach may be responsive to the needs of these particular parties, it does not meet the needs of those parties who may not even know that these T/TA resources exist, or who may not have the bandwidth or resources to proactively reach out and make use of free T/TA. As such, as part of our work with the HHS-SAMHSA-funded Center of Excellence in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (COE), we developed a bidirectional T/TA strategy, where we not

only responded to the needs of those who actively sought T/TA, but also proactively reached out to states and communities who had not reached out to us first, using a data-driven approach. For example, we identified high need states or communities where concentrated levels of inequities exist by examining poverty data, discipline data, and data from the COE indicating which states and communities we had already supported and those with the fewest touch points of support. We then took a relationship-based approach to reaching out to those communities and states to make them aware of our services and support them in establishing the building blocks for new infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) systems. In this way, we were avoiding perpetuating an inequitable T/TA system where those with the most resources and access receive more resources and supports, while those without the awareness or bandwidth to access supports receive considerably less or no support. We will apply this bi-directional approach to the ESS Center's T/TA services.

Collaborative approach to professional development informed by principles of adult learning. Effective TA is defined by research as a collaborative and coordinated effort to facilitate systemic change, build capacity, enhance practices, and achieve agreed-upon outcomes. This collaborative approach offers pathways to improvement through professional learning activities and materials designed to promote changes in the dispositions (motivations), behaviors, practices, beliefs, and understandings of staff within the systems served. By fostering such holistic professional development, our approach ensures sustainable and impactful improvements in education systems.

Our approach is firmly rooted in learning principles that have proven effective in guiding adult learners to expand what they know, enhance their problem-solving skills, and achieve their personal and professional goals. These principles posit that effective training is: ***relevant*** to the

experience or intended experience of the adult learner; ***engaging***—the adult learner retains knowledge more readily if they are engaged in the process of discovery and exploration rather than being the recipient of information; ***active***—the learning is an active process that closely replicates the environment within which the skills or knowledge will be applied; and ***learner-centered***—adults have accumulated a wealth of life experiences and knowledge that can be used as a resource for their own learning as well as the learning of others (Knowles et al., 2012).

In providing professional development and T/TA services, we begin by meeting participants where they are, acknowledging and embracing diverse ways of knowing. We provide opportunities for individuals and groups to examine their values, beliefs, and biases and understand how these impact their relationships and interactions. Through this self-examination process, learners recognize the need to adopt a strength-based mindset. They actively promote equitable programming, policies, and practices, and understand their role as advocates for change to address inequities and disparities. This method supports transformational learning, leading to shifts in perspectives, beliefs, dispositions, and behaviors essential for systemic change.

Evidence-informed, child-centered, and culturally sustaining policy- and practice-focused framework for enhancing early school success. The six ESS Center priorities identified earlier closely align with recommendations included in a recently published report by CEP and New America, ***Learning, Joy, and Equity: A New Framework for Elementary Education.*** This report provides a new framework for the early grades that is multidimensional and informed by the latest research on the science of learning and development, equity and inequity, health and mental health, and overall child and family wellbeing. It identifies 14 “core ingredients” for effective, systemic change in elementary

education, starting at the school level and setting the stage for SEA, REA, TEA, and LEA policy and practice enablers. This framework will inform the ESS Center's approach to identifying T/TA topics, in collaboration with the Regional Centers.

14 Core Ingredients in *Learning, Joy, and Equity: A New Framework for Elementary Education*

1. A transformative leader and local leadership team
2. A child-centered vision and philosophy
3. A Universal Design approach built into every aspect of schooling
4. Dual Language Education to promote bilingualism, biliteracy, biculturalism, positive self-identities, and to meet the needs of English learners
5. Approaches to teaching that align with the science of child development
6. Research-informed instruction that is culturally sustaining, including math, literacy, science, social studies, the arts, and second language learning.
7. A school climate that prioritizes mental health and wellbeing, embraces children's identities, and is proactive in combating racism and bias.
8. Safe, healthy and aesthetically-pleasing, child-centered learning environments
9. Child, classroom, and school-level data are collected and analyzed to tailor instruction, professional development, and inform planning.
10. Child grouping based on child development and learning, small enough to promote deep relationships and individualized attention
11. A well prepared, fully supported teacher workforce
12. Explicit attention and resources dedicated to the experiences and outcomes of children from historically marginalized communities
13. Culturally-grounded authentic family and community engagement
14. Nutritious food, culturally sustaining mealtime rituals, and ample movement and physical activity.

Critical Educational Challenges to be Addressed by the Center

Closing Opportunity Gaps

To date, not enough attention, funding, research, and technical assistance has been dedicated to the early grades, resulting in widely divergent policies and practices at the school level, many of which are not aligned to the latest science on child development and learning. Further, these policies fail to consider historical and contemporary inequities and their impacts on students from marginalized communities, including children with disabilities, multilingual learners, and Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian American, and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander children. As we continue to grapple with post-pandemic recovery, it is critical to reflect and think

transformatively about what schools need to do differently, in partnership with families and communities, centering children, their joy, their curiosity, and their rights to an enriching, stimulating, culturally affirming educational experience.

Much has been written about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' academic performance and mental health, with overwhelming coverage of "chronic absenteeism," "learning loss" and "learning recovery." Well-documented consistent data and decades of research suggest that education systems, since their inception, were not working for large swaths of American students, resulting in large opportunity gaps for Black, Latine, and Native American children (Ladson-Billings, 2006; 2013). The pandemic lay bare and exacerbated gaps and challenges that have always existed—by design, by practice, or as a lingering remedy of the past. Indeed, there is a long and painful history of systematic exclusion and marginalization in our nation's education systems that has disadvantaged children from marginalized communities. Rooted in this history, stark inequities in resources, learning opportunities, classroom experiences, and educational outcomes in today's US education system persist, disproportionately impacting children from historically marginalized communities.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recently published a report on closing opportunity gaps for children birth to age eight, which documented many of these contemporary inequities through a historically informed lens (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). Research summarized in the report indicates that schools serving primarily children of color are often less-resourced, spend less on construction and facility maintenance and renovations, have less experienced teachers, and have fewer opportunities for enrichment. Many children with disabilities still receive their services in self-contained classrooms regardless of their needs, including more than half of preschoolers

with disabilities, despite a robust research base indicating that high quality inclusion in general early childhood and education settings are associated with improved social and academic outcomes (US Department of Education, 2023). The nation's large and growing emergent bilingual child population still lacks access to dual language education, with recent data indicating that over 90% of emerging bilingual children lack access to dual language learning (Williams et. al, 2023). Additionally, researchers find that Black and Latine children are less likely to be referred to enrichment programs, like Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs, even when they have the same grades and test scores as their White peers. Decades of data and research also indicate that Black children continue to be excluded from learning settings via expulsions and suspensions at starkly disproportionate rates. Disparate discipline practices persist even though there is no research to suggest worse behavior and many studies indicate bias in behavior-related decision-making (Gilliam et al., 2016; Meek et al., 2020; Okonofua et al., 2015; NASEM, 2023). Finally, inequitable experiences in kindergarten too often follow from and are followed by poor quality experiences in the early education and early grade systems.

Taken together, well established data indicate that children from historically marginalized communities have less *access* to high quality early learning opportunities (NASEM, 2023; Education Trust, 2019) and have poorer *experiences* within early learning settings (NASEM, 2023; Meek et al., 2020; Meek et al., 2024), resulting in disproportionate *outcomes*. These inequities in educational opportunity are reflected across and compounded by deep racial and economic inequities across all US systems that impact virtually every domain of life—health, financial stability, economic mobility, mental health, interactions with the criminal justice system, and so on.

Addressing Priority Content Areas

Layered on the existing inequities in early care and education is the continued "pushing down" of pedagogical and instructional content created for older children to preschoolers, kindergarteners, and first graders. Changes are needed to ensure developmentally informed, child-centered pedagogy and instruction across the priority content areas, as summarized below.

Developmentally informed, culturally sustaining pedagogy that nurtures social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Children are born natural scientists eager to learn about and make sense of the world around them. Starting early in infancy and continuing throughout childhood they are keen observers and experiment with the world, people, and objects around them (Bucher & Pindra, 2020). Many relevant parties in the education system have emphasized kindergarten readiness when in fact robust bodies of developmental research and neuroscience indicate that children are born ready and eager to learn. However, for optimal learning, children need a safe space with trusted, nurturing adults. Pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and the elementary years are foundational in children's lives, development, and academic trajectories. These years set the tone for children's future learning, and they present a critical opportunity to optimize children's endless curiosity and natural love of learning. Unfortunately, at their origin, many local education systems were built on a factory model, centered around the needs of adults and on the future labor force, as opposed to around children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive developmental needs. Various iterations of federal education law since then have served to reinforce the "one size fits all," standardized approach to learning, focused on systems and accountability, not on the ways science tells us children learn and develop. This has resulted in high levels of absenteeism, disengagement, exclusionary discipline, and students not meeting rigorous standards across subject areas. When instruction

and pedagogy—and the rules, policies, and practices surrounding them—are grounded in child development and learning science, children thrive (National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine, 2016; 2023; 2024).

Despite the education system's shortfalls and inequitable historical roots, innovation and child-centered, developmentally grounded learning is happening in many elementary schools across the country. Identifying, spotlighting, building on, and scaling their good work is necessary, as is the need to translate research into policy at the SEA and LEA levels, and at the school level. Indeed, many efforts, policies, research studies, and programs have moved the education field forward in understanding learning, development, and academic growth in US schools. For example, some researchers have done deep work on child-centered pedagogies, culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012), and inclusive education that applies a universal design for learning (UDL; Rose & Meyer, 2002). Other researchers have completed extensive work on teacher evaluation and leadership development (Kraft & Christian, 2022). Curriculum and assessment are robust fields of their own. Contemporary work on assessment is moving the field forward in holistic, dynamic, bias-conscious assessment (Ascenzi, 2018). While there is no single ideal elementary school experience, there are core ingredients to which every child needs and deserves access, as described in the recently published report, *Learning, Joy, and Equity: A New Framework for Elementary Education*. These core ingredients will inform the center's T/TA offerings and align with the priority content areas identified by the Department.

Early Literacy Instruction. The foundation to foster children's skills to become competent and motivated readers starts in their earliest years. Early literacy sets this foundation, and the skills acquired in early childhood support children's cognitive and academic growth by equipping them with the skills to decode texts and comprehend what they read (Lonigan &

Shanihan, 2009). The seminal National Panel on Early Literacy Panel report (Lonigan & Shanihan, 2009) highlights that the skills most predictive of future reading are alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, rapid letter naming, print concepts, and oral language. For young children acquiring early literacy skills, effective instructional practices include explicit alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness instruction that follows a systematic scope and sequence; storybook interventions to build children's oral language, vocabulary, print awareness, and comprehension; opportunities to engage in activities that foster children's writing development and print concepts; and language-rich environments that allow children to engage in quality interactions with adults and peers (Graham et al., 2014; Lonigan et al., 2013; Piasta & Wagner, 2010; Soto et al., 2019). These early literacy domains and instructional practices are aligned with Science of Reading principles that guide our current understanding of literacy development and instruction—principles informed by a body of multidisciplinary research conducted in the last 50 years across the world (Reading League, 2022). Furthermore, early literacy instruction should embed culturally responsive practices by integrating children's cultures, languages, and identities into their learning experiences (Bennett et al., 2018), with a focus on fostering children's early literacy learning alongside other cognitive and socio-emotional skills (Tandzegolskienė-Bielaglovė et al., 2023). To this end, there is a need to align early literacy instruction informed by the Science of Reading with culturally responsive teaching and embedded opportunities to integrate early literacy instruction within activities that target other developmental domains.

Despite the research on the most effective domains and instruction of early literacy, research supports that young children experience varying levels of quality in their early literacy instruction. Factors for this variability include reduced access to quality early literacy instruction,

limited educator training, and instruction that is misaligned with scientific research. Providing multi-dimensional technical assistance will ensure that the gap between best practice and implementation are addressed through policies, learning standards, instruction, professional development, and assessment.

Early Math Instruction. Early childhood mathematics is a burgeoning field in both research and practice. The growth of early learning programs that include four-year-olds, along with research showing the potential of early math instruction on long-term outcomes, has led to opportunities and challenges. Opportunities exist to bring mathematics more centrally into early childhood settings and support more young children to know and understand mathematics. However, with those opportunities come challenges that are both particular to the teaching and learning of mathematics and more broadly part of teaching young children. Evidence continues to grow elaborating how much early math matters. Children who do well mathematically early on also do better later—and not just in mathematics (Duncan et al., 2007; Grissmer, 2011; Romano et al., 2010). Early math is a natural part of development. Children are inquisitive, and they can learn to think mathematically and can learn important mathematical practices (seeing patterns, persevering, explaining), in part through play (National Research Council [NRC], 2001, 2009). All children should be supported from the beginning in developing their innate capacity to learn math, just as they should be helped to develop their innate capacity to learn language.

Researchers in the United States and around the world have accumulated robust findings about the development of young children's mathematical thinking (e.g., Baroody & Purpura, 2017; Clements & Sarama, 2007; Moss, Bruce, & Bobis, 2016; National Research Council [NRC], 2001, 2009). The research is full of detail and nuance about young children's mathematical ideas, and it consistently reveals that young children know more than we might

expect. For instance, children can model and solve story problems without prior instruction (Carpenter & Moser, 1984). Research-based knowledge about the development of young children's thinking also has been widely influential in the design of curricula, standards, and professional development (e.g., Clements, Sarama, Wolfe, & Spitler, 2013; National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010; Schifter, Bastable, & Russell, 1998; Sowder, 2007; TERC (Firm), Pearson Education, Inc., & Scott, Foresman and Company, 2008). The results from these studies point to the importance of learning about and attending to the details of children's mathematical thinking and helping teachers to learn from their ongoing practice and to make instructional decisions that recognize and build from children's existing understanding (Franke, Carpenter, Levi, & Fennema, 2001; Jacobs, Lamb, & Philipp, 2010).

Mathematics has historically been seen as less central in early childhood and early grade curriculum than literacy, and thus many early childhood teachers feel less comfortable and often anxious about teaching mathematics. Often early childhood teachers report they chose early childhood so they would not have to teach mathematics. In addition, early childhood teachers often struggle with the tensions between playful learning spaces and intentional teaching. So, supporting early childhood mathematics requires supporting teacher and adult learning and helping them see the assets they bring to the learning of mathematics as well as helping them leverage playful learning to support mathematics.

Supporting multilingual learners is also central to the learning of mathematics. Often mathematics is seen as the "universal language" and is not seen in relation to the learning of language. We know now that language is central in learning mathematics and that mathematics serves as an important area for supporting multilingual learners. Early childhood settings are wonderful spaces for developing mathematics and language together through translanguaging

practices (Maldonado, et. al, 2020). The challenge remains to provide early childhood educators with the T/TA support they need to facilitate mathematics learning and language together in ways that honor students' home language and encourage their learning of mathematics and English.

Often in the teaching and learning of mathematics we focus on what students do not know, what language resources they do not have, and what home deficits they are overcoming. Math instruction in early childhood education and the early grades, along with the research on children's thinking, children's language learning and translanguaging, and teacher learning, should create an opportunity to change that narrative focusing on what students do know, what resources and strengths they do bring to school, and leveraging those to create further learning.

School Climate that Prioritizes Social Emotional Development and Wellbeing.

School Climate that Prioritizes Social Emotional Development and Wellbeing. Students with social-emotional or behavioral concerns (SEBC) who do not receive effective, timely intervention experience the worst academic and quality of life outcomes of any school age group, including dramatically higher rates of suspension and expulsion, lower academic achievement, increased involvement in juvenile justice and worsened mental health over time (Anderson et al., 2001; Development Group Services, Inc., 2017). Additionally, teachers have long reported managing student behavior problems, such as those often co-occurring with SEBC, as a top concern (Robers et al., 2012) contributing to worsened school climate and educator burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Unfortunately, most (65–80%) students with SEBC are not receiving any services, and elementary age students are 90% less likely to receive mental health services than older students (Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002; Merikangas, et al., 2011). In this practice gap, schools often

resort to exclusionary and punitive discipline that further impacts student outcomes including involvement with the juvenile justice system (Aizer & Doyle, 2011) and contributes to student and family member disengagement and distrust (Brandt et al., 2014). These issues are largely the basis for the development of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) frameworks (Sugai & Horner, 2009), which incorporate social and emotional learning (SEL) intervention.

An expanding body of literature in PBIS based on well-designed intervention research studies supports the implementation of MTSS in PK–12 settings (Fazel et al., 2014; Hoagwood et al., 2007). Current models of MTSS (e.g., the Pyramid Model, SWPBIS) provide instruction and intervention at three levels: (1) universal for all children; (2) targeted, intensive instruction to support groups of children with identified risk factors for developing learning, SEL, or behavioral needs, and (3) individualized, function-based interventions. Instruction in SEL promotes development of child self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013). These competencies are associated with academic success and positive school adjustment (Dusenbury et al., 2015; Sklad et al., 2012). Early identification of SEBC by interdisciplinary school teams, and a supportive, strengths-based approach to prevention and intervention with SEL instruction and SWPBIS, provides schools with an alternative to punitive exclusionary practices and improves school climate, which is linked to positive changes in academic achievement, decreased challenging behavior, and social-emotional health (Charlton et al., 2021). At this juncture, the field needs accessible, efficient, and culturally responsive and sustaining resources that consider the unique contexts of PK–3 settings and the diverse workforce of teachers and educational aides. Successful TA must:

- Provide preschool teachers of varying backgrounds and skill levels with the knowledge, tools, and skills they need to implement research based models of MTSS including universal (whole school and classroom), targeted (groups of children), and individualized, function-based interventions to address the SEL and behavioral needs of young children from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, including those with disabilities and dual language learners.
- Deliver contextually valid strategies for the integration of SEL and behavioral practices in grades PK–3, as combining SEL and behavioral practices with culturally responsive practices has shown positive outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students including reducing racial inequities (McIntosh et al., 2021).
- Prepare support personnel (e.g., social workers, early childhood special education personnel) in effective professional development practices that leverage available TA materials and resources to support PK–3 teachers in universal screening, individual child assessment, and implementation of positive behavior support practices and SEL curricula.
- Assist teachers and related support personnel to develop competence in active family engagement around determining culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate expectations for classroom behavior and supporting their child's social emotional development.

Kindergarten Transitions. The transition from preschool to kindergarten is a critical milestone, impacting both children and their families. Effective support involves addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of children, considering community and school cultures, and utilizing available resources (Bornfreund et al., 2020). A focused approach to supporting these transitions can significantly influence children's social, emotional, and academic

development—reducing anxiety, fostering belonging, and establishing a strong foundation for future success. Collaboration among families, educators, and community providers is essential.

A systems approach to transitions into kindergarten should consider the social, emotional, and health needs of children and families, while also recognizing the diverse cultural and community contexts. This involves cultivating robust relationships and collaboration among various stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, families, and community organizations (Bornfreund et al, 2020). Key elements include facilitating effective data sharing, removing learning barriers, aligning services, enhancing family engagement, honoring children's diverse background experiences, and providing targeted supports to ensure improved outcomes.

Children moving from the relatively protected and nurturing environment of preschool to the more structured and demanding kindergarten setting can experience stress and anxiety—a shift affecting self-esteem, social skills, and overall well-being. Seamless transitions lead to better school enjoyment, academic growth, and social competence (Atchison et al., 2018). Schools and families can support this by facilitating visits, teacher meetings, and transition activities. Family engagement bridges the gap between home and school, providing valuable insights into children's development and aligning educational goals (Macy, 2023). Effective family engagement practices are crucial for successful transitions.

Seamless transitions also contribute to children's academic preparedness. Strong early literacy and numeracy skills are crucial for academic success. Comprehensive transition programs can play a pivotal role when they include: 1) academic programming for children, 2) professional development for teachers, and 3) classes for parents. Through these three essential components, transition programs can impact children's literacy and math skills (Ehrlich et al., 2021). Continuity of care also ensures children feel secure and supported, allowing

personalized education and better outcomes. Alignment between preschool and kindergarten standards and curricula supports academic and social success (Atchison et al., 2018).

To integrate these aspects of effective transitions from preschool to kindergarten and the early elementary grades, technical assistance is essential. Key areas of focus include:

- Professional Development: Training for educators on best practices.
- Curriculum Alignment: Ensuring continuity in learning experiences.
- Classroom Environment: Establishing consistent routines, appropriate practices, and an enriching setting.
- Family Engagement Strategies: Developing resources for effective family engagement.
- Data and Assessment Tools: Monitoring progress and informing instruction.
- Collaboration and Networking: Sharing learning and community support.
- Policy Advocacy: Promoting policies for seamless transitions.

A focused and collaborative approach to transitions benefits individual students and enhances the overall education system's effectiveness and equity.

Everyday Attendance and Parent and Family Partnerships. Recent data on chronic absenteeism is alarming. However, the dialogue around the issue has not been nuanced enough. It has not interrogated the historical context of attendance laws and practices and how they have been applied differently to different groups of children over the course of American history. Without this missing, essential understanding, our solutions and interventions will continue to fall short. After all, the chronic absenteeism rate for lower income students went from 19 percent to 32 percent and from 15 percent to 26 percent for all students in K-12 public schools (Attendance Works, 2023). Like so many challenges in the education system, COVID worsened it, it did not create it.

In the 1880s Indigenous children were separated from their families and forced to attend boarding schools, which were schools designed to strip Indigenous children of their identity, culture and humanity or as Richard H. Pratt, who founded a boarding school, once said, these were schools designed to "kill the Indian in him and save the man." Parents who resisted and refused to send their children to boarding schools faced imprisonment amongst other cruel and unusual punishments such as being denied access to food. Attendance laws, in this case, were used as a tool, alongside many other policies aimed at destroying tribal communities, resulting in intergenerational trauma and understandable, logical distrust. Today, Native American children have the highest rates of chronic absenteeism, compared to other racial demographic groups.

Decades later, after slavery and Jim Crow laws, as schools were forced to desegregate, 40 percent of all suspensions were for attendance-related offenses with Black students suspended at rates higher than their White counterparts. Suspension and expulsion were uncommon practices at segregated Black schools. Black parents made claims of bias that ultimately went ignored. We have, undoubtedly, progressed as a society, but the residue of those policies and practices are still embedded in attendance policies today. And the trauma that resulted from those policies and practices is intergenerationally imprinted in the minds and hearts of those impacted and their descendants. Today, Black children are still the most suspended group of students in the country; in four states, unexcused absences are a suspendable offense. In some states, parents still face imprisonment if their children are absent. Put plainly, schools, more often than not, have not treated families as partners; they have treated them as people in need of punishment. The solutions to this complex issue must be multifaceted and address the root causes of absenteeism today. Some of the factors that contribute to chronic absenteeism include health, transportation, family engagement and support, housing instability, and climate change (Rodawold, 2024).

Furthermore, everyday attendance as a goal means that schools must meet the everyday and evolving needs of students and families. This includes being able to support children when they are sick, providing washers and dryers on campus for families to wash clothes, exploring funding sources for assistance programs to help with essentials such as healthy food and transportation, and offering culturally responsive and sustaining mental health support, to name a few. Family partnerships, then, must be about building connection and trust - not just for the purpose of everyday school attendance but for the purpose of community, which will unquestionably enhance school attendance without perpetuating harm. Considering this, our approach to building and strengthening parent and family partnerships is about building capacity regarding culturally responsive and sustaining ways to (1) connect with parents and families, (2) listen to parents and families, and (3) implement attendance policies and practices that center the voices and experiences of parents and families.

Impact the Center Plans to Achieve

The Center plans to achieve its impact on improving learning conditions and student outcomes in the early grades via the development and delivery of research-informed resources, universal training, targeted technical assistance, and strategic collaborations. Indeed, because much of the work of the proposed ESS Center is indirect, much of our impact will be executed via intentional, strategic, and close collaboration with the Regional Centers, the National Center, as well as other relevant federally funded training and technical assistance centers. These include other national centers we are part of, such as the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning funded by the Office of Head Start; the Early Childhood Technical Assistance center, funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the US Department of Education; the National Center for Positive Behavior Intervention and

Support funded by OSEP; and the Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at the US Department of Health and Human Services, among others; as well as centers we are not a part of but have established relationships with. We will leverage our strategic collaborations to promote widespread awareness of the ESS Center's universal capacity building TA resources and services at the national, state, and local levels, using a data-driven, bi-directional approach to reach high-need SEAs, REAs, TEAs, and LEAs across the country.

Specific outcomes aligned with the ESS Center's capacity building objectives are summarized in the logic model. **Short term outcomes include:** ***Increased knowledge and capacity of key decision makers at the state and local levels,*** including state superintendents of education; district superintendents; school principals and assistant principals; and other state and local education leaders and their respective leadership teams. ***Increased number of universally accessible, high-quality T/TA resources specifically focused on ESS Center priorities*** that can inform LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs, including those not directly engaging with the Comprehensive Center system, as well as strategic partnerships organizations that serve as state and local education collaboration platforms, such as the Education Commission for the States, the National Association for State Leaders in Early Education, and the Multicultural Student Achievement Network.

Mid-term outcomes include: ***Increased intentional and coordinated collaboration between LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs*** that participate in the ESS Center's professional learning communities and communities of practice focused on established priorities and emerging needs. ***Increased implementation of child-centered pedagogy and instruction*** in targeted subject areas (including math and literacy) among LEAs and educators that access ESS

Center resources and participate in universal and targeted T/TA services, such as Micro Learning Suites and Early School Success Office Hours.

Long-term outcomes include: ***Increased knowledge, leadership, and capacity related to providing equitable PK–3 learning environments*** among leaders and educators at the local, state, and national levels. ***Improved educational opportunities, experiences, educator practice, and student outcomes*** that are not associated with children's demographic characteristics.

Capacity-Building Services

Our work will be conducted in close partnership with the National and Regional Centers. Lisa Gordon, Center Co-Director, will be the designated liaison between the ESS Center and the other centers. Our work will begin with formal MOUs that detail how we will work together and establish formal lines of communication. This joint work will begin with strategic planning meetings at the beginning of each fiscal year to include identifying, assessing, and addressing the needs of high-leverage clients and streamlining services, a mid-year tracking and check-in meeting, and end of year reflections. Between these three checkpoints, there will be constant communication between the designated team leaders across Centers to ensure that each deliverable is aligned with a need in the field, and to ensure that our work in general is responsive to what Regions are asking for and trends identified at the national level. The ESS Center's digital dissemination and communication lead, Mr. Eric Martinez, will be directly connected to each Regional Center and the National Center to ensure resources and public-facing language is consistent across the Centers.

Universal Capacity-Building Services

Our proposed universal capacity-building services focus on identifying existing and developing new evidence-based tools and resources to support child-centered policy, pedagogy, and instruction across the ESS Center priorities; widely disseminating such tools and resources to practitioners, education system leaders, and policymakers in formats that are high quality, easily accessible, understandable, and actionable; and aligning capacity-building services to client needs. Our universal capacity building TA resources and services will be publicly available to all interested parties; we will using a collaborative, data-driven, bi-directional T/TA approach to promote awareness of and engagement with the ESS Center among high-need SEAs, REAs, TEAs, and LEAs across the country.

Universal Capacity Building Activities
1. Create accessible, public-facing ESS Hub website 2. Develop research, policy, and practice "state of the field" briefs 3. Develop implementation tools for leaders 4. Provide accessible T/TA opportunities, including webinars and fireside chats 5. Implement strategic communication and dissemination plans, including quarterly newsletter, social media, and presentations/workshops at national conferences

1. Accessible, public-facing ESS Hub website

Our Center's universal TA efforts will include the design and implementation of a central, online, public-facing, and free Early School Success (ESS) Hub to (a) share all resource, webinar recordings, tools and guides developed by the center; (b) spotlight "bright spot" LEAs across the country innovating and implementing best practices; (c) announce all professional learning and community of practice opportunities; and (d) serve as a connection point on early grade content issues for interested leaders. We will also collate and include a registry of subject matter experts, by region, on a searchable database on the website, enabling LEAs, TEAs, REAs, and SEAs to access deeper levels of support, as needed. The website will have a landing page for each content

area, where resources will be shared across themes, including review of research, policy scans, bright spots, and national survey findings. The website will be launched in the first year of the Center and maintained, managed, and updated continuously. **Content for the website, including quality control, consistency in voice and messaging, organization of resources, materials, tools, and announcements, will be managed by Center Co-Director, Dr. Tunette Powell. The website will be a standalone, independent website technically managed (e.g. website development, technical management, ongoing maintenance) by the Center's communication and digital media lead, Mr. Eric Martinez.**

2. *Research, policy, and practice "state of the field" briefs*

Research briefs. The Center will begin its work in year 1 by publishing a series of "state of the research" briefs that synthesize research conducted to date across each of the priority areas (i.e. developmentally appropriate pedagogy; family partnerships and attendance; math, literacy and social emotional instruction and learning; kindergarten transitions). These briefs will be accessible to an array of audiences, use plain language, and be concise. They will be disseminated with an accompanying webinar. These "state of the research" briefs will be updated each subsequent year with newly published research and learnings, including new data published from the ECLS-K 2023-2024 cohort. **Content leads will lead a team in developing each research brief, specifically: (1) developmentally appropriate pedagogy: Dr. Rosemarie Allen and Laura Bornfreund; (2) early literacy instruction: Drs. Shervaughnna Byrd and Xigrid Soto Boykin; (3) early math instruction: Drs. Kristine Ho and Cristina Navarro-Aguirre; (4) social emotional development and school climate: Drs. Wendy Machalicek and Amy Schmidtke; (4) parent partnerships to support regular attendance: Dr. Tunette Powell and Dr. Dalhia Lloyd; and (5) kindergarten transitions, Dr. Cama and Laura Bornfreund.**

Policy briefs. Concurrently, the Center will publish a "state of policy" brief that will review state policies that impact the early grades and address each of the aforementioned priority areas. For example, in our focus on transitions, we will examine state preschool standards and their alignment or misalignment with state early grade standards. This brief will be updated and re-published annually, similar to the state of the research briefs. **The state of the policy brief will be led by Dr. Shantel Meek at the Children's Equity Project, in partnership with New America Fellow, Laura Bornfreund.**

Practice briefs and national field survey. Finally, the Center will develop and conduct a field survey with a nationally representative sample to understand existing practices, needs, and bright spots currently being implemented in early grade classrooms nationwide, as well as to better understand the perspectives of various critical parties - including parents, educators and support staff, principals, and superintendents. Currently, there is very little national data collected in the early grades, limiting our understanding of best practices, innovations, inequities, and the greatest areas of need. For example, fourth graders are the youngest learners assessed in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, kindergarten entry assessments vary widely by state if they are used at all, and the most recent Early Childhood Program Participation Survey of the National Household Education Surveys Program data was collected in 2019.

The national survey aims to understand the landscape of educational practice from various perspectives and will query families, teachers and support staff, and school leaders. A stratified random sample will be used to select school districts, then principals, teachers and support staff, and parents within this. Parent specific questions will outline major priorities for their children's education, the educational practices and support their child receives, the challenges and barriers they face across an array of areas including attendance, and the

innovations and best practices they have seen in their communities and along their child's educational journeys. Teacher specific questions will assess existing practices, ideologies, and innovations, as well as the greatest classroom-level needs and challenges, specifically within kindergarten and first through third grade settings. Principal specific questions will address their understanding of teacher's educational practices and target school level policies and practices, including data based decision making, resource allocation, family and community partnerships, and educator professional development. The survey will be developed in year 1; year 2 we will pilot the survey (months 1-6) and field the survey (months 7-12); year 3 will be used to clean, interpret and write up the findings. Beginning in year 3, we will publish "state of the field" briefs using these data and other relevant data. We will conduct a follow up survey in year 4 with a subsample from the original data collection that will focus on high need or timely issue areas, with updates published from this round in year 5. **Survey development, analysis, and interpretation will be co-led by Co-Director Tunette Powell; Brittany Alexander, the Center's data and evaluation lead; and Center Senior Advisor Dr. Iheoma Iruka.**

3. *Implementation tools for leaders*

The Center will develop 4 implementation tools, guides, and resources to support school, LEA, REA, TEA, and SEA administrators in research-informed implementation across the Center's priority areas. The first tool will be published in Year 2 and will be a **Template for Early Grade Strategic Planning**, building from the CEP's existing strategic planning template, to support school leaders in establishing the building blocks for successful implementation of kindergarten transitions, family partnerships and attendance, research informed literacy and math instruction, and developmentally appropriate pedagogy that supports all domains of development, including cognitive, social, and emotional development. The tool will be in the form of a fillable pdf with three parts. Part 1: Landscape Analysis: In this part, leaders will

conduct a landscape analysis of their own systems, including students served, existing policies, funding available, data collected, and relevant community partnerships that would impact priority area implementation. Part 2: will support leaders in planning strategically, setting long term goals, intermediary benchmarks, people responsible, and timelines across priority areas. Part 3: will enable leaders to measure high level progress over time across the priority areas, noting where progress has been made and where more work is yet to be done. **Dr. Powell and Lisa Gordon will lead the development of this tool, in partnership with Content Leads.**

The second tool, published in Year 3, will be a **Guide for Closing Opportunity Gaps and Outcome Disparities in the Early Grades.** This tool will guide leaders through understanding what opportunity gaps are, how to identify them in the data, and research informed approaches leaders could use to bridge opportunity gaps and meaningfully close disparities in student outcomes, including across the Center's priority areas. We will use the recently published National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine report on Closing the Opportunity Gap 0 to age 8 as a research foundation for this guide. **Dr. Meek, who was a Committee Member of the NASEM Opportunity Gap report, will lead the development of this tool in partnership with Organizational leads Dr. Kent McIntosh and Dr. Walter Gilliam, and Content Leads.**

The Center will develop two additional tools in Years 3 and 4. These tools will be **field initiated tools** that respond to emerging needs. We will partner closely with the Regional Centers and the National Centers to determine what these tools will focus on, and use data from our national survey and office hours offering to understand pressing needs and field priorities. **Dr. Tunette Powell and Lisa Gordon will be responsible for the development of these tools, in partnership with the appropriate Content Leads and subject matter experts (SMEs).**

4. Accessible training and technical assistance opportunities

Quarterly webinars across priority areas. Each quarter, the Center will host a webinar dedicated to highlighting innovations and bright spots across the country, ensuring coverage across each priority area (pedagogy, instruction, transitions, families and attendance). These webinars will ensure that the Center is not only focused on peer reviewed research, but is also actively identifying and spotlighting community-led innovations being implemented in schools across the country. Bright spots will be informed by the policy scan, survey, relevant interviews and regional centers. Beyond being featured in quarterly webinars, these "bright spots" will be organized into a pool of innovators who will serve as ongoing resources to other LEAs in our targeted T/TA supports (see below) and as "demonstration sites" for innovation that other leaders can visit and engage with in building up their own early grade capacity. **Webinars will be managed by Lisa Gordon. New America will lead in the development, production, and dissemination of two planned webinars annually, with support from New America Fellow Laura Bornfreund. Two additional webinars will be hosted by the CEP on topics within the priority areas that are field initiated, informed by the emerging needs identified by the Regional Centers. Content leads and subject matter experts would contribute content and present on the webinars.**

Quarterly Fireside Chats with Subject Matter Experts. Each quarter, the Center will pull from its network of SMEs (see Key Personnel and Subject Matter Expertise, pp. 45-61) to host Fireside Chats, accessible to anyone. These chats will explore timely issues facing schools, LEAs, SEAs, TEAs, and REAs and dig deep on specific areas of interest within our major priority areas, which may include focus on particular populations of children or particular issues within priority areas. These areas will be informed by the Regional Centers and the major needs cropping up across SEAs and LEAs, but may include issues such as supporting children who are

dually identified as English learners and children with disabilities on early math instruction; implementing principles on the Science of Reading with English learners in bilingual or monolingual settings; or addressing harsh and exclusionary discipline that disproportionately impacts Black children through developmentally informed policies and practice, understanding and awareness of bias, and culturally responsive school climates. Fireside chats will begin in the third quarter of the first year, and continue for the duration of the project. **Lisa Gordon, Center Co-Director, will lead and manage all aspects of the Fireside Chats, including communication with the Regional Centers and the National Center, identifying topics and experts, and managing marketing and dissemination.**

5. *Strategic communication and dissemination*

Quarterly newsletter. Each quarter, the Center will publish a newsletter that includes new resources, tools, or event announcements from the center; features new early grade research published in the literature; features new early grade policies at the state or local levels; shares major news stories related to early grade practice or policy; and features a local Bright Spot or innovator. **Mr. Eric Martinez, Center communications and media lead, will lead all aspects of newsletter development, marketing, and dissemination, in partnership with the Center Co-Direcorts and content leads.**

Social Media. The Center will develop and implement a strategic social media plan utilizing Canva to create media assets and disseminate via X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube while using Hootsuite to schedule and manage all social media efforts to share Center announcements, resources, and tools using a diverse and creative strategy. New social media accounts and branding styles will be created for the Center to be utilized throughout all digital materials being disseminated. **Mr. Eric Martinez, Center communications and media lead, will lead all aspects of the social media strategy, including**

development, implementation and tracking our reach via social media.

Presentations and workshops at relevant national conferences. In addition to the aforementioned activities, the Center will present at relevant national conferences, as another form of dissemination. These will include major early learning conferences, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Professional Learning Institute, National Research Conference on Early Childhood, as well as major K-12 conferences, including UNITED: The National Conference on School Leadership; Conference on Racial and Social Justice (NEA); University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA), and the South by Southwest Education (SXSW EDU) Conference. **Co-Directors Dr. Tunette Powell and Lisa Gordon will lead coordination of the Center's representation at various conferences, ensuring full coverage at field-essential conferences with appropriate content leads and subject matter expert partners.**

Targeted Capacity-Building Services

Targeted capacity-building services aim to enhance the utilization of evidence-based products and tools focused on Early School Success amongst practitioners, education system leaders, elementary schools, LEAs, REAs, TEAs, and SEAs. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (CoPs) will serve as the foundational approaches to foster peer-to-peer, interactive, and sustained learning experiences over extended periods. These methodologies are chosen for their effectiveness in providing participants with ample time to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon innovative strategies, ultimately facilitating meaningful changes in educational practices. We will also develop Micro Learning Suites aligned with identified and emerging needs, and will provide on-call support during Early Grade Support Office Hours. By leveraging these approaches, our targeted capacity-building services

will engage participants in continuous, adaptive professional development, providing the support leaders and educators need to increase the overall effectiveness of their early learning policies and practices, thereby promoting early school success.

Targeted Capacity Building Activities
1. Coordinate professional learning communities 2. Coordinate community of practice on early school success 3. Develop micro learning suites 4. Coordinate early grade support office hours

1. Professional learning communities

Professional learning communities (PLCs) will provide the opportunity to highlight LEA "bright spots" on specific areas of interest within our major priority areas, which may include focus on particular populations of children. The PLCs will include cross-disciplinary LEA teams of both early education leaders and practitioners (up to 20 teams with up to 6 members each for a maximum of 120 participants per PLC and up to 480 participants across 4 proposed PLC engagements). The PLCs will utilize the ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) Model® that was first inspired by the way clinicians learn from medical rounds during residencies, and has evolved into a learning framework that applies across disciplines for sustainable and transformative change. Sessions will enable participants to present real scenarios on identified topics to colleagues for discussion and recommendation, as they learn from one another through a continuous loop of learning, mentoring, and peer support. The structure of these sessions is designed to increase collaboration across various levels of personnel (i.e., LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs). Previous collaborations include: Council of Chief State School Officers; Education Commission of the States' early childhood system P-3 Academy Leaders from AZ, CA, CO, KS, KY, MA, and MS; Governor Offices in CA, AZ, and GA; the Nebraska

Early Childhood Leadership Cadre. Topics have included: embedding equity into state strategic plans including Universal PreK Systems; identification of child care financing issues with state Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS); evaluation of state ARP investments and recommendations on data and equity. Sessions will be held monthly for six months. The Center will host one PLC per year beginning in Year 2. **Lisa Gordon, Center Co-Director, will lead and manage all aspects of Professional Learning Communities, including communication with the Regional Centers and National Center, identifying topics and experts, and managing marketing and dissemination. She will pull in content leads as well as experts from our advisory committee based on the content area of focus.**

2. *Community of practice on early school success*

The Community of Practice (CoP) on Early School Success is designed to build and strengthen the capacity of SEA, TEA, REA, and LEA teams in deepening their work with clients and educational teams to drive systems level change. The CoP will include representatives of SEAs, REAs, TEAs, and LEAs in cross-disciplinary teams (up to 20 teams with up to 6 members each for a maximum of 120 participants per CoP and up to 360 participants across 3 proposed CoP engagements). The CoP teams will meet twice a month for 12 months to engage in shared dialogue and inquiry on the ESS Center's prioritized areas. Sessions will utilize strategic planning tools developed in Year 1 to implement a holistic approach to addressing these areas. The tools will serve as the focus for CoP engagements. Tools may include the Template for Early Grade Strategic Planning, Guide for Opportunity Gap and Disparity Impact, and/or other field identified tools. The ESS Center will collaborate with the Regional and National Centers to determine the specific tool/focus for the Community of Practice on Early School Success. Assignments in between sessions serve as a bridge to enable participants to individually reflect and apply learnings to their work. The project team brings extensive experience in leading CoP

engagements for state, local, and federal leaders, and education staff. Previous collaborations include: Administration of Children and Families Office of Head Start National Training and Technical Assistant Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning for Regions - IX, VIII, V, II, and I; the Center on Excellence on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, State VT Department of Health and Human Services; the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission; and California Department of Education to name a few. These engagements have addressed critical topics such as creating equitable learning environments for Head Start children and families, supporting the school success of young Black boys, and developing professional development frameworks for early learning leaders, classroom teachers, and higher education programs. The Center will hold one Community of Practice each year beginning in Year 3. **Lisa Gordon, Center Co-Director, will lead and manage all aspects of the Community of Practice, including communication with the Regional Centers and National Center, identifying topics and experts, and managing marketing and dissemination.**

3. *Micro learning suites*

Micro Learning Suites provide 20-minute professional development self-guided engagements accessible on the ESS Hub for education practitioners. Sessions will be organized around topics in response to emerging field identified needs. Suites may include videos of exemplar practices and tools for reflection that enable participants to navigate at their own pace. The team has expertise in integrating exemplary practice videos and reflective practice in T/TA supports. Previous collaborations have included: Administration of Children and Families Office of Head Start National Training and Technical Assistant Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning for Regions - IX, VIII, V, II, and I; Center on Excellence on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, State VT Department of Health and

Human Services as shared above. The team also has access to an extensive online library of curated videos demonstrating concrete examples of high-quality early childhood teaching and learning practices (under development by the Buffett Institute and the Nebraska Department of Education). Micro Learnings will begin in Year 2. **Lisa Gordon, Center Co-Director will lead and manage all aspects of the Micro Learning Suites in collaboration with Co-Director, Dr. Tunette Powell and the ESS Center's communication and digital media lead, Mr. Eric Martinez. Dr. Dalhia Lloyd and Cama Cole of the Buffett Institute will assist with the selection and development of video content.**

4. *Early grade support office hours*

Each month, the ESS Center will host Office Hours, rotating each month between the priority areas. These sessions will be led by ESS Center leaders, content leads, and appropriate SMEs and will serve as venues for collaborative dialogue, answering pressing questions, sharing major needs, and or seeking support in specific areas. **Lisa Gordon, Center Co-Director, will lead and manage all aspects of the Center's Office Hours, including communication with the Regional Centers and the National Center, coordinating with subject matter experts and ESS Center content leads, and managing marketing and dissemination.**

Subject Matter and Technical Assistance Expertise

Partnerships

Children's Equity Project. The CEP has a strong track record of establishing and maintaining strategic, collaborative partnerships with national, state, and local organizations and individual leaders, as well as with subject matter experts across the country. This is evidenced by our CEP network, which is a collaborative of scholars and experts across the country with deep subject matter expertise on an array of education and child development issues. This network has

over two dozen scholars and policy experts from universities and organizations across the United States. In addition, we have partnered with nearly every major early childhood national organization on policy reports and resources, co-branding some of our highest profile work with organizations like the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Bipartisan Policy Center, The Century Foundation, National Head Start Association, the National Black Child Development Institute, the National Indian Child Care Association, and the Education Trust. We also have an established track record partnering and collaborating with major K–12-focused organizations. For example, we partnered with the Education Commission of the States to host a state learning community focused on equity in the early years and the early grades. The CEP's Executive Director and Co-PI, Dr. Shantel Meek, serves on the early learning subcommittee of the National Council of State Legislatures. The CEP has also partnered with the National Governors' Association on developing a policy academy, building on the CEP's groundbreaking report: *Start with Equity from the Early Years to the Early Grades*, for governors' education advisors. Finally, our track record on building partnerships is further demonstrated by our multiple existing partnerships and relationship with other federally funded T/TA centers. These include, but are not limited to, the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning funded by the Office of Head Start (OHS); the Early Childhood Technical Assistance center, funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the US Department of Education; the National Center for Positive Behavior Intervention and Support funded by OSEP; and the Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at the US Department of Health and Human Services. We also have strong partnerships with partner T/TA centers that we are not directly leading or

subcontractors for, including OHS' National Center for Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety, OHS' National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, and OHS' National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations.

The CEP also has an established family advisory committee, where we partner with a cross-country group of parents of children in early childhood through secondary education. The purpose of the committee is to center the experiences, perspectives, and expertise of families, particularly families whose expertise has been historically and intentionally excluded from educational decision-making processes. It is our belief that whoever or whatever we center becomes the lens through which we see and frame research, practice, and policy. With this in mind, the committee meets twice a year to share and learn more about families' educational experiences and to provide feedback and guidance on various equity-centered CEP initiatives.

Our ESS Center partners also have longstanding partnerships with national, state, and local education organizations, as summarized below.

Buffett Early Childhood Institute. The Buffett Institute provides training and technical assistance at the intersection of research, policy, and practice and has established partnerships with the collaborators on this proposal and many other organizations nationally, regionally, and locally. The Institute's executive director, Dr. Walter Gilliam, is current president of the board of directors of ZERO TO THREE, past president of Child Care Aware of America, a senior fellow to the Bipartisan Policy Center, and a former Senior Advisor to the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Other national organizations who have partnered with the Institute include the following: National Head Start Association; National Black Child Development Institute; National Indian Child Care Association; Education Commission of the States; National Council of State Legislatures; National Governors' Association; OHS' National Center for Early

Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning; Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, funded by SAMHSA; OHS' National Center for Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety; OHS' National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement; and OHS' National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operations. The Institute has provided extensive T/TA in Nebraska, in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, and others.

UCLA Center X Math Project. Center X Math Project partners include: Baldwin Park Unified School District, Center for Powerful Public Schools, Chino Valley Unified School District, City Year, Inc. Los Angeles, Compton Unified School District, El Segundo Unified School District, Families in Schools, Holy Angels Elementary, Inglewood Unified School District, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office, LA's Promise, Lawndale School District, Lennox School District, Los Angeles Small Schools Center, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles Urban League, Lynwood Unified School District, Manhattan Beach Unified School District, Montebello Unified School District, Mountain View School District, NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center, Paramount Unified School District, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, Pasadena Unified School District, Poway Unified School District, Redondo Beach Unified School District, Rowland Heights Unified School District, San Gabriel Unified School District, Santa Monica/Malibu School District, South Pasadena Unified School District, Temple City Unified School District, and Torrance Unified School District.

The California Reading and Literature Project. CRLP partners include: California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), 21st Century California School Leadership Academy (21CSLA), 21CSLA UTK Initiative, Sacramento County Office of Education, Parlier

Unified School District, LAUSD, Compton Unified, SDUSD, Hawthorne Unified School District, Aspire Unified, (DEEP) - Diamond Educational Excellence Partnership, CA GEAR UP, San Diego County Office of Education, Calipatria Unified School District, CA Environmental Literacy Initiative, Empower Charter School, Santa Ana Office of Education, Geffen Theater, 100 Black Men Inc., Long Beach Unified School District, CA State Board of Education, CA Department of Education, California State University, The University of California, California Lutheran University, Imperial County Office of Education, etc.

University of Oregon: As stewards of the Center on PBIS for the past 25 years, our Center team (i.e., Co-Directors and Center Partners) has developed strong national, regional, SEA, and LEA implementation networks that currently provide TA to over 25,000 schools implementing PBIS in all U.S. states and most territories. The Center partners with over 18 Center Partners and Technical Assistance Providers including researcher leaders situated nationally (e.g., Association for Positive Behavior Supports), within the Midwestern U.S. (e.g., Midwest PBIS Network, PBIS Missouri, Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center), the Northeastern U.S. (The May Institute, Northeast PBIS Network), the Southern U.S. (Florida PBIS Project, Mid Atlantic PBIS Network), and the Western (Northwest PBIS Network, California PBIS) U.S. regions. Center workgroups include classroom supports, crisis response and recovery, district and state systems, equity and belonging, juvenile justice and alternative education, mental health and wellbeing, students with disabilities, Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports, and under-resourced settings. Our Center Partners bring (a) over 25 years of experience working together, (b) leadership of professional PBIS networks in over 40 states, (c) web-based data systems for assessing both fidelity of PBIS implementation and impact on student behavior outcomes, (d) a national database of over 25,000 schools, (e) standardized training and coaching

curricula, (f) a searchable electronic library of evidence-based practices and systems, and (g) efficient project management and evaluation routines. Further, quality resources are available at the institutional level (Universities of Oregon, Connecticut, South Florida, and Center Partner institutions).

Equity in Hiring Practices

The CEP at ASU is a racially, ethnically, linguistically, and regionally diverse team with 90 percent of our team identifying as people of color and situated in 10 states across the United States and in Puerto Rico. The proposed ESS Center leadership team is also diverse by multiple measures. The co-directors of the ESS Center are Black women. Members of our core team, which includes senior advisors and content leads, include first generation college graduates, immigrants, bilingual people with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities, to name a few. Furthermore, ASU promotes equal opportunity, and discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, and qualified veteran status. Equal employment opportunity includes, but is not limited to, recruitment, hiring, promotion, termination, compensation, benefits, transfers, university-sponsored training, education, tuition assistance, and social and recreational programs. ASU's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion supports and fosters a culture of inclusiveness. We promote and assist with equal opportunity and diversity initiatives. We also provide university leadership and hiring officials with clear and accessible employment data, timely and effective consultation, and high-impact training. If we are awarded this grant, we will make efforts to ensure the continued and expanded diversity of our team, through the following equitable hiring practices:

- **Accessible entry points.** We will ensure that that everything from the job description to the systems we use for people to apply are accessible and do not filter out qualified applicants because of biased resume screenings;
- **Diverse slates.** Part of our hiring process includes presenting a diverse group of qualified candidates. If a diverse group of applicants are not applying for positions, then we will meet as a leadership team to strategize about ways to be in spaces that diverse, qualified candidates are;
- **Interview guides.** We will use standardized interview questions that get at true expertise and functional knowledge. We will also provide interview questions to all candidates before the interview to ensure candidates have time to process and reflect on the questions, a strategy that has been proven to support candidates with disabilities and candidates who are neurodiverse.
- **Outcome assessments.** Annually, we will evaluate our hiring processes, including examining our results of the hiring process, identifying what is happening and developing a plan to sustain or improve our effectiveness.

Key Personnel and Subject Matter Expertise

CEP Key Personnel/Subject Matter Experts

Dr. Shantel Meek, **Founding Executive Director and Professor of Practice, Children's Equity Project, ASU.** Prior to founding the CEP, Dr. Meek served in the Obama Administration as a Senior Policy Advisor for Early Childhood Development at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and as a Senior Policy Advisor for Education in the Domestic Policy Council at the White House. During her tenure in the administration, Dr. Meek worked on a variety of early childhood policy issues and served as the point person for the

early childhood policy dimension of President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative. Recently, Dr. Meek served on the consensus committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine exploring the opportunity gap in children birth to age 8. She has extensive experience managing federally funded T/TA subcontracts, having managed contracts with five different multi-year, multi-million-dollar T/TA centers funded by both the US Department of Health and Human Services and the US Department of Education, in addition to state contracts (e.g., State of Arizona, State of Vermont); local T/TA contracts (e.g., Montgomery County); and several philanthropic grants (e.g., W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Heising Simons Foundation). Dr. Meek serves on the boards of Child Trends and the Pyramid Model Consortium and is a member of the Ideal Learning Roundtable. Dr. Meek holds a B.A. in Psychology and an M.S. and Ph.D. in Family and Human Development from Arizona State University. She began her career working with children with disabilities and providing inclusion support services in schools, in partnerships with teachers, school leaders, and families.

Dr. Tunette Powell, Director of Parent and Family Partnerships and Assistant Research Professor, Children's Equity Project, ASU. Dr. Powell is an educator and researcher who has published several books and papers on issues of family-centric engagement in schools, kinship, race, racism, and school-induced collective trauma. In her role at the CEP, she formed the Children's Equity Project's first Family Advisory Committee, a diverse, cross-country group of families of children in early childhood through secondary education. Dr. Powell, who earned her PhD in education at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), previously served as the Director of the UCLA Parent Empowerment Project—a project focused on developing, nurturing, and sustaining parent engagement and parent leadership in schools, especially at schools serving Black and Brown families. Dr. Powell's background spans across educational

contexts and includes serving as an administrator at several elementary and secondary schools, a health and wellness teacher, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president, governing board member of an elementary school, and as a training and professional development consultant at elementary and secondary schools and districts throughout the country, including the Los Angeles Unified School District, Omaha Public Schools, and Dallas Independent School District. She has been featured in every major daily newspaper in addition to features on CNN, MSNBC and NPR's *This American Life* as part of her efforts to center the experiences of parents and families.

Lisa Gordon, Senior Director of Training, Technical Assistance and Professional Development, Children's Equity Project, ASU. Lisa is the Senior Director of Training, Technical Assistance, and Professional Development, and Professor of Practice with the Children's Equity Project (CEP) at Arizona State University. With 28 years of experience in early childhood education, Lisa has specialized in designing and delivering professional development, training, technical assistance, and consulting services at both state and federal levels. Her work is dedicated to addressing equity, race, and social justice issues to promote child-centered, strengths-based, and equitable educational practices, programs, and policies to drive systemic change. Lisa leads equity initiatives for two national technical assistance center partnerships under CEP. She contributes to the Office of Head Start (OHS) National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning by developing research-to-practice resources, facilitating communities of practice, and conducting professional learning engagements for OHS Regional T/TA nationwide. Additionally, she works with the SAMHSA-funded Center of Excellence on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, where she designs and delivers professional learning for education leaders and practitioners and serves as a

Technical Assistance Advisor to support state leaders and programs in integrating equity into mental health consultation. Before joining CEP, Lisa was the Project Director of School Systems Partnerships and Programs and the Associate Director of Early Childhood Programs at the Center for Culture, Race & Equity at the Education Center at Bank Street College. She has served as President of the Pyramid Model Consortium (PMC). Lisa has mentored and coached elementary school principals to enhance their capacity to lead high-quality early childhood instruction and programming, aiming to improve the coherence and quality of teaching and learning across the PreK to Grade 3 continuum.

Laura Bornfreund, New America Fellow and consultant. Bornfreund is a freelance author and consultant working on a book about transforming kindergarten. Previously, Bornfreund worked for New America for 14 years, most recently as a senior fellow and advisor on early and elementary education with the Education Policy program. As a Senior Fellow, Bornfreund focused on transforming kindergarten and promoting policy and practice to strengthen the transition into kindergarten and the early elementary school grades. Prior to her Fellow role, Bornfreund was director of Early & Elementary Education Policy at New America for nearly seven years and, before that, served as deputy director. During her time at New America, she wrote multiple publications including *Getting in Sync: Revamping Licensing and Preparation for Teachers in Pre-K, Kindergarten, and the Early Grades* and was lead author of *A Toolkit for Effective and Supportive Transitions for Children, Families, and Educators*, *Support Early Learning in America: Policies for a New Decade*, *From Crawling to Walking: Ranking States on Birth–3rd Grade Policies that Support Strong Readers*, and *Beyond Subprime Learning: Accelerating Progress in Early Education*. Bornfreund contributed a chapter to *Sustaining Early Childhood Learning Gains: Program, School, and Family Influences*. She has

presented on many topics, including high-quality and developmentally appropriate teaching and learning in kindergarten, state policies to support early literacy, teacher preparation, principal preparation, and transition into kindergarten. Bornfreund's work was also cited in the seminal *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Third Grade* consensus study from the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council in 2015.

Dr. Rosemarie Allen, Research Professor, Children's Equity Project, ASU and Metro State University Denver; CEO Institute for Racial Equity and Excellence. Dr. Allen is a world renowned leader in racial equity, child development, and culturally sustaining pedagogical experiences for children from historically marginalized communities. She has spoken to large audiences internationally and in every state in the United States about implicit bias, social emotional learning, and child development. She has also engaged in extensive T/TA across the United States, at the local, state, and national levels. She currently holds joint appointments as a Research Professor at the Children's Equity Project at ASU and in the School of Education at Metropolitan State University of Denver. She is also the founder and CEO of the Institute for Racial Equity & Excellence where she supports families, schools and systems in advancing equity in learning experiences. Dr. Allen also has extensive experience inside government, having served in directorship roles with the Colorado Department of Human Services where she was responsible for the State's child care licensing program, the federal child care assistance program, the redesign of the State's quality rating and improvement system, the implementation of the State's professional development plan, and assisted in the creation of Colorado's early learning guidelines.

Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka, Professor, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and Senior Advisor, Children's Equity Project, ASU. Dr. Iruka is a Professor in the Department of

Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Founding Director of the Equity Research Action Coalition, and a Senior Advisor for the Children's Equity Project at ASU. Dr. Iruka is engaged in projects and initiatives focused on how evidence-informed policies, systems, and practices in early education (birth to age 8) can support the optimal development and experiences of children from low-wealth and marginalized households and communities. She has extensive research and evaluation experience, managing large grants from a variety of federal research entities, including the National Institutes of Health, the Institute for Education Statistics, and the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation at the Administration for Children and Families. She has done extensive state and local data work, merging a variety of child success indicators across health, education, and environment and creating data dashboards for policy makers. Her work focuses on addressing how best to ensure excellence for young diverse learners, especially Black children and their families, through the intersection of research, program, and policy. Dr. Iruka serves and/or has served on numerous national and local boards and committees, including the Brady Education Foundation, Trust for Learning, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine committees on *Supporting Parents of Young Children*, and *Applying Neurobiological and Socio-behavioral Sciences from Prenatal through Early Childhood Development: A Health Equity Approach,* and the American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs Racial Disparities in PreK-12 Education.

Xigrid Soto-Boykin, Director of Language Justice and Learning Equity, Children's Equity Project, ASU. Dr. Xigrid Soto-Boykin is an Assistant Research Professor and the Director of Language Justice and Learning Equity at the Children's Equity Project at ASU. Her current work focuses on the topics of early childhood bilingualism; inclusion for preschoolers

with disabilities; language and early literacy development; and pedagogy, curricula, instruction, and assessment. Her doctoral training focused on the development of early literacy and language interventions for children in preschool and the early elementary grades. She also was an Institute of Education Science (IES) postdoctoral fellow focusing on implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in early childhood settings. Prior to her doctorate, Dr. Soto-Boykin served as an Americorp Reading Tutor in early elementary grades and as a school-based speech-language pathologist for children with reading and writing-focused learning difficulties. Dr. Soto-Boykin has extensive T/TA experience, leading the multilingual portfolio and co-leading the disability portfolio at the federally funded National Center for Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning, where she leads universal T/TA offerings—including presentations, webinars, and resource development. She also co-leads the CEP's work on the federally funded Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, focusing on recruitment and retention of diverse special educators as well as key indicators at the classroom and systems levels of inclusion of children with disabilities. Dr. Soto-Boykin leads the CEP's work on the Science of Reading, with a particular focus on its application with multilingual learners and children with disabilities. She also has authored or co-authored over ten peer reviewed articles and a book chapter and has presented at numerous national conferences related to the topics of early literacy and language.

Dr. Brittany Alexander, Assistant Research Professor at the Children's Equity Project, ASU. Dr. Alexander is an early childhood equity and policy researcher at the CEP. Her research broadly focuses on intersectional educational equity, teacher-child interactions, social and emotional learning, exclusionary discipline, and the impact of racism on children's educational experiences. She has experience in state evaluation work, including internal evaluation experience with Arizona's First Things First organization, and has worked extensively

on an external evaluation of Arizona's American Rescue Plan Act child care investments and associated impact on the child care system with Arizona's Department of Economic Security. She has also published policy briefs on state exclusionary discipline policies, ECE quality and equity, and policies supporting Black children and families, as well as peer-reviewed research on the development of hope in adolescence.

UCLA Center X Math Project Key Personnel/Subject Matter Experts

Dr. Kristine Ho, Director of the Center X Math Project. Dr. Ho has been Director of Center X Math Project at UCLA since June of 2017. Prior to her position at UCLA, Dr. Ho served as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Southern California (USC) Rossier School of Education where she taught math methods for elementary and secondary candidates. She has spent the latter part of her career engaging in and growing the work around Cognitively Guided Instruction by providing training and support in schools in California. Dr. Ho also served in the Teacher Education Program at UCLA as a Supervisor for Secondary Mathematics Candidates. Prior to this, she was a secondary mathematics teacher in the Centinela Valley Unified School District. Dr. Ho received her Ph.D. in Urban Schooling as DiME (Diversity in Math Education) Fellow from UCLA, her M.Ed from UCLA, her B.A. in Mathematics and B.A. in Linguistics from the University of Washington.

Dr. Cristina Navarro-Aguirre, Associate Director of Elementary Mathematics. Dr. Navarro-Aguirre is the Associate Director of elementary mathematics at the UCLA Mathematics Project with a background in teaching bilingual and dual language interdisciplinary education. Her professional experience includes coaching and facilitation in literacy, mathematics, and science. Her post-graduate work at UCLA and USC were centered on mathematics and language

development. Collaborating with culturally and linguistically diverse communities has led her to continue to reflect and study the intersection of mathematics and language development.

Karen S. Recinos Alvarado, early learning and elementary mathematics coach. Recinos Alvarado has served as an elementary and early education settings math coach with the UCLA Center X Math Project since 2014. She is also a Pre-K-3 Coherence Collaboration Coach for California Ed Partners and is part of the California Mathematics Project (CMP) Early Math Initiative Leadership team. She lectures at California State University, Dominguez Hills for Elementary Math Methods and Master in Dual Language courses. She is an active member of the Development & Research in Early Math Education (DREME) Network, a network of scholars across the country who engage in collaborative research and development with the goal of advancing the field of early math learning and teaching.

Dr. Lybroan James, CEO of STEMulate Solutions and consultant. Dr. James is a dynamic and engaging educator of 30 years with a proven record of generating and building relationships with administrators and stakeholders while transforming teachers' and students' mindsets and performance in elementary school mathematics. Lybroan's evidence-based approach led to one elementary school raising math proficiency rates from 10% to 83% in one year. Some of Lybroan's accomplishments include: Training and coaching mentors from 34 charter schools to support over 100 new teachers; designing and presenting teacher trainings nationally, supporting over 38,000 teachers on issues of equity, effective instruction, and social-emotional learning; and demonstrating exceptional communication skills as a national presenter and speaker, addressing difficult topics and systemic challenges through courageous conversations. Lybroan attended UCLA, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics/Economics, and Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, where he

earned a Master of Education. Having taught for fifteen years, Lybroan saw the inequities in educational opportunities, which ignited his passion to support the most underserved, disenfranchised group in public schools—young students of color. His company, STEMulate Solutions, addresses common core state standards (with an emphasis on STEM) and issues of equity, cultural competence, and social emotional learning. He helps teachers and students engage in rigorous math development through 21st-century engagement strategies. Lybroan's methodology infuses music, humor, and storytelling to communicate abstract concepts and problem-solving skills. He draws on his strong network, New Teacher Center and the UCLA and Harvard alumni networks, to increase capacity in serving pre-K and elementary school teachers around the country.

California Reading and Literature Project Key Personnel/Subject Matter Experts

Dr. Shervaughnna Anderson-Byrd, Executive Director of the California Reading and Literature Project. Dr. Anderson-Byrd is a proud graduate of Long Beach Unified School District and has been working in education for 30 years. She began her teaching career in Hong Kong, where she taught primary school and eventually became Head Teacher. Since returning to the United States, she has been a K-12 teacher, a reading specialist, and a site and district administrator; she has extensive instructional coaching knowledge and experience in establishing and nurturing professional learning experiences. She has served on California state committees concerning English Language Arts, English Learners, Standard English Learners, and instructional practices for Black/African American students. She supported the entire county of Los Angeles as a consultant for the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). She supported the state of California as a content specialist for Educational Outreach at the UC Office of the President in Oakland.

In Oakland, Shervaughnna had the opportunity to serve schools with high populations of Black/African American students. While working in Oakland, she noticed the inequitable resources and perpetual low academic outcomes for Black/African American students.
In 2008, while working at LACOE, she created the first Black/African American county professional learning community and created a space for educators to come and discuss issues concerning Black students. In 2010, Shervaughnna became the Director of Reading Programs at Center X at UCLA, where she continued her focus on supporting the most marginalized students by developing programs and awareness in local professional organizations. She also had the role of Director of the Parent Empowerment Program, where she brought the concept of a "village" framework to districts throughout Los Angeles County to support the most marginalized communities in our school systems to have a stronger voice in their children's learning.

In June of 2023, Shervaughnna was named the Statewide Executive Director for the California Reading and Literature Project, making her the first Black/African American person in this role. In 2023, Shervaughnna received the UCLA Black Excellence Award for dedication and contributions that illustrate commitment, integrity, and perseverance.

Buffett Institute Key Personnel/Subject Matter Experts

Walter Gilliam, Ph.D., executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. Gilliam came to the Institute from Yale University, where he was Elizabeth Mears & House Jameson Professor of Child Psychiatry and Psychology at the Yale Child Study Center and director of Yale's Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy. He is board president of ZERO TO THREE, a past president of Child Care Aware of America, board treasurer for the Irving Harris Foundation, and a former senior advisor to the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In 2023, he was named a senior

fellow working with the Bipartisan Policy Center's Early Childhood Initiative. Gilliam is co-recipient of the prestigious 2008 Grawemeyer Award in Education for the co-authored book, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*. His research involves early childhood education and intervention policy analysis (specifically how policies translate into effective services), ways to improve the quality of PreKindergarten and child care services, the impact of early childhood education programs on children's school readiness, and effective methods for reducing classroom behavior problems and preschool expulsion, as well as issues of COVID-19 transmission, vaccination, and health and safety promotion in early childhood settings. His scholarly writing addresses early childhood care and education programs, school readiness, and developmental assessment of young children.

Gilliam has led national analyses of state-funded PreKindergarten policies and mandates, how PreKindergarten programs are being implemented across the range of policy contexts, and the effectiveness of these programs at improving school readiness and educational achievement, as well as experimental and quasi-experimental studies on methods to improve early education quality. His work frequently has been covered in major national and international news outlets for print (e.g., New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Chicago Tribune, LA Times), radio (e.g., NPR), and television (e.g., CNN Headline News, NBC TODAY Show, CBS Early Show, ABC Good Morning America, ABC World News Tonight, FOX News). Gilliam has actively provided consultation to state and federal decision-makers in the United States and other countries (such as the People's Republic of China and the United Arab Emirates) and frequently provides testimony and briefings before Congress on issues related to early care and education.

Dalhia Lloyd, Ph.D., director of professional learning at the Buffett Institute. Dr. Lloyd joined the Institute in 2015, initially serving as a program specialist overseeing family and

community facilitators as part of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, then becoming associate director, then director, of professional learning. In her program specialist role, Dr. Lloyd worked closely with school-based personnel to implement policies and practices that foster relationships between schools, families, and communities. Prior to joining the Institute, she served as director of early childhood education services at the Child Saving Institute in Omaha. Earlier, she worked for Cedars Youth Services as program manager, developing and implementing training for early childhood staff. Dr. Lloyd's extensive work experience, academic training, and research have provided her with a solid foundation in the field, including several years of experience collaborating with educators, families, and communities. Her research focuses on culturally specific parenting practices and the social and cultural interactions between educators and children.

Cama Cole, MA, **associate director of professional learning at the Buffett Institute.** In her current role, Cama leads the design, development, and evaluation of innovative, evidence-based and human-first professional learning for early childhood professionals. She is committed to co-designing research, practice, and policy efforts from start to finish with those who are most likely to be impacted by an educational system that is responsive, equitable, and just. In 2021, Cama founded a three-year, statewide fellowship for early childhood professionals from across settings to unify the profession, increase continuity of care and transitions from birth through Grade 3, and build the individual and collective capacities of educators to lead change efforts in their communities. Cama has designed and facilitated professional learning for school-based educators across districts to create and implement culturally sustaining practices, family partnerships, and PreK to Kindergarten transitions. She has expertise in adult learning theory, communities of practice, and student and educator-centered learning.

In her previous roles as an Education Facilitator and Manager of Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives at the Institute, Cama worked across every level of the early childhood ecosystem to support the development and implementation of cross-cutting strategies for elevating Nebraska's early childhood workforce. She also supported school districts and community partners to implement the School as Hub approach, a comprehensive and innovative approach to improving outcomes for young children and families. Her range of professional experiences contribute to her ability to cohere ideas within and across the ecosystem to maximize impact and organize and distill information in accessible ways for multiple audiences. Cama's experience and expertise in co-creating solutions with early childhood professionals ensures that deliverables are responsive, scalable, and sustainable.

Amy Schmidtke, Ed.D., director of program development at the Buffett Institute. Amy Schmidtke, EdD, brings expertise in children's social and emotional development with extensive experience in early childhood education, professional learning, coaching, and leadership. In her current role, she spearheads initiatives aimed at reducing opportunity gaps and enhancing educational outcomes for children from birth through Grade 3. Her work includes providing instructional leadership, designing materials for program development, and developing and overseeing professional learning programs. Amy's presentations and workshops emphasize social-emotional development and guided play. With over 20 years of experience as an early childhood teacher and coach, Amy has consistently prioritized children's social and emotional development through relationship building, instructional practices, and classroom environments.

Amy's contributions include co-authoring professional resources and delivering professional development that prioritizes child-centered learning and development. In her recent project editing the 3rd edition of NAEYC's *The Intentional Teacher: Choosing the Best*

Strategies for Young Children's Learning, Amy emphasized current research and practices in the field focused on understanding each child, the value of strong adult-child and child-child relationships, and culturally responsive practices. Her other publications include chapters in the NAEYC Casebooks, such as "Counting Collections in Community" and "Prioritizing Listening to and Learning from Families," which highlight developmentally appropriate practices and family engagement strategies. Additionally, her qualitative study on kindergarten teachers' perceptions about the influences of professional learning on guided play, published in the *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, underscores her commitment to integrating research and practice to enhance early childhood education. As an adjunct instructor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, she has taught the graduate course "Social Worlds of the Young Child," and has also instructed courses on infant/toddler, preschool, and school-age child development at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha. Amy's work consistently highlights young children's social and emotional development as a foundation for life-long learning and well-being.

University of Oregon Key Personnel/Subject Matter Experts

Dr. Kent McIntosh, Ph.D., Philip H. Knight Chair of Special Education at the University of Oregon and Director, Educational and Community Supports research unit in the College of Education. Dr. McIntosh has been the PI or Co-PI of more than $98 million of external funds. He has been PI of 5 IES projects (and Co-PI of 3 more). He is the PI of an OSEP TA Center (the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), the largest grant in the history of the University of Oregon. His current research focuses on implementation and sustainability of school-based interventions, reducing racial discipline disparities, and integrated academic and behavior support. He is lead author of over 100 peer reviewed scholarly journal

articles and presenter of over 70 keynote addresses. He is Co-Director of the current Center on PBIS and facilitator of the Center's Equity Workgroup, as well as a founding member of the PBIS-SCP Canada Network. His awards received to date include Article of the Year from APA's Division 16, Article of the Year from CEC's Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders, the Distinguished Early Career Research Award from CEC's Division of Research, and both the Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Outstanding Research Award and the Fund for Faculty Excellence Award from the University of Oregon. He is the parent of a child with multiple disabilities and has also worked as a school psychologist, teacher trainer, and general and special education teacher.

Dr. Wendy Machalicek, Ph.D., BCBA-D, is Professor in Special Education at the University of Oregon. Dr. Machalicek has published 127 publications on the assessment and treatment of social communication delays and challenging behavior of young children with developmental delays, with emphasis on teacher- and parent-mediated interventions and single case research methods. She is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*. Dr. Machalicek has served as PI or Co-PI on federal grants totaling $10.8M. She is current PI of the OSEP-funded leadership grant, Project CO-LEAD, a consortium across UO, Purdue University, and the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign funding 17 future leaders in autism, advanced research methods, implementation science, and cultural adaptation. She is also the PI/PD of the IES Advanced Methods Training in Single-Case Design and Analysis. Dr. Machalicek brings the personal experience of having a child with multiple disabilities on an IEP and has worked as a preschool special education teacher in reverse inclusion early childhood settings, as a family support coordinator for foster parents of children with disabilities, and as a behavior consultant in elementary general education and special education settings.

Other Subject Matter Experts. In addition to our key personnel, we will engage other SMEs in our network (Table 1) as consultants to support ESS Center activities, as needed.

Table 1. Additional Subject Matter Experts in ESS Center Network

Name	Affiliation	Area of Expertise
Alfredo Artiles	Stanford University	Disability and language
Dina Castro	Boston University	Dual language learners
Stephanie Curenton	Boston University	Classroom quality measurement
Donna Ford	Ohio State University	Gifted and talented education
Annamarie Francois	University of California, Los Angeles	Equity and developmentally informed pedagogy; adult principles of learning
Paul Gorski	Equity Literacy Institute	Equity and support for students from low-income communities; adult principles of learning
Mary Louise Hemmeter	Vanderbilt University	Social emotional, disability inclusion
Neal Horen	Georgetown University	Mental health, social emotional
Tyrone Howard	University of California, Los Angeles	Equity in the early grades; social emotional
Kim Nesbitt	University of New Hampshire	Social emotional, disability inclusion
Pedro Noguera	University of Southern California	Social emotional; school success for students from low-income communities
Hakim Rashid	Howard University	Black boys and early childhood education
John Rogers	University of California, Los Angeles	adult principles of learning and T/TA; democracy and education
Dena Simmons	LiberatED	Equity and social emotional development
Rema Reynolds Vassar	Wayne State University	Parent and family partnerships
Conor Williams	The Century Foundation	English learners
Dawn Yazzie	DZIL NITSAA Consulting & Services	Indigenous communities; mental health

Technical Assistance Expertise

CEP TA Experience

The mission of the Children's Equity Project (CEP) is to dismantle systemic racism in learning systems and to close opportunity gaps so that all children thrive. Our work sits at the nexus of practice, policy, and research. All our work is applied and intended to build more equitable systems for children and families. We focus on a range of equity issues impacting children that are focused on creating equitable access to resources and opportunities that support children and family's well-being, experiences that are fair and just and culturally responsive, and outcomes that are not associated with children's demographic characteristics.

Our work is led by our core faculty and staff at Arizona State University. This core team includes the Executive Director (Dr. Shantel Meek) who provides strategic oversight and management of CEP operations; Senior Directors for Policy (Mr. Mario Cardona) and Training and Technical Assistance (Mrs. Lisa Gordon); 3 Content Area Directors who oversee specific content areas (i.e. Parent and Family Partnerships, Dr. Tunette Powell; Language Justice and Learning Equity, Dr. Xigrid Soto-Boykin; and Disability and Mental Health Policy, Dr. Evandra Catherine). In addition, the CEP team includes 5 additional faculty research professors who have unique and deep expertise across a variety of equity topics (e.g. parent and family partnerships, social emotional development, disproportionate discipline, inclusion of students with disabilities, literacy and language justice); 2 postdoctoral research scholars; a doctoral student; four undergraduate research assistants each of whom provide data management, research, analytic, and writing support; an assistant director of operations and budget who manages fiscal, contractual, programmatic, and human resources operations; an administrative assistant who supports with scheduling, coordination, travel and logistics; and a communications specialists

who leads the CEP's digital dissemination strategy, including social media engagement, listserv and eblast management, website management, video development and photography, and ensuring consistent branding. The CEP leads a collaboration of more than 25 partners who are national leaders in education and equity, have deep expertise on a broad range of education research and policy issues, and uniformly approach their work with an equity lens. Their expertise covers equity in funding and financing; inclusion and rights of students with disabilities; literacy, language justice and English learner issues; mental health equity; implicit bias and disproportionate discipline; early grade literacy; immigration issues as they affect children and families; culturally sustaining teaching and learning environments; equitable assessment and evaluation approaches; unique issues in tribal communities; equity for religious communities; and gender equity, among other topics. Our collaborators work at 15 organizations and institutions of higher education, including University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Howard University; University of Oregon; University of Denver at Metro State; University of California Los Angeles; University of California San Francisco; Yale University; Vanderbilt University; Florida International University; Boston University; Georgetown University; NORC at the University of Chicago; and others.

CEP has served as sub-contractors in several national, federally funded centers. These include the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning and National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety both funded by the Administration for Children and Families at the US Department of Health and Human Services; the Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at the USHHS; and the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center funded by the Office of Special Education Programs at the US

Department of Education. Major buckets of work have included: leading the revision of major frameworks and competencies to embed equity as a throughline to implement equitable practice, including the Framework for Effective Practice to inform best practice in early childhood teaching and learning (OHS), and the IECMHC Competencies to strengthen culturally responsive and sustaining mental health consultation practice for leaders and practitioners (COE); Developed and facilitated Community of Practice engagements for OHS Regional federal and T /TA staff on advancing the work of equity to create equitable and culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning environments for children and families (OHS); Developed and led a five-part webinar series to deepen understandings and address issues of equity, bias, and resulting disparities in IECMHC (COE); developed equity tool kits and audit resources to support educational leaders and practitioners (OHS/COE); Revised the Classroom Language Model tool to ensure equitable practices. We have also managed state level contracts, where we partnered with state leaders to identify recommendations to advance equity and enhance quality in 0-8 systems (Arizona); deeply examined the state's IDEA Part C system and provided recommendations for systemic improvements (Arizona); and developed a professional development plan to strengthen the capacity of the early childhood workforce of state leaders, teachers, and teacher preparation programs to advance equity in early learning so that all children can thrive (Vermont). We have also managed several local grants, including grants to support the early childhood workforce in Montgomery County. This included the development of a strategic plan with cross-functional leaders to advance the work of equity in early intervention system delivery (led by Lisa Gordon), and partnering with families in educational advocacy in Maryland (led by Dr. Tunette Powell). We have provided TTA to national education advocacy organizations to address issues of equity to support system level change for education leaders

and practitioners birth to Grade 3. This included: support to early childhood system P-3 Academy Leaders from AZ, CA, CO, KS, KY, MA, and MS to address CEPs *14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education* in their state plans (Education Commission of the States) and collaboration with NAEYC to revise core components of its Early Learning Standards Position Statement and Accreditation Items through an equity lens.

The Children's Equity Project is best known for our thought leadership, policy and systems focus, and deep experience with T/TA. Most recently, the Center published: ***Learning, Joy, and Equity: A Framework for Elementary Education***, in partnership with New America. The report outlines 14 core ingredients and observable indicators that should be embedded into elementary education systems, alongside local bright spots across the country implementing innovations across the core ingredients. Previously, we published several reports digging deeper into preschool through 3rd grade systems, including: *Start with Equity: From the Early Years to the Early Grades*, in partnership with the Bipartisan Policy Center; *Building a Universal Preschool System Around Head Start* in partnership with The Century Foundation; *A New Framework For Dual Language Education* in partnership with the Century Foundation; and *14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care and Education*, in partnership with the Equity Research Action Coalition at UNC Frank Porter Graham, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Head Start Association, Council for Professional Recognition, National Black Child Development Institute, National Indian Child Care Association, The Education Trust, and The BUILD Initiative. The reports provide an exhaustive research base and foundation of existing data that can be used to help inform the work of the Early School Success Content Center.

Buffett Institute TA Experience

Since its founding in 2013, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska has collaborated with stakeholders across the state and at all levels of the early education system—including SEAs (such as the Nebraska Department of Education and Nebraska's multi-county Educational Service Units [ESUs]), LEAs (including the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, its 11 school districts, and others), early educators, families, and community partners—to build capacity to provide quality, coordinated early learning services for all children from birth through Grade 3.

The Institute's TA services are guided by its "School as Hub Birth–Grade 3" approach, which is based on the idea that schools can serve as the "hub" to connect young children and their families to resources within and beyond school walls. This approach is designed to help policymakers and educators reduce or eliminate opportunity gaps for young children facing persistent economic and social disparities so that all children can reach their full potential.

The approach is built upon evidence-based practices in early education and informed by the Institute's extensive collaboration with 11 LEAs in Nebraska that are collectively committed to closing opportunity gaps for young children living in poverty. It focuses on enhancing quality, strengthening continuity, and advancing equity in early care and education to ensure all young children have the opportunity to learn, develop, and succeed. Using evidence-based principles of practice, the Institute guides LEAs as they translate these aspirational values into strategic action.

The School as Hub Birth–Grade 3 approach calls for engaging stakeholders from all levels of the system that surrounds the child, including SEA and LEA leaders; school leaders, teachers, and staff; child care providers; community members; and families. Objectives focus on promoting positive outcomes for children and families by building the capacity of SEAs and

LEAs in three domains that represent high-impact, high-leverage areas of focus for systemic change—leadership effectiveness, instructional excellence, and family and community partnership engagement.

Transitioning from typical educational practices to evidence-based practices focused on quality, continuity, and equity is an iterative, developmental process that takes place gradually, based on careful planning, mentoring, and the ability and willingness to adapt to changes as they unfold. To support this process, the Institute has developed a wide variety of TA tools, resources, and services, in close collaboration with SEA and LEA partners, including:

- **Strategic planning guides and services** to support LEAs in developing and operationalizing action plans that are tailored to their strengths and needs and are designed to advance quality, strengthen continuity, and enhance equity for all children and families, birth through Grade 3.
- **Community of practice tools and services** that use a collaborative inquiry approach to build and sustain powerful partnerships focused on enhancing leadership effectiveness, instructional excellence, and family and community partnership engagement.
- **An online early childhood video library**, currently being developed in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education, to serve as a professional development resource for early educators. The library comprises curated videos demonstrating concrete examples of diverse, high-quality early childhood teaching and learning practices.
- **Kindergarten transition planning tools and services** to help families, school district staff, Kindergarten teachers, and early care professionals ensure smooth transitions for young children as they move from one care setting to the next, including from preschool to Kindergarten.

- **Professional development tools and resources** developed with and for early childhood educators from diverse backgrounds to help educators shift their instructional practices to ensure all children have the types of experiences they need to support their behavioral and social-emotional health, as well as their intellectual development.

These tools, resources, and services are grounded in the science of early development and the current research on adult learning principles, coaching, and implementation science.

UCLA Center X TA Experience

Center X at the School of Education & Information Studies at UCLA is where research and practice intersect for urban school professionals. Center X brings together UCLA, public schools, and the diverse communities of Los Angeles, to demonstrate that schools for our most vulnerable student populations can become rich, rigorous, socially just, and caring learning communities where all children learn extraordinarily well and reach their full potential. Since 1994, Center X has provided educator professional development services to build teaching and leadership capacity and coherence in racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse low-income communities in Los Angeles. As a result of the robust track record of Center X's transformative educator preparation and professional development activity, Center X is currently the University lead partner for two California statewide technical assistance centers:

1. **The 21st Century California School Leadership Center**: In partnership with the California Department of Education, California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, State Board of Education, UC Berkeley, California Subject Matter Projects and Regional Academies, 21CSLA provides a robust, equity-forward approach to expand the capacity of California leaders at all levels. Informed by

improvement science, this initiative aims to improve instruction, schools, and districts to better meet the needs of underserved students, ultimately creating more equitable schools for historically marginalized pupil groups. Center X's primary role is to provide multi-tiered support to regional technical assistance centers through the California Subject Matter Projects, the Principal Leadership Institute, and Coaching Partnerships.

2. **California Teacher Residency Technical Assistance Center (RTAC):** In partnership with the Santa Clara County Office of Education, RTAC provides technical assistance to regional teacher residency hubs focused on: the benefits of establishing residency programs to teacher candidates, LEAs, and teacher preparation programs; best practices in recruitment of residents, particularly residents that represent the diversity of the state's pupil population; minimizing cost burden to residents, including leveraging Golden State Teacher Grant Program funding; best practices in partnership and administration of successful residency programs between LEAs and Commission-approved IHE-based teacher preparation programs; and scaling up and sustaining successful residency programs.• about best practices in partnership and administration of successful residency programs. Center X's primary role in this partnership is to provide evaluation support through its teacher education program.

Center X is also a key partner to the **California Community Schools Statewide Transformative Assistance Center (STAC)**. This initiative is designed to accelerate efforts across the state to reimagine community schools in alignment with the CCSPP Framework. Funded by the California Department of Education's California Community Schools

Partnership Program, the STAC supports schools' efforts to partner with community agencies and local government agencies to align community resources to improve student outcomes. These partnerships provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.

California Reading and Literature Project TA Experience

The California Reading & Literature Project (CRLP) provides transformative professional learning in Reading/Literacy. Our professional learning centers educators as learners and leaders to ensure that every California student receives high-quality, rigorous, comprehensive literacy instruction that is responsive to their identities, assets, and needs. CRLP intends that all California students complete high school as broadly literate individuals prepared for success in higher education, the work force, and civic life in the 21st century.

CRLP's effectiveness stems from its core values and the evolution of elements that serve them:

- **Literacy:** Literacy is a civil right.
- **Equity:** All students deserve high quality responsive, culturally affirming literacy instruction.
- **Leadership:** Teacher leadership fosters agency for courageous and informed decision-making.
- **Community:** Inclusive and collaborative educational communities advance collective expertise.
- **Inquiry:** Curiosity and questioning create a cycle of learning, knowing, and understanding.

CRLP actively develops teacher leadership to collaborate in teams with university faculty and researchers to develop CRLP's professional learning content. All CRLP programs are

aligned with California's ELA/ELD Framework. CRLP establishes partnerships with schools and districts to provide TK–12 teachers with comprehensive, high-quality professional learning for teaching reading, subject literacy and academic language.

CRLP advocates for better access to literacy instruction in TK–12 education in the following ways: creating professional learning designed to deepen teachers' content knowledge and strengthen their classroom practice as they develop their capacity as leaders, maintaining a statewide professional network to bolster teachers' subject knowledge and instructional skills in reading, literature and academic language, and building professional learning communities that contribute to teacher retention and effectiveness, especially in underserved schools and districts. CRLP sites endeavor to provide comprehensive technical assistance aimed at increasing the likelihood that teachers will successfully implement what they learned in professional learning. Our approach to TA is codified in the CRLP *Capacity Building Model*, which provides regional directors and district/school leaders guidance in the different stages of the implementation of new teaching practices and the necessary support for teachers. Whenever possible, CRLP designs in partnerships with districts and school sites to meet their professional learning needs through the development of short- and long-term plans that align with their efforts to implement goals.

University of Oregon TA Experience

The Educational and Community Supports Research Unit at the University of Oregon houses the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which was initially funded in 1998 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). The Center on PBIS supports schools, districts, and states to build systems capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behavior support. The broad purpose of PBIS is to improve the

effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of schools and other agencies. PBIS improves social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented groups. PBIS is an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting *students'* behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health. When implemented with fidelity, PBIS improves social emotional competence, academic success, and school climate. It also improves teacher health and wellbeing. It is a way to create positive, predictable, equitable and safe learning environments where everyone thrives. Over the past 26 years, the Center has established itself as a leader in the field of education, working together with state and local agencies to improve social, emotional, academic, and behavioral outcomes for all students. Its work is rooted in prevention, centered in equity, based on human-centered science, and only implemented through collaborative partnerships with students, families, educators, and their extended communities. The Center on PBIS achieves its aims through:

1. **Extensive implementation networks**. As stewards of the Center on PBIS for the past 25 years, our Center team (i.e., Co-Directors and Center Partners) has developed strong national, regional, SEA, and LEA implementation networks that currently provide TA to over 25,000 schools implementing PBIS in all U.S. states and most territories.
2. **Established implementation framework**. We have consistently applied a preventive, problem-solving logic within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework to organize supports. We emphasize (a) **equity** to promote access, meaningful participation, and improved **outcomes** for every learner, including students with disabilities, students with intensive needs, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; (b) evidence-based **practices** implemented in a culturally and contextually relevant manner; (c) **systems** that promote high-fidelity and sustained implementation of these practices within an

MTSS framework that matches student level of need with support intensity; (d) efficient collection and use of **data** to drive decision making at the SEA, LEA, school, classroom, and student levels; and (e) a **multi-tiered TA** approach that promotes efficient, effective, and sustained adoption of the PBIS framework (McIntosh et al., 2018) at scales of societal importance (Horner et al., 2017).

3. **Strong infrastructure and resources**. Our Center on PBIS has developed a strong infrastructure for universal, targeted, and intensive TA, including:

- A high-traffic national dissemination **website** with more than 750,000 users and more than 2.5 million page views during the past year
- A freely-available **web application** used by more than 13,000 schools to monitor fidelity and outcomes of PBIS implementation in the past year
- Research-validated **measures** to monitor organizational readiness, capacity, fidelity, and student outcomes
- A highly-rated **National PBIS Leadership Forum** that attracts over 1,500 participants annually from school, LEA, and SEA leadership teams
- Highly-used **blueprints** to guide implementation, professional development, and evaluation of the PBIS framework
- Free-access **training and coaching materials**
- Relevant and useful evaluation **briefs**, practice **guides**, and **tools**

4. **Extensive content expertise**. Center Partners bring experience and expertise in implementation frameworks (e.g., PBIS, MTSS, Interconnected Systems), evidence-based practices in a range of content areas (e.g., equity, special education, mental health, behavior support, intensive interventions, crisis response and recovery), and contextualized

implementation in a range of educational settings (e.g., rural, urban, and suburban schools; juvenile justice facilities; high-need and low-resource LEAs; settings exposed to natural disasters and violence). Center Partners will collaborate to support implementation, integration, and alignment of a range of evidence-based practices and systems to support SEAs, LEAs, schools, classrooms, and ultimately students and address critical problems affecting our schools and students (e.g., discipline disproportionality, crisis recovery).

Project Design

Early School Success Content Center Organization

The organization of the proposed ESS Center, including key roles and responsibilities, reflects the history, alignment, experience, and collaboration that our partner organizations have gleaned from decades of experience with training and technical assistance. As summarized in the organizational chart, the ESS Center will be led by a **Leadership Team** composed of three **Co-PIs/Co-Directors** from the CEP at Arizona State University in partnership with **Organizational Leads** from the UCLA Center X Math Project; the California Reading and Literature Project; the Buffett Early Childhood Institute; New America Fellow, Laura Bornfreund; and the Department of Special Education at the University of Oregon. Each of the six priority content areas will be led by a team of two **Content Co-Leads** from the partner organizations. The ESS Center's day-to-day operations, communications, and evaluation activities will be led by an **Interdisciplinary Support Team** from the CEP, including a Web Development/Communications Lead, Project Coordinator, and Evaluation Lead, with additional support from **Senior Advisors**. Leadership and implementation of ESS Center activities will also be informed by a compensated **Advisory Committee** composed of practitioners, content experts and representation from groups that are directly impacted by the work (e.g., school and district leaders, classroom teachers, parents, policymakers).

Key Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of key personnel related to the development and delivery of T/TA are described above in the Capacity-Building Services section. Roles and responsibilities related to management of the ESS Center are described below.

Co-PIs/Co-Directors. Dr. Shantel Meek, Dr. Tunette Powell, and Lisa Gordon, all from the CEP, will be Co-PIs for the ESS Center, with Dr. Powell and Lisa Gordon also serving as Co-Directors. The Co-PIs will be responsible for the overall operations of the center, including

communication with OESE, strategic planning, budget, implementation of scope of work, evaluation, dissemination, field and partner collaborations, personnel management, contract management, and quality control. ***Dr. Meek, PI*** will serve as a leader for the ESS Center, responsible for overall strategic planning; communications with federal project officers; establishing strong partnerships with national, state, and local organizations of relevance; and participating in dissemination efforts, as appropriate. ***Dr. Powell, Co-PI and Center Co-Director, Resource Development***, will be responsible for the daily operations of the Center, with support from a Project Coordinator (TBD), to include budget tracking, reporting, subcontract partnerships, evaluation and quality control efforts, performance management, stakeholder engagement, and dissemination (including in-person conference opportunities and direct digital dissemination or partner-facilitated dissemination). She will also oversee all resource development efforts, including annual states of the research, policy, and practice scans, as well as the development of tools for the field. As such, she will serve as a direct supervisor to Mr. Eric Martinez, Web Development/Communications Lead, and Dr. Brittany Alexander, Evaluation Lead. Dr. Powell will also serve as Content Co-Lead for family partnerships and attendance, considering her life's work and deep expertise in these issues. ***Lisa Gordon, Co-PI and Center Co-Director, Training and Technical Assistance,*** will oversee all T/TA efforts, including universal and targeted capacity-building activities. Lisa will be responsible for managing relationships with the National and Regional T/TA Centers, as well as other relevant T/TA centers (e.g. the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning). She will also be responsible for managing the pool of subject matter experts who will participate in regular T/TA offerings. Lisa and Dr. Powell will jointly supervise and be supported by the project coordinator.

Organizational Leads. Organizational Leads will oversee the administrative, budgeting, communication, and reporting responsibilities for their respective organizations, in close coordination with the Co-PIs. Each Organizational Lead will also contribute to annual research and/or policy reviews related to their respective area of expertise, assist with identifying bright spots, and will participate in T/TA capacity-building activities, as previously described (see Capacity-Building Activities).

Content Leads. The Center's T/TA work will be implemented by six content teams**,** under the leadership of Content Leads (see organizational chart) and in close partnership with the Co-PIs/Directors and Organizational Leads. Each content team will work under the "A-E-O" framework to ensure equity is at the foundation of all T/TA work across access, experiences, and outcomes. At the beginning of each year, content teams will develop detailed work plans, timelines, and specific deliverables, to be finalized together with the Leadership Team and the federal project officer/s. Content teams will develop resources, facilitate webinars, and provide universal and targeted technical assistance, as previously described (see Capacity-Building Activities). In addition, each content team will have their work informed by annual listening sessions with a related stakeholder panel during the strategic planning season of each year. These panels will include state leaders, district and school leaders, and practitioners. Families of children in the early grades will be a part of each of these groups.

Interdisciplinary Support Team. The Center's ***Evaluation Lead, Dr. Brittany Alexander***, will lead performance evaluation efforts in consultation with Senior Advisor, Dr. Iheoma Iruka (see Performance Management and Evaluation section for more information). The ***Web Development/Communications Lead, Mr. Eric Martinez***, will lead web development and strategic communications efforts (see Communications and Dissemination, later in this section,

for details). The ***Project Coordinator (TBD)*** will have content expertise and deep experience with logistics and operations. This person will oversee the day-to-day logistics of the center, remaining in daily contact with the Directors and in close communication with the Leadership Team. The Project Coordinator will provide the Directors and the Leadership Team with weekly updates on center activities, manage contracts and communication with advisors and contractors, facilitate advisory committee meetings, and importantly, in partnership with the Directors, ensure adherence to timelines and quality control of all resources and activities. Together, the Directors and Project Coordinator will ensure effective leadership, project management, innovation, strategic planning and execution, delivery of consistently high quality and timely resources and activities, and compliance with reporting.

Senior Advisors. Senior advisors and subject matter experts will be compensated as consultants to support ESS Center activities. ***Dr. Lebraughn James*** will serve as consultant for the Center, supporting the Math Content Team, including in the development of resources and related T/TA efforts. ***Dr. Iheoma Iruka*** will serve as a senior advisor on research and evaluation, supporting Dr. Alexander and the Center Co-Directors on the national assessment survey design, analysis, and interpretation. In addition to serving as a content co-lead for literacy instruction, ***Dr. Xigrid Soto-Boykin*** will serve as a senior advisor on disability and multilingualism, to ensure all products and deliverables meaningfully integrate children with disabilities and multilingual children. The Center will also manage a pool of subject matter experts (SME) with deep expertise across the Center's priority areas (see Table 1, p. 61). These experts will support fireside chats and other universal capacity-building offerings, as appropriate, and will receive compensation for their work as consultants.

Advisory Committee. Advisory committee members will represent a range of experiences and expertise with diverse representation across social identities (i.e., race, gender, age, ability, gender, social economic status, language use, and religion). The advisory committee will support the leadership team in ensuring all content across ESS Center activities and tiers of T/TA are community-centered and meet the needs of the content areas. The advisory committee will also advise on the best approaches to meet the educational needs of the regions and the needs of all students, including those furthest from opportunity.

Management Plan

Our ESS Center team embraces a leadership structure that ensures a diversity of perspectives and experiences are reflected in our work, while also ensuring consistently high-quality resources and activities that are delivered on schedule. The organizational chart clearly delineates our roles and supervisory structure. The internal communication flow will include: a **kickoff and annual team retreats** with the leadership team to strategically plan, review evaluation themes, discuss emerging needs, and develop detailed work plans. **Weekly leadership team meetings** with the full leadership team, project coordinator, and key consultants and contractors on an as needed basis. We will use weekly meetings for three purposes: to check in on progress, setbacks, and needs in ongoing work; to discuss quality assurance and continuous quality improvement across the Center's work; and as a platform for strategic planning and innovation. Also, the project coordinator will send an **internal weekly roundup of all center activities** to the Leadership Team, including upcoming timelines, requests for support, and other timely, relevant information. The Co-Directors will remain in **daily contact** with the Project Coordinator to ensure appropriate oversight and support for center

activities, and the Leadership Team will remain in close contact with each other, the co-Directors, and the Project Coordinator, as needed between meetings.

Partnerships

The ESS Center partnerships represented in this application emphasizes deep subject matter expertise, long standing experience in training and technical assistance, specifically in federally funded national centers, strong working relationships, name recognition, and trust. Most of the entities in this partnership have worked together previously. Each of the PIs and Co-Directors have a long history of collaboration with the partner organizations. Additionally, the proposed ESS Center will build on the CEP's history of being led in partnership with scholars and advocates at several universities and organizations across the United States—an intentional decision that has expanded our work, collaboration, and outreach efforts.

Personnel Management

Our personnel management system is rooted in equity and can be broken down into the following four areas: (1) hiring, (2) supervising and leading, (3) development, and (4) work culture and retention.

Hiring. As noted above, our hiring practices are designed to ensure equity through accessible entry points (e.g., job descriptions, titles, etc.); diverse slates and intentional outreach of diverse qualified candidates when we do not have a diverse slate; interview guides that ask candidates the same questions, with interview questions being given ahead of interviews to support candidates who need more time to process responses; and outcome assessments that allow us to identify patterns, themes, strengths, and weaknesses in our hiring approaches.

Supervising and Leading. We propose a co-director leadership structure, which we believe encourages collaborative decision making. Our co-directors will regularly participate in leadership assessments and annual leadership training. This co-director leadership structure will also allow us to build a center that can be more equitable in the areas of performance management and development. Our co-directors will support the ESS Center team's performance through quarterly checks that focus on goal setting, progress, development plans for proposed goals and future goals, and corrective action plans if team members are not meeting expectations. We will be using the PeopleSoft performance management platform to capture and store information.

Development. The ESS Center will approach development in three ways: (1) leadership development (succession planning), (2) on-the-job development (opportunities for team members to grow in their roles), and (3) performance development (opportunities to develop a team member who is not performing). Development for our team members will be approached in the same way we think about child development and teacher development—that is every person deserves differentiated, individualized development plans that allow them to grow. Our development plans will be guided by the 70-20-10 rule of development—70 percent on the job experience that comes from a team member doing their job; 20 percent exposure, such as being part of a formal mentor program or being given a stretch assignment; and 10 percent formal education such as training, webinars, and courses.

Work culture and retention. Retention is about the health and wellbeing of employees. Considering this, our retention strategy is about care, inclusion, and development. By care, we mean competitive compensation and benefits, recognition, affirmation, respect, and dignity in the workplace, as well as caring for the whole employee. Inclusion, to us, is about opportunities for

our team to be included in decision making conversations regardless of role and opportunities to connect and learn from and with each other. It also means that we are fostering a workplace culture that affirms team members across social identities (race, gender, religion, etc.).

On a quarterly basis, we will create opportunities for our team to get to know each other through one-on-one pairings. Team members will be paired across content areas and expertise for 30 minutes to connect informally. At regular team meetings, we will debrief the one-on-one pairings. Additionally, we will employ network cohorts for our senior advisors to cultivate peer learning communities across content expertise.

Even as we commit ourselves to equitable practices across these areas, we recognize that we must also have a succession plan in place. Included in our performance management plan is a succession plan that ensures our ESS Center is able to achieve its goals. Our succession plan for co-directors, content leads, and the evaluation lead includes an immediate, emergency successor (someone who can immediately serve as interim); ready-now successor (someone who is ready now and can take the team over as their new job); ready-soon (someone who could be ready within the next six to 12 months); and ready later (someone who is still a couple of years from being ready with the appropriate development and support, e.g., training, being asked to attend meanings that give them exposure and experience).

Needs Assessment and Stakeholder Engagement

Partnerships with Regional and National Comprehensive T/TA Centers and other applicable T/TA Centers. A seamless partnership with the Regional and Comprehensive T/TA Centers will be vital to ensuring that the ESS Center is providing content that is relevant, timely, and directly applicable to the challenges facing the field. The first activity we will engage in as a Center is to host a kickoff meeting, and establish a formal partnership, with the Regional and

National Centers, identifying clear activities and people responsible for continuous communication. This may include monthly calls to assess major needs in the field as well as emerging innovations at the SEA, LEA, TEA, or REA levels. In addition, we will establish close partnerships with other relevant T/TA centers, including the National Center for Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning, the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, and the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support TA Center, to engage in joint work, understand emerging needs and innovations in their areas of focus, and inform our strategic planning and activities. Although our planned activities are described throughout this application, we will maintain a level of flexibility to attend to emerging needs, while ensuring priority areas are thoroughly covered.

Advisory Committee. We will establish an advisory committee in year 1 of the Center. This advisory committee will be composed of people representing a variety of roles in the early grade space and will be primarily tasked with surfacing key challenges, best practices, and innovations in the field. The group will include 10 to 15 members, including state policy leaders, superintendents, principals, educators, mental health staff, disability staff, parents, and family coordinators. We will establish partnerships with organizations (e.g., UnidosUS, National Parents Union, Racial Justice Now, Parenting for Liberation, the Village Initiative, National Association of Black Male Educators, Latinx Parenting, etc.) who represent these various relevant groups to identify committee members who represent diverse backgrounds, roles, and experiences. Every 18 months, we will rotate individuals off the committee and welcome new ones to ensure an even more diverse array of perspectives are presented.

Office Hours. Our office hours offering (described fully above) will enable us to have direct contact with a wide array of interested parties at the educator, school, SEA, LEA, TEA,

and REA levels. Our goal with office hours is to establish a venue that is open ended, field driven, and responsive to emerging needs. That is, each "office hour" may have a general, broad theme (e.g. literacy) to ensure the appropriate SMEs and Center staff are available, but the time will be spent hearing from interested parties, answering their questions, and using thoughts and themes that arise to inform future T/TA offerings.

National Survey. We propose to conduct a national survey (fully described above) that will query a variety of key parties in the early grade space about their experiences and challenges in their respective roles. This will include school leaders, educators, and families, aiming to understand educational practices from a variety of perspectives. These data will inform our T/TA strategy by ensuring our products and resources are aligned with need and capturing bright spots of innovation. More broadly, this survey will provide insights to the field on the perspectives of these diverse parties on the early grade system, data that is sorely lacking currently, impacting policy decisions, resource allocation, professional development, and so on.

Stakeholder Engagement. Beyond partnerships with national T/TA centers, we will also establish formal partnerships with relevant parties in the early grade research, practice, and policy spaces. These partnerships will grow from and expand beyond the extensive partnerships the ESS Center partners already have. We will work with these partners in a variety of ways, starting with a "field kickoff meeting" that will bring together all relevant organizations for a Center launch where we will discuss the Center's goals, plans, activities, and offerings. We will partner with these organizations in a variety of ways, as appropriate, such as: sharing all resources, newsletters, and information with their respective memberships and listservs; inviting them to be featured in universal offerings, including webinars, as relevant; partnering with them to identify bright spots and innovations in the field; presenting at their conferences and events, as

requested; and as appropriate, co-authoring, disseminating, and/or branding resources. These organizations include, but are not limited to, those listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Potential Partner National Organizations

The School Superintendents Association	National Association of Special Education Teachers
National Alliance of Black School Educators	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Education Commission of the States	National Association for the Education of Young Children
Commission for Chief State School Officers	National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association for Bilingual Education	Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents
Multicultural Student Action Network	National Association of Elementary School Principals

Budget Set-Aside. Our budget includes the required 5% set aside to respond to emerging needs, as identified by the Regional Centers and the National Center. The ESS Center will partner with OESE program officers to determine the most appropriate application of those funds to respond to emerging needs. We will take into account each of the aforementioned partnerships and data sources in determining the highest need areas that require greater resource allocation.

Communications and Dissemination

We have been highly successful in our dissemination strategies used with the CEP and other federal TA centers, and we will continue to use those approaches. Strategies that we have described include our highly rated and used websites with hundreds of materials for download, our strong social media following and successful social media postings, the co-branding and dissemination of materials with partner organizations and other TA Centers, sharing of our materials through other TA entities (e.g., ECTA, NHSA, COE) and partner organizations, conference presentations and publications, and our national conference. Together, we have hosted hundreds of webinars, with tens of thousands of views and hundreds of thousands of

views via social media. Our digital dissemination efforts, led by Mr. Eric Martinez, will include a constantly updated website; a quarterly newsletter; a social media strategy that is planned, tracked, and adjusted based on engagement; cross postings and sharings across each of the five partner organizations represented on the ESS Center team; and strategic leveraging of other field partnerships with other T/TA Centers and national organizations. We will track overall website traffic and pinpoint which geographies our content is being engaged with based on the most social media impressions and engagement, along with open and click rates from our quarterly newsletters and email marketing promotions for new resources.

Table 3. Activities, Milestones, and Timeline

ACTIVITIES AND MILESTONES	YEARS 1	2	3	4	5
Universal Capacity Building Activities					
ESS Hub website					
ESS Hub website development (months 1–6) and launch (month 7)	X				
Ongoing site maintenance and improvements		X	X	X	X
Research, policy, and practice landscape briefs					
Research landscape briefs in priority content areas Annual landscape analysis and publication milestones: Months 1–3: systematic review of research literature Months 3–9: brief writing Months 9–12: feedback from advisory panel Dissemination	X	X	X	X	X
Policy landscape briefs Annual landscape analysis and publication milestones: Months 1-3: policy landscape analysis Months 3-9: brief writing Months 9-12: feedback from advisory panel Dissemination	X	X	X	X	X
National survey					
Development	X				

Pilot the survey (months 1–6) and field the survey (months 7–12)		X			
Clean, interpret, and share initial findings			X		
Follow-up survey, focused on high need areas				X	
Publish findings from follow-up survey					X
Practice landscape "bright spots" briefs Annual landscape analysis and publication milestones: Months 1–6: National scan; relevant party interviews Months 9–12: Write and publish report	X	X	X	X	X
Disseminate research, policy, and practice briefs on ESS Hub	X	X	X	X	X
Implementation tools					
Template: Early Grade Strategic Planning		X			
Guide: Closing Opportunity Gaps in the Early Grades			X		
Field initiated tool(s)				X	X
Accessible T/TA opportunities					
Quarterly webinars	X	X	X	X	X
Monthly fireside chats	X	X	X	X	X
Strategic communication and dissemination plans					
Quarterly newsletter	X	X	X	X	X
Social media	X	X	X	X	X
Presentations/workshops at national conferences	X	X	X	X	X
TARGETED CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES					
Professional learning communities focusing on "bright spots"		X	X	X	X
Community of practice on early school success			X	X	X
Micro learning suites		X	X	X	X
Monthly early grade support office hours	X	X	X	X	X
EVALUATION					
Finalize evaluation plan	X				
Client satisfaction survey					
Develop and pilot (months 1–6)	X				
Ongoing use of survey (beginning month 7 of year 1)	X	X	X	X	X
Content area knowledge development survey					
Develop (months 1–6), expert review (months 6–9), pilot (months 9–12)	X				
Ongoing use of survey for targeted TA		X	X	X	X
Implementation survey					

Develop (months 1–6), expert review (months 6–9), pilot (months 9–12)	X				
Ongoing use of survey for targeted TA		X	X	X	X
Website analytics					
Review website analytics on an ongoing basis after initial launch	X	X	X	X	X
ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATION					
Administration and management of the Center	X	X	X	X	X
Dissemination planning and implementation	X	X	X	X	X
Collaboration and coordination with National and Regional TA Centers	X	X	X	X	X

Performance Management and Evaluation Plan

The efforts of the TA center to achieve the intended outcomes will be examined through a formative evaluation throughout the project and a summative evaluation. The Early School Success Content Center Logic Model in the Approach to Capacity-Building section details the key inputs and activities that will lead to the specified outputs and outcomes (short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes). Annual service plans will be submitted each year to update the Center's five-year plan to account for evolving client needs, and the evaluation will be adjusted accordingly. Additionally, the Center will ensure that data needed for any independent national evaluation is collected and shared as appropriate.

Our key evaluation goals are to understand the extent to which TA activities were delivered as intended and assess the extent to which outputs and outcomes were achieved. During the first 6 months of the grant period the evaluation plan will be finalized to reflect any updates in TA activities with input from all partners. The evaluation is specifically targeted at four key performance measures: 1) increased knowledge and capacity of key decision makers, 2) increased implementation of child-centered pedagogy and instruction, 3) increased intentional and coordinated collaboration among education agencies at all levels, and 4) increased number of

universally accessible T/TA resources focused on ESS Center priorities. These performance measures will build collectively in service of the long-term desired impacts 1) increased knowledge, leadership, and capacity related to providing equitable PK-3 learning environments and 2) improved educational opportunities, educator practice, and student outcomes. Additionally, findings from the national survey will be used to inform both the content and evaluation of TA.

Performance Measures

Across all performance measures, the center will have a streamlined set of standards and practices for continuous quality improvement. Namely all interactive sessions will include a **client satisfaction survey** regarding client satisfaction and perceptions of the usefulness, quality, and relevance of services. When it is not possible to collect information regarding the user of the resource (i.e., static online reports), we will examine Google analytics and track the citation of any center resources in published works. Additionally, **content knowledge surveys** and **implementation surveys** will be conducted to understand the outcomes of targeted TA. Surveys will be kept as short as possible (under 20 minutes to complete) to reduce participant burden.

1) Increased knowledge and capacity

The Center aims to increase the knowledge and capacity of key decision makers at the state and local levels (i.e., state superintendents of education, district superintendents, school principals and assistant principals, other state and local education leaders, and their respective leadership teams) through both universal and targeted TA activities. Specifically, TA activities including an ESS Hub; annual state of the research, policy, and field syntheses across each priority area; "Bright Spot" quarterly webinars; and fireside chats are expected to serve as universal opportunities for expanded knowledge. Targeted TA activities including PLCs, CoPs,

micro-learning sessions, and expert office hours, are expected to lead to increased knowledge and capacity. The completion of activities and associated outputs will be tracked to understand if the implementation of these activities leads to increased knowledge and capacity for TA participants. As part of the Center, a database will be created collecting basic demographic information on TA participants to better understand the reach of activities and to inform the needs of the field.

Static universal activities (i.e., ESS Hub written resources) will be tracked through Google analytics and citations. Interactive sessions such as "Bright Spot" quarterly webinars, fireside chats, expert office hours, and micro-learning sessions will be followed by the client satisfaction survey. Both PLC and CoP offerings will include both client satisfaction and pre/post participation content knowledge surveys. The client satisfaction survey will be developed such that general user expectations and experience information is collected post participation. A relevant content knowledge survey will be created for each unique topic area (i.e., developmentally appropriate pedagogy, family partnerships and attendance, math, literacy, social emotional instruction and learning, and kindergarten transitions) containing a limited number of questions (i.e., 10–20 questions) related to knowledge and application of the content area administered pre/post. Both the client and content knowledge surveys will be developed in year 1 of the grant in consultation with SMEs, with the first six months used for question development, months six to nine for feedback and expert review, and months nine to twelve piloting. All developed surveys will undergo user validation processes and expert review (i.e., content and experiential expertise).

2) Increased implementation

Next, the evaluation will examine the extent to which TA activities resulted in increased implementation of key child-centered pedagogy and instructional practices across the priority

content areas (developmentally appropriate pedagogy, family partnerships and attendance, math, literacy, social emotional instruction and learning, and kindergarten transitions). Participation in targeted TA activities (PLC and CoP) are expected to increase the implementation of evidence-based practices across content areas and include more intensive forms of support to facilitate behavior change. First, PLCs will allow participants to focus on the implementation of content area knowledge through presenting real scenarios on identified topics to colleagues for discussion and recommendation. Additionally, the peer-engagement component facilitates the expansion of implementation ideas and strategies through real-world examples. For CoP participants, the sessions will utilize developed implementation tools that will facilitate the increased implementation of best practices. Therefore, in addition to the client and relevant content knowledge surveys, PLC and CoP participants will be asked to complete the implementation survey. This survey will have questions on the extent to which participants have implemented their stated objectives through the use of research- and community-informed, practice-based tools and resources as well as open-ended response options regarding implementation strategies more broadly in their particular area of focus. The implementation survey includes additional questions tailored to the specific content area or focus of the targeted TA. Additionally, participants will be asked to share experiences with implementation including any key barriers and areas of improvement in TA focus and delivery.

3) Increased, intentional collaboration

We will assess the extent to which TA recipients have increased intentional collaboration between LEAs, REAs, SEAs, and TEAs specifically focused on early grade priorities and practices via the PLCs and CoPs. Specifically, as part of targeted TA sessions, participants will be encouraged to collaborate with any known team members and across attendees. For PLCs, participants come from cross-disciplinary LEA teams and, over six months, must collaborate on

real scenarios, helping to facilitate the development of collaborative skills and build relationships. For CoPs, participants include representatives of SEAs, REAs, TEAs, and LEAs in cross-disciplinary teams, meeting twice a month for 12 months, facilitating relationships across levels and encouraging joint growth and development. To determine the extent to which participants feel they collaborate across disciplines and across SEA, REA, TEA, and LEA levels, items will be added to the client satisfaction survey asking participants to report perceptions of collaboration and any relevant evidence of this collaboration.

4) *Increased number of universally accessible resources*

All universal TA resources, and the micro-learning and expert office hours targeted TA offerings, are aimed at increasing the number of universally accessible resources. Specifically, the ESS Hub, including state of the field briefs, implementation tools, quarterly webinars, fireside chats, office hours, and micro-learnings, will provide offerings that can be universally accessed. Additionally, a social media toolkit strategy and strategic partnerships with organizations that serve as state and local education collaboration platforms (e.g., Education Commission for the States, National Association for State Leaders in Early Education, Multicultural Student Achievement Network) will be used to intentionally expand access. To ensure these activities are implemented and achieve the stated aim of serving as a universal resource, all static offerings will be examined through an annual website audit. Google analytics data will be used to identify strengths and weaknesses, accessibility audits will be conducted, and usability testing will be implemented. Live webinars and fireside chats will include the client satisfaction survey.

Other Attachment File(s)

*** Mandatory Other Attachment Filename:** Resumes.pdf

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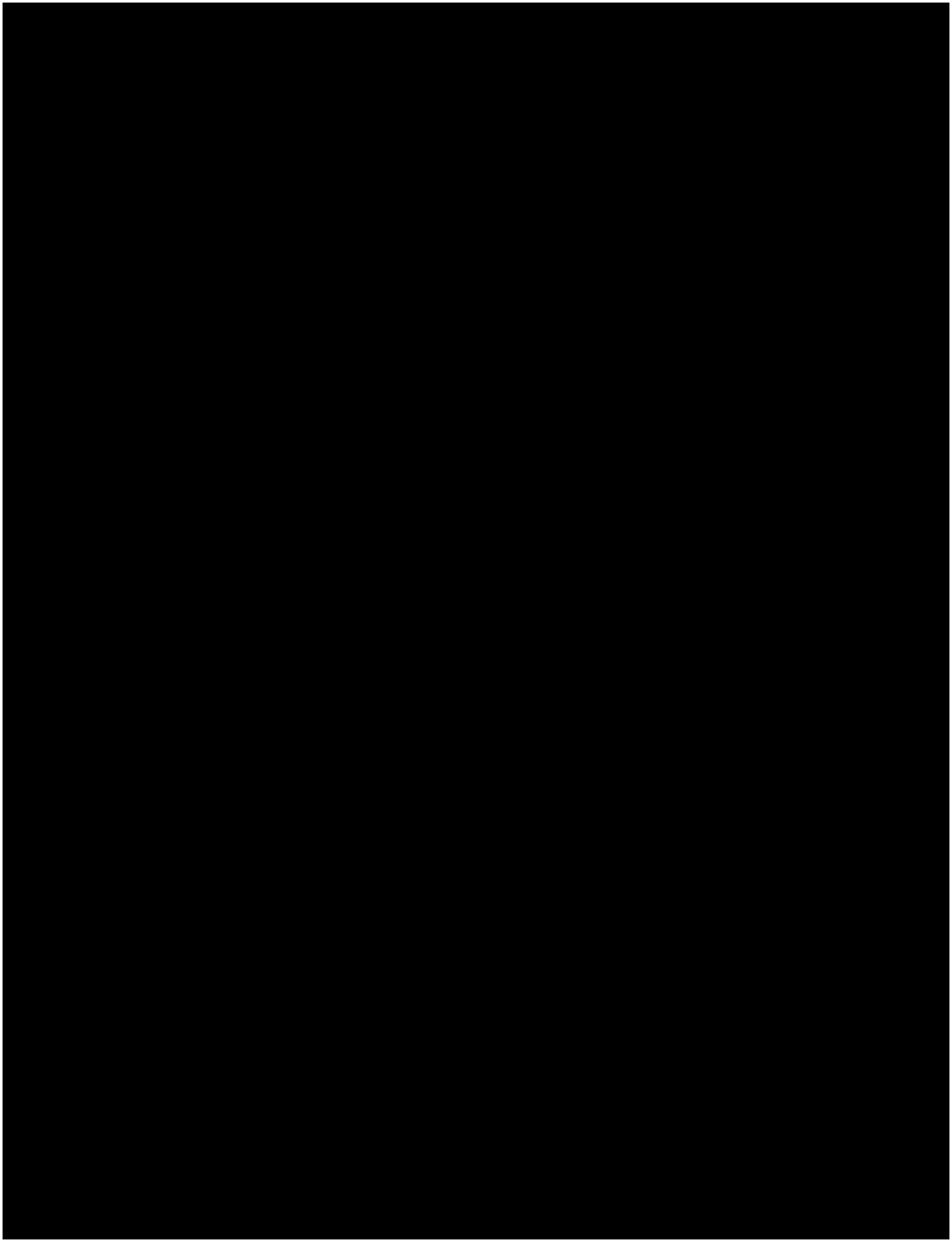

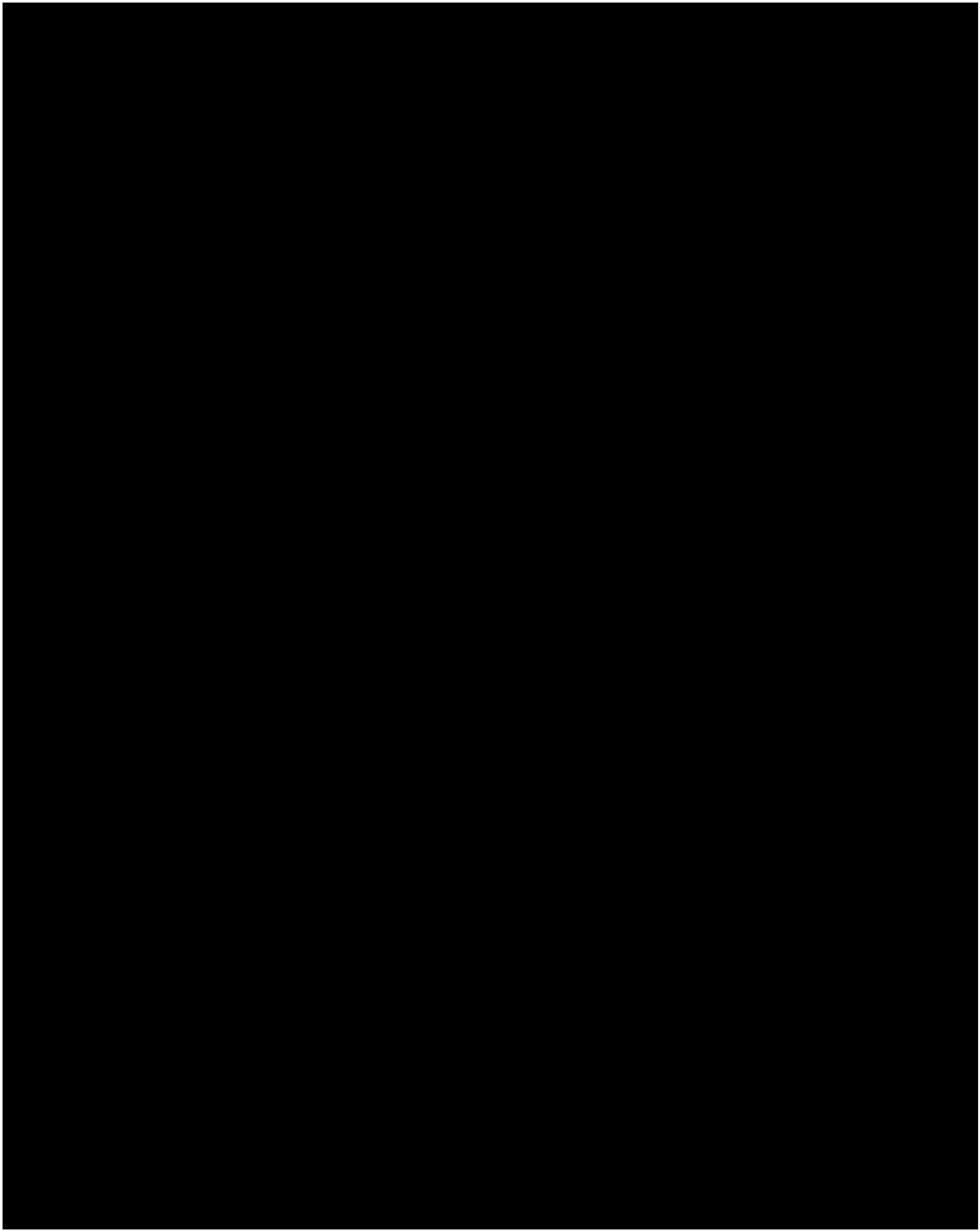

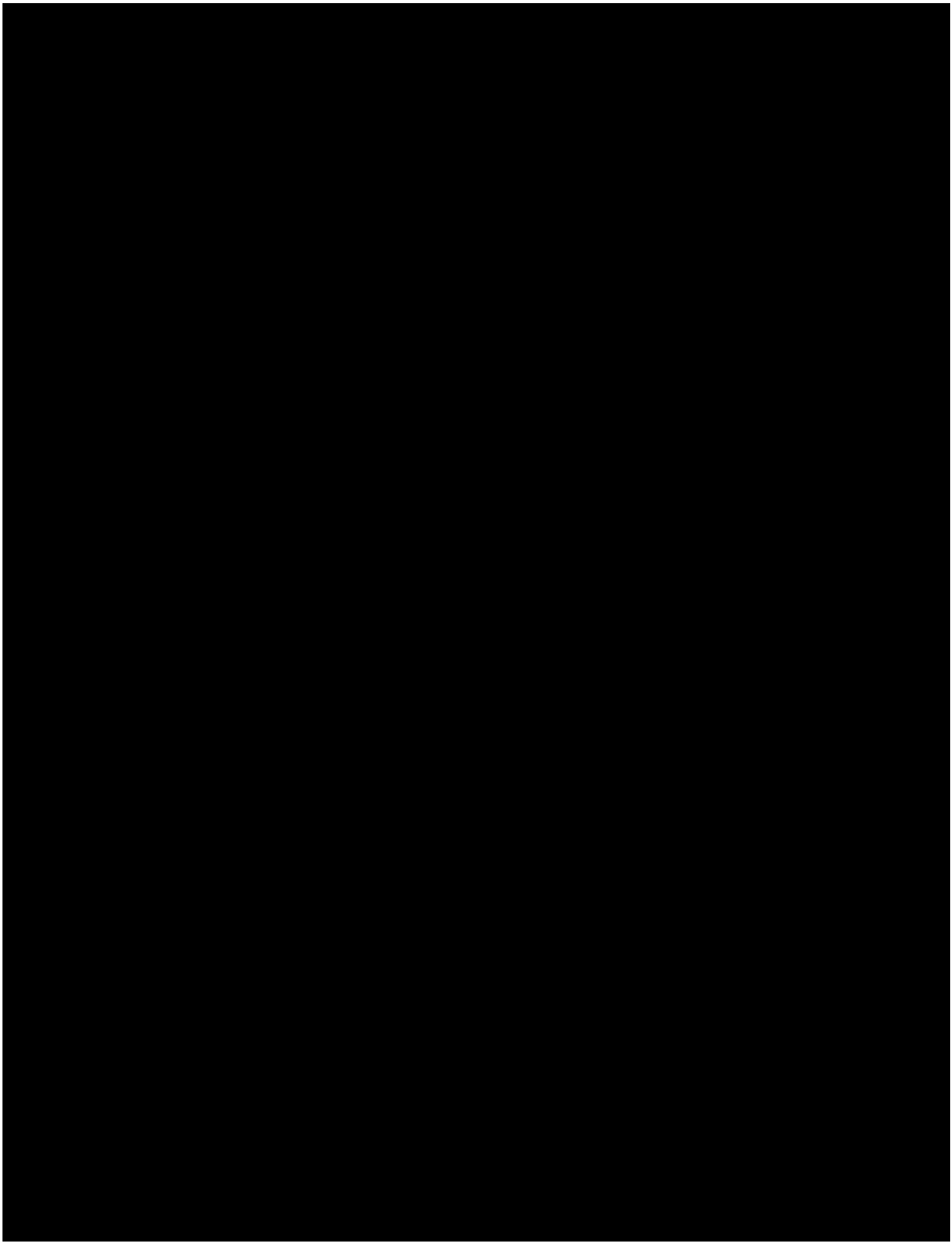

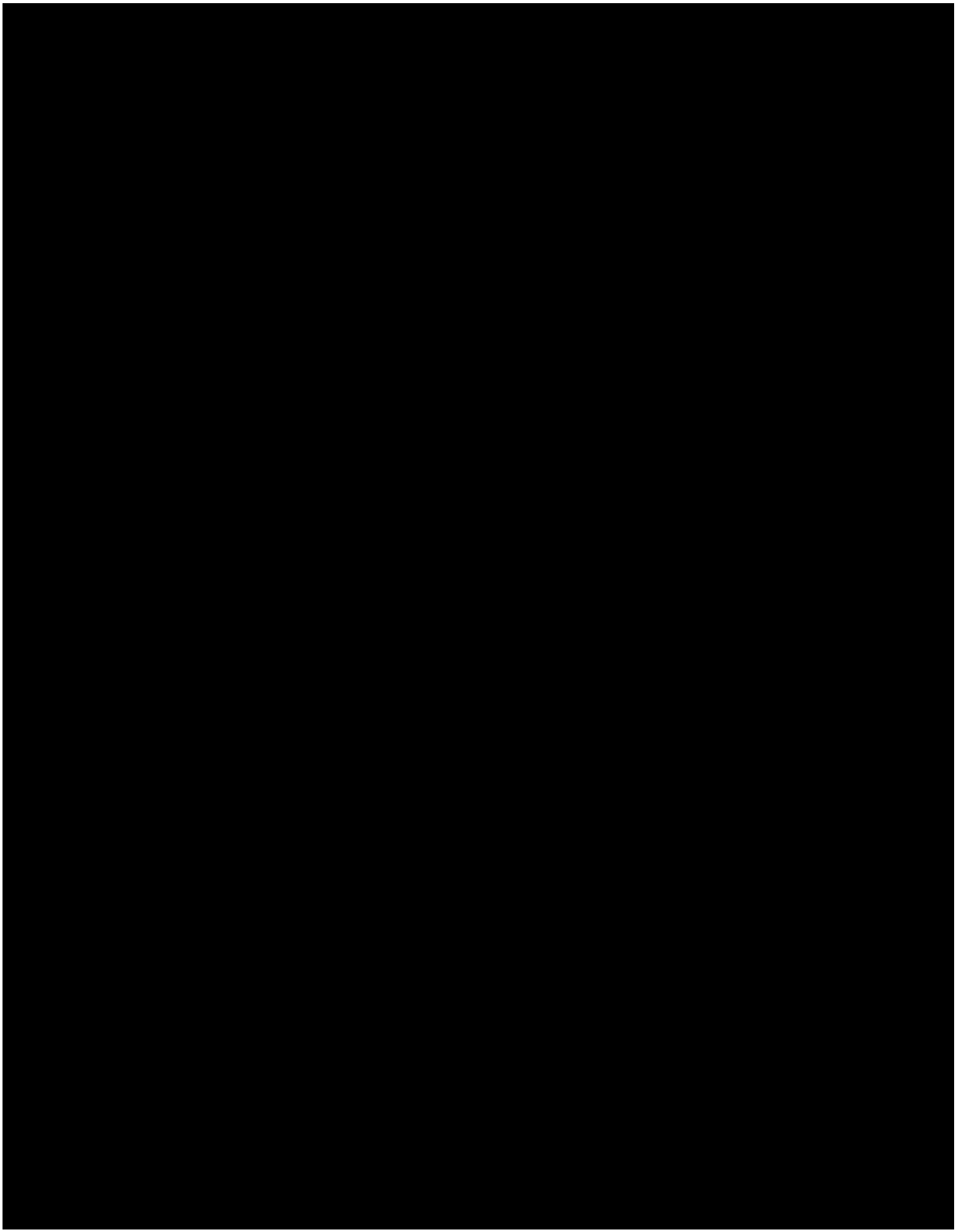

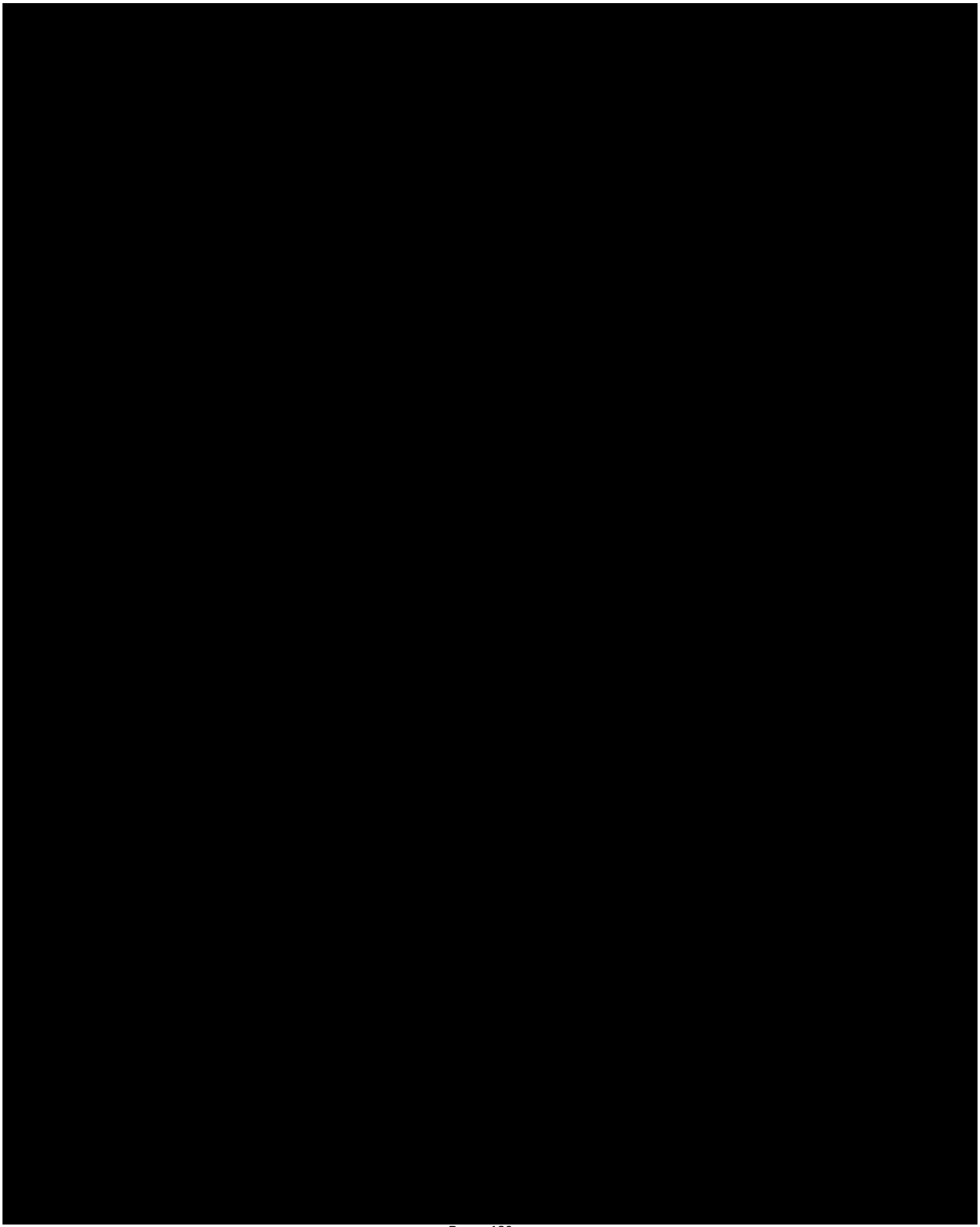

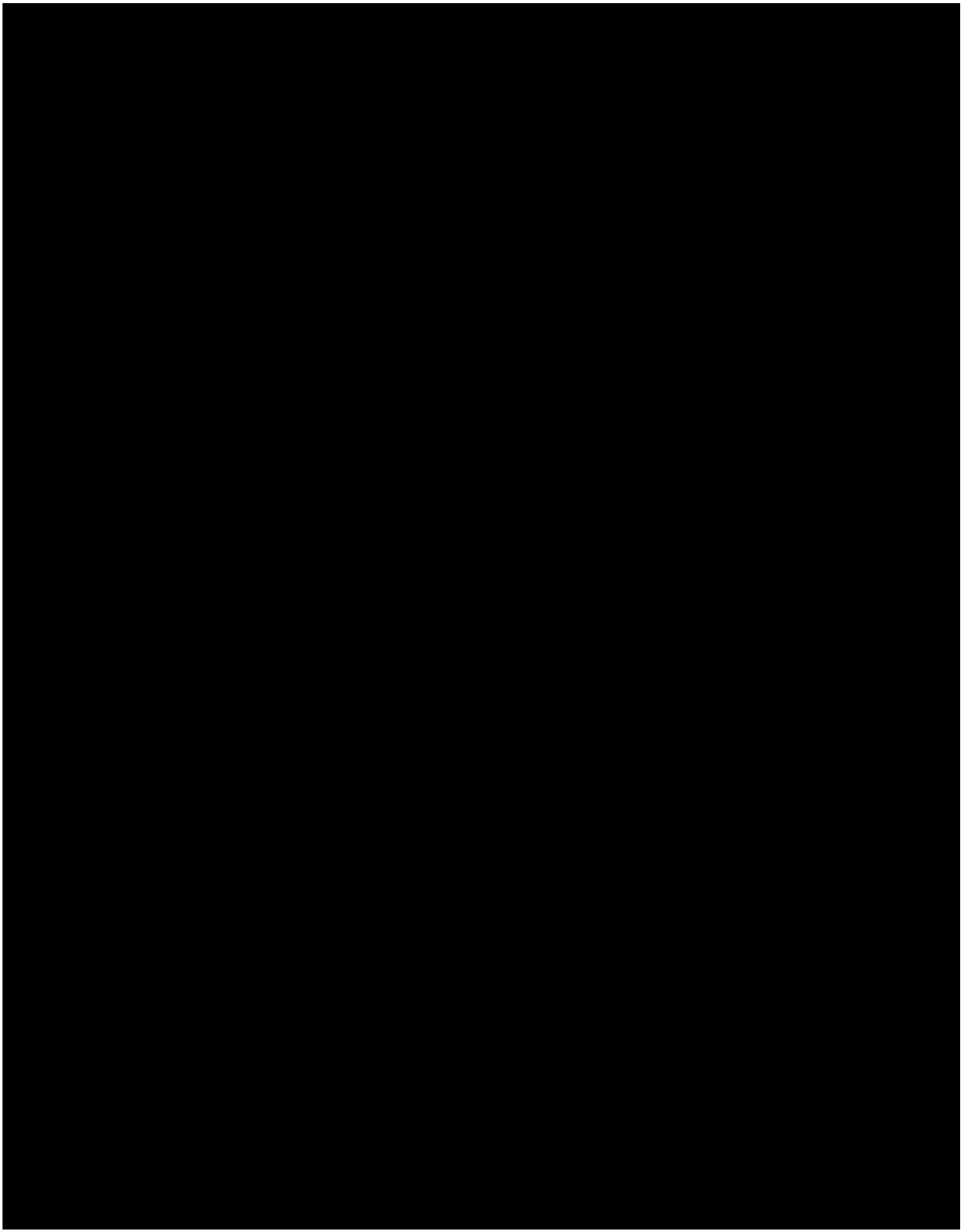

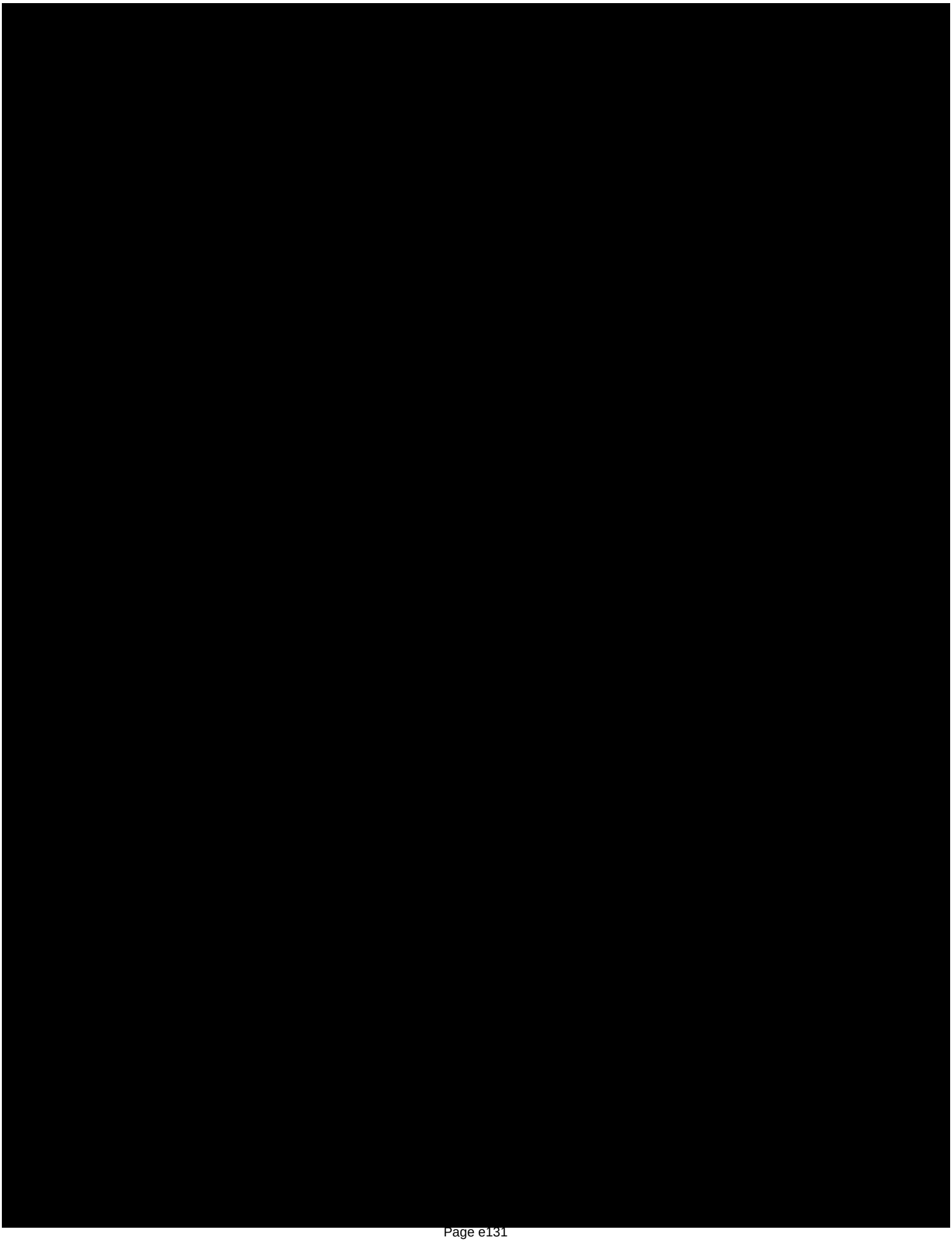

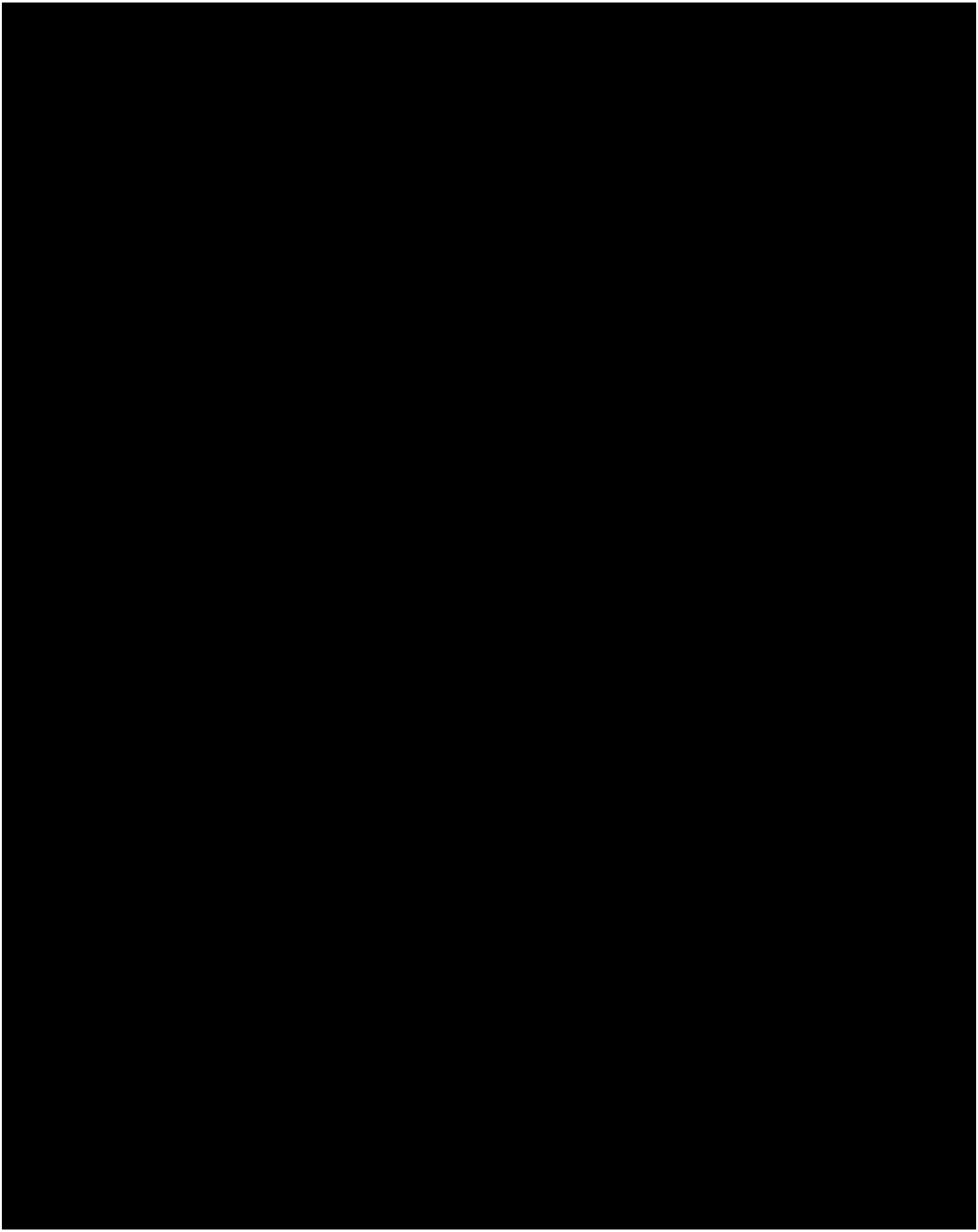

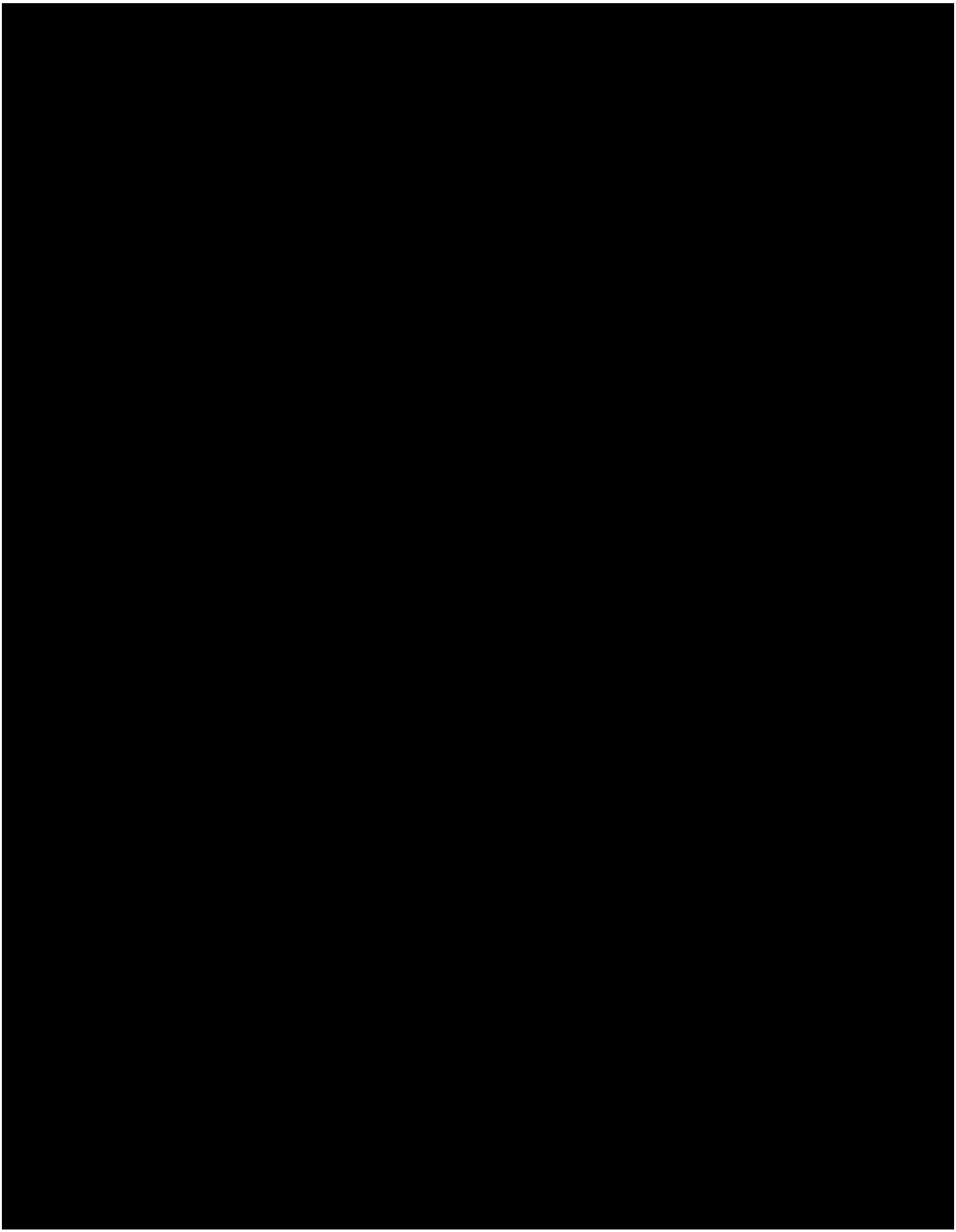

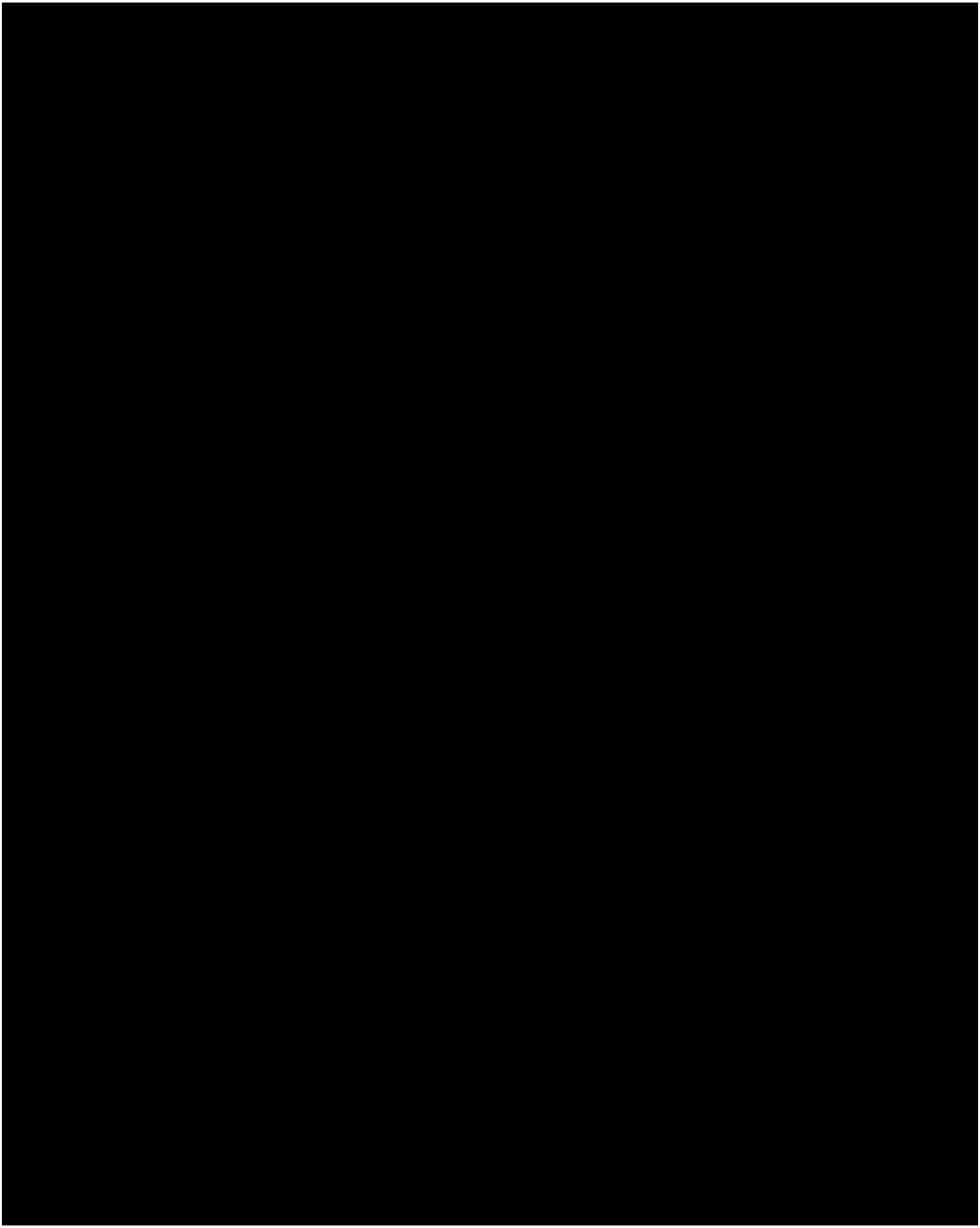

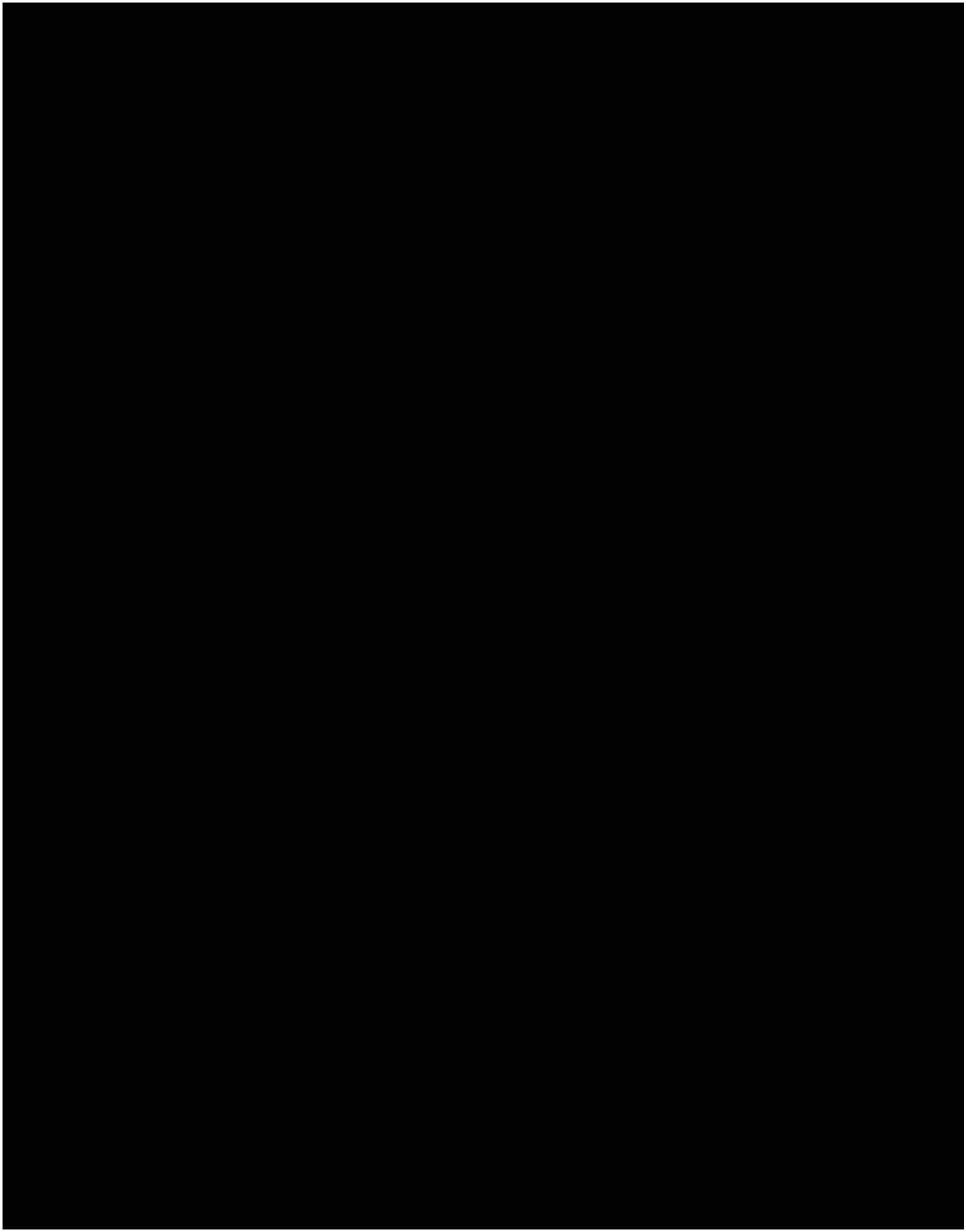

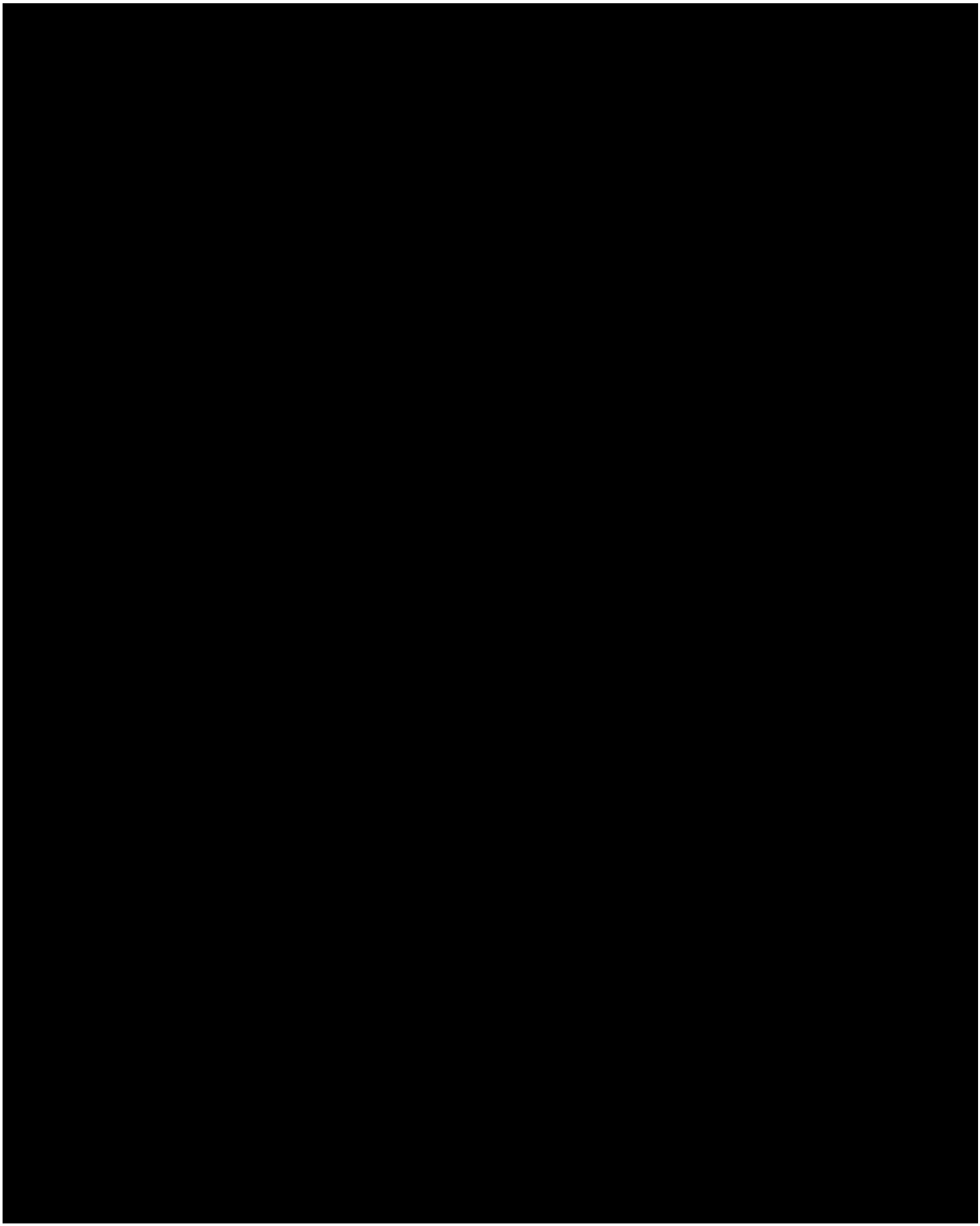

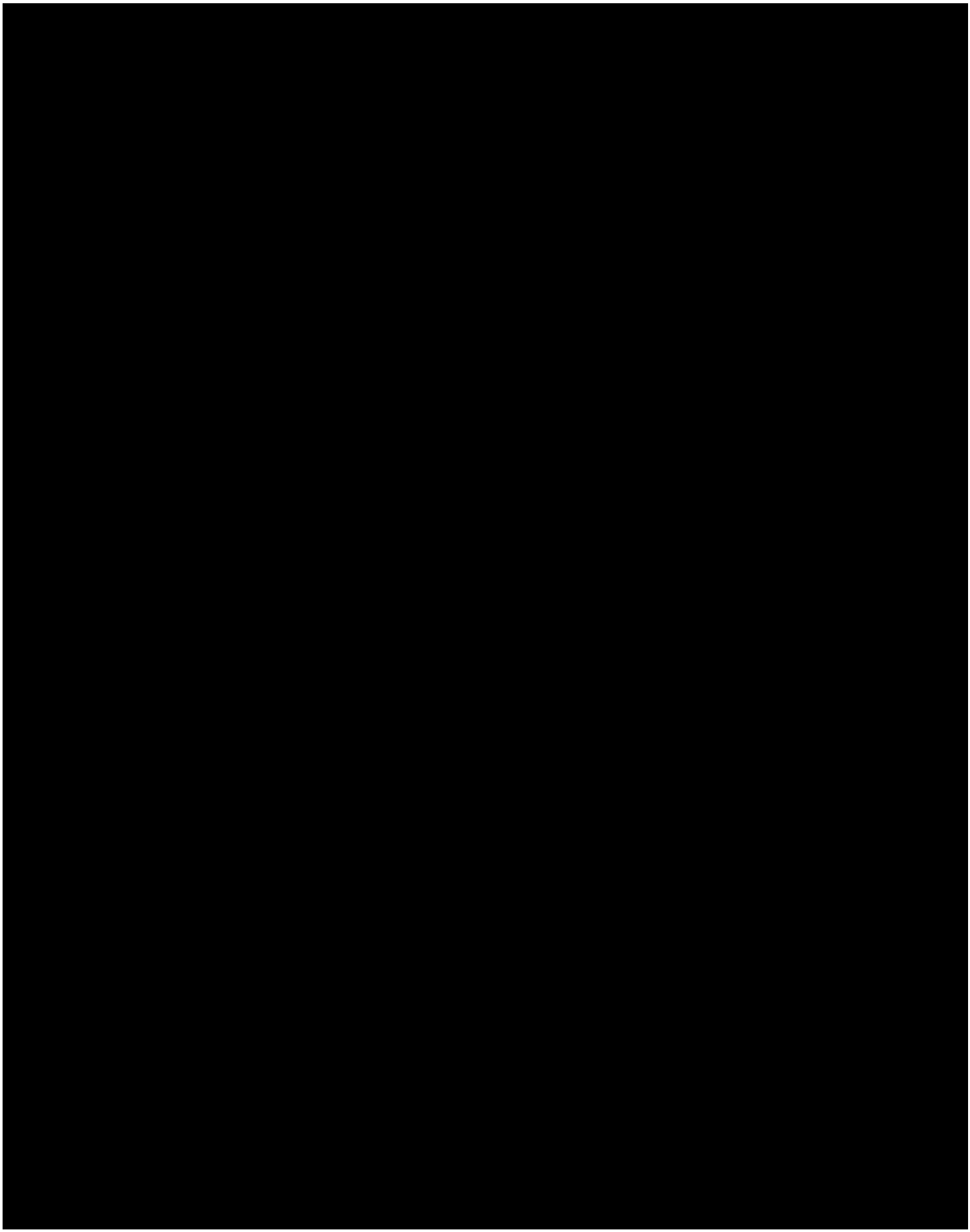

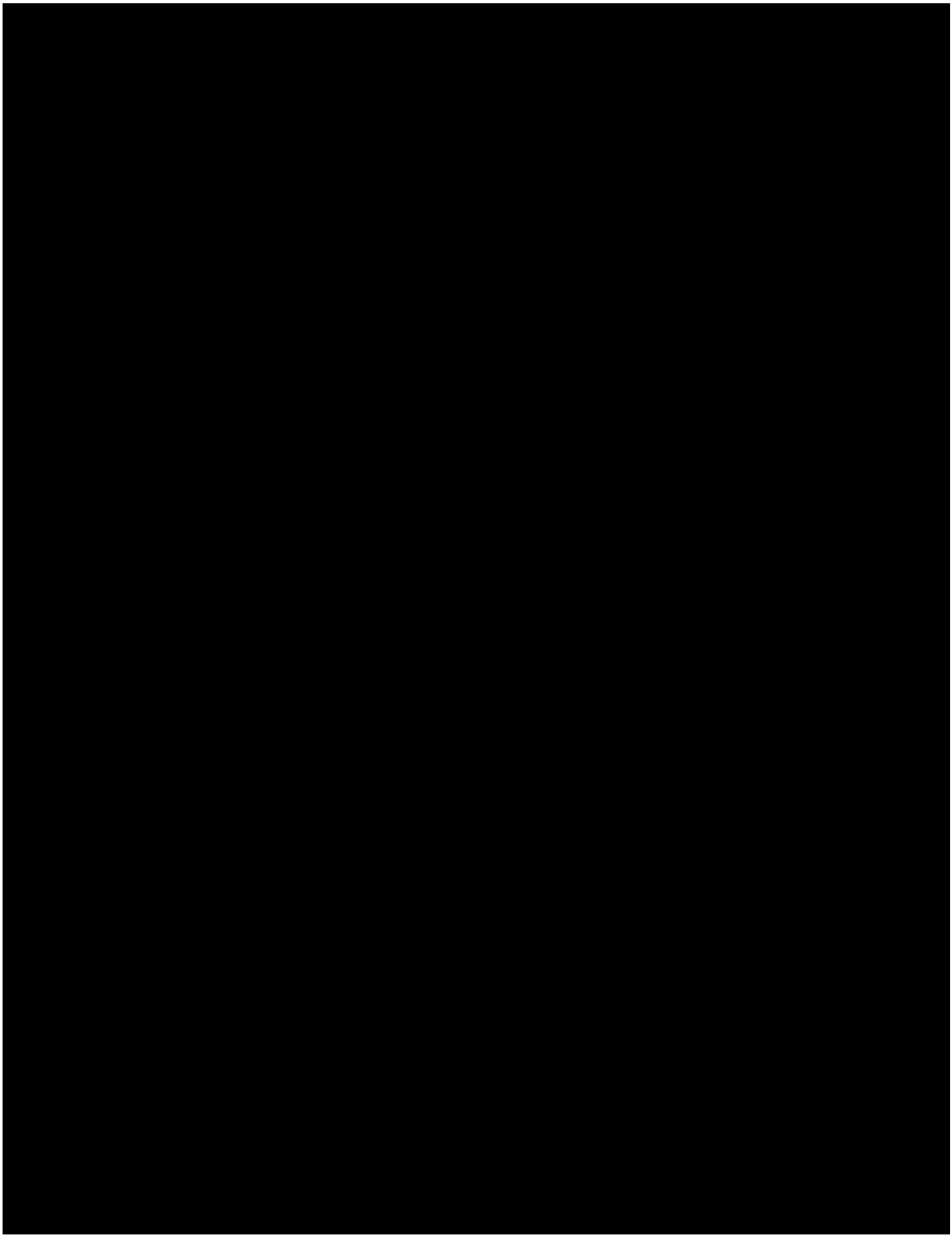

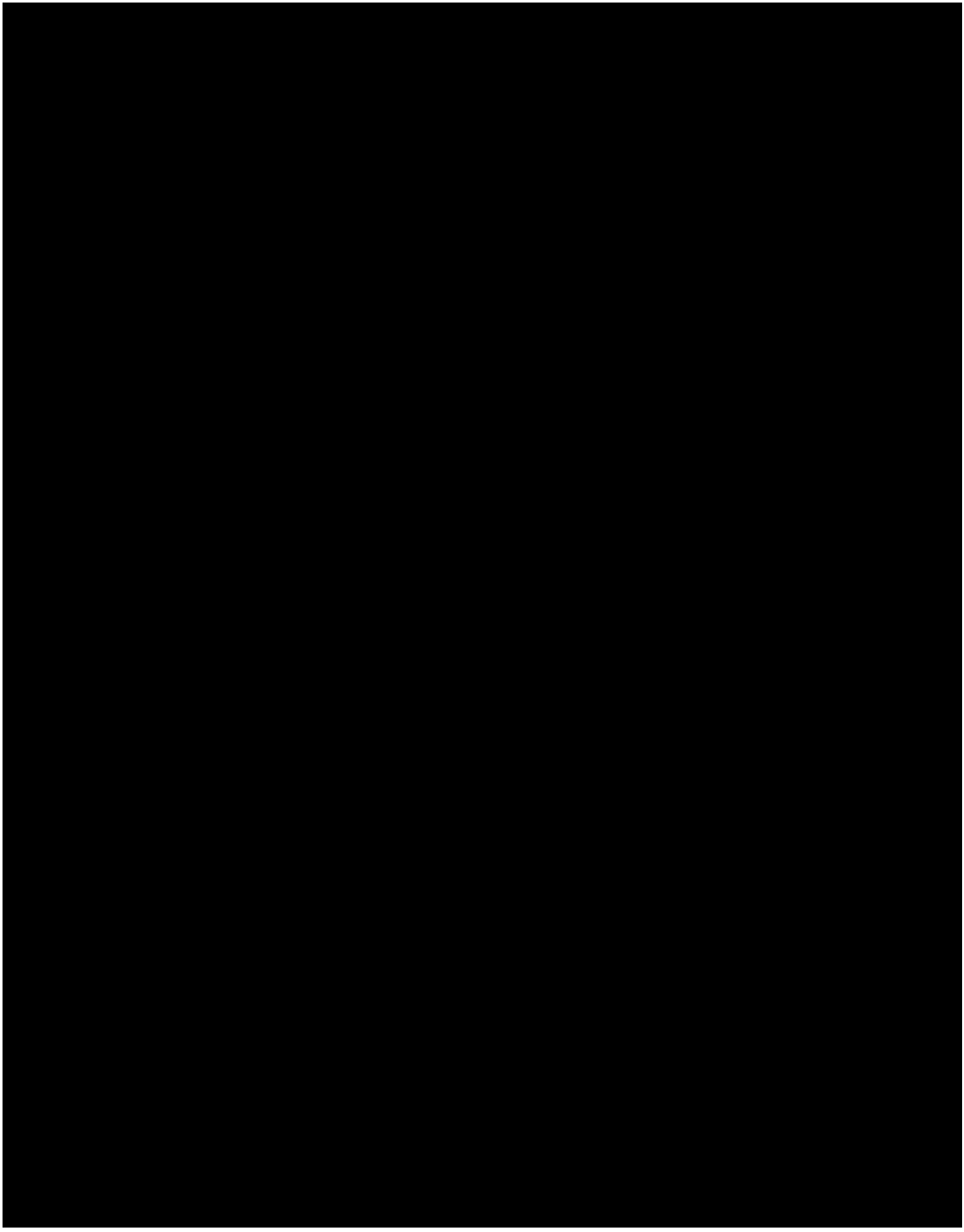

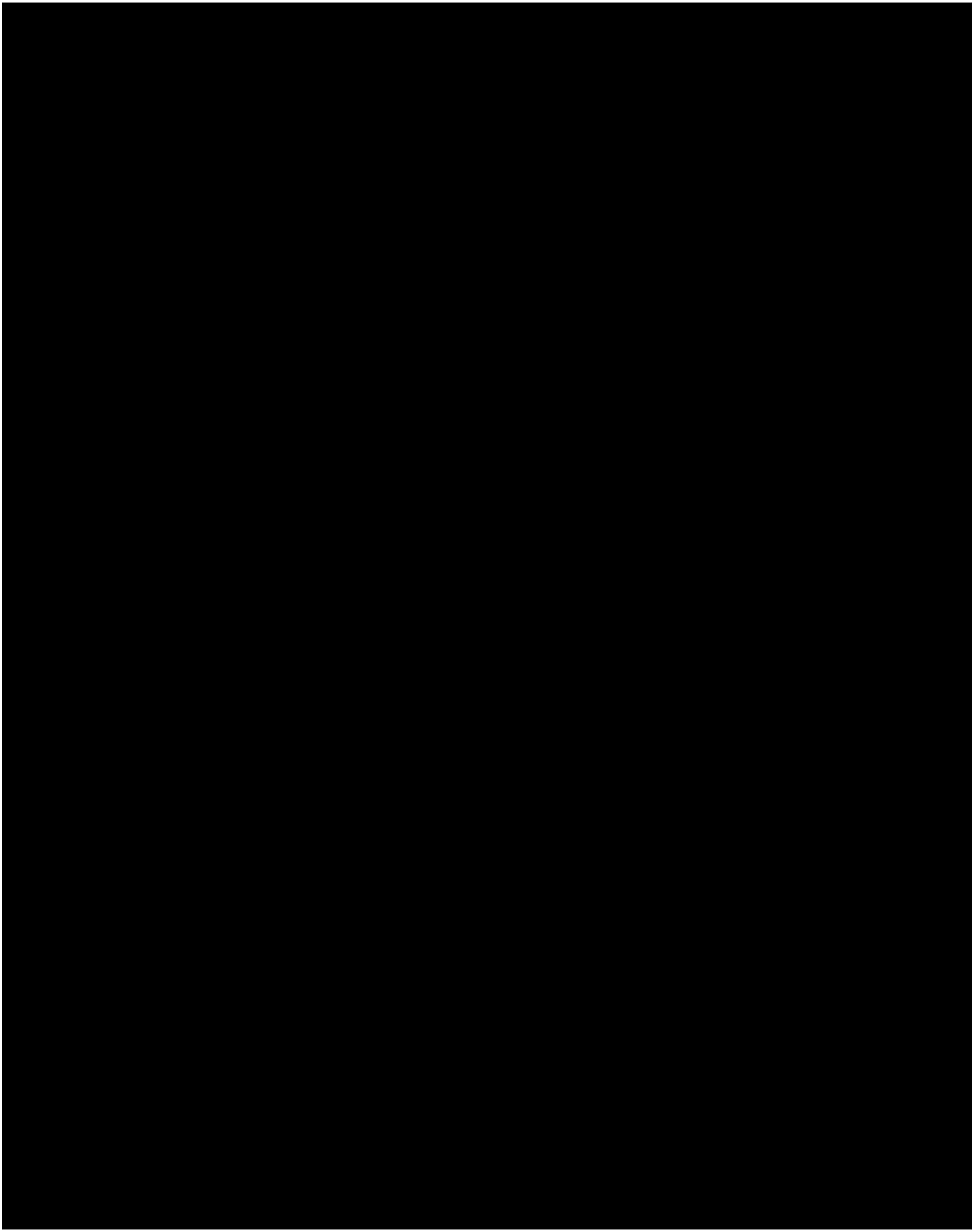

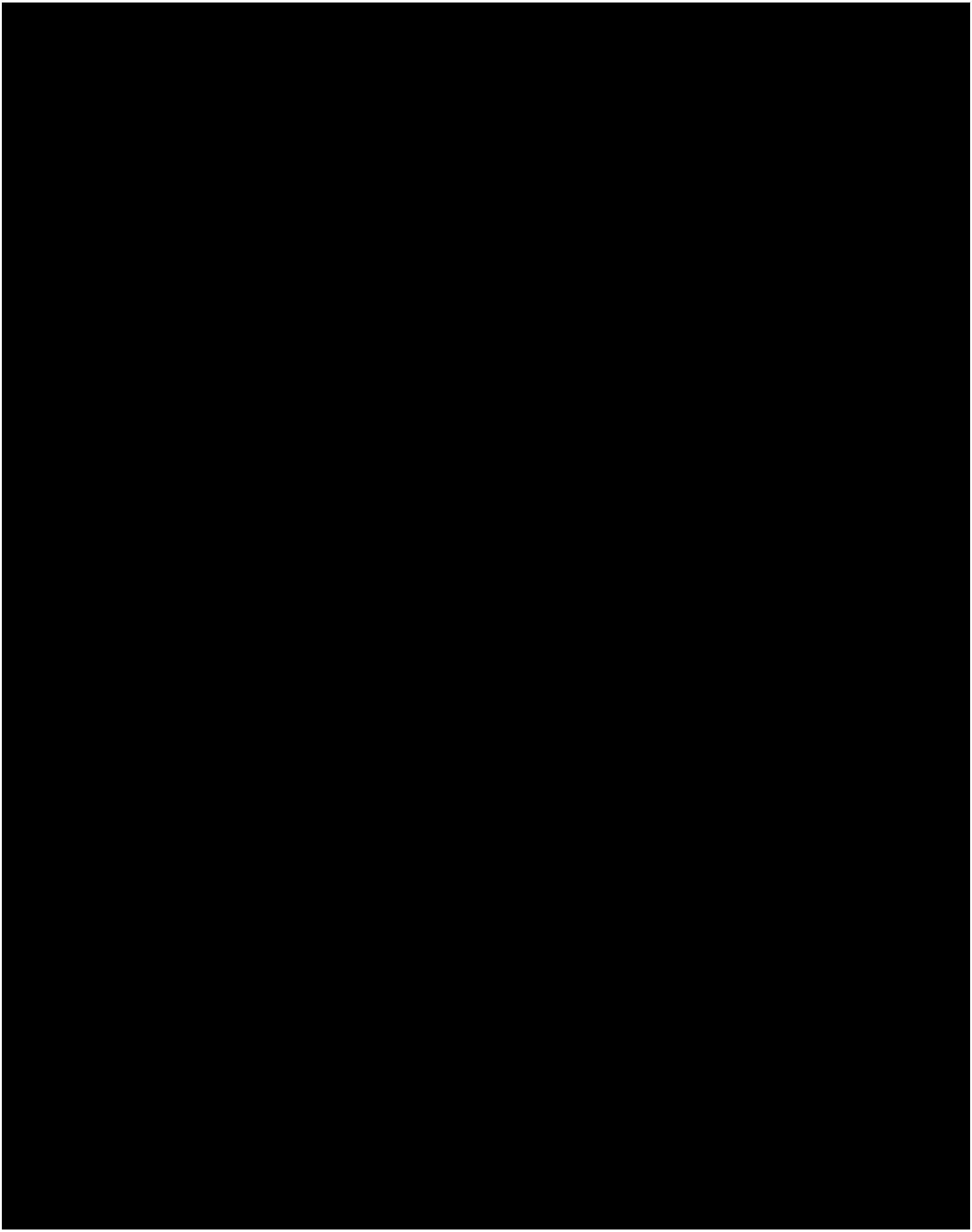

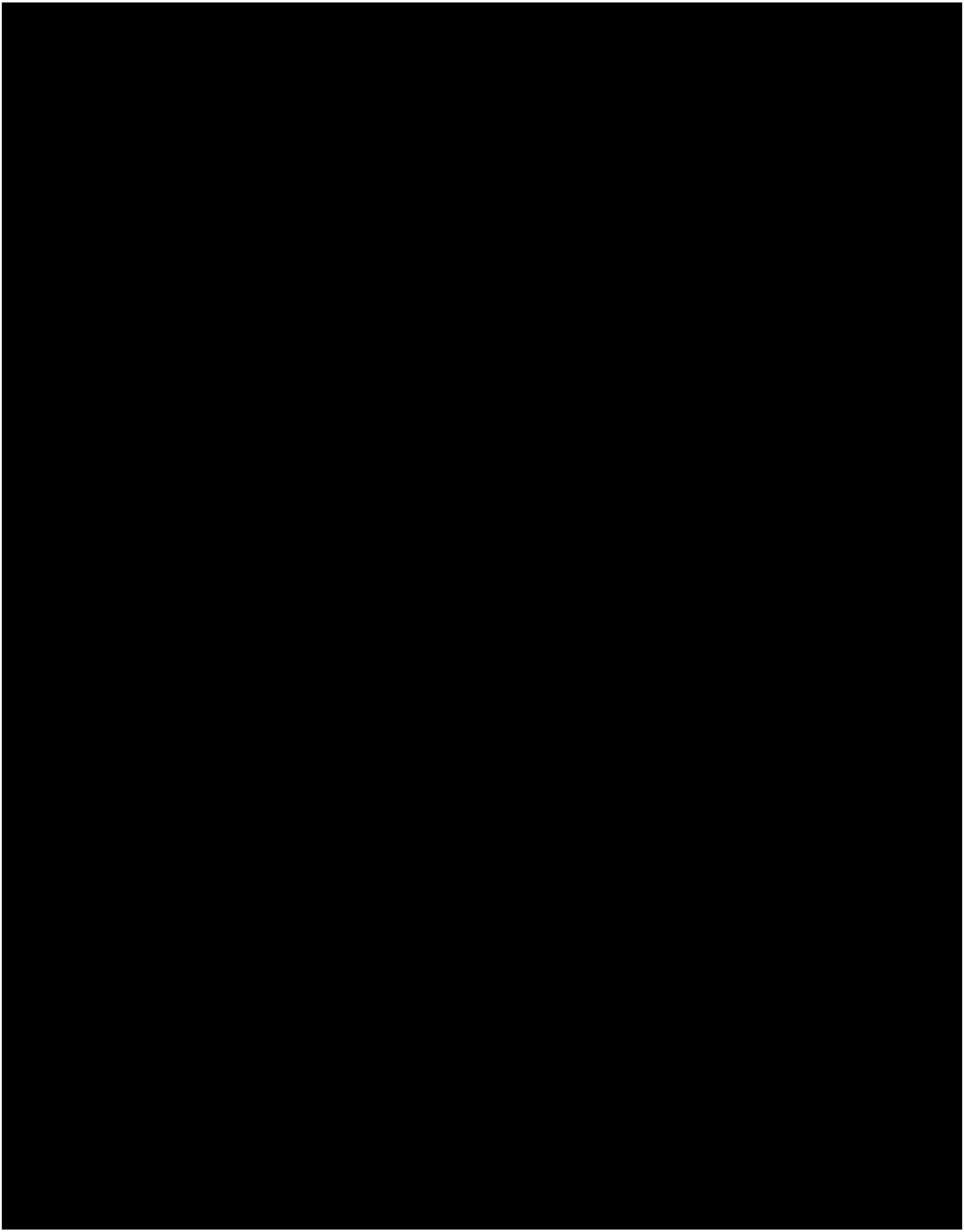

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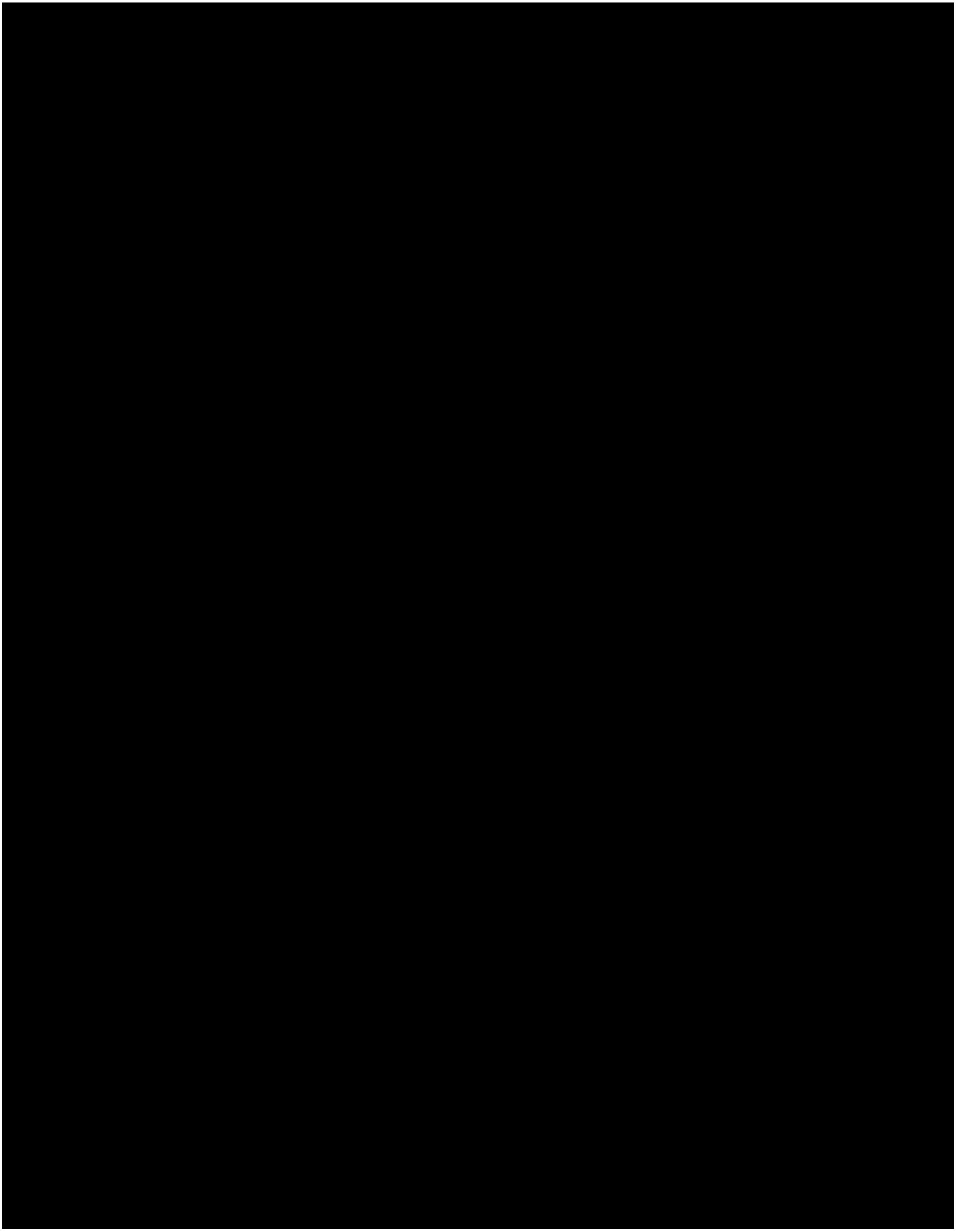
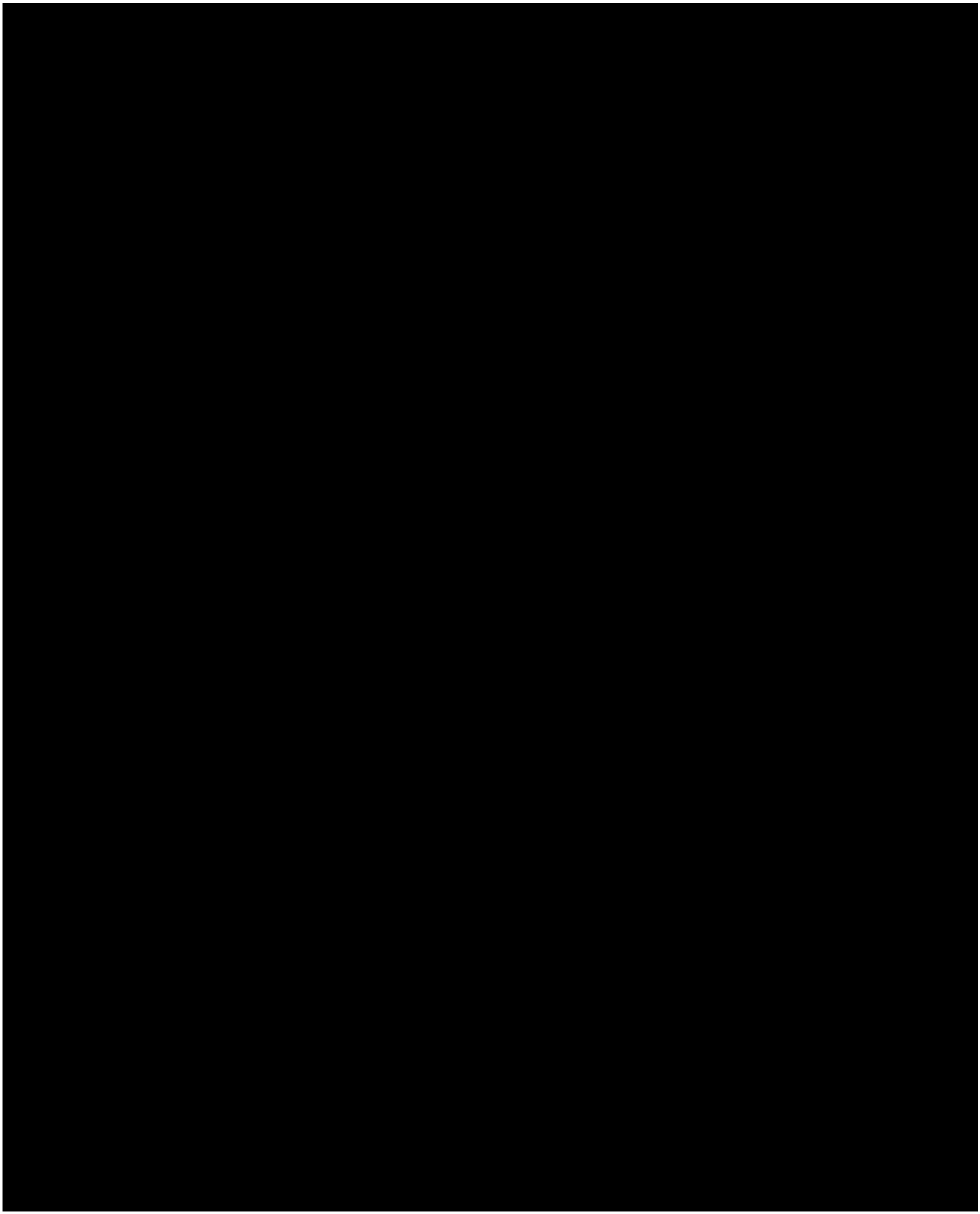




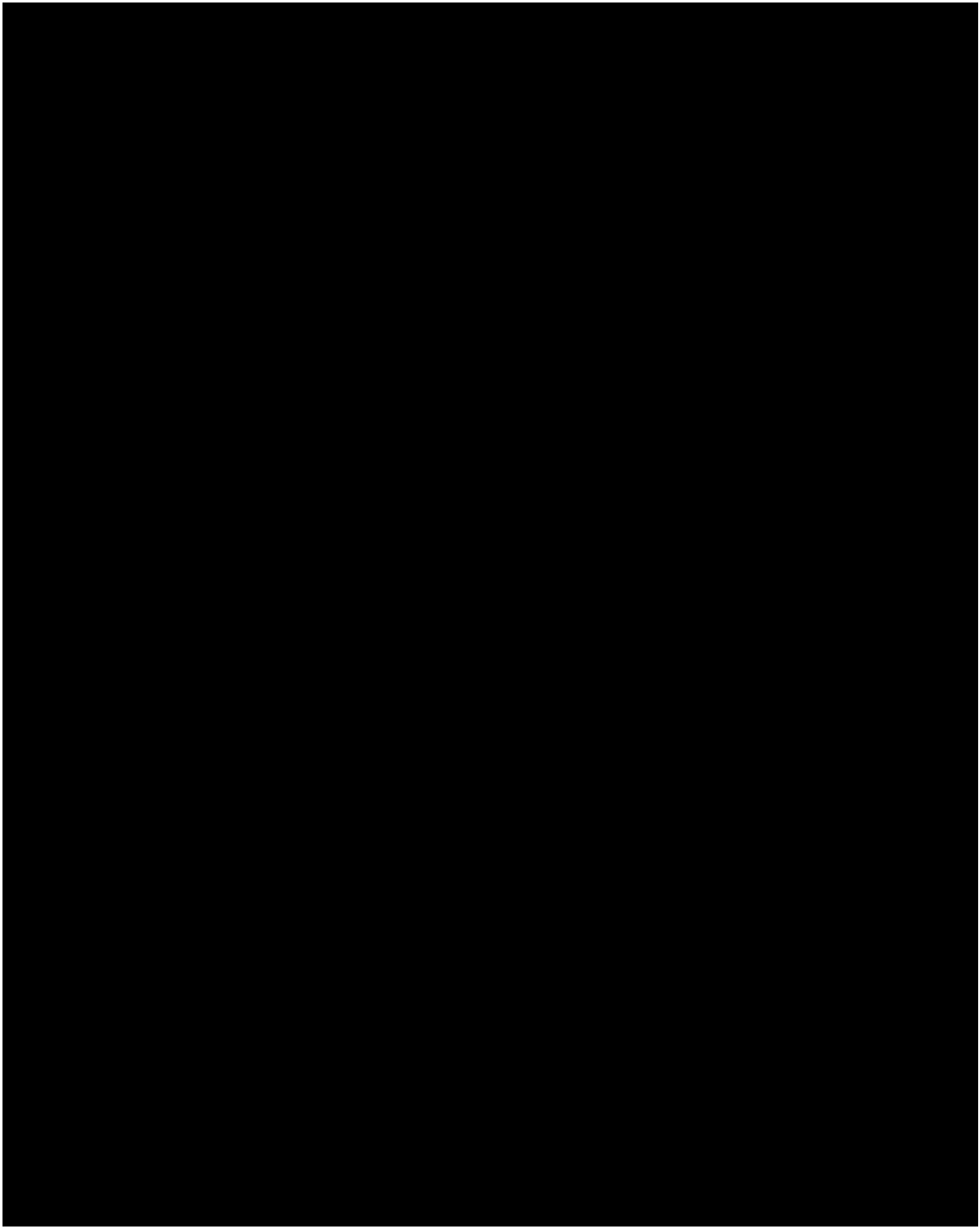
Budget Narrative File(s)

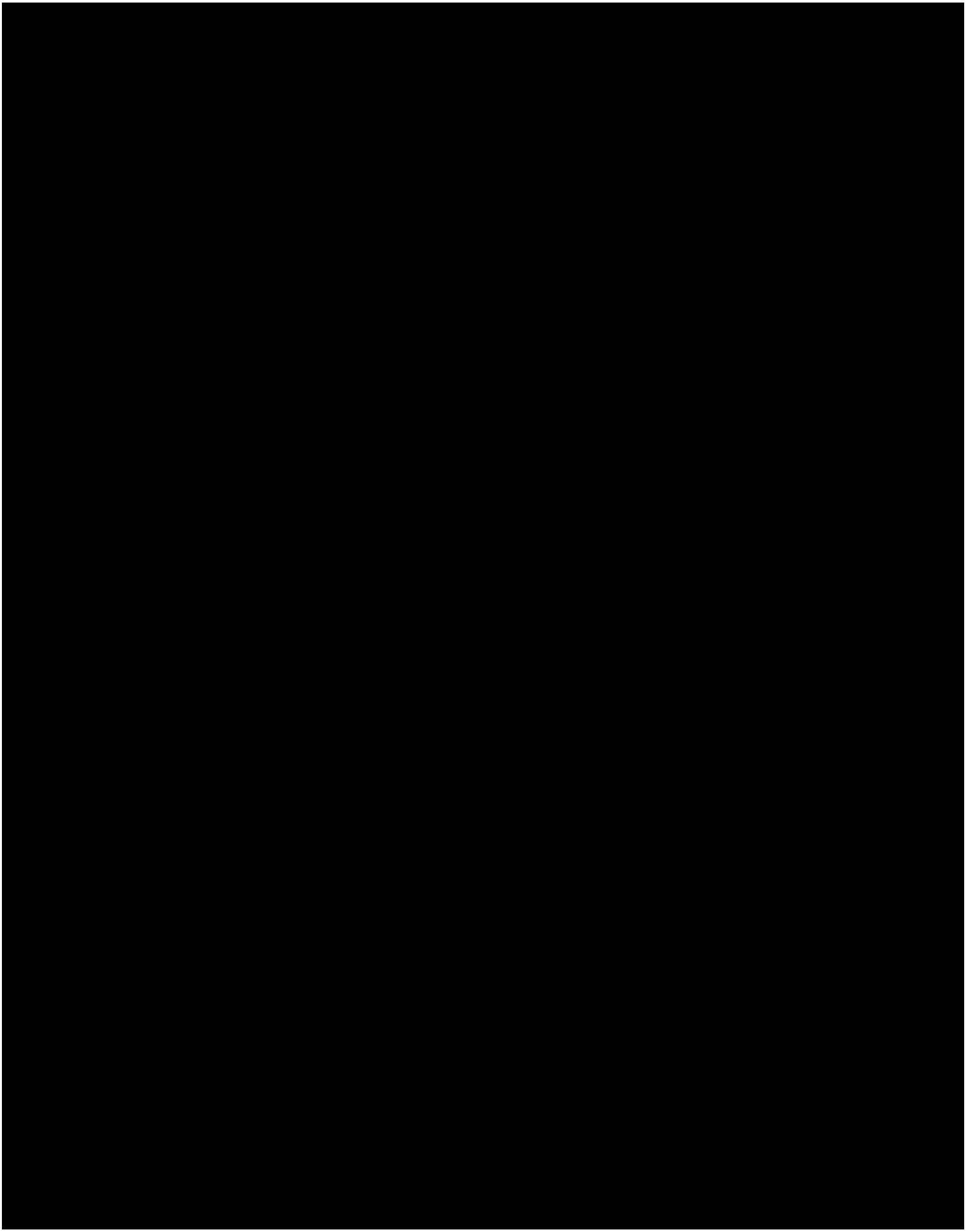
*** Mandatory Budget Narrative Filename:** Full_Budget_Justification_FINALv3.pdf

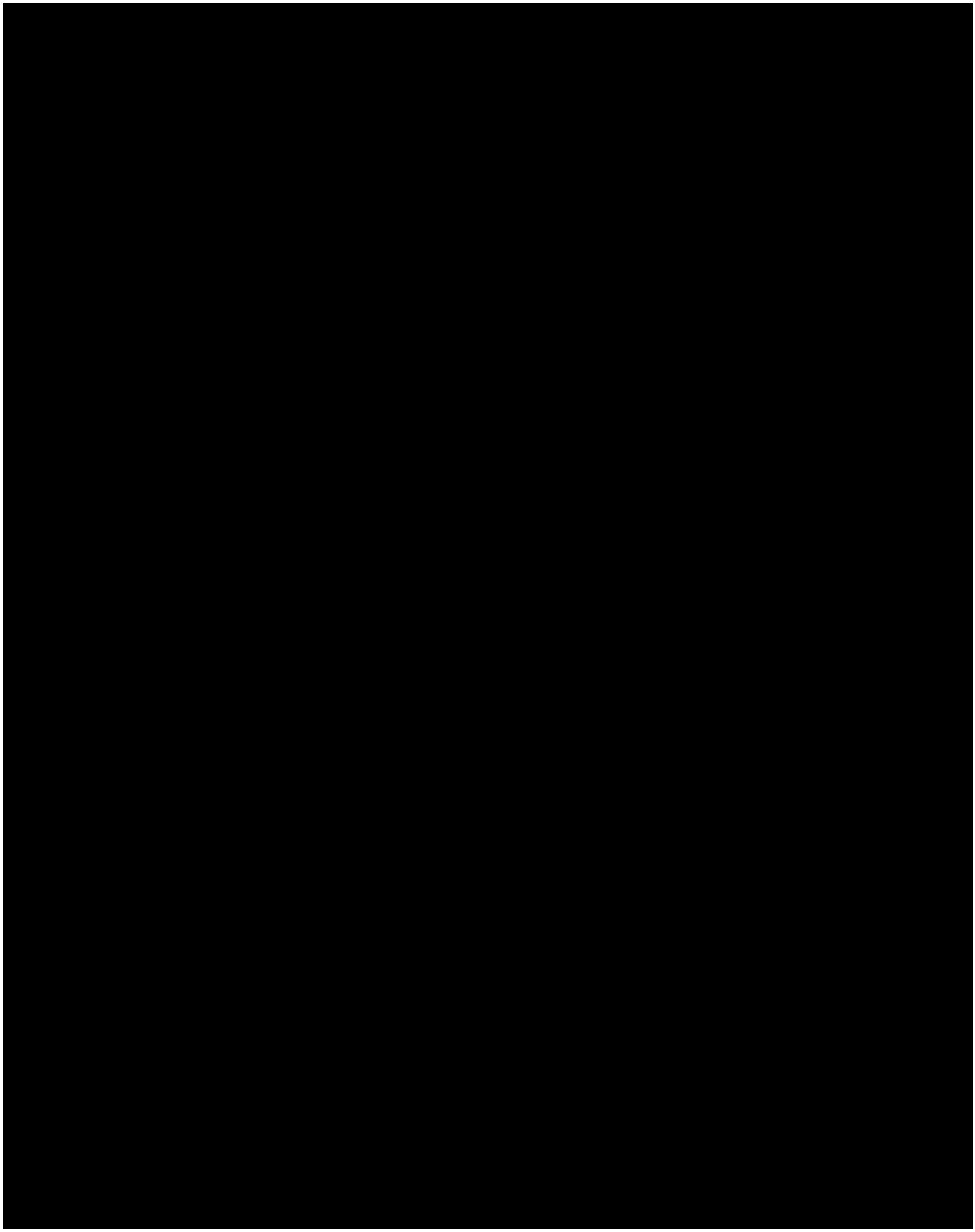
Add Mandatory Budget Narrative | Delete Mandatory Budget Narrative | View Mandatory Budget Narrative

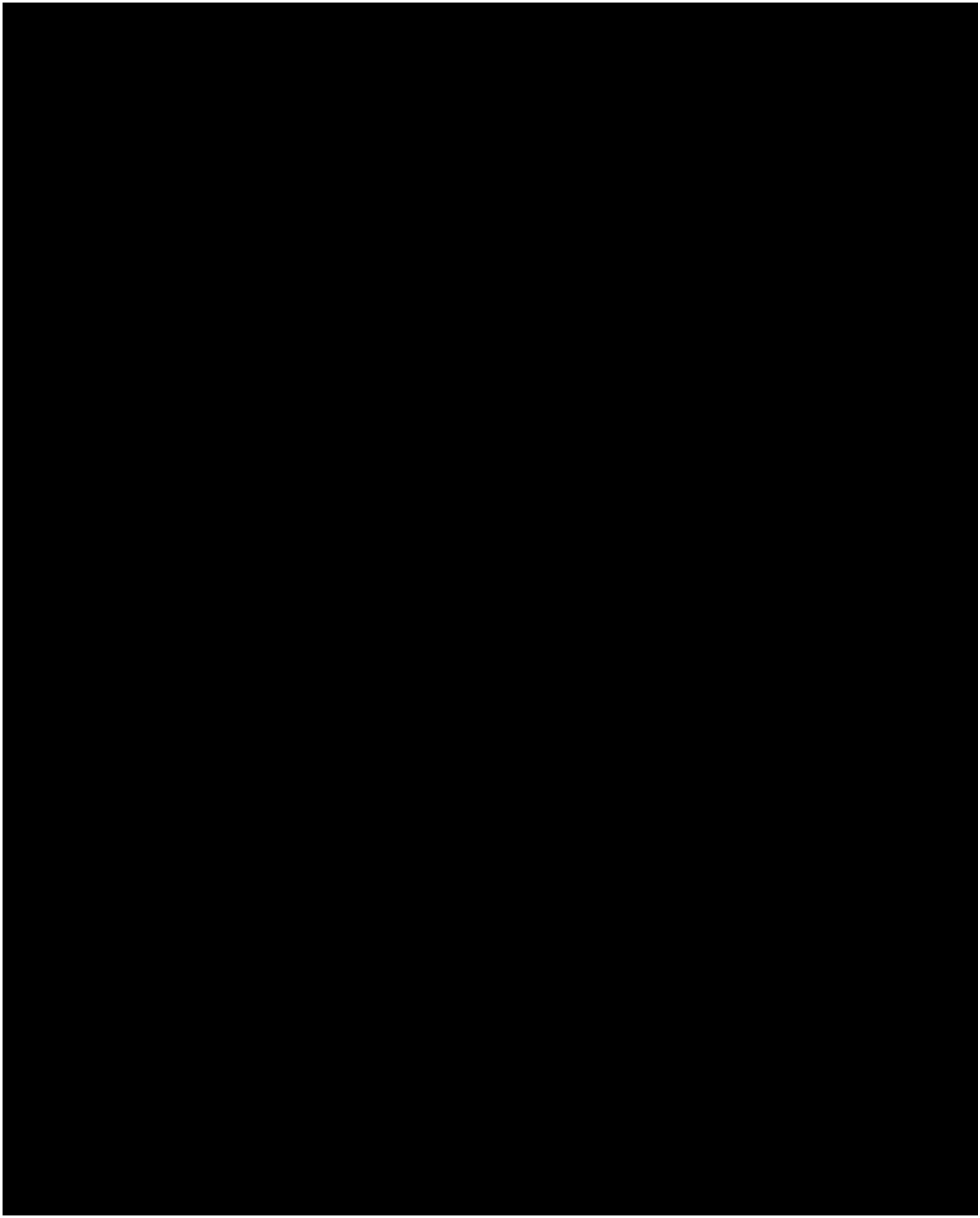
To add more Budget Narrative attachments, please use the attachment buttons below.

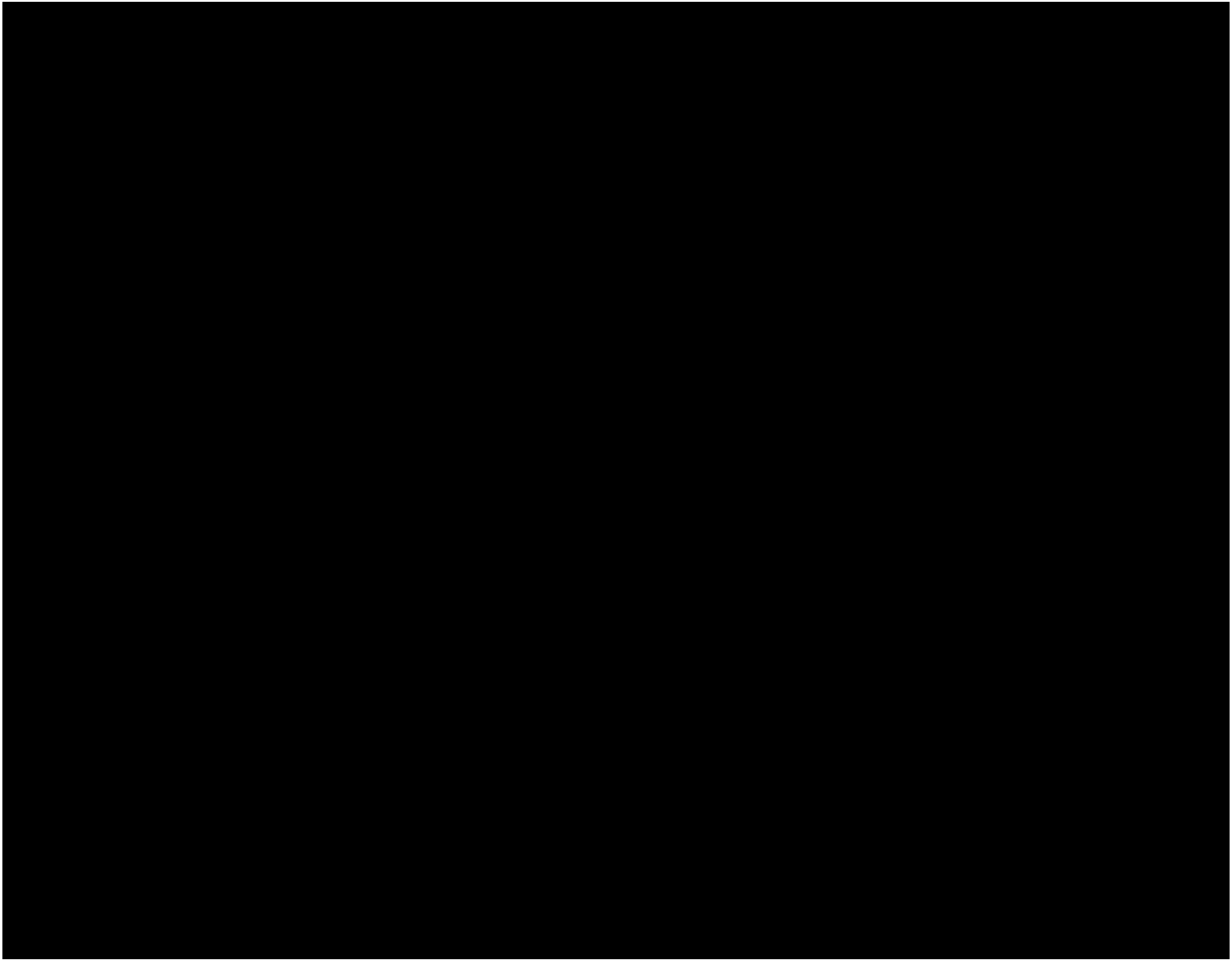
Add Optional Budget Narrative | Delete Optional Budget Narrative | View Optional Budget Narrative











OMB Number: 1894-0007
Expiration Date: 04/30/2026

U.S. Department of Education Supplemental Information for the SF-424
Application for Federal Assistance

1. Project Director and Applicable Entity Identification Numbers:

Prefix:	* First Name:	Middle Name:	* Last Name:	Suffix:
Dr.	Tunette		Powell	

* Project Director Level of Effort (percentage of time devoted to grant): 50

Address:

* Street1: [redacted]
Street2:
* City: Tempe
County:
* State: AZ: Arizona
* Zip Code: 852876011
* Country: USA: UNITED STATES

* Phone Number (give area code) [redacted]
Fax Number (give area code)

* Email Address: [redacted]

Alternate Email Address: [redacted]

OPE ID(s) (if applicable)

NCES School ID(s) (if applicable)

NCES LEA/School District ID(s) (if applicable)

2. New Potential Grantee or Novice Applicant:

☐ N/A. This item is not applicable because the program competition's notice inviting applications (NIA) does not include a definition of either "New Potential Grantee" or "Novice Applicant." This item is not applicable when the program competition's NIA does not include either definition.

For NIA's that include a definition of "New Potential Grantee" or "Novice Applicant," complete the following:

a. Are you either a new potential grantee or novice applicant as defined in the program competition's NIA?

☒ Yes ☐ No

b. If the program competition NIA is giving competitive preference points for a new potential grantee or novice applicant, how many points are you claiming for your application? (the NIA will indicate how many are available)

3

3. Human Subjects Research:

a. Are any research activities involving human subjects planned at any time during the proposed Project Period?

☐ Yes ☒ No

b. Are ALL the research activities proposed designated to be exempt from the regulations?

☐ Yes Provide Exemption(s) #(s): ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8

☐ No Provide Federal Wide Assurance #(s), if available:

c. If applicable, please attach your "Exempt Research" or "Nonexempt Research" narrative to this form as indicated in the definitions page in the attached instructions.

Add Attachment | Delete Attachment | View Attachment

4. Infrastructure Programs and Build America, Buy America Act Applicability:

If the competition Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) in section III. 4. "Other" states that the program under which this application is submitted is subject to the Build America, Buy America Act (Pub. L. 117-58) (BABAA) domestic sourcing requirements, complete the following:

☒ This application does not include any infrastructure projects or activities and therefore **IS NOT** subject the BABAA domestic sourcing requirements.

☐ This application **IS** subject to the BABAA domestic sourcing requirements, because the proposed grant project described in this application includes the following infrastructure projects or activities:

- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Remodeling
- ☐ Broadband Infrastructure

If this application **IS** subject to the BABAA domestic sourcing requirements, please list the page numbers from within the application narrative where the proposed infrastructure project or activities are described:

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS: EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information. Responses are limited to 4,000 characters.

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The mission of the Children's Equity Project (CEP) is to dismantle systemic racism in learning systems and to close opportunity gaps so that all children thrive. Our work sits at the nexus of practice, policy, and research. All our work is applied and intended to build more equitable systems for children and families. We focus on a range of equity issues impacting children that are focused on creating equitable access to resources and opportunities that support children and family's well-being, experiences that are fair and just and culturally responsive, and outcomes that are not associated with children's demographic characteristics.

2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Ensuring equitable access to our resources, activities, and T/TA is a central goal of our proposed center. As articulated in the Narrative, the CEP's central mission is advancing equitable access to learning opportunities; ensuring positive experiences for children, especially those from historically marginalized communities; and closing disparities in educational outcomes. We apply this lens across all of our work. This includes our work in T/TA. The CEP is a sub contractor on several federally funded T/TA centers, where we consistently play the role of ensuring equity is embedded to all activities. This requires careful consideration of dissemination and outreach strategies. Major barriers to accessing supports include bandwidth, infrastructure, and time to engage in quality improvement activities. Communities and schools that are under resourced and serve students with higher needs may be disproportionately impacted by these barriers. Our advisory committee will play a pivotal role in ensuring that our resources and outreach are designed for and available to all, especially historically marginalized and underserved communities. We also recognize that one of the barriers might be a digital barrier.

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

As described in the Narrative, we also developed the Bidirectional T/TA Approach, ensuring our resources and support not only reach those relevant parties who are already connected; but also those who are less connected and have less bandwidth to access supports. We will ensure all resources and T/TA opportunities are available to all audiences. We will curate lists of end users that are in historically marginalized and under served communities to

ensure direct outreach via our digital dissemination. We will also ensure content is relevant to these communities by covering deep equity issues as they pertain to the early grades. The 5% set aside will allow us to address digital barriers.

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

In the first six months of the grant we will work to curate a list of end users (e.g. LEAs, REAs, schools) to ensure a robust and targeted listserv and dissemination list. We will also work with the Regional and National TA Centers in Year 1 to establish a bidirectional T/TA strategy to ensure all users, including those who may face greater barriers to accessing resources and individual outreach, as appropriate.

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.

2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.

3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.

Paperwork Burden Statement