

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/11/2024 12:31 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	8
Sub Total	70	68
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	2
Sub Total	6	5
Total	76	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #27 - Early Tier 1 - 27: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)

Strengths:

The applicant clearly described an exceptional project that involved the development and demonstration of a promising new strategy for teacher recruitment, training, and retention. The strategy builds upon the results of prior research designed and tested by the applicant to assess the efficacy of an electronic tool to gain a better understanding of workforce resilience (e93). The proposed project entailed a new approach for workforce development that focused on improving the abilities of school leaders to address staff issues such as turnover, wellbeing, resilience, and retention (e18). The applicant presented strong relevant and current research to support the needs for the project, including: 1) Research from Marx et al., 2023, demonstrating that teachers' decisions to stay in the profession are influenced by the nature and level of support provided by school leaders; 2) Research from Kaiser, 2023, demonstrating that the stress teachers experience from job demands can be reduced with support from school leaders; and 3) evidence from Doan et al., 2023, demonstrating stress and burnout correlate with staff performance and teacher intentions to leave the profession (e15). The applicant described a project utilizing the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle of inquiry to provide school leaders with a process of using data to design and test changes of practice (e19-e20). The intended outcomes of the project supported school leaders to develop their knowledge, understanding, and self-efficacy of effective interventions and approaches to staff resilience and retention (e22).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant described a strong project that is well-defined and evidence-based. The conceptual framework presented a strong theoretical foundation for the project. The applicant will implement the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle of inquiry as a framework for school leaders to design, implement, and monitor workforce strategy interventions (e19). This would equip school leaders with skills to influence working conditions that support and improve the retention of educators (e19). The applicant provided more than sufficient evidence of the research behind the conceptual framework (e94-e95). For example, the Workforce Learning Hub intervention that provided online professional learning curriculum for school leaders was supported by evidence from a meta-analysis conducted by Bragg, et al., 2021 demonstrating successful outcomes from professional online learning opportunities for educators (e94). Another example was a description of the Workforce Dashboard giving school leaders access to staff data that research from Serapio et al., 2023, suggests leaders like to have (e94). The Logic Model clearly demonstrated a framework with components (resources), activities, and mediators/outputs hypothesized to be critical to achieving the intended short- and long-term outcomes of the project (e83). The relationships between and among the project components and relevant outcomes in the Logic Model are clearly aligned with the narrative descriptions of the conceptual framework (e18-e21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant described an overarching goal to improve the well-being and retention of teachers through the delivery of an innovative and cohesive workforce strategy (e13). The applicant provided clear and measurable objectives and outcomes to be achieved by the project. Three Project Objectives and corresponding Performance Measures were clearly displayed in Table 2 with appropriate metrics for meeting the expected outcomes of the project (e23-e25). As an example, Objective 1 to identify and train school leaders in workforce data literacy, workforce development and management practice will be measured, in part, by Performance Measure 3 to measure the percentage of school leaders completing at least 3 learning modules per year. Objectives and performance measures were aligned with the project target populations including students, school leaders, and teachers, and with project components included in the Logic Model (e83).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)**

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provided an appropriately-detailed twofold design to address the needs/barriers experienced by the target populations. The project centered on serving K-12 high-needs students defined as low income and/or students of color (e8, e158) attending schools in Pennsylvania with high rates of teacher turnover (e26). A second target focused on empowering school leaders to improve workforce outcomes in schools that serve high-need students, leading to improved student outcomes (e158). The applicant provided clear evidence of the high need student populations served by schools in the geographic region of the university (e25). 86% of the schools in participating districts qualified for Title 1 funding, the majority of students in 66% of those schools were students of color, and the average racial/ethnic profile of the schools was 68% minority (e25). The design of the proposed project will lead to improvement in student outcomes through the implementation of strategies to 1) improve the abilities of leaders to positively support the workforce in schools and 2) improve the workforce culture for teachers to reduce high rates of teacher turnover and attrition (e26-e27).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of practices to encourage applications for employment from persons who are members of underrepresented groups. As described by the applicant, the university's Graduate School of Education (GSE) Action Plan for Faculty Diversity improved faculty search processes to better ensure diversity of faculty and staff (e103). The proposed project demonstrated that Quantily, LLC and PeopleBench, two organizations partnering with the applicant, have diversity, equity, and inclusion hiring policies and practices (e105, e106).

The applicant demonstrated sufficient evidence that key personnel have the relevant qualifications to contribute to the successful implementation of the project. The applicant described qualifications of key personnel adequate for designing, implementing, and evaluating the project designed to prepare school leaders to recruit and retain diverse teachers and, therefore, to improve the workforce culture (e27). Key personnel included university team members as well as team members from Quantily, LLC and PeopleBench (e28-e31). As an example, the Program Director/Principal Investigator for the project is the Vice Dean of Innovative Programs and Partnerships at the university and has experience in education reform through innovation (e28). The evaluation partner from Quantily, LLC, is experienced with both experimental and quasi-experimental research designs in education and has presented on the topic of complex program designs (e29). Resumes of all key personnel were included in Appendix B (e46-e65) and resumes of other project personnel were in Appendix J.6 (e116-e137).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

- 1. (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a management plan that was sufficient to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. The applicant stated that the university Graduate School of Education (GSE) will be the lead agency and fiscal agent for the project, thereby assuming all legal, fiscal, and fiduciary responsibilities for managing grant funds (e31). The applicant described prior experiences of the GSE in administering large project that will support the successful completion of the project on time and within budget (e31). Project responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks were clearly detailed in Table 3 (e32-e34). As an example, a major activity in the first month of year one of the project will be for the Project Management Team (PMT) to meet with key stakeholders and the evaluation team, review goals, objectives, activities, timelines, and the budget, and to identify next steps (e32). A milestone included at this point was that project staffing and membership of the management team will be complete in January 2025 (e32). The applicant provided documentation of additional project milestones on e161. In addition, the management plan demonstrated clear alignment with the project conceptual model and Logic Model.

Weaknesses:

The budget narrative provided by the applicant does not include a breakdown of salaries/costs specific to each of the project personnel (e139-e140). For example, the Program Director/Principal Investigator was allocated 20% of time to oversee all aspects of the program but no specific salary information was provided (e139). A total cost for all salaries is included but it is not possible from the available budget information to determine what people are paid relative to the level of responsibility they have for ensuring the project objectives are completed on time and within budget. Not knowing personnel costs relative to the overall budget could have bearing on finishing within budget should personnel take more time than expected to achieve deliverables.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers

**and Partners
(up to 3 points)**

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:

- (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)**
- (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)**
- (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)**
- (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrated how the project will be implemented in partnership with Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The faculty and alumni of two HBCUs partnering with the applicant would provide advisory and consultative services along with utilizing students from their respective teacher education programs to support a diverse pipeline of teachers that reflect the student populations taught in those areas of Pennsylvania (e159).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through the following priority areas:

- (a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and**
- (b) Using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high-quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K-12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.**

Strengths:

The applicant described a project clearly designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on educators serving high-need schools and students. The pandemic resulted in high rates of teacher attrition that left schools with unfilled positions or filled with teachers not fully certified (e12). Evidence from Fuller (2023) was provided demonstrating that high teacher attrition rates occurred disproportionately in poor districts and in schools serving higher numbers of students of color (e12). The project focused on implementing promising new strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining teachers who improve student access to better educational opportunities (e14).

- (b) The applicant described evidence-based instructional approaches and supports for school leaders that included 1)**

culturally-responsive materials that will enable leaders to build robust, diverse, and supportive environments for teachers, and 2) extensive professional development and involvement in professional learning communities (e160). The applicant also described providing the training necessary for school leaders to become skilled in the use of the electronic platform underlying the project (e8, e13).

Weaknesses:

a) The applicant provided no evidence of conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments focused on students that have become disengaged from learning and on strategies specific to reengaging and supporting students and their families.

Reader's Score: **2**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/11/2024 12:31 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/12/2024 11:14 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	8
Sub Total	70	68
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	2
Sub Total	6	5
Total	76	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #27 - Early Tier 1 - 27: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)

Strengths:

The overarching project aim is to improve the wellbeing and retention of teachers through delivering an innovative and cohesive workforce strategy that elevates, strengthens, and sustains a resilient educator workforce to better support students (e13).

The proposed project seeks to innovate workforce strategy in schools through a balance of digital tools and professional development to enable school leaders to (1) develop workforce data literacy in relation to teacher wellbeing, resilience, and retention; (2) build knowledge of data-driven workforce planning; and (3) engage in the design, implementation, and monitoring of longitudinal workforce strategy (e8). These types of interventions, when combined, will help to ensure a successful implementation.

The application provided scholarly literature to highlight the potential efficacy of their work and to illustrate how it is built on that foundation. For example, Marx et al. (2023) discusses school leaders and their influence on teachers' decisions. Additionally, Kaiser (2023) posits that teachers are less impacted by stress when supported by their leaders (e15).

A unique addition to the project is the use of the Plan–Do–Study–Act (PDSA) Cycle, which provides a framework for quality improvement of systems that guide an iterative process of using data to design and test changes to practice intended to achieve a specific outcome (Reed & Card, 2016; Taylor et al., 2014). It is widely used in healthcare and adapted for use in Professional Learning Communities to support teachers' professional development for student instruction (e19). This type of intervention will provide consistent support to the participating teachers and school leaders.

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)

Strengths:

The conceptual framework is considered high quality because all the components are interconnected and are well-aligned with the project narrative, which supports the underlying research (e19). The framework includes Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycles, which is used for quality improvement of systems that guide an iterative process of using data to design and test changes to practices intended to achieve a specific outcome (e19).

The logic model clearly articulates the key components of the project (use of workforce strategy builder, online core curriculum, PLC sessions, teacher resiliency training, staff participation in Culture Tracker and Resilience Tracker), the mediators (school leader retention, changes in workforce strategy, school climate/culture, teacher resilience), and the outcomes of interest (workforce and teacher attendance, teacher retention) (e83).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant's objectives described on pages e141-150 are also appropriately aligned with their concomitant outcome measures (e141-150). For example, they will use the South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0 Evaluation Rubric (e135) to evaluate novice teachers during their solo teaching time (e27).

All outcomes are measurable and realistic for the subject matter. Examples include "70 percent of principals completing at least 3 elective, relevant learning modules per year on workforce interventions" and "60% of principals who report they are confident or very confident using workforce data to inform strategy" (e141-142).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)

Sub

Strengths:

The first target population is expertly identified as the K-12 students who are low-income and/or students of color (e8). Eighty-six percent of the schools are eligible for Title 1 funding due to the high percentage of low-income families they serve. Additionally, 66% of the school enrollments are students of color (e25).

The second target population is the school leaders who will be trained in best practices needed in workforce data literacy, workforce development, and management practice to support the classroom teachers that are directly working with K-12 students (e141).

The project meets the needs of the target populations by improving outcomes for the student population by empowering school leaders to improve workforce outcomes (e25-26). Additionally, learning loss in the student population due to teacher turnover will be addressed (e26). Teacher turnover has been shown to have a negative impact on student learning, with the negative impacts inequitably influencing schools in areas where students experience high rates of poverty and racial diversity, which are more likely to have higher rates of leader and staff turnover (e26).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant diligently encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented. The applicant has culturally responsive recruitment strategies to include: (1) developing proposals about how the school may best marshal its resources to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, mitigate instances of sexual bias and harassment, and increase literacy around these areas (e104), (2) outreach to diverse networks such as the American Evaluation Association's Minority Service Institution Programs and job boards, and (3) ensuring objectivity in the interview process by using a standard set of interview questions to bring equity to the process (e105). Additionally, all of the project partners have included their diversity statements regarding requirement and hiring practices (e102-106).

The applicant provided ample justification for qualifications of the personnel that would be employed by the project scope through their curriculum vitae and resumes (e46-65). The Project Director and Principal Investigator brings expertise in envisioning, implementing and convergence of business, technology, and education in established, emerging, and public sector environments. He has committed his career to education reform through innovation and

Sub

impact. Additionally, he served as Deputy Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, where he set strategy, policy, programs, and legislation for over two million students (e28).

The Co-PI on this project will lead the rigorous evaluation of the project. Her research projects are at the leading edge of statistical methods in field contexts, including scaling up interventions (e29).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

- 1. (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed timeline that highlights the major project management activities (e32-34). Each objective was broken down by year and school term. For example, "Meet with key stakeholders and evaluation team to review goals, objectives, activities, timelines, budget, and next steps" provides the appropriate level of leadership for the assigned task (e32). The application provided a budget narrative with a description of responsibilities for each key personnel member, to include the budgeted level of effort necessary for them to successfully manage the project and complete the assigned tasks (e139-140).

Weaknesses:

The budget narrative failed to include the salaries of the key personnel to determine if the compensation will allow the project to stay within budget (e139 -140).

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 3 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or

in partnership with one or more of the following entities:

- (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
- (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

Strengths:

The applicant meets this criterion by partnering with two universities with Historically Black College and University distinctions – Delaware State and Cheyney University of Pennsylvania (e66).

This partnership is noteworthy because the project will engage the universities' faculty and alumni to provide advisory and consultative services, while also involving students from each university's teacher education programs to support and enhance a diverse pipeline of teachers that reflect the populations they teach in Pennsylvania (e14).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through the following priority areas:

(a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) Using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high-quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K-12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The application meets criterion (b) by supporting the retention of teachers. The legacy of the pandemic continues to adversely affect teacher and staffing shortages, including shortages of instructional aides and transportation personnel (PSBA, 2024). For example, as of October 2023, there were more than 2,000 vacant teacher positions in Pennsylvania (PA) and an additional 6,500 people teaching on emergency certificates (e12).

The pandemic also exacerbated trends toward an older, less experienced, and more unstable teaching workforce—characteristics that are more prevalent in schools located in disadvantaged communities (e13).

The applicant uses evidence-based instructional approaches through their Project HERO, which innovates workforce strategy in schools using digital tools and professional development to enable school leaders to develop workforce data literacy in relation to teacher wellbeing, resilience, and retention, which will ultimately support students' opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards (e8).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not adequately address (a) how they will conduct community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families.

Reader's Score: **2**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/12/2024 11:14 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/12/2024 03:47 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	9
Sub Total	70	69
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	2
Sub Total	6	5
Total	76	74

Technical Review Form

Panel #27 - Early Tier 1 - 27: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)

Strengths:

Project HERO is a comprehensive initiative designed to address pressing issues such as teacher turnover and retention through innovative workforce strategies and inquiry-based improvement cycles, data-informed decision-making, localized and responsive interventions, entrepreneurial approaches, partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and addressing the impact of Covid-19 on academic learning. These strategies aim to enhance employee skills, teacher wellbeing, resilience, retention, diversity recruitment, and organizational culture, demonstrating a commitment to exploring new methodologies and refining existing approaches to improve educational outcomes. Tools like Resilience Tracker™ and Culture Tracker are employed to gain insights, while workforce learning hubs and professional learning communities are established to foster continuous development. (p. e8, e11-14)

The innovative aspect of Project HERO lies in its entrepreneurial, scalable, and research-informed approach. This suite of customizable digital interventions supports workforce strategy by providing leaders with a platform to consolidate and visualize data, prioritize needs, and implement responsive actions to bolster staff resilience and retention.

The project also focuses on implementing an entrepreneurial digital solution with an emphasis on equity and diversity, utilizing inquiry-based improvement cycles. Professional learning opportunities and customizable materials are offered, and consulting on digital tools and workforce strategy programs is provided. By engaging school leaders in learning activities and promoting data-driven decision-making, Project HERO aims to scale engagement in learning activities and foster a culture of diversity and inclusion, ultimately driving positive outcomes in school leadership, student engagement, and staff well-being. (p. e15-16)

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted

Sub

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)

Strengths:

Project HERO clearly describes a comprehensive conceptual framework to evaluate its impact on teacher and workforce outcomes. This framework includes implementation fidelity and innovative tools like the PeopleBench platform, focusing on workforce strategies, data-driven decision-making, and inquiry-based improvement cycles to enhance organizational culture. It targets outcomes such as teacher turnover, student engagement, and staff well-being. The framework is aligned with research questions, uses valid and reliable measures, and incorporates innovative activities. (p. e18-21)

The Logic Model for Project HERO offers a structured framework that delineates the essential components and relationships needed to meet the project's goals. It starts with key inputs such as expertise from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, financial resources, and collaborations with educational institutions. The Logic Model clearly explains how inputs facilitate activities that enhance data-driven decision-making as innovative strategies to bolster teacher resilience and retention. It graphically represents the long-term impacts by fostering sustainable workforce strategies, addressing teacher shortages and retention challenges, and positively affecting student achievement and school performance. By employing a systematic approach, the Logic Model guides Project HERO towards achieving tangible outcomes and lasting impacts in workforce development and educational leadership. It underscores the project's commitment to creating sustainable improvements and contributing to national efforts in education. (p. e13, e40-41, e83)

The project outcomes clearly include enhanced teacher resilience and well-being, improved retention rates, reduced turnover, and strengthened leadership capabilities. The overarching goal is to create a resilient and effective educational environment that improves overall school performance and student outcomes, promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and benefits high-need populations and underserved communities. (p. e13, e40-41, e83, e141-150)

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)

Sub

Strengths:

The proposal clearly defines specific and measurable goals, objectives, and outcomes aimed at enhancing student achievement, addressing teacher shortages, improving staff retention rates, fostering teacher resilience, and enhancing staff well-being. The objectives focus on improving leadership capabilities, reducing turnover rates, supporting data-informed workforce planning, and implementing digital tools. Measurable outcomes include enhancing workforce data literacy among school leaders, designing longitudinal workforce strategies, and positively impacting student outcomes and school performance. (p. e22-25)

The proposal emphasizes a structured approach with quantifiable targets to ensure effective evaluation of the project's success. It highlights the importance of workforce data literacy, strategy development, and implementation, with performance measures related to student outcomes, teacher retention, staff resilience, and school culture. The use of quantitative indicators for tracking progress underscores the project's commitment to data-informed decision-making and achieving its outlined goals and objectives. (p. e22-25)

Project HERO aims to create a resilient educational environment by identifying and training school leaders in best practices for workforce data literacy, development, and management (Objective 1). It supports school leaders in developing and implementing data-informed workforce strategies (Objective 2) and seeks to improve staff and student experience and retention in PeopleBench Schools (Objective 3). This focus on measurable improvements in school performance and student outcomes demonstrates a clear and tangible approach to achieving its stated goals. (p. e22-25)

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)

Strengths:

The design of the proposed project is highly appropriate and tailored to effectively address the needs of the target population, including bringing about positive changes within the educational environment. (p. 22-25) The project aims to support students, teachers, and personnel within underserved, underrepresented, high-need schools and communities, as well as individuals from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Specifically, the project activities will address their needs by enhancing leadership capabilities; improving teacher retention rates; fostering resilience, promoting staff well-being; and addressing workforce planning and development needs. (p. e22-25)

Those served by the proposed project includes high-need students, school leaders, teachers (especially those from diverse backgrounds and teachers of color), staff in schools, students of color, students experiencing poverty, students in rural areas, individuals from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), underserved communities, populations receiving Special Education services, individuals from diverse backgrounds, and underrepresented groups in the educational sector. The project aims to support these groups by enhancing leadership capabilities, improving teacher retention rates, fostering resilience, promoting staff well-being, and addressing workforce planning and development needs. (p. e22-25)

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to encouraging applications for employment from individuals who are members of traditionally underrepresented groups based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. They have implemented specific strategies to promote diversity and inclusion within their workforce, such as outreach to diverse networks, recruitment from organizations representing underrepresented groups, and tracking metrics to ensure a diverse applicant pool. The applicant's efforts include partnering with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), involving faculty, alumni, and students from these institutions, and focusing on addressing disparities in representation within the educational workforce. Additionally, the applicant emphasizes workforce data literacy training, resilience building, and staff support to create a more inclusive and diverse educational environment. (p. e27, Appendix J3 Diversity Statements e102-106, e158-161)

The key project personnel for the Project HERO initiative at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education encompass a well-qualified diverse team with various roles and expertise. The team includes a diverse group of qualified individuals. Each member brings unique qualifications, training, and experience to contribute to the success of the project's objectives and outcomes. The key staff members have diverse qualifications and experiences, including expertise in education, research, workforce development, data analysis, program management, leadership, and a commitment to promoting equity and inclusion in education. They possess skills in project coordination, data analysis, research support, leadership, and implementing initiatives to support educator well-being, retention, and professional growth within the school environment. (p. e28-31, Resumes, e115-137)

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 9

Sub

1. (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

The management plan for the Project HERO initiative is well-structured and comprehensive. It includes clearly defined responsibilities for key personnel, such as the Program Director, Principal Investigator, Co-PI, and Evaluation Partner. Timelines and milestones are outlined, starting from the project launch phase within the first six months, progressing through pilot years and subsequent project years. Continuous evaluation and improvement strategies are integrated to adapt to challenges and ensure responsiveness to participants' evolving needs. The plan demonstrates a thorough approach to project management, focusing on accountability, timelines, and milestones to accomplish tasks effectively and efficiently. The timeline includes specific milestones and activities for each year of the project, focusing on addressing barriers to equitable access and participation. Including milestones related to workforce strategy development, data literacy, professional learning community sessions, and the implementation of interventions to support school leaders in improving staff retention and resilience. (p. e31-34, e139-140, e161)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not adequately describe the salaries for the staff, making it difficult to ascertain the relationships between the budget, the time set aside for the project, and how time/cost overruns will be managed to stay within budget.

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 3 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:

- (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
- (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

Strengths:

The Project HERO grant involves diverse partners, including Cheyney University, and Delaware State University. These partners contribute a range of expertise and experiences, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. (p. e14, Letters of support, e66-e83)

The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (Penn GSE) plays a pivotal role in the Project HERO initiative by providing leadership, expertise, and support in various aspects such as research design, grant-funded evaluation designs, workforce strategies, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Penn GSE collaborates with partners to enhance educational access, improve outcomes for high-need student populations, and manage federal funds effectively. (p. e14, Letters of support, e66-e83)

Both Delaware State and Cheyney University are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), who will actively contribute to the Project HERO initiative by providing advisory and consultative services, engaging faculty, staff, alumni, and students from their teacher education programs, collaborating with other institutions to develop workforce strategies and educational practices. Their focus is on addressing teacher shortages in schools serving diverse populations, particularly students of color, those in poverty, and rural areas, to improve teacher resilience and retention and benefit high-need students in Pennsylvania. This collaboration aims to enhance the pipeline of teachers to reflect the demographics of the communities they serve, promoting equity, diversity, and inclusivity in education. Additionally, they collaborate with other institutions to develop workforce strategies and educational practices, aligning with the project's goals of improving teacher resilience and retention to benefit high-need students. (p. e14, Letters of support, e66-e83)

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty: Community Asset-Mapping and Needs Assessment and Evidence-Based Instructional Approaches and Supports (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through the following priority areas:

(a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) Using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high-quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K-12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

- a) No strengths noted
- b) The applicant clearly responds to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students and the educators who serve them through Project HERO. This project aims to enhance evidence-based research interventions supporting workforce retention, teacher resilience, and school culture post-pandemic. Through innovative workforce strategies, professional development, and partnerships, Project HERO aims to improve teacher resilience, wellbeing, and retention, ultimately benefiting both educators and underserved students disproportionately affected by the pandemic and other systemic challenges. The applicant focuses on providing additional needed resources, professional development opportunities, and mental health support for both students and educators to address the long-term effects of the pandemic on education. (p. e40-41, e141-150)

Weaknesses:

The grant proposal does not contain explicit information about the applicant conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments related to student disengagement or strategies for reengaging students and their families. The focus of the grant is primarily on workforce development, training school leaders, and evaluating interventions post-pandemic. Therefore, based on the information available in the document, there is no mention of the applicant directly addressing the criteria of conducting community asset mapping and needs assessments for disengaged students or outlining specific strategies for re-engaging and supporting students and their families.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/12/2024 03:47 PM

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/02/2024 11:34 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	28
Sub Total	30	28
Total	30	28

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Early Tier 2 - 3: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 28

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

The applicant's plan to partner with an expert evaluation team to conduct a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) whose focus will be outcomes amongst teachers in school, more specifically, teacher retention and attendance, is likely to produce evidence about the project's effectiveness (e35-e37). The proposed project will utilize a mixed methods study that includes interviews with school staff, ongoing surveys, and observations to uncover best practices and make data-informed recommendations to enhance programmatic structure (e38).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not specify whether the intended research design will meet What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations. The project does not provide details on how they intend to structure the focus groups they plan to conduct, such as how they will engage participants or facilitate them in person or virtually.

Reader's Score: 18

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant's chosen methods of evaluation, including formative feedback from interviews and surveys, will permit assessment of progress towards intended outcomes (e39). A summative report containing evaluation findings at the end of the year will provide performance feedback to improve the current program format and offerings (e39).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Sub

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant's evaluation team will explore the extent to which the program is meeting key dimensions used to measure implementation fidelity, which will include adherence, duration, quality, participant responsiveness/engagement, and program differentiation (e41). The intended fidelity analysis will commence in year one of the project, in order to identify and mitigate potential variations in program delivery that could affect project outcomes (e41).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/02/2024 11:34 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/07/2024 04:35 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	28
Sub Total	30	28
Total	30	28

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Early Tier 2 - 3: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, THE (S411C240083)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 28

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

Quantily, LLC team will operate independently to evaluate Project Helping Educator Resilience & Optimism: Workforce Strategy for Wellbeing & Retention (Project HERO) to determine effectiveness and to make sure it meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). The evaluation focuses on key questions that will lead to meet WWC standards (e14). The cluster randomized controlled trial (RCT) design used will support a balanced comparisons based on socioeconomic status (SES) and school level. Also, focusing on outcomes amongst teachers and school such as teacher retention and attendance, more likely to produce evidence of the project's effectiveness. The use of the two-level hierarchical model (HLM) will allow for a more accurate estimate of treatment effects by accounting for the innate association among teachers within the same school. By using HLM, the evaluation would have a better sense of the impact of the intervention, in this case Project HERO, while also controlling for variables at both the teacher and school levels. This project accounts for missing data for its effectiveness. There will also be continuous collection of feedback through interviews, focus groups, and surveys once a year versus end of the project, year 5.

Weaknesses:

The project does not clarify whether it will meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations, which complicates the assessment. Additionally, while there is an acknowledgment of attrition and contamination, the use of principal and teacher volunteer data raises concerns. Although it is stated that incomplete data from volunteers who do not complete surveys will not be utilized, PeopleBench acknowledges that minimal contamination can still occur. Especially, PeopleBench has found that about 80% of teachers remained in prior studies (e38).

Reader's Score: 18

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

Sub

Strengths:

A mixed methods approach such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, project participation tracking, and literature review, will provide project leads with short-term but continuous analyses of principal and teacher experiences, and outcomes to understand the potential barriers to implementation. Bi-weekly meetings to discuss program development and emerging findings, 2 reports, and mid-year memo will support constant feedback towards achieving intended outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

The evaluation plan clearly outlines key project components, including the workforce strategy builder, online curriculum, Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions, and resilience training, ensuring that stakeholders understand what is being implemented. Mediators such as school leader retention, changes in workforce strategy, and organizational culture are specified, which helps in understanding the pathways through which the intervention may have its effects. The outcomes of interest (teacher attendance and retention) are well-defined and measurable, facilitating quantitative analysis and providing concrete metrics for success.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/07/2024 04:35 PM