

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/24/2025 03:50 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas A&M Research Foundation (S411A250007)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	15
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	35
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Sub Total	100	70
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Returning Educ to States	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Expanding Educ Choice	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	115	75

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Expansion Panel - 2: 84.411A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Texas A&M Research Foundation (S411A250007)

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:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project introduces an innovative approach, such as a modification of an evidence-based project component to serve different populations, an extension of an existing evidence-based project component, a unique composition of various project components to explore combined effects, or development of an emerging project component that needs further testing.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes an RCT evaluation for the scalability of a middle school literacy intervention based on a framework called Knowledge Acquisition and Transformation (KAT) for students who are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged across five states (p. e11). The applicant provides a well-detailed description of the proposed intervention and its components including professional development embedded with continuous improvements efforts, teacher lessons and a web-based solution, called Intelligent Tutoring for the Structure Strategy (ITSS) (p. e11). The intervention is currently being implemented across 72 schools in grades 6-8. The applicant proposes that the web-based ITSS and teachers use of the KAT-360 as the innovative components that utilize AI technology, alongside the evaluation offering the potential of scaling a promising existing solution (p. e13). The applicant explains that the intervention components were informed by teachers and administrators to address four barriers to student literacy that includes skill development, ineffective learning materials, teacher practice and sustainability (p. e14). The applicant includes a diagram that outlines the four barriers addressed in the literacy intervention (p. e14). Detailed examples of individual lessons and resources are in the appendix J section (p. e154).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to effectively scale the proposed project for recipients, community members and partners. In determining the applicant's strategy to effectively scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 35

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which there is unmet demand for broader implementation of the project that is aligned with the proposed level of scale.**

Strengths:

The applicant adequately describes the unmet need as students who lack literacy skills have fundamental skill tied to positive life outcomes. Additionally, the applicant discusses the importance of middle grades as the bridge towards high school completion (p. e15). They cite the 2024 NAEP findings that 33% of 8th graders showed a literacy decline, and situate this literacy intervention as a solution to minimize a potential decline in this critical time period (p.e16). In particular, the intervention highlights comprehensive skill development around main idea, summarizing and inferences (p. e16) that are comprehension gateways. Applicant provides sufficient details and descriptions of the intervention components (p. e15-18). Applicant details the promising findings of the intervention in current elementary implementation and a table (Table 2) that outlines the solution evidence mapped to the scalability of the innovation for each barrier (p. e19).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a feasible management plan with a high-level overview of project goals, objectives and timeline that covers key project functions and tasks (Table 3, p. e20). The applicant includes a detailed discussion that highlights how the project effort will be divided across four teams (p.e21). Sustainability efforts are addressed in objective 6 during the final year of implementation. The applicant explains that key personnel have experience facilitating federal grants and RCTs (p. e21). In the appendix, the applicant includes detailed descriptions of team members and their proposed role for this project (p. e143).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 3. (3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides adequate evidence of demonstrated commitment from project partners through letters of support that indicate school, district, university partners, etc. (p. e105) across the proposed geographic locations. The letters demonstrate enthusiasm for the intervention, readiness for implementation, pledge support and highlight the unmet need among student demographics, such as economically disadvantaged data (p.e107).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 4. (4) The quality of the plan to deliver project services more efficiently at scale and maintain effectiveness.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a strong delivery plan that captures critical components needed to deliver their intervention at scale and ensure effectiveness. The descriptions of key project teams indicate they have proven experience deploying the intervention successfully and understand optimal implementation models. For example, they will have on-demand content libraries to support teacher's virtual library which increases accessibility and availability of intervention content. The applicant proposes utilization of school onboarding tools that offer prescriptive instructional activities and crowdsourcing content based on student-level data and teacher input (p. e26). The applicant describes progress monitoring efforts that are informed by teacher surveys, reflections and pre- and post-training survey (p. e25).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 5. (5) The quality of the mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information and resources on its project to support further development, adaptation, or replication by other entities to implement project components in additional settings or with other populations.**

Strengths:

The applicant presents a compelling dissemination plan that offers multiple touchpoints and target audiences for distributing their findings, outcomes and lessons learned across multiple platforms. This includes sharing customized resources real-time and recommended study modules generated from the intervention's implementation to educator networks (p. e 27). The proposed project team has experience with the development of various resources and tools to supplement class instruction, such as games, podcasts, webinars and newsletters (p. e26). The applicant names conferences, research publications and writing a textbook as other dissemination pathways (p. e27).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The quality of the logic model or other conceptual framework underlying the proposed project, including how inputs are related to outcomes.**

Strengths:

The applicant includes a comprehensive logic model that maps the intervention's inputs to student outcomes. Desired outcomes include state assessments and skill improvement (p. e28) for both short-term and long-term periods. Applicant includes evidence-based outputs and detailed outline of treatment for students and teachers (p. e29). The logic model is followed by a thorough discussion of its components with cited evidence and theoretical support named (p. e28-29).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 15

- 2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and ambitious yet achievable within the project period, and aligned with the purposes of the grant program.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a comprehensive overview of ambitious project goals which include onboarding schools across five states with a goal of developing new state textbooks and state standards for middle school grades (p. e30). They detail aligned project activities, alongside proposed progress measurement. They include scalability as part of their core objectives with dedicated resources allotted to better understanding scalability factors for optimal implementation (p. e31). They describe added value of addressing instructional aspects that are top of mind for educational leaders such as state-specific content, and adaptations made for certain learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, and multi-lingual supports (p. e31).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation or other evidence-building of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation or other evidence building, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the effectiveness of the project on relevant outcomes that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations, as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks.**

Sub

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

2. (2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing and potential implementation in other settings.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

3. (3) The quality of the evaluation plan for measuring fidelity of implementation, including thresholds for acceptable implementation, to inform how implementation is associated with outcomes.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

4. (4) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including valid and reliable information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1: Returning Education to the States (up to 10 points)**

Project or proposals that will be carried out by one or more of the following entities:

(a) State educational agencies (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801(49))

(b) An Indian Tribe (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(e)), Tribal organization (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(l)), or Tribal educational agency (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7452(b)(3))

(c) Consortia of the entities identified under this priority.

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this criteria.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this criteria.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Expanding Education Choice (High-Impact Tutoring) (up to 5 points)

Projects or proposals that will expand access to education services that accelerate learning such as high-impact tutoring.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to review the evidence related to education services that accelerate learning, including high-impact tutoring, and to cite the highest-level of evidence supporting their response to the competitive preference priority in their application.

Strengths:

The proposed project leverages a high-impact tutoring program, supported by strong evidence including a WWC designation (p. e15). The tutoring intervention shows promising results for elementary grades and is being translated into a middle schools solution through the EIR KATE grant (p. e8). The tutoring program includes AI components and increases reach for scalability and teacher application outside of project scope with real-time access and activities shared widely.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 11/24/2025 03:50 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/24/2025 03:50 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas A&M Research Foundation (S411A250007)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	14
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	35
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Sub Total	100	69
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Returning Educ to States	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Expanding Educ Choice	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	115	74

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Expansion Panel - 2: 84.411A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Texas A&M Research Foundation (S411A250007)

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:

Reader's Score: 14

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project introduces an innovative approach, such as a modification of an evidence-based project component to serve different populations, an extension of an existing evidence-based project component, a unique composition of various project components to explore combined effects, or development of an emerging project component that needs further testing.

Strengths:

The proposal communicates some ways that the project will introduce an innovative approach. For example, the project will evaluate and scale the Knowledge Acquisition and Transformation (KAT) framework, an evidence-based reading comprehension program (p. e11). This framework has shown promise in support students' reading achievement. (p. e11). The scaling of the program seeks to address four root causes of reading comprehension problems in middle grades (p. e11). Additionally, the project will involve developing web-based state-related lesson plans to serve socioeconomically disadvantaged middle-grade students in five states. And the project will also explore the combined effects of the four components in a three-cohort design RCT to determine impact, cost, and establish guidelines for scaling (p. e13). The combination of scaling the KAT framework, providing web-based curricular support as well as developing guidelines for scaling suggest that this project has many innovative elements to its approach.

Weaknesses:

One aspect of the project's innovative approach is not clear in the proposal. Specifically, the proposal does not make evident how the field-initiated tools represent an innovation to support the overall implementation of the project.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to effectively scale the proposed project for recipients, community members and partners. In determining the applicant's strategy to effectively scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 35

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which there is unmet demand for broader implementation of the project that is aligned with the proposed level of scale.**

Strengths:

The proposal fully communicates that there is unmet demand for the broader implementation of this project. This demand is conveyed through citing research that emphasizes the importance of reading to learn in the middle grades (p. e15). In addition, the proposal shows that the 2024 NAEP results, which show that reading scores declined nationally in both 4th and 8th grades, with 33% of 8th graders performing below the NAEP Basic level. This is the highest percentage ever recorded and shows the need for improved reading teaching and learning (p. e15-e16). More than 50 years of research have demonstrated that the KAT framework components yield strong outcomes for reading comprehension in grades K through 12, yet the proposal cites research to show the prevalence of unproven reading instruction approaches (p. e17-e18). This further demonstrates an unmet need for a program like the one presented in this proposal. In total, this proposal thoroughly shows that there is an unmet demand for the broader implementation of this project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The proposal provides a comprehensive management plan that clearly suggests that the project can be implemented on time and within budget. For example, the proposal identifies the two goals that the project aims to address, such as goal one, which is to recruit and onboard schools and create new KAT resources for school textbooks and state standards for grades 6-8 in five states (p. e20). In addition, the proposal aligns six objectives with the goals to further specify the goals (p. e20). Moreover, the proposal articulates activities that will be implemented to address the objectives (p. e20). This further specifies the implementation work and how the activities ultimately address the project goals. These activities are arrayed on a timeline across five years to show the sequence within which they will be implemented, to further convey the feasibility of the plan (p. e20). Finally, the proposal assigns project teams to the implementation activities, which provides a level of accountability for the completion of the activities (p. e20).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 3. (3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**

Strengths:

The proposal clearly conveys the relevant and demonstrated commitment of each partner. First, the proposal explains that the project team includes experienced researchers, practitioners, technology experts, evaluators and

Sub

methodologists from four different organizations (p. e21). The project will be organized into teams that capture the relevant expertise of these and other partners, such as reading experts, teachers, programmers and evaluators (p. e21). Additionally, the proposal provides letters of support from school and organization partners for the project to further demonstrate their commitment to the project (p. e105-e117).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

4. (4) The quality of the plan to deliver project services more efficiently at scale and maintain effectiveness.

Strengths:

The proposal provides a high-quality plan to deliver project services more efficiently at scale. For instance, it is worth noting that the applicant has a track record of success in developing, deploying, and sustaining the KAT solutions to over 9,000 teachers nationwide (p. e25). Also, the project is implemented with web-based tools, such as a cloud platform, Teacher lesson guides, Teacher modeling videos, instructional resources and video-based communication (p. e25). In addition, professional development resources are fully available on the web using a massively open online virtual learning system where instructional videos are presented to teachers, interactive learning activities are completed, and KAT lesson planning is practiced (p. e25). These, and other tools and resources, enable high-quality project scaling.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

5. (5) The quality of the mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information and resources on its project to support further development, adaptation, or replication by other entities to implement project components in additional settings or with other populations.

Strengths:

The proposal details high-quality mechanisms for project dissemination. For example, the project has already developed a library of resources to share what has been learned in the past from related projects (p. e26). In addition, the proposal lists a variety of strategies that the project will employ for dissemination, such as conference presentations, articles, podcasts, webinars, newsletters, social media and policy briefs (p. e27). This shows that the project is thinking broadly about reaching a variety of audiences and stakeholders to share what they learn about the project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The quality of the logic model or other conceptual framework underlying the proposed project, including how inputs are related to outcomes.**

Strengths:

The proposal provides a detailed logic model that clearly communicates the relationship between the project activities and the intended outcomes (p. e28). For example, the logic model specifies the core project activities. (p. e28). Moreover, the logic model in the proposal shows how those activities are linked to the student level and teacher level outputs that are anticipated from the project(p. e28). Furthermore, the project's logic of implementation is further extended to connect the outputs with student level and teacher level measurable outcomes in the short term and long term (p.). As a whole, the logic model provides a clear rationale for the project through the articulation of the key activities of the project that will ultimately aim to achieve specific outcomes for the students and the teachers participating. (p. e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

- 2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and ambitious yet achievable within the project period, and aligned with the purposes of the grant program.**

Strengths:

The proposal effectively describes the goals, objectives and outcomes to be achieved by the project in a way to show that they are specific, measurable and ambitious. For instance, the proposal lists the two project goals, such as goal two which is to determine the project's impact on Grade 6-8 Student Reading Outcomes, Cost, and Scalability Factors (p. e29-e30). In addition, the proposal further specifies those goals, by six objectives that are aligned with the two goals (p. e29-e30). Finally, the proposal details how each of the objectives will be measured to understand program-level, teacher-level and student-level progress (p. e29-e30).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation or other evidence-building of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation or other evidence building, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the effectiveness of the project on relevant outcomes that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations, as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing and potential implementation in other settings.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The quality of the evaluation plan for measuring fidelity of implementation, including thresholds for acceptable implementation, to inform how implementation is associated with outcomes.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including valid and reliable information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Returning Education to the States (up to 10 points)

Project or proposals that will be carried out by one or more of the following entities:

(a) State educational agencies (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801(49))

(b) An Indian Tribe (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(e)), Tribal organization (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(l)), or Tribal educational agency (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7452(b)(3))

(c) Consortia of the entities identified under this priority.

Strengths:

The proposal does not address the criteria for competitive preference priority one. Specifically, the lead applicant is not a state educational agency, an Indian Tribe or a consortium of the two.

Weaknesses:

The proposal does not address the criteria for competitive preference priority one. Specifically, the lead applicant is not a state educational agency, an Indian Tribe or a consortium of the two.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Expanding Education Choice (High-Impact Tutoring) (up to 5 points)

Projects or proposals that will expand access to education services that accelerate learning such as high-impact tutoring.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to review the evidence related to education services that accelerate learning, including high-impact tutoring, and to cite the highest-level of evidence supporting their response to the competitive preference priority in their application.

Strengths:

The proposal fully addresses competitive preference priority two. For instance, the project will utilize two high-impact web-based AI tutoring systems that accelerate learning for middle-grade students and their teachers (p. e14-e15). The web-based AI tool for students has showed transformative results for students as shown in the what works clearinghouse (p. e15). And the teacher focused program is based on research that suggests that increasing teacher and administrator knowledge of reading comprehension instruction, aligned with the science of reading (SOR), was predictive of large improvements in a recent research study with upper elementary schools (p. e15).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 11/24/2025 03:50 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/24/2025 03:50 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas A&M Research Foundation (S411A250007)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	0
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	0
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	26
Sub Total	100	26
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Returning Educ to States	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Expanding Educ Choice	5	0
Sub Total	5	0
Total	115	26

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Expansion Panel - 2: 84.411A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Texas A&M Research Foundation (S411A250007)

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:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project introduces an innovative approach, such as a modification of an evidence-based project component to serve different populations, an extension of an existing evidence-based project component, a unique composition of various project components to explore combined effects, or development of an emerging project component that needs further testing.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to effectively scale the proposed project for recipients, community members and partners. In determining the applicant's strategy to effectively scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is unmet demand for broader implementation of the project that is aligned with the proposed level of scale.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Sub

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

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

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The quality of the plan to deliver project services more efficiently at scale and maintain effectiveness.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

5. (5) The quality of the mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information and resources on its project to support further development, adaptation, or replication by other entities to implement project components in additional settings or with other populations.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Sub

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

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: 0

Sub

1. (1) The quality of the logic model or other conceptual framework underlying the proposed project, including how inputs are related to outcomes.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and ambitious yet achievable within the project period, and aligned with the purposes of the grant program.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation or other evidence-building of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation or other evidence building, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 26

Sub

Sub

1. (1) **The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the effectiveness of the project on relevant outcomes that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations, as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks.**

Strengths:

The applicant presents a comprehensive description of several evaluation method components comprising the calculation of attrition rates, including implementation of reduction techniques, small attrition rates in previous similar studies, a description of contingencies for exceeding WWC thresholds for low attrition, procedures for joiners, and accounting for missing data (p. e32-33, e38-39).

The applicant provides a strong description and justification of the target sample sizes used in the impact analysis, taking into account effect sizes, statistical power, previously documented and plausible intraclass correlations (ICCs), attrition, and fixed and random model effects (p. e34-e35).

The applicant presents six research questions that are clearly aligned to specific project measures and assessments with detailed reliability estimates for both students and teachers (p. e33-e34, e37-e38).

The applicant includes consistent references throughout the evaluation plan that allow for a clear understanding of the various hierarchical linear models (HLMs), covariates, and interactions that will be explored through the project evaluation and how each primary outcome as well as predictor/moderator covariates are aligned to the research questions and support evidence of effectiveness (p. e38-e41).

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant mentions including student demographic variables such as gender and special education status, it is not clear if other relevant variables are going to be considered in the impact analysis model, including grade level, race, socioeconomic status and/or free and reduced lunch status. The lack of clarity regarding these demographic variables can negatively affect the impact and effectiveness of the project findings (p. e41).

The applicant does not provide a sufficient explanation of the randomization procedure for schools and how the balanced allocation and clustering of four schools into sites will be implemented in each of the five states. More detailed information about the randomization of schools would enhance the validity of the project outcomes and more strongly support evidence of effectiveness for meeting WWC standards (p. e35).

Reader's Score: 13

2. (2) **The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing and potential implementation in other settings.**

Strengths:

The applicant presents a strong discussion of (1) the examination of correlations between teacher fidelity and student ITSS use; (2) the triangulation of survey, observation, usage, and cost data; and (3) the documentation of questions, concerns, and potential challenges from teachers in order to provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication to other states (p. e43-e44).

The applicant clearly indicates that all impact estimates, including student outcomes and teacher knowledge and fidelity data, will be used to prepare and validate structured adaptation recommendations as well as state-specific roadmaps to success that are suitable for middle-school students in various settings (p. e31, e45).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The quality of the evaluation plan for measuring fidelity of implementation, including thresholds for acceptable implementation, to inform how implementation is associated with outcomes.

Strengths:

The applicant presents a moderate quality plan for measuring fidelity, including a clear description of three measures of student fidelity for ITSS implementation (such as ITSS-AVG, ITSS-TQC, ITSS-LCTS) as well as two observational measures for teacher implementation fidelity (such as TKUS and TKUR) (p. e38).

The applicant presents a convincing discussion of specific high-quality measures of implementation related to teacher fidelity, such as completing five ITSS teacher lessons of each text structure, completing 16 hours of teacher professional development, 80% of teachers completing the six KAT steps during two observations, and 100% of teachers attending at least 20 of the planned 30 PLC sessions in school (p. e33, e44).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not explicitly identify distinct thresholds for acceptable implementation for two of the student fidelity measures, such as the total number of questions answered (TQC) and the total number of lessons available in text Structures (LCTS). For example, the application indicates that students must complete 5 ITSS lessons of each structure, but it is not clear how many structures are expected to be completed throughout the 45 minutes of instruction per week. (p. e44)

It is not clear if the thresholds that are presented in the narrative are minimum acceptable thresholds or expected dosage amounts. A range of threshold limits and options are not presented or explained. (p. e36-e37)

Reader's Score: 3

4. (4) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including valid and reliable information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.

Strengths:

The applicant presents extensive evidence of the validity and reliability of the EMPOWER project components, supported by peer-reviewed literature, WWC guidelines and parameters, and evidence-based studies with methods and activities that are being built upon and expanded through the proposed project (p. e44).

The applicant clearly describes a plan to solicit relevant and reliable feedback by surveying teachers who did not have high-fidelity and inquire about potential solutions or changes that may help improve their delivery. This feedback and follow-up can be used to enhance project implementation and guide successful replication of effective strategies in other contexts (p. e44-e45).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Sub

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Returning Education to the States (up to 10 points)

Project or proposals that will be carried out by one or more of the following entities:

(a) State educational agencies (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801(49))

(b) An Indian Tribe (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(e)), Tribal organization (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(l)), or Tribal educational agency (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7452(b)(3))

(c) Consortia of the entities identified under this priority.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Expanding Education Choice (High-Impact Tutoring) (up to 5 points)

Projects or proposals that will expand access to education services that accelerate learning such as high-impact tutoring.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to review the evidence related to education services that accelerate learning, including high-impact tutoring, and to cite the highest-level of evidence supporting their response to the competitive preference priority in their application.

Strengths:

Not reviewed

Weaknesses:

Not reviewed

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/24/2025 03:50 PM

