

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/02/2024 11:11 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	0
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	40	0
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	24
Sub Total	100	24
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	0
Sub Total	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	0
Sub Total	3	0
Total	106	24

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Mid-Phase - 2: 84.411B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

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 factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

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

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the strategy to scale 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 extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Sub

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) 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:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

5. (5) The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

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 extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

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 and measurable.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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: 24

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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).**

Strengths:

The application adequately describes the RCT design, meeting the WWC standards without reservations (p. e36), which will produce evidence about project effectiveness by addressing seven research questions regarding the impact and implementation of the +AFFECT program through a rigorous evaluation design. This will include randomized controlled trials (RCTs) across three successive cohorts of schools. The diverse settings, differential impact analyses, and comprehensive implementation data from multiple sources will generate valuable insights into effective strategies for replicating and scaling the program in varied contexts. The plan also describes methods to minimize attrition occurring over the summer months (p. e38).

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 15

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

Strengths:

The evaluation plan adequately proposes to provide guidance on program replicability to other settings, based on project development and implementation (pp. e38-e39). The +AFFECT project's development and implementation are effective for replication in other settings due to its rigorous and independent evaluation by AIR, comprehensive evaluation design including randomized controlled trials (RCTs) across diverse districts, use of multiple sources for implementation data to assess fidelity and identify key factors, and detailed cost-effectiveness analysis to inform future replications.

Weaknesses:

N/A

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.**

Strengths:

The conceptual framework (Appendix J.5) identifies primary and secondary teacher outcomes, such as the quality of classroom interactions, sense of self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. This clarity allows for a focused evaluation of how these outcomes mediate the impact on student outcomes (i.e., engagement and academic achievement). The plan provides specific, measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation, such as attendance rates, completion of coaching cycles, and meeting frequencies. These clear criteria make it possible to objectively assess the fidelity of implementation and guide program improvement (p. e41).

Weaknesses:

The multiple thresholds and detailed criteria may add complexity to the evaluation process, potentially making it challenging to consistently collect and analyze data across all treatment schools.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	15
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	40	40
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	19
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	0
Sub Total	100	74
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Total	106	80

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Mid-Phase - 2: 84.411B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

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 factors:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

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

Strengths:

The significance of the project is fully demonstrated as the applicant intends to implement the Scaling and Sustaining Professional Learning that supports positive acceleration for Early-Career Teachers (ECT) project to build on current school district practices to support Early-Career Teachers. The applicant provides research data that supports the premise that enhancing ECT teacher skills through high-level training, student achievement will increase in high-poverty schools (pgs. e14-e20).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

Reader's Score: 40

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

The applicant appropriately describes multiple barriers to scale with the most relevant being buy-in of the project from district and school leaders. The detailed information clearly shows that the lack of buy-in is largely due to the

Sub

negative aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, district leaders are reluctant to add more activities to an already strained teacher workforce, school leaders struggle to find ways to support Early Classroom Teachers (ECTs) to become more effective in the classroom without overwhelming them, and training must be cost-effective. The plans to address the barriers are appropriately described. For example, to address the buy-in of the district and schools the applicant proposes providing a five-cycle dosage Teachstone +AFFECT project that cost analyses indicate is highly cost-effective and the project components are cognizant of teacher's time to participate (pgs. e20-e23).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) 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 is clearly delineated with the timeline and milestones identified, including potential start dates to ensure an on-time/on-budget project implementation. The management plans describe the distinct roles and responsibilities of the applicant organization and partners. For example, the project evaluation will be a collaborative team effort between the organization and Georgia State University with data collection beginning year 1 (pgs. e249- 250).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Strengths:

The applicant's capacity is fully demonstrated as the information provided indicates that staff and partners are highly qualified to successfully implement the project. For example, the program director demonstrates 20 years of experience teaching and has extensive experience working to improve teacher professional learning programs to improve Title I and other high-need schools (pgs. e24-e26).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

The dissemination plan is appropriately described and indicates that the applicant and partners will utilize multiple avenues to ensure resources and project findings are readily available to district teachers, school leaders, and community stakeholders. For example, the applicant will provide products and resources for free on its website,

Sub

which currently logs a high volume of monthly users seeking information. The applicant describes other effective strategies to be utilized including making sure that findings are available in peer-reviewed journals, conferences, and stakeholder meetings a minimum of three times per year for information-sharing purposes (pgs. e27-e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

- 5. (5) The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.**

Strengths:

The applicant fully demonstrates that the products resulting from the proposed project can effectively be used in a variety of other settings. The adaptable project components and findings will be made available through journal articles, conference presentations, policy briefs, and electronic email networks. The strategies are designed to support researchers, policymakers, professional organizations, school districts, and school system staff. The applicant proposes to ensure project coaches and online support will be available for additional (pgs. e28-e29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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: 19

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.**

Strengths:

The applicant appropriately describes the conceptual framework, and the research presented supports the framework described. For example, research is provided indicating that the effectiveness of early classroom teachers (ECTs) affects student performance in high-poverty schools. The research and framework support the multiple project components such as instructional coaching for teachers designed to motivate and improve teacher and student relationships (pgs. e30-e31).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant presents clearly specified goals and objectives for the project that are mostly measurable, and the desired outcomes are described. For example, Object 2. Strategy 2.2 indicates that the applicant will collect data and analyze the fidelity of the data and share it with partner Teachstone. The measures for this objective are clearly described, including coaches' logs and implementation briefs. The applicant presents a measurable outcome is that 90% of teachers in treatment schools have completed all five coaching cycles (pgs. e31-e32)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not demonstrate measurable goals and objectives for all project components/activities. For example, Objective 3., Strategy 3.1 outcome indicates that there will be increased engagement and capacity to sustain and expand +AFFECT in participating districts. However, no measures are presented to determine how this outcome will be met by the project (pgs. e31-e32).

Reader's Score: 4

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.

Strengths:

The applicant fully demonstrates the need for the project through the data provided which shows a diverse student population comprised of 47% Black, 30% Hispanic, and 13% English learners, and on average, 76% of students qualify for lunch. The data specifically indicates that there is a need to support high-poverty schools. The findings from video-recorded classrooms in 127 schools in 8 districts showed that students experienced low levels of support and were not engaged in learning and novice teachers indicated that support is needed to effectively support the student population (pgs. e14-e15, e32-e33).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

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: 0

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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).

Sub

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 in other settings.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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 appropriately describes plans to work with Georgia State University, a minority-serving institution. The applicant has worked with the university for over three years promoting diversity in the education sciences. The university

will support the project through evaluation and research activities to ensure the fidelity of the project (pgs. e12-e14, e20-e22).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 project specifically addresses the impact of COVID-19 on students and teachers in high-need schools as several evidence-based strategies will be implemented to support Early Classroom Teachers (ECTs) including individual coaching and conducting needs assessments at the district and individual levels by instructional coaches. The goal of the project is to address the effects of COVID-19 in high-needs schools to increase ECT support and student engagement and achievement. The applicant presents a detailed plan for utilizing evidence-based instructional approaches that will support Early Classroom Teachers by providing professional development such as coaching to enhance their skills to better serve students in high-needs schools (pgs. e12-e14).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	15
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	40	40
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	0
Sub Total	100	75
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Total	106	81

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Mid-Phase - 2: 84.411B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

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 factors:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

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

Strengths:

The proposed project presents an innovative approach by combining tailored professional learning and instructional coaching to address significant barriers in high-poverty schools.

The applicant provides a well-researched number of studies which consistently show that teachers are crucial for improving student outcomes (Chamberlain, 2013; Chetty et al., 2014; Gershenson, 2016; Kraft, 2019; Rivkin et al., 2005; Sass et al., 2010), particularly in high-poverty settings where the variation in teacher effectiveness is more pronounced (Nye et al., 2004). (p.e15-e16)

The applicant adequately demonstrates the importance of the +AFFECT program targets early childhood teachers (ECTs) with five years or less of experience in Title I schools, aiming to boost teacher effectiveness and student engagement. (p. e15-e17)

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

Reader's Score: 40

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

The proposed project effectively addresses scalability barriers with four key strategies. First, it aligns with the needs of district and school leaders by limiting the program to five coaching cycles and focusing on early childhood teachers (ECTs), making it more sustainable and cost-effective. Second, it includes school leadership activities, such as regular meetings with principals and instructional leaders to ensure support and integration of the program. Third, it involves ECT team activities to foster a positive perception of coaching and encourage collaboration among teachers. Finally, the project supports continued integration by gradually shifting authority and responsibility to local school and district leaders, ensuring the program's sustainability beyond the initial implementation year. These strategies are based on thorough analysis and past experiences, addressing specific barriers to scaling and sustaining the program. (p. e24-26)

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) 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 proposed management plan is well-structured and clearly outlines the project leadership and long-standing professional and collegial relationships as a foundational to achieving the project goals and objectives in bringing the project to scale. The detailed project timeline (Appendix J.4) chart clearly defines responsibilities, timelines, and milestones, essential for tracking progress. Furthermore, the project evaluation demonstrates a collaborative effort starting in year one across a variety of roles and responsibilities.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates strong capacity to bring the proposed project to scale through a robust management infrastructure and experienced subcontracted organizations. The project management team, led by the project director with 20 years of experience in teacher PL programs, is well-equipped to oversee and scale the initiative. Additionally, the deputy director adds significant project management experience, particularly in high-need schools. Furthermore, the strength in partnerships leading aspects of the plan provides contextual expertise to the overall project success.

Sub

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

A noted strength in the proposal is the capacity to disseminate information utilizing well-established partnership channels in the field of education. For examples, Learning Forward (LF) will lead the dissemination work by launching a network grounded in Learning Forward's well-established continuous improvement strategies, as well as the newly revised (2022) Standards for Professional Learning. (p. e22)

Learning Forward (LF) has experience leading and facilitating professional learning networks. (e282) LF will leverage (a) each partner's dissemination mechanisms, (b) third-party mechanisms, and (c) a CoP, as detailed here. The partners will use social media to publicize the products, which will be available at no cost. Products will feature participants' experiences, innovative program practices, lessons from implementation, and findings about impact. Social media outreach and announcements in LF's weekly, monthly, and quarterly newsletters (PD in the News, Connect, and Tools for Learning Schools) will draw attention to products, all available for free on the project webpage. (p. e22- e24)

Additional dissemination outlets include: Teachstone website as well as its annual InterAct conference. AIR capacity to reach practitioners, policy makers, and researchers who seek to use the best evidence through target email networks. Great Teachers and Leaders and of Regional Educational Laboratories, for engage practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. GSU partnership with school districts across Georgia and supplies a significant share of the state's teachers. To encourage replication, GSU will engage these partners in dialogue about the program and participant experiences as well as project stories and lessons. (p. e22-e24)

The applicant provides a detailed plan for third party dissemination specific to researchers through peer-reviewed academic journals and research-based conferences. The partners will also develop broadly understandable products like highlights, FAQs, and briefs for education trade publications (e.g., Education Week, Educational Leadership) and conferences (e.g., Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Education Commission of the States). (p. e27 & e28)

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

5. (5) The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.

Strengths:

The proposal demonstrates how products developed could impact the field of education. These include resources for Policy Makers, PL Provider Organizations, and School System Staff through short blogs, articles, conferences, presentations, and webinars. A communications toolkit for participants to share their perspectives and project information. For School System Staff implementing the program resources include refined implementation guides for central office staff and school leaders, manuals for coaches, teachers, FAQs, and other open-license materials online. In addition, tips about implementation provide strategies across settings. For researchers, present study findings will be available at research conferences, along with reports and journal articles. (p. e29)

Sub

Weaknesses:

None

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 extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.**

Strengths:

The applicant's proposal provides detailed information about the conceptual design and framework, evidence-based approach, logic model, and a well-thought-out implementation plan. The framework is based on evidence showing that Teachstone's Fidelity Support System and individual coaching improve student achievement and classroom interactions, particularly in high-poverty and diverse settings. The +AFFECT program's activities for school leadership and ECT teams are grounded in research on effective professional learning features. (p. e30-e32)

The model integrates practices in support of academic learning and engagement. For example, the model includes Teachstone resources, such as the Fidelity Support System, specialists, and coaches supporting program implementation. The programming aspect of the model (+AFFECT) provides individual coaching and activities for scaling, which aim to help early childhood teachers (ECTs) understand and apply effective interactions in their classrooms, enhancing the quality of classroom interactions. (p. e32- e34)

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicants proposed project plan provides well designed, clear, and concise goals inclusive of objectives, outcomes, and measures for action planning to improve academic outcomes. For example, the management plan breaks this goal into three objectives and 13 strategies, each with specific, measurable outcomes time.

Furthermore, AIR will use its management plan (see B2 and Appendix J.6) to ensure the partnership achieves the project's overall goal: to refine, test, scale, and sustain +AFFECT in 76 schools (4 + 28 + 44) between 2025 and 2028, and to disseminate lessons and practices that advance the field. (p. e30 & e31)

Sub

Weaknesses:

None

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.

Strengths:

The design of the proposed project is appropriate to the needs of the target population. The partner districts' Title I middle schools reflect significant diversity, with 76% of students qualifying for lunch, 47% being Black, 30% Hispanic, and 13% English learners. An AIR study (Garet et al., 2017) shows that students in high-poverty schools experience the lowest levels of support for engagement, particularly in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. For instance, 39% of classrooms in higher poverty schools were in the lowest quartile for Emotional Support, compared to 14% in lower poverty schools.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

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: 0

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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).

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 in other settings.

Sub

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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 demonstrates their partnership with GSU's as a minority-serving institution as co-principal investigators. (p. e13)

Weaknesses:

None

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 demonstrates knowledge of the impact of COVID-19 on students and teachers in high-need schools and uses student engagement to improve student achievement, individual coaching, and individual needs assessment by trained instructional coaches to support effective instruction using an evidence-based instructional approach. (p. e13)

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/02/2024 07:40 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/05/2024 01:30 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	0
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	40	0
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	23
Sub Total	100	23
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	0
Sub Total	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	0
Sub Total	3	0
Total	106	23

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Mid-Phase - 2: 84.411B

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

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 factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

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

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the strategy to scale 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 extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Sub

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) 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:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

5. (5) The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

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 extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

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 and measurable.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

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: 23

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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).**

Strengths:

The proposed evaluation plan is fully articulated and designed to generate evidence about the intervention's efficacy which will meet WWC standards without reservations. The evaluation succeeds at this through proposing a school level RCT (including randomization), with adjustments for clustering, a intent-to-treat analysis, and efforts to establish baseline equivalence using blocking (p.e33-40).

A thorough description of outcome measures is provided in Appendix J.14 which provide evidence of prior evidence of validity and reliability of the measures to meet WWC standards.

Thoughtful plans to minimize attrition are included (p.e38).

Detailed information is provided about necessary sample sizes and power analyses in Appendix J.12 to support a fully powered study (e.259-61).

The plan addresses the potential for overalignment on quality of classroom alignment (given co-development by Teachstone) by specifying an alternative measure as the primary.

This plan proposes multiple outcome measures for both students and teachers to generate evidence across multiple domains.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide clear evidence to ensure an independent evaluation given that it is both implementer and evaluator. In the budget narrative there is a description of the importance of "avoiding conflicts of interest" and the applicant indicate that it has "built-in assurances to guarantee that a robust firewall is in place" but an exact description was not included of what is part of the firewall to ensure independence (p.e273).

Reader's Score: 14

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

Strengths:

The evaluation plan outlines 4 features of the plan to provide robust guidance for future replication and testing of the intervention in other settings (p.e39-40).

This includes implementation in diverse settings (e246), differential impacts and moderator analyses at multiple levels, analyses of implementation data from multiple sources, and cost effectiveness analyses.

The applicant also include multiple in-depth measures of fidelity including logs, interviews, checklists as described on p.e256-7.

The proposed project effectively includes detailed plans for a cost analysis with robust analysis methods to generate cost information for potential adopters (p.e252-3).

Weaknesses:

none

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.**

Sub

Strengths:

The evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components and student and teacher outcomes in the logic model (Appendix G, e225).

Thresholds for acceptable implementation are clearly defined in the evaluation plan (p.e41).

Weaknesses:

The logic model does not specifically identify mediators by name. Although the mediation analysis questions (p.e35) do identify the teacher outcomes as mediators, the particular relationship between different outcomes is not clear. For example, it is unclear if the secondary teacher outcomes are mediators of the primary teacher outcomes as well.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

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:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/05/2024 01:30 PM

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	15
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	40	40
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	0
Sub Total	100	75
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Impact of COVID-19	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Total	106	81

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Mid-Phase - 2: 84.411B

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences (S411B240028)

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 factors:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

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

Strengths:

The project adequately proposes an innovative, evidence-based strategy (+AFFECT) to address the difference of outcomes between teachers in the 75th percentile VS the 25th percentile (p. 14). Early Career teachers are a critical lever in improving student outcomes, especially in high-poverty schools, due to the high percentage of ECTs in these schools (p. e12).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

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

Reader's Score: 40

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

The application identifies four key strategies to overcome past barriers to scaling and sustaining. For each of the strategies and barriers listed the applicant clearly identifies the barrier and provides a strategy based on evidence to overcome the obstacle. For example, barrier 2 lacked mechanisms to engage leadership and they formulated an

Sub

adequate strategy based on past experience and current research (p. e21).

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) 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 proposes a management plan that clearly defines responsibilities with respective milestones, and timelines (Append J.6). For example, strategy 1.1 AIR Partnership Lead, GSU and Districts will be responsible for recruiting schools and teachers for pilot and impact study (p. e249). The proposal also clearly illustrated the management structure through identifying the broad responsibilities of each partner (Appendix J.4).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

The applicant has qualified personnel for the start of the project. Through the course of implementation, they will effectively expand the team by having the superintendent of six partner districts appoint a district leader to support scaling (P. e26). Following the first year of implementation, leaders will also recruit district coaches using Teachstone's guidelines (Appendix J.2).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

- 4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant has clear mechanisms for dissemination and has distributed the roles and responsibilities for this plan thoroughly. For example. GSU will be responsible for sharing with researchers and policy makers along with state's teachers. They will also engage with partners to replicate the project (p. e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

5. (5) The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.

Strengths:

There is a high likelihood for the products to be utilized in a variety of other settings due to the applicant thinking through which products will benefit distinct groups. For example, the first group (policy makers, PL provider organizations and school system staff) will find the following products most useful: short blogs, articles, conference presentations and webinars (p. e29). The applicant also breakdowns +AFFECT Dissemination products to clearly explain the product, author, examples of dissemination outlet, frequency of update and the focus of the product (Appendix J.9). This thorough plan will ensure high utility of the products.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

The conceptual framework clearly demonstrates the activities and the overall quality of the project. The project is grounded in evidence throughout the proposal. For example, the applicant justifies the use of Teachstone's Fidelity Support System because it demonstrated positive impact on student achievement (p. e30).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly breaks down the objectives for the project. There are three objectives listed with 4 or more strategies listed with measures and outcomes (Exhibit 3, p. e31). The applicant has goals listed for both teachers and coaches. For example for Strategy 1.3, the outcome has a teacher goal (80%) and a coach goal (100%) to have feedback survey completed (p. e31).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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.

Strengths:

The proposed project is appropriate and will successfully address the needs of the target population. The applicant justifies working in high-poverty middle schools and supporting the needs of students, school leaders and ECT through the research provided (p. e33)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

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: 0

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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).

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 in other settings.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Sub

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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 will be partnering with Georgia State University. This is building off of a long-term, 4 year partnership to promote diversity in education sciences and to bring diverse perspectives and lived experiences into research (p. e13)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 addresses both sub criterion of CPP2. The project aims to address the impact of COVID-19 on students and teachers in high-needs schools (p. e13 & A1). The applicant also addresses using engaging and effective instruction (A2) and evidence-based instructional coaching (A3 and A4) to address the impact of COVID-19 (p. e13).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: **3**

Status: Submitted
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