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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)
Reader #1:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		15	
	Sub Total	15	
Selection Criteria			
Strategy to Scale			
1. Strategy to Scale		30	
	Sub Total	30	
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan			
1. Project Design/Management		35	
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		20	17
	Sub Total	55	17
	Total	100	17

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - EIR - Mid Phase Grants - 3: 84.411B

Reader #1: **********

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. **In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project.

   (2) The national significance of the proposed project.

   (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

   Strengths:

   n/a

   Weaknesses:

   n/a

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria   - Strategy to Scale

1. **In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy, or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

   (2) 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.

   (3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety

   Strengths:

   n/a

   Weaknesses:

   n/a

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

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

(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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (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 Evidence Standards without reservations.

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

   (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

   (4) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components, mediators, and outcomes of the grant-supported intervention, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   • The detailed description of the evaluation plan beginning on page 27/e51 clearly outline how the design will indeed meet WWC standards w/o reservation.

   • Page 18/e42 outlines a plan to use data for the purposes of continuous improvement which will help strengthen implementation over the course of the project.

   • The named external evaluator, MDRC, has a well-documented history of conducting rigorous evaluations.

   • The plan on page 26 (e50) for 'tiered randomization' over the course of the project will allow for a more nuanced assessment of impact than a single randomization period/year.

   • The power analysis has been well documented and the sample size is appropriate based on such calculations.

   • The implementation study outlined on page 29 (e53) will serve to strengthen the impact of the evaluation and provide evidence of its replicability across a variety of settings by documentation conditions under which the program is maximally effective and which variables may hinder ideal levels of implementation.

Weaknesses:

•   Page 19/e43 – the proposal would benefit form a more concrete definition of success for the output related to teacher training – this could take them form of defining an acceptable threshold of participation to be considered fully trained.

•   Page 24/e49 indicates that evaluation will take place beginning in June 2021. However implementation of the project will be in its third year by then. The proposal would benefit from a more detailed description of how data on prior participants will be retroactively obtained. Further, Page 26(e50) indicates a plan for the evaluation to start in 2019 (y2)

•   Page 25/e49 indicates that this will be a student-level RCT, however the description of teachers teaching students on the bottom of page 23/e47 does not reference a plan for randomization at the student level. It would be useful to know concretely that this randomization can occur that groups students into teachers' classrooms. This may be further hindered by the need for active parent consent. For example, left unknown is: If a parent does not agree to the randomization, is that student automatically put into a non-research classroom or they will have an equal likelihood of being placed in a STARI classroom but just will not be subject to the evaluation? If the former, this puts non-consenters at a disservice/unfair disadvantage potentially.

Note: This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: **17**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 05/30/2017 01:55 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)
Reader #2: **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		15	0
	Sub Total	15	0
Selection Criteria			
Strategy to Scale			
1. Strategy to Scale		30	0
	Sub Total	30	0
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan			
1. Project Design/Management		35	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		20	17
	Sub Total	55	17
	Total	100	17

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - EIR - Mid Phase Grants - 3: 84.411B

Reader #2: **********

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

   (1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project.

   (2) The national significance of the proposed project.

   (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

   Strengths:

   NA

   Weaknesses:

   NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria   - Strategy to Scale

1. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

   (1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy, or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

   (2) 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.

   (3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety

   Strengths:

   NA

   Weaknesses:

   NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

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

(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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (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 Evidence Standards without reservations.

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

   (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

   (4) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components, mediators, and outcomes of the grant-supported intervention, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   The project will use a number of methods to produce WWC evidence without reservations (p. 27). First, the evaluation will implement an RCT. Specifically, there will be student-level random assignment in 45 high poverty schools. The target population is adequately detailed. For example, students will be in grades 6-8, and, since this is a professional development literacy program, students eligible for the study will have low ELA scores and were not previously in a STARI program. From that group, students whose parents have consented to the study and students who plan to enroll in the fall will be randomly assigned to the treatment or control classroom. The strategy of assigning some students to a non-research waitlist will fill empty seats is sound to insure maximum participation (p.26), Impact analysis will be an intent-to-treat analysis which is appropriate to deal with missing data and subject attrition to maintain the initial randomization (p. 28). The researchers propose different and reasonable power analyses (p. 28). MDES effects sizes for the different samples and measures including state tests, ETS tests, and attrition rates have been calculated based on their previous work and other MDRC studies indicating thoughtful consideration of the samples and impact variables.

   The methods of strong coaching including in-person, group, and online training as well as the expertise and availability of STARI personnel has promise to provide guidance for replication in other settings (p. 7). The researchers propose measuring fidelity of implementation with records including training, meetings, interviews, and observations. They will set a priori benchmarks which is a sound approach so that they can make corrections only as the data indicates (p. 29). The scaling study to document the successes and challenges of how the initial work was scaled for the current study is a reasonable approach because it builds on actual experience using both qualitative and quantitative data (p. 29). Further as researchers study program differences with regard to ethnicity, poverty, school and district size, they will be able to generalize the findings to help other schools implement the project.

The researchers address outcome eligibility through establishing face validity (measures of reading including an ETS-developed test not aligned with the intervention and state administered tests in ELA, math, social studies, and science), reliability (all measures have reliabilities greater than .5, p. 27) and all measures will be collected similarly in both treatment and control groups. Data from state tests will be pooled across districts through z-scores and test score proficiency which is an acceptable approach to facilitate comparisons. In addition, researchers will measure non-cognitive factors (self-efficacy and engagement) through a student survey.

The logic model puts forth the key components of the intervention including available resources, comprehensive activities including training, implementation, tool development, and continuous improvement activities, and teacher, student, and district outcomes (p 14). In addition, the logic model specifies products in terms of an expanded set of tools and communication strategies. The researchers also address obstacles and strengths that many middle school teachers have little content knowledge of reading strategies and therefore a need for long term PD and intensive coaching not just on content but on motivation as well (p. 7). Other obstacles include high poverty and highly stressed schools.

Regarding cost analyses, there are different approaches to cost analysis and many are complex and comparisons across different entities can be difficult. The ingredients approach cited by the researchers appears to be acceptable and has appeal and is justified as being systematic and uses actual data from project and school budgets and from national educational surveys and labor indices so that making cross comparisons and projections across schools and districts may be more reliable since most closely approximates actual costs and may be similarly collected by districts (p.30).

The evaluators have in-depth expertise and experience. The researchers make a strong case for the evaluation budget and resources that increases the confidence that the evaluation will yield reliable, valid, and useful information for project improvement, implementation, and scale up (p.30). For example, the evaluators will be able to assist with recruitment, develop both data collection and analysis plans, and issue periodic updates and information sharing to insure that the data continues to be collected, analyzed, and used.

Weaknesses:

What is not clear are the methods for recruiting and retaining teachers and coaches. Teacher motivation is a critical factor that does not appear to be addressed. Two significant weaknesses include that there is no discussion about the placement of students whose parents do not give consent. Also, the evaluation doesn't begin until 2021 and it is not clear why the delayed start date. The analysis could possibly be strengthened with separate analyses of only those subjects who completed the intervention.

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: 17

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 05/30/2017 03:16 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)
Reader #3:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		15	15
	Sub Total	15	15
Selection Criteria			
Strategy to Scale			
1. Strategy to Scale		30	30
	Sub Total	30	30
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan			
1. Project Design/Management		35	35
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		20	0
	Sub Total	55	35
	Total	100	80

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - EIR - Mid Phase Grants - 3: 84.411B

Reader #3:   **********

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. **In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project.

   (2) The national significance of the proposed project.

   (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

   Strengths:

   1.The applicant provides sufficient narrative regarding the magnitude of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. The applicant desires to validate the efficacy of the Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI) to engage in four high needs school districts in various states in grades 6-8. The applicant provides citations to support the fact that students who were unable to read proficiently by grad 3 were 4 times more likely than proficient readers to leave school without graduating. Other citations indicate that 26% of students who cannot read proficiently by grade 3 and who spend at least one year living in poverty, do not graduate from high school, a number that rises to 31% for black students and 33% for Hispanic students.   Other supports include citations that find some impact for basic reading skills interventions, but not for reading comprehension and that when researchers implement the intervention programs, they are more successful than when teachers do. (p.2)

   2. The applicant provides support for the national significance of the proposed project. The aim of STARI, is to build self-efficacy through the matching of unit texts to students' reading levels so that success is within reach for all. Fluency passages are written at four levels of difficulty to allow students to be matched to the level that promotes greatest progress with passages that are aligned to the unit theme, proving background knowledge needed for participation in discussion and debate. (p.3) STARI results indicate that STAARI students not only made gains in component reading skills as assessed by RISE, they demonstrated growth on 21st century critical reading skills as assessed by the GISA while control students did not. The goal is to measure STARI's comparative effectiveness in schools with different characteristics or for students in different subgroups such as ELL.

   3.The proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities established for the competition. This approach, a large scale one can produce new evidence after the project is completed and will clarify whether and how SARI can be implemented with positive impact on students in widely varying sites. The applicant provides units of study in the appendix which, this reviewer believes, has the potential to reach high need students in multiple categories in varied school settings. A particular unit on Foster Care, part 1: First Contact illustrates different levels for the same comprehension piece until mastery is achieved. The topics are relevant to the population and include reading topics on Grandparents That Parent, Kids Without Parents and others contemporary issues that directly relate to high need students.

   Weaknesses:

   none noted

Reader's Score: **15**

Selection Criteria   **- Strategy to Scale**

1. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy, or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

(2) 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.

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety

Strengths:

1.The applicant makes a strong case for unmet demand for the strategy that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application. The demand for reading skills assistance for teachers, as surveyed in the Boston Public Schools, teachers said they needed more comprehensive and engaging approaches to adolescent reading intervention. The interest and demand for STARI has surfaced according to the applicant, from educators across the nation. While formal marketing has not been introduced, more than 1500 registrants form 46 states have sought access to STARI and new requests come in daily. The grant partners from large urban school districts are excited about the opportunity to be part of the project and implementation. (NYC, DC, Baltimore are examples) (p.6) This further evidenced by test data showing that NYC for grades 5-7 is well below proficient and partially proficient and Baltimore did not meet expectations and partially met expectations.

2.Barriers to scale are enumerated by the applicant that may prevent them from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application. The barriers are greater for reading interventions in schools with high proportions of low income students as environmental stresses in high poverty schools impact student behaviors and work habits facing additional demand on teachers. It is in these settings that teachers need to receive more than introductory workshops to succeed. The project will overcome this barrier by requiring that they require longer term professional development and intensive coaching support. The level of teacher investment is another critical area, and teachers need to be motivated to invest in developing skills to teacher reading. In addition, school administrators need to motivate and support teachers without which is an exceedingly large barrier to overcome. (p.8)

3.The applicant provides evidence of the feasibility of a successful replication of the proposed project. Narrative supports include that the project will provide a four year opportunity to design, pilot, gather evidence and feed and continually improve the tools developed until we have an effective model for district capacity building. The sample of schools and districts represents a good mix in districts like New York City, Baltimore, and the State of Mississippi where partners will face multiple challenges for replication. These are the real deal districts whose student performance levels are a challenge to educators. STARI is owned by the SERP Institute, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to bridge the world of research design and practice, and is in a unique position to directly support districts as a core component of it mission. SERP plans to work with states, districts and educational associations such as the Council of Great City Schools and the Minority Student Achievement Network to reach a broader audience. (p.12)

Weaknesses:

none noted

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

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

   (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.

   (3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

   (4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

   Strengths:

   1. The goals, objectives and outcomes to be achieved for the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. The applicant's presentation of this section is thorough and detailed. The logic model specifies the resources that the lead agency will bring to the project: project activities, the measurable outputs to be produced and the ultimate outcomes being targeted. The Logic Model is presented in clear readable terms with specificity provided for each of the categories. For example, under Activities-Training lists Teacher Institutes, Coaching workshop- Implementation-Video introduction for principals, site visits, student placement, weekly coaching, Monthly OPLC's, ongoing support of coaches throughout the year – then it goes to Tool Development…(p.14)   The project goals are supported by the lead agencies design center which is a resource for the project in terms of the capacity for user-centered design, illustration, video and web design, essential for project activities.

   2. The management plan provides adequate plans to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget including defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. The fact that there are both a project director and assistant project director to provide for the day to day operations recognizes the importance of project implementation to achieve desired outcomes. In addition, there is a Continuous Improvement Officer whose primary function is to identify areas of improvement, refine processes, tools, or outputs to improve quality. The applicant's narrative describes specific communications and meetings to be held in order to coordinate project activities. For example, the design staff will consult with team members on design specifications and develop timelines for collection of video and other artifacts, development of wireframes, layout, etc. Project Director Meetings will take place at routine weekly meetings with the six coaches to debrief on progress and challenges in classrooms and interact more frequently as needed. (p.22). The timeline is date specific and comprehensive with specific phase implementation.

   3. The applicant provides for the adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. There is a Continuous Improvement Officer whose primary function is to identify areas of improvement, refine processes, tools, or outputs to improve quality. The applicant's narrative describes specific communications and meetings to be held in order to coordinate project activities. Activities for participants will take place in their respective districts with district institutes to be held in all four districts. The applicant in their presentation provides a clear picture for feedback, modifications of program and a plan to provide oversight for total implementation.

   4.The potential and planning for the incorporation of project activities beyond the end of the grant are discussed by the applicant. The user forum will continue to be a source of support at the end of the grant. Results will be publicized and information will be shared with districts nationally about the STARI program and the opportunities for profession learning available. In addition, all data will obtained, cleaned and analysis completed with the already detailed dissemination plan launched. The lead agency will notify new districts of the availability of district services offered to those who are interested in implementing the program. (p.25)

Weaknesses:

none noted

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (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 Evidence Standards without reservations.

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

   (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

   (4) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components, mediators, and outcomes of the grant-supported intervention, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   na

   Weaknesses:

   na

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/30/2017 03:16 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)
Reader #4: **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		15	15
	Sub Total	15	15
Selection Criteria			
Strategy to Scale			
1. Strategy to Scale		30	29
	Sub Total	30	29
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan			
1. Project Design/Management		35	23
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		20	0
	Sub Total	55	23
	Total	100	67

Technical Review Form

Reader #4: **********

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. **In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project.

   (2) The national significance of the proposed project.

   (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

   Strengths:

   The applicant refers to this national well-known and documented problem: 24% of the U.S. students who leave middle school without reading proficiency are unprepared to meet college and carrier-ready standards.
   The study goes even farther: students who are reading below grade level in third grade are strongly exposed to the probability that they will not graduate from high school, black and Hispanic students being the most exposed. There is a relationship between reading levels and graduation rate. This relationship depends upon the level of poverty, and the student's race. Applicants consider the consequences that failure to complete high school have not only on the student but on future generations and on the nation as a whole (for example higher unemployment and poorer health) (p.1)

   The new approach is built on professional development specifically tailored to the particular needs of the teachers teaching in low performing schools. It takes into account the result of a previous program that addresses the reading needs of middle school students who are 2-4 years below grade level. The exceptional approach is in the fact that the program, which addresses basic reading skills, builds complex comprehension tasks at the same time. Most of all, student motivation, which relates to student engagement, has a central role in this methodology and topic selection and themes chosen as well as instructional practices are studied to engage the middle school struggling reader.

   This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

   Weaknesses:

   None

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Strategy to Scale

1. **In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy, or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

   (2) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations.

Strengths:

The unmet demand comes after teachers were surveyed about 10 years ago on the resources they needed to solve the problem of students arriving in high school unable to comprehend their text books. Since then, interest for a reading intervention program that addresses the specific needs of middle school students below grade level in English Language Art has increased. One of the evidence of the need for such program is the buy-in of four public school systems among the poorest in the nation (Free-Reduced lunch eligible above 65%) who have become district partners. The program is designed to engage students in standards-aligned comprehension tasks and bring them to grade level expectations in one year. This program builds on both comprehension and reading skills using content that interest teenagers. It addresses the barrier of students' low motivation by exposing to reading topics that are relevant to their live and is organized around peer collaboration and integration.

Another important barrier that the program addresses is that middle school teachers are not trained to teach reading to teenagers. The level of reading that is requested from students in middle school differs greatly from the level requested in 3rd grade for example: a slow and inaccurate decoding, weak vocabulary and insufficient background knowledge have an impact on the comprehension needed to access content.

Furthermore, teachers need to be motivated to invest in developing the skills to teach reading and through this program, they will be offered more opportunities to learn based on introductory workshop, long-term professional development and coaching support is a way to address this barrier.

This program builds capacity to provide professional learning opportunities and implementation support to teachers who have no experience in teaching reading.

During the implementation years, the program will continue to be developed in order to address successful replication in a variety of settings. A plan is described on page 12 that takes into account the complexity of some challenges in varied contexts. The project will provide a four-years opportunity to design, pilot, gather evidence and feedback necessary for its improvement. Districts and schools will be chosen with respect to the different challenges they face and learning and responding to the implementation challenges in these contexts is part of the scaling process.

Program successes will be well advertised through network, conference presentation and webinars to increase interest.

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 29

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

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

   (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.

   (3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the

proposed project.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

Strengths:

Goals are clearly specified and measurable: Develop resources to build capacity of coaches, teachers and district and school administrators in order to promote literacy practices and to address the needs of below level readers in 6-8 grades. The training takes into account the diverse needs of the struggling student adolescent specifically in reading skills and effective literacy and targets some common challenges that teachers can encounter like the lack of motivation of students that have been unsuccessful. It represents a diverse combination of face-to-face, online resources, webinars and PLCs that can support all teachers' learning (p. 10)

Teachers' motivation is created by tying the training program to professional advancement incentive and by acquiring administration support and knowledge. For that a video-base introduction to the program for principals and district leaders will be developed.

Program implementation will be regularly evaluated through interviews and classroom observations
The logic model given on page 14 shows the relationship between the development of the resources and the different outcomes at the student, the district and the nation levels.
A continuous improvement officer will identify unforeseen barriers and areas of improvement for reproducibility purpose.
Timeline detailed on page 23 is based on 3 phases (launch in one school year, implementation across three school years, and evaluation and dissemination). All three phases are well described in term of activities, goals and milestones for example the milestones for phase 1 is the hiring of a project director, coaches and schools and students identified.

Phase 3 is specifically designed for the evaluation team to work with district partners to complete all data analysis and publicize results which will be shared nationally. Opportunities for professional learning will be advertised at the same time to districts interested in implementing the program.

Weaknesses:

Some of the criteria that would show effective implementation of the reading program in divers settings are unclear in their expectation for example 'generating evidence'
It is also unclear what resources will be used to train the SERP coaches during the 30 hours coaching workshop. Nothing is said about how experienced the STARI teachers are and how they will be recruited.
Some tasks are not clearly defined for example: the 'other responsibilities' of the district coaches,
how and when the videos of STARI classrooms will be collected (p16), and who will be in charge of updating the website, which main purpose is creating interest for future program expansion.
Teacher attrition is considered. What about students'?
The expansion of the program after the grant is considered and districts will continue to implement it at their "own expense". It would be interesting to see a study of how much this will cost to the districts if they plan to continue the program.

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. In determining the quality of the project evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(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 Evidence Standards without reservations.

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

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components, mediators, and outcomes of the grant-supported intervention, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

 Strengths:

 NA

 Weaknesses:

 NA

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/05/2017 10:01 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)
Reader #5: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		15	14
	Sub Total	15	14
Selection Criteria			
Strategy to Scale			
1. Strategy to Scale		30	30
	Sub Total	30	30
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan			
1. Project Design/Management		35	35
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		20	
	Sub Total	55	35
	Total	100	79

Technical Review Form

Reader #5: * * * * * * * * * *

Applicant: Strategic Education Research Partnership Institute (U411B170043)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. **In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (1) The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project.

   (2) The national significance of the proposed project.

   (3) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

   Strengths:

   The applicant provides a clear description of the overall problem (page 1). The biggest problem identified is 24% of the US eight graders are not reading at grade level (page 1). Other identified challenges include: the low graduation rate as indicated by the national longitudinal study; 26% of third graders who are proficient in reading will end up not graduating from high school as well as the one who live in poverty (page 1) the applicant provide a clear description of the high need population who are not graduating from high due to reading challenges; 31% of black students and 33% for Hispanic students (page 1).

   The applicant clear indicates the need for interventions to target both basic and higher-order reading skills for the targeted population (page 1). The applicant provides a clear demonstration of the use of up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. The project will be designed to be consistent with the study conducted by researchers from Wheelock College and Harvard University that led the development of the Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI) (page 2). The proposed project will use (STARI) to support students in grades 6-8 who read 2-4 years below grade level (page 2).

   Weaknesses:

   Even though the applicant explained the impact on academic achievement of the STARI on high-need students as indicated by the data on in a randomized trial in four districts in a northeastern state, the supporting data of proficiently level for the participating students is not included in the application.

   This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria   - Strategy to Scale

1. **In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

   (1) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates there is unmet demand for the process, product, strategy, or practice that will enable the applicant to reach the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

   (2) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or

(3) The feasibility of successful replication of the proposed project, if favorable results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a clear description of the target population and needs for reading intervention as indicated in the table on page 6 with 39-70% of 5th to 7th graders performing below grade level on ELA state tests. Additionally, the survey for BPS teachers indicates a need for more comprehensive and engaging approaches to adolescent reading intervention.

The applicant clearly defines the barriers to meet the targeted pollution and his strategies to use to address the challenges. One of the barriers is professional development/learning opportunities for the teacher as well as school leaders (page 7). Additionally, the applicant will build capacity among teachers, administrators, and coaches. Furthermore, additional resources to facilitate the implementation of the STARi will be provided with the support of this grant (page 8). The project will implement several strategies such as 30- hour workshop for the coaches, online monitoring tool to for coaches to support and monitor implementation of the STARI, A monthly face to face professional learning communities allowing appropriate collaboration among teachers and coaches that will expand to the second year of this grant. Applicant describes a clear and measurable sequence of teacher supports (page 10). The applicant clearly specifies that an evaluation will be used to collect, analyze and disseminate data throughout the four years of this project to help staff and key stakeholders stay on track with implementation and for ongoing improvement (page 12).

Weaknesses:

NA

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: **30**

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

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

   (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.

   (3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

   (4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

Strengths:

The applicant outlines a management plan that is sufficient to guide the implementation and operation of the project (pages 13-24). Objectives and associated activities are specified, along with person(s) responsible, a timeframe for completion of activities, and milestones for accomplishing tasks.
The applicant outlines sufficient procedures to ensure feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the project (page 24). Procedures will include teachers to complete survey right after the Institute and later one during the year. Additionally, the teacher will be asked also to complete a survey after the coaching institute and after the Monthly PLC. A user forum will be implemented for online collaboration (page 18).

Weaknesses:

NA

This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

Reader's Score: **35**

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

 1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

    (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 Evidence Standards without reservations.

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

    (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

    (4) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components, mediators, and outcomes of the grant-supported intervention, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

  Strengths:

  Weaknesses:

 Reader's Score:

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/02/2017 12:17 PM