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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)
Reader #1: **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	9
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	33
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Management	35	32
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Total	100	74

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Expansion - 1: 84.411A

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

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)

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 project proposal presents a significant amount of information regarding the importance of a pre-school education and provided research based information about the lack of pre-school opportunities for students residing in rural areas that are impacted by transportation, personnel, poverty, and lower priorities for funding.

   The project offers an opportunity to engage students and parents who reside in rural areas with a project to integrate reading, science, math instruction for young children in a model that overcomes barriers (i.e. transportation, personnel, and curriculum). The applicant references that 30% of the national population is rural, so the project offers the opportunity for a significant impact (Page 3-5).

   The project that the applicant has proposed provides a collaborative model (multiple states, state education associations, local education associations, and additional partners that will offer a large scale model for replication by other rural serving states and organizations (Page 5 & Appendix).

   A unique approach to meeting the priorities that have been established was presented. They have demonstrated that they meet priority number one through the past performance and evidence generated through their similar project work in the states of Utah and Mississippi. Their model of integrating technology and software through student involvement and parent engagement with strategic support add to their strengths in meeting the priority #2 in implementing a field initiated project. They have also demonstrated that their curriculum approaches are based on proven standards based practices and can be delivered effectively through a technology medium (Page 12-20)

   The project plan has referenced how their project will meet the invitational priorities (#1-#2) that are focused on personalized learning and early learning and cognitive development. These elements are fundamental parts of the project and can be seen with the technology integration and the curriculum targets that they have described (Page 12-20).

   Weaknesses:

   Research based evidence referencing the national dilemma of a lack of pre-school opportunities for students in rural areas was presented, but they lack specific details about the local states, state educational associations, and local education associations that they will be serving with the project (Page 2-3).

   Little information was provided in depth about how the parental instruction and the technology support piece will be implemented or the effectiveness of parental guided instruction with pre-school students. They make few references to how this is an effective approach on a broad scale (5 states – 3,000 projected students) (Page 5-7).

Reader's Score: 9

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 extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.

    Strengths:

    The grant proposal has demonstrated that the areas to be served by the grant project meet the standards and criteria for the project and participants who will be served by the project. They propose to serve five states without pre-school education support, areas of high rurality and remoteness, and populations of cultures (Hispanic, Native American) with learning readiness gaps (Page 19-21).

    Specific strategies that are targeted at eliminating barriers to pre-school education in the targeted areas of the grant project was outlined in the proposal. They have addressed issues with local access to services, cost of services, transportation, parental preferences, and an advocacy/political factors. They have offered evidence based, proven, practical and implementable solutions for each of these elements that do not seek to provide or replace expensive site models, but is "providing scalable options for developing school readiness" (Page 21-24).

    A Multitiered approach to distribute information about their programming and project was presented. They have provided a plan that will encompass distributing research information generated from their practices, a public information and media action plan, strategic plans for pilot expansions, and the development of partnerships (Page 24-27).

    Weaknesses:

    The project proposal has not clearly defined the unmet demand for these services. Key factors are proven to exist (lack of state funding for pre-schools, rural/remoteness, cultural population need), but the applicant has not quantified the need within these areas that would ensure a demand to scale this project up to a national level that they are proposing (Page 19-21).

    The applicant has not articulated how the training of rural superintendents will have a national impact on pre-school education from the project, as superintendents have role as an instructional leader in districts, but not necessarily content

experts or facilitators of change at the building and program level. (Page 4-5).

Reader's Score: **33**

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the 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 extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g.,SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

   Strengths:

   This is a project based on four fundamental goals and aligned objectives that will provide overarching guidance for the implementation of the project. The goals, objectives, and outcomes are all specific and measurable. In addition, the applicant's narrative for the project has been closely aligned to these goals, objectives, and outcomes. (Page 28-35).

   An articulated management plan that outlines timelines for the implementation of the grant and key benchmarks for completing specific tasks was presented. They have outlined the responsibilities of key leadership in the implementation of the grant. The management team has demonstrated with past implementations (i.e. Utah) their ability to implement a large scale grant project. The qualifications of the leadership team will offer strong leadership for the project. (Page 28-36).

   Information on feedback and ongoing improvement and identified key staff who will be a part of the ongoing improvement process was presented. They have provided information on types of information that they will gather for feedback (i.e. Recruitment information, training information, assessment data, and parent/teacher feedback). They have also referenced how they will make adjustments and changes to their programming based on the feedback received during the course of the project (Page 36-37).

   There is a strong and established history of working to sustain large scale projects. They also have developed large scale partnerships in the project that will enable ongoing support of the project, even for small number of participants. Their approach of the project has been to scale up the project and to scale down the costs associated with implementation and integration of the project.

   Demonstrated support from local, regional, and state entities for the project was provided (Page 39-Appendix).

   Examples of multi-year financing models to support their ability to sustain the projects during and beyond the scope of the initial project were provided in the project proposal (Page 28-38).

Weaknesses:

Few details about how their management team will operate effectively to scale up their project from the past experience (1-2 states) to multiple states with a large rural focus area was provided. They have not provided in depth information on the use of the liaisons in the process of connecting with the parents and students and serving as the link with the larger organization to insure that the programs are being completed by the students and the parents. (Page 28-36).

In depth information on a planned approach for feedback and continuous improvement will be implemented during the course of the grant project was not provided by the applicant (Page 36-37).

Reader's Score: 32

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, 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 standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in the NIA).

   (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 project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   Not Applicable

   Weaknesses:

   Not Applicable

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/07/2018 04:33 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)
Reader #2: **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	0
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	0
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Management	35	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	13
Total	100	13

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Expansion - 1: 84.411A

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

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)

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:

   Not applicable.

   Weaknesses:

   Not applicable.

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 extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.

   Strengths:

   Not applicable.

   Weaknesses:

   Not applicable.

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the 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 extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g.,SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

   Strengths:

   Not applicable.

   Weaknesses:

   Not applicable.

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, 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 standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in the NIA).

   (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 project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   The methods of evaluation have the potential to produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations because a randomized control trial (RCT) is proposed (p.40, 44). The methods of evaluation have the potential to provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant literacy and social-emotional student outcomes through the use of valid and reliable instruments including the Preschool Early Literacy Indicator, Brigance, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and Social-Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales (p. 47). The evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes in its logic model (p. 48).

   The applicant demonstrates that the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings by studying key components of fidelity including program usage, education technology, and support for families (p. 48). These components are closely aligned with the project's logic model (p. 48).

Weaknesses:

It cannot be determined if the RCT meets What Works Clearinghouse standards because the applicant does not provide sufficient information about the randomization process. For example, the applicant proposes to use a blocked experimental design, randomly selecting from each district block. The applicant states that each cohort will include 200 students per state, but the sample sizes for each district block within each state are not included (p. 46). The applicant includes power calculations to demonstrate that the total sample meets an appropriate statistical power criterion, but does not show that the number of students included by district block is sufficient to create an adequately sized sample (p. 46). The applicant does not specify which of the pretests (Preschool Early Literacy Indicator, Brigance, or Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) will be used to establish baseline equivalency and to address subject attrition. If all three are used, then the applicant does not describe a strategy for establishing baseline equivalence or addressing subject attrition if some pretests indicate baseline equivalence but others do not (p. 45).

The applicant does not describe how the four student outcome instruments will be administered to ensure that children are assessed in a reliable and appropriate manner. Given that many of the students will not be attending preschool, it is unclear how evaluators will gain sufficient access to students to conduct the testing and how evaluators will confirm that assessors are qualified to administer the various tests.

The applicant does not sufficiently describe measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation. For example, the applicant mentions the importance of examining program usage, education technology, and support for families to ensure fidelity of implementation (p. 48), but does not describe specific thresholds that must be met. It is unclear how the applicant will develop or use the intended fidelity score for key components, or how the proposed a priori established threshold for "Implementation with fidelity" or "Not with fidelity" will be established (p. 49).

Reader's Score: 13

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/06/2018 03:51 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/07/2018 01:45 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)
Reader #3: **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	0
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	0
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Management	35	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	14
Total	100	14

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)

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: **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 extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.

   Strengths:

   n/a

   Weaknesses:

   n/a

Reader's Score: **0**

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the 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 extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g.,SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

   Strengths:

   n/a

   Weaknesses:

   n/a

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, 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 standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in the NIA).

   (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 project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   The research questions (pg 43-44) are sound and integrate not only family and site characteristics but also include notions of social and emotional readiness within a longitudinal study of three years of student learning. (p 45).

   The large sample size, roughly 2/3 of the treatment group, exceeds that required by the statistical power analysis (p 46) and allows for some level of attrition. The district blocking within the RCT is a wise strategy to help reduce selection bias in the case of unequal numbers of individuals assigned to treatment and control groups (p. 47). The sampling plan utilizes a power analysis to identify the appropriate sample size to detect an effect size of at least .25.

   As the logic model indicates (p 48), a significant amount of logistical setup is required for the program to be implemented across rural communities. Feedback from families in the form of pre- and post-testing will play an important role in understanding how effective this strategy is in other settings. The mixed methods analysis of implementation fidelity, including field observations of District Liaisons supporting families, will provide insights as to the efficacy of various program activities (p 47-48). Additionally, the project's cost-effective analysis, while not completely developed, identifies

potential units of measurement (eg., literacy outcomes, program salaries, etc.) that are appropriate and necessary to any attempts to replicate the program in other rural settings. Finally, an implementation fidelity score will be calculated and measured against a priori established thresholds in order to compare implementation rates with overall success. (p 48-49), and an implementation study will attempt to link program activities and outcomes (pg 47).

The project focuses on the key measures of success – student knowledge and attitudes and parental involvement and attitudes – and employs multiple methods to measure these outcomes, including pre- and post-tests, interviews, field observations, and meetings. Tests of numerous aspects of student literacy outcomes (e.g,. letter knowledge, phonological awareness, etc.) will be drawn from established test instruments (p. 46). Additionally, the social and emotional questions, in particular, are drawn from established assessment tests (p. 47). The proposed evaluation has taken steps to account for attrition and selection bias (p. 45, 47).

The logic model (p 48) provides a detailed understanding of the project's key Inputs/Activities, mediators, and outcomes and aligns well with the Objectives and Activities outlined for Goal 2 (pg 32-33).

Weaknesses:

In the completion of the SEARS short form, teachers, students, or parents will have the opportunity to complete this form, presumably on behalf of the student (p 47). It is unclear how different respondents' answers would be accounted for in the analysis of this data.

To a greater extent, it is similarly unclear who will administer the PELI and Brigance tests to the children if they are not currently enrolled in schools. Because test assessors would likely need to be trained, it is unclear if all parents would be trained to conduct these tests, or whether the District Liaisons would be trained and then administer the tests. If the three assessments are used, it is unclear how they will be utilized to establish baseline equivalency among treatment and control groups.

While the RCT design will include district blocking, it is unclear if and how the 200 sample per state will be conducted at the district block level. Additionally, it is unclear how, if at all, scores from different states/jurisdictions will be compared to each other.

Further, with parents playing such a critical role in the project's implementation, the evaluation plan would benefit from more detail regarding the types of questions they will be asked in surveys and/or interviews.

Finally, more detail regarding acceptable implementation thresholds would strengthen the application. Establishing the thresholds at the application phase would give a sense of the rigor of the standards by which the application team will assess implementation success.

Reader's Score: 14

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/07/2018 01:45 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)
Reader #4:   **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	35
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Management	35	35
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Total	100	80

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)

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 magnitude of severity of the problem is addressed by stating that five of the states that joined together to form the UPSTART Great Plains TASK Force do not offer a state-funded preschool program and they are seeking to overcome the barriers found in rural state educational agencies to early learning.

   The project is nationally significant because it aims to solve the problem of social inequity through education. The project is focusing on the tipping point that they see in education for early childhood education. The proposed project provides substantial data and research on pages 3-4, (e24-25) to support the national significance.

   The proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities established for the competition because they use a mixed method research design. The mixture of the two methods of the Waterford computer skills lessons and assessments and the family engagement using text message, emails, phone calls and trainings change the educational logic.

   Weaknesses:

   Not Applicable

Reader's Score: **10**

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 extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable

others to use the information or strategies.

Strengths:

The extent to which the applicant shows there is unmet demand for this proposal is around the issues of access and rurality. Several rural counties in 5 different states will join in this project. The use of statistics and research support the applicant's proposal.

The barriers to scaling the project are access and availability, cost, transportation, performance fidelity, parental preferences, and priorities. The level so the scale is to focus on all of those mentioned above and then how will the new program overcome each. As stated on page 22 (e44) the project is able to provide affordable, scalable options in rural populations.

The TASK force follows a strategy of Research information, Public information, policy information, pilot expansions and partnerships/philanthropy. Each strategy is explained and detailed on how it will enhance the TASK program.

Weaknesses:

Not Applicable

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the 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 extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g.,SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

Strengths:

The proposed project is shown on the project management plan on page 4 on pages 31-35 (e53-57) give clear and measurable goals.

The project provides an adequate management plan that including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones within a reasonable time.

The feedback and improvement sections are detailed and organized on how to obtain and disseminate for improvement and accountability. The feedback is built into a multi-year management plan.

The evidence to ensure resources to operate beyond the length of the grants are found on pages 37-40. The operating model in Table 5 and 6 show the ability to invest in the program and be able to drive growth and continue to connect with project partners.

Weaknesses:

Not Applicable

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, 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 standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in the NIA).

   (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 project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   Not Applicable

   Weaknesses:

   Not Applicable

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/12/2018 12:43 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)
Reader #5: **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	34
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Management	35	30
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Total	100	74

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Expansion - 1: 84.411A

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

Applicant: Waterford Institute (U411A180001)

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:

   In terms of Significance, the proposal does an excellent job identifying the need for early childhood education in rural communities (pp. 2-5), pointing out the growing discrepancy in test scores and funding among rural communities and suburban and (small) urban communities.   UPSTART's Task Force scales project with demonstrated success. Support from National Rural Education Association and Rural School and Community Trust is a plus as well, speaking to the effectiveness of the intervention. It aptly addresses early childhood intervention and cognitive development.

   Weaknesses:

   The proposal has no weaknesses in this regard—excellent work.

Reader's Score: **10**

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 extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.

Strengths:

In terms of Strategy to Scale, the Waterford UPSTART program has specifically focused on meeting the unmet demands of rural communities and builds upon a Utah i3 Validation grant (p. 6). It well identifies its past success (pp. 8-10). Waterford Early Learning and its Assessment of Core Skills (WACS) have a demonstrated track record (p.10-11) and the proposal identifies potential barriers to scale. Importantly, WACS not only generates reports to schools but to families as well, which was a significant plus in terms of dissemination, which is likewise well articulated in terms of their outreach to schools and districts.

Weaknesses:

One minor detractor in terms of Strategy to Scale is this question of how well the proposed model helps support families to implement the five day a week regiment (see Design & Management feedback for more detail); in terms of building off of prior success, this needs to be further articulated.

Reader's Score: 34

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the 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 extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g.,SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

   Strengths:

   In terms of the Quality of the Design & Management Plan, the team is well-qualified to conduct such research. Table 4 (pp. 31-35) represents a highly detailed mapping that well articulates the Goals, Objectives, and corresponding Activities. The team has the requisite resources to conduct such an ambitious project. Mechanisms are in place in terms of districts, schools, and family reports to ensure there is timely feedback, leading to programmatic revision, if need be.

   Weaknesses:

   What is less articulated in the proposal is how the coaching model will help support families to implement what this reviewer perceived to be a fairly strenuous intervention pattern. As the proposal notes, families are not required to send their children to a pre-K program. The intervention—15 minutes a day, 5 days a week—purports to be modest as written in the proposal. But while 15 minutes daily represents no great amount of time, consistent usage (5 days a week) is a significant hurdle; a pair of 1 hour blocks weekly is an easier lift and while this reviewer does not doubt the 15 min/ 5 day approach to be more beneficial, the proposal could have spent more time identifying how its coaching will reach families to ensure they are getting students online daily, and this needed to be explicitly addressed in their "barriers" section.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, 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 standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in the NIA).

   (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 project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

   Strengths:

   N/A

   Weaknesses:

   N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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